

LOST IN A SUMMER DREAM

a screenplay by Joseph Minion

(646) 284-6089

[influx13@juno.com](mailto:influx13@juno.com)

[www.kinderkamackroad.com](http://www.kinderkamackroad.com)

EXT. CAPE COD BEACH (1977) - DAY

A beach with no people except for two FIGURES walking along it, close to the ocean. They are MARTHA (7 years old) and her older brother DOUG (11). The sky is overcast.

*[This beach section is a bit like a silent movie: classical compositions, the camera set-ups all on a tripod.]*

After they walk for a while, the voice of a NARRATOR kicks in as the two children continue walking on the sand, near the crashing waves and approaching a rise of black rocks.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

When Martha Wright was seven years old her family went to Cape Cod. One morning she was walking along the beach with her brother when they found themselves nearing a jetty made up of craggy piles of sharp rocks.

More or less, what the Narrator is describing is what we'll be seeing, giving things the feeling of a childhood fable.

NARRATOR (V.O. cont'd)

Martha picked up a flat stone and in a moment of pure spontaneity she threw it into the surf in such a way as to make it skip many times.

Shots of the stone (slow motion) skipping over the water.

NARRATOR (V.O. cont'd)

She had never done that before. She'd seen her brother and his friends do it. Perhaps it was the presence that day of her brother that compelled her to do it. Whatever the reason, her first stone-skipping attempt was *hugely* successful.

Shots back and forth between Martha and Doug, watching with amazement as the stone skips, and the stone, and...a third PAIR OF EYES, so close up that we cannot see who it is.

NARRATOR (V.O. cont'd)

The stone had clearly skipped so many times that Martha sensed even then, as a

NARRATOR (V.O. cont'd)

child, before these things become more important than they really are, that her deft throw must have been some kind of stone-skipping record. Even Martha's brother was impressed and he voiced his enthusiasm in a rare display of emotion. Her brother's enthusiasm made Martha *really* wish she'd counted the number of skips.

As Martha and Doug watch the stone sink, we hear a voice:

LITTLE BOY (O-S)

28 skips! A record! Splendid!

Martha and Doug look up: we see, for an instant, their POV of a LITTLE BOY with blond hair pointing out over the ocean where the stone was skipping. But very quickly he ducks behind the craggy rocks atop which he was standing.

MARTHA

Who was that? Did you see him?

DOUG

A little kid with blond hair?

MARTHA

Yeah! He said the stone skipped 28 times! He said "Splendid"!!!

DOUG

C'mon...let's go talk to him.

Shots of Martha and Doug climbing, and looking all over the rocks on which they saw the little boy.

NARRATOR (V.O)

Martha and her brother searched and searched for the boy, climbing over and scouring the piles of black rocks as far as their little arms and legs would allow them, but they couldn't find him. But there was no doubt that they both had seen him.

EXT. BEACH / INT. TENT - NIGHT

A campfire on the beach. A pup tent, the glow of a lantern coming from within. Inside the tent, Martha and Doug are sitting up, with blankets over them. They are still mystified by the blond boy.

MARTHA

Maybe it was a spirit!

DOUG

Or a God, like Neptune!

MARTHA

Maybe it was *baby Jesus!*

DOUG

But we both saw him, so he was real!

MARTHA

And he said it was a record! My stone skipped *28 times!*

DOUG

28 - that number will be an important one for you. It's more than just a record. Don't you see? *It means something! It's like your life.* That's what he was saying. The stone. Each skip is a whole year!

MARTHA

You mean I'm only going to live to be 28? Hmm. Well that's a long time. I'm only seven now. I have a whole twenty-one years. That's, like, *forever.*

DOUG

No silly. You have 28 years to figure out how to be in this world, Martha. *All over at 28! The learning part, that is!* And then, you're *in baby!*

Doug picks up a bottle of soda pop.

DOUG

A toast!

Martha lifts hers, suspends it in front of her brother's.

MARTHA

28 years to figure things out.  
Splendid!

CUT TO a shot outside, on the beach, the tent small, the campfire blazing, the ocean roaring in the night.

IRIS OUT on the campfire.

IRIS OPENS TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

A close-up of a now grown-up Martha, weeping, the sound amplified by the echo chamber effect of the bathroom tiles.

Martha is sitting in a bathtub filled with water. Her head in her hands. Shaking. Title card: "21 Years Later"

Wider: we see a framed POSTER for a theatrical production. Martha's husband, BEN is pounding on the locked door.

MARTHA

All over at 28...All over...

BEN (O-S)

Martha would you get out here?  
We got a birthday cake for you,  
dammit. You're ruining every-  
thing on your birthday, baby!

MARTHA

I'm 28 and it's all over...

BEN (O-S)

Whaddaya mean "all over"? You've  
got a loving husband and a beautiful  
daughter! I *told* you the doctor said  
these post partum depressions are normal.  
Now get out here.

We can hear the sound of a BABY crying, also, on the other side of the door.

## MARTHA

Nooooooooo...No no no no no...It's  
all over...it's all over...over at  
28...*Where's Jesus now?*

The pounding gets harder, more forceful. Martha, in the tub, takes a .38 caliber pistol out of a leather holster.

The door is kicked open by Ben. He is holding their daughter, Nell, an infant. He runs over to the tub where Martha has just pulled the hammer. She stops as she looks up and sees not only her husband, but her baby daughter, crying, watching her mother about to off herself, sensing it's *BAD*.

Martha, ashamed, drops the gun into the tub, begins weeping. We hear Ben run out of the bathroom and get on the phone to call an ambulance. HOLD on Martha.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SANITARIUM (VARIOUS ROOMS) - DAY/NIGHT

Various angles in what we'll understand, from the accretion of detail, as a mental health facility. NOTE: *Martha will be seen eating an ICE CREAM CONE, in every location, at various stages of completion.* As if the holding onto the ice cream cone is giving her a sense of security.

Background noises of ORDERLIES shouting commands to people; occasional SCREAMS. Some PATIENTS play ping-pong. The TELEVISION is constantly on (this whole sequence is done in a kind of jump cut/dreamlike fashion to give the feeling of time in limbo, time suspended.) The TV is tuned to the popular game show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire." Martha watches with great interest.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DIVORCE COURT CONFERENCE ROOM (2005)

Close up of Martha. She is looking around as various parties seat themselves. We can hear chairs being pulled as the two opposing lawyers (KATZ and HILL) and a JUDGE, and BEN and Martha's daughter NELL seat themselves, too. (Ben helps Nell to her seat.) Nell is now seven years old. A title card comes up at screen bottom: "2005"

KATZ

Does Nell really have to be here?

JUDGE

I thought that was already settled?

(picks up a document)

Mr. Burke? I have a letter from -

BEN

Yes we've discussed this. Nell  
wants to be here, actually.

NELL

As a sociological point of interest  
I find it necessary to expose myself  
to certain legal rituals like this.

KATZ

Okaaay....

JUDGE

She stays.

KATZ

Riiiiight...

JUDGE

Now...Ms. Wright. We are here,  
after many months to discuss your  
strong feeling, still, that you deserve  
to gain custody of Nell.

MARTHA

Well I *am* her mother.

JUDGE

Yes but according to the petition  
on your divorce agreement it was  
agreed - in fact you agreed, Ms.  
Wright - that you were in fact  
unfit to act as her mother.

KATZ

Not to mention the many other  
testimonials, copies of which I have  
with me, which I strongly doubt

Ms. Wright wants brought up, regarding  
KATZ (cont'd)  
her *first* release from Wilkes-Barre  
Institute for the -

HILL

That's irrelevant, Katz.

KATZ

Oh it's irrelevant that the first  
thing your client did when she was  
released from Wilkes-Barre is let her  
child drive a car in the middle of  
a snowstorm. A five year old.

MARTHA

You see, Your Honor...that's really  
not endangering anyone. There were  
absolutely no cars on the road so  
what better time for a child to learn?  
She asked me, she *begged* me, to drive.  
Do you know how important it is to  
spot the times when your child is  
hungry to learn something?

KATZ

Oh Jesus.

MARTHA

Do you have any children, Judge?

JUDGE

The car skidded 360 degrees and  
almost went over a cliff.

MARTHA

But it *didn't*. Anything "almost"  
happens, so what's it mean?

HILL

Martha, for godssake, I'll do the  
talking, all right?

MARTHA

Goddammit, Larry, you said you'd  
mention the bungalows. How I'm  
making a damn good profit off-

HILL

Your honor, Ms. Wright asked me to present her daughter with a request at this hearing. And that's all I want to submit. Ms. Wright feels it will have a bearing on the outcome of this meeting.

Hill takes out a document from his attache case.

JUDGE

What is it?

HILL

(looks at Martha)

Are you sure, Martha?

Martha nods enthusiastically. Hill clears his throat.

HILL (cont'd)

(reading)

"Dear Nell: I have written to the producers of the show *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire*, requesting to be a contestant on that show. When my request is granted, I expect the staff will ask me to provide them with the telephone number of a friend whom I can call as a 'lifeline'. As you may know, a contestant gets three 'lifelines'. One of them is a friend they can call to help them if they are stuck on a question. I would like you to be that person, as I believe you, my daughter are the smartest person I know. Would you be one of my lifelines, Nell? I already consider you one, not in the game show sense, but in the here-we-are-living-life sense, so I just see this as a matter of form fitting content. Your Mom."

Pause. Everyone looks around the room at each other, Katz making a show of holding back laughter.

BEN

I don't understand. Martha, you  
 BEN (cont'd)  
 know that you're going to be on the  
 show? They gave you a date?

MARTHA  
 No, I haven't heard back from them  
 at all yet. But I thought I should  
 be prepared for when I do.

Very long, uncomfortable pause. Hill looks defeated.

JUDGE  
 You were correct, Ms. Wright, it  
 did have a bearing on this meeting,  
 which is over.

HILL  
 But Your Honor, motion to—

JUDGE  
 Custody is denied. I'll send in  
 a bailiff to help see you out.

The judge leaves. Ben's lawyer gets up and follows her. Ben starts getting up, taking Nell by the hand. (Nell is looking with compassion at Martha.)

BEN  
 Wait here with your mother for  
 one minute, sweetheart...

CUT TO Martha's POV as she looks up and sees Nell, as Ben goes over to talk, in the background, with Katz. Nell stands looking at her mother, a strange look in her eyes, as if she wants to comfort her but only can say:

NELL  
 What will you be doing now?

EXT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A BAILIFF escorts Martha out of the conference room. The bailiff walks her a few feet, then Martha pulls away.

MARTHA

Please...

Hill walks out of the room, passes Martha.

HILL

I have to go, Martha. Call me.

He walks past. Martha sits on a bench that's against the wall. She looks up at the bailiff.

MARTHA

I'm fine.

The bailiff walks away. HOLD on Martha sitting there, alone. She looks up. At the far end of the hall, backlit, she sees a GIRL SCOUT. It is like an apparition; it's almost as though it's Martha, two decades ago.

Martha looks fiercely at the Girl Scout, like a drowning man reaching out for a lifesaver tossed to him. The Girl Scout starts for the exit. Martha gets up to follow, walking quickly towards the exit.

EXT. COURT BUILDING - DAY

Martha steps outside, squinting. We see her POV, the Girl Scout joins a little troop of other scouts, presided over by a SCOUT MOTHER. They fall into an orderly arrangement.

The Scout Mother pulls out a whistle, blows it, and the Girl Scouts walk almost military fashion down the street. SOUND OVERLAP, the rumblings of theatrical line readings-

INT. GIRL SCOUT MEETING HALL IN NEW LEBANON, N.Y. - DAY

CLOSE-UP of a flyer tacked onto a bulletin board: TONIGHT ONLY! NEW LEBANON GIRL SCOUTS PRESENTS A PLAIN ENGLISH VERSION OF SHAKESPEARE'S "TITUS ANDRONICUS"

Under that: ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY MARTHA C. WRIGHT. We can already hear, off-screen, noise from the play already in progress.

CUT TO:

The STAGE: a little makeshift area, a part of the meeting hall cleared off with crudely hand-painted boards against the back wall creating a forest setting with a "castle".

SHAWNELADEE, a 7-year-old black girl, is playing the role of Lavinia. The villain, DEMETRIUS, and his cohort, CHIRON (they're all in Shakesperean costumes) grab hold of Lavinia and, wielding a rubber knife, play-act at cutting off her tongue. Shawneladee-as-Lavinia lets out a terrific SCREAM and spits out a mouthful of fake blood.

After the dirty deed Demetrius produces an actual cow's tongue and prances around the stage in triumph. The actors playing Demetrius and Chiron are also young girls. All of the actors are Girl Scouts.

CUT TO the AUDIENCE. There are several dozen metal foldout chairs with various members of the community sitting there, some of them horrified at the grisly acts being performed. Others watch calmly, taking it in stride. Many chairs are empty. Back on stage:

DEMETRIUS

Ah-ha! And now you'll never be able to telleth anyone what happened to you here today! Go ahead, try to say something! Yea, I doth order you! Speaketh and see what happens. Say "Demetrius raped me and cutteth out my tongue." Go ahead, sayeth it!

Shawneladee opens her mouth to speak but can only garble.

DEMETRIUS (cont'd)

What's that, Lavinia? Cat gotteth your tongue? Why I can't understandeth a word! You see! I am im--...im--...

Shawneladee senses her fellow actor has forgotten her line.

SHAWNELADEE (as Lavinia)

*Impervious.*

(pause, then louder)

*Impervious.*

DEMETRIUS

-impervious to your accusations! Ha-ha!

JUDY, the child actress playing Demetrius, walks to the front row and hands the cow's tongue to an AUDIENCE MEMBER who then passes it to the AUDIENCE MEMBER next to him. They each take turns examining it for a moment, figuring that's what they're supposed to do. Onstage:

CHIRON

Hey, she could still write!  
We gotta cut off her hands!

DEMETRIUS

Her hands! Brilliant idea, Chiron!  
Indeed...let's see if she could  
accuseth us in writing with only  
a pair of knobby stumps. I thinkest not!

Demetrius' rant continues onstage in the background.

CAMERA scans rows of audience farther and farther back until we see, standing against the back wall of the auditorium: Martha. She's dressed in a GIRL SCOUT UNIFORM.

Martha looks over and sees her friend FERN (a bit older), who is sitting in the audience. Fern turns to look at Martha and mouths the word "Wow", obviously impressed. CUT TO another CLOSE-UP of the cow's tongue being passed from one audience member to another.

CHIRON (O-S)

If I were her I would hangeth myself!

DEMETRIUS (O-S)

Whateth is she gonna tieth the knoose  
with? Her toes? Ha!!!

INT. BACKSTAGE (LATER) - DAY

Martha is being interviewed by a little girl, TRUDY, who sits across from her with a pen and pad in her lap.

The performance over, the GIRL SCOUTS are passing through, on their way to or from the dressing room in various stages of costume and makeup removal.

TRUDY

What my paper will delve into, Ms. Wright, is exactly what kind kind of preparation you gave the Scouts, especially—

(glances at Playbill)

Shawneladee Baker, who plays Lavinia. Some would say the role is a bit traumatic for a seven-year-old.

MARTHA

Well, *life* is traumatic, Trudy. Can I call you Trudy?

Trudy nods. She looks like she wants to say something.

MARTHA (cont'd)

And I don't think we're doing our youth any good by shielding them from the fact that we live in a hostile environment. Predatory even. You know, I'm the leader of this particular Girl Scout troop—

(stops; Trudy is writing)

That's Troop 185. New Lebanon chapter. And you can ask any one of my scouts: I never shy away from looking the demons right in the eye.

(leans forward)

Not only the demons *out there*, Trudy. But the demons...

(points to her own head)

*in here.*

Trudy continues scribbling away in her notebook.

TRUDY

Yes, of course...

(looks up)

Off the record?

MARTHA

Off the record...what?

TRUDY

I mean, I'm not going to put

TRUDY (cont'd)

this opinion in my article; I'll leave that to the critics. But, well, I felt the play was a bit sensationalistic. I mean, I do think the idea of a theatrical Girl Scout troop is good, don't get me wrong. But...passing around a *tongue*? Isn't that a bit archaic? The type of stuff they did in the 60's? We're not exactly living in the past here in New Lebanon. Just because this isn't Greenwich Village...

Trudy stops herself, looks suddenly regretful.

TRUDY (cont'd)

I'm sorry. I can be a little bitch sometimes. Please, ignore what I just said, ok?

MARTHA

Sure! You're young!

TRUDY

I think this is a really cool thing. Really I do, Ms. Wright.

(calls out)

*Mom!* Done here, let's go!

Trudy jumps up from her seat.

EXT. PARKING LOT / INT. CAR - DAY

Trudy walks with her MOTHER to a car. They get in; her Mother starts the engine.

MOTHER

You get everything you need?

TRUDY

No.

MOTHER

No?

TRUDY

I just said it: "no", okay?  
The article's going to be a  
piece of shit, okay?

The Mother shuts the engine off.

MOTHER

Trudy—

TRUDY

I don't know what I'm *doing*  
anymore! "Cover the play",  
they tell me, "cover the play,  
it's a local story, it's human  
interest." But I don't know what  
the hell I'm doing! Why wasn't I  
in that play? Why not *me*? Why  
aren't there reporters asking  
questions about *me*? How did I  
wind up being the one on the  
outside? Is it *your* fault? Hmmm?  
Is it *your's* and Dad's fault?

(pause)

*Start the fucking car!*

MOTHER

Did you take your Ritalin?

TRUDY

Start the fucking car I said!

The Mother starts crying as Trudy keeps cursing. She starts the car engine. Then, hunched defeatedly over the steering wheel, she pulls the car away, continuing to weep.

TRUDY (cont'd)

Put it in drive; put it in drive.  
Step on the gas; step on the gas. Pull  
out of the lot; pull out of the lot...

INT. MEETING HALL - DAY

It's the post-performance powwow, no one in the hall now except for the Girl Scouts, Martha, Fern and assorted parents, waiting. The Scouts are sitting on the stage and Martha, pleased as punch, stands in front, facing them:

MARTHA

All right! You gave 'em a terrific show and now I want you all to give yourselves the big hand that you deserve!

Martha starts applauding, as do the dozen-or-so GIRLS.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Troop 185 performed friggin' Shakespeare here tonight! Yes!

They all applaud again; some of them whistle.

MARTHA (cont'd)

You girls...I'm so proud...

We will CUT TO CLOSE-UPS of the various Girl Scouts:

MARTHA (cont'd)

I have watched you volunteer in soup kitchen. I have seen you come together after the hurricane spring and clean up the streets of New Lebanon. And I have seen you set up lemonade stands at the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade... but never before have you made me prouder to wear this uniform than the way you came together, the way you worked as a living, breathing, organic team on this magical evening.

INT. MEETING HALL - LATER

Fern calls out to Martha from the stage area, holding up a rain slicker.

FERN

Martha, someone left this...

MARTHA

Oh that's Trudy's. Let's take  
it with us...

Everyone has gone. One last girl, ROBIN (age 7, is saying  
goodbye to Martha. Robin's father (MEL) waits for them to  
finish. Then:

MEL

Okay, hon. Go wait by the  
car. I'll be right out.

Robin pecks Martha on the cheek and trots away. Mel sidles  
over to Martha as he watches Robin leave.

MEL (cont'd)

What a night! No exaggeration!

MARTHA

Oh, you know. Couldn't do it  
without the girls. Robin was  
just wonderful.

MEL

You made her wonderful.

MARTHA

Why what a nice thing to say.

MEL

Have you ever thought about  
robbing an Amtrak car filled  
with bulging wallets?

MARTHA

Huh?

MEL

Nothing. Just I was wondering  
if maybe you'd like to have a  
drink later.

MARTHA

Oh, that's really... You know,  
I'm just so tired, getting the  
show up and all-

MEL

It doesn't have to be tonight.

Awkward pause. Eye contact exchange. What's going on?

MEL (cont'd)

Look you know I'm married...And  
I know you've met Robin's mother  
so you, uh...

(chuckles)

...know what I have to contend with.

Another pause. Martha seems to register the insult to  
Mel's wife but doesn't say anything about it. Then:

MEL (cont'd)

I find you incredibly attractive.  
No exaggeration.

EXT. PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON (PRE-DUSK)

Fern is walking beside Martha, towards Fern's car. Martha  
is still in her Girl Scout uniform; she's carrying Trudy's  
rain slicker.

FERN

I've seen that guy around. What'd  
he want?

MARTHA

Oh, you know...he liked the play,  
that's all...

FERN

Did you get a look at Brenda  
Slocum? Can you say "reducing  
diet"? And Annie Kruitzer? Tell me  
that isn't the worst wig ever.  
We're talking Bobby Goldsboro's  
evil twin sister.

They approach Fern's car, parked on the street. In that  
moment, Martha notices the parking meter. In an almost  
subliminal POV cut, we see the red "Time Expired" flag pop  
into the little glass window.

INT. FERN'S CAR - AFTERNOON

MARTHA

Hey...you in a hurry?

FERN

Why?

Fern looks at Martha. Can tell what she wants.

FERN (cont'd)

All right but you chip in for gas.

Fern, during the drive, is constantly checking herself out in the rear-view mirror, fixing her hair or something.

EXT. SERVICE STATION - DUSK

FERN

...and *Terri Bollinger!*... Someone should tell that woman to stay out of the sun. I've seen more supple skin on gila monsters...

Fern is saying this as she pulls out of this service station, onto main road. Martha glances out the window at a poster of a grinning CLOWN (an ad for something) in the window of the service station.

EXT. STREET IN SPENCER, NEW YORK - DUSK

More of an uppercrust town. The streets are wider and better paved. The houses are ritzier. Lawns are bigger. Fern keeps prattling on.

FERN (O-S)

And she goes, during the intermission "That's negative and I don't really have room in my life for any more toxicity; I'm in a new place now". And I, like, say to her "Uhh...Zoe, all I said was what was in the newspapers this morning, I'm not trying to rain on the parade that is your life, *ok?*"

The sanitation department *really did threaten to strike* and this is called staying informed" *Toxicity!* Can you believe that bitch?

INT. FERN'S CAR - DUSK

Fern looks over at Martha, who looks tense.

FERN  
You all right?

Martha just nods. Fern notices that Martha still is holding onto the rain slicker, placed on her lap.

FERN (cont'd)  
Why don't you throw that in the back?

Martha, holding the slicker, turns to toss it onto the back seat. The light is fairly low but we see, through her POV, that there is a large bundle of clothes all along the back seat. It should look a little strange, almost as though there is a body there. Martha lays the slicker on top of the bundle, turns around.

MARTHA  
Salvation Army?

FERN  
Huh?

MARTHA  
Don't let me forget it...  
Slow down.

Fern sees that they're getting close to the house Martha wanted her to bring her to. She slows to a crawl.

EXT. STREET / INT. FERN'S CAR - DUSK

Martha looks out the window at a house. It is getting dark so it's hard to make out much more than that it's a very nice, expensive looking place. Well tended lawn. There are lights on, visible through some of the windows.

Martha is looking concertedly at the house, drinking it in. A shadow moves behind one of the upstairs window curtains.

FERN

Up there. Do you see?

MARTHA

Yes. She looks big.

After a few more moments, one of those NEIGHBORHOOD PATROL CARS comes by and slows to a halt adjacent to Fern's car. A uniformed man rolls down his window.

PATROLMAN

Can I help you ladies?

FERN

No, that's all right.

PATROLMAN

Do you need direc-

FERN

We're fine, thank you.

Fern steps on the accelerator. They drive past the house.

FERN (cont'd)

*Golly...* "Neighborhood watch"! Looks like this place has become a regular gated community since last time we were here.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Fern is driving back to New Lebanon.

INT. FERN'S CAR - NIGHT

FERN

Hey Trudy's house is on the way back. Want me to stop by so you can drop off the slicker?

MARTHA

That's all right, it's out of the

way. Or maybe I'll hand it to one of her school friends at the next scout meeting.

Fern laughs.

MARTHA (cont'd)

What's so funny?

FERN

Nothing.

MARTHA

What?

FERN

Oh come on. You have to admit it's funny. I mean, did you ever think, say, in your mid-twenties that in your mid-thirties you'd be talking about the next "scout meeting"?

MARTHA

Meaning what?

Fern is silent.

MARTHA (cont'd)

What do you believe in, Fern?

FERN

Hey don't get righteous on me. I've had a long goddam day.

MARTHA

No, I wanna know. Do you think I'm ridiculous? I'd like to know if my supposed best friend privately thinks I'm this, like, laughable fool.

FERN

Oh, Jesus...

MARTHA

I hate that "I've had a long day" shit. You can say that any day. Everybody has a "long day". Every-

body's busy. "Oooh, I've just been so busy!" "I've had suuuuch a long day!" Gimme a fuckin' break.

FERN

Martha! I *have* had a very difficult day today with Ron, okay? The fact is we are most likely gonna break up again. You're going on about friendship but I haven't noticed you ask me about my life? And it looks to me like I just sat through a play *you* directed and drove *you* there and am at this very moment driving *you* back because *your* car is in the shop. Ahh. That felt good. I feel better. You feel better?

Martha says nothing.

FERN

C'mon, kiddo. Wanna go over to Lucille's for a drink?

MARTHA

You said you "sat through" a play I directed. *Sat through*.

FERN

Oh come on...

MARTHA

That implies it was something you had to more or less *endure*.

FERN

Don't start.

MARTHA

And you just had to crowbar in That thing about you and Ron Because - as usual - that's all you ever want to talk about. You and Ron. You want to go to Lucille's and get a drink so you can whine about you and Ron for the eight millionth time-

FERN

Shut up! All right, that's it.  
Forget it. You're out of your  
fucking mind, you know that?

FERN (cont'd)

Your're losing it, Martha. I  
feel sorry for you...

MARTHA

Go to hell!

FERN

...I really do.

EXT. MARTHA'S HOUSE / INT. CAR - NIGHT

Fern pulls the car up in front of Martha's small, wooden,  
blue, two-story house.

Martha reaches back to grab the slicker from the back seat.  
As she does so, the headlights of the car coming from down  
the street illuminate the back seat, and the light creates  
an illusion - for a split second - of Martha thinking she's  
just yanked the slicker off of an ELDERLY BLACK WOMAN who  
shoots Martha an angry look as she pulls the slicker off.  
Martha is startled, reels back holding the slicker.

FERN

Go on, get out.

Martha looks at Fern, then looks back at the back seat; it  
just looks like a pile of clothes again.

FERN (cont'd\_

*Amscray.*

She gets out of the car, somewhat rattled, and slams the  
door shut. Fern pulls away. Martha walks up the path to  
the front door carrying her pocketbook and the slicker.  
She turns to look; Fern's car disappears around the corner.

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Martha unlocks her door and enters. She puts Trudy's slicker on the coat rack, then walks into the living room and turns on a lamp. Her house is very clean.

She walks over to her answering machine; presses "Play".

HARRIET OLNEK'S VOICE

Miss Wright, this is Madeline Olnek's mother, Harriet. I just wanted to let you know how much me and my husband enjoyed your play and how proud we are of Madeline, who already wants us to buy for her all of Shakespeare's plays. An eight year old! Anyway, we think it's fabulous, the great work you've done. Well... bye for now. And thanks again!

It clicks off. Martha wears a little satisfied grin. She presses rewind and listens to the entire message again.

After that she goes over to a CD player and selects a CD; puts it in the player. Albinoni's *Adagio* begins playing.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

CLOSE-UP of gas burner. CUT TO Martha looking at it as if kind of entranced by the flame. Then (still wearing her Girl Scout uniform, cap and all) Martha starts heating oil in a frying pan. Her pocketbook is on the kitchen counter. There's a PHOTO of Martha with her daughter, Nell, on the refrigerator door held by a magnet.

When the oil is hot enough, she opens her pocketbook. She takes out the cow's tongue that was used as a prop in the play and drops it into the frying pan. Then she sticks a fork into it and begins moving it around the pan.

MARTHA

A Girl Scout is resourceful!

INT. DINING ROOM / INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Later, Martha (still wearing uniform) sits at her dining room table, a single lit candle next to her place setting. We can still hear the *Adagio* playing in the background.

She calmly eats the tongue, slicing into it with a sharp knife. She inspects each morsel that she has cut off quite closely before putting it into her mouth.

INT. BEDROOM CLOSET - NIGHT

Martha, now in pajamas, is hanging her Girl Scout uniform in the bedroom closet. As she does this we CUT TO a CLOSE-UP of a photo nailed to the back wall of the closet: Martha dressed in a safari outfit, a Man (her ex-husband BEN, also in a safari outfit) standing with his arm around her.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Martha finishes brushing her teeth. She begins flossing.

INT. CLOSET - NIGHT

Martha is again in a walk-in closet. There is a stack of VIDEOTAPES on a shelf. She takes one off. On its label it says: "Nell. 12/23/99 First word."

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Martha is watching the videotape: It is Nell in front of a Christmas tree, one-year-old, sitting up with nothing on but a diaper. We can hear Ben's voice:

BEN (O-S, on tape)  
Say it again, Nell! Go 'head!  
Say it again for Mommy, too!

NELL (on tape)  
Cook-ie!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

MARTHA is standing in front of the mirror hanging over her dresser. She looks at herself and crosses a hand over her heart. She begins to recite the Girl Scout Promise and the Girl Scout Law:

MARTHA  
On my honor I will try to serve  
God and my country, to help people

at all times, and to live by  
the Girl Scout law...

As she continues we will CUT TO CLOSE-UPS of various items:

- A copy of "The Depression Book" by Cheri Huber.
- A reproduction of the section of the ceiling of the Sistene Chapel that shows God's hand nearly touching Adam's.
- A little framed photograph of Martha with a dog.
- Several elaborate crayon doodles taped to the wall.
- An open music box with a tiny ballerina sticking up.

MARTHA (cont'd)

I will do my best to be honest  
and fair, friendly and helpful,  
considerate and caring, coura-  
geous and strong, and responsible  
for what I say and do, and to  
respect myself and others,  
respect authority, use resources  
wisely, make the world a better  
place, and be a sister to every  
Girl Scout.

She finishes, crosses over to the bed, gets in and shuts  
off the night table lamp. She begins to lie back but she  
is positioned a bit too far up on the bed so that her head  
smacks into the headboard really hard.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Oww! *Fuck!*

EXT. DINER, NEW LEBANON - DAY

An establishing shot of a diner off Highway 28.

MARTHA (O-S)

The last word I said last night  
before I went to sleep was fuck.

INT. DINER - DAY

Martha, in a Scout uniform, is sitting at a booth with Mel  
(the guy who came onto her after the play previous night).

MARTHA (cont'd)

The last word anyone says or thinks before they fall into slumber has grave consequences for the direction the following day has. I believe that.

MEL

Yeah I think the Buddhists believe that happens when we all die. They think your very last thought will affect how you're reborn. No exaggeration!

MARTHA

Eh? That reincarnation crap?

MEL

Never mind. You were saying?

MARTHA

I don't believe in accidents. But I do believe *mistakes* are made for a greater purpose. To lead us to a deeper knowledge of ourselves.

(pause, sips water)

You know it's funny. When I was a kid I used to doodle. I'd start off trying to make some simple shape...a perfect three leaf clover shape, maybe, or a perfect bird's beak. You know. Simple. But sometimes my crayon would slip...oops!... and I'd ruin it. And then I'd have a choice. I could throw the doodle out, pretend I didn't even do it and start over again...or I could use the ruined doodle and then, you know, work it, draw around it and embroider something greater and more elaborate. So that I'm using my initial mistake to force myself to turn it into something more beautiful than I could have imagined if I hadn't

made that mistake in the first place. And I guess you can say that's my philosophy in life. You use your mistakes, your little slips, as a guidepost. As a beacon

MARTHA (cont'd)

to take you into an experience you never would have had if you hadn't made that mistake in the first place...

Pause. She sips her coffee. Mel looks pretty lost.

MARTHA (cont'd)

So when I said fuck...I woke up this morning trying to figure out what the universe was trying to tell me. But, you know, sometimes it helps to have someone sort it out with you. Like trying to interpret a dream. Sometimes there are just so *many* ways to see something.

MEL

Things can be confusing sometimes ...in life. But you know what they say about dreams...that often the simplest interpretation is the most accurate, like that saying: Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.

Mel looks panicked for a second, realizing that that interpretation is the non-erotic interpretation. And he wants to make damn sure he keeps things on the erotic track here.

MEL (cont'd)

But often it isn't! I mean... I mean often...*real often*...a cigar, you know, is a phallus. I mean, let's not just throw out a century of Freudian insight here, for godssake...

MARTHA

So you're saying the simplest-

MEL

Yeah. You said - and I quote-  
 "Fuck". So. The simplest  
 interpretation...Well...Let me ask  
 you: What image is conjured up  
 in your mind when you invoke the  
 word "fuck"? Close your eyes...

Martha closes her eyes. As they're closed Mel scans her  
 body lustfully. They sit there in silence, Mel waiting for  
 her to picture whatever "fuck" makes her think about. After  
 a while he reaches across the table and takes her hand.

MEL (cont'd)

Well?

Martha opens her eyes, smiles.

MARTHA

Ooh...I'm embarrassed to say.

MEL

Then let me say it for you: You and  
 me, in bed, totally naked...our  
 bodies joined together having hot  
 sex. No exaggeration. Am I right?

Pause. Martha has difficulty admitting:

MARTHA

As a Girl Scout leader I am sworn  
 to honesty. And the honest answer  
 is: Yes, Mel...

(lowers her head)

Yes.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Mel is having animal sex with Martha, grinding away at her,  
 the bedsprings squeaking loudly. At Martha's moment of  
 climax she screams out:

MARTHA

*Loooooove!!!!*

A few seconds later Mel has his orgasm. Their body

movements slow down. As they regain their breaths Martha, holding her arms around Mel, lets out a girlish squeal.

MEL

Wow. You are so hot... No exaggeration.

MARTHA

Mel! Mel did you hear that?

MEL

What?

MARTHA

What I screamed out: *Love!*

MEL

Uh-huh.

MARTHA

I mean... what I was talking about before. How words you say, thoughts you have...are kind of pointing you in a definite direction. How there are no accidents. I swear I didn't plan it. It just came out of me: *Love!*

MEL

What are you saying?

MARTHA

I don't know. I guess...I guess ...here we are. You and me. You helped me interpret fuck in the simplest possible way, and now the word I shout out is "love" so, you know...logically...the way to interpret that...well you know... you and me...love...and you, and me...you know...

Mel lifts himself up, off of her. He lies down on the bed next to her and she tries to snuggle. Martha notices a tattoo on his arm: a dagger going through a rose, with blood.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Oh. Didn't see that before. A dagger going straight through a rose! What does that mean?

MEL

It means I was drunk one New Years Eve and near an army base.

MARTHA

Oh, Mel. Anyway like I was saying. I mean, if we apply the same logic...you don't have to be a rocket scientist. You... and me...and love! Simple, no?

Mel sits up on the bed, pulling away, preventing intimacy.

MEL

Well. It's not *that* simple. Love is...a very abstract concept. John Dillinger loved crime. Reportedly he had a very large penis but all we do know is that he loved crime. I think, maybe... even I love crime. I don't know. I can't talk about this stuff to hookers. You put up with it. You do even though I'm not paying you, that's why you're sweet.

MARTHA

You don't think there's any connection between my shouting out "love" and you?

MEL

No. No no no no no. No way.

MARTHA

But you don't even know why you picked out that tattoo. Out of all the choices in that parlor.

MEL

Hey, I'm...incredibly flattered that was your interpretation. No

exaggeration! But I need some money, man...What time is it?

MARTHA

Why?

MEL

So this is where we meet. Got it? We'll get this same room

MEL (cont'd)  
every time so it'll feel cozy.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Mel drives off. A bicycle is parked in front of the room.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Martha watches out the window as Mel gets into his car and drives off.

INT. MOTEL ROOM (LATER) - DAY

Martha is lying in the bed in her underwear. The TV is on, tuned in to "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire".

INT. MOTEL ROOM (LATER) - DAY

The TV now off, Martha finishes getting dressed, back into her Girl Scout uniform. She looks at a small picture hanging on the wall next to the mirror. A nativity scene, but a vandal has defaced it, Magic-Markering out baby Jesus.

MARTHA

*Where's Jesus?*

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Martha leaves the motel room and rides off on her bicycle.

EXT. HIGHWAY 28 - DAY

Martha is riding her bicycle in a daze. She swerves into the road as a car is passing by, the DRIVER honking. He sticks his head out, waving his fist:

DRIVER

Watch out you stupid bitch!

EXT. SERVICE STATION - DAY

Martha pedals her bike into this New Lebanon service station. One of the mechanics, LOU, sees her ride in.

LOU

Hey, Miss Wright! You bike all the way here from home?

MARTHA

A Girl Scout must remain physically fit, Lou. My car ready? You told me by today -

LOU

Talk to Ray...  
(points to service bay)  
I think he's done...

MARTHA

(looking in bay)  
Where is he? Don't see him.

LOU

He should be there...

MARTHA

Where? Hey where's my car?

INT. SERVICE STATION BAY - DAY

MARTHA

Ray? Hello?

She goes up to another mechanic, PHIL, working on a car.

MARTHA (cont'd)

You seen Ray?

Phil shrugs, obviously doesn't want to be disturbed.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Ray? Ray, you here?

She sees Lou coming out of the office.

MARTHA (cont'd)

So where is he? And my car?

LOU

I don't know, Martha. Be patient.  
He'll be here. Maybe he's out  
Taking it for a test drive. Hold  
your horses.

MARTHA

A test drive. Well. I'm gonna fill  
my bicycle tires.

(opening pocketbook)

Can I get some quarters, Lou?

LOU

Careful Martha. That's a high  
pressure hose.

MARTHA

Lou. Get serious...

(handing dollar bill over)

The day you guys started charging  
money for air. Boy oh boy.

EXT. SERVICE STATION - DAY

Martha has her bike leaning against the air machine,  
filling the tire. But she holds it for too long: *BANG!* It  
pops.  
She looks around, hoping no one has noticed. No one cares.

MARTHA

Mother-fucker...

She kicks the bicycle over. She walks over to an ice cream  
vending machine and buys a popsicle, devouring it.  
Then she looks up and sees her car (Ford LTD) being driven  
onto the lot. RAY is behind the wheel.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Ray! There you are!

EXT. SERVICE STATION (LATER) - DAY

Martha and Ray are standing in front of the LTD, the hood open, the engine running. [NOTE: Ray, throughout movie, occasionally lapses into a Christopher Walken accent.]

MARTHA

What are you talking about? The engine sounds great.

RAY

I know, Martha. But when I finished the transmission I saw that you needed oil. I tried putting four quarts of oil in and it just came right out of the oil pan. Turns out the plug wasn't sticking tight to the pan. So I tried putting in an oversize plug but turns out the damn thing's stripped, there's nothing to screw it into anymore. Ok, so then I put sealant around it. That'll do for a little while but what ya really need down there, Martha, is a brand new oil pan...

MARTHA

A whole new oil pan.

RAY

...which we don't have in now, so I'll have to order it from the warehouse. That's in Jersey, though, so it'll take us a couple days. But I need to get the okay from you.

MARTHA

But you were just driving it. I just now saw you driving my car.

RAY

Yeah, test drive. For your own safety. It's like that.

Pause.

MARTHA

So how much we talkin' about?

RAY

New oil pan, labor. We could do it for three sixty. That and

RAY (cont'd)

the transmission work...come to just under eight hundred. 'Bout seven-ninety five. Unless we find something else wrong with it.

MARTHA

Why do you guys always say "we" when it comes to fixing a car? You're the only one who-

RAY

Martha what can I say? Do you want the work done or not?

EXT. SERVICE STATION (LATER)

Martha is sitting by the air pump with her bicycle. She decides to try to fill the back tire. She puts a quarter in the machine and starts filling it carefully, with tiny blasts of air this time. But this one pops, too: *BANG!*

MARTHA

God...*dammit!*

EXT. STEEP HILL - DAY

Martha is walking her bike up a hill but, as it's steep it's getting hard. Suddenly, sweaty, she loses her temper.

MARTHA

*Aaaaagggghhhhh!!!!*

She tosses the bike in the bushes. She stands there for several moments, looking at the discarded bike.

INT. BUS - DAY

Martha, seated on a bus. It stops and MISS PERCY gets on; she looks like that Black Woman Martha thought she saw in the back of Fern's car. She seats herself next to Martha.

MARTHA

Hello.

MISS PERCY

You say hi, I say hi back, *hello*, in fact. In fact I'd shake your hand but don't wanna muss up that very strange uniform of yers.

Miss Percy raises her hands; they're covered with dirt.

MARTHA

Oh my. Gardening?

MISS PERCY

Huh. I wish. Was correctin' my grandchild's buryin' site.  
(she nods w/her head)  
House over yonder, back yard.

MARTHA

Oh. Your grandchild is buried behind a house? I'm sorry to--

MISS PERCY

No no no my grandchild's pet guinea pig. She buried it wrong and wouldn't listen to me so I hadda come all the way out here and fix it myself. Anyway I'm Miss Percy dontcha know, never seen you on this here bus.

MARTHA

Martha. My car's in the shop.

MISS PERCY

Oh you can afford a car. Well

laa dee da. Didn't know I was  
sittin' next to *royalty*.

Martha lets this slip - figures it's her sense of humor.

MARTHA

What do you mean she "buried  
it wrong"? How do you bury a  
guinea pig *wrong*?

MISS PERCY

Gotta take out the eyes, bury

MISS PERCY (cont'd)

them separate. And ya got to  
bury the eyes *facing down*. In  
the direction of the center of  
the earth. Otherwise they'll  
be watchin' you and you don't  
wanna go 'round this life with  
no ghosts haunting you. Grand-  
child's at work, didn't even  
know I came by. She'll thank  
me some day when her life don't  
go off the tracks 'cause she's  
had a goddam rodent spirit pul-  
ling her down into hell with it  
her whole life. Oh, I know 'bout  
these things. I know. But do  
I ask for thanks? No m'am I do  
not. I just ask *where's Jesus*?

MARTHA

Oh.

Pause. Martha sees where the bus is slowing down.

MARTHA (cont'd)

I get out here.

MISS PERCY

Try not to hide it so much.

MARTHA

Huh?

MISS PERCY

You got it crawlin' all over

you. Serpents. Or yellow jackets. I need more time to see *precisely*. I know how to keep 'em from bitin'. Your trouble: it's 'bout your *daughter ain't* it?

Martha, scared, stumbles over Miss Percy on her way out.

MARTHA

Good bye. It was very nice talking to you, Miss Percy.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Martha, exiting the bus, looks back as it moves on. She looks into the bus window: Miss Percy is glaring back.

EXT. STREET / MARTHA'S HOUSE - DAY

Martha is walking to her house. She sees Trudy (the girl who had interviewed her for the school paper), her bicycle leaning against a post, waiting for her on the front porch.

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - DAY

Trudy is seated on the living room couch. Martha sits adjacent to her on a matching chair.

TRUDY

I hear voices. You've got a good rep with the Girl Scouts. Someone they can talk to. Do I have to join up or what? Because if I do I will. But I gotta talk to someone about this and I don't want it to be my parents. They really wouldn't want to know anyway. They can't deal with negative shit. So what's the deal?

MARTHA

Trudy, Trudy, no...No, I would never make joining the scouts a compulsory activity just so someone can come to me

with their problems. What do you mean you hear voices?

TRUDY

I can't really say it any more directly than that. I. Hear. Voices. In my head, I hear a voice. I try to ignore it but it's getting harder. They're getting *insistent*. So now what?

MARTHA

Insistent. Well what are they insistently...*saying*?

TRUDY

(matter-of-fact)

Weird stuff. Inducements to shoplift. Putting stamps on upside down. Kicking people hard on their ass at indoor malls. I'm not saying any of it's terribly *clever*, in the British usage of the word. The most imaginative one is the voice that tells me to take a two by four and stretch it across the rocks at Portifoy Gulch. You know, that place in the woods in Van Saun Park. Telling me to, you know, do it some time. Just *do it*, you know the slogan. Walk across, traverse it, like that World Trade Center guy. Anyway I sense trouble ahead if they keep bugging me. The voices. But if I'm wrong in confiding all of this to you then hey I'm, uhh, outta here. No problem.

Trudy stands up but Martha motions for her to sit down.

MARTHA

Wait a minute.  
(pause)

It's good you came to me.

TRUDY

Ok well this is lunch period  
so we have to make it snappy.

Martha's mail is pushed through the mail slot by the  
MAILMAN. The clank of the metal slot startles both of  
them.

TRUDY

*Jesus!*

MARTHA

Where???

(turns, sees it's the mail)  
Trudy...You'll have to come back  
when you have more time. Can you  
get out of gym? Or better yet...  
why not come to the next scout  
meeting.

TRUDY

I'm not a joiner, I'm warning you.  
In fact the voice in my head is  
telling me to kill one of those  
little groupthink narcissists.  
You think that's the best place  
in the world for an anti-socialite  
like me to show?

MARTHA

Hey...don't call them that.  
I don't take that from *anyone*,  
I don't care whose voice you're  
hearing, understand?

TRUDY

Sorry.

MARTHA

Okay. So how 'bout tonight?

TRUDY

I guess I can show up.  
(looks at watch)  
Well I gotta go. Algebra.

She starts heading for the door, sees her slicker on the coat rack and grabs it.

TRUDY (cont'd)  
This is mine by the way. I appreciate your nabbing it after the play. Later.

She kicks away the mail and lets herself out the door.

INT. SCOUT MEETING HALL - EARLY EVENING

In the same hall where the play was held, Martha stands in front of the Girl Scouts (of varying ages):

MARTHA  
Okay did everybody hear that? Rachel just asked me why we haven't sold any cookies in a while. So. Anybody know the answer to that?

KIMBERLY raises her hand.

MARTHA (cont'd)  
Kimberly.

KIMBERLY  
Because our troop isn't recognized by the New York State Girl Scouts Council so they can't legally supply us with cookies.

MARTHA  
Why isn't our troop recognized?

KIMBERLY  
Because we don't have enough adult volunteers. I think.

MARTHA  
That's right. Not a high enough ratio of adults to Girl Scout. You see, according to the National

Girl Scout Council which makes rules for the Girl Scout Councils of all fifty states, even for us to be having this scout meeting we need to have at least two adult volunteers for every ten scouts. And exactly how many adult volunteers have you seen for the last six months?

TRISH, a 7-year-old, jumps up and shouts out:

TRISH

Just you, Ms. Wright!

MARTHA

That's right, Trish. Just me. And why is that? Because all the other adult volunteers before that...well...they just gave up, didn't they? They got tired of doing Girl Scout volunteer work, isn't that correct? And that's because they stopped believing. Why many of these volunteers were your own mommies, weren't they?

The Girl Scouts nod and say, in unison: "Hmm-hmmm".

MARTHA (cont'd)

Your own mommies, imagine that! Not believing in the future of their own daughters. Too busy with their own petty lives... their shopping, their bridge games, their vile gossip, their drinking, their sordid affairs—

Martha realizes what she has just said, tries to backpedal.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Uhh...You know, by "affairs" I mean, you know, all the parties they have to go to - and have - to do...a lot...of drinking... of cranberry juice. And a lot

of other juices. Yeah.

An older scout, JENNIFER (15) stands up.

JENNIFER

But how come we never talk about sex at these meetings? I wanna talk about sex. My body is changing and there's all this stuff going on inside me and I wanna *talk* about it, Miss Wright. What kind of group is this if we can't even talk about what we're going through?

During this Martha spots Trudy slumping in. Martha nods to Trudy who nods back, then sits alone in the rear, reading.

MARTHA

Jennifer. Heeeeere's the thing: What we have in this room is a mixture, see? And because our troop is small we sort've have no choice but to have meetings with that whole mixture: a mixture of Daisy Scouts...

(indicates some 5-year-olds)

Robin and Theresa...Brownies...

(points to girls ages 6-8)

Shawneladee and Samantha, and Kimberly and Yolanda...some Juniors...

(indicates girls ages 9-11)

Harriet, Rachel, Edwina, Lori, Frances and Penelope...then of course there's you Cadettes...

(indicates girls 12-14)

Patricia and Wendy, Gretchen, Joanne, Rene and Debbie...and finally you Seniors...

(points to 3 more girls)

Emily, Roseanne, and last but not least you, Jennifer.

Twenty-one in all.

SAMANTHA

And *where's* Jesus?

(pause)

Hey, just kidding!

EDWINA

What about Grace?

MARTHA

Grace. Yes. Well, it's true we haven't seen her in a while...but, yes, Grace. Another lovely Cadette. Anyway, the point is, Jennifer, we simply cannot talk about sex in a mixed group such as this. You do understand that, don't you?

(addresses whole group)

MARTHA (cont'd)

All of you understand that. Am I right, girls?

A mix of responses. Some say "Uh-huh"; some shout "No!"

KIMBERLY

Why can't we sell cookies again? Isn't that what Girl Scouts do?

MARTHA

Kimberly I just got finished explaining why...

LORI

My mommy said they're gonna shut us down! She said that since we're not officially recognized it's wrong for us to have meetings and to call ourselves Girl Scouts. And that your organizing us under false pretensions. And...and...she said you should be locked up!

MARTHA

Really? Well, Lori. I noticed your mother was there when we performed *Titus Andronicus*... I noticed her applauding along with all the other mommies and daddies when you got your lines out. I sure noticed that. See, girls? See what I mean about

"gossip"? I don't see *your* mother volunteering, do I, Lori? I gotta do *everything* myself!

Another Junior, HARRIET, corrects Lori:

HARRIET

It's false *pretenses*. Not *pre-tensions*. It's *pretenses*.

MARTHA

(forcing smile)

Thank you Harriet. You're so

MARTHA (cont'd)

helpful in our time of crisis.

HARRIET

Well it's true isn't it? Aren't Girl Scouts supposed to be honest? Let's face it. We are operating under false pretenses.

A shot of Trudy as she smiles slightly during all of this.

MARTHA

Well whaddaya want me to do? Huh? Whaddaya expect me to do? Go out and grab volunteers off the street? That what you want? Because I'll do it. If that's what I have to do so we can win state recognition... if that's what I have to do, I'll do it. Because I *love* you girls! I love you and I'll do *anything*! Anything to see you treated the way you deserve. I'll never give up! Never!

FRANCES

Are you okay, Miss Wright?

MARTHA

Yeah I'm fine, I'm fine.

Emily raises her hand.

EMILY

Uh...

MARTHA

Emily, yes...

EMILY

Why don't we divide up? Why don't we have separate meetings for each separate rank?

CUT TO various Girls' faces.

GRETCHEN

Maybe we could find some more adult volunteers! Maybe some-

GRETCHEN (cont'd)

body who's new to New Lebanon? I mean...we can try, can't we?

Pause. There's a sense of confusion.

MARTHA

All right, I don't feel very good about this meeting. Next time I promise...I'll come with a plan. Okay?

Barely audible "okays" throughout room.

MARTHA (cont'd)

C'mon, let's hear it! OKAY???

GIRL SCOUTS

(in unison)

OKAY!

INT. REAR OF HALL (LATER) - NIGHT

Martha is alone with Trudy as the last of the scouts is leaving the hall.

TRISH

G'night, Miss Wright.

MARTHA

Good night, Trish...

Pause as Martha waits for the sound of the door to shut.

MARTHA (cont'd)

So...how're the voices doing,  
Trudy?

TRUDY

It's fucking torture. They can  
whisper. "Psssst-psssst-psssst."

MARTHA

Look, I was thinking about  
something. I was thinking about  
how I quit smoking...

Martha pulls a small dictaphone from her pocketbook.

MARTHA (cont'd)

The way I finally quit smoking was  
I got myself *bored* with it. And  
the way I did that is I wrote down  
every time I smoked a cigarette; I  
made a note of it, and I also  
described how much I enjoyed each  
and every cigarette. Each and  
every *puff*. And after I did that  
for a while, I really started seeing  
how I wasn't really even enjoying  
smoking. I broke it down, you know.

TRUDY

So you want me...

MARTHA

I want you to say into this tape  
recorder *whatever the voices tell*  
*you*. Every single thing. The  
tone of the voice, too. Describe  
it best you can - I know you're  
good with words. I'm asking you  
to try this. For a week, maybe  
more. If you start to get bored  
with them I think they'll leave  
you alone. Can you do that?

Trudy takes the dictaphone. She looks at Martha and smiles.

TRUDY

You know something. I gotta say I think this is a damn good idea. Better than anything some shrink would come up with. Because you know we'd be talkin' meds with one of those guys. Believe me I know.

MARTHA

Bring this back when you're ready.

TRUDY

Sounds like a plan.

Trudy gets up, starts heading for the door. Martha stands, too. Almost at the door, Trudy turns around. She walks quickly over to Martha and hugs her around the waist.

TRUDY (cont'd)

Thank you.

CLOSE-UP of Martha as she hugs back. Finally Trudy loosens her grasp and scurries out, the door slamming behind her.

EXT. MEETING HALL - NIGHT

Mel is waiting in the parking lot, his car running. He leans over and rolls down the passenger window when he sees Martha come out. His daughter, Robin, is in the back seat.

MEL

Well *hey there* Scoutmaster!

Martha squints, recognizes Mel.

MARTHA

Oh. Hello Mel.

MEL

Hello to *you*.

Martha, closer now, sees Robin.

MARTHA

Hi Robin, why I just saw you, didn't I!

ROBIN  
Hey Miss Wright!

MEL  
I came by to pick her up and  
I didn't see any other car in  
the lot...so...I wondered...

Mel leans over and opens the passenger side door.

MEL (cont'd)  
Maybe the scoutmaster needs a  
lift?

INT. MEL'S CAR - NIGHT

Martha is in the passenger seat, Robin still in the back.

MEL  
So Robin was telling me about  
this thing...that you need more  
adult volunteers for your Girl  
Scout activities? Something  
like that?

MARTHA  
Oh yes, well. Workin' on it...  
(sees them pass a street)  
Oh...that was a right back there.

MEL  
Maybe I could help. Maybe...

MARTHA  
Mel, you missed my street.

EXT. MOTEL / INT. MEL'S CAR - NIGHT

Mel pulls into the lot of the same motel as before.

MEL  
Martha, maybe you and I should  
have our own meeting. Who knows.  
I'm an accounts manager and  
sometimes when we have meetings  
and put our heads together the  
boys and I come up with *all* sorts

of solutions...

Martha is uncomfortable. Robin has no clue what's going on.

MARTHA

Well maybe that's a good idea.  
For some...other time...Mel. I  
think Robin here wants to start  
getting ready for bed, though.

ROBIN

I don't wanna go to bed!

MEL

You dooon't... Well maybe Daddy  
will let you stay up a little  
longer if you be a good patient  
little girl while Miss Wright  
and I have our meeting.

MARTHA

Mel...

Mel takes Martha's hand and puts it on his crotch.

MEL

In fact we can have the meeting  
right here if Miss Wright's good  
at giving meetings in cars. Do  
you give good meeting, Martha?

Martha pulls her hand away. She's trapped.

MARTHA

No, not in the car, Mel.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Mel is fucking Martha in the ass. She is pressed against  
the window (with only the light from the bathroom on. From  
her position, as she's getting humped, she can look down in  
the parking lot and see Robin waiting patiently in the car.

CUT TO the backseat and HOLD on Robin, sitting, oblivious.

Martha can be heard in a SOUND OVERLAP:

MARTHA (O-S)

But when I left the car here I know the odometer read 107 thousand and something miles. Something like that.

EXT. GAS STATION / INT. MARTHA'S CAR - DAY

Martha is in the driver's seat, Ray the mechanic is standing outside, leaning over and looking through the window. A small CRUCIFIX hangs from the rear-view mirror.

MARTHA (cont'd)

But it's up to over, like, 109 thousand now. What gives?

RAY

*Test drives*, Martha. I have to do test drives. Don't you know I have to do test drives to make sure everything's working okay?

MARTHA

Ray. *2000 miles* worth of test drives? Are you kidding me?

RAY

Now hold on, I think you're exaggerating here. I really don't think you had only 107 when you brought it in -

Looking past Ray, Martha sees a WOMAN walking buy holding onto a baby, cradling it lovingly in her arms.

RAY (cont'd)

I mean look at this ol' tank. This thing's lucky to have under two hundred thou.

MARTHA

Don't you *jot down* the mileage? When people bring their cars in isn't that the first thing you do...*jot down* the mileage?

RAY  
(shrugs)  
Sometimes.

MARTHA  
*Sometimes!*

RAY  
I'm sure you had over 108.  
Yeah. *Well* over.

Behind Ray, Martha notices the woman with the baby, walking past, suddenly *trip*. She drops the baby. She picks it up as if nothing's happened and keeps right on walking.

RAY (cont'd)  
I remember now. It wasn't any-  
where close to 107...

MARTHA  
(staring at Woman w/baby)  
I've gotta go. But Ray, I mean...  
*"test drives"*! This is ridiculous.

RAY  
You sure you don't want that new  
oil pan? It should arrive today-

MARTHA  
Forget it!

Furious, Martha pulls out. As she exits the gas station lot she tries to get a better look at the odd baby-Woman.

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - DAY

Martha is in her living room. Using a sticky roller she cleans off the lint from her uniform. When she finishes she places the roller in a drawer, then sits on the couch. HOLD for a long time. She just sits there, as if she is waiting for something to happen.

Through the window, Martha sees the mailman (FRANK) approaching. She opens the front door just as he's stepping onto the porch.

MARTHA

Hi, Frank.

The Mailman hands her the mail; she grabs it.

FRANK

Hi there, Martha. Boy you're pretty anxious for the mail!

MARTHA

Mmmm.

FRANK

You're always so cheerful. You slay me, Martha...have a good one...

MARTHA

Right. A "good one". Okay.

She slams the door closed. She starts looking anxiously through the mail; she sees an envelope that looks interesting. The return address reads:

Girl Scout Council of Greater New York  
PO Box 1555 Bank Street Station, Albany, N.Y. 12210

MARTHA

*It's about time.*

Martha opens the envelope and takes out a letter, begins to read it. We hear a MALE VOICE:

MALE VOICE (V-O)

Dear Ms. Wright: It has come to the attention of the Policing Committee of the Girl Scout Council of Greater New York that you are continuing to organize activities in your community. It is reported that you've been proclaiming said activities as official Girl Scout events, operating under the aegis of Troop number 185, New Lebanon Chapter, a troop that is no longer active.

INT. KITCHEN

Martha carries the letter in, picks up a book of matches, lights one, places the letter in the kitchen sink and sets fire to it. She watches it burn. During all this we CARRY OVER the letter narration:

MALE VOICE (V-O)

Please be advised that said activity is in no way sanctioned by the Girl Scout Council. Your continued organizational efforts are hereby in direct violation of Provisional

MALE VOICE (V-O cont'd)

Amendment 14 of the National Girl Scout Code as provided for by the Federal Government. If you do not cease and desist from all activities that you label in any way connected to, or in any way associated with the Girl Scouts of America, the Federal Marshall will be notified and you will be placed under arrest, to face a prison term of at least five years and/or a fine of at least \$100,000.

MARTHA

Yeah yeah yeah...Fuck you all.

MALE VOICE (V-O)

We also request that you immediately return your Girl Scout uniform to the above address, including the original receipt for the purchase of the uniform. You will be refunded in full for said purchase.

The last of the letter burns, balling up into a cinder.

HOLD ON CLOSE-UP of Martha watching, mesmerized, as the letter disappears. Then she washes it down the drain.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Martha is on the couch, re-watching Nell's video. She is eating from a pint of ice cream. We hear the tape:

NELL (on TV, O-S)  
Coo-kie.

INT. LTD - DAY

Martha is driving, dressed in an old business suit. The Girl Scout uniform is in a shopping bag on the other seat. She sees something ahead and begins to slow down.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Martha pulls her car over to the same bus stop where she'd gotten off the day before. She waits.

EXT. BUS STOP (LATER) - DAY

Martha looks up and sees the bus coming. She gets out of the car, walks across the street to meet the arriving bus.

When the door opens Martha lets the people off first, then still standing outside, regards the BUS DRIVER.

MARTHA

Is that Miss Percy woman riding today?

BUS DRIVER

Say what?

MARTHA

Can I take a look for--...You don't know Miss Percy? Black lady in her 60's, maybe 70's?

BUS DRIVER

Don't know who you're talking about, lady.

He looks into his rear view mirror so he can see everyone.

BUS DRIVER (cont'd)

No, nobody like that's on...

MARTHA

I can't take a look myself?

BUS DRIVER

This look like a fuckin' museum?

He shuts the door, Martha's nose nearly getting squished.

INT. LTD - DAY

Martha is driving again. She's in the left lane, behind a truck. She notices over the mudflaps of the truck the word "Grateful" painted to the left and the word "Dead" on the right, with arrows pointing in the respective directions.

Martha passes the truck on the right (the only lane open). As she does, the truck's horn honks so loud she's startled.

INT. MINI-MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

The parking lot is full as Martha pulls in. She drives down a row of parked cars, then notices in her rear-view mirror that a parked car she already passed is pulling out.

Martha stops, puts her car in reverse, then quickly backs into the spot after the person leaves. In doing that she has aced out another driver who was trying for the spot.

When this driver sees Martha take the spot he leaps out of his car and runs over to Martha. He's wearing dark sunglasses. He beelines to her window, starts pounding on it.

ANTI-SEMITE

You goddam Jew! Goddam fucking Jew in your Jew car! That spot was mine *you goddam Jew!*

Martha sits there, petrified, not saying a word. PASSERSBY notice this furious guy making a scene, but does nothing.

ANTI-SEMITE (cont'd)

That spot was mine bitch! You had your chance you fucking Jew bitch! *Get outta there now!*

Martha sits perfectly still. The guy continues pounding, now on the hood of the car. Martha keeps looking over at

the people passing by, as though expecting one of them to do or say something on her behalf.

But no one does anything; they watch the scene like it's a car accident. Martha turns towards the guy and screams out:

MARTHA  
I'M NOT JEWISH!

The guy ignores her, continues pounding and shouting invectives. Then gives her the finger. Finally he walks away, gets into his car and drives off. Martha notices that the guy's family is waiting in his car. She looks terrified.

She wraps the uniform around her like a security blanket.

MARTHA  
*Where's Jesus now?*

INT. DRY CLEANER - DAY

Martha walks in and has to wait because the CLERK is dealing with another customer. Martha notices that the customer is Fern, who has not seen Martha walk in yet.

When Fern turns to exit Martha makes with body language that shows she would like to talk to her, even in light of the recent flare-up. Fern sees this, makes very brief eye contact and ignores Martha. She walks out.

CLERK  
May I help you?

MARTHA  
(shaky voice)  
Uh. Yes. I'd like to have  
this dry cleaned, please.

She begins taking the uniform out of the bag.

EXT. MINI-MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

Martha scans the parking lot as she walks back to her car.

MARTHA  
Now I'm vulnerable...

EXT. BLIGHTED NEIGHBORHOOD (HOUSE #1) - DAY

MARTHA parks in front of this rather rundown house in South New Lebanon. She walks up to the front stoop, knocks. VERNA, a smudge-faced woman in her 40's, answers the door.

MARTHA

Hi Verna.

Without saying anything Verna goes away for a moment, then comes back carrying an envelope. She hands it to Martha, who tries to take it but Verna is reluctant to let it go. Finally Martha pulls it away, opens it, counts the money.

VERNA

You're going to *count* it? You're *actually* going to stand there and count it in front of me?

EXT. HOUSE #2 - DAY

Martha is walking up to the front door of another house. It's also a one story bungalow, in not very good condition.

There is a house very close to it, next door. On its front lawn a dog is tied to a post. It BARKS at Martha. Martha, seeming to recognize the dog, talks "back" to it.

MARTHA

Hey there Snowzer! How ya doin'?

The dog BARKS some more.

MARTHA (cont'd)

What's goin' on there Snowze?

A LITTLE GIRL talks to Martha from a window of that house.

LITTLE GIRL

Are you the one who always talks to Snowzer whenever you come this way collecting rent?

MARTHA

Why yes I do...Is that okay?

LITTLE GIRL

Don't do it. Cut it out. I don't want you talking to my dog.

Martha, visibly nonplussed, turns her attention back to the house she is visiting, knocks on the door.

FEMALE VOICE (O-S)

Who's there?

MARTHA

It's Martha.

Martha can hear a MALE and FEMALE voice. Pause. She continues knocking.

FEMALE VOICE (O-S)

Who's that you say?

MARTHA

Martha Wright. Is Ralph home?

FEMALE VOICE (O-S)

Not home.

MARTHA

Is that you Cara? Can I speak to you?

The door opens slightly. CARA, black and in her 40's, too, peers out, not opening the door any wider than necessary.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Hi Cara. I guess you know I'm here for the rent.

CARA

Ralph's not here. You have to come back later.

MARTHA

Not here? You know this is the third time I've been here Cara. Rent was due three weeks ago.

CARA

I said he's not here.

MARTHA

Look, Cara. No kidding. You tell Ralph I'm gonna have to collect soon or I'll have to take steps. Here. I'm gonna leave this with you.

(takes a form out)

It's not official...it's just to show you what an eviction notice looks like. That they really exist...

CARA

Uhh...that there eviction notice...you're saying that it's not official? It's not a real eviction notice in other words.

MARTHA

Well that's right. It's not a legal document I'm serving you.

CARA

It's just for show.

MARTHA

Okay, sure, it's just for show.

CARA

Well then how 'bout this: you can take that there eviction notice, fold it four ways and stick it where the moon don't shine.

Martha hears, coming from inside the house, footsteps running again, then the sound of the back door slamming shut. She tries to look inside the house past Cara, but Cara narrows the door opening even more. Martha tries to wedge the door open but she's not strong enough, and...

Cara slams the door closed. Martha stands there for a moment. She steps off the front stoop, then walks over to the side of the house, and slowly towards the back yard.

When she gets a few yards in she hears a scuffle, footsteps running again. She reaches the back yard just in time to see the figure of a man (RALPH) jumping over a wire fence, disappearing into the yard on the other side. Martha stands still. It's as though she's being watched.

EXT. HOUSE #3 - DAY

Martha parks the LTD, gets out, goes towards the front door.

INT. HOUSE #3 - DAY

GRACE (12 yrs old) watches from the window as Martha walks to the front door. A TV is on - a talk show. There is a huge pile of laundry on the living room floor. An upright piano is against a wall. Martha knocks, Grace opens the door.

MARTHA

Grace...

GRACE

Hi Miss Wright.

MARTHA

It's not the weekend. Is there any reason you aren't in school?

Grace shrugs.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Is your daddy home? I need to pick something up from him.

Grace shakes her head no.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Can I come in, Grace?

GRACE

I guess so.

Grace lets Martha in. She seems nervous.

MARTHA

It's good to see you, Grace.  
Doing laundry?

GRACE

Uh-huh...

Grace walks over to the pile, begins folding the clothes. Martha seems annoyed at the TV show. She recognizes it.

MARTHA

Can I shut that off, hon?

Grace shrugs. Martha walks into living room, shuts it off.

MARTHA (cont'd)

We miss you at the Scout meetings, Grace.

GRACE

I'm not allowed to go no more.

MARTHA

I know that.

GRACE

Daddy said I can go back if you lower the rent. He hates you. He says you exploit people.

MARTHA

Do you hate me too, Grace?

She doesn't answer, continues to fold clothes.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Didn't you enjoy being a scout?

GRACE

I'm not allowed to talk about it.

MARTHA

You used to play the piano for us so well. Remember? We miss that. We could've used you last night. We put on a play! And we could've really used your brilliant piano play-

Grace starts to cry slightly, trying to hide it. But it's impossible not to hear it. Martha goes over to Grace and,

bending down to comfort her, notices that Grace's bare feet are unusually red.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Grace. What's... What's with... your feet? Jesus, honey, what's going on?

Grace breaks down now, drops whatever clothes she's holding, turns around and hugs Martha, who holds her protectively. Grace, frightened, bawls hysterically in her arms.

GRACE

It's the piano!

MARTHA

What, honey? What about the piano?

GRACE

(continuing to sob)

Daddy...when he comes home... He makes me sit down at the piano. He takes out sheet music. He makes me sit down and play it. Music I've never seen before. And whenever I play a wrong note he tells me to stop and then he makes me stand up on the carpet. He ties my feet together. He takes this can of lighter fluid and he squirts it all around my feet. And then he lights the carpet with a match and he makes me stand there until the fire gets really close to my feet and I have to start screaming because it's too hot.

During this Martha looks over at the carpet near the upright piano. CUT TO her POV of little areas of burnt carpet, the fibers scraped off.

GRACE (cont'd)

Then he puts the fire out and he sits me back down at the piano and makes me start the music from the beginning of the piece. And when I play a wrong note he does the same thing all over again. And over and

over again until I play the whole  
piece from the beginning without  
playing a wrong note—

She stops. She's crying hard now. Martha is holding her.  
CUT TO: on the TV talk show a GUEST says to the HOST:

TALK SHOW GUEST (on TV)  
Where's Jesus now?

A car pulls up outside. Sound of car door slamming.

GRACE  
Oh god oh god oh god...

Grace pulls away from Martha. She forces herself to stop  
crying and resumes folding clothes.

GRACE (cont'd)  
(panicky)  
No I was kidding! Kidding!

The front door is pushed open. Grace's father, WEBB, storms  
in. Martha gets up from the floor.

WEBB  
Get the fuck out of here.

MARTHA  
I was just—

Webb reaches into his wallet, takes out a wad of bills and  
throws them at Martha, who bends down and starts picking  
them up.

MARTHA  
Webb. I'd like to talk about Grace.

He opens the front door all the way, looks at Martha again.

WEBB  
I have no idea how many tries  
it'll take until you actually do  
fly out the door but I think it'll  
be fun making you fly around in all  
directions. We can call it the Peter  
Pan game. Ready to play Peter Pan?

But Martha has gotten the point and is on her way out during this. Webb slams the door closed on her when she's out.

INT. LTD - DUSK

Martha shuts her car door. She sits there behind the wheel.

She sees: a man raking leaves. Another man, walking down the street, accidentally kicks some of the leaves the first man was raking back onto the area he just finished raking. When the first man sees this he takes his rake and intentionally reaches out to rake the second man's feet, causing him to stumble. The second man doubles back and kicks some more of the raked leaves back at the first man. Then both of them start shouting and pushing.

EXT. STREET / ICE CREAM TRUCK - DUSK

Martha gets an ice cream cone from a Good Humor Man. She walks over to her car, scarfing it down on the way.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Martha pulls to a stop in front of a church. Still eating the ice cream cone she gobbles up the rest quickly.

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOOTH

Martha is confessing to FATHER MOREL.

MARTHA

I feel terrible because then I shouted out *I'm not Jewish!* How awful. It wasn't the point. I was scared. It wasn't right for me to say that though. I mean, even if I'm not Jewish, saying that to make him less angry at me was, like, using my non-Jewishness to try to protect me but saying that was wrong. It

just seems very *wrong* somehow...

FATHER MOREL

Don't judge yourself so harshly. You were frightened. You said as much. A hostile stranger is pounding on your car, there's no one coming to your aid. Of course you were frightened. You needn't punish yourself for being human, my dear. Didn't you read about this on my website?

MARTHA

Really, Father Morel?

FATHER MOREL

The sin is with him, not you. I assure you.

Martha makes a quick sign of the cross.

MARTHA

Thank you. I feel better.

FATHER MOREL

And thank the Lord that this brute didn't become violent.

MARTHA

Yes. I do. Of course.

(pause)

There's something else, Father.

FATHER MOREL

Yes?

MARTHA

I committed adultery. With a married man. Again. Or whatever it is when I'm not married and he is. I get confused.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Martha, waiting, sees Father Morel exit the church.

MARTHA

Father Morel. I need to talk  
to you...

FATHER MOREL

Oh, Martha...is that you?

MARTHA

It's me. Please. If you have  
a little time, I-...Please...

Father Morel nods gently, motions for her to follow him.

INT. FATHER MOREL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Father Morel is booting up a new computer as he sits down  
behind a large wooden desk. There is an older, discarded  
computer piled near the door, the electrical cords wrapped  
around it. Martha sits across the desk from him, anxious.

FATHER MOREL

Do you have a website, Martha?

MARTHA

You mean, like...a kind of messy  
tangle of psychological problems?  
Like a web - a kind of spider web  
of extreme tension? It's more like  
I'm very confu-

FATHER MOREL

No I mean the computer type.

MARTHA

???

FATHER MOREL

A computer site. With your -  
with whatever you do. The  
Girl Scout thing. I mean...  
the Girl Scout activities.

MARTHA

Is that a "w-w-w" thing?

FATHER MOREL

Of course. Are you living  
in the dark ages?

Long awkward pause. Bewilderment between the two of them.

MARTHA

How does someone know if they're  
wasting their life? That is my  
question for you. Or...if you  
have to ask does that mean you  
must be wasting it? Or...I mean,  
if you aren't wasting it would the  
question just never occur to you?

FATHER MOREL

No one can answer that. What is  
waste? Nobody's life is a Frank  
Capra movie. I'll tell you some-  
thing between you and me...and I  
want you to keep this mum...

MARTHA

I promise.

FATHER MOREL

Because this could get me defrocked  
quicker than you can say pederast...

MARTHA

Really I promise.

FATHER MOREL

Well I *used* to believe suicide was  
a mortal sin. That's church doctrine  
and it basically aligns with what  
our culture reinforces. Now I just  
think that was all part of the  
control wing of the church. You gotta  
have followers and, just like the  
corporate society, you gotta have  
consumers. So of course you're gonna  
scare people into thinking they'll  
suffer eternal damnation if they off  
themselves. Otherwise when things  
got tough there wouldn't be anyone

left to control and exploit.

MARTHA

No. There wouldn't be.

FATHER MOREL

This New Lebanon gig is good but I'd like to get myself on the map by coming out one day and well... of course not *advocating* suicide but definitely not touting the whole party line about it being a mortal sin. I think rape is much worse.

MARTHA

I see you've thought about this.

FATHER MOREL

In fact that's the name of my website. "[www.mysteriousanswers.com](http://www.mysteriousanswers.com)". You wanna see? I've just had the whole thing redone. Do you have a God concept, Martha? Because that's all I need to know to tell you what part of my website to explore. If you don't, that's a whole 'nother window.

MARTHA

I guess...these are really the days of computers, aren't they?

FATHER MOREL

Yes. Yes, goddamit.

(long pause)

Oh yes. You should read Roger Penrose. Science meets faith! So whose life's a-wastin'? Not yours? I didn't mean to sound flip before. Especially if you were talking about yours...I'm assuming you're concerned about one of your little scouts? Did you tell me your God concept?

Another long pause. Martha knows he can't help her.

MARTHA

(indicates discarded computer)  
So are you throwing that out?

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Father Morel is installing his old computer in her living room. He's just finished making the last wire connection.

FATHER MOREL  
Now shove in your phone line...

He inserts jack, turns it on. It makes booting-up noises.

FATHER MOREL (cont'd)  
In case you...I've had a Linksys  
FATHER MOREL (cont'd)  
wireless system for about three  
years now, and have had very little  
trouble with it. It was pretty easy  
to set up and it's been very mobile.  
It seems to me that if it ever starts  
acting up on you, the best cure is to  
unplug it, then plug it back in. That  
usually gets everything working again.

MARTHA  
Uh. What are you talking about?

FATHER MOREL  
Once my router went bad, and I was  
thinking bad, bad thoughts about our  
internet provider. Bought a new  
router, and ouile', back in business!

And on the screen his screensaver comes on - a naked woman,  
a la Playboy centerfold. Father Morel looks mortified.

MARTHA  
What a beautiful girl! How did  
that get on there, Father?

FATHER MOREL  
I don't know. Sometimes ya gotta  
watch these computers, they do all  
sorts of weird things that you have  
no control over. Probably a virus.

Father Morel changes the screen wallpaper quickly, and starts fiddling with the computer.

FATHER MOREL

You promise you're not gonna spill about my suicide opinion? It's like saying the pill is OK. I could really get in trouble for that. It's sacrilege.

Martha nods.

FATHER MOREL (cont'd)

You'll never be the same now that I'm showing you how to use a computer. You know that, don't

FATHER MOREL (cont'd)

you? I've ruined you.

He gets up and starts heading for the door, walking backwards, stumbling over furniture as he finally grabs the doorknob.

MARTHA

Good night, Father.

FATHER MOREL

Forgive me!

Martha stands there as she watches Father Morel throw the components in his back seat, get in his car and drive away. Pause. Martha looks up at the night sky, at the stars.

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE (LATER) - NIGHT

Martha is sitting on the couch. Silence. She just stares into empty space, as though she is waiting for something to happen.

INT. CLOSET - NIGHT

Martha goes back to the shelf with the videotapes stacked up. She takes another one off the shelf. Looks at the label: NELL MEMORIZES WILLIAM BLAKE - SONGS OF INNOCENCE

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE (EVEN LATER) - NIGHT

Martha is watching the video. Mostly we stay on her face, with occasional cutting to the TV where again we see Nell, older than before, reciting:

NELL (on TV)  
 In futurity I prophetic see  
 That the earth from sleep  
 Grave the sentence deep  
 Shall arise and seek  
 For her maker meek  
 And the desert wild  
 Become a garden mild  
 (pause)  
 I forgot the rest.

BEN'S VOICE (O-S, on TV)  
 That's okay darlin'. That was  
 beautiful. That was great.  
 We'll show Mommy.

The screen goes to black. Martha sits there staring at it. Then the screen goes to static. Martha reaches for the phone, dials a number. We hear the same voice - Nell's voice - answer the phone:

NELL (on phone)  
 Burke residence.

Martha cannot bring herself to say anything.

NELL (on phone, cont'd)  
 Hello?

Another hesitation. Finally she hangs up. She goes to the computer. There are a bunch of "desktop" icons that Father Morel had left on the screen. One of them says "Shortcut to Heaven". Curious, she clicks on it.

The screen fills with a video image of a monk pouring gasoline all over himself, then immolating himself. His expression remains calm, even blissful. When it ends Martha begins to play it again. The phone RINGS, startling Martha. She gets up, answers.

MARTHA  
 Hello?...Why Me!...

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Martha and Mel are fucking. Mel comes.

INT. MOTEL ROOM (LATER) - NIGHT

Martha is almost finished getting dressed while Mel is taking a shower. We can hear his voice from the bathroom.

MEL (O-S)

I tried going with a whore but  
...no *warmth*. I couldn't even  
get hard. I want you to know  
how much I appreciate this.

Martha walks over to the window. Looks out. She sees:  
Walking along the road that the motel is on is: Miss Percy,  
from the bus, barely illuminated by the street lamp.

In the bathroom Mel gets out of the shower, begins drying  
himself off with a towel. He just keeps right on talking:

MEL (O-S)

My boss said "I'll let you do  
the spread sheets today." I'll  
"let you." Don't you hate it  
when people give you orders but  
they put it that way? I'll "let"  
you. Bunch of crap.

He comes out of the bathroom: Martha has flown the coop.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Martha slams the door of the LTD and starts it up. She  
puts on headlights and pulls out, headed in the direction  
she saw Miss Percy walking from the motel room window.

INT. LTD - NIGHT

Martha is driving, peering out the front window trying to  
spot Miss Percy when, suddenly, she hears SIRENS. She

looks in her rear-view mirror: Police cars are gaining, lights flashing - trying to get her to pull over.

She does pull over. One of the police cars screeches to a stop on the shoulder in front of her. Another, behind. TWO MEN dressed in black get out of the car behind her. One of them is carrying a rifle. The other approaches her. She rolls down her window. The man takes out a badge.

DETECTIVE JAMES

Martha Wright?

MARTHA

Yes.

DETECTIVE JAMES

M'am, I'm Detective James; we'd like you to come with us please.

INT. GOVERNMENT OFFICE, NEW LEBANON - NIGHT

Martha sits waiting alone in a blank-walled room. DETECTIVE JAMES enters, followed by two other Marshalls.

DETECTIVE JAMES

Ms. Wright, we're Federal Marshalls.

MARTHA

You're with the FBI?

DETECTIVE JAMES

That's right. Ms. Wright, you are not under arrest. But I have to ask you a few questions. You don't have to answer them but if you refuse, we will *certainly* be able to secure an arrest warrant, quickly.

MARTHA

Well what is it?

DETECTIVE JAMES

A few days ago there was a truck hijacking in Pennsylvania, out on highway 80, the interstate. Over \$200,000 worth of high quality furs was removed from this truck. They haven't been retrieved. I'm

heading the investigation.

MARTHA

Uh-huh.

DETECTIVE JAMES

Ms. Wright, we have a witness who saw the license plate of the car. He I.D.'d the vehicle as yours. The license plate number is yours.

He studies Martha's reaction. She just looks surprised.

DETECTIVE JAMES (cont'd)

Now why do you suppose that is?

MARTHA

Is that it?

DETECTIVE JAMES

"Is that it"?

MARTHA

This has nothing to do with the Girl Scouts?

DETECTIVE JAMES

The *what*?

MARTHA

When did this happen?

DETECTIVE JAMES

It happened two days ago. What was that about the Girl Scouts, Ms. Wright? The *Girl Scouts*?

MARTHA

Oh, nothing. For a minute I just thought...

Martha starts to look relieved. She thinks, puts it together, realizing it must have been Ray the mechanic.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Uh...wow...a truck hijacking! Why would anyone want to do that?

Detective James looks over at the other Federal Marshalls.

DETECTIVE JAMES

For money, Ms. Wright. It's called grand theft.

MARTHA

Yes. Of course. Well. I didn't do it. I mean...

(realizing enormity of charge)  
I didn't do it! Are you *kidding*?

DETECTIVE JAMES

Uh-huh. Well, was someone else using your car that day? Was there someone else who you lent your car to?

MARTHA

I didn't lend my car to anybody. Is it possible that the witness got the plate number *wrong*?

DETECTIVE JAMES

So you're saying it's just not possible that someone else could have had your car that day.

MARTHA

Well I sure didn't *lend* it to anybody, I can tell you that.

The interrogation comes to a sudden standstill as the Marshalls look at each other, not sure of Martha's innocence.

EXT. PARKING LOT, GOVERNMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Detective James is walking Martha to her car. He reaches into his pocket, takes out his card, hands it to her.

DETECTIVE JAMES

Don't leave town, Ms. Wright.  
Just to be on the safe side.

MARTHA

Well I hope you find the furs.

DETECTIVE JAMES

We will. We're following up a few other leads. Suspects...

MARTHA

(getting into car)

You guys should go after some *criminal* type, not me!

DETECTIVE JAMES

You're kind of old for the Girl Scouts, aren't you?

Martha ignores, starts the engine, angry at this comment.

DETECTIVE JAMES (cont'd)

Anyway don't leave town, Ms.-

MARTHA

I heard you the first time.

She puts the car in reverse and pulls out.

INT. LTD - NIGHT

Martha is driving home. On the dashboard, we see her "oil" light come on, red. She notices it, doesn't want to deal. She bangs on it a couple of times. It goes out.

EXT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Martha pulls into her driveway.

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Martha is sitting up in bed reading the "Ray Kroc Story - The Father of McDonalds."

MARTHA

(reading aloud)

"The successful businessmen will get themselves world recognition.

They will rise above the water table of mediocrity by not only meeting world records, but by creating new ones. They will raise the bar. *They will stop at nothing...*"

Martha flips through the book, stops again, reads:

MARTHA (cont'd)

"First, I made a list. Ten things I didn't like about myself. I was completely honest. It wasn't easy."

She presses the book to her breast, eyes shut, thinking...

INT. LTD - NIGHT

Martha sits in her car, in the middle of the night, the SOUND of the crickets outside. She looks at the odometer. In one hand she holds Detective James' card. In the other she's cradling the crucifix that hangs from the mirror. She is deep in thought...

CUT TO WIDER SHOT of:

EXT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Martha in the car, in front of her house in the wee hours. In the dim light we can see her slump over onto the seat.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Martha, who has fallen asleep in her car, gets out of the LTD groggy-eyed and drags herself into the house.

INT. MARTHA'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Martha is sitting at the dining room table, pen in hand, a piece of paper on the table in front of her. A cup of hot coffee is on the table in front of her. She takes a sip.

Martha has just finished compiling a list. She takes a deep breath, looks down at her list.

MARTHA

A Girl Scout is organized.

CUT TO a CLOSE-UP of the list:

- (1) Illegal Girl Scout meetings.
- (2) Affair with married man
- (3) Hated by tenants
- (4) Wrecked marriage
- (5) No friends
- (6) Loss of faith
- (7) Cats hate me

She scans down the list with her eyes. She starts doodling madly over the list. She is doodling what appears to be a giant cookie. She stops herself...

She goes over to her phone, pulls out the business card for the service station stuck behind it, dials.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Hello, this is Martha Wright.  
Is Ray there? Yes I'd like to  
speak to him please. (pause)  
Hi Ray. It's me. Martha Wright.  
With the LTD. With the LTD with  
2000 more miles on the odometer  
than there should be? I think  
you may have to come over to my  
house. In fact I'm sure of it.  
Or I'll have to call Detective  
James, you see.

INT. DRY CLEANER - DAY

Martha picks up her freshly dry-cleaned Girl Scout uniform.

VENDOR

Receipt?

Martha shakes her head, leaves with the bagged uniform.

INT. GIRL SCOUT MEETING HALL - DAY

Martha, wearing the clean uniform, is heading another meeting of the Scouts. Girls from the last meeting are there.

MARTHA

All right listen up. We're gonna go out and do some good!

Some of the girls cheer, say "Yeah"; "All right", etc.

MARTHA (cont'd)

And I have a plan! By God, we're putting ourselves on the map!

More scattered cheers.

HARRIET

Hospice volunteer work!

MARTHA

No!

WENDY

Witnesses to civil ceremony marriages!

MARTHA

Wrong!

EDWINA

Used book fair!

Martha opens up the piece of paper she has taken out of her pocketbook so it faces the girls. It is the paper on which she'd written her list and on which she'd started doodling:

It is a picture of a giant chocolate chip cookie. We can make out the words in the list beneath the crudely drawn chips. Martha holds the drawing up proudly, as if she is holding the key to the secrets of the universe:

MARTHA

*The biggest Girl Scout cookie sale  
of ALL TIME!!!*

No reaction from the girls, just some puzzled looks.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Don't you see? We can't miss!  
It came to me...That's what  
people want really from Girl Scouts.  
So that's what we're gonna give  
'em! But it'll be this great,  
like, ironic statement.

HARRIET

Ironic?

MARTHA

We'll sell so many cookies that  
we'll break world records, and  
then we'll have to be recognized!  
Then, mark my words, those sorely  
needed adult volunteers will show  
up in droves - all these women  
wanting to be part of this news-  
making Girl Scout Troop. Troop  
185! The state will have to give  
us an official charter and then,  
finally, we can move on to bigger  
and better things. Work within  
the system! Stuff like...like  
what you said before, Harriet...  
What did you say before?

HARRIET

Hospice volunteer work.

MARTHA

Yeah, yeah... Stuff like that!

Theresa, in front row, squints as she looks at the drawing.

THERESA

What are all those words inside  
the cookie? See what I mean?

MARTHA

Huh?

(looks at doodle)

Those...are the ingredients that  
go into chocolate chip cookies.

Martha quickly crumples the paper.

EDWINA

You sure about this Miss Wright?  
I mean, to even get the boxes of  
Girl Scout cookies so that we can  
then go out and sell them we have  
to already have the state recogni-  
tion, and since we don't now... I  
mean... How are we gonna get the  
cookies. Do we have to bake them  
ourselves? Do you know what that  
will cost? All the *ingredients*?

MARTHA

"Bake them ourselves"...nonsense!  
No... That's the best part! I'm  
arranging it right now! I'm  
arranging it so we'll be so stocked

MARTHA (cont'd)

up on cookies we won't even know  
where to put 'em all! Patience!

EXT. TRUCK STOP, NEW JERSEY INTERSTATE / INT. LTD - NIGHT

Martha is parked, waiting behind the wheel of her car. A  
U-Haul mini-trailer is now attached to it.

Ray comes out of the truck stop, gets into passenger side.

RAY

All right all right...

MARTHA

Jesus, Ray, you were in there  
over an hour.

RAY

What do you expect? What exact-  
ly did you expect me to do, stand  
up on a stool and yell out *Which*  
*one of you truckers is freighting*  
*cookies? I need to know because,*  
*well, we wanna hijack your truck*  
*a little ways down the interstate*

*and I really don't have the time to cozy up to all of you and get you to confiding in me... Is that what you thought?*

MARTHA

Look don't get fresh with me you fucking felon. You get fresh with me and remember I'll take you down right along with me, buster-

RAY

All *right*, all right.....

MARTHA

So? You gonna tell me what you found out in there or what?

RAY

I got to talking to this one guy.

RAY (cont'd)

He's freighting for Nabisco. He's heading north on 287 for a while, then east on 87 on his way to Allentown...

MARTHA

*East?* Shit. That means when we're done we'll have to double back... Couldn't you have found some guy who's heading up New York state?

RAY

Martha. Are you kidding me? We're goddam lucky to've found a guy who's freighting cookies at all, man. And anyway it's better to do it, y'know, far from home...

MARTHA

I just hope it doesn't get too humid. I hate driving long distances when it's so humid. I *would've* had the air conditioning repaired if your goddam garage wasn't gonna charge me an arm and a leg for it.

RAY  
 (patience wearing thin)  
 Yeah...  
 (sees TRUCKER leaving  
 truck stop)  
 Him. That's the guy.

Martha looks, sees the Trucker. A big, beer-bellied guy.  
 He's walking towards an eighteen wheeler.

MARTHA  
 Jesus. What a slob.

RAY  
 Martha...

MARTHA  
 No, I mean it.  
 (turns to Ray)  
 You know, I instruct my girls on  
 MARTHA (cont'd)  
 proper diet. And the first thing  
 I say is *no fried foods*. No way.

EXT. NEW JERSEY INTERSTATE / INT. LTD - DUSK

Martha is driving right behind the truck.

RAY  
 Stay a few car lengths behind him  
 until we make our move. Fall back  
 a little, Martha...

MARTHA  
 Oh fine...

She slows down, letting cars pass her.

MARTHA (cont'd)  
 But if one of the people in one  
 of these cars has the same idea  
 and gets to this guy first, I  
 swear I'll wring your neck Ray.

RAY  
 I wouldn't worry about that.

MARTHA

Well I don't have the luxury of not worrying. This is my baby. Sure, it's no skin off your nose if I don't get back to New Lebanon with a few hundred thousand cookies. No skin off your nose at all. I'm the one here who cares about Troop 185. You're just another asshole.

(as they pass a farmhouse)

Ooh! Look at the color of that barn! Now *that* is charming!

Ray is visibly getting increasingly impatient with Martha.

EXT. INTERSTATE / INT. LTD (LATER) - NIGHT

The lights of the truck can be seen a few car lengths in front of them. A turn-off ramp is coming up - a sign reading Route 87 west. Truck Route. The truck goes that way.

RAY

Good. A few miles up there's a weigh station. Now remember... don't pull into the weigh station.

MARTHA

Right. I know.

RAY

Stop the car right at its entrance, I'll get out, then you drive up to just beyond it and watch for the truck coming out. And just stay with it until I get him to stop.

MARTHA

All *right*.

(pause)

So what kind of cookies is this guy carrying anyway?

RAY

Huh?

MARTHA

Cookies, Ray. What kind exactly?

RAY

Whaddaya mean *what kind*? They're cookies, a whole goddam truckful.

Martha looks over at him, frowns.

MARTHA

Ray, are you a complete moron?

Ray takes a revolver out of his pocket. Checks it, then sticks it back in his pants.

MARTHA (cont'd)

There are chocolate mints, there are shortbread cookies. There are sugar cookies, Ray, chocolate chip, oatmeal raisin, ginger spice...this

MARTHA (cont'd)

is something I don't actually have to tell you, is it?

RAY

They're Nabisco cookies, Martha. I don't know what kind exactly. All kinds I guess. Who cares?

MARTHA

Precisely my point! Exactly! Who cares? *I do! I care!* And as usual I'm the only one! The only goddam one who cares!

Ray whacks Martha on the side of her head with the gun. Her nose starts bleeding.

RAY

Would you *SHUT THE FUCK UP!!!*

Martha does, indeed, shut up. She feels the blood coming down her face. And she suddenly, remarkably, goes into a higher pitch, internally, than even before. *Focussed.*

RAY (cont'd)

All right, pull over. Let's do it.

Martha begins pulling the car over to the shoulder, near the weigh station entrance.

CUT TO exterior shot of the LTD stopping at the shoulder. The car stopped, Ray gets out, turns to face Martha as he leans over into the passenger side window:

RAY

I'll stop him about two miles up.  
*Be there!*

Martha nods, her expression frozen. Ray leaves. He walks into the weigh station area, adjusting his shirt so it hides the gun in his trousers.

EXT. WEIGH STATION AREA - NIGHT

Ray loiters, pretends he's a trucker. He watches and waits for the trucker they've been following to exit his truck.

EXT. LTD - NIGHT

Martha, on automatic pilot, pulls the car onto the highway.

EXT. WEIGH STATION / INT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

The trucker finally gets out. He lights a cigarette. He's on the driver side. Ray makes sure no one's looking, then quickly goes to the passenger side, steps onto the little metal staircase and pulls open the passenger side door. Ray closes the door and climbs behind the passenger seat, squatting way down and curling up as much as possible.

EXT. INTERSTATE (FARTHER UP) - NIGHT

Martha drives past the weigh station, then again pulls the car to a stop on the shoulder and waits. She looks at the crucifix dangling from the rear-view mirror. She waits.

EXT. WEIGH STATION

The trucker finishes his cigarette, douses it. He signs a document in front of the WEIGH STATION OFFICER, then climbs

back into the truck. He starts the engine and begins pulling out of the weigh station.

EXT. INTERSTATE / INT. LTD - NIGHT

The truck now coming onto the interstate, begins picking up speed. Martha is pulled onto the shoulder just beyond the weigh station feed. When the truck passes her she puts the car in gear.

The little red "oil" warning light comes back on. Martha doesn't notice it. She pulls onto the highway, following the truck closely.

EXT. INTERSTATE, FARTHER UP / INT. LTD - NIGHT

The truck starts slowing down, pulling onto the shoulder. Martha does the same. She stops the car, puts it in neutral, leaves the motor running.  
We hear a MUFFLED PISTOL REPORT.

She sees Ray jump out of the truck. He's sticking the gun back into his trousers and carrying a set of keys with his other hand. Martha gets out of the LTD and runs over to the back of the truck.

MARTHA

What was that sound?

RAY

What do you think. Let's go,  
we've got work to do.

Ray's fidgety, but he finds the right key and unlocks the back of the truck. Ray throws open the heavy door. Inside are stacks of boxes.

MARTHA

I heard a shot.

Ray grabs Martha by the scruff of her uniform's collar:

RAY

*Listen* you scrawny 4-H cunt...  
You want to get cold cocked again?

I'm running things now. You think you got something on me? Is that what you think? *Grand theft?*

He pulls her face so it is right up against his.

RAY (cont'd)

Well now you're an accessory to a whole new ball of wax babe...okay? Just a little insurance for me, got it? Because if you think you can get me in trouble for grand theft just try seeing what they can do to you for accessory to murder one.

He releases her.

RAY (cont'd)

Now load!

Martha, processing all this, starts getting very nervous. She stands there, starting to shake. Ray has already taken a pile of boxes out and begins heading for the U-Haul. He screams back at her:

RAY (cont'd)

I said *load!*

Martha regains her composure. She grabs a box, lifts it...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LTD - NIGHT

The radio is off. Ray is driving. Martha is staring out the window, in a fog. Ray smiles.

RAY

What better alibi than a Girl Scout? Anybody asks you about two days ago you say you were with me. Make it sound like we're fucking but you're too embarrassed to admit it. Make it real melodramatic. Yeah. I was over at your house fucking you all day on the sixteenth, you got that? Truth is I'd kind've enjoy a little Girl Scout pussy-

Ray notices the red oil light flashing

RAY (cont'd)  
 Jesus, Martha. Your oil. You  
 never got that fixed? *Brilliant...*

EXT. HIGHWAY SERVICE STATION / INT. LTD - NIGHT

The LTD is parked. Ray starts filling the engine with oil. Martha gets out of the car and heads for the rest room, on the side of the building.

INT. REST ROOM

Martha enters, begins washing her face in a filthy, cracked and grease-stained sink. Someone is in the stall. At that person's feet there sits a transistor radio - on *LOUD* - and a country music song is being broadcast with a refrain that goes: "*Where is Jesus?*" It's getting to Martha. She says towards the stall door:

MARTHA  
 Could you please shut that off?

The voice of Miss Percy, the woman from the bus, is heard:

MISS PERCY  
 (from inside stall)  
 That you, child?

Martha recognizes the voice. She is suddenly very alert.

MARTHA  
 Miss Percy?

MISS PERCY  
 (laughing)  
 Too late now, ain't it? But  
 I can still help.

Martha can see Miss Percy reach down and put the volume on the transistor radio even higher. [Miss Percy's dialogue will be increasingly harder to hear throughout scene.]

MARTHA

Too late? Why too late? I  
still have my scouts...

MISS PERCY

What if your daughter can see  
you now...All dirtied up in  
a gas station ladies room  
talkin' to people in the crapper?

Miss Percy turns the radio higher. Martha speaks louder.

MARTHA

How do you know about her? I  
wanna see you, open up!

Martha grabs the door of the stall, shakes it but no dice.

MISS PERCY

Remember what I said about the  
guinea pig! When you bury it!

MARTHA

No! No I don't know what you're  
talking about! I'm not burying  
no guinea pig. What do you mean?

Miss Percy turns the radio even higher. Martha shouts:

MARTHA (cont'd)

Turn that off! Lemme see you! I  
don't have no guinea pig! *I DON'T  
HAVE NO GUINEA PIG!*

She keeps trying to get into the stall. Miss Percy laughs.

MISS PERCY

Those eyes! Facin' the earth!

MARTHA

*I'M NOT BURYING NO GUINEA PIG!  
I'M MARTHA C. WRIGHT! I'M WITH  
THE GIRL SCOUTS OF AMERICA!!!*

At which point the door is swiftly swung open by Ray  
(instantly the music from the transistor radio stops, who  
has obviously heard her screaming. He shoots her a dirty  
look.

RAY  
Yeah. Beautiful.

EXT. SERVICE STATION - NIGHT

Ray grabs Martha and walks her angrily to the driver's side. He puts his mouth right up to her ear.

RAY  
OK you're driving. It'll keep  
you focussed.

He throws her into the car, then gets in on the other side.

INT. LTD - NIGHT

RAY  
Let's go, we'll do it down the  
road a little. I don't wanna do  
it here. It's not fun here anymore.  
She starts the engine, begins pulling onto the highway.

EXT. HIGHWAY / INT. LTD - NIGHT

The radio is tuned to HEAVY METAL MUSIC.

RAY  
(pointing out window)  
All right, here. Pull over.

Martha slows the car, stops on the shoulder. She turns the music on even louder, which annoys Ray but he says nothing.

RAY (cont'd)  
You got a rag in the trunk?

MARTHA  
A rag?

RAY  
Look, just--. Oh for chrissake.

Ray reaches over and tears off a hunk of Martha's uniform. He takes the torn piece of uniform and gets out of the car.

EXT. HIGHWAY / INT. LTD (LATER) - NIGHT

Ray is under the car, plugging up the oil pan hole. He manages to stuff the piece of uniform neatly into the hole. But as the car is still running, he is coughing from the exhaust fumes. He calls out:

RAY  
Shut the engine off!

In the car, Martha has had the car in "Drive", with her foot pressed on the brake.

RAY (cont'd)  
*Martha, shut off the engine!*

Ray's voice is almost impossible to hear over the radio.

MARTHA  
What?  
RAY  
SHUT. OFF. THE. ENGINE!!!!

Martha, panicky and unable to understand, lets her foot off the brake. The car rolls forward. It bounces up and down as the back tire runs over Ray, crushing him under the car.

RAY  
*Aaaaaaagghhhhhh!*

Martha jolts into a kind of semi-awareness of what might have just happened. Even more panicked she throws the car into reverse, as if to make up for her mistake.

The car rolls backwards, again bouncing up and down.

She slams on the brake, throws the car in neutral and finally shuts off the engine. Silence. Martha gets out of the car. She walks around to the front and sees Ray's body, his neck squashed. Dead. She seems to freeze in that spot forever.

On the interstate, cars go by, oblivious.

Martha goes back inside the car and shuts the radio off.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Martha grabs Ray's gun and tucks it into a pocket of her torn uniform. She starts dragging Ray's body into the woods. Cars continue to whiz past, blocked by trees.

She pulls him farther into the woods. When Martha cannot drag him another inch she drops to her knees, exhausted.

She looks down at Ray, who is on his back. His eyes are bulging out of his head. Martha looks at this. Seems to remember something someone recently instructed her. She grabs a stick and digs two little holes in the ground.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The wee hours. The SOUND of CRICKETS. The LTD and the U-Haul are parked in front of the house. Martha is taking the last of the boxes out of the U-Haul. She sets it down, closes and locks it. She carries the box into the house.

Next, Martha pulls the crumpled piece of paper she'd earlier shown the Girl Scouts out of her uniform pocket. She sets it on the dining room table. She flattens the paper out, picks up a pen and adds to the bottom:

- (8) Accessory to grand theft
- (9) Accessory to murder

Martha goes to the computer. She finds the "Ask Jeeves" website and types in the question: "What is it called when you kill somebody but you didn't intend to kill somebody?" She clicks "Enter" and a bunch of cites with the word "Manslaughter" come up on her screen. She goes back to the dining room table and adds:

- (10) Manslaughter

Martha goes over to the living room couch, looks out at the vast expanse of boxes in her living room. She slumps over and falls asleep.

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - DAY

Martha is awakened by the sound of mail coming through her mail slot (which means it's pretty late in the day). She looks around and sees that there they still are: the boxes. She wipes sleep from her eyes and gets up off the couch.

She goes over to the mail: One of the items is a package. She opens it: It's an audio tape from Trudy, with a note:

"Side A: VOICES IN MY HEAD (side B is Bjork. Ignore.)" -T

Martha puts the tape on the table next to her updated list.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Martha comes out of the shower, begins drying herself.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE-UP of Martha's hand ripping open one of the boxes. Inside, instead of cookies there are nothing but a bunch of *chilling sleeves* (padded, insulated tubes that wrap around wine bottles in order to keep it chilled while dining).

CUT TO a wide shot; we see that the living room is filled with identical boxes. Martha, in her bathrobe, pulls one chilling sleeve after another out of this first box. She holds them up. Confused. Disappointed. Horrified.

She rips into another box. More chilling sleeves. QUICK CUTS of Martha in increasingly advanced stages of opening boxes: Nothing but box after box of chilling sleeves.

INT. U-HAUL OFFICE - DAY

Martha is handing her rental agreement to RHODA (wearing a nametag), standing behind a counter. There is a little boy MATTHEW (7), Rhoda's son, who is haranguing his mother, grabbing her pants leg and whining a lot and just generally trying to get her attention. He's eating a candy bar.

Rhoda tries to ignore her son and just glances at the form, been through this a million times:

RHODA

Was everything satisfactory?

MARTHA

Yes.

RHODA

Would you be interested in a U-Haul credit card? We're offering 8.9% and 0% on balance Transfers with a minimum of a \$100 transfer; no fee.

Martha nods.

RHODA (cont'd)

Fill this out. I'll be right Back, I just have to check for Damage on the trailer.

Rhoda hands Martha a clipboard with a credit card Application form on it, a pen chained to the top. Martha takes it.

Martha sits down on a bench seat next to a large plate glass window through which we can see Rhoda, with Matthew tagging along after her, giving the trailer the once-over. Martha fills out the form. Through the window behind her we can see, as Rhoda inspects and unhitches the trailer, her little son Matthew inspecting Martha's car, checking out the tires.

At one point Matthew, bending down and looking at one of the tires, reaches towards it and pulls something out. His exclamation is audible through the window. (NOTE: important that there's a muted quality to what we overhear.)

MATTHEW

A tooth! I found a tooth!

Matthew tries approaching Rhoda with his discovery but Rhoda can't be bothered; she's too busy unhitching the trailer.

MATTHEW

But Mom! It's a real tooth! In That lady's tire! Look!

RHODA

Matthew, I'm busy. Go practice  
Your percussion.

MATTHEW

But--

RHODA

CUT IT OUT! NOW!

Matthew runs into the main office. He stands right in front of Martha, holding the tooth as if confronting her. Martha keeps filling out the credit card application, ignoring Matthew.

MATTHEW

Can I keep it?

MARTHA

I need to fill this out sonny.

Matthew pockets the tooth. He walks sullenly back, behind the counter. He shrugs, then goes to a specific shelf behind the counter and picks up a pair of CASTANETS. He begins playing them.

HOLD for a bit on the very odd juxtaposition of Martha filling out a credit card application and Matthew, on the other side of the counter, playing the castanets - as behind all of this, outside, Rhoda finishes unhitching the trailer and comes back in.

RHODA

You're still filling that out?

Rhoda turns around and looks at Matthew admonishingly.

RHODA (cont'd)

Can it.

Matthew stops. Awkward pause as Martha sits there, finishing the application. She brings it up to the counter. There is a strange exchange of glances between her and the kid as Rhoda finishes the paperwork on the U-Haul return.

RHODA (cont'd)

Keep it on the original card?

MARTHA

Yes.

RHODA

(referring to application)

Why do you need this one then?

Martha doesn't know how to react. What is Rhoda saying?

MARTHA

Can I go now?

EXT. MINI- MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

Martha is waiting for a parking spot. She sees someone pulling out of the spot, but instead of going for it she waits until she sees someone else going for it. Then she quickly pulls into it from her side, quite obviously - intentionally - aceing out the other person.

When she's pulled in she just sits behind the wheel and rolls down her window, as if she's expecting a major confrontation. Instead the WOMAN in the other car just drives past, giving Martha a weird look.

Martha just sits there for several more moments, then pulls out of the lot. Then she does *exactly the same thing* again at another parking spot. This time the MAN she aces out gives her the finger as he drives off.

Again Martha just waits in the car. She stares at a MOTHER and DAUGHTER whom the mother lifts onto a musical mechanical horse. The mother puts a quarter in the horse, which plays a little song as it rocks back and forth. The song is "It's a Small World After All". The little girl wears a smile as she enjoys the ride.

INT. GIRL SCOUT MEETING HALL - NIGHT

Martha stands in front of the Girl Scouts. There are significantly fewer scouts in attendance, 1/3 of the original twenty-one. The room is mostly empty seats.

MARTHA

Okay...okay, okay, okay...

Samantha raises her hand but Martha doesn't even notice.

MARTHA (cont'd)

So. You know, girls. Sometimes the sign of a good leader is that she can admit when she's made a mistake. Well, I made a mistake.

Samantha puts her hand down.

MARTHA (cont'd)

We have to...think...logically here. It's important to think logically. Right, girls?

She looks; they just stare back, sensing something's wrong.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Right. Anyway. I really wasn't thinking logically when I had the idea about the cookie sale. Now I know I got you girls all excited about it. But then I got to thinking. Girls...what are cookies? I mean, really...what are they?

Still no response, not even facial, from the Scouts.

MARTHA (cont'd)

I mean, you know: What part of a meal is a cookie? Is a cookie an appetizer? Hmm? Anyone wanna answer that one for me? Lori? You got any opinions on that? Is A cookie an appetizer?

Lori looks frightened.

MARTHA (cont'd)

IS IT???

LORI

No!

MARTHA

No! Thank you. No, it's not an appetizer. Well then. Is a cookie an entrée? Is it the main course of a meal? Hmm?

WENDY

No, Ms. Wright.

MARTHA

Thank you, Wendy. So then...what is a cookie? I mean, what part of a meal? It's not an appetizer and it's not an entrée. So it's...a...

SAMANTHA

A dessert.

By now the Scouts are all exchanging glances with each other, wondering what the hell is going on with Martha.

MARTHA

A dessert! Very good, Samantha! And the idea of a cookie sale... Well, it seems like we're kinda *skipping ahead*, doesn't it? It seems like if we concentrate on cookies, well, we're just going right to the dessert. Right?

No response. Pause.

MARTHA (cont'd)

*RIGHT???*

Whatever scouts are there say "Right" unenthusiastically.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Right. So I say we have to back up a little. Not a lot. We don't have to back up all the way to the appetizer. Let's not get too extreme here. Hey, I betcha most people don't even order appetizers anymore what with the new fad diets and such am I right?

(again, after no response)

*RIGHT?*

The Scouts are frightened but one of them shouts: "Right!"

MARTHA (cont'd)

Right.

Martha reaches into her pocketbook and pulls out the chilling sleeve that she'd been using to cover the Evian bottle.

MARTHA (cont'd)

So. Let's say we back up just as far as the entrée. The main course. When people are, for instance, probably *drinking wine!*

Robin starts crying. Martha, noticing, stops herself.

MARTHA (cont'd)

Samantha...What's the matter, honey? Why the tears?

ROBIN

Ms. Wright...What's the *matter* with you?

MARTHA

Oh...you really had your heart set on the cookie sale didn't ya? I'm disappointing you is that it? But honey, don't you see the logic in this? Before you get to the dessert you get to drink...

Martha holds up the chilling sleeve.

MARTHA (cont'd)

...wine!

Robin runs out of the meeting hall. As she exits out the rear she bumps into POLICEMAN #1 who is followed by POLICEMAN #2. The Girls all turn around to see the cops.

POLICEMAN #1

Martha Wright?

MARTHA

Yes, that's me! But this is a *girls only* meeting-

POLICEMAN #1

Would you step outside please?

Policeman #2 is taking out a pair of handcuffs.

MARTHA

But we're in the middle of an important meet-

POLICEMAN #1

Meeting's over, Ms. Wright. Let's go. Right now.

MARTHA

Oh. I see. Okay.

Unflustered, Martha puts the chilling sleeve back into her pocketbook. She begins walking towards the cops. And when she's close enough, Policeman #2 slaps the cuffs on her.

INT. POLICE STATION INTERROGATING ROOM, NEW LEBANON - NIGHT

Martha is seated in a chair in a room much like the one the FBI men had her in. A local cop, DETECTIVE CRIMMINS, stands at the table in front of her. A STENOGRAPHER is present.

CRIMMINS

Ms. Wright, do you know why you're here?

MARTHA

It's about that highway thing.

CRIMMINS

No, Ms. Wright. The FBI doesn't believe you did that, actually. We don't either. We did discuss you with Detective James.

MARTHA

Oh, that.

CRIMMINS

Anyway that's a federal matter. That's not why you're here.

MARTHA

It's not the highway thing.

CRIMMINS

You know a 12-year-old, Grace Foley.

MARTHA

Grace. Yes. She's the daughter of one of my tenants, Webb Foley. She was one of my favorite Scouts.

CRIMMINS

Careful, Ms. Wright. You don't want to say anything that may incriminate you without your lawyer present.

MARTHA

Huh?

CRIMMINS

You were at her house...her father's house...two days ago?

MARTHA

That's right. I was doing my rent collections. Sometimes I have to.

Shot of the elderly stenographer getting all this down.

MARTHA (cont'd)

People don't always pay on time. It's rough out there, I don't have to tell you...a police officer.

CRIMMINS

Rough. Yeah. Ms. Wright, Grace Foley has accused you of molesting her in the living room of her house that day. She says you tried to pull off her underwear. Then her father came home and before he could see what you were doing, you stopped. That's what she says.

Martha takes this in. She seems strangely unaffected.

MARTHA

Is that right.

CRIMMINS

This is a pretty serious charge

Ms. Wright. What about it?

MARTHA

What about it?

CRIMMINS

Did you do it, Ms. Wright?

MARTHA

It's about the rent. I think this is about the rent.

CRIMMINS

What do you mean?

MARTHA

I mean call them up right now and see if Grace keeps to her story if you tell them I want to lower their rent.

Detective Crimmins just looks at her for a minute. He nods, leaves. Martha is alone with the stenographer. During this conversation Crimmins is visible through two planes of glass and a hallway in between, on the phone.

MARTHA (cont'd)

You seem a little old to be in a job like this.

STENOGRAPHER

My husband got screwed over in a business deal. I had to learn a trade. It's not so bad.

MARTHA

How awful. What kind of deal?

STENOGRAPHER

You know those thumbnail photographs on pornographic websites? Well the size of those things isn't just arbitrary. It was my husband who figured out just what size they should be so men would be intrigued enough by the image to click onto another link. Because they had to

be small enough so that men wouldn't feel comfortable masturbating to them. But big enough to get him to lay out a credit card. Anyway now they're trying to tell him there's no copyright on geometrical sizes.

MARTHA

Well...they have a *point*. How can anybody say they have a copyright on-

Crimmins walks back in. Stands there, looking rather sad.

CRIMMINS

You can go.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Martha is standing outside the same church in which she met with Father Morel. She slowly walks up to the threshold.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Martha walks in, looks around at some of the people sitting there at night. All of them in silent suffering. She sees someone leave the confessional booth where she had made a confession to Father Morel. And someone new goes inside.

She waits a few more moments, then turns and leaves.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

After walking for a bit, Mel drives by in his car, honking. He slows down and rolls down the window. Robin is in the back seat.

MEL

Hey! You all right? Robin told me there was a little trouble?

MARTHA

Oh. Hi Mel.

She sees Robin.

ROBIN

Ms. Wright I was so worried!

MEL

Need a friend?

MARTHA

Huh?

MEL

Maybe another meeting? Calm  
the nerves?

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Martha and Mel are on the bed, having sex. Mel is pounding away at her like an animal. On the motel television a porno movie is playing but the sound is off.

When he finishes he right away starts to get off of Martha but she tries to grab onto him, so that they'll stay entwined. But he breaks away and makes a beeline for the bathroom. There is a pause. Nothing but silence. Then:

MEL (O-S)

Goddammit...

Martha just listens.

MEL (O-S)

I hate the way whenever I come it  
takes me long to pee right after-  
ward.

MARTHA

Mel?

MEL (O-S)

Dammit!

MARTHA

Mel I wanna talk. Please...

MEL (O-S)

I *knew* it.

MARTHA

Mel I'm in trouble...

MEL (O-S)

I KNEW IT!

Mel comes charging into the room, quickly putting on his trousers as he speaks.

MEL (cont'd)

You know that about men, don't you? You always go in for the kill right then, right when I'm standing there trying to urinate.

MARTHA

The *kill*? I just wanna--

MEL

It takes time... for a guy to pee afterward. It's clogged, and you know that. Still every time *that's* when you start in on some way the world is treating you wrong.

MARTHA

I think I'm losing my scouts, Mel. I think my Girl Scouts are disbanding.

MEL

I wouldn't be here to *hear* about it if this place didn't happen to have a bathroom, and I'm damn well gonna use it if it's here.

MARTHA

You could use the bathroom, Mel... You could--

MEL

No I can't! Because...because... it's like Martha, if someone came up to you and grabbed you by the shoulders and said "I WANT YOU TO LISTEN TO ME! I WANT YOU TO HELP ME ME ME!" then I got news for you that would be assault and battery. Legally it would, it'd be assault and battery under the law. What's

so different between that and taking advantage of the fact that a man needs to stand still for a little while...the only way you can make it an even playing field is to NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE of that biological fact...but you do...you do EVERY TIME.

MARTHA

Are you accusing me of assault and battery because I tried talking to you when you're peeing-

MEL

I need time to think!

MARTHA

Well I'll listen to you too...Why does it-

MEL

There are no men left, that's why you don't listen to me. Because

MEL (cont'd)

you don't know what a real man even looks like anymore. All that's out there are chicken parts of people, broken insects, dragging themselves along with half-squashed legs. When that's all you see every day then when you do see a real man like me you won't even recognize him.

Mel goes back into the bathroom to pee. We follow him.

MEL

I have to have it *right in my mind*. I have to go over it a million times in my mind, every move, every step... like Ted Williams practicing his swing.

MARTHA (O-S)

Mel what are you talking about?

MEL

Oh you don't want to hear it. I don't go around assuming you want to hear everything like you do....Ohhhhhh no.

He is peeing.

MARTHA (O-S)

Well I don't...unless you want to tell-...Why are you changing the subject?-....I'm going through something Mel I need you to listen!

MEL

Well you're not gonna hear it because...no....This doesn't count. I'm not here...if you see me as here now just because I'm using the bathroom than that's the same as assault. There's gonna be three of us. An Amtrak car has never been held up before. We know the right car. We cased it out. Never been done, a job like in the old West. You sure you want to hear this Martha? This is what I have to think about...

Mel flushes. He enters the bedroom, zipping his fly.

MEL (cont'd)

I need to have every move of this job down in my mind to the last--

*BAM! BAM-BAM-BAM!*

Martha shoots him in the chest, holding the gun that she'd taken off of Ray. Blood splatters. Mel lays dead. After the toilet flushes it makes a GURGLING SOUND. Martha taps the toilet handle. HOLD until the toilet-gurgling stops.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Martha walks past Mel's parked car. We see that Robin has fallen asleep - she is snoozing away in the back seat.

INT. GIRL SCOUT MEETING HALL - NIGHT

CLOSE-UP of Martha. During the speech we slowly PULL BACK:

MARTHA

Girls. I've been wrestling with this for a while. Your scout leader has gotten herself into *quite* a situation, and I realized...what does a scout do when she's in trouble? She talks to fellow scouts! I mean, that's what we're here for, isn't it? Shouldn't we help each other out? Give each other advice? What's the point of having a Girl Scout troop if we can't do that for each other? I'd like to think I've always been there for all of you!

PULL BACK far enough to see that the first rows are empty.

MARTHA (cont'd)

As you know I've been working really hard to get our Troop state recognition. It's been my biggest priority because state recognition means funding, and that means new uniforms and

MARTHA (cont'd)

more volunteers and unlimited boxes of cookies, and all the rest. But. Recently I committed manslaughter, I think that's the legal term for it. You know, when you don't really mean to kill somebody but then, *whoops!!!*

Farther back, halfway down the hall, every seat is empty.

MARTHA (cont'd)

I ran this guy over with my car. It was like...God...when you run over a cat or a possum or something but this time the car really went *whump*, *waaaay* up...because this time there was this, like, actual *human being* under there! Sheesh! Anyway...oh, and by the way this all happened because I was trying to secure us some cookies for the *World's Biggest Girl Scout Cookie Sale* idea I had...that great idea, remember? Well. That's not gonna happen...

We've PULLED BACK all the way to the rear now; we can see the entire hall is empty. Martha is talking to herself.

MARTHA (cont'd)

So the thing is...Nobody knows about this. I mean, you know now, I guess, but the cops and everything...they don't know! Go figure! They tried to nab me on this ridiculous Grace Foley charge. Girls, I am telling you I am really at my breaking point. But how do I actually "break"? I'm sure you can understand how I need to talk to somebody. I mean, this is really intense! *How do I break?*

INT. MARTHA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Martha is sitting on the couch listening to Trudy's tape.

TRUDY (on tape)

"Go over to that man and tell him to shove a stick up his ass." That one I, like, heard three times today and the only reason I don't actually do it is 'cause I figure the guy would beat the shit out of me. OK, and there's: "Step on an old lady's poodle". I hear that one a lot. It might even be my own actual voice; it's really hard to tell sometimes... So okay, then there's: "Take thy the name of Satan and act in the world accordingly." That one is worrisome. The voice is sexy. There's this one that's particularly repetitive, I think I told you: the one that tells me to go to Portifoy Gulch with a two by four piece of wood, stretch it out across that double cliff-face near the lake and the walk across it. It's like some sort of "Fear Factor" voice and you

know what Ms. Wright: I think I may just do it to finally get rid of the damn thing...

Martha rewinds the tape a bit to play that over.

TRUDY (on tape, cont'd)  
--sort of "Fear Factor" voice  
and you know what Ms. Wright: I think I may just do it to finally get rid of the damn thing...

Martha has an intuition. She gets up, grabs her car keys, goes to the computer. She clicks on the icon for the video of the Monk immolating himself. Then she clicks "Repeat". She walks away from the desk but the camera slowly DOLLIES IN on the image, filling the screen more and more, of the Monk setting himself on fire, over and over...

EXT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Martha pulls out of her driveway, tires screeching...

EXT. VAN SAUN PARK PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Martha drives into the lot. She gets out, slams the door and starts heading into the park: the Portifoy Gulch Trail.

EXT. CLIFF FACE - NIGHT

With only the moonlight illuminating her, Martha starts up a steep cliff face, a la "Deliverance."

SERIES OF DISSOLVES as Martha gets higher and higher.

EXT. PORTIFOY GULCH - NIGHT

Martha arrives at the top of the rocky cliff. Her Girl Scout uniform is worse for the wear, covered with dirt. She climbs down a short series of boulders to arrive at:

Portifoy Gulch: There is a sharp drop - about thirty feet across there is a symmetrical cliff face, but the drop is deadly.

A fallen branch is suspended across the two sides. Martha sees it. Then she looks up. She sees: her daughter Nell. Nell is beckoning her to come across.

NELL

Mom! I did it! 28 steps, I counted! You do it, too!

Nell beckons from the other side.

NELL (cont'd)

Please try! It feels great! I'll talk you through it the whole way! I love you, Mom!

Martha starts, then looks at the drop. She cannot do it.

MARTHA

I can't. I can't do it. I'm sorry. I've failed. Sorry...

NELL

Oh, that's all right I still

NELL (cont'd)

love you... (pause)  
Wait there, I'll come over to you the long way...

Nell, like an apparition, disappears into the woods on the other side.

Martha sits. She looks up at the treetops, past them and into the stars. It is a very clear night.

MARTHA

Where's Jesus?

There is a rustling. A little girl steps out from behind some foliage. She goes up to Martha, who now sees that it is Trudy. Trudy hugs Martha.

MARTHA

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

TRUDY

Sorry? What on earth for? It worked! I think the voices

have stopped - even Mr. Fear  
Factor!

Pause. Martha looks up at the sky again.

TRUDY (cont'd)  
Now let's get off this rock.  
Can you drive me home?

MARTHA  
Sure. C'mon, Trudy.

TRUDY  
Well...what'd you do tonight?  
Anything half as interesting?

They both start walking back down the trail - the long way.

EXT. TRUDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Martha stops the LTD in front, lets Trudy out.

TRUDY  
Thanks again Miss Wright.  
I feel like a million. Hey  
who knows...maybe after this  
I'll join up after all...

Martha smiles, her enthusiasm tempered. Trudy walks off.

INT. LTD - NIGHT

Martha is driving, seemingly aimlessly, through the heart  
of town. Most of the shops are closed. She pulls over.

EXT. MAIN STREET / MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Martha is walking along the street. She stops at a movie  
theater, looks at the marquis: "Breakin' All the Rules".

She goes up to the ticket seller, reads the sign stating  
the admission prices. The TICKETSELLER is reading a book.  
Martha starts reaching into her pocketbook for money.

TICKETSELLER

The last show already started.

MARTHA

Oh I don't mind.

TICKETSELLER

But really, it's a long way into  
the movie.

MARTHA

Really I don't mind.

INT. LOBBY AREA

Martha walks quickly through the lobby area. She passes a middle-aged man obsessively playing a video racecar game.

INT. MOVIE THEATER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Martha washes her face, looks at herself in the mirror. There is graffiti on the wall above the mirror. It says:  
WHERE'S JESUS?

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

Martha sits down near the rear. Only moments after she plants herself down, the movie ends.

Lights come up, people begin leaving. She sits there. The clean-up staff start coming in. One of them points a flashlight at her, then nods his head towards the exit.

EXT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Martha pulls her car into the driveway. She gets out, starts for the front door.

INT. MARTHA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It is very dark in the living room, except for the light coming from the repeated Monk immolation video on the computer screen.

Martha walks over to a lamp far into the room. The camera is close on her. She flicks it on, lighting the room. Her head is back to us. She remains still.

She turns around, slowly. We see her expression as all of the boxes containing chilling sleeves remind her that the events of the last 24 hours have been absolutely real.

She sees there's a message on her answering machine. She presses "Play":

ROBIN'S MOTHER (O-S)

(worried)

Uh, hello Martha? This is Jody Wertlieb, Robin's mother? Listen I'm sorry if I'm disturbing you but I'm a little worried. After Mel left to pick Robin up from your meeting they never got home. Could you call me the second you get this message? Thanks Martha. Of course I've already called the police. Okay...thanks again.

HOLD ON Martha taking this in, deeply. Another reminder.

INT. LIVING ROOM (LATER) - NIGHT

Martha has made a bed out of hundreds of chilling sleeves. Her going to bed now has an almost sacrificial quality to it. Or even one of complete renunciation or surrender. She has candles lit all around the living room.

She takes off her bathrobe. She is completely nude. She gets into the bed of chilling sleeves. She goes to sleep.

EXT. SAAB DEALERSHIP, NEW LEBANON - MORNING

Establishing shot of a Saab dealership, early in the morning, right after they've opened. Rows of shining, spanking new Saabs. We can see Martha's LTD parked on the lot.

INT. SAAB DEALERSHIP - MORNING

Martha is sitting directly across from JOHN RYDELL, a Saab salesman in his late 50's. She's wearing the Scout uniform.

RYDELL

Wow. I'm...I couldn't be happier

that you're so certain in your decision. In all my years as a sales representative for any car dealership I must say I've never met anyone more sure of what she wants.

MARTHA

And I'm trading in the Ford. Don't wanna see that ol' thing anymore!

Martha looks around the gleaming showroom with a beatific smile on her face, like a little kid on Christmas morning. In the background there is a woman cradling a fake baby.

RYDELL

May I ask...how did it come about that you arrived at this decision with such certainty? I mean, you didn't even want to go out for a test drive—

When he says "test drive" we can see Martha wince slightly.

RYDELL (cont'd)

--which of course is fine, but... I'm curious...why a Saab?

MARTHA

I had a dream last night. And it was so clear. You know that thing when you instruct your subconscious to tell you, in the dream you're gonna have that night, just what the answer to whatever it is you're going through is? Well it was so vivid. I was driving a brand new Saab. And I heard voices the whole dream going *You need a Saab! You need a Saab, Martha!*

RYDELL

Really.

MARTHA

And the whole thing had this feeling like a beautiful collage, with

rolling hills and big pink patches of farmland and those big ol' Holsteins next to these great big red silos. And I'm driving through it in my new Saab, happy as could be, just completely blissed out! And it was so clear with those voices, those voices going *You need a Saab, you need a Saab!*

RYDELL

Ooh!

MARTHA

So okay! I need a Saab? Here I am! I'm buying a Saab! Do you take credit cards I'm a little short on cash, I just lowered the rent on one of my properties.

Rydell sits there, pondering everything she's said. He studies Martha for a while before responding. He is a reasonable man and he doesn't want to sell a car to a nut.

RYDELL

You know, I took psychology in college. Now, I'm the last person who would want to talk you out of a sale but if you don't mind my playing the devil's advocate for a second here... It is possible that your dream was even more literal than you think. It might mean that you need a "sob" as in a cry, a good cry. It's just that I seem to remember reading about the kind of dream you describe. Often brand names well...it's just the way our dreams communicate sometimes and you have to be on the lookout for it. It could mean...well frankly it probably means that all you need is a really good cry. You know as a first step in whatever it is you're going through. Because buying a car never solved anybody's problems. I mean even I would never tell a customer that.

Rydell could see that Martha does not like hearing this.

RYDELL (cont'd)

You sure you don't want to take a little time and think this through?

MARTHA

So you take credit cards or what?

RYDELL

Uh, yeah, we sure do.

He pulls a contract out of a file and plops it on the desk.

EXT. MAIN STREET / INT. SAAB - DAY

Martha is driving through town in her stylin' new Saab...

...Which kicks off a "happy driving sequence". She is enjoying the thrill of the new Saab as she makes her way home. The feeling approximates the way she described her dream to Rydell. It is almost over-the-top with happiness.

That is, Martha's internal attitude approximates it. She is quite obviously feeling blissful now, as though she is seeing the world with new eyes. She is riding the high of a pampered, consumer afterglow which starts to wear off after not too long. Slowly, as the sequence continues, she doesn't look quite as happy anymore.

EXT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - DAY

There is a police dragnet waiting for Martha in front of her house. Cop cars everywhere. Lights flashing. One cop has a megaphone pointed at her house and is telling her to "Come out with her hands up". Martha drives right into it.

She can see neighbors gathered as near to her front lawn as they can get. One of the NEIGHBORS points to Martha when she sees her driving down the street in the new Saab. Martha can hear the neighbor going "*There she is! That's her!*" And sure enough, every cop there now looks her way. Martha floors the Saab.

As she plows her way past her house and beyond, we can see cop after cop getting into a squad car and starting to make chase. But Martha has a good head start. She's flying...

EXT. MAIN ROAD, NEW LEBANON - DAY

Drive-by shot: Martha in the Saab going very fast.

EXT. HIGHWAY ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - DAY

Martha driving through the outskirts of New Lebanon, the landscape on all sides becoming very flat and unadorned.

EXT. HIGHWAY (FARTHER ALONG) - DAY

Even more countrified landscape. Martha speeding along.

A lone figure is standing on the side of the highway. It is a woman, arm out, thumb extended. Hitchhiking...

It's Miss Percy. With the transistor radio at her feet.

Martha sees Miss Percy. Zooms past her. But not without making eye contact -- Miss Percy zapping her with a look that would rival the most wrathful eye of a medieval God.

Soon Martha sees an old ramshackle church that has one of those changeable signs out front - the kind with the plastic black letters. Today's sign reads: *Where's Jesus?*

Martha zooms past it. We can hear the sound of POLICE SIRENS in the distance.

EXT. STREETS IN SPENCER - DAY

Martha is going way too fast as she arrives in the town where her daughter and her ex-husband live (the town we saw briefly earlier in the story). She turns a corner, tires throwing up gravel.

EXT. NELL'S HOUSE - DAY

Martha screeches to a halt in front of the same house Fern had driven her to a few nights ago. She runs out of her car, beelines to the front door. Taps frantically using the brass doorknocker.

The sound of police sirens seems to have multiplied; they are closing in from all directions now.

Martha is pounding on the front door with both fists as police cars fill the street behind her from both directions. There are over a dozen: lights flashing, sirens blaring.

Desperate pounding on the front door. Practically scratching at it with her nails. Martha has gone totally primal. Several POLICEMEN have by now jumped out of their cars and are running onto the lawn. Others have rifles out; they're aiming at Martha.

Nell opens the front door. Martha lunges forward, wrapping her arms around her daughter, trying to drink in this touch before, a second later, she is pulled away by a POLICEMAN.

Nell watches as her mother, screaming, is yanked back...

And handcuffed...

And shoved into the back of a cop car as her Miranda rights are read.

ANGLE on Nell. Watching. Slow ZOOM IN on one the lenses of her eyeglasses, reflecting the convoy of police cars...

The sound of her mother's wailing barely discernable under the din...

Closer in as a tear forms in the corner of Nell's eye and begins to slide down her cheek.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END