

thirtysomething

"be a good girl"

written by
richard kramer

prod. #8216

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FINAL DRAFT

march 6, 1989
march 7, 1989 Blue
march 9, 1989 Pink
march 10, 1989 Yel

CHARACTERS -- 8216

elliott
nancy
michael
melissa
hope
jane
ellyn
elaine steadman
murray steadman
rose waldman
aunt cookie
aunt bea
aunt muriel

*

mrs. ceil hyman
little girl rose (8)
young rose (30)
young elaine (8)
young aunt muriel (30)
young melissa (8)

*

1918 woman
woman (v.o.)
paramedic

*

ATMOSPHERE

4 skaters
bargain hunters
customers
Mr. Zimmerman
pushcart peddler
women (1918)
rose's pregnant mother

LOCATIONS -- 8216

interiors

steadman's

dining room

kitchen

sunroom

melissa's loft (empty)

darkroom

closet

rose's house

dining room

front hall

bedroom

stairway (1965)

living room

pollack's store

mirrored dressing room

mirrored dressing room (1935)

rose's throne

*

DAA

michael's office

exteriors

1918

tenement steps

lower east side street

a pavement

scene chronology -- 8216

day one -- 1-2
night one -- 3-7

day two -- 8-9

day three -- 10-12
night three -- 13-18

day four -- 19-22

day five -- 23-26, 28
night five -- 29-42

day six -- 43-44, A47

day seven -- 48, 51, 53-54

flashback -- 1918

6, 11, 49, 50

flashback -- 1935

27, 52

flashback -- 1965

45

1 INT. STEADMAN HOUSE--KITCHEN--DAY

1

A sheet billows across the screen; it drops to reveal Janey and Melissa, flanked by Hope and Michael, folding the laundry.

MELISSA

Come on...that's not true. I mean
I know your Mommy and Daddy are
middle-class and boring, but you
really like me best?

Hope finds a shredded, wet piece of paper in the laundry basket.

HOPE

Look! I found your license...

The phone rings. Michael gets it in the sunroom; Hope makes a sock puppet for Janey.

HOPE

Remember Shari Lewis?

MELISSA

And Lambchop, of course I do...

MICHAEL

Hello--Oh hi, Marsha...No. We're
fine, really...Hold on, I'll see
if I can find her...

He shouts, theatrically loud, to Hope, who is now an inch away.

MICHAEL

Hope--! Just a second...
(covers mouthpiece)
It's your cousin...what do I say?

HOPE

(takes phone, very
sunny)
Marsha...Really, much
better...Wednesday? Let me check
the book...

She exits into the sunroom for the rest of her conversation.
Michael watches her for a moment and turns back as:

MELISSA

What are you doing tomorrow night?

MICHAEL

The usual. Watch 60 MINUTES, make
sure we've eaten all the major
food groups for the week...What
are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

MELISSA

The usual. Supper at my grandmother's. And if you and Hope wanted to come --

HOPE

(returns)

How is she? She feeling better?

MELISSA

She's great, she's amazing--and don't do your imitation --

MICHAEL

"Melissa--who's that boy?" "That's Michael. My cousin. You've met him a million times." "Get him a coaster, he's leaving rings..."

MELISSA

You did leave rings. Come tomorrow, you can make up for it...

HOPE

We're coming next week, for the birthday party...Which is still so weird to me--I mean that it's your birthday, and your mom's, and your grandmother's--

MELISSA

Not exactly. They're all the same month, we just always do it the same day...

MICHAEL

I can't wait. The old gang. Aunt Muriel, Aunt Cookie--

HOPE

I thought they didn't speak to each other.

MICHAEL

No. Aunt Bea doesn't speak to Aunt Cookie. Aunt Helen doesn't speak to Aunt Muriel--

MELISSA

Michael--

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (2)

1

MICHAEL

And after dinner--they all play
gin. Aunt Bea says to Aunt Muriel
"Tell Cookie I'm knocking with
five and I'll never forgive
her..."

Hope goes into the sunroom with a laundry basket, pointing, as
she goes, to a selection of wallpaper samples hung around the
door.

HOPE

We should pick one of these
today...

As Michael sinks down to the floor with a basket of socks, ready
for balling, Melissa comes over to join him.

MELISSA

Fine. Then don't stay for cards.
Just come for dinner--

MICHAEL

Liss--we like to spend weekends
together. You know. Since the
baby--

MELISSA

Oh sure...I was just thinking,
younger people, you know, they're
good for Nana...

MICHAEL

What? You're implying Aunt Bea
and Uncle Sidney are depressing?
They've been to Aruba!

HOPE

(returns)

Janey would like to see her Aunt
Melissa. Immediately.

MELISSA

God, what a pushy kid...

Melissa goes out. Hope and Michael fold another sheet together,
silent for a moment. It billows, then drops, then:

MICHAEL

Hope...?

(as she looks at him)

It's okay.

2 INT. MELISSA'S LOFT--DAY

2

Ellyn and Melissa look around the loft together; golden, late afternoon light pours through the skylight.

MELISSA

So I was thinking--where the bed is now I could make a sitting area, and put the bed here...And basically, you know, lighten the whole place up --

ELLYN

A clean slate. Great...I do it with an ulcer, you do it with a staple gun. So let's get started...

MELISSA

I can't throw anything out--

*

As Ellyn lists things, holding them up, Melissa briefly considers them and then tosses them into the box.

ELLYN

THE CROCKPOT COOKBOOK...FUN WITH TOFU...

MELISSA

Anything from ex-boyfriends who've married someone else...

ELLYN

Be ruthless. Not everything old has a value. Some stuff's just old.

MELISSA

When did you get so healthy? I mean-- how are you?

ELLYN

Well, I'm not planning any camping trips...I'm okay. The whole thing, now that I'm coming out of it--I know some stuff now.

MELISSA

Like what?

ELLYN

(pleased)
Nothing.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

MELISSA

Nothing? Are you satisfied with your therapist?

ELLYN

Until I got sick, my life was this constant State of The Union address about me. But now--God, I don't know, it's all these questions. I had to face the truth, and just--you know--accept I wasn't really sure about anything--

(breaks it)

Either that or not have a stomach...And with work--I think I want to go back full-time. In a few weeks. Which is fine, because there's a project I've wanted to do, but there was never time...You know anything about prisons?

MELISSA

There's a lot of single men.

ELLYN

(produces a folder)

Look. I want to do a pilot study on recidivism. And I thought--you know--

MELISSA

What?

ELLYN

I need pictures. Really good ones. So if you want to mull it over

--

MELISSA

I've mulled. Sure.

ELLYN

Really? That's great --

MELISSA

When would we do this?

ELLYN

Next week. I've got it all lined up...

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: (2)

2

MELISSA

I've got all that birthday junk
to do--

ELLYN

Is it a problem? I could try to
reschedule--

MELISSA

No. My mother, she'll handle it...

(closes the box)

Okay. Records...

*

She takes an empty box over to her record collection, hauling
out a pile to go through when:

ELLYN

You're lucky. With your
grandmother, that you're so
close...

MELISSA

You ever know yours?

ELLYN

They died when I was little. One
left me nine Wedgwood dessert
plates and the other left me a
chemical imbalance. Look...let
me show you what I've got in mind
for that prison stuff...

3 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--FRONT HALL--NIGHT

3

Grand and dingy--an older, more freshly assimilated generation's
idea of luxury. Rose has not changed much in this house since
1955. Melissa enters; she has a small package which she sets
on the hall table. Her mother, ELAINE, greets her.

ELAINE

You're here, I was worried --

MELISSA

Ma--I'm half an hour early...

ELAINE

Your grandmother keeps asking
"Where is she? Is she here yet?"

MURRAY STEADMAN, Melissa's father appears; they kiss.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

MURRAY

Sweetheart --

MELISSA Hi, Daddy.

ELAINE

Murray, where's Mother?

MURRAY

She's not coming down till we all
sing "Hello, Dolly!". Relax,
Elaine. She's fine...

ELAINE

(hands Melissa a drink)
Would you give this to Aunt
Muriel? With a coaster...
(to Murray)
Look at this rug. It's completely
worn out. She could fall, break
a hip...

4 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--LIVING ROOM--NIGHT

4

Melissa sits on a couch between AUNT COOKIE and AUNT MURIEL.

AUNT COOKIE

You look lovely, darling.

MELISSA

Thanks, Aunt Cookie...

AUNT MURIEL

But you're missing an earring.

MELISSA

I'm not. There's just one.

AUNT COOKIE

Did you check the car seat?

MELISSA

There's just one--

AUNT MURIEL

Tell you what--

AUNT COOKIE

We'll keep an eye open--

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

4

MELISSA

(gives up)

Great. I'd really appreciate that--

AUNT COOKIE

(looks o.s.)

Rose--

And ROSE WALDMAN--still a beauty, and very much the matriarch-- makes her regal entrance. Everybody rises; Melissa goes to her.

MELISSA

Hey, Rosie...

ROSE

Look at you...Would it kill you to dress like a normal person?

MELISSA

I do like you taught me. Like Coco Chanel said--"Get dressed, then take one thing off..."

ROSE

In your case I'd have kept on going. Now watch this...

Rose goes to Aunt Muriel and deftly fingers the material of her dress.

ROSE

Very nice, Muriel. But you paid too much.

AUNT MURIEL

It was a birthday present. From Sidney!

ROSE

(to Melissa)

See--my fingers know. They're famous in the business. And what they just felt was not a bargain. Muriel...

(lights a cigarette)

Next time send Sidney to me, dear. You're family. I'll send him home with a carload for you...

(takes Melissa's hand)

Now come with me...

Rose leads Melissa off.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: (2)

4

AUNT COOKIE
(to Aunt Muriel)
She's still smoking.

*

5 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--FRONT HALL--NIGHT

5

Rose adjust her makeup as Melissa gives her her present.

MELISSA
Look. I got you fruit slices...

ROSE
(peers inside)
Are they lemon? I hate the
lemon...

*

Aunt Cookie passes in the background.

*

AUNT COOKIE
Where should I put my honey cake,
Elaine?

ROSE
(to Melissa)
In the garbage. That honey cake
showed up on my angiogram...

*

Elaine appears, and readjusts the thermostat.

ELAINE
Dinner's ready...

ROSE
What are you doing?

ELAINE
This house is a freezer--

*

ROSE
It's an oven. Put it down.

*

ELAINE
People are sitting in their coats,
Mother...

ROSE
(enlisting Melissa)
You said it was too hot, right?

MELISSA
(trapped, as they wait)
Well, actually, I--

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

ROSE

See? Now where's Murray? I need
a highball--

ELAINE

You don't need a highball, Mother.
We're about to eat...

*

Melissa finds a framed photograph of herself and Rose. It's
clearly ten years old. Through the following Elaine stands back,
forgotten for now, quietly watching this moment between her
mother and daughter.

*

MELISSA

Rosie...Look at this.

ROSE

(looks at picture)
Me and my girl...

MELISSA

It's a little old. I think I was
still a virgin in this picture...

ROSE

Don't kid yourself. No virgin
would wear that blouse...

MELISSA

You know what? It's time for a
new picture...

Murray appears, and instinctively senses the dynamic here as
Melissa grabs her camera and sets up.

*

ROSE

Why?

MELISSA

It's what I do...

ROSE

(generally)
It's what she does. When do I see
something in LIFE magazine?

ELAINE

People think she's very gifted,
Mom...

MURRAY

I want one of the three of you.
For my desk...

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: (2)

5

ELAINE

Murray, I've got a pot roast in there that's turning to leather--

ROSE

(as Melissa raises camera)

Not in my glasses!

MELISSA

I'm just framing, Nana...

ELAINE

(uncomfortable)

Where do you want me?

*

MELISSA

A little to your left, Mom. And Daddy--you be me--

MURRAY

I'll need an earring.

Melissa, happy with her shot, hands Murray her camera.

ROSE

This is ridiculous...

6 But Murray's begun. The flashes mesmerize Rose. She dissoociaates 6 from the present; voices fade, replaced by the sound of roller skates and a distant girls' chorus. Our very tight view of Rose is punctuated by an image of a YOUNG GIRL, in white, on roller skates. Each time we see her she is closer; Rose's memory attenuates her movements and desaturates her of color.

MELISSA'S VOICE

Nana--?

7 BACK TO SCENE

7

MELISSA

Nana--what is it? Are you all right?

ROSE

What? What is this?

ELAINE

Mother, I'm calling the doctor

--

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

But Rose has successfully restored the appearance of normalcy.

ROSE

Don't. I'm all right. Really,
Elaine. I don't want you to
worry. Just take the picture. Do
I look all right?

MELISSA

You look beautiful.

8 INT. MELISSA'S LOFT--DARKROOM--

8

Melissa hangs prints of the pictures she took at Rose's house. A few catch Rose's infirmity and panic; in the others, she's all right. O.S.: A knock at the door. Melissa pulls down the shots of the weak Rose, throws them away, and turns off the light in the darkroom.

9 INT. MELISSA'S LOFT--DAY

9

Melissa has made real strides here; The loft is noticeably cleared out; the bed has been pushed to the middle of the room. She opens the door to Elaine, who enters with a shopping bag.

MELISSA

Hi, Mom...

ELAINE

(looks around)

You've really changed things...

MELISSA

Yeah, well, I figured it was time
to change from Marlo Thomas to
Samuel Beckett...

*

ELAINE

I'm sure it'll be lovely. Like
Nana always says, you've got real
flair...

MELISSA

She says that?

ELAINE

(unloads shopping bag)

All the time...I brought those
things you wanted from her
attic...

(more)

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

ELAINE (Cont'd)

(as Melissa
investigates)

You should see it. It's a complete
fire trap...

MELISSA

(holds up a pair of old
roller skates)

Where'd you find these?

ELAINE

In a trunk. So what do you want
with all this?

MELISSA

I wanted to give her something
special. So I thought--THIS IS
YOUR LIFE, ROSE WALDMAN. I had
my own stuff, all those pictures
I took as a kid, and I thought
if I mixed them with stuff of hers
it could be incredible. Then we
all cry and Rose wins a set of
Tourister luggage--

ELAINE

So it's a wrap-up of her life--

MELISSA

Until now...I talked to her
yesterday. She sounded great--

ELAINE

She promised to rest yesterday.
This is a woman with arrhythmia,
congestive heart failure...She
spent the day pricing a shipment
of resort-wear.

MELISSA

She likes to work--

ELAINE

She likes to drive, too.
Yesterday-- she parks in the
tow-away zone, as always, and,
as always, I go to the tow yard.
They call me Elaine now, we've
become very good friends...

MELISSA

Mom--have a cup of tea...

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: (2)

ELAINE

I can't stay. I'm interviewing attendants-

MELISSA

Attendants? Why?

ELAINE

She's not taking her Digoxin. I know. I count the pills. And I've given up trying to coax her--

MELISSA

She forgets. I'll talk to her.

ELAINE

Could you come to the store tomorrow? Keep an eye on her? That would help...

MELISSA

(senses something)

Mom--are you okay? I can help with Nana, Mom--

ELAINE

Some things are going to change, Melissa.

MELISSA

What things?

ELAINE

Daddy and I have decided that Nana is going to come live with us.

MELISSA

Okay--wait. Mom, I know her--

ELAINE

No. You know your darling Rosie. I know a sick old woman who won't take care of herself--

MELISSA

She'll never do it. That's her house. She's lived there forty-five years.

ELAINE

(to end it)

I've got to go. That traffic is going to be murder...

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: (3)

9

MELISSA

(to stop her)

You can't make her move out. I'll
help with her. You just tell me
how.

ELAINE

We'll talk.

She goes. We stay with Melissa for a beat, and

FADE OUT

10 INT. WALDMAN'S CLOTHING STORE-- MIRRORED DRESSING ROOM--DAY

10

In this hall of mirrors, women of all ages, sizes and shapes-- united only by bloodlust for a bargain--wriggle into and out of Rose's marked-down outfits. Prominently featured is an item of furniture which, for want of a better description, I will describe as Rose's throne. This is where she needlepoints, and it is from here that she casts her barbed remarks at her customers. In the first two cuts, however, she is on her feet.

1. ROSE

It's not you, darling. Go home and make a pot roast...

2. ROSE

What if a bus hit you? You'd want strangers to see you dead in that? Try the blue. That you'll be gorgeous in...

3. ROSE

So it's a Calvin. On you, it looks like a Coolidge. Go up a half-size...

The montage ends. Rose is with MRS. HYMAN, one of her "faithfuls".

MRS. HYMAN

It's the usual thing, Rose. I can't decide. I'll come back. With a friend...

ROSE

(don't lose the sale)
Wait, I've got an idea...
(calls out)

Melissa!

(as Melissa enters)

My grand-daughter. This is Mrs. Hyman, sweetheart... She's one of my faithfuls --

MRS. HYMAN

You're missing an earring, dear.

MELISSA

(why fight it?)
I'm looking for it.

ROSE

Mrs. Hyman needs a second opinion. And I'm not talking surgery--

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

MRS. HYMAN

Am I spanning across the hips?

MELISSA

No, really, I like it, it's you...

(to Rose)

And maybe if you knocked off ten

--

ROSE

She's going to ruin me. Honey--get us a cream soda and a sales slip...

(to Mrs. Hyman)

You won't be sorry. And if you are-- there's no returns.

Melissa goes. Mrs. Hyman changes in a dressing room. Rose collects discarded outfits; as we pass off from her we hear Mrs. Hyman, o.s.

MRS. HYMAN (O.S.)

She's adorable. There's a real resemblance, even more than your daughter...

There's no response. Mrs. Hyman looks out to see that Rose is pale and fighting for breath. She calls out as other women surround her.

MRS. HYMAN Melissa!

Melissa runs in, sees Rose, and goes to her.

MELISSA

Nana--what is it?

ROSE

I'm all right...

(holds tight to her)

Melissa...stay with me--

MELISSA

I'm right here --

ROSE

Just till this passes...And don't tell your mother--

Rose is fading again. Melissa turns to Mrs. Hyman and another woman.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (2)

10

MELISSA

I need water for her, and call
my mother, the number's by the
phone--

11 As she is making these requests we move in past her, until
we're tight on Rose. We go with her on an inner journey, a few
steps deeper than in Act One. We see the skating girl, but this
time she moves back and forth across the frame to reveal the
Young Rose (8 years old) sitting very still on tenement steps.

11

12 BACK TO SCENE

12

Time has passed. Elaine is here now, with Melissa. She bends
down:

ELAINE

Mom?

Rose looks up, lost somewhere between present and past. Melissa,
who is now seen between the two of them, gently strokes Rose's
forehead.

MELISSA

It's all right, Nana. It's all
right...

13 INT. STEADMAN HOUSE--KITCHEN--NIGHT

13

We're back and forth--with Hope, Nancy, Michael, and Melissa--
between the kitchen and dining room as they clear dinner dishes
and bring out coffee cups and dessert. Nancy is at the window
seat, looking through some chintz samples Hope has left there. *

MELISSA

The real problem's my mother, she
acts like Rose is Grandma Moses,
but she's not, she's got
congestive heart failure, there's
medication, you don't have to be
hospitalized...

NANCY

They all have that. Both my
grandmothers did...
(holds up chintz sample)
This one. I like this one... *

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

HOPE

The thing about Rose is she's so beautiful... She must have been something when she was young--

MELISSA

She was, I'll show you pictures.

HOPE

I hope I look that good when I'm old, and we're living in Miami...

MICHAEL

You'll look fine. I'll have shrunk to 5'3" and have a little mustache...But it's not a problem. We're never going to get old, right?

NANCY

Right. But our parents will...

WHAM! A wind-chill factor hits the Steadman house.

MICHAEL

Unless, of course, they have the consideration to be already dead.

NANCY

But what about the ones who do get old? What if they get Alzheimer's, or get really sick --

MICHAEL

It's really upsetting. The whole idea...

HOPE

Well--who knows? Like with my mother and father...They live on a golf course...So maybe one day they'll be having a really good game, just driving along...Then a meteor falls on the golfcart and they're both killed instantly.

(on their reactions)

Painlessly...

(dig that hole, girl)

Not soon. In ten years. Okay. Twelve.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: (2)

13

MELISSA

A daughter's wish. Very touching,
Hope.

MICHAEL

My mom's sixty-one, but to me
she's forever forty-two, in a
Country Squire...

MELISSA

All I know is I don't want to be
with Elaine like she is with
Rose...

HOPE

Well, the thing about Rose is,
she's tough.

MICHAEL

And she's strong--

HOPE

She'd have to be, to keep a
business going, for what? How long
is it?

MELISSA

Fifty-five years. Seven days a
week, till a few years ago...She
was never--you know--your standard
perfect-piecrust grandma...

(brief pause)

I'd go to her store after school,
she'd drop whatever she was doing.
We'd go for ice cream, for a
walk...Or she'd say "Let's get
out of here. We'll go to the
movies and hit the Chinaman. My
treat..." I was fat, I looked like
Little Lotta, didn't have any
friends. But she was my friend...

A pause. Hope gently puts her arms around Melissa.

HOPE

She'll be all right.

MELISSA

So this is dessert? Make Your Own
Sundaes? You've been reading
REDBOOK again, Hope--

HOPE

I'm a busy woman. You want a
wedding cake? Get married.

14 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--FRONT HALL--NIGHT 14

Elaine sits alone, waiting, in the dark hall, smoking a secret cigarette. The doorbell rings. *

15 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--ROSE'S BEDROOM--NIGHT 15

We see Rose from an angle just outside the door to her bedroom. She is in bed, working on her needlepoint as she calls out to Elaine.

ROSE

Elaine! Who's there? *

ELAINE (O.S.)

I'm going to the door, Mom! *

Rose stuffs her needlepoint into its bag and looks in a compact. She quickly pats on some rouge and puts on earrings, preparing herself for her Audience. *

16 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--FRONT HALL--NIGHT 16

Elaine goes to open the door for Melissa, putting out her cigarette on the way.

MELISSA

How is she? What did the doctor say?

ELAINE

The usual. She's not taking care of herself, not taking her medication...I've got an attendant coming at eight for an interview--

MELISSA

I thought you found a good one--

ELAINE

I did. She lasted three hours...

ROSE (O.S.)

Elaine? Who is that? *

ELAINE

It's Melissa! *

MELISSA

(as they go upstairs)

I can only stay a little while, Mom. I promised Ellyn I'd help her with some stuff...

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

ELAINE
Fine. I'll work something out...

*

MELISSA
I'm sorry...

*

17 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--BEDROOM--NIGHT

17

Rose, in bed, has pulled herself together and gone back to her needlepoint. We're with her for one private beat before Melissa enters; she takes the scarf that is draped over her bedside lamp and quickly ties it around her neck. Melissa enters, goes to her, kisses her and sits down on the bed. Elaine stands in the doorway.

ROSE
Darling--

MELISSA
So Nana--where's the mah-jongg tiles?

*

ROSE
I threw them away. I already know enough widows...

*

ELAINE
Are you hungry, Mom? I've got soup.

*

ROSE
I don't want anything...

MELISSA
You should try to eat something--

ROSE
(because Melissa said it)
What kind of soup is it?

ELAINE
Beef with barley. Your recipe.

ROSE
I'll try a cup. And maybe a few nice crackers.

*

A brief pause, and Elaine goes.

*

ROSE
Did you call the store?

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

ELAINE (o.s.)

Yes, Mom...

ROSE

What did we do today?

ELAINE (o.s.)

(Some figure.)

ROSE

(to Melissa)

That's lousy, but this is always
a slow period --which you'll
learn.

Melissa notices a small electronic device on the bed.

MELISSA

What's this? You've been wired?

ROSE

The doctor gave it to me. I'm
dizzy, I palpitate, I keep a
record. They read the tape--

MELISSA

And save a call to their broker...

ROSE

(laughs)

I'm laughing. Either you're really
funny or I'm not dead yet...

Elaine returns, bearing a tray.

ELAINE

Here it is...

MELISSA

(takes tray from her)

Thanks, Mom...

ROSE

Sit down, Elaine. Have a cracker.
You're always bouncing around like
a meshugganeh...

ELAINE

(can't resist)

I can't sit down. I've got to go
interview attendants--

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: (2)

17

ROSE

We're back on that again? *

ELAINE

Mother, I don't know what you said to that woman today, but it must have been awful-- *

ROSE

I don't want some strange black woman in my house--

ELAINE

Mother, you know I hate it when you say things like that--

ROSE

Right, I'm prejudiced. I hired my first black saleswoman in 1941. Black people love me.

ELAINE

That's not the point--

ROSE

Look, Elaine. Make it easy. We'll turn this house into a nursing home. I'll ask all my friends, you can help us glue tiles to juice cans... *

ELAINE

(after a moment)

You two have a nice visit. I'll be downstairs... *

Elaine goes. Melissa sets up a tray for Rose.

MELISSA

Here you go...
(as Rose tastes the
soup)
How is it?

ROSE

(pushes it away)
It's all right...

MELISSA

You've got to eat something...

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: (3)

17

ROSE

I will...Is it supposed to rain?
My shoulders feel like rain...

*

Melissa gently starts to massage her shoulders.

MELISSA

How's that?

*

ROSE

All these years...I never knew
I had a Swedish grand-daughter...

A moment, as Melissa continues to work on Rose. Then, gently,
she kisses the top of Rose's head.

MELISSA

Come on. Under those covers...

She helps Rose out of the chair, out of her robe, and into bed.

ROSE

I don't know if I can sleep. My
head gets so busy --

MELISSA

Then tell one of your stories.
That'll help...About Grandpa--

ROSE

You don't want to hear that --

MELISSA

(encouraging her)

He never left the house without
a new hundred dollar bill...

ROSE

(hooked)

Never...Jack was a king. Fanny
Brice was in love with him. He
sold Jolson a summer house...

(she's into it now)

Max Kellerman, his partner--Max
told me they'd lost everything.
Not Jack. Jack sat in a chair...I
went and made a business. I was
pregnant with Elaine, I went into
labor the third day we were open,
the next day I was back...

(fading now)

In business...

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: (4)

17

Melissa gently pulls the covers over Rose. She removes her scarf and places it back over the lamp. She notices Rose's slippers on the floor; for Melissa, right now, it is as if they are Rose herself. She arranges them neatly by the side of the bed, then turns off the light, silhouetting herself.

18 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--FRONT HALL--NIGHT

18

Melissa comes down the stairs, bearing Rose's tray. Elaine searches for her keys.

MELISSA

She's asleep...

ELAINE

You should go home, dear. Thanks for

coming.

MELISSA

Are you coming back, Mom?

ELAINE

I've got to. There's no one to stay with her...

A moment as Melissa considers, then--

MELISSA

Maybe I could--

ELAINE

(a protestation of nobility)

No no no, I want to --

MELISSA

But you're exhausted--

ELAINE

So are you--

MELISSA

But you're more exhausted--

ELAINE

It's not a problem.

MELISSA

It isn't for me either--

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

ELAINE
You've got your own life--

*

MELISSA
Mom--I'll call Ellyn--

*

ELAINE
(what can she do?)
All right. How is she?

*

MELISSA
She's fine--

*

ELAINE
I'd better go. If she goes near
a cigarette I want you to call
me.

*

MELISSA
I'll call you.

ELAINE
You're sure this is all right?

*

MELISSA
She's going to be fine, okay?
(kisses Elaine goodbye)
She's going to be fine.

Elaine goes. Melissa takes the tray into the kitchen. We linger
on the pattern the moon makes as its pours through the fanlight.

FADE OUT

ACT_THREE:

19 INT. MELISSA'S LOFT--DAY

19

A colorful silk shawl hangs at a dark closet's doorframe. Behind this shawl is where Melissa keeps her clothes. We hear her before we see her:

MELISSA (O.S.)

Okay...I'm ready...here I come...

The closet light goes on. Melissa pulls the shawl aside and steps out to reveal herself to Ellyn. She doesn't look a lot like the Melissa we know; she could, in fact, pass for an anchor-woman. She models her outfit for Ellyn.

ELLYN

(somewhat nonplussed,
but)

You look--really! You look --

Melissa, discouraged, confronts herself in a mirror.

MELISSA

I look like Diane Sawyer after
a henna job by a blind man.

ELLYN

No, really, you look--Do you have
jury duty?

MELISSA

I'm going to my grandmother's
store. Just for a day or two,
till she's on her feet...

ELLYN

So she's okay, basically?

MELISSA

She's fine. I'm completely wiped
out, I sat up all night with
her...

(a brief pause)

Ellyn, look, a lot of stuff has
come up lately --

ELLYN

I know, it must be really hard--
mean

MELISSA

And I think it might be the best
thing...

(more)

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

MELISSA (Cont'd)
(this isn't easy)
You know, with your project--

ELLYN
Let me just see what you did the
other day.

MELISSA
I haven't had time to print.

ELLYN
(careful)
I see. Right...

MELISSA
I was going to last night, but
I told you about last night--

ELLYN
And you don't have time now.

MELISSA
I called Russell, he says he can
do them--

ELLYN
When?

MELISSA
Next week. Is that okay?

ELLYN
I have to think --

MELISSA
Because if it isn't--

ELLYN
No, wait, I just have to think...

Ellyn is both hurt and angry right now. She's turned away from
Melissa.

ELLYN
It's all right. Because--this is
something I'm working on. Because
it's stuff like this that screwed
me up in the first place, not
being able to roll with the
punches, as it were...

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: (2)

19

MELISSA
(guilty)
I'll find the time. Maybe
tonight--

ELLYN
It can wait.

MELISSA
Ellyn--

ELLYN
Really. It can...

20 OMIT

20

21 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--TV ROOM--DAY

21

Rose, in robe and nightgown, sits in a chair. Melissa attends her.

*

ROSE
Now say it back to me--what's the
hot number?

MELISSA
Anything 98.

ROSE
I offer an item for twenty, and
the same for \$19.98. The 98 sells
out, the twenty sits like a
herring. Which is human nature,
which is also business. So knock
'em dead, kid!

22 INT. WALDMAN'S--MIRRORED DRESSING ROOM--DAY

22

Melissa attends a large, middle-aged woman, posing in the
mirror.

MELISSA
It's very you. It's very
wow...Have a cream soda and I'll
write you a sales slip...

23 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--TV ROOM--DAY

23

Rose is in a different robe; Melissa wears a different "appropriate" outfit. Rose, nodding, looks through business ledgers.

ROSE

Not bad for a Wednesday...

(proud)

It's in the blood...

24 INT. WALDMAN'S-- MIRRORED DRESSING ROOM--DAY

24

Melissa moves through a series of quick cuts with customers. She grows more and more tired throughout.

25 OMIT

25

26 INT. WALDMAN'S--MIRRORED DRESSING ROOM--DAY

26

Closingtime. The dressing room is empty. Melissa--who, right now, would call her autobiography DEATH OF A SALESWOMAN--collapses into a chair, a pile of clothes in her arms. Elaine enters.

ELAINE

We're locking up...

MELISSA

(a zombie)

Not yet. There's still a few items from the Resort Line I'd like to turn over...

*

ELAINE

She's very proud of you. You've done well...

Elaine gathers up discarded garments and puts the overheard lights out. Only the spots, forming pools in the darkness, remain.

ELAINE

Your friends know what time tomorrow night?

MELISSA

Seven o'clock. I told them.

(looks around)

It's strange...She's never changed this room. How long's it been like this--twenty-five years?

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

ELAINE
Longer than that...

A brief pause, as a cloud of memory passes over Elaine.

ELAINE
Aunt Muriel was working with
her...

MELISSA
I never knew Aunt Muriel worked
with Nana...

ELAINE
She did...

Now, as we slowly move in on Elaine, we are in--

27 ELAINE'S MEMORY--WALDMAN'S--MIRRORED DRESSING ROOM--1935

27

YOUNG ELAINE, maybe eight years old and all dressed up, plays
jacks. AUNT MURIEL (30) is with her.

YOUNG ELAINE
Where's Mama, Aunt Muriel?

AUNT MURIEL
Mama's busy right now, Elaine... *

YOUNG ELAINE
But she said we'd have a special
day -- *

Aunt Muriel gives Elaine a box; she opens it and takes out the
rollerskates.

AUNT MURIEL
It is--and this is our secret.

YOUNG ELAINE
(she understands now)
Mama's not coming...
(her anger rising)
She promised, we were going out
--

YOUNG ROSE (30) enters.

YOUNG ROSE
But we can't.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

YOUNG ELAINE
Mommy, you said--

YOUNG ROSE
What's going on right now?

YOUNG ELAINE
(a familiar litany)
A Depression...

YOUNG ROSE
Which means--?

YOUNG ELAINE
People do without.

YOUNG ROSE
And what are we?

YOUNG ELAINE
Lucky.

YOUNG ROSE
Say it again.

YOUNG ELAINE
We're lucky.

YOUNG ROSE
Now who's my good girl?

28 BACK TO SCENE--PRESENT--TIGHT ON ELAINE

28

As her look, emerging from this moment of shared memory, gives us all the answer we need to the preceding question: "I am..." A brief pause. Melissa is moved by this revelation.

MELISSA
It must have really hurt, Ma...

ELAINE
(dismissing it)
It's just a story. And you know me. I probably didn't even get it right...

She puts out all the remaining lights but one. As she's on her way out:

MELISSA
Mom? In case things get too crazy tomorrow--happy birthday, Mom.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

ELAINE

Thank you.

She puts out the final light. The dressing room is dark.

*

29 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--LIVING ROOM--NIGHT

29

Melissa, her family and friends (well--Michael and Hope, that is) have come together in surprising harmony. Murray plays the piano and people gather round to sing "Make Someone Happy". Aunt COOKIE reveals herself as a suburban Mabel Mercer. Elaine approaches Melissa.

*

ELAINE

Nana wants to see you, dear...

MELISSA

Okay...

Before Melissa goes, she collars Michael, indicating a very tiny, very old, very fierce-looking man sitting on the couch.

MELISSA

Michael--go talk to Mr. Zimmerman.
He's all alone...

*

30 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--BEDROOM--NIGHT

30

Melissa does up the last buttons on Rose's dress. Rose looks beautiful. She turns to Melissa for approval.

MELISSA

You look beautiful--

ROSE

(both tender and
intense)

Happy birthday, darling...

MELISSA

Happy birthday, Rosie...

ROSE

I want you to know something.
Which is how much I love you...do
you know that, Melissa?

MELISSA

I know that, Nana.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

A30 ROSE'S HOUSE--LIVING ROOM--NIGHT

A30*

Michael sits next to Mr. Zimmerman on the couch.

MICHAEL

(loud)

So...Melissa tells me you're Mr. Zimmerman, from Miami. I'm Michael Steadman. Murray's nephew...

(no response; very loud)

I'm in advertising! You know! The ad game!

(no response, gives up)

Something tells me you're retired, don't ask me why...Here. Have some cheese...

31 OMIT

31

32 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--DINING ROOM--NIGHT

32

Elaine puts finishing touches on the table.

33 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--ROSE'S BEDROOM--NIGHT

33

We're just outside, in the hall. The piano and singing can be heard from downstairs. Rose, watching herself in the mirror, practices the words of a speech.

ROSE

We've got three birthday girls here tonight. One of them is eighty, but I won't say who...

34 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--LIVING ROOM--NIGHT

34

Michael and Hope are seated on the couch with Aunt Bea.

AUNT BEA

Michael, I was very sorry about your father. He was a lovely man.

MICHAEL

Thank you, Mrs. Rifkind.

AUNT BEA

Such a lovely man. Why do they always take the good ones?

(more)

*

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

AUNT BEA (Cont'd)

It's a heart attack, usually at a wedding, or a stroke, and they can't talk any more. Or cancer, and the chemo, and the agony, and the hospitals. And what can you do for them?

*

MICHAEL

(after a beat)

Not much, I guess.

*

ELAINE

(passing through)

Dinner...

35 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--FRONT HALL--NIGHT

35

Melissa collars Hope as she emerges from the living room.

*

MELISSA

Hope--have you seen Ellyn?

*

HOPE

I haven't seen her...

*

MELISSA

Excuse me...

She goes to the phone and quickly dials.

MELISSA

Ellyn, hi...it's me...are you there?

Elaine passes Melissa on her way to the dining room.

ELAINE

Dinner...

MELISSA

(to Elaine)

Great...

(back to phone)

So I guess you're not there...Okay. 'Bye...

*

She hangs up, as the guests leave the living room, passing her on their way into dinner.

36 OMIT

36

37 OMIT

37

38 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--DINING ROOM--NIGHT

38

Candles glow; the guests are seated around the table. Rose is at one end, Elaine is at the other, and Melissa is in the middle. As Murray makes a speech, Rose, throughout, keeps a watchful eye on Melissa.

MURRAY

--So here we are, and it's that time of year again--time to say happy birthday to my three best girlfriends--Elaine, Melissa, and Rose...What more can I say? Only to ask that we all raise our glasses--

(everyone does)

Say L'chaim, or cheers, or Tchin-Tchin...

(everyone does)

And eat the veal while it's hot, God knows it cost me enough...

Murray gets his applause and dinner is on. Platters are passed around, wine is poured, etc.

39 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--FRONT HALL--NIGHT

39

Between courses. As tonight's guests stretch their legs we find Aunt Cookie and Aunt Muriel waiting to use the bathroom.

AUNT COOKIE

He's been in there a long time...

AUNT MURIEL

(knocks, talks very loud)

Mr. Zimmerman? Is everything all right in there?

40 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--DINING ROOM--NIGHT

40

The women clear dinner plates, replacing them with dessert plates. Elaine hovers over Rose.

ROSE

The dinner was beautiful, Elaine...

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

ELAINE
(surprised)
Thanks, Mom...

MELISSA
It really was--

ROSE
You've got a touch--which you sure
didn't get from me...
(reaches for Elaine's.
hand)
Thank you, dear...

Elaine, not knowing how to handle this, heads for the kitchen.
She can't resist turning to ask:

ELAINE
What about the veal? Did you think
it was a little dry?

ROSE
Not dry. Maybe a little veiny--

ELAINE
(goes into kitchen)
I could kill that butcher...

ROSE
(to Melissa)
Come sit by me, sweetheart.

Melissa gets up to move next to Rose. Elaine comes out of the
kitchen. For a moment, the three generations of women--Rose,
Elaine, and Melissa--are together. Rose sees this, and calls
to Murray at the other end of the table.

ROSE
Murray--get the camera!

Rose puts her arms around Elaine and Melissa; Murray takes the
picture. Rose gets up, and clinks her glass with a knife.

ROSE
Sit down, please. Everyone sit
down. I want to say something
and it's not about underpricing
your competitors...

Everyone sits.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED: (2)

40

ROSE

We've got three birthday girls here tonight. One of them is eighty--but I won't tell who...

(laughter)

What I will tell is a story. About business--my business. People always ask "Rose--what's your secret? How did you do it?" Tonight I'll tell you. Human nature. I observed it. Everyone makes mistakes. I understood that. A manufacturer--he falls in love with a fabric. The mill says he's got to take five thousand yards, and it turns out the public wants half of that. Does he put it away and tie up the money? No. He cuts. I take. What I ask shocks him--but the cash is moving, and he's got something. People need something in their hand. I saw that--and now people need me...

It is at this point that we shift to Melissa to both see and feel how she absorbs Rose's words. She scans, inside herself, images encrusted both with memory and feeling. We see these, to the accompaniment of Rose's words, in a series of brief dissolves.

41 OMIT

41

A) Rose's slippers.

ROSE (V.O.)

Tonight--my hands are full, and so is my heart...

DISSOLVE TO

B) Rose's needlepoint bag, and a particularly beautiful piece of her work, framed, with her name--Rose Waldman--stitched in.

ROSE (V.O.)

It may skip an occasional beat, but who's counting?

DISSOLVE TO

C) A table of family photographs, featuring framed shots of Rose through the years.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

ROSE (V.O.)

Well--I am. Tonight--I'm eighty years old tonight...I look at my life, and I see that my hands are too full...

*

And, now, we go

42 BACK TO SCENE

42

Placing ourselves with Melissa's reaction, and then returning to Rose.

ROSE

I want to use them now to count my blessings, not the sales slips by the register at the end of the day. And my biggest blessing is here tonight...

(she takes Melissa's hand)

My dear grand-daughter, Melissa--to whom I have decided to leave my business--after I train her right--and who I trust will carry my name into the future...

It is suddenly very, very quiet. Rose has delivered quite a bombshell, and all are feeling it--Murray and Elaine in particular. All eyes are on Melissa now, and she feels every one of them. The air, for her, has turned heavy in here; the movements and voices of people seem to take place at a distance. She is both here and not here--as the lights dim and a birthday cake is brought out by Aunt Cookie; as everyone sings; as Rose fixes her gaze on her across the glowing candles.

*

FADE OUT

43 INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE--DAA--DAY

43

Michael and Elliot brainstorm for a perfume campaign. Elliot lies on his side, a la Deneuve, and delicately strokes the "Cloud" perfume bottle.

ELLIOT

"Cloud...A touch behind the ears,
a touch on your athlete's
foot--and then... You're
floating..."

They don't see Melissa enter behind them.

MICHAEL

Wait...wait...how about--
(his own breathy pitch,
very Calvin Klein)
"Cloud...Because every cloud has
a silver lining..."

MELISSA

Unless it doesn't...
(looks around)
Great office...

ELLIOT

Hi. 'Bye. I've got a lunch date--

MICHAEL

You do not --

ELLIOT

Right. But you guys probably want
to air emotional truths. I do not
acknowledge emotional truths,
unless you get a little sex out
of it. See ya...

He goes. Melissa sees a framed picture of Michael's father.

MELISSA

Your dad...That's one of the first
pictures I ever took...

MICHAEL

With that little
Brownie...Remember?

MELISSA

Of course--

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

MICHAEL

(looking at picture)

That's your house. So we must have been visiting from Chicago...

MELISSA

I remember--I used to want to hide in your suitcase and go home with you...

(turns to him)

You got free from your family so easily, Michael. What's your secret?

MICHAEL

Luck, maybe? Mom and Dad got divorced, they stopped being my parents, they just turned into people...

(a pause)

What are you going to do?

MELISSA

I don't know...At the party, I didn't even say goodbye to her. It's almost three days now...

MICHAEL

She been calling?

MELISSA

She knows she doesn't have to...

MICHAEL

And what about Ellyn?

MELISSA

You know about that?

MICHAEL

I watch Nightline. She was on last night, with all your former psychiatrists...She told Hope.

MELISSA

All I wanted was to help everybody.

MICHAEL

Hey--Ellyn knows that. You're insane, but you mean well.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED: (2)

43

MELISSA

Then I don't seem like this
heartless bitch to her?

MICHAEL

Well--maybe. But better her than
your family, huh?

MELISSA

(frustrated)

Oh, great! A cryptic comment...Are
you going to explain that?

MICHAEL

Melissa, I can't set the VCR
timer. You want me to tell you
why families tear each other
apart? Look...you're an amazing
woman...I don't know how you do
it, you're like totally
honest--except with your family.
You unzip your skin, hang it next
to Rose's mink, and this other
person steps out. Who's not you...

MELISSA

Who is she, then?

MICHAEL

This good girl. Who doesn't see
the truth.

MELISSA

Oh yeah? What's that?

MICHAEL

(takes the challenge)

Okay. That there's this old bat
on a throne--who was always an
old bat. And she's used to
running everyone's life only she
can't anymore...she can't even
run hers. But she says "Limbo!"
and the whole room's dancing.
Just look at your mom, and at--

They look at each other. His statement needs no finish.

MICHAEL

You've got to face her. The worst
that can happen is she'll turn
you to stone, right?

A moment. They just sit there together. And then he holds her.

44 INT. MELISSA'S LOFT--DAY

44

Melissa, alone, sits against the wall in her new, empty space. The remaining furniture is covered with dropcloths. The floor around her is littered with old photographs. One, in particular, catches her eye. It's black and white; the print has crinkled edges. The image: tilted, from a low angle, shooting up an ornate flight of stairs. Rose is the subject, although we cannot identify her in the shot. Melissa turns the photo over. On the back are the words: "Nana. My birthday. 1965..." And now, remembered voices return to her.

ROSE (V.O.)

You go back to that man and have him redo it. Free. Don't pay him, Elaine--

ELAINE (V.O.)

Murray likes my hair like this, Mom--

ROSE (V.O.)

It's going this way, and that way, and up, and down--what were you thinking of?

And, with Melissa, we now return to the scene and moment:

45 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE--MAIN STAIRCASE--(1965)--DAY

45

We're at the same low angle we've seen in the photograph. YOUNG MELISSA, eight years old, is perched in an alcove on the staircase, artily composing, with her Brownie, a shot through the bannister on the landing. Rose and Elaine exists as pairs of legs; we don't see their faces.

YOUNG MELISSA

Nana...smile--

ROSE

Not now, darling--

YOUNG MELISSA

I want to take your picture--

ROSE

I look terrible--

Rose's hand reaches to take the camera, but Young Melissa gets her picture anyway. Now, Rose does succeed in taking the camera.

ROSE

I said not now!

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

ELAINE

Sweetheart--be a good girl and
run out and play...

46 OMIT

46

47 OMIT

47

A47 MELISSA'S LOFT--DAY

A47*

She puts the photograph down, and, for a moment, just sits, very
still.

48 WALDMAN'S--MIRRORED DRESSING ROOM--DAY

48

Rose, on her throne, attends Mrs. Hyman, needlepointing
throughout.

MRS. HYMAN

I don't know, Rose. This color's
never worked for me...

*

ROSE

(testy)

Ceil--trust me. Picture it with
a tan...

MRS. HYMAN

I don't tan. I have very fair
skin...

Rose, annoyed, stuffs the needlepoint in the bag and gets up.

ROSE

Fine. I never push. Don't buy
it...

*

And at just this moment--Melissa enters, dressed in a typical
Melissa outfit. Mrs. Hyman is glad to see her.

*

MRS. HYMAN

Melissa, honey, you've got such
an eye...what do you think?

MELISSA

I think I like it. I like the fit,
I like the look...we've got the
same coloring. I used to avoid
this color. But I tried it.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED:

48

MELISSA (Cont'd)

And you know what? It really works
for me--

MRS. HYMAN

Why not? Something new... *

Mrs. Hyman goes. Rose sits down with her needlepoint.

ROSE

She's been coming here nineteen
years. That's maybe the fourth
outfit she's ever bought. Nice
work-- *

MELISSA

Thanks, Nana...So how come the
store's still open? It's after
five-- *

ROSE

I got a big shipment. I'm open
till seven this week, to try to
move it...

MELISSA

That's a long day for you... *

Rose just needlepoints for a moment.

ROSE

It's been four long days. I
haven't heard from you--

MELISSA

I've been crazy, they moved up
the deadline on my PHILADELPHIA
magazine piece...I told you about
that...

(on her non-response)

It's a great thing for me. I'm
the photographer for the cover
story...You know that magazine?

ROSE

I know the city. I don't need to
read about it. You look tired--

MELISSA

(on the spot)

Yeah, well, the past few days have
been--

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED: (2)

48

ROSE

You should have called me.
(before she can respond)
But it's all right.
(shows her the
needlepoint)
Look. I'm making you a pillow...

MELISSA

I didn't call because I wanted
to see you--you know,
face-to-face.

ROSE

You're right. We'll have dinner--
(picks up phone)
I need a table at Bookbinder's...
(to Melissa)
You want a drink?

MELISSA

No, thanks--

ROSE

(on phone)
And bring me a highball and some
cashews...
(her eye on Melissa)
And my checkbook. The personal.
(hangs up)
I'm going to give you a little
something. To tide you over--

MELISSA

I don't want money, Nana--

ROSE

Call it a loan, then--

MELISSA

And I don't want the business.

The briefest of pauses...

ROSE

Of course you don't. You don't
know anything about it yet--

MELISSA

That's not what I mean--

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED: (3)

48

ROSE

Yes it is. And you shouldn't worry, because I'm going to teach you everything...

An ASSISTANT brings her drink. Rose takes it. *

ROSE

Thank you. And take back the checkbook. Lock it up.

(to Melissa)

Forget the money. You've got your pride. I respect that...We'll talk in the restaurant--

MELISSA

Why don't we talk here?

ROSE

This is a place of business. It's too loud, there's no privacy--

MELISSA

This is business, Nana. It's mine.

ROSE

(a moment, looks at her)

Then talk. Go on. Talk.

MELISSA

(on the spot)

Nana...What you want me to do, what you offered me...This place--it's your life. I'm so proud of you and what you've done. I'll always be grateful that you wanted me to take it, that you trusted me that way.

ROSE

I see you in this business--with me, till I die and it's yours...I've killed myself all these years--for what? I was rich a long time ago. I could have stopped--but I didn't. I had to make this ready to give to someone. And who? Your mother? She's taken care of--

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED: (4)

48

MELISSA

Nana--you 've already given me so much. You always have...how can I ever thank you enough for that--

ROSE

You can! You can let me help you.

MELISSA

But I don't need you to help me. The store--I wouldn't be happy. It's not my life--

ROSE

Your life? What life? You snap a few pictures, you live like a bum, you dress like a freak...Do you have a husband? A family? Fine, you want to be "free", you're "independent"... But you're not fooling me, sweetheart. You've never fooled me. I didn't get to be who I am by not knowing what's best for the people I love. And I love you--so do what I tell you--

MELISSA

Love me? Is this how you love? You didn't do all this for me, Rose. You did it for you--and you did great. And you can have it--but you can't have me. You think you're going to help me? I'll tell you who's going to help me, Nana. Me. Okay? Me!

Melissa is now in a hurry to get out of here. She gathers up her things, turned away from Rose as she rises up to challenge her.

ROSE

Fine! I take back the offer! Are you happy now? Because I want you to be happy. You'll have nothing--but you'll be happy! I'm going to die--and you'll have nothing! Melissa--do you hear me? Melissa--

Rose, in her rage, tries to summon Melissa to turn and face her condemnation.

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED: (5)

48

And what we do now, in the hall of mirrors, is to slow down time and turn it into an echo chamber. Rose's cry of Melissa's name reverberates emptily back to her. She first sees Melissa, who's on her way out, in slow motion. We then go back to Rose, who cries out again--only now she is alone among the mirrors. As she looks to Melissa, she is still walking away in her slow motion--but now new elements separate her from Rose. A Pushcart Peddler slowly passes through. A few WOMEN, in simple immigrant dress, surround him, haggling silently. Melissa looks to Rose through all this, then these others block her from Rose's view.

Rose's cry to Melissa now loses its danger and becomes, instead, helpless. As she looks back, she sees just one little girl. This is Young Rose herself, and she's playing hopscotch.

YOUNG ROSE

(as she plays)

A, my name is Alice and my husband's name is Al...

WOMAN'S VOICE

Rose...?

YOUNG ROSE

Coming, Mama...

She looks back over her shoulder to Rose, signals her to follow, and then runs off through a wall of white light, as we go now to

49 A PAVEMENT

49

Where we follow her feet for a beat or two as she hopscotches along, then pull back (or crane up) to reveal

50 EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE STREET--1918--DAY

50

The whole world seems to be out today. Pushcart peddlers sell fruits, vegetables, and clothes, haggling with the neighborhood women as the learned men pass by in their prayer shawls. Young Rose leads us through the scene, catching up with her MOTHER, who is heavily pregnant. Young Rose holds on to the back of her skirt as she bargains with a peddler.

Young Rose's attention is diverted by the four skating girls, who float by in an attenuated image of joy and freedom. When they pass Young Rose sees a peddler with skates for sale. She looks up to her mother. Her mother shakes her head, then passes out of frame. Young Rose lingers for a moment, then turns to search for her mother.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

MELISSA

Her name is Rose--

PARAMEDIC

Can you hear me, Rose? Can you hear me?

54 INT. MELISSA'S LOFT--DAY

54

Melissa opens the door to Elaine.

MELISSA

Mom, hi...how are you?

ELAINE

I'm all right. A little tired.

MELISSA

I would have stayed at the hospital, but they told me she just needed to sleep.

ELAINE

I'm glad you were here. I needed a break...I hope's it all right--

*

MELISSA

Of course it is. How is she?

*

ELAINE

(lighting a cigarette)

They're going to keep her there, maybe a week, do some tests, try a new medication...

(re cigarette)

Don't tell Nana. She thinks I've stopped...This doctor says she's not eating because she's depressed. What she is is exhausted. I should never have let her go back to the store till she was completely better--

*

MELISSA

You could have stopped her?

*

ELAINE

This doctor--in his running shoes... He says when she's out I should just let her be. Of course. He doesn't live with it every minute--

*

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

54

MELISSA

Mom--

*

ELAINE

*

I know what I have to do. Get her out of that house and move her in with me--

MELISSA

Mom--

*

ELAINE

She drinks, she smokes, she won't take her medicine, I can't keep an attendant--

*

MELISSA

Mom--move her in with you? So you can slug it out twenty-four hours a day instead of twelve?

*

ELAINE

What are you talking about?

*

MELISSA

She drives you crazy, Mom--

*

ELAINE

No, she doesn't--

*

MELISSA

Mom--what about you?

*

ELAINE

What about me? She's my mother, she's not well--and I have to take care of her--

*

MELISSA

By killing yourself? By being her slave? Jumping every time she opens her mouth?

*

ELAINE

That's the way she is. I can't change her.

*

MELISSA

Yes--but if you weren't so angry at her maybe you wouldn't want to help her so much...

*

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (2)

54

ELAINE

Just wait a minute. You don't know as much about this as you think you do--

MELISSA

I do now, Mom. I've seen her. She still needs to run everything, and God help you if you get in the way of that because you will pay. She's done it to you--and she just tried to do it to me. And we don't have to give in to that...

ELAINE

Oh. Fine. Just leave her there to die, then?

MELISSA

No! I'm just saying stop being her safety monitor. Because if she's going to take her pills she's going to wash them down with a highball--and that's only if the carton of Luckies is empty. She's going to sit on her throne at the store, and if something happens, and there's a choice between calling the doctor and making a sale--she'll make the sale. You could hire Mother Theresa as her attendant, and Rose will try to push a little resort wear on her--

ELAINE

Melissa--

MELISSA

Let me finish, Mom! It's just that--if that's what she wants--then okay. But she's sick now, and she's old, and she's going to have to deal with the consequences--

ELAINE

(strong)

But what if something happens to her?

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (3)

54

MELISSA
(just as strong)
Then it happens. And we'll deal
with it.
(a pause)
You and me...

A pause.

ELAINE
So that's what you think.

MELISSA
Hey--you didn't ask.

ELAINE
(looks at her)
You didn't even consider taking
the business, did you?

MELISSA
Mom--how could I? This is my
life...right here. It may not look
like much right now--

ELAINE
I never said that--

MELISSA
You're right. You didn't.
(realizes)
You never have...

ELAINE
That night...I don't think I'll
ever forget that night. What she
did, how she did it, in front of
everybody...Not that I don't want
you to have the business--because
you're going to have it someday
anyway--

MELISSA
Mom--we're better off without it.

ELAINE
(considers this, then--)
Maybe. Who knows...

Elaine looks at Melissa now, as if there is something she wants
to say but won't allow herself to. Melissa notices this.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (4)

54

MELISSA

What?

ELAINE

Nothing. It's just--

MELISSA

What, Ma?

ELAINE

Sometimes I think maybe you should have been her daughter.

MELISSA

But I'm not. I'm yours...

ELAINE

(gathers her things)

I have to go. I've got six things to get for her--

MELISSA

Mother--did you hear a single word I said?

ELAINE

We'll talk. Okay?

MELISSA

Okay...

Elaine is on her way up the steps, Melissa follows her.

ELAINE

Now I've really got to go. That traffic's going to be murder...

MELISSA

Mom?

(Elaine turns)

I love you...

Elaine just takes this in. Her face, right now, provides all the response Melissa needs. She goes. Melissa, for a moment, is very still. Then she gets up and considers the new, empty space she's made for herself. She moves to the back of the loft, where one of the large doors is open. As we move in on her, we create, in effect a double frame. As Melissa gets ready to paint, we see, through the open door, the girl skating by. Melissa now takes a paintbrush and starts to paint. We move back from her, past a shelf on which all that remains are two framed photographs: Rose alone, and Melissa and Elaine together.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (5)

54

As we pass off from this to see, through the shelves, Melissa starting to transform her home as we

FADE OUT