

Georgia's Miss Baby

by

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FADE IN

EXT. MEMORIAL DRIVE, CAMBRIDGE

Traffic speeding along. Sunlight off the Charles River.

SUPER: PLACARD: "September 11, 2001"

EXT. MELANDA SMITH'S CAR

License plate: "Retired Air Force," with insignia.

INT. CAR

MELANDA SMITH, mid-50s, Caucasian, speaking on a cell phone to her son, MICHAEL. Small flag pin and a retired Air Force pin on the lapel of her coat. Music on the radio.

MELANDA

Michael, I saw the shoes this morning—you've got to do more to protect them if they're going to last you through the season.

EXT. TRAFFIC LIGHT - MEMORIAL DRIVE

Red light at the intersection with the bridge on River Street. Melanda stops second in line.

INT. MELANDA'S CAR

Music stops—announcer's VOICE.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

We interrupt our programming—

Melanda turns down the volume.

MELANDA

And one more thing. Did you send in that rebate?
They're only going to honor it until the end of the
month.

EXT. FIRST TRAFFIC LIGHT - BRIDGE

Car bullets through just as the light changes to red.

INT. MELANDA'S CAR

Melanda can see the bridge traffic light turn yellow, gets ready to pull out.

MELANDA

And one more thing: I love you. Sorry I had to leave
so early this morning.

Light turns green.

EXT. BRIDGE

Car speeds over the crest of the bridge.

INT. MELANDA'S CAR

MELANDA

See you tonight.

Just as the words finish, Melanda's car disintegrates. The cell phone hangs in the
air recording everything, and then Melanda is lost forever.

EXT. CAMBRIDGE RINDGE AND LATIN HIGH SCHOOL

MICHAEL SMITH, 16, light-skinned African American, loose shirt, fatigues, sneakers, hair long, with his friends.

Michael's cell rings: message.

MICHAEL

Yo, wait.

He listens. His face changes from ease to horror.

From a million miles away he hears his name.

VOICE

Michael! Michael!

Michael focuses on the STUDENT standing in front of him.

VOICE

Principal wants to see you.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

PRINCIPAL, ashen-faced, at her desk. JOSH SMITH, mid-50s, African American, buzz cut, stands there. Same small flag pin and retired Air Force pin on his lapel.

JOSH

Michael—something's happened.

Michael holds up his cell phone.

MICHAEL

She left me a message.

PRINCIPAL

(to both)

I'm so sorry.

Josh opens his arms, and Michael, without hesitation, lets himself be embraced by his father.

EXT. CEMETERY

In the crowd several men and women wear Air Force dress blues, including Josh. An American flag drapes the coffin.

BRANCH OF A TREE

Three ravens bob their heads as they CAW.

GRAVESIDE

Dozens of people bow as the two women in uniform carefully fold the flag in regulation fashion and hand it to Josh and Michael.

OVER THE COFFIN

Michael's and Josh's hands throw dirt on the coffin. The ravens' CAWS fill the air.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Michael's friends welcome him back: handshakes, embraces, etc. He smiles faintly and eases into his place.

But he wears a look distant and preoccupied.

INT. SMITH LIVING ROOM

On TV replays of the planes, the towers, their collapse. They have TV dinners, but their food stays untouched.

JOSH

God.

Josh takes his tray, asks Michael with a nod if he is done. Michael nods back yes.

JOSH

Can't eat either.

Josh, the two trays in his hands, looking at the TV, looking at his son, his face both pained and empty.

INT. KITCHEN

The two aluminum trays slide into the wastebasket.

EXT. REAR DECK

Josh lets the screen door slam. He can see the living room full of TV light. He lifts his despairing face to the dark sky.

INT. LIVING ROOM

A recruitment commercial for the Marines plays on the television.

Flickering light and the RECRUITER'S VOICE wash over MICHAEL.

INTERCUT BETWEEN MICHAEL'S FACE AND TV SCREEN

ANNOUNCER

—and you will protect your country—learn to serve
the ideals—and honor the freedom that we—for the
love of your nation—

In the kitchen, the SLAM of the screen door.

DOORWAY

Josh watches the end of the commercial

JOSH

Everything okay?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

The TV shifts back to the news. Michael and Josh stare.

INT. SUPERCUTS - NEXT DAY

The HAIRCUTTER checks the sign-in sheet at the front desk.

HAIRCUTTER

Michael Smith?

Michael stands.

CHAIR

Michael sits as the haircutter sails the apron over him.

MIRROR

The Haircutter's images float over Michael's image in the mirror.

HAIRCUTTER

And what are we going to say about ourselves today?

MICHAEL gives himself a hard look.

EXT. RECRUITING CENTER

Through the window: Michael, now wearing a classic buzz cut, talks with a MARINE RECRUITER.

They stand. The Recruiter hands Michael a packet. They shake hands.

EXT. RECRUITING CENTER

Michael exits and turns down the street.

ELECTRONICS STORE

On multiple televisions in the display window, a re-run of the crashing of the planes into the towers. Michael watches.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Josh paces, the recruiting materials fanned out on the coffee table.

Michael sits at attention, silent.

JOSH

(points to literature)

I'm not going to sign anything!

Josh continues to pace.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DECEMBER

Well-appointed office. SOUND of pen on paper.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

Your wife's death occurred—

JOSH

Three months ago.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

And Michael just turned seventeen?

JOSH

Yes.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

For the last three months—

JOSH

He has imagined himself as a Marine.

SOUND of pages shuffling.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

More than imagined himself, it seems.

INT. GUIDANCE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE

Shabbily-appointed office.

COUNSELOR (O.S.)

You can't mean that.

SOUND of papers shuffling.

COUNSELOR (O.S.)

All our plans for college—

MICHAEL

Sir, I don't mean to be impolite—but that's not important now. Not with the way things are.

SOUND of more shuffling papers.

COUNSELOR (O.S.)

And they are how, Michael?

MICHAEL

Ready to rock.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE

THERAPIST (O.S.)

—many different ways to handle grief.

JOSH

Joining the “war” on terrorism is not one of them.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

You don't approve.

JOSH

It doesn't make sense.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

How have you been handling your grief these past months, Josh?

No response.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

Felt angry? Futile? I know you have.

Josh shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

You miss Melanda.

JOSH

More than you can imagine.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

Then imagine it for Michael.

JOSH

I understand, but—

THERAPIST (O.S.)

He misses his mother—as simple and as complicated as it gets, Josh.

JOSH

But the Marines—

THERAPIST (O.S.)

Serve and protect. Part of something bigger. Do the right thing. Do you know someone who joined the Air Force for the same reasons?

SOUND of writing on paper.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

I'm not saying you should let him do this. The both of you—meet with me next week. Let's see what our three heads can come up with.

INT. GUIDANCE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE

MICHAEL

My mother was a good person—she didn't deserve what happened. Just like those other people.

COUNSELOR (O.S.)

Michael, it's not too late for the applications.

MICHAEL

Not in my plans, sir. Three hots and a cot as soon as I can.

SHUFFLING paper.

COUNSELOR (O.S.)

All right.

(pause)

You know, I understand—

Michael rises.

MICHAEL

Thank you, sir. Will that be all?

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - MAY GRADUATION

Usual decorations. Principal on stage announcing names, students getting diplomas, pictures snapping, etc.

STAGE

PRINCIPAL

Michael Lawrence Smith.

Applause, but no Michael on stage.

Principal and counselor spot him at the back.

BACK OF AUDITORIUM

Michael, hands behind his back, at attention, watches.

AUDIENCE

Even though surrounded, Josh sits as if isolated, hearing his son's name ring through the space.

STAGE

PRINCIPAL

Jeanette Smollins.

Smiling JEANETTE waves as she strides across the stage.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE

Michael and Josh in separate chairs.

THERAPIST'S VOICE (O.S.)

Will that be all right with you, Michael? To go back?

MICHAEL

Yes, sir.

JOSH

I think it'll be good for us to go back to the cabin.

THERAPIST'S VOICE (O.S.)
A place your mother—and your wife—loved a great
deal.

JOSH
Yes.

THERAPIST'S VOICE (O.S.)
(to Michael)
And where you loved her.

Though side-by-side, Michael and Josh are miles apart.

THERAPIST'S VOICE (O.S.)
Good. We'll meet when you get back.

INT. STATION WAGON - JUNE

Michael in the passenger seat leafing through Marine Corps recruitment paperwork.

The back loaded with duffel bags and vacation “stuff.” On the dashboard, a small statue of Our Lady of Knots along with St. Christopher. Music HUMS under the road sounds.

EXT. CAR

The New Hampshire countryside shimmers.

EXT. CAR - LICENSE PLATE

License plate: “Retired Air Force,” with insignia.

INT. CAR

The low MUSIC fills the silence as Michael continues to read. Josh's hand slowly squeezes and lets go of the steering wheel, his only outward sign of irritation.

EXT. CAR

The blue sparkle of Newfound Lake as they come over a rise.

INT. CAR

Josh points to the lake.

Michael glances up, and for a moment, his face softens.

JOSH

Almost there.

Just as quickly Michael's face shifts back to serious. He gathers his papers and stares out the window—all done precisely, without fuss.

EXT. CAR

A house, shadowed by ragged cedar trees. Among the trees, in bright contrast, a freshly painted carousel horse caparisoned like a knight's steed.

INT. CAR

The horse catches Josh's eye.

JOSH

Well, look at that.

MICHAEL

What?

But they've passed by it, so Josh U-turns.

EXT. CAR

The car U-turns, then slowly passes the horse.

INT. CAR

JOSH

I don't remember that. Do you remember who lives there?

Michael shakes his head no.

JOSH

Remember that carousel ride in Germany? You must have been—

MICHAEL

Long time ago, Dad.

Josh U-turns to go back in the original direction.

JOSH

Yes. And no.

EXT. ROAD

Sign: "Welcome to Bristol / Population: Happy." In bright design, with stars and comets, an attached sign: "Don't forget the Annual Bootids Celebration, June 27 and 28."

TURN

Road sign: "Lake Shore Drive." The car kicks up a dust-devil as it turns.

EXT. SMITH BUNGALOW - YARD

Josh pulls up beside a neat clapboard bungalow. ERNEST SHEA, 60s, with a rubbery belly and a smile to match, gets up from digging in the flower beds. He pulls a watch out of his pocket. Josh and Michael get out of the car.

ERNEST

Right on time, Colonel. Like always.

JOSH

You know me, Ernest.

Michael starts unpacking the car and lugging the bags into the house. Josh shakes Ernest's hand.

JOSH

Michael, come say hello.

Michael continues into the house.

MICHAEL
(shouting)
Hello, Mr. Shea.

Michael disappears into the house. Josh looks apologetic.

ERNEST
People didn't think you were coming this summer.

JOSH
The place looks good—you've made it look good
enough to sell.

ERNEST
You thinking about that?

JOSH
Thinking about a lot of things, Ernest.

ERNEST
Always were a thinking man, Colonel.

Michael comes out, waves, but comes no closer. He takes more stuff out of the car, starts back to the house.

JOSH
(hand on shoulder)
Don't want him to think the old man's lame.
(heads to car)
Settle up the accounts later?

ERNEST
Roger, Colonel. Just gonna keep on working these
beds over here.

Josh waves as Ernest goes back to his work.

CAR

Josh humps out a large trunk clearly beyond his strength.

Suddenly, Michael's hand appears on the grip, and the trunk slides smoothly off the tailgate.

MICHAEL

Got it, Dad.

Josh watches Michael carry the trunk effortlessly.

JOSH

(murmuring)

And the gods in their youth were wondrous to behold.

Josh pulls out several canvas bags filled with fruit and other groceries—the last of the haul.

JOSH

And then there be us mules.

EXT. SHED

Ernest hanging up some tools, getting others. He looks at the framed picture of a brilliantly smiling woman in work clothes standing in front of the house. She wears one canvas glove and holds up the ungloved thumb of the other hand. The thumb is painted a brilliant green.

ERNEST

That shouldn't be out here.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Josh can just see Michael in his bedroom changing into his running shoes.

JOSH

Hey, do you mind if I join you?

MICHAEL

In training, Dad.

JOSH

(slaps belly)

Could use some of that myself.

MICHAEL'S BEDROOM

Michael pauses with just the briefest of hesitations.

MICHAEL
Sure, Dad—that would be great.

INT. LIVING ROOM

JOSH
Great.
(sotto voce)
Great.

EXT. YARD

Michael wears a tee-shirt with the Marine Corps logo; under the logo is the slogan “Death Before Dishonor.” Michael stretches as Josh comes outside. Josh begins stretching, too, strained where Michael is graceful.

After what is clearly not enough stretching, Josh says—

JOSH
Ready.

Michael, with just the barest tell-tale hint of reluctance, begins a slow trot down Lake Shore Drive. Josh, sucking down air, starts after him.

EXT. ROAD - FROM A DISTANCE

Against the glare of the lake and the heat off the road, Michael and Josh are small silhouettes, Michael far ahead.

EXT. ROAD - CLOSER IN

Josh is can barely see the soles of Michael’s sneakers. And between POUNDING blood and RASPY breath, Josh is not sure he can stay upright much longer.

Finally, he pulls to the side and weakly waves to Michael.

JOSH
(breathless)
You go on—I’ll—catch—up.
(whisper)
Right.

EXT. ROAD - FURTHER AHEAD

Michael looks back at Josh. He backpedals a bit watching, and only when his father stands up and waves does Michael turn around and put on a kick that speeds him away.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS

Michael stops when he sees the horse. He hesitates, then crosses the road.

EXT. HORSE

The paint is smooth, uncrackled, new. His hand rests on its arched neck.

Then, he swings a leg over and sits on the saddle. His legs are so long his feet stay firmly planted.

EXT. ROAD

Josh stands in the shade of a tree, now breathing normally.

With a little hitch in his shorts and a clearing of the throat, he leans over to touch his toes—and with a GRUNT and a SHOVE, he just manages to brush the tips of his sneakers.

JOSH

All right.

Onto the road, barely at a trot—but dogged.

JOSH

The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong—

He keeps on going.

EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE

Michael scans the driftwood figures that frame the side-door: a duck, a swan, a butterfly.

Ornate initials painted on the side door, silver outlined in black: “JN.”

Just inside the door, through a side window, Michael can see dozens of blue-green glass insulating knobs.

He moves toward the back, cicadas SAWING the air.

EXT. BACK OF HOUSE

As Michael rounds the corner, he sees a flower garden bursting with colors and forms, divided by pathways lined with butterfly mosaics of broken mirror pieces and colored stones.

Sculptures of driftwood, stone, ceramic rise from these flower islands.

EXT. GARDEN PATH

Still as he is, Michael could be one of the statues. Insects dance around him. The air HUMS with silence.

BACK OF HOUSE

A porch with its own roof is attached to the back of the house. It sits below the level of the house roof.

On the house roof drinking water perches JONATHA NEWCOMB, 95, four-foot-nothing and topped with a shock of white hair cut man-short. Blue chambray shirt, overalls, baseball cap, but wearing a pair of black Chinese slippers. In her right hand, a claw hammer.

Aluminum flashing dangles over the eave, half-nailed in.

A wooden ladder, jury-rigged and half-assed, is cleated into the porch roof and leans against the eave of the house roof.

A third ladder that is little more than a collection of duct tape, splints, and toed-in screws looking long past dead, leans against the eave of the porch roof.

Jonatha has her eyes fixed on the handsome young man.

EXT. GARDEN

As he steps toward a beautiful luscious flower, Michael knocks over a blue-green glass dragon and breaks it.

As Michael backs away, he squashes a profusion of phlox.

Michael continues backing up, then heads back to the road.

EXT. ROAD

Josh is trying to give a good imitation of a power walker—and not succeeding.

EXT. BACK OF HOUSE

Michael is just about to escape when a VOICE ropes him in.

JONATHA (O.S.)

I hope you have your glue.

Michael spins but sees nobody behind him.

JONATHA (O.S.)

A heffalump, you know.

Michael locates the VOICE: above him, on the house roof.

JONATHA

Proverbial cat got your tongue? I'm coming down.

But before Michael can answer, he hears BREAKING WOOD as ladder rungs SNAP.

PORCH ROOF - BACK OF HOUSE

Jonatha lands right on her ass, cedar splinters trailing after her. She grabs her right hip in pain.

SIDE OF HOUSE

Jonatha's BARK cuts through the heavy air.

JONATHA (O.S.)

Goddamn, that hurts! Goddamn that hurts like a sonofabitch!

BACK OF HOUSE

Michael rounds the corner and skids to a stop.

Jonatha tries to rise, but no go: her right leg refuses.

Michael backs up until he can see Jonatha.

PORCH ROOF

JONATHA

You gonna help?

MICHAEL

Of course, of course! What do you want me to do?

JONATHA

See that ladder?

MICHAEL

Right. Right.

Michael moves to the ladder.

LADDER

Michael puts a hand on the dead ladder.

LADDER RUNGS

Michael's foot on the first rung, the second, the third.

PORCH ROOF

Behind her Jonatha hears a CRACK and a CRASH.

LADDER

Michael, on his back, looks at the splintered leftovers of what had been the first three rungs.

PORCH ROOF

JONATHA

You all right?

MICHAEL (O.C.)

Fine.

JONATHA

Good—I don't have to pay death and dismemberment. Plan B, then.

MICHAEL (O.C.)

Plan B?

JONATHA

Back up so I can see you.

Michael moves into her view.

Jonatha points downward.

JONATHA

Stand right there—

MICHAEL

Where?

JONATHA

Right there—the footprints—

BOTTOM OF PORCH

Michael looks down at two painted footprints, with a caption: "Saw The June Bootids, Year of the Tiger." The two footprints are also painted like a tiger, mouth open, fangs bared.

MICHAEL

The tiger.

JONATHA (O.C.)

Exactly.

Michael plants his feet.

MICHAEL

Okay.

JONATHA (O.C.)

Now we're cooking.

EXT. ROAD

Josh now moves along at a good semi-geezer clip, and his face bears a grim smile that says "not defeated."

EXT. PORCH ROOF

JONATHA

Ready?

MICHAEL (O.C.)

Yes.

JONATHA

I'm going to slide—

Michael backs up to see Jonatha.

MICHAEL

You can't do that. Don't you have another ladder?

JONATHA

Don't worry. What's your name?

MICHAEL

Michael.

JONATHA

Michael, I'm going to trust you—damn, that hurts.—
Show me you're ready—show me your arms.

Michael backs up and gives her back a blank look.

Jonathan holds out her arms like a cradle.

Michael does the same.

MICHAEL

That's what you want?

JONATHA

That's what I got. Now step on the tiger and get ready.

BOTTOM OF PORCH

Michael steps on the tiger and holds out his cradling arms.

JONATHA (O.C.)

Excellent. Now, follow.

PORCH ROOF

Jonatha lays herself down. The dry cedar shakes splinter, turning into powder as she scoots herself toward the roof edge.

JONATHA

When I get to the edge, I'm going to roll over and you're going to catch me. Got that?

MICHAEL

This is crazy.

JONATHA

Good enough "yes" for me.

Jonatha starts to slide all on her own.

JONATHA

Lancelot, you better be ready!

BOTTOM OF PORCH

Blinded by dust, all he can hear is the RIPPING SLIDE of Jonatha's overalls and her VOICE: "You better be ready!"

And then Jonatha slams into his upper chest and slides down into his arms. One of the straps on her overalls pops loose, and the metal button at the end of the strap scores Michael's temple in a shallow cut.

Jonatha's velocity also slams Michael to the ground—but Jonatha is nicely cushioned by Michael's body.

In the following silence the HISS of settling dust. Then a squirrel CHATTERING. The WHIRR of a hummingbird. Then the rest of the garden and the summer day.

Jonatha flexes her right leg and finds it usable again. She gets up, then looks down at the stunned Michael.

She offers him a hand, and with more strength than he expected, Jonatha helps him up. Standing next to each other, it is Mutt and Jeff.

Jonatha turns his head to see the cut.

JONATHA

Easily mended by the damsel. Jonatha Newcomb. I'd be rich if I had a dime for every "n" added to my name.

MICHAEL

Jonatha.

Jonatha underscores the slogan on Michael's tee-shirt with her finger, in the process flicking off some cedar splinters.

JONATHA

"Death Before Dishonor."

Jonatha gives Michael the same look she would give a new flower in her garden.

JONATHA

Maybe. C'mon.

INT. JONATHA'S KITCHEN

Michael at the kitchen table. On the table, under his hand, a thick pane of glass presses down a red and gold patterned cloth.

A window opens onto the garden. Through it Michael counts at least half a dozen homemade bird-feeders cut from gallon plastic jugs hanging from various trees and poles.

A stump of typewritten paper waits next to an Underwood typewriter. Rolled in the typewriter, a sheet half-filled. Michael reads the title: "Andromeda."

The kitchen bristles with art, from charcoal drawings to more driftwood sculptures to rough brown ceramic tiles with portraits of Mexican peasants.

Even the panels of the drop ceiling are painted: the famous God/Adam scene from the Sistine Chapel, except with the genders reversed. Now it's Goddess/Eve.

Bookshelves bulge with everything from Reader's Digest abridged editions to science books to "Coffee, Tea, Or Me."

Jonatha RUMMAGES in the bathroom.

JONATHA (O.S.)

I've got band aids here somewhere—

Michael presses his finger against the glass and traces the gold filigree while Jonatha BANGS a few more cabinet doors.

KITCHEN DOORWAY

Jonatha holds up an old cigar box emblazoned with a garish picture of two lovers titled "Romeo y Julieta."

JONATHA

It hath been found.

KITCHEN TABLE

Inside the box is the most eclectic First-Aid kit ever imagined, topped off by neon-colored children's band-aids.

Jonatha takes a swab and alcohol. Before she cleans, she puffs on his temple. He flinches, but only just.

JONATHA

So it won't sting.

Michael does not flinch as Jonatha daubs and cleans the cut, but as his fingers tap against the glass, his neck stiffens, and his whole body seems to want to remain still and pull away.

She angles his head to get more light, then unpeels a band-aid. Never once does she take her eyes off him. Never once does Michael meet her gaze directly.

Jonatha lays the band-aid over the cut and smooths it down, and there is a moment when Michael, head cupped in Jonatha's small hand, mimics the picture on the cigar box lid, but with genders reversed.

Then, polite but deliberate, Michael stands, his head dinging a blue-green glass globe with a second red globe nestled inside it.

JONATHA

Did I hurt you?

Michael shakes his head "no," reaches up to stop the globe.

JONATHA

That came from France. Not another like it in Christendom.

But even as Jonatha speaks, Michael edges toward the door.

MICHAEL

I should go.

JONATHA

You're leaving.

Michael keeps edging but also keeps bumping into boxes and paper piles and magazine piles and book piles and small tables with knick-knacks and shelves with crystals so that he cannot make the clean get-a-way he wants.

JONATHA

I don't bite.

MICHAEL

I just should—

JONATHA

At least not people. And you're forgetting something.

Jonatha points to her own temple.

MICHAEL

(touching band-aid)

Thanks. Thank you.

JONATHA

And thank you back for saving my rump.

MICHAEL

No problem.

JONATHA

Jonatha.

MICHAEL

Jonatha. I should just get—

JONATHA

You owe me some repair work.

Michael stops.

JONATHA

Ladders and dragons and such. We can negotiate.
But only if you want to.

Jonatha picks up her first-aid kit.

JONATHA

I never force anyone to do anything. Could you pour
two glasses of water? I want to show you something.

Jonatha disappears into another room. Michael hesitates, then turns to the cupboards over the sink. He gets two cups—old mason jars—and fills them from the tap. He sets them on the kitchen table.

He hesitates again, throws a look at the door to the kitchen, through which he can see the living room and beyond that the road, just glimpseable through the living room window.

Then Michael sits at the table and traces the gold filigree through the glass.

INT. JONATHA'S BEDROOM

The small single-bed is wedged among a neat but crowded archive of drawings and writings.

Jonatha takes a thick binder filled with drawings, each in a protective plastic sleeve, and leafs through it. She finds what she wants to find.

INT. KITCHEN

Every object in the room that can reflect sunlight now does.

Jonatha sets the binder down, gestures for Michael to look.

The drawing is on thick cream paper, all done with a single unbroken ink line. A dancer, body arced, cradles another dancer who has just leapt into the first dancer's arms. The dancers' hands are splayed and grasping.

DRAWING

Michael's finger traces the drawn line.

JONATHA (O.S.)

Two of Katherine Dunham's dancers. The one you're touching—Syvilla Fort. The other one is Katherine. You don't them, do you? Too young. I knew them in New York. They were people to know. See what they're doing?

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Yes.

JONATHA (O.S.)

You and me, wasn't it?

EXT. HOUSE

Josh YELLS.

JOSH

Hello!

INT. KITCHEN

Both Michael and Jonatha hear the VOICE.

MICHAEL

My father.

JONATHA

Two handsome men in one day—that hasn't happened in a long time.

EXT. SIDE OF THE HOUSE

JOSH

Hello!

Out comes Michael followed by the most leprechaun-looking person Josh has ever seen. Josh is sweat-soaked wet.

JOSH

Hello.

JONATHA

Hello.

JOSH

Just had a feeling, you know. We stopped to see your horse earlier. Josh Smith. And that is my son Michael.

JONATHA

You look like a thirsty man, Josh Smith.

JOSH

I am exactly what I look like.

JONATHA

Michael—that water on the table?

MICHAEL

Yes, ma'am.

JONATHA

Ask the table to give it up to your father.

Michael disappears into the house.

JOSH

I hope he hasn't—

JONATHA

Mr. Smith, Michael saved my life.

JOSH

Really.

JONATHA

Yes.

JOSH

He's been busy, then.

INT. KITCHEN

Through the window Michael sees Jonatha lead Josh through the garden, showing him the broken dragon, the snapped ladders, the rescue.

MICHAEL

(softly)

Damn.

Michael grabs both glasses of water and heads back outside.

EXT. GARDEN

Michael hands one glass to his father, who drinks it, then the second, which his father doesn't.

JOSH

It seems you made quite an impression on Ms. Newcomb here.

JONATHA

Bam! I made the impression on him.

Mimics falling into Michael's arms. Without a hesitation, Michael reaches out to catch her, then draws his arms back to his sides as Jonatha LAUGHS.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

A car pulls in—well-traveled. Out slides BARBARA MORGAN, Josh's age, an Irish colleen with an accent to match. She's heavy but moves with grace. She wears a lab coat with an insignia: "North Country Visiting Nurses Association." She carries an old leather doctor's bag.

BARBARA

Halloo!

EXT. GARDEN

JONATHA

We have ourselves a Round Table. A tertulia. C'mon.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

JONATHA

You just missed my fall from grace.

(pointing to Michael)

Lancelot saved me. And that's Lancelot's father.

JOSH

Josh Smith. My son, Michael.

Barbara give Josh and Michael the once-over.

BARBARA

Ernest Shea told me you were coming, Mr. Smith. Mr. Smiths. Barbara Morgan, RN—sounds like a soap opera, eh? Why don't you tell me the tale inside, where I can get some water? And Jonatha, where's your hat?

Josh offers Barbara the second glass of water.

JOSH

Here, take this.

BARBARA

Thanks.

Jonatha slips her arm through Barbara's, and they both start toward the house.

JONATHA

Not like I have brains left to fry.

BARBARA

(to Josh)

She's got more brains left than most start out with.

JOSH

I don't doubt.
(holding the door)
After you.

BARBARA

The first nice thing said to me today.

Barbara disappears into the house.

JOSH

You should stay—just for a few minutes.

Michael hesitates, then enters. Josh follows.

INT. KITCHEN

Barbara spreads her gear on the table and prepares to put the blood pressure cuff on Jonatha's arm. Michael stays to the side, looks at the artwork on the walls. Josh sits, an amazed look on his face. Barbara inflates, then deflates, listening with the stethoscope.

JONATHA

(to Barbara)

Will you still get positive numbers?

BARBARA

As always.

Josh points at the ceiling.

JOSH

I like that.

JONATHA

Pope didn't care much when he visited.

BARBARA

Good.

Barbara takes off the cuff, makes a note in a small journal.

JONATHA

Cadaver's still in good shape, huh?

BARBARA

They're going to love cutting you up. A real cut-up
you're going to be.

Barbara preps a syringe.

BARBARA
(prepping syringe)

Vitamins.

JONATHA

Can't stand pills.

JOSH

Cadaver?

Barbara gives Jonatha the shot, then re-packs as she talks.

JONATHA
(ironically)

Ow.

BARBARA

I met this fine young fossil a couple of years ago
when she came to me, the head of the nursing
program, wanting to donate her body to science.

JONATHA

This body has never taken drugs—not even aspirin.
And meat? Feh!

BARBARA

I will swear to that, as far as I know. So I'm keeping
her fresh for the academic slab.

JONATHA

Which could come any day now.

BARBARA

If you keep pitching yourself onto the roof, it will—
really.

JONATHA

Ernest never came by like he said he would.

BY THE WALL

Michael, only half-listening, scans beige-brown clay tiles with pictures of men with sombreros, women with scarves, donkeys, agave, town plazas, hummingbirds, and so on.

BARBARA

Ernest Shea is a man of good intent but short on follow-through. Like most humans.

(twinkle in her eye)

Or is it just most men?

JOSH

He's done all right by us.

BARBARA

(to Michael)

Those are some of my favorites.

Barbara stands and wags a finger at Jonatha in a mock-serious tone.

BARBARA

Give Ernest Shea a call right now and tell him—

JONATHA

Yes, master.

BARBARA

Seriously, Jonatha—

Jonatha gets up from the table.

JONATHA

It's too early in the day for serious.

(to Michael)

I did those in Mexico.

BARBARA

(to Josh)

I forgot—she only gets serious after nap time.

(to Jonatha)

So go take your nap.

JONATHA

Because I'm 95 she thinks she can boss me around.

BARBARA
Sometimes her age and her IQ match.

JONATHA
That trumps me. I'll go take my nap.

Barbara moves toward the kitchen door.

BARBARA
(to Michael)
I like the one right by your shoulder the best.

MICHAEL
This one?

JONATHA
The child with the star in one eye. That's Barbara's
name for it.

Barbara comes back into the room, stands next to Michael, points out the "star"
in the eye.

MICHAEL
Yeah.

BARBARA
(to Josh)
Lift? Or do you two want to run back?

JOSH
If it's not out of the way.

BARBARA
Only brave men ride in my rattletrap.
(to Jonatha)
I'll see you tonight for more of the stories.

JONATHA
Hasta luego—

BARBARA
Baby.

They give each a high-five, then a low-five. Josh and Barbara start for the door.

JONATHA

I have a better idea.

BARBARA

Better than?

JONATHA

Ernest Shea. Mr. Smith—may I borrow Lancelot here? For some repairs.

JOSH

I don't know if I can speak for him—he is almost eighteen. Michael?

Barbara focuses on Michael, smiles at Jonatha.

MICHAEL

Yeah. Yes. Sure. Yes ma'am.

JONATHA

Then I'll stay off the roof.

BARBARA

You just saved me a mound of headache.

Barbara offers Josh her leather bag.

BARBARA

Would you mind?

JOSH

Not at all.

They head outside, chatting.

JONATHA

Thanks again, Lancelot.

MICHAEL

Nothing to it.

JONATHA

Ah, the wisdom and folly of youth.

MICHAEL

I'll come tomorrow.

JONATHA

Come when you can.

JOSH (O.S.)

Michael!

Jonatha puts her two hands over her heart, then flings her arms wide open. Michael, surprising himself, smiles at the hokey gesture, then turns and leaves.

INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM

Jonatha watches them hump stuff from the back seat to the trunk to make room, their VOICES and LAUGHTER soft and muffled. Then the car pulls away.

Behind her, in a wild but organized profusion, are dozens of canvases being filed into crates. The completed crates bear inventory lists. Jonatha is packing up her life.

One pile stands out by being the only one hidden under burlap.

She walks to a window that looks out onto the garden, and what can be seen from up here but not ground level is that the garden is set up as a spiral.

On the wall are two calendars, not current ones but dated 1913 and 1941—and they match day-for-day completely.

CALENDAR PAGES

On the June page of each one, Jonatha has x'd out each day, with the last day circled heavily. Written next to the last day on both calendars: "Meeting The Elephant."

Snaking around the margins of the 1913 calendar Jonatha has written in these lines: "And so these men of Indostan / Disputed loud and long, / Each in his own opinion—"

She takes the pencil hanging next to the calendar and puts another circle around "Meeting The Elephant." Then adds one more line: "Exceeding stiff and strong."

ROOM

Jonatha slips off her slippers and lays down, crosses her hands and closes her eyes. Rested breathing. Sleep.

EXT. ROAD

Barbara's car passes the sign announcing the Bootids, then follows the road around the lake.

EXT. DRIVEWAY SMITHS' BUNGALOW

Barbara pulls into the driveway.

INT. BARBARA'S CAR

BARBARA

One point five miles exactly.

MICHAEL

Thanks.

BARBARA

Training for something?

MICHAEL

Yes.

JOSH

The Marines.

Barbara looks at Michael, then Josh. Michael gets out.

EXT. CAR

All three out of the car.

BARBARA

The Marines?

JOSH

He wants to enlist in the fall.

BARBARA
Not college?

MICHAEL
No.

BARBARA
Interesting choice.

Ernest trundles his way across the lawn.

BARBARA
Trouble on the hoof.

ERNEST
Hello, Barbara.

BARBARA
Hello, Ernest.

ERNEST
Good to see you.

BARBARA
Likewise, I'm sure.

ERNEST
Really good to see you.

BARBARA
Still just likewise, Ernest.

ERNEST
How did the two of you—

BARBARA
Does flashing at Jonatha's spark anything?

The cogs work behind Ernest's face. Then enlightenment.

ERNEST
She wasn't?

BARBARA
She was.

ERNEST

She didn't?

BARBARA

She did. At least tried.

ERNEST

Damn!

BARBARA

What did you expect? You weren't there the nanosecond she thought you should be there, so—

ERNEST

My ass is grass now.

BARBARA

She's asked Michael for a hand.

ERNEST

I intended to—

BARBARA

Ernest—

ERNEST

It's stopped.

BARBARA

And I have to get going.

JOSH

Water?

BARBARA

(checks watch)

I have time.

JOSH

Would you mind?

MICHAEL

(hesitating)

Sure, Dad.

Michael goes into the bungalow.

BARBARA

"Sure, Dad." A nice voice for someone wanting an in with the Marines.

INT. BUNGALOW

Michael stares at Josh and Barbara through the living room window, then moves into the kitchen.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Josh, Ernest, and Barbara: a slight awkwardness in the air.

ERNEST

Well—better get back—you know, pruning.

BARBARA

You're a fine snipper, Ernest.

Barbara just smiles at him.

BARBARA

Nice seeing you, Ernest.

ERNEST

Likewise, I'm sure.

A look at Josh, a look at Barbara, then off he goes.

JOSH

Pardon me for asking, but is there—

BARBARA

Not on my part.

JOSH

But he—

BARBARA

Ever since high school.

JOSH
So why not—if you don't mind my asking?

BARBARA
—your asking.

INT. BUNGALOW

Michael, a troubled look on his face, glass in hand, watches Josh and Barbara talk.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Josh and Barbara see Michael come out of the house.

BARBARA
Some other time—maybe.

Michael hands Barbara the glass.

BARBARA
Thanks.

MICHAEL
If it's okay, I'm going to finish.

BARBARA
Michael, thank you again for today.

MICHAEL
It's all right.

BARBARA
You must be very special.
(to Josh)
She doesn't open up to just anybody.

MICHAEL
She's—

BARBARA
Weird.

MICHAEL
(laughing)

Yeah.

BARBARA
Rearrange the letters in “weird” and you get “wired,”
and she’s that, too.

Barbara hands Josh the glass unsipped.

BARBARA
I mean it, though, about being special. She’s very
picky about who she shares her earth-time with. Did
she show you any of her work?

Michael’s body language swings between wanting to leave and wanting to talk.

MICHAEL
A drawing.

BARBARA
I knew it. Her dancers, I’ll bet.

MICHAEL
Two dancers.

BARBARA
Ah, well, there you are. Just don’t let her size fool you.

MICHAEL
I’ve already figured that.

BARBARA
Michael, ‘twas nice meeting you.

MICHAEL
Nice meeting you, Ms. Morgan.

BARBARA
Barbara.

MICHAEL
Barbara.

JOSH

Be careful.

BARBARA

Yes, be careful—one of those fierce loons may get you on the road!

And then Michael lopes away for his run.

EXT. SIDE OF THE BUNGALOW

Ernest, glancing up from the hedge, stares at Josh and Barbara. He looks as if he's sucking a lemon.

EXT. ROAD

Michael, looking over his shoulder, can just make out Josh and Barbara standing at her car.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

BARBARA

Now off I am to the swift completion of my appointed rounds.

Barbara starts back to her car. Josh opens her door.

BARBARA

We weren't sure, you know, that you were coming back this summer. Glad you came back.

JOSH

So far, seems we've packed three days into one.

BARBARA

Here we slip the surly bonds of earth.

Barbara starts to get in, then hesitates.

JOSH

What?

BARBARA
Is Michael really set on the Marines?

JOSH
Half yes, half no—hard to say.

BARBARA
Grief—

JOSH
You must see a lot of that in your work.

BARBARA
You don't need my work to see grief. I've pried
enough—if you should want to talk—

JOSH
I'm hoping some silence and rest here will fill in the
blanks.

BARBARA
Yes, well—

JOSH
I didn't mean—

BARBARA
(with half-smile)
I know that! Off to my appointed rounds.

Barbara gets in, starts the car.

BARBARA
It's been nice meeting you, Josh Smith.

JOSH
And likewise, Barbara Morgan—I'm sure.

Barbara gives him a tiny salute, backs out, drives away. Josh sees Ernest.

JOSH
Want to settle up the accounts now?

But Ernest, with the look on his face of being a day late and a dollar short, just
waves and retreats.

Glass in hand, Josh stands alone in the driveway. Then he drinks—and never spills a drop.

EXT. DECK - EVENING

Josh and Michael at the table, eating dinner—a barbecue, in silence. From the lake they hear the CALL of a loon. Josh LAUGHS.

JOSH

The last time we were here. Your mother stood right there and sang.

Michael stands. Josh leans back in his chair to see him. Michael starts stacking the plates.

JOSH

And then the loon barked. And you howled like a wolf. The critter chorus.

Michael piles on the flatware, napkins.

JOSH

I'll get them.

But Michael continues, then goes into the house.

THROUGH WINDOW

Josh sees Michael lean on the sink, his head bowed.

DECK

Michael returns to get the rest.

MICHAEL

I don't want you to do that again, Dad. All right?

JOSH

Michael, it just came up.

MICHAEL

I have got to keep focused.

JOSH

Michael—

But Michael's hands are full, and he starts back in.

JOSH

She would never want you to go.

MICHAEL

You channeling her now? Then don't make like you know.

JOSH

You don't know, either.

MICHAEL

Something bigger and something better, that's what I know.

JOSH

What are you talking about?

MICHAEL

I'm going to finish the dishes.

Michael leaves.

Josh hears the water go on and through the window sees Michael set things up to wash, the night punched with the SOUNDS of dishes and glasses and flatware banged around.

Josh takes the pitcher and pours the water on the coals, watches the steam and smoke rise into the empty night sky.

INT. JONATHA'S KITCHEN - SAME EVENING

Barbara and Jonatha at the kitchen table. Light from an architect's lamp. Jonatha wears her "Bootid" outfit of star-cap and tee-shirt: "Shake your Bootid."

Jonatha TYPES at the Underwood while Barbara waits. Jonatha's face is clear and focused.

Then, with a triumphant gesture, Jonatha pulls the paper from the platen and hands it to Barbara.

JONATHA

New story, hot off the fingers.

As Barbara reads, Jonatha recreates in her mind the memory told in the story: her father, the telescope, and GEORGIA, the family servant, African American, older.

In the memory colors shine and the air is clear, and everyone is what they appear to be, with nothing hidden.

BARBARA (V.O.)

ANDROMEDA—Papa has his eye glued to the telescope when Georgia carries me horseride in saying Miss Baby want to say her goodnights but Papa goes “ssssss” until he gets the telescope in clear fokus for his calculations ofasudden he is letting out a skreechy sound that sounds like YOUREEKA again saying beautiful Andromeda and Papa telling Georgia to put the little stool which he has for me to stand up on. My eye is seeing a site it says I can not beleeve because it is looking at a round piece of night cram full of stars winking and twinkling and one most of all and I surprise myself hearing myself say out loud ANDROMEDA. Papa is moving me down off of the stool and I am wishing that I could leave my eye glued to the pipe at least for a while longer Georgia pulls her eye to the pipe and ANDROMEDA comes out between her teef like the woof of steam from the kettle I say Papa Andromeda will be my name from now on foreverand a day but Papa is saying like he means it that is a very frivlus notion and quite impossible Andromeda is the name of a hevenly body and not for any child yet born But Georgia looks at me look at her and our mouths spit stars when we say quiet outside Papa’s ears ANDROMEDA
ANDROMEDA

SILENCE stretches. Barbara puts the paper on the table, spins it. Her face fills with sadness and delight.

BARBARA

Andromeda. You certainly were Georgia’s Miss Baby, weren’t you?

Barbara touches Jonatha's temple softly.

BARBARA

It's a very good story, Andromeda.

JONATHA

(pointing)

There's another new one. Would you—

BARBARA

I'd be honored to read.

Barbara takes the top sheet off the pile, props it up. Jonatha watches her intently.

BARBARA

The Horse Carousel.

EXT. ROAD - FROM A DISTANCE - NEXT MORNING

Against the morning glare off the lake, Michael and Josh are small silhouettes, Michael far ahead of his father.

Josh stops to catch his breath, hands on knees, while Michael runs on without him.

EXT. JONATHA'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

Michael, barely winded and sweating, walks onto Jonatha's property. He pets the horse. Against the side door are two empty wooden crates, with a note: "Two more. Ladder around back. Sorry about the roof. Ernest."

At the end of the driveway Michael sees a chair. Each arm has a carved human hand attached. The right hand holds a hammer. The left hand holds a box of roofing nails.

On the seat is a tube of sealant, tin snips, and a putty knife. Across the back of the chair runs a painted phrase: "Get a grip on yourself."

The rest of the chair is painted over with symbols of "grips": a vice, hand-grips, straitjackets, etc. Michael looks around, but Jonatha doesn't seem to be in sight.

Michael picks up the tools, goes to the back of the house.

EXT. PORCH ROOF

A new aluminum A-frame ladder leans against the eave.

On the ladder, a sign in ornate lettering: "Abandon Dante, all ye who enter here."

Over the bottom rung hangs a tool belt, which Michael straps on, putting everything into its pockets. At the foot of the ladder, a bundle of new cedar shakes.

Up the ladder and onto the roof, and with an expert eye and hand, Michael squeezes out a bead of sealant, drives home the first nail with one blow, and, with the putty knife, smooths the extra sealant over the nailhead.

INT. UPPER ROOM

Jonatha, with her crates and pictures, hears the hammer blow. She looks out the window and watches Michael work.

EXT. JONATHA'S HOUSE

Josh slides to a stop at the foot of the driveway, hands on knees, breathing deeply.

As he straightens, he hears a HAMMER blow. He moves down the driveway.

At the end of the driveway he peers around the corner of the house and sees Michael on the A-frame. He pulls back.

Josh goes back out to Lake Shore Road and starts running for home.

EXT. ROOF

Nail set, single hit, daub of sealant, then nail set, single hit, daub of sealant, and so on down the line.

Tin snips cut the flashing so that it curls around and under the eave. Several nails tack it home.

Michael calculates, then lays the courses of new cedar.

Michael on the A-frame, tool-belted and sweating, smiles.

EXT. ROAD

Josh skids to a stop. He bends over and huffs heavily. A passing car honks. Josh waves without even looking up.

Then Josh steps back onto the road. With a heroically deep breath, he gears up and shuffles toward home.

INT. JONATHA'S KITCHEN

On the table, a lemonade with a postcard leaning against it. Inscribed in an elaborate hand over a grinning set of Cheshire Cat teeth: "Drink me."

MICHAEL

Ms. Newcomb?

No answer. He drinks. With the glass still to his lips, he turns to see Jonatha in the doorway, which startles him. Lemonade streaks down his tee-shirt.

MICHAEL

Sorry. Slob.

Jonatha's hands hold the fragments of the broken glass dragon. She puts them carefully on the table.

JONATHA

One more thing, then you're paid up. Have a seat.

Michael looks where he can put the glass down, but Jonatha takes it and puts it in the sink.

JONATHA

Sit.

She sits opposite him.

JONATHA

Go ahead.

MICHAEL

What?

JONATHA

Rebuild it.

MICHAEL

Me?

She puts next to him a bottle of clear glue.

JONATHA

Why not you?

Michael picks up one piece, then another, then another, seeing how to fit them together. Jonatha watches intently, says nothing.

EXT. BUNGALOW

Josh once again in his driveway, breathing like a gaffed whale. Ernest, kneeling in the flowerbeds, waves his trowel. Josh can barely manage to return the wave.

A CAR HORN behind him sends him six inches off the ground. He scoots out of the way as Barbara pulls in.

BARBARA

For the next Olympiad?

Barbara gets out of the car.

BARBARA

I'm always seeing you in your running clothes.

ERNEST

Hello, Barbara.

BARBARA

Hello, Ernest.

(to Josh)

A hand with the bags?

JOSH

Bags?

BARBARA

Staples—for the two men in training.

Barbara grabs a bag, heads into the kitchen. Josh grabs two bags and follows. Ernest watches with a hangdog face.

INT. JONATHA'S KITCHEN

Michael has the base of the dragon glued together, and he's holding two other pieces together until the glue dries.

JONATHA

Barbara tells me you want to join the Marines.

Michael hesitates, then responds.

MICHAEL

Yes, ma'am.

JONATHA

Careful of your pressure—focus.

Jonatha lays a thin bead of glue along an edge of the already completed bottom. She sets in another piece.

JONATHA

Hold it firm.

She arranges Michael's fingers to hold it in place. Then she peers at those same fingers.

JONATHA

What would convince a young man with such sensitive hands to be a soldier?

Michael's hands tremble slightly.

JONATHA

I'm sure you have a good answer.

Michael looks at Jonatha, and without anything like a preparation, Michael's eyes fill with tears. Jonatha gently lifts his hands away from the glass—and it holds.

JONATHA

The grace of quick-drying glue.

Jonatha holds his hands, but he gently and firmly slides them away, gets up from the table.

MICHAEL

I can finish it tomorrow.

JONATHA

You're welcome to finish it anytime you want.

MICHAEL

I'm going to go.

JONATHA

Then safe home, Michael. And thank you.

Michael stares at the dragon, then into Jonatha's face.

EXT. HOUSE

Jonatha watches him start his steady run. Then she hefts the two empty crates and takes them inside.

INT. BUNGALOW KITCHEN

Barbara puts down her bag, followed quickly by Josh's two bags. She notices the photo on the counter, the one Ernest had seen in the shed. Josh picks up the photo.

JOSH

Where did this come from?

Barbara says nothing as she takes items from the bags: milk, bread, and other such stuff.

BARBARA

(jar in hand)

Where do you put your—

But she sees Josh staring at the picture and waits. Her own face looks uncertain about the sadness on his face.

JOSH

(sotto voce)

Ernest.

Josh puts the photo on top of the refrigerator, leaning it against a cabinet.

JOSH

Always find Melanda in the kitchen.

Points to the jar.

JOSH

That usually goes up there.

Barbara grabs the jar.

BARBARA

(with a smile and half-salute)

Aye aye, captain.

Josh starts putting things away.

JOSH

Wrong service.

BARBARA

That's right—Air Force.

JOSH

More often the Air Farce.

Barbara hesitates with a loaf of bread in her hand.

JOSH

Bread in the bread box.

As they finish putting away the groceries and fold the paper bags, they look like any domestic couple.

Work done, a moment of not-quite-awkwardness.

JOSH

How much do we owe you?

BARBARA

Now you've insulted me. I'm kidding! But if you do want to take on a bit of guilt, you can make it up by giving me a hand with Jonatha's bi-weekly offload. That would be nice.

JOSH

Fair exchange. Let me change my shirt.

Josh exits. Barbara looks after him for a moment, then takes down the picture of Melanda. She runs her finger along the frame, touches the green thumb.

BARBARA

"This is the Hour of Lead / Remembered, if outlived—"

She puts it back, straightens her dress, waits.

INT. JONATHA'S KITCHEN

The half-finished dragon on the table. Jonatha watches it.

From the front doorway.

BARBARA (O.S.)

Yoo-hoo, Lady of Spain.

JONATHA

In here, Lady of Shallot.

Barbara and Josh come into the kitchen with the bags, set them on the counter. They both notice the dragon.

JONATHA

That boy of yours—

She points to the dragon.

JONATHA

—has steady hands.

Josh with fruit and bananas in his hand.

BARBARA

Fruit, bottom shelf. Bananas, hanging basket.

JOSH

Did he finish the roof?

JONATHA

He did.

JOSH

Where is he?

JONATHA

He went that'a'way. With his training.

Josh and Barbara continue to put away groceries. Jonatha runs her finger over the rough edges of the glass.

JONATHA

A straight question, Mr. Smith.

BARBARA

Beware.

JONATHA

I don't know you directly, so you can tell me to shut up—but when's the last time Michael got mad?

JOSH

Mad?

JONATHA

Mad.

JOSH

I've never seen him get mad—I mean, really mad. He gets irritated. Usually with me.

JONATHA

He got mad in front of me.

Josh stops putting away groceries.

JOSH

What did he do?

Jonatha looks up at them both, gives them a once-over, then stands up.

JONATHA

I'm going to check the roof.

EXT. ROOF

Jonatha sits on the roof, inspects the flashing work. Josh climbs onto the A-frame, sees Michael's work. Barbara stays at ground level.

JONATHA

He did excellent work.

JOSH

He was a roofer one summer. You said he got mad.

JONATHA

How long are you here, Mr. Smith?

JOSH

Two weeks.

JONATHA

If he comes back here tomorrow, I'd like your permission to hire Michael. I've got a project.

BARBARA (O.C.)

What project?

JONATHA

One that you don't know about.

BARBARA (O.C.)

And I thought I was in the loop.

JONATHA

Barbara.

Something "no-nonsense" in Jonatha's voice shuts her up.

JONATHA

Mr. Smith?

JOSH

It's not my permission you need, Ms. Newcomb—it's up to Michael.

JONATHA

I just want you to know that I want to ask him.

She pauses, then looks at them both with a faint smile.

JONATHA

I don't want you to think I'm hitting on your beautiful young son.

A pause at Josh what Jonatha said. Barbara's LAUGHTER rises up around them.

Jonatha holds out her hand, and Josh, backing down the ladder, helps her descend, as if helping a queen.

BOTTOM OF LADDER

BARBARA

At least this time you didn't have to have someone catch you.

JONATHA

(holding Josh's hand)

I'd say this is a pretty good catch.

JOSH

I am the catch of the day.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

They come around the corner of the house.

JONATHA

Now, go. I have work to do.

JOSH

A straight question to you, Ms. Newcomb.

BARBARA

You owe him one.

JOSH

You said he got mad. What happened?

Instead of answering, Jonatha sits side-saddle on the carousel horse.

CAROUSEL HORSE

JONATHA

Did you know this horse came from San Antonio, Texas? It just followed me, and I took it in.

Jonatha runs her hand over the carved mane.

JONATHA

When Michael was re-building the dragon—

JOSH

Yes.

JONATHA

I asked him about his mother.

JOSH

So you know.

BARBARA

It'd be the rare local who didn't.

JONATHA

And I asked him about soldiering. And I noted how strong his hands were—he has wonderful hands, Mr. Smith—and I asked him why.

JOSH

What did he tell you?

JONATHA

His eyes—the anger right there. His eyes are too young for that.

Jonatha slips off the horse.

JONATHA

I don't think pain builds character—I really don't. I think pain just makes more pain, and I'm not in favor of more pain in the world. Hands like his don't need it.

Jonatha pats the horse.

JONATHA

If he comes back, he's welcome back.

Josh runs his hand along the horse's rump.

JOSH

All right, Ms. Newcomb.

JONATHA

Now, go, the two of you.

BARBARA

And I've got to get back to the office.

JOSH

Goodbye.

Jonatha watches them get into the car and drive away. She slaps the flank of the carousel horse, as if to send it off on a gallop.

INT. BUNGALOW KITCHEN

Michael, sweat-streaked, holds the picture of his mother. Ernest, wiping his hands and feet, knocks at the door.

ERNEST

Mind if I come in?

Without waiting for an answer, he comes in, sees Michael with the picture.

ERNEST

Found that in the shed—thought it belonged in here.
Do you know when your father's back?

Michael puts the picture down.

MICHAEL

No, I don't.

ERNEST

She was a lively woman, your mother. I remember
your father painting that thumb. I'm real sorry.

MICHAEL

I don't know when he'll be back.

EXT. BUNGALOW DRIVEWAY

Barbara's car pulls in.

INT. KITCHEN

ERNEST

Mention the devil and in he rides. Hear you're going into the Marines?

MICHAEL

Is there anything people don't know around here?

The sound of car doors SLAMMING shut.

ERNEST

Plenty. Beg pardon. I'll just go and talk with your dad.

Ernest leaves, letting the screen door bang shut. Michael stares at the door, then goes to it, still holding the picture, and presses his face against the wire mesh.

He watches the three adults talk with one another, then Ernest move back to his garden work, shoulders slumped.

As he turns away from the screen door, he notices the folded paper bags on the counter.

When he turns back, he sees his father holding the car door open for Barbara, the two of them laughing at something Barbara has said.

IN HIS HANDS

The image of his mother laughs up at Michael.

THROUGH THE SCREEN DOOR

Josh and Barbara talk and laugh.

KITCHEN

Michael's face sets hard. He stalks out of the kitchen.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Josh holds open the car door, makes a gallant gesture as Barbara gets ready to slide behind the wheel.

JOSH

You aren't serious.

BARBARA

Oh, when it comes to bingo in the church, I am quite serious.

JOSH

On Friday.

BARBARA

All the colored markers you'll need. And you could take away \$300—

JOSH

\$300.

BARBARA

—in the big one.

Barbara's face suddenly blushes in embarrassment.

BARBARA

I'm just being silly. We can—

JOSH

We can go for bingo on Friday night. Who can resist the big one?

Josh closes the door.

JOSH

Friday, then.

BARBARA

Friday it is.

INT. BARBARA'S CAR

She waves to the diminishing figure of Josh Smith in her rearview mirror, then whispers to herself.

BARBARA

Well. Bingo. Of all things.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM

Michael sits on his bed, barefoot, holding the picture of his mother. Then he places it on the bed. He puts his socks and running shoes back on.

EXT. BUNGALOW

Michael comes out of the house and runs right past Josh without saying a word, heading out onto the road.

JOSH

Michael? Michael?!

EXT. FLOWERBED

Ernest watches Michael disappear, then looks at Josh. For a moment their eyes lock. Then Josh retreats to the house.

Ernest shakes his head, his face sad. He keeps weeding.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Josh watches Michael through the kitchen window wash the dishes. Again, he pours water on the barbecue coals, watches the steam rise up.

From off the lake, the CRY of a loon.

JOSH

Michael. Michael!

SINK

Michael shuts off the water, then walks to the back door, drying his hands on a kitchen towel. He looks through the screen door but can't see his father.

JOSH (O.S.)

Michael.

Michael opens the door and steps onto the deck.

DECK

The two of them stand in the light thrown from the kitchen window and open back door.

JOSH

Listen.

The loon's CALLS pierce the darkness.

JOSH

Just listen to that.

They stand there, in silence, not touching but not distant from each other.

JOSH

I talked with Ms. Newcomb today.

MICHAEL

Yeah?

JOSH

I saw the dragon.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

JOSH

She said she invited you to come back.

MICHAEL

She did.

JOSH

Are you going to go? No, wait—none of my business.
Go or not if you want to.

Other NIGHT SOUNDS, then the LOON again.

JOSH

She seems nice enough. She seems to like you.

Michael on the verge of saying something but switches at the last moment.

MICHAEL

I'm going to go inside and finish.

JOSH

Thanks for doing the dishes.

Michael is almost in the house when he turns to his father. He sees his father's broad back, his weight leaning against the railing of the deck. Another CRY of the loon.

MICHAEL

I'm going to go—finish.

Michael walks back into the house. Through the window Josh watches Michael snap the towel against the air several times as he moves back to the sink.

INT. JONATHA'S KITCHEN - NEXT DAY

MICHAEL'S HANDS

They lay the last piece of blue glass edge to glued edge.

KITCHEN

Michael looks at Jonatha with an expression of "There!"

JONATHA

To finish—how does it feel?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

Michael strokes the dragon gently.

MICHAEL

I wish I hadn't broken him in the first place—that's what I feel.

Jonatha stands.

JONATHA

Let's put him back on guard duty.

EXT. GARDEN

Michael nestles the dragon on its former pedestal. The garden BUZZES around them. The SILENCE stretches.

Jonatha starts back to the house.

JONATHA

You've paid back what you need to pay back,
Michael. You're free to go, if you want.

Though he tries not to show it, his face and body show that he doesn't like the offer.

JONATHA

But—if you're available—I do have some other work.

A blue jay SQUAWKS at them, then dives away.

JONATHA

A personal project.

MICHAEL

I'm available.

EXT. ROAD

Looking more lively than ever, Josh pushes himself along.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM

Barbara, dressed in a white lab coat with the VNA insignia and a stethoscope dangling out of one pocket, sits with a CROWD of third-graders.

She is going over the anatomy of the heart, which she shows with a plastic model of the "Visible Heart." The TEACHER sits right in the middle of the group.

She points to the veins and arteries as she speaks.

BARBARA

Repeat after me. "Red blood in."

STUDENTS

Red blood in.

BARBARA

Blue blood out.

STUDENTS

Blue blood out.

Barbara makes a big circular gesture around her own body.

BARBARA

Feeds all the little cells.

The STUDENTS also make circles around their bodies.

STUDENTS

Feeds all the little cells.

BARBARA

As it whooshes all about.

STUDENTS

As it whooshes all about.

Barbara puts the model down, places two fingers on her wrist.

BARBARA

Everyone do this.

They do.

BARBARA

Feel that little jumpy thing right there?

Barbara makes a "heartbeat" NOISE.

BARBARA

That's called a pulse.

More HEARTBEAT NOISES, and the kids pick up on it. One GIRL can't seem to find her pulse, so Barbara helps her, and when she's got it, the girl grins broadly.

BARBARA

You guys have got great hearts. Give yourself a big hand.

Everyone applauds.

INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM - JONATHA'S HOUSE

Michael looks at the organized chaos. He walks around and goes to lift the burlap cover on the hidden pile.

JONATHA

Not that.

MICHAEL

Sorry.

JONATHA

Not needed. I'm working on that group over there.

MICHAEL

Okay.

WALL

He sees the calendars, turned to the correct month, with the days carefully x-ed out.

On another wall he sees a poster for the June Bootids, 1998, full of stars and comets. Michael points to it.

MICHAEL

What's that?

JONATHA

I designed the poster—for the town. And the tee-shirt.

MICHAEL

No, the Bootids.

JONATHA

Celestial visitors. That group?

Michael turns to see a collection of paintings of Mexican peasants and village scenes, done on a material that looks and shines like cellophane.

He goes to them, starts carefully looking through them.

JONATHA

These were tricky.

MICHAEL

You were in Mexico?

JONATHA

Met Trotsky. And Rivera. And Siqueiros.

MICHAEL

They were famous?

JONATHA

A little.

Jonatha takes one painting, props it against the wall.

JONATHA

See how it crinkles? On the backside it's rough cloth, but smooth and shiny on the front side. I picked this up at Macy's, when I worked there as a window-dresser. They were going to throw it out—never saw a material I couldn't use. Now, here's the trick.

She turns the painting around.

JONATHA

You can't paint from the front because of the cellophane. Which means you have to paint backwards.

Turns the painting face-front again, points to the knee of the peasant.

JONATHA

See that little white patch on his knee, that little bit of sunlight?

MICHAEL

Yes.

JONATHA

That's the closest to you, isn't it? That came first.

MICHAEL

Then from the front to the back.

JONATHA

And you couldn't repaint anything. One chance, one gamble—that was it. Or throw it away.

MICHAEL

Had to have the whole thing in your head—

JONATHA

In my eye—head had nothing to do with it. If I “thunk” too much, I'd screw it up. The whole thing would appear, right here, like a dream—get out the brushes and hack away.

Jonatha gets up and lets out a GROAN that surprises her.

JONATHA

Get me the WD-40. Those crates over there? I'm doing the same with these.

MICHAEL

With everything.

JONATHA

Yep. I'm closing up shop.

MICHAEL

That sounds like going away.

JONATHA

If you can put those pictures in the crates—

MICHAEL

Are you?

JONATHA

If you put those pictures in the crates—

MICHAEL

Going away?

JONATHA

The whole world comes and goes, talking of Michelangelo. If you put those pictures in the crates—

MICHAEL

In the crates—

JONATHA

—then I will write up the inventory. That's the division of labor here.

MICHAEL

Aye-aye, sir.

Michael starts crating the Mexican pictures.

MICHAEL

Has anybody ever seen these—you know, like in a gallery?

JONATHA

Just be careful—watch what you're doing.

Jonatha hunches over her pad of paper, writing. Michael lifts a picture of a mother and two children, boy and girl, and something about its sweetness makes him look closely.

MICHAEL

This is great.

Jonatha looks up to see what he sees.

JONATHA

(reluctant)

She made tortillas out of blue corn.

MICHAEL

How old were you when—

JONATHA

Not much older than you.

MICHAEL

It's not like this now, is it?

JONATHA

Nothing ever is. Just be careful.

Michael slides it into the crate, then picks up a picture of a vibrantly white camellia and stares at it.

Jonatha watches his intense gaze, then speaks.

JONATHA

One day I had a crowd of camellias just like those in my arms—

(pointing)

—the man in that picture of over there gave 'em to me—and the smell was so much like a fist that I passed right out.

MICHAEL

Yeah?

JONATHA

(mimicking)

"Yeah." Those were the days when a body knew what to do with beauty.

INT. BUNGALOW KITCHEN

Josh comes in, sweating.

TOP OF THE REFRIGERATOR

Josh sees that the picture of Melanda is not there.

HALLWAY

Josh stands in the doorway of Michael's room. He sees the picture on the bed.

MICHAEL'S ROOM

Josh picks it up, props it against the pillow, then, thinking better of it, lays it back in the rectangle made by the frame on the coverlet, as if no one had ever touched it.

INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM

Michael is tacking home the cover to a crate while Jonatha tapes her inventories to each crate.

JONATHA

C'est tout finis, I'd say.

MICHAEL

All right.

Jonatha goes to the calendar and marks off one more day.

MICHAEL

Why are you doing that?

JONATHA

Because it's one more day.

Michael gets up and reads the calendar.

MICHAEL

What does it mean, "Meet The Elephant."

JONATHA

The one sitting in the middle of the room that no one talks about.

MICHAEL

I don't understand.

Jonatha just touches Michael's arm.

JONATHA

Don't worry. Thank you.

MICHAEL

The pictures are really great.

JONATHA

Lemonade?

MICHAEL

Sure.

JONATHA

Then lead on, Macduff.

As Michael walks down the stairs, Jonatha trails him, keeping a hand on his shoulder and reciting poetry.

JONATHA

It was six men of Indostan / To learning much
inclined, / Who went to see the Elephant / (Though all
of them were blind), / That each by observation /
Might satisfy his mind.

EXT. DECK - EVENING

Michael and Josh at the table eating.

MICHAEL

She has me put her pictures in these crates, and she
makes up lists.

JOSH

Storing them?

MICHAEL

I don't know. And she's got these calendars she
marks off—except that they're 1913 and 1941. Why
would she do that?

JOSH

I don't know. It is strange.

MICHAEL

Even stranger. On the last day of the month, this
month, she's got "Meet The Elephant," like heavily
penciled in. And another thing—I think—

JOSH

What?

MICHAEL

Dad, I think her pictures are great—not like I really
know, but I find myself staring and staring at 'em.

Josh smiles at his son.

MICHAEL

But I don't think she's ever shown 'em to anybody,
you know, like in a museum.

JOSH

Maybe that's what this is all about.

MICHAEL

Without Ms. Morgan knowing?

JOSH

Good point. You want to keep helping her out?

MICHAEL

She'd like me to.

JOSH

Do you?

MICHAEL

Yeah—yeah, I think I do.

The air is suddenly filled with bat SQUEAKS as they hunt. Josh rubs his son's
buzz cut.

JOSH

Be careful, or they'll get caught in your hair!

MICHAEL

At least I have some.

Josh slaps his belly.

JOSH

Getting smaller.

Michael gets up, gathers the plates.

MICHAEL

We'll see.

JOSH

I'll get those.

MICHAEL

You cooked.

Michael goes into the house, and Josh sees him at the sink. The light from the kitchen shimmers in Josh's eyes.

INT. KITCHEN

Josh comes in holding the glasses, lets the screen door WHOOSH shut. Michael is washing.

EXT. DECK

A young raccoon sidles along the railing, then sits up and looks at the two humans in the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

Josh brings the glasses to the sink.

JOSH

Here.

MICHAEL

Got'cha.

Michael starts to rinse the glasses.

JOSH

Michael. I've got something to tell you.

For a moment it seems as if the roles have been reversed: Josh, the hesitant teenager, Michael, the patient parent.

JOSH

I've got a—date. With Ms. Morgan. Barbara.

EXT. DECK

The raccoon moves closer.

INT. KITCHEN

Michael doesn't say anything, just rinses the glasses.

JOSH

Friday. Bingo. At the church.

Michael shuts off the water, dries his hands.

EXT. DECK

The raccoon sits up and leans his forepaws against the window screen.

INT. KITCHEN

Both Michael and Josh hear the SCRATCH of the raccoon's paws on the screen, and for a moment the three creatures look at one another without judgment or fear. Michael looks at Josh, then leaves the kitchen.

Josh trades looks with the raccoon.

Michael comes back with the picture of Melanda, puts it back on top of the refrigerator, then turns to Josh. The raccoon watches everything.

Michael approaches the raccoon, who does not move.

MICHAEL

(whispering)

Raccoon, raccoon—

Michael makes a mask around his eyes with his fingers. Moves even closer.

JOSH

(whispering)

Up in a tree—

Josh raises his arms.

JOSH

Raccoon, raccoon—

MICHAEL

You can't see me.

They both cover their eyes, Michael right at the window. The raccoon looks to one, then the other, and without fuss turns and leaves.

Michael faces his father.

MICHAEL

I get 50% of everything you win.

JOSH

Right into the trust fund.

Michael moves to go back to his room. Josh reaches out to give him a hug, but Michael shies away.

MICHAEL

It's okay, Dad.

Michael disappears into his room.

JOSH

(to himself)

Well. Bingo. Of all things.

A CRASH as the raccoon goes for the tomatoes in the salad.

EXT. BARBARA'S DECK - SAME EVENING

Barbara puts down a gin and tonic, then wriggles out of her lab coat and tosses it on the table. The stethoscope makes a solid THUNK.

Sipping, she stares at the shimmering lights from the houses on the other side of the lake.

She fishes out the stethoscope and listens to her own heart and breathing, then puts it down. Takes a long drink, stares into the darkness.

EXT. ROAD - FROM A DISTANCE - NEXT AFTERNOON

Against the afternoon glare, Michael and Josh are small silhouettes, Michael this time not so far ahead.

EXT. ROAD - CLOSER IN

Michael turns to look at his father, who waves to him.

JOSH

Go on! I'm fine!

Michael takes off, but Josh, instead of doubling over to catch his breath, continues steadily, face to the sun.

EXT. JONATHA'S DRIVEWAY

Michael sees Barbara's car.

INT. JONATHA'S LIVING ROOM

Michael pokes his head in.

MICHAEL

Hello.

BARBARA (O.S.)

Come on in.

INT. KITCHEN

Barbara at the table with cuff, syringe, etc.

BARBARA

The 200,000-mile check-up.

JONATHA

That's almost to the moon, but not back.

Barbara collects her instruments.

BARBARA

You'll live long enough to make it back.

(to Michael)

She puts redwoods to shame.

MICHAEL

Ms. Morgan?

BARBARA

Yes, Michael.

But Michael doesn't answer right away. The two women shoot a glance at each other as they read the hesitation in his body.

BARBARA

What is it, Michael?

MICHAEL

Could I talk with you for, like, a moment?

BARBARA

Of course.

Michael points to the living room.

MICHAEL

In there?

BARBARA

Of course. Ms. Newcomb?

JONATHA

I'll just sit here and grow another tree ring.

Jonatha watches intently as they move into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Michael paces.

MICHAEL

My dad says— My dad says you two have a—date tonight.

Barbara doesn't answer right away.

BARBARA

I guess we do, Michael.

MICHAEL

Bingo.

BARBARA

At the church—yes. Michael, why don't you sit down?

Michael sits next to her as they sit down on the couch.

MICHAEL

You knew my mother?

BARBARA

I knew your mother a little.

MICHAEL

Did you like her?

BARBARA

I heard she had the greenest thumb in town. I envied that.

Barbara holds up her thumb.

BARBARA

No talent in mine whatsoever. What I knew of your mother I liked. Everyone who knew her liked her. A heart like a green thumb. She is missed, Michael.

Michael traces a figure on his knee.

BARBARA

I'm sorry she's gone.

Barbara puts a tender hand on Michael's shoulder.

MICHAEL

I told him—50% of everything he wins.

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA

Only fifty percent? I'll make sure he ups it to 75.

MICHAEL

He's not a big gambler.

BARBARA

Neither am I.

Barbara touches the cut on his temple.

BARBARA

Healing quite nicely.

INT. SIDE DOORWAY

Michael watches Barbara get into her car and drive away.

JONATHA

You okay?

MICHAEL

Can we go work?

JONATHA

In work is salvation. Let's go do that, Michael.

INT. BUNGALOW - LATER

Josh at his dresser. He slips his wallet in his pocket and his cell phone on his belt, pulls at his shirt, hitches up his pants.

Finally, he looks up and peers at himself in the mirror for a good ten seconds.

A KNOCK on the kitchen door.

INT. KITCHEN

Josh sees the dumpy silhouette of Ernest at the screen door. Except that Ernest, for Ernest, is dressed up: white shirt, polyester slacks, loafers, hair slicked back.

Josh opens the door for him.

JOSH

Come in.

Which Ernest does—but with a cane and limp in his left leg.

JOSH

What happened, Ernest?

Ernest tries to stand tall, though clearly in pain.

ERNEST

Ain't nothing much.

JOSH

It's a nothing that's something, Ernest. Come on, sit down.

ERNEST

I can stand just fine.

But Josh pulls out a chair for Ernest. He throws it a defiant look, but the pain begins to win the battle.

ERNEST

Well, maybe for a minute.

Ernest hobbles over to it and sits. Josh sits in a second chair.

JOSH

Ernest, we can settle up the accounts later. I'm about ready—

ERNEST

I know where you're going. And that's why I'm here.

Ernest tries to appear tough but only looks more hangdog.

ERNEST

You have a date.

JOSH

Does everybody know this?

ERNEST

"Don't make love by the garden gate / Love is blind, but the neighbors ain't."

JOSH

I see—

Ernest holds up his hand for Josh to stop.

ERNEST

I don't mean disrespect, Colonel, but I have to know.

JOSH

Know what?

ERNEST

I have to know what your intentions are towards
Barbara.

Josh half-smiles at the earnestness of Ernest.

ERNEST

Because if you intend to—

JOSH

Ernest, how did you hurt yourself?

ERNEST

Don't change the subject—

JOSH

I'm just curious—friend to friend.

Ernest fidgets, then speaks.

ERNEST

I started running. Tried to start, that is. Made it to the
end of the driveway, then twisted my ankle. On a
rock.

JOSH

That's a shame. Running, huh?

ERNEST

Yeah. You know, so that—

JOSH

Yes, Ernest, I know.

The cicadas SAW the air.

JOSH

You've taken good care of the place.

ERNEST

It's a good place.

JOSH

Wouldn't trust it to anyone else.

Josh makes two fists and bangs them gently together.

JOSH

We're a little too old for this, aren't we? With your ankle and my hamstring, we couldn't even get a running start.

ERNEST

Most likely.

JOSH

No big bang for these old bucks, eh?

Ernest fidgets.

ERNEST

But do you intend—

JOSH

I intend to win \$300 tonight. That much I know.

ERNEST

Because if you—

JOSH

I still miss Melanda like there's no tomorrow. Like the twelfth of never. Past that—I don't have a clue.

Ernest sits up tall, rests his hands on his cane.

ERNEST

That \$300 tonight is mine.

JOSH

Wouldn't have expected anything less from you.

Josh leans over and taps his cane.

JOSH

You even have your sword.

Ernest taps the floor with his cane.

ERNEST
May the best "Bingo!" win.

JOSH
Hoo-wah!

INT. BARBARA'S HOUSE - LATER

Barbara, dressed smartly, cosmetic'd, scoots around unnecessarily moving pillows, dusting off spotless table-tops, and so on.

BARBARA
(whispering)
Slow down—stay fresh—

When Josh knocks on the front door, she stops, takes a deep breath, then opens it—

FRONT DOOR

To see a nervous Josh smartly dressed.

BARBARA
Come on in, come on in.

Josh enters. Barbara closes the door.

BARBARA
Welcome to the humble abode. Would you like a drink?

JOSH
I would love a drink.

Barbara puts her finger to her temple.

BARBARA
I sense gin and tonics cooling in the refrigerator.

JOSH
Splash of lime juice?

BARBARA
But of course!

They move toward the kitchen. Barbara turns to face Josh.

BARBARA

I am remarkably out of practice at this.

JOSH

I was never even in practice to be so much out of it.

BARBARA

Good—I'm glad we got that out of the way.

JOSH

Drinks.

BARBARA

Drinks it is.

INT. UPPER ROOM

Michael slides pictures in the crates, the room almost completely organized except for the one untouched pile covered with a rough burlap cloth.

Jonatha draws up her list.

EXT. BARBARA'S DECK

Under a multi-colored umbrella, Josh and Barbara sit sipping gin and tonics, looking out over the lake.

BARBARA

I want to show you something, Josh. Do you mind?

JOSH

No.

Barbara enters the house. Josh, alone, sips, stares, sips again.

Barbara returns with a well-made, polished wooden box. She sets it down, opens it.

Inside is a tightly folded American flag.

On top of the flag is a picture of Barbara's MOTHER, her service portrait.

Barbara nods at it. Josh cradles the photo, careful not to get fingerprints on it.

BARBARA

“Full military honors,” Melanda’s obituary said. Flag included.

JOSH

And this?

Barbara sits.

BARBARA

I, too, know about the losing of mothers.

(points to photo)

Pamela Dorothy Morgan. 85th Evac Hospital, Gia Dinh Province, Vietnam. A brave nurse in a stupid war.

Josh hands her the photo. Barbara also cradles it.

JOSH

And now you’re a nurse.

BARBARA

With my mother’s leather bag at my side, no less. I know what Michael’s gone through—going through. And you, too—a little, at least.

Barbara replaces the picture in the box, closes the box.

They sit, sip in silence. Barbara points to the box.

BARBARA

Maybe this wasn’t—

JOSH

I’m thinking exactly the opposite.

BARBARA

So—“I-75” still sounds good to you?

They raise their glasses to each other.

JOSH

To Pamela Dorothy Morgan.

BARBARA

And the big one.

INT. UPPER ROOM - JONATHA'S HOUSE

Bare bulb. The windows show the coming of night. Michael nails the crate shut while Jonatha tapes on the list.

Only one group of items remains, covered with the burlap.

Jonatha marks off the days on the calendars. She looks at the untouched pile, then walks around it, fidgety.

MICHAEL

I drew something. A picture.

Michael pulls a folded piece of paper from his pants pocket, hands it over to Jonatha, who unfolds a crude but not bad picture of a raccoon.

JONATHA

A raccoon.

MICHAEL

You can recognize it. Last night, at the kitchen window, my dad and I saw—that.

Jonatha scans him.

MICHAEL

My mother used to sing to me about a raccoon—

Jonatha pushes the drawing back to him.

JONATHA

Well, that's nice.

MICHAEL

What's the matter?

Jonatha, agitated, moves around the room, skirting close to the covered pile, then away.

MICHAEL

You okay?

JONATHA
That's what your mom did for you?

MICHAEL
Yeah.

JONATHA
Sing?

MICHAEL
All the time.

JONATHA
Sing, read to you—

MICHAEL
Yeah.

JONATHA
Aren't you lucky?

Michael puts the drawing back into his pocket, then walks to the covered pile.

MICHAEL
Okay. So let's just finish this—

JONATHA
Don't touch that, I told you!

Michael turns to her. Anger momentarily washes over his face, then drains away as he sees Jonatha's face and body suddenly livid and fearful and frail all at once.

Then Jonatha faints. Michael manages to catch her before she hits the floor.

INT. JONATHA'S HEAD

Michael's VOICE as if from far away. She tries to answer, but all she hears from her mouth is a raven's CAW.

INT. UPPER ROOM

Michael picks her up.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Michael lays her on the coach. Her breathing is oddly regular, and she looks nothing more than asleep.

Michael takes out his cell phone, dials.

INT. BINGO HALL

Josh and Barbara, with what looks like an acre of bingo cards in front of them, are laughing and joking with the people around them, even Ernest.

Josh's cell phone rings. He answers, listens.

JOSH

Here's Barbara.

He quickly hands it to Barbara. Barbara listens intently.

ERNEST

Everything okay?

BARBARA

What's her breathing like? Any convulsions? We'll be right there.

Barbara hands the phone back.

JOSH

(to Michael)

Are you all right? Okay, we'll be right there.

He disconnects. They prepare to leave.

BARBARA

Looks like we won't be going for the big one.

JOSH

I'll get the car.

Josh leaves.

BARBARA

(to Ernest)

It's Jonatha.

ERNEST

You want I should call the EMTs?

BARBARA

Not yet.

Indicates for Ernest to take their cards.

BARBARA

Ernest, you get the \$300, we split in threes.

EXT. JONATHA'S DRIVEWAY

Josh and Barbara pull in. The car's headlights catch Michael knocking on the door. They get out, Barbara with her leather bag.

BARBARA

What happened?

MICHAEL

Just after I finished talking with you, she woke up.

BARBARA

Woke up.

MICHAEL

Like a jack-in-the-box. I gave her some water, then walked out here to see if you were coming. When I wanted to go back in—door was locked.

EXT. LIVING ROOM WINDOW

Michael, Josh, and Barbara see Jonatha sitting on the couch, an afghan around her, ignoring the RAPPING on the window to get her attention.

JOSH

How strong can that front door be?

MICHAEL

I have a better idea.

EXT. PORCH ROOF

Michael skips up the A-frame to the roof, then opens the window of the upper room and slips through.

INT. UPPER ROOM

The bare bulb still burns. Michael sprints down the stairs into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Michael walks right past Jonatha, who stares in front of her, her face set. He opens the front door.

Barbara, leather bag in hand, hustles to Jonatha, who makes no response to Barbara feeling her forehead, taking a pulse, etc.

Josh stands in the background.

BARBARA

I am going to call the EMTs.

Jonatha's voice BARKS out.

JONATHA

No!

BARBARA

And why not?

JONATHA

I'm not leaving!

BARBARA

You fainted, Jonatha. It may have been a stroke.

JONATHA

I am not going!

BARBARA

Then do me a favor, you old coot—just lie down.
Okay?

Jonatha doesn't move. Barbara takes her legs and swings them onto the couch, lays her back, head to the pillow, tucks the afghan around her. Jonatha doesn't resist, doesn't help. Within seconds she seems sound asleep.

BARBARA

What happened?

Michael points to the kitchen, and Barbara nods.

INT. KITCHEN

MICHAEL

We were talking about my mother—about Mom—
upstairs—

(to Josh)

—I was going to tell her the raccoon song—

(to Barbara)

—and then she just collapsed. Like a tent.

Barbara walks to the doorway, looks on Jonatha, then turns back to Michael.

BARBARA

Show me.

JOSH

I'll sit with her.

INT. UPPER ROOM

MICHAEL

Here it is. This is what we've been doing—"closing up
shop."

BARBARA

She said that.

MICHAEL

Called it that. Made some cadaver jokes. And there're the calendars. Same dates as this year, just different years. And look, here, at the end of the Junes: "Meet The Elephant." And a poem: "And so these men of Indostan / Disputed loud and long, / Each in his own opinion / Exceeding stiff and strong, / Though each was partly in the right, / And all were in the wrong!"

BARBARA

(overlapping)

The six blind men and the elephant. A favorite of hers. Blindness, fooling yourself—

Michael points to the last group of paintings.

MICHAEL

I kept wanting to get to those, but she yelled at me once not to touch 'em, then yelled at me again just before she—you know, boom. So I didn't.

The two of them stand by the covered pile.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Jonatha's breathing stays regular, but her eyelids begin to tremble, as if she is dreaming.

INT. UPPER ROOM

BARBARA

I think we have to.

MICHAEL

Let's take 'em downstairs. I don't feel comfortable—

BARBARA

Good idea. Josh!

JOSH (O.S.)

Yeah?

BARBARD

Need your help.

INT. KITCHEN

They pile what they've carried downstairs on the table and floor.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Michael looks at Jonatha, her eyes fluttering but her breathing even. He gives the afghan an unnecessary tuck.

INT. KITCHEN

MICHAEL

She's breathing okay.

They begin to unpack the items.

INT. LIVING ROOM - JONATHA'S DREAM

Everything in soft focus—bright, colorful. Jonatha, now five years old, sits on the carousel horse. Then, carefully, she stands on it, like a bareback circus rider. The strong VOICE of GEORGIA, 40s, African American, calls out.

GEORGIA

Miss Baby! Miss Baby! Get down!

The scene suddenly shifts to Jonatha, same age, sitting primly in her tree, a rope ladder hanging down.

Georgia appears at the base of the tree. She knows Jonatha is up there but makes believe not to notice.

GEORGIA

Miss Baby—I got your favorite eats in the kitchen. But I'm giving it to Mugsy if you don't come down.

INT. KITCHEN

All three pore over drawings, paintings, writings, and other items about Georgia.

In the middle, as if framed by all the material, is a photo of Georgia and Jonatha at the age of five. Despite the difference in skin colors, it is clear from their features that they are more than servant and Miss Baby.

BARBARA

Georgia was a servant in the Newcomb house.

Josh holds up an old postcard of San Antonio, Texas.

BARBARA

That's where they lived.

Michael turns the photo over, reads the caption.

MICHAEL

"Georgia's Miss Baby."

JOSH

Stories, poems—

BARBARA

Drawings, paintings—

JOSH

All Georgia, all the time.

JONATHA'S DREAM

Jonatha, hidden in the linen closet, peeks through the crack between the door and the jamb.

Her FATHER, big, beefy, well-suited, comes into the laundry room, Georgia there folding sheets.

Her father puts his hand on Georgia's waist.

GEORGIA

Mr. Newcomb—please.

FATHER

Please what?

Jonatha, in the closet, begins quietly tapping the letters "S O S" against the jamb—short-short-short, long-long-long, short-short-short—as her father spins Georgia to face him. The tapping gets faster and faster.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Jonatha's breathing, still even—but her eyes dance.

INT. KITCHEN

Barbara holds up a large photo.

BARBARA

Family photo. 1913.

JOSH

(pointing up)

The calendar.

BARBARA

Dated the last day of the month.

Barbara turns the photo over, and then keeps turning it back and forth as she points out people.

BARBARA

Mother. Father. Jonatha on Georgia's lap. Aunt.
Uncle, uncle, uncle, uncle. A couple more aunts.
Cousins.

Michael holds a document that transfixes him.

JOSH

What?

Michael hands it over to Barbara.

BARBARA

A birth certificate.

JOSH

For?

MICHAEL

A young girl—born to Georgia.

Barbara looks at the family photo.

BARBARA

I don't see any black girl in the picture.

JOSH

It's unusual they even included Georgia. When's Jonatha's birthday?

BARBARA

February 28.

Josh holds up the birth certificate, his finger under the phrase "February 28."

MICHAEL

Dad?

JOSH

Yeah, I know.

MICHAEL

No—

JOSH

It's been known to happen—

BARBARA

(amazed)

Jesus H. and a dose of Mary.

JONATHA'S DREAM

A funeral. Closed casket, photo of the father on an easel. Georgia supports Jonatha's MOTHER by the arm, but the mother is strangely dry-eyed and the only white woman whose face is not covered by a veil.

Jonatha in the choir loft, watching the patterns made by the heads of the congregation. Beside her, the organist PLAYS. The pastor's VOICE drones.

Jonatha's eye drifts to the dappled sunlight on the windows, to the grain of the wood railing on which her hands rest, these patterns matching the patterns made by the people in the pews. All blending, all swirling.

JOSH (V.O.)

An obituary—Jonatha's father.

BARBARA (V.O.)

Died from?

JOSH (V.O.)

Something sudden—apparently healthy one day,
gone the next.

The kitchen, father and mother at the table, Georgia at the counter. Father drinks his coffee, reading his newspaper, then suddenly begins to choke as whatever was in the coffee takes effect. Within minutes, dead.

Georgia and mother look at each other.

INT. KITCHEN

JOSH

Whatever it was, it was bad enough to make it a
closed casket.

MICHAEL

This is way too weird.

JOSH

And another one.

Barbara takes the second clipping—a second obituary.

BARBARA

Jonatha's mother.

MICHAEL

Man.

They all look steadily at each other.

BARBARA

What did Jonatha know?

JOSH

And when did she know it?

JONATHA'S DREAM

Jonatha, now 18, standing in front of her mother and Georgia, screaming without pause because they have finally told her the truth about her past.

Jonatha suddenly climbing up her tree, Georgia underneath calling out to her, then Jonatha suddenly losing her grip and falling, falling, falling, past Georgia into Mexico and sketching the daughter and mother who made tortillas from blue corn, then falling into New York painting the same picture on the cellophane, smiling, energized.

INT. KITCHEN

They sift through drawing after drawing of Georgia—young, old, in oil, in charcoal, in gouache—picture after picture after picture.

MICHAEL

I don't think Jonatha's ever had a show.

BARBARA

She's never said to me she wants one.

MICHAEL

And would Jonatha ever say something like that?

JOSH

Listen to this.

Josh holds up a yellowed typewritten page.

JOSH

First of all, signed by—

Turns the letter to them. They can see the logo on the letter: Museum of Modern Art.

JOSH

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Museum director.

MICHAEL

A show?

JOSH

Apparently very interested.

BARBARA

The date?

JOSH

(looking closely)

Nineteen forty—last number smudged, maybe 1,
maybe 7.

BARBARA

The calendar.

MICHAEL

Bingo.

JONATHA'S DREAM

INT. DINER - 1941

Jonatha, 33, at a table. She's made a tableau from the salt and pepper shakers, ketchup bottle, etc. Her right leg jitters, and she can barely sit in her chair.

On the table in front of her, the letter from the museum, which she spins.

Through the plate glass window Jonatha watches Georgia, now older, come closer, checking an address on a piece of paper until she sees the diner and Jonatha at the window.

Jonatha puts the letter away.

EXT. DINER

Georgia looks at Jonatha, then enters.

INT. DINER - TABLE

Georgia slides into a chair, clutching her large purse. She stares at Jonatha.

GEORGIA

My God. Miss Baby.

JONATHA

What do you want?

GEORGIA

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Georgia clicks open her purse, takes out a newspaper clipping: her "mother's" obituary notice.

Georgia slides it across the table. Jonatha reads it but does not touch it.

GEORGIA

I'm sorry.

JONATHA

Stop saying that.

GEORGIA

I didn't know if you knew.

JONATHA

Knew what?

Jonatha blows the clipping back across the table.

JONATHA

You wasted your time.

GEORGIA

Baby. Baby.

Georgia goes to touch her, and Jonatha recoils.

GEORGIA

Come home, Baby.

JONATHA

No thanks.

Jonatha gets up.

JONATHA

My mother is dead. And my mother is dead. From now to whenever—both dead.

As hard as Jonatha tries to keep her face like stone, on the last "dead" her face contorts with anger and pain. But she will not share the grief.

JONATHA
(whispering)
You need to go back to being dead.

EXT. DINER

Jonatha does not want to look back, but she does and sees Georgia alone at the table.

Georgia puts her hand on the plate glass window, and as soon as she does the glass and the entire diner, including Georgia, SHATTER into dust.

The force of the BLAST throws Jonatha up and away, and she finds herself falling, falling, falling until she is caught by a pair of strong brown arms out in back of her house.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Jonatha's eyes pop open.

INT. KITCHEN

They look up to see Jonatha in the doorway.

They scramble to their feet and go to her, but she waves them away as she moves to the table.

She touches the photo of her and Georgia.

JONATHA
I am very tired.

Jonatha looks at the three of them.

JONATHA
(to Michael)
I am very ashamed.

She looks at the photo, then right into Michael's eyes.

JONATHA
I want to go home.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NEXT MORNING, GREY DAWN

Vigil. Josh and Michael in chairs, Barbara on the couch—sleeping.

Michael wakes, extricates himself, wincing as he does, then goes to Jonatha's bedroom and sees that her bed is empty.

INT. KITCHEN

Michael looks out the window, sees Jonatha sitting on the knoll in her garden, wrapped in the afghan, staring.

MICHAEL

(whispering)

Like a ghost.

Josh and Barbara shuffle in, see Jonatha.

JOSH

What?

MICHAEL

A ghost.

(pointing)

I never even heard her go out.

JOSH

What are we going to do? We have a suicidal ghost sitting out there with the flowers. Date marked on the calendars and everything.

MICHAEL

(whispering)

Closing up shop.

BARBARA

Meeting the elephant. I don't know—she never needs help. I need help figuring out what help she needs.

JOSH

I have an idea.

They turn to face him.

JOSH
Actually, your idea.

MICHAEL
Mine.

JOSH
A show.

A moment as the idea sinks in.

MICHAEL
Yeah!

BARBARA
She'll never let you.

MICHAEL
She wouldn't have to know.

JOSH
At least about setting it up.

MICHAEL
Right. The show she never had.

JOSH
—she never had.

BARBARA
You're thinking—

JOSH
Yes.

MICHAEL
Yes!

BARBARA
The Georgia pictures.

JOSH
Yes.

BARBARA

Rest in peace.

JOSH

Exactly.

MICHAEL

We have to do that. We have to do that.

Barbara stares at the lonely figure in the garden.

BARBARA

It means lying to her.

MICHAEL

A little.

JOSH

Artistic license.

MICHAEL

Just a little. I mean, only if you agree. You know her best.

BARBARA

I don't know what I know now, knowing what I just learned.

Barbara keeps looking at Jonatha, then nods her head yes.

EXT. GARDEN

Barbara and Michael where Jonatha sits.

BARBARA

Jonatha, I need you to come with me. I need to check out the plumbing.

MICHAEL

Here, I'll give you a hand.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Balancing things carefully, Josh puts the thick pile of materials into the trunk of the car.

EXT. GARDEN

Michael escorts her. Jonatha puts up her hand to stop him.

JONATHA

You would die for your mother.

MICHAEL

Anybody would.

BARBARA

Jonatha, before you catch something.

JONATHA

But you would die for her.

MICHAEL

C'mon.

They walk a few more steps.

JONATHA

Look at the dragon. It held up.

MICHAEL

Never doubted it.

Jonatha now looks quite frail and scared as she holds on to Michael's arm. Barbara bites her lip in worry.

INT. KITCHEN

Josh ties a length of rope across the stairway up to the room. From it he hangs the sign Jonatha had hung on the A-frame: "Abandon Dante all ye who enter here."

Barbara and Michael come in with Jonatha.

BARBARA

This is one little girl who's going right to bed.

Barbara takes her straight into the bedroom. Josh and Michael look at each other.

MICHAEL

How was your date?

JOSH

It was fine.

Barbara comes back out.

BARBARA

Could you hand me my bag?

Josh takes it from the kitchen table.

BARBARA

Thanks.

Barbara looks at Michael and smiles, then disappears back into Jonatha's room.

MICHAEL

Win anything?

JOSH

How about 50% of some close misses?

MICHAEL

Seventy-five.

JOSH

That's doable.

Barbara comes back out.

BARBARA

She's exhausted—fell right off by herself.

MICHAEL

I'll stay while you guys, you know, set things up.

Barbara and Josh leave.

INT. JONATHA'S BEDROOM - DOORWAY

Michael watches Jonatha breathe.

EXT. BUNGALOW DRIVEWAY

Barbara's car pulls in.

INT. KITCHEN - BUNGALOW

JOSH

Quite a night.

Barbara takes the picture of Melanda.

BARBARA

May I borrow this?

JOSH

Why?

BARBARA

I have an idea.

JOSH

Just be careful—

BARBARA

The hands of a nurse, remember.

EXT. BUNGALOW DRIVEWAY

Barbara moves to her car.

BARBARA

We'll do it at my house. Familiar territory.

JOSH

When—

BARBARA

Has to be tomorrow night.

JOSH

And why is that?

BARBARA

The night of the Bootids.

JOSH

The what?

BARBARA

The Bootids. Haven't you seen the signs?

Barbara pulls away.

BARBARA

I'll be back!

The car disappears down the road.

EXT. STREET IN TOWN

A banner advertising the town's celebration of the Bootids hangs across Main Street.

EXT. PHOTO SHOP

Through the window: Barbara with the pictures of the three mothers on the counter instructing the clerk to make a copy of each.

EXT. ART ASSOCIATION

Members of the art association, including Ernest, help Barbara load easels into the back seat of her car.

INT. LIBRARY

Josh at the library, looking up "Bootids."

INT. JONATHA'S KITCHEN

Michael with a sketchbook trying to draw some of the Mexican faces on the ceramic tiles.

INT. BARBARA'S HOUSE

Josh and Barbara set up the "show," making Barbara's living room into a gallery: pictures on easels, on the walls, etc.

INT. JONATHA'S KITCHEN

Jonatha peeks around the door jamb at Michael as he draws. Michael senses her and turns.

She comes to the table, sees what he's doing. Taking his drawing hand into her hand, she guides the pencil along a particularly difficult length of cheekbone, and under the guidance, the face seems to leap into focus.

She gets a glass of water, then retreats into her room.

INT. PHOTO SHOP

The clerk slides the three copies across to Barbara, who looks at each of them and nods approval.

INT. BARBARA'S HOUSE

The Georgia "show" is ready.

EXT. ROAD - NEXT AFTERNOON

Michael and Josh running on the road, this time together.

INT. BUNGALOW KITCHEN - NEXT EVENING

Michael fidgets with his tie until Josh comes over and, with sure hands, re-ties the tie.

Michael then returns the favor by straightening Josh's tie.

INT. JONATHA'S LIVING ROOM

Barbara, dressed. Jonatha, not.

BARBARA

Every year we go to my house to see the Bootids.

The sound of a CAR IN THE DRIVEWAY. Barbara gets up to open the front door.

BARBARA

What makes this year any different?

JONATHA

Because I'm dead this year.

Michael and Josh, spiffed and polished, come in.

BARBARA

Lancelot and Galahad.

The three of them stand quietly.

JONATHA

What?

MICHAEL

The Bootids.

JOSH

A periodic meteor shower during the month of June.

JONATHA

Which has sucked the last couple of years.

BARBARA

Piss and vinegar levels rising—good. Are we going to do this like we always do, or not?

The three wait patiently.

INT. BARBARA'S CAR

Michael in back with Jonatha, who has dressed herself in her "Bootid" outfit of star-cap and tee-shirt: "Shake your Bootid."

EXT. BARBARA'S DRIVEWAY

They get out of the car.

JOSH

Michael, you're on.

MICHAEL

Aye, aye.

JONATHA

Where are you—

Michael lopes ahead and enters the house.

JONATHA

Where's he going?

BARBARA

He knows where he's going. Come on.

With Josh and Barbara on either side of her, her arms through theirs, they make their way into the house.

INT. BARBARA'S KITCHEN

Michael, white towel draped across his arm, holds one tray of glasses filled with champagne and a second tray with little eats on it.

MICHAEL

Would you care for a drink? Something to eat?

JONATHA

What are you doing?

Michael politely ignores her and makes the offer to Josh and Barbara.

JOSH

Don't mind if I do.

BARBARA

Don't mind if I do.

JONATHA

You all lost what few brains you had?

MICHAEL

The gallery is this way, ma'am.

Michael puts the trays down, takes a glass for himself, and offers Jonatha his arm.

MICHAEL

May I?

Jonatha takes his arm, and Michael escorts Jonatha into the living room, now the "gallery."

BARBARA

(whispering)

Here goes.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Jonatha is stunned by what she sees.

She faces them. Barbara hands her a champagne flute. They raise their glasses in a toast, then down the champagne.

Jonatha, looking at her glass, downs it as well, then hands her glass to Michael.

She gives them all a frank stare, then turns and enters "the gallery." She shifts from "exhibit" to "exhibit," and as they watch her, they can almost see the energy pour back into her body, so much so that, without warning, she begins to dance from piece to piece.

BARBARA

Are you shaking your Bootid, Jonatha?

MICHAEL

It's not professional, you know, but—it's your show.

EXT. DECK

On a small ornate table, three brass bowls. Inside each is a nest of sweetgrass and incense.

In back of each bowl is a white lighted candle, and in back of each candle is a photo: Melanda, Georgia, and Patricia.

The sky is just turning from gold to the bruised purple of night, and in the east, stars have already risen.

BARBARA

It's not just Georgia who needs peace.

Barbara strikes a match to the sweetgrass and incense, and the smoke curls upward.

JONATHA

To all of them.

JONATHA'S VISION

Aerial shot skims low over the New Hampshire landscape. Then it crests over the trees and speeds down across the golden-colored water of the lake. It speeds past Barbara's deck, where four people stand small against the coming night. It speeds past the houses along the shore, their lights like fires in the gathering dark.

In the east, the sky is now completely dark.

The shot rises from the level of the lake into the darkness. A streak of fire across the sky: the first meteor. Several more follow.

The picture of Barbara's mother.

JONATHA (V.O.)

Assuming Our Mothers.

The candle flames dance across the glass covering the picture of Barbara's mother.

JONATHA (V.O.)

out of dreams they come / to hold once more / our
desperate skin and / our hopeful eyes

The picture of Melanda, with the green thumb.

BARBARA (V.O.)

out of dreams they come / to tell us "yes / I have not
left you behind / even though I have left you"

The candle flames dance across the glass covering the picture of Melanda.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
we forgive them for / the mistake they made / in loving
us always / we who have not loved enough

The picture of Georgia and Jonatha.

JOSH (V.O.)
each son and daughter / makes the journey that must
be made

The candle flames dance across the glass covering the picture of Georgia and
Jonatha.

JONATHA (V.O.)
each daughter and son / finds home at the end and
the beginning

Sparks fly upward into the darkened sky.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
if we forgive and are forgiven / so much we can do
with what is left to us of living

The night sky fills with meteors.

FADE OUT