

THE KARENSKYS

"All Karenskys, All the Time"

by

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WRITER'S DRAFT

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COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. A GLASS JAR

WE ARE VERY CLOSE ON A LITTLE BLACK ANT.

BILL (V.O.)

This is me, a common black harvester ant. Actually, I'm not an ant. And I'm not black, either, if you want to get technical about it. I'm a very white biology professor from Ohio. But I'm trying to make a scientific point. Besides, look how cute he is.

ANGLE - A RED ANT

AS IT DROPS INTO THE JAR. THE ANTS TOUCH ANTENNAE, CHECKING EACH OTHER OUT.

BILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Now this is my wife. A red ant. Very different kind of ant. But since it's just the two of them, they get along, even fall in love. They get married, have a little ant, it's ant heaven. Then the black ant, that's me, gets a great new job heading the Biology department at San Francisco State. Which means they have to move, right near the red ant's old colony.

ANGLE - ANOTHER BIG JAR, FILLED WITH RED ANTS

AS THE RED AND BLACK ANTS KEEP TOUCHING ANTENNAE.

BILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Now, the red ant, my wife, thinks
it's great. She talks about dinners
and boat trips and card games and all
the great family things they do in
the colony. And the black ant
thinks, "Okay, how bad could it be?"

SUDDENLY, THE JAR LIFTS OUT OF FRAME.

BLACK ANT'S POV

THE JAR IS TIPPED OVER AND WE FALL INTO THE SWARM OF
RED ANTS JUST AS WE;

GO TO BLACK:

BILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Eew.

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

SCENE A

FADE IN:

INT. ATWOODS' APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

IT'S A COMFORTABLE PLACE SOMEWHERE IN SAN FRANCISCO. SOME HALF-UNPACKED MOVING BOXES ARE SCATTERED AROUND. EMILY ATWOOD (30'S, DARK, PRETTY, DOWN-TO-EARTH) PULLS ON HER JACKET AND GRABS HER KEYS. HER FOUR-YEAR-OLD SON SITS ON THE FLOOR NEAR THE HALLWAY, PLAYING.

EMILY

Billy, we should've left twenty minutes ago. Now, come on, stop dawdling. Let's go!

BILL ATWOOD STEPS OUT FROM THE HALLWAY PAST LITTLE BENJAMIN. BILL IS HANDSOME, EASY-GOING, A BIT SHY.

BILL

I'm not dawdling. I'm stalling. Do we have to see your family right this minute? Emily, we're not even unpacked. It can't be good to yank Benjamin around like this.

BENJAMIN

Can we go see Grandpa now?

BILL

See, he's talking crazy.

EMILY

Bill, I know they make you uncomfortable, but please just deal with it, okay? I miss my family. I wanna see my mommy.

BILL

Hey, your mom is great. I love your mom. But the rest of them are well, you know, pretty loud and boisterous and over-emotional and --

EMILY

This is about the man-kissing, isn't it?

BILL

(UPSET) Why do they do that?

EMILY

It's an ethnic thing. Men can kiss men, it's nice.

BILL

It's kissing.

EMILY

(LIGHTLY) It doesn't seem to bother you with my sister.

BILL

You're going to start that again? Emily, Bernadette does not have a thing for me.

EMILY

Last Christmas she sucked frosting off your finger.

BILL

I didn't have a napkin.

EMILY

You want to bet how many times she's
going to flirt with you tonight?

BILL

What, you actually want to count?

EMILY

Sure.

BILL

You're going to spend the whole night
watching Bernadette like a hawk, just
so you can say she flirted with me
like twelve times?

EMILY

I'll say fifty.

BILL

(AFTER A MOMENT) What's the bet?

EMILY

(EVENLY) You know what the bet is.

BILL

Oh. I love that bet. Let's go.

THEY GET READY TO LEAVE AS WE;

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE BINT. KARENSKY LIVING ROOM - A WHILE LATER

A BIG OLD-FASHIONED ROOM IN A BIG OLD-FASHIONED HOUSE. ON ONE SIDE IS A DINING TABLE BIG ENOUGH TO SEAT TEN. ON THE OTHER ARE A SOFA AND OVERSTUFFED CHAIRS. THE FURNITURE IS GOOD QUALITY, VERY OLD, AND SPOTLESSLY CLEAN. THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO HAVE MONEY, BUT DON'T BELIEVE IN WASTING IT.

PEARL KARENSKY (60'S, CHEERFUL, SENSIBLE) IS SHELLING WALNUTS WITH HER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW ANNE-MARIE (30'S, IRISH, NERVOUS). EMILY AND BENJAMIN COME THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR, BILL FOLLOWING.

BILL

Hey, ring the --

EMILY

(IGNORES HIM) Hi!

PEARL

Lambie! (TO BILL) Other Lambie!

(TO BENJAMIN) Little Lambie!

PEARL RUNS OVER FOR HUGS.

EMILY

(EMOTIONAL) Mom, this is so...

PEARL

(SAME) I know. I'm so happy you're back. Every time I think about it...

SHE QUICKLY CLAMPS HER HAND OVER HER MOUTH, FIGHTING TEARS. EMILY DOES THE SAME THING. THEN;

EMILY

I know, I know. Driving up here, looking at the old street...

THEIR HANDS GO OVER THEIR MOUTHS AGAIN.

BILL

Hey, Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

Hi, guys.

THEY HUG.

EMILY

Anne-Marie, it is so good to see you.

How's little Katherine?

ANNE-MARIE

Fine.

EMILY

And little Constance?

ANNE-MARIE

Fine.

EMILY

And little Joshua?

ANNE-MARIE

Fine.

EMILY

And little Megan?

ANNE-MARIE

Fine.

EMILY

And little Nicky?

ANNE-MARIE

Fine.

EMILY

And the twins?

ANNE-MARIE

Fine. Fine.

EMILY

... Did I forget anyone?

ANNE-MARIE

I couldn't tell you.

BERNADETTE KARENSKY-KANITSKY (30'S, PRETTY, A BIT HEAVY ON THE MAKEUP, AND EQUIPPED WITH WHAT SHE LIKES TO CALL "A NICE RACK") COMES OUT FROM THE KITCHEN.

BERNADETTE

Mom, I did something wrong. I can't get the cabbage smell out of the cabbage.

EMILY

(SMILES) Hey, Bernadette. (TO BILL - QUIETLY) Start counting.

BERNADETTE

Oh my god. Emily, how are you doing?

BERNADETTE QUICKLY TAKES OFF HER APRON AND PRIMPS A LITTLE.

EMILY

I'm great, how are you?

EMILY TAKES OFF HER DOWN JACKET, RUNS HER FINGERS THROUGH HER HAIR. THEN THEY MOVE TOGETHER AND HUG. IT'S A REAL HUG, BUT THE SECOND IT'S OVER, THEY PRIMP AND STRAIGHTEN THEIR CLOTHES.

PEARL

Oh, for God's sake, girls. You're
both pretty.

EMILY / BERNADETTE

(DEFENSIVE) We know.

BERNADETTE GOES TO BILL AND BEN FOR HUGS.

BERNADETTE

(SMILES) Hello, boys. (TO BILL)
Well, look who got even more
handsome.

EMILY

Yeah, he's a handsome (TO BILL) one.

BILL

(FLUSTERED) Oh well, y'know, it's...

BERNADETTE

Look how flustered he gets. He
thinks I'm flirting with him.

SHE GIGGLES, GIVES HIM ANOTHER HUG.

EMILY

Oh, he takes everything too
seriously. (TO BILL) Two seriously.

BILL

I get it. (THEN - TO BERNADETTE)
So, how's little Kevin? That
juvenile court thing go okay?

BERNADETTE

Great. The cop didn't even show up.

MAX KARENSKY (60'S, BARREL-CHESTED, SLAVIC ACCENT) ENTERS FROM THE YARD, FOLLOWED BY HIS SON "LITTLE MAX" KARENSKY (35, A BIG LUG) AND BERNADETTE'S BOY KEVIN KARENSKY-KANITSKY (12, A LITTLE SHIT).

MAX

(SEES THEM) Hey!

MAX AND LITTLE MAX RUSH OVER AND GREET EMILY AND BEN WITH BIG HUGS AND KISSES.

BILL

(HANGS BACK) Max. Little Max.

LITTLE MAX

Hey, professor.

MAX

How's the genius in the family?

BILL STICKS OUT A HAND. MAX AND LITTLE MAX HUG HIM AND PLANT BIG WET ONES ON HIM. BILL ENDURES IT. LITTLE MAX THROWS AN ARM AROUND BILL'S NECK.

LITTLE MAX

Geez, it's like Christmas for me, you moving here. Someone to do guy stuff with. Bowling and talking about cars and shooting guns --

ANNE-MARIE / PEARL

(TOGETHER) You're not getting guns.

LITTLE MAX

What? (CHUCKLES) No, that was just an example, we're not getting guns.

HE MOUTHS TO BILL, "WE'LL GET GUNS." BILL REACTS. MAX CROUCHES DOWN BY BENJAMIN.

MAX

Benny, you want a treat from Grampa?

Here you go.

MAX PULLS HALF A HOT DOG FROM HIS COAT POCKET,
BRUSHES IT OFF, HANDS IT TO BEN. BEN TAKES A BITE.

MAX (CONT'D)

Good, eh? That's 'cause your family
made that hot dog. It's not that
crap you get in the grocery store,
full of wood chips and pig heads.

LITTLE MAX TAKES BEN BY THE HAND.

LITTLE MAX

Well, a little snout for texture.
You want to go next door, see all
your cousins? You got two new ones
since last time.

MAX

You believe this guy? Married six
years, already has seven kids. I
dare you. Ask him what he was doing
twenty minutes ago.

LITTLE MAX

Dad, come on. You make me sound like
a sex maniac. (TAPS ANNE-MARIE ON
THE SHOULDER) Honey?

ANNE-MARIE GASPS AND JUMPS AWAY, STARTLED.

LITTLE MAX (CONT'D)

Sorry. I forgot about coming up
behind you. You want to take Ben
over?

ANNE-MARIE

Oh. Oh. Oh. Sure. Come on,
sweetie.

ANNE-MARIE EXITS WITH BEN.

LITTLE MAX

We got Mrs. Duchovny to baby-sit.
She's great, she's half-deaf now.

KEVIN STEPS UP TO MAX, YANKS ON HIS SLEEVE.

KEVIN

I helped clean out the garage,
where's my money?

BERNADETTE

Kevin, I said help your family. You
don't charge for that.

MAX

(SMILES) Hey, he worked, he gets
paid. We're not commies. (HOLDS OUT
A BILL) You a commie, Kevin?

KEVIN

(GRABS IT) No damn way.

KEVIN RUNS OFF. MAX LAUGHS.

BERNADETTE

(PLEADING) Mom?

PEARL

Max.

MAX

What? He's funny.

PEARL

Number one, you're spoiling that boy rotten, and number two, you completely undermined your daughter's authority. Apologize to her.

MAX GOES OVER TO BERNADETTE WITH HIS HEAD DOWN. THEN HE SLAPS HIS HAND ON THE TABLE.

MAX

That boy needs his father!

EVERYONE GROANS.

BERNADETTE

I'm not having this conversation.

BERNADETTE QUICKLY GOES BACK INTO THE KITCHEN.

MAX

Hey, that's not me, that's God.

Marriage is forever, even if there's problems. Look at your mom and me, you think I'm a bed of roses?

EMILY

Dad, Bernadette was totally right to dump Mickey. He was a creep.

LITTLE MAX

(TO BILL) It was awful. We'd catch him playing around, whale the tar out of him, catch him again, whale on him again... it was turning into a job.

MAX

Yeah, but I really think we got through to him that last beating.

PEARL

Can we change the subject, please? I want to know about Bill's new job.

MAX

That's right. Professor fancy-pants. Let's hear it.

BILL

It's really not very interesting.

LITTLE MAX

Of course it's interesting. You're the only man in the family that's ever had a real education. Now you got this big impressive position at the university. Tell us about it.

BILL

Well, I'm still going to teach Comparative Anatomy.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

But I'll also be in charge of the
Biology department, which means I get
to allocate some of the funding. I
really want to focus more attention
on some of the sub-disciplines, like
Entomology and Biophysics.

BEAT. THEN;

LITTLE MAX

(SMILING BLANKLY) How about that.

MAX

(TO PEARL) Dinner ready?

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE CINT. KARENSKY KITCHEN - A WHILE LATER

AGAIN, THE ROOM IS BIG, OLD, AND COMFORTABLE. A ROOM WHERE YOU COULD FIX DINNER FOR THIRTY OR JUST SIT AND SHOOT THE BREEZE FOR A FEW HOURS. BILL AND EMILY ENTER FROM THE LIVING ROOM, CARRYING PLATES.

EMILY

(CALLS BACK) We got these dishes,
Mom. Just relax for a minute.

BILL

You think Ben's okay?

EMILY

I'll check.

SHE GOES TO A WINDOW.

EMILY (CONT'D)

(YELLS) Ben, you okay?

BENJAMIN (O.S.)

(YELLS) Yeah, Mom.

EMILY

(YELLS) Okay, call if you need
anything.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(YELLS) Is that you, Emily?

EMILY

(YELLS) Hi, Mrs. Depisto. How are
you?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(YELLS) Fine. I had that pelvic surgery.

EMILY

(YELLS) I heard. What'd they do, put a pin in the bone?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(YELLS) Yeah, good as new. Tell your dad the shell steaks were terrific.

EMILY

(YELLS) I will. Bye.

SHE TURNS FROM THE WINDOW.

BILL

(GROANS) I'm going to explode. How much more food is there?

EMILY

(LOOKS) Just some noodles. And a pot roast with carrots and potatoes. And the bean casserole you like.

BILL

(PAINED) With the bacon bits? Your mom's trying to kill me.

EMILY

If you actually dropped dead from overeating...

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

You'd make her the happiest woman on earth. Unbutton your pants. She loves that.

BILL

Honey? When we go back, could we, you know, trade places?

EMILY

Why?

BILL

Your brother keeps grabbing me around the neck. (DEMONSTRATES) Hey, smart guy... Hey, you're funny... Hey, that's a great neck I'm pinching off.

EMILY

Don't be such a baby.

BILL

I'm not being a baby. Your family does a lot of inappropriate touching.

EMILY

And therefore you want to sit next to my sister?

BILL

No, I just...

EMILY

And by the way, the count is now twenty-six.

BILL

What? What was twenty-six?

EMILY

Bill, she showed you her bra.

BILL

Come on, she was just asking me --

(THEN) Okay, twenty-six.

EMILY

Just relax. You're doing fine.

Everyone loves you, you're the star
of the family. They all think you're
so intelligent.

BILL

But they don't think I'm intelligent
the way you do. They think it's some
weird super-power, like heat-vision.

THEY START BACK OUT TO THE LIVING ROOM.

EMILY

Well, you're just going to have to
suffer through people thinking you're
wonderful. This is what families do,
Bill. They hug, and grab, and kiss,
and love and nurture each other.

AS THEY HEAD OUT, WE;

CUT TO:

SCENE DINT. KARENSKY LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

AS BILL AND EMILY COME IN. ALL THE ADULTS ARE AT THE TABLE.

MAX

(SLAPS THE TABLE) That is the stupidest thing I ever heard!

LITTLE MAX

It's not stupid, I just want to try something different. You said I could run my store my way.

MAX

Not when you're being stupid.

ANNE-MARIE

Stop saying stupid. It's not stupid.

PEARL

Use another word.

MAX

(THINKS A MOMENT; THEN) I can't, it's just stupid.

BILL SHRINKS BACK TO THE KITCHEN.

BILL

(QUIETLY) We should --

EMILY

(CHARGING IN) You always do this, resort to name-calling when you're wrong. (THEN) What's he wrong about?

BERNADETTE

Little Max wants to start selling hot foods in his shop.

MAX

Hey. They're my shops. And they're butcher shops. We are people of meat. Raw meat.

LITTLE MAX

Why do you make such a big deal out of this? We buy one hot table, make some lasagna, chicken wings, ribs, it's easy. Customers ask for this.

MAX

They ask what time it is, you want to sell clocks? People should do what they know. Everyone wants to do their own thing, even if they stink at it, and the whole country's falling apart because of it.

LITTLE MAX

Yeah, that's right, me and my steam tray of macaroni are gonna destroy democracy.

EMILY

Dad, this isn't even about whether it's a good idea or not.

BERNADETTE

(NODS) Why don't you just admit you don't want to spend the money?

MAX

You think it's about money? You think it's about money? (PULLS A BILL OUT OF HIS WALLET) Fifty bucks! This is how much I care about money!

HE TRIES TO TEAR THE BILL UP. HE CAN'T.

PEARL

Honey, there's too much tape from when you tore it up last week.

MAX THROWS DOWN THE BILL IN FRUSTRATION AND GETS TO HIS FEET.

MAX

I'm the king of my house and the boss of my shops, and nobody tells me I have to have lasagna!

HE HEADS FOR THE KITCHEN, TURNS, PICKS UP THE FIFTY AND EXITS.

PEARL

And tomorrow night, he'll ask me to
make lasagna and he won't know why.

LITTLE MAX

(PAINED) Why can't he ever listen to
me? It's like a knife in my heart.
Pass the pirogis.

BERNADETTE

Here you go.

LITTLE MAX

(SIGHS) Ah, so what? Maybe it is
stupid.

BILL

(SHRUGS) I don't know, I thought it
sounded like a good idea.

BILL GOES BACK TO EATING. EVERYONE AT THE TABLE
STARES AT HIM. THEN;

BILL (CONT'D)

(BAFFLED) Thank you? This was
delicious? I'm sorry?

EMILY

Bill, if you thought Little Max was
right, why didn't you say something?

LITTLE MAX

Yeah, he'd listen to you.

EMILY

You have to go talk to him.

BILL

What, right now? Shouldn't he have
time to cool off?

BERNADETTE

There isn't that much time in the
universe.

EMILY STARTS PUSHING BILL BACK TO THE KITCHEN.

EMILY

Bill, you can do this. Just tell him
what you think, you'll be fine.

(THEN) And don't say I sent you.

BERNADETTE

And don't back him into a corner.

ANNE-MARIE

And don't let him think you're trying
to change his mind.

PEARL

But don't pretend that you're not
trying to change his mind. And if he
reaches for a -- (THEN) Never mind,
he won't.

BILL

(PANICKING) Reaches for a what?

What's he reach for?

EMILY NUDGES BILL INTO THE KITCHEN.

CUT TO:

SCENE EINT. KARENSKY KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

MAX IS AT THE STOVE SLAPPING FOOD ON A PLATE AS BILL ENTERS. MAX DOESN'T TURN.

MAX

Forget about it. You're not gonna change my mind with sex. (TURNS, SEES BILL) Oh. Well, you either.

BILL

Good to know.

MAX

That boy, he keeps pushing and pushing me. I say "no" and he doesn't listen. I don't know what I'm gonna do, I get no respect from him anymore.

BILL

Well, you know, change isn't always a bad thing.

MAX

(STOPS) What do you mean?

BILL

(CAREFULLY) Just that I've been in situations where I didn't want to do something. And then, when I finally did do it, I wished I'd done it a long time ago.

MAX

(AFTER A MOMENT - NODS) Okay. You
win.

BILL

I do?

MAX GOES OUT TO THE LIVING ROOM AS WE;

CUT TO:

SCENE H

INT. KARENSKY LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

AS MAX ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY BILL.

MAX

(ANNOUNCING) I talked this over with
William, and we've decided. (TO
LITTLE MAX) You're fired.

ON THEIR REACTIONS, WE;

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOSCENE J

FADE IN:

INT. KARENSKY LIVING ROOM - SECONDS LATER

EVERYONE LOOKS AT MAX AND BILL, STUNNED.

EMILY

What do you mean, he's fired?

BILL

Excuse me, I --

MAX

I mean he's out, gone. (TO LITTLE MAX) Come by the shop tomorrow for your apron and your knives. They'll be in a box out on the sidewalk.

BILL

Um, excuse me...

BERNADETTE

Dad, are you crazy? You can't do that.

MAX

Watch me. I'm gonna move Alfonso over from my shop. If he needs any help, he can consult the professor, he's got lots of good ideas. (TO LITTLE MAX - GRANDLY) You can still live next door.

LITTLE MAX LOOKS AT BILL, CRUSHED.

LITTLE MAX

You used your brain against me?

BILL

If anyone would let me talk, I'd --

EMILY

Come here.

EMILY YANKS BILL INTO THE KITCHEN. ANNE-MARIE TURNS
TO MAX.

ANNE-MARIE

So this is how you thank him, after
twenty years of slaving away for you?
My father may be a shiftless drunk,
but at least he understands the
concept of loyalty.

MAX

Oh, so he's going to give back the
five hundred bucks I loaned him?

ANNE-MARIE

Not now.

PEARL PULLS MAX ASIDE.

PEARL

Max, you are doing a terrible thing.
This is what happens from only going
to church on Sundays. My mother told
me when we got married, "Three times
a week or there's no hope for him."
And now look what you've done.

(MORE)

PEARL (CONT'D)

You've hurt your own child, just out of pig-headedness. It's the sin of pride, Max Karensky. I'm ashamed of you.

MAX

(QUIET) Your eyes are like two perfect little poems.

BEAT. PEARL JUST STARES AT HIM. MAX GIVES HER THE SLIGHTEST OF SMILES. THEN;

PEARL

I can't believe you think that's going to be part of your evening.

MAX

Fine. Then I'm going to my shop to cut my meat and peek at that calendar you thought I threw away!

HE GRABS HIS JACKET AND STORMS OUT THE FRONT DOOR.

CUT TO:

SCENE KINT. KARENSKY KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

AS BILL AND EMILY TALK.

EMILY

... How could you mess this up? All you had to say was three words.

"Hot. Food. Good." What happened?

BILL

I don't know! We talked for like two seconds, and suddenly I was leading a palace coup with Alfonso. (THEN) I don't really have to consult with him, do I?

EMILY

(SIGHS) For God's sake, Bill.

BILL

No no no, no no. I am not in trouble with you, Emily. You are in trouble with me. Any fair person would look at this situation and say the whole thing was your fault.

EMILY

What?

BILL

That's my position.

EMILY

Based on what?

BILL

You know I'm a complete idiot when it comes to talking to your dad, and yet you insisted on pushing me into it. If you have that little regard for my feelings, then well, that's something you need to examine.

BILL STARTS FOR THE LIVING ROOM.

EMILY

(UNIMPRESSED) How long do you think you can pull this off?

BILL

(WITHOUT TURNING) I'm just hoping to get to the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE LEXT. ALLEY - NIGHT - A WHILE LATER

A SMALL ALLEY BEHIND "KARENSKY'S FINE MEATS."
THERE'S A SMALL LOADING DOCK WITH DOUBLE DOORS AND A
SERVICE ENTRANCE NEXT TO THAT. IT'S STILL RAINING A
LITTLE. A MINIVAN PULLS UP TO THE STORE.

ANGLE - INSIDE THE VAN

PEARL IS DRIVING. EMILY RIDES SHOTGUN. BILL SITS
NEXT TO LITTLE MAX, AND BERNADETTE IS BEHIND THEM.

EMILY

Okay, just go in and tell him what
you really meant to say. We'll wait
out here.

BILL

What, I'm doing this alone?

PEARL

I know my Max. He won't back down in
front of an audience.

BILL

But I already did the alone thing
with him. I was terrible.

BERNADETTE

(PATS HIS SHOULDER) Come on, you
just weren't used to him. (THEN -
RUBBING HIS NECK) Oh, you're really
tense.

EMILY

Yeah, he must have like (TO BILL)
thirty-eight things on his mind.

BEAT. THEN;

BERNADETTE

Emmie, what the hell are you talking about?

PEARL

Language.

BERNADETTE

But she's been talking like a lunatic all night. (TO EMILY) There is nothing unlucky about Friday the Twenty-fifth.

BILL

It's just a game me and Emily play. (THEN) A silly, dumb, pointless, idiotic little game.

EMILY

Bill, just go in there and get Little Max his job back. You'll be fine.

LITTLE MAX

I really appreciate you putting yourself out for me like this. (EMOTIONAL) You know, it's...

HE THROWS HIS ARM AROUND BILL'S NECK.

BILL

(UNWRAPPING HIMSELF) That's really not necessary.

LITTLE MAX

Well, it means a lot to me. You're a
stand-up guy.

BEAT. THEN;

EMILY

Stand up, Bill.

BILL

(HESITATES) I really think it'd be
more productive if someone went with
me.

EMILY

(FED UP) Fine, I'll go with you.

Let's get it over with.

SHE OPENS THE DOOR. BILL GETS OUT OF THE CAR, SHUTS
HIS DOOR. EMILY GETS BACK IN AND SLAMS THE DOOR.

SFX: DOOR LOCKS

EMILY (CONT'D)

Go!

BILL GLARES AT HER, THEN TRUDGES TO THE SERVICE
DOOR, AS WE;

CUT TO:

SCENE MINT. CUTTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

IT'S A GOOD-SIZED ROOM, KEPT AT A CONSTANT 55 DEGREES. THERE'S A WALK-IN REFRIGERATOR, A COUPLE BIG TABLES, SOME SAWS AND GRINDERS AND VARIOUS OTHER EQUIPMENT. A HALF-SIDE OF BEEF HANGS ON A CHAIN TRACK.

MAX IS AT A TABLE, CUTTING STEAKS. HE'S WEARING AN OLD-FASHIONED SLEEVELESS T-SHIRT AND HEAVY GLOVES. BILL ENTERS.

BILL

Max?

MAX

Oh. Hey, professor.

BILL

(RUBS HIS ARMS) I forgot how cold it is in here. (LOOKS) And bloody.

MAX

Hey, the cold is good for you.

(POUNDS HIS CHEST) I got nipples like a teenager.

BILL

I'm going to take your word for that.

(THEN) Listen, about Little Max...

MAX

(WAVES HIM OFF) Ay-yi-yi-yi... It's no matter what I try for him, that boy's gonna make my heart attack.

BILL

(POINTS) Okay, now you're making your accent thicker on purpose.

MAX

What?

BILL

You hide behind that when you hate what's happening. Like at our wedding.

MAX

I did not.

BILL

You did too. You publically wished me a penis.

MAX

I wished you happiness.

BILL

It's on the video.

BEAT, THEN MAX SMILES A LITTLE.

MAX

You want a drink?

HE GOES TO THE HANGING HALF-SIDE OF BEEF AND PULLS A BOTTLE OUT OF IT.

MAX (CONT'D)

(WINKS) Straight from the old country. You can't buy it here anymore. Some college kids went blind and everyone panicked.

HE TAKES A LONG SWIG FROM THE BOTTLE.

MAX (CONT'D)

That's the way the world is now.
Everything's bad for you. Every year
something gets banned. Fertilizer,
pesticides, everything has to change.
No one respects the old ways. My
papa had a farm. He was knee-deep in
chemicals for fifty years. He had a
woman's boob growing out of his hip,
and you never heard a peep out of
him.

BILL

Quite a guy.

MAX

(LIFTS THE BOTTLE) Here's to him.

MAX TAKES ANOTHER SWIG, HANDS THE BOTTLE TO BILL.
BILL STEELS HIMSELF, FORCES DOWN A TINY SIP. THEN;

BILL

(REACTS) That is the single most
delicious thing I've ever tasted.

HE TAKES ANOTHER SIP AS MAX SMILES.

MAX

Yeah. And now they want you to drink
light beer.

BILL

Point taken.

MAX

(LOOKS AROUND) I like coming here at night. It's quiet, you can really appreciate the meat.

BILL

Oh. (NODS) Yeah.

MAX

William, don't pretend to appreciate the meat. That's patronizing.

BILL

No, I just, you know, didn't want to hurt its feelings.

MAX

You want to appreciate the meat?
Come here.

HE TAKES BILL OVER TO ONE OF THE HANGING HALF-SIDES AND SLAPS BOTH HIS HANDS ON IT. THEN;

MAX (CONT'D)

Punch the meat.

BILL

Punch it?

MAX

(NODS) Like in "Rocky." Go ahead.

BILL LOOKS AT MAX FOR A SECOND, THEN THROWS A PUNCH AT THE HALF-SIDE. THEN ANOTHER. THEN ANOTHER. THEN A FEW MORE.

BILL

(WINDED) This... is really sick.

MAX

Want to stop?

BILL

In a minute.

HE GOES BACK TO POUNING ON THE HALF-SIDE AS WE:

CUT TO:

SCENE PEXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

WHERE THE FAMILY WAITS IN THE MINIVAN.

LITTLE MAX

... Okay, Patron Saint of flight attendants.

PEARL

(INSTANT) Saint Bona.

BERNADETTE

Patron Saint of funeral directors.

PEARL

(INSTANT) Saint Joseph of Arimathea.
You kids aren't even trying.

EMILY

Okay, big shot. Patron saint of motorcycle racers.

PEARL

(SMUG) Grand Prix or Supercross?

EMILY

Supercross.

PEARL

Saint Christopher, Saint Francis and
on the east coast, Mary of
Castiliazzo.

LITTLE MAX

She is good.

BERNADETTE

Oh. This is so weird. (TO EMILY)
Do you remember waiting out here,
just like this, when we were in high
school?

PEARL

Boy, I saved you guys that night.

EMILY

(REALIZING) Oh, that's right. The
prom...

BERNADETTE

Yes! And Dad was going to kill us
'cause we rented hotel rooms with
Brad and Gary?

EMILY

Eew, Gary Swaboda. What was I
thinking?

BERNADETTE

Come on, he was cute.

EMILY

No, he was gorgeous. And so stupid.

THEY LAUGH, REMEMBERING. PEARL GLARES AT THEM.

PEARL

You girls swore to me you spent the
night at Linda's.

EMILY

Oh. Well yeah, but... hm.

THE TENSION HANGS IN THE AIR FOR A BEAT. THEN;

LITTLE MAX

(GRINS) Hey, Mom. Who's the patron
saint of lying teenage girls?

EMILY AND BERNADETTE LAUGH. THEN;

PEARL

(CAN'T HELP SMILING) Apparently,
Gary Swaboda.

THEY ALL LAUGH AS WE;

CUT TO:

SCENE QINT. CUTTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MAX AND BILL HAVE MADE SOME PROGRESS ON THE BOTTLE. THEY'RE NOT BOMBED, BUT THEY'RE GETTING THERE. BILL IS PLAYING WITH THE CHAIN TRACK, SWINGING BACK AND FORTH WHILE HE TALKS.

BILL

So let me get this straight. You sneak over on a boat at the age of fifteen, you have no place to stay, you don't know anybody, you don't even speak English. And yet somehow you manage to make a living, learn the language, start a business, expand it into two very successful stores while you're also getting married and raising a family and building a house and helping the FBI destroy the Mafia. (THEN) That last part of the story needs work, by the way.

MAX SHRUGS.

BILL (CONT'D)

So, what doesn't make sense to me is a guy like that... being afraid to sell a little hot food.

BEAT. THEN;

MAX

I'm not afraid. I'm embarrassed. I should have thought of it first.

Five years ago, I would have.

(SIGHS) I'm getting slow.

BILL

Really? Big, tough Max is frightened of getting old?

MAX

Only the getting weak and sick and dying part.

BILL

(TRYING TO HELP) Well statistically, a guy with your body type... you're not going to linger, you'll go just like that. (THEN) Besides, if you don't fire him, you've got Little Max to carry on for you.

MAX

He's a good butcher. He can cut down a hind-quarter in two minutes and the scraps wouldn't fill a teacup.

BILL

You know how lucky you are? Your son idolizes you.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

Try explaining to a four-year-old why
you're excited about finding a
divergent subspecies of mollusk.

(OFF MAX'S BLANK STARE) That's the
same look he gave me.

MAX

Hey, what you do is important.
Someday he'll understand. Then he
can explain it to the rest of us.

BEAT. THEN;

MAX (CONT'D)

They're all waiting out in the car,
huh?

BILL

(NODS) Let's go home.

THEY START OUT.

MAX

I know one thing. When I do go, I
don't want to be buried or cremated.
I want 'em to bring me here, dress
out my carcass, and sell me for
eleven ninety-eight a pound.

BILL

You want people to eat you?

MAX

(SHRUGS) I just think I'd taste
good.

AS THEY EXIT, WE;

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE RINT. KARENSKY KITCHEN - A WHILE LATER

PEARL, BERNADETTE, AND EMILY ARE PACKING LEFT-OVERS. BILL IS LEANED BACK IN A CHAIR WITH A WASHCLOTH OVER HIS EYES.

EMILY

Mom, stop. We won't be able to eat all this.

PEARL

You can do anything if you set your mind to it, honey.

BILL LETS OUT A MOAN.

EMILY

How're you feeling, swinger?

BILL

(GROANS) Like there's an army in my head, trying to dig their way out with bayonets.

PEARL

(GOES TO HIM - QUIETLY) Let this be a lesson to you. Never do anything Max thinks is a good idea.

PEARL EXITS. BERNADETTE GOES OVER TO BILL, STROKES HIS HEAD.

BERNADETTE

Poor baby... If he needs to lie down, he can always use my bedroom. (TO BILL) Always.

BERNADETTE EXITS.

EMILY

(RAISES ARMS) Fifty-four. I even
beat the point spread.

SHE GOES OVER TO BILL, RUBS HIS SHOULDERS.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Hey, you did good tonight.

BILL

Thanks. Can I ask you for a favor?

EMILY

Sure. What?

BILL

Never make me do this again.

EMILY

Do what?

BILL

Be in the middle of all this
emotional uproar. I'm not good at
it. I'm repressed, okay? I come
from a hundred generations of
repressed ancestors. They would have
been appalled if they'd seen me
tonight. They wouldn't have said
anything, but there'd be a lot of
underlying tension.

EMILY

Your family's not repressed. They're passive-aggressive.

BILL

I'm serious. Can't we both just be who we are?

EMILY

What do you mean?

BILL

Look, being careful and thinking things through, that's my thing. But emotions, and nurturing, and connecting with people... that's your thing, that's what you're good at. (THEN) Emily, that's what made me fall in love with you. You're the missing piece of me. Can't we honor that?

BEAT. THEN;

EMILY

(MOVED) No. But that was so sweet of you to say.

BILL

Aw come on, that "missing piece" thing is brilliant. I'm not being unfriendly, Emily. I'm just shy.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

Isn't there anyone in this family
that's shy?

EMILY

Yes. You. (THEN) And we're all
very happy about it. Now let's get
Benjamin and take you home.

THEY START OUT.

BILL

I'm exhausted. What time is it?

EMILY

(CHECKS HER WATCH) Eight-fifteen.

BILL REACTS AS WE;

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

END OF SHOW