

The Woman On The Bench

by
Dennis J. Manning

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Dedicated to:

For Margaret, my mother.

For David, my father.

*And for everyone who waits at a bench
that isn't really about a bus.*

THE WOMAN ON THE BENCH

EXT: BUST STOP & BENCH IN RAVENWOOD, IL,

August 8, 2024, town center.

The bench is a symbol of waiting, hope, and the passage of time

The film opens with a close-up of a woman, Margaret, sitting on a bench at a deserted bus stop. The sky is overcast, and there's a palpable sense of anticipation in the air. Margaret is 68.

The camera pans out to reveal the small, quaint town in the background. The scene sets a melancholic and mysterious tone.

Margaret checks her watch repeatedly, looking down the road for a bus that never arrives. Her anxious demeanor hints at a deeper story.

As Margaret sits, townspeople pass by, each with their own stories and secrets. Brief interactions with Margaret or scenes of their daily lives are shown, hinting at the town's intricate web of connections.

DAVID

You know that bus/

MARGARET

Just a few minutes, sometimes it runs behind

DAVID

But that bus hasn't/

MARGARET

Been on time for a while, that's OK, I have time, no rush.

DAVID

Where are you going to?

MARGARET

Just a few more minutes.

Townspeople now flood the scene. People bustling back and forth. Shop owners opening doors. MARGARET sits unaware, just looking in the distance to someplace far away.

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The song "*Heart in my Song*" (*original for this screenplay by Dennis Manning*) plays. The camera pans back and Margaret is unaware of the comments around her.

David turns to speak to Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Wally Thompson, shop owner of a convenience store.

45. Plain looking with a humble spirit

DAVID

What is she thinking about when
she's thinking ?

MR. THOMPSON

Like she is looking somewhere far
away from where she is now.

DAVID

She looks like a window in a house
that belongs to be opened.

MR. THOMPSON

Maybe she's in a dream.

Gina Thompson, 35, a woman who used to be a looker, now settling into an ordinary life is frustrated by the signs and activities of people enjoying life as she is frustrated with her own marriage and current state of affairs.

Margaret fidgets on the bench looking at her watch, clutching her purse, trying to blend in when she is aware she is a focal point.

MARGARET

I feel like everyone is looking at
me. Where is that bus?

Gina walks over to join David and Mr. Thompson. She says in a plain matter-of-fact voice:

GINA

She just sits there, what is she
thinking, day after day.

MR. THOMPSON

I would imagine/

GINA

Oh for God's sake you and your
dreaming, you should sit on that
bench with her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. THOMPSON

I bet in her mind she says, "Hello
I am ready to dance."

GINA

Well if that is the case, someone
should tell her feet to move
along. It is annoying her sitting
there.

DAVID

She wasn't always like this.

MARGARET

I should be moving along.

MR. THOMPSON

Gina, stop analyzing. All emotions
are

GINA

A waste of time.

Jill Fletcher, 22, a young woman with bright eyes and
dreams. The world is her oyster and everything is
possible.

Jim Fletcher, 24, the husband, every bit as hopeful and
wide-eyed as his wife Jill. They are going to explore
everything the world has to offer.

Jill talking to Jim about Margaret.

JILL

They say she must have been
something

INT: TOWN LIBRARY

As Jim speaks there is a transposition to the town
Library for this conversation

JIM

I was asking about Miss Margaret
at the library. I saw her one day
sitting there looking at a picture
book of Paris. I went up to her
and said, "Miss Margaret have you
been to Paris?"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGARET

Oh my young man, yes. Everyone should go to Paris. Open your mind and arms and heart to new things.

EXT: TOWN SQUARE

JIM

I knew then, Jill, Miss Margaret must have had class.

ANGLE on Mr. Thompson putting his hand on David's shoulder to calm him.

MR. THOMPSON

She looks like a music box just waiting to be opened.

Officer Dylan, 68, but looks 50 a well-groomed, fit and handsome man. Broad shoulders and a calming voice, he holds the town together. He Joins David, Gina and MR. Thompson.

OFFICER DYLAN

I saw her on a bench yesterday waiting for the bus.

GINA

Officer, Dylan, can't you do something about that? Isn't there a law?

MR. THOMPSON

Gina, now stop.

GINA

You stop. Don't

OFFICER DYLAN

Ok you, two, I need a coffee.

GINA

Ok, come with me and let's leave the dreamers out on the street.

Officer Dylan goes with Gina to their Convenience store.

David nods a "good Day" to Mr. Thompson. He walks over to the bench where Margaret is sitting. He sits down. Margaret politely smiles, then looks at her watch.

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CONTINUED:

Then looks for the bus. Then moves away, subtly about an inch from David.

DAVID

You, know that bus hasn't been by here for 15 years. We used to sit here, you and me, waiting to take the bus to the mall.

MARGARET

That mall used to be fun, now it is almost empty. DO you remember Michael, you would give David a few quarters for the arcade and he would be so happy, just run off. He was always so strong.

DAVID

Mom, it's me, David, not Michael. Dad has been

MARGARET

Away on a business trip. Soon, I will see him. Maybe I'll do the mall another day.

Margaret looks at her watch. The townspeople disperse back to their day.

DAVID

Mom, do you have the time.

Margaret ignores him. She doesn't talk to strangers.

DAVID

Pardon, would you know the time?

MARGARET

Young man, do I know you?

DAVID

Well yes, you do. We were just talking about the mall and the bus ride.

MARGARET looks DAVID up and down and says politely:

MARGARET

I don't recall you. I am sorry. Sometimes I forget. The time is 8:15 am.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID

You don't recall me? Remember we would sit here waiting for the bus every Saturday?

MARGARET

No, I'm sorry. My son always warned me not to talk to people I don't know.

DAVID

Last Tuesday I took you to the eye doctor.

MARGARET

You know those scams where people ask you your social security number and then they clean out your bank account.

DAVID

My birthday, last month you made your famous Bundt Cake.

MARGARET doesn't answer. She looks back at her watch.

DAVID

It's me, David. You knew me then for just a few moments, then you slipped away.

MARGARET looks and then looks nervous. She gets up and walks off.

David is sitting on the bench shaking his head. Jill walks over and sits down. She says warmly to David.

JILL

I know, Miss Margaret seems to drift sometimes.

DAVID

Drift?

JILL

She talked to me once about "her Michael"

DAVID

I think I can fix her. I can get through to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JILL

Oh she so loves him. Can I say something?

DAVID

She is lost, no concept of who I am or she is. Yes, what is it?

Jill pats David's hand.

JILL

People don't need fixing. They need love. Maybe you can help her find out where she is and where she wants to go.

Jill nods a good day and joins Jim. Mr. Thompson steps over to David.

MR. THOMPSON

Don't worry she does this everyday. I make sure she doesn't sit there too long.

DAVID

How could she not know me?

MR. THOMPSON

She was never quite the same after. She seems to be retreating further into her memories.

DAVID

No, there's still time. She just needs something to anchor her to the present. I can reach her.

MR. THOMPSON

A woman's heart is a labyrinth of secrets.

DAVID

But I have been right here.

MR. THOMPSON

Beneath the surface, it's a reservoir of hope and resilience, weathering storms that would break lesser souls.

DAVID

It is like she doesn't even know I am there.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DAVID (CONT'D)

She just left me hanging there.
Yet I still manage everything. One-
sided love is hard.

DAVID leaves. Mr. THOMPSON heads back into his shop.

INT: LIVING ROOM OF MARGARET, LATER THAT MORNING, 1030AM

The clock strikes the half-hour. MARGARET is lightly dusting and hums a happy tune to herself. She talks as if she is talking to a dear friend.

MARGARET

Michael, you know, the lilacs are in bloom again. Just like the year we planted them. I watered them today, made sure they were just right. Oh and the roses are just beautiful. They smell so full of summer, I just cannot get enough of those. I must go and collect some for our dinner table tonight. I can almost see you there, by the garden gate, smiling that crooked smile of yours. Remember how we used to sit on the porch and watch the sunset? I swear, the sunsets haven't been the same since you left. Oh but it has just been a day. One day! Margaret Mary get a hold of yourself!

MARGARET stops and turns on the record player plays "Weekend In New England" by Barry Manilow. The song plays and she swoons:

MARGARET

*"When will our eyes meet? When
can I touch you? When will this
strong yearning end."*

MARGARET refocuses her "conversation"

MARGARET

I made your favorite dinner tonight, Michael - roast chicken with those little potatoes you love. It's almost ready, and the house smells just wonderful. Julia Child would be proud of me. You'll be here soon, I just know it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGARET (CONT'D)
It's funny, I can hear your
footsteps in the hallway
sometimes. You always come home at
this time, right?

The chorus comes back.

MARGARET
*"When will our eyes meet? When
can I touch you? When will this
strong yearning end."*

She picks up an old magazine and sits for a moment. She
looks through like she is looking at cherished memories.

MARGARET
I've been tidying up, making
everything nice for you. Can't
have you coming home to a mess. I
even found that old record we used
to dance to.

She gets up and dances by herself but like she is with a
partner.

MARGARET
*"When will our eyes meet? When
can I touch you? When will this
strong yearning end."*

Maybe we can dance tonight, like
we used to. Oh, Michael, it's been
so long. But you'll be here soon.

There is a knock on the door. MARGARET looks startled.
She turns off the music. The knock again.

MARGARET
Coming! Michael has a key, why
would he knock? Oh he must have
his hands full. He always brings
me flowers and wine! Oh that
Michael!

The scene goes to B&W. NOTE: The living room will be
exactly the same from the B&W version to the color
version. MARGARET drifts in her mind this scene back to
1978.

OFFICER DYLAN (young version from 1978) is at the door.
MARGARET opens the door with smiles and hugs ready.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGARET

MICHAEL!

She looks startled.

MARGARET

Officer Dylan, what can I help you with? Is it time for the charity ball tickets. That comes around so fast each year. Come in let me get my purse. Michael and I love that dance. Can I make a song request? It was just playing.

MARGARET is lost in her reminiscing.

MARGARET

"When will our eyes meet? When can I touch you? When will this strong yearning end."

She takes \$20 out of her purse. She goes to hand it to OFFICER DYLAN.

MARGARET

I know Michael and I danced perhaps too much last year. He does love to dance. You know how he is.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margaret, you should sit down.

MARGARET

I know we should sit down and give others a chance to dance but when we hear Barry Manilow you just have to move.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margaret please listen.

MARGARET

*"At the Copa,
Copacabaaaaaaaaaaaaana! Music and
passion were always in fashion at
the Copa. She lost her love."*

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, it's Michael, there's been

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARGARET

Many times when I wanted to sit down and he said, "no, no, no little lady, my feet still have shoes on so that means we still got some dancing left to do!"

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie! There's been an accident.

MARGARET

It was no accident Michael and I are together all these years! In the stars, they said. Our love and our history is written in the stars.

The scene goes back to color. OFFICER DYLAN is no longer there. MARGARET turns and looks for OFFICER DYLAN, she still has the \$20 bill in her hand.

MARGARET

Officer Dylan? Odd, now where did he go? He didn't even take the money for the ball. Must have had an emergency. No matter, I will take it down to him later. I must get back to my cleaning and check on my dinner!

MARGARET exits to the kitchen and sings full voice "At the Copa, Copacabaaaaaaaana"

EXT: OUTSIDE THE HOUSE OF MARGARET. 2 MINUTES BEFORE.

OFFICER DYLAN is approaching the house. He sees MARGARET open the door and appear to be talking to someone. He cannot yet hear the conversation.

As he approaches he hears MARGARET singing in full voice "At the Copa, Copacabaaaaaaaana"

There is a knock. She says in a cheerful voice expecting MICHAEL.

MARGARET

Now my love no need for flowers and wine. Let me get the door for you.

She opens the door to find OFFICER DYLAN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGARET

Michael! Oh my love you have come home!

She pauses a moment. Like a lady, she regains her focus.

MARGARET

Officer Dylan. There you are. You were just here and then left. I thought there was an emergency! I didn't see you leave.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie?

MARGARET

And I want to give you the \$20 for the ball. Michael will be thrilled we are going. We always go! I hope they play those wonderful Manilow songs!

OFFICER DYLAN

Manilow? Margie are you ok?

MARGARET

Oh, Dylan, I am fine! We've known each other for forever! Where are my manners? Come in! Michael would be ashamed if I left you on our doorstep. Do you want some iced tea? Why even ask, I know you do. You always liked my iced tea. Wait, you LOVE my iced tea! I make it just like my mom made it, God rest her soul.

MARGARET goes to the kitchen and she sings more from "Copacabana." She returns with the glass of iced tea and the \$20 dollars.

MARGARET

Here you go. Your iced tea and your 20 dollars for the tickets. I don't want those girls down at the station to think that we get a free ride even though you and I and Michael go way back! Where is that man. He works hard. I tell him he should think about retiring soon. What do you think, Dylan?

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, retire? What day is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGARET

Dylan, are you losing your memory?
Why today is Tuesday, of course!
Are you teasing me? I think you
work too hard. Just like my love,
Michael, does.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, what year is it?

MARGARET

Oh, Dylan! Stop!

She puts her hand on his head checking for a fever.

MARGARET

Are you sure you don't know what
year it is? Come now don't tease
me!

OFFICER DYLAN

Just humor me. Maybe I have been
working a bit too much.

He sits down on the couch.

OFFICER DYLAN

You know sometimes you can second-
guess yourself. What year is it
Margie?

MARGARET

Dylan. You are being silly. It
is 1978 of course. Little David
just turned 2 last week. I will
need a sitter for the upcoming
ball. You have that \$20 I gave
you. I don't want Inez saying I
didn't pay!

OFFICER DYLAN

1978?

MARGARET

Oh Dylan, now do you need to lie
down for a moment? I better call
Inez and tell her you better take
the afternoon off. I wonder if her
sister, Tina, is free to babysit
for us. Let me call her now. You
have some of that delicious iced
tea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She goes to the phone and calls the police station. The phone rings.

MARGARET

Hello is Inez there? Inez. Inez Ragosky. "RA- GOSS KEEEEEY" What? No Inez? Oh you are fooling! It's not April Fool's day! Well tell her when she gets back that Dylan, well Officer Dylan Brooks is going to take the afternoon off. He is not himself. He forgot that this is 1978! Ok thank you. Good bye.

She hangs up the phone.

MARGARET

Ok now you relax.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, it is not 1978.

MARGARET

Dylan of course it is! Wait is this a game! Michael must have put you up to this! Oh that little lovebug!

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, it is 2024.

MARGARET

Now, Dylan, ok enough with the games. Stop it now you are worrying me.

OFFICER DYLAN takes out his phone and talks into it.

OFFICER DYLAN

Hey Alexa, what is today's date?

MARGARET

Who is Alexa? Is someone else here?

ALEXA

Today's date is August 8, 2024.

MARGARET

How did you do that? Who is "Alexa?" Where is she?

MARGARET goes to the front door and opens it and shouts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARGARET

Inez Ragosky if this is another one of your games, I will not share with you my Bundt Cake recipe! Now you come out! Inez. Inez!

She closes the door. She comes back inside and speaks plainly.

MARGARET

I am good at math but that would be

OFFICER DYLAN

46 years from 1978

MARGARET

So that means I would be

OFFICER DYLAN

68. Margie we are the same age. Don't you remember?

MARGARET

68! Well of course I remember.

She drifts for a moment and then, like a Lady, reclaims the situation with grace.

MARGARET

I was just playing along with you. I was the lead actress in "Glass Menagerie"

OFFICER DYLAN

And I was the Gentleman Caller.

MARGARET

Michael was the perfect "Tom." He should be back soon.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie.

MARGARET

I know he gets busy, he talks to everyone at the store. Well I better get you back to your day.

She gets up and moves to get DYLAN out the door. He gets up and wants to say more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MARGARET

Tell Inez I am sorry I worried her about you! And you must show me sometime how you got that "Alexa" to speak out of nowhere.

ALEXA

OK. Here is "Out of Nowhere" by Bing Crosby.

The song plays.

MARGARET

Alexa Stop it.

ALEXA

OK.

The song stops.

MARGARET

Oh you! I know Inez must be doing this from somewhere. I must see how you do these Theatrics!

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, are you ok?

MARGARET

Dylan! Of course! Stop by anytime for iced tea, just like my mom used to make it. 12 tea bags that's the secret in boiling water and steep for 10 minutes. Add the sugar when the water is hot.

She eases DYLAN out the door.

MARGARET

Bye now, Dylan and be sure to have the girls note that we paid our \$20 for the ball. Michael and I will see you there!

She waves good bye and shuts the door. She lingers for a moment.

MARGARET

2024. Of course it is 2024. Of course I am 68.

She hums "Copa" as she arranges the magazines, opens the blinds, fluffs a pillow on the couch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MARGARET

Michael will be home soon. I want to put on my party dress for the ball tonight. By the time he gets home we will have an appetizer. I made "pigs in a blanket."

She snorts like a pig and laughs.

MARGARET

"Pigs in a blanket!" Perhaps I will go cut some flowers for the table. Why should Michael always bring flowers. We have the loveliest roses right here.

She grabs a set of garden gloves, puts on her garden boots and heads out to the backyard roses. As the door to the back opens we see roses that are only thorny vines. MARGARET turns and puts on a wide sun hat.

When she turns back to face the yard, the scene goes to B&W.

The yard is filled with roses. MARGARET hums "Rose Garden" as she heads outside to the lush, vibrant garden full of roses.

"I beg your pardon, I never promised you a rose garden. Along with the sunshine, there's got to be a little rain sometimes...."

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE OF MR. THOMPSON

Mr. Thompson, 45, is busy arranging shelves and stock in the convenience store, "Thompson's Corner Market." GINA THOMPSON, his wife is counting the money at the register. She seems irritated. MR. THOMPSON is humming "Rose Garden" as the scene starts.

MR. THOMPSON

"I beg your pardon. I never promised you a rose garden."

GINA

My, God, you still have that song in you head? Of all the songs, of all the music that is out there, why in the name of heaven is that song in your head?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. THOMPSON

*"Along with the sunshine. There's
got to be a little"*

GINA

Are you even listening to me?

MR. THOMPSON

Yes, dear.

GINA

Don't "Yes dear me" God I thought
I would have such a bigger and
better life. Jesus, here I am
still in Ravenwood 20 years longer
than I ever wanted to be.

MR. THOMPSON

Yes, dear.

GINA

Twenty years, and here I am, still
standing in this "Corner Store."
For the love of God, the store
isn't even on a goddamned corner!

MR. THOMPSON

It used to be years ago, then we
moved the location.

GINA

Used to be is over. Gone. That was
18 years ago. Just like that old
woman who sits out there every day
waiting on a bench for a bus that
will never come.

MR. THOMPSON

Now, now, let's not talk of
Margaret.

GINA

For a bus that will NEVER come! I
am like her. Waiting for
something to happen and it never
will.

Mr. THOMPSON begins singing again from "Rose Garden"

MR. THOMPSON

*"You better look before you leap
still waters run deep."*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GINA

Now THAT is a laugh. "Look before you leap." When was the last time you leaped? My God, I am wasting away. Love just isn't enough.

MR. THOMPSON

I love you, Gina

GINA

You are content with your simple dreams - a steady job, a roof over our heads, a quiet life. But what about me? What about my dreams? The world is so much bigger than this town. Ravenwood can't be the last stop on the train, right? I want to see it, feel it, live it. I mean is this it? Will I be counting this money, in this spot for the next 20 years. Oh my God! Shoot me.

MR. THOMPSON

Gina you are getting yourself all worked up.

GINA

I am that sad, crazy woman on the bench.

MR. THOMPSON

Gina, now Miss Margaret is not crazy.

JILL FLETCHER comes in the store. She is 25 and very energetic and happy. This irritates the life out of GINA.

JILL

Hey Mrs. Thompson. Do you have AAA batteries?

GINA

Hello, Jill, I am not sure let me check. Wally?

MR. Thompson is still humming "Rose Garden"

GINA

Wally?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MR. THOMPSON

Yes, dear? The batteries are right to the left of the register.

GINA

"Right to the left?"

JILL

Oh here they are. Great.

GINA

Every time I bring it up, he just smiles and says, 'Why would you need more, Gina? We've got everything we need right here.

JILL

I'm sorry?

GINA

But he doesn't understand the fire burning inside me, the restless ache for something more, something extraordinary. I need to breathe, to spread my wings and fly, but I'm chained by his contentment.

MR. THOMPSON

She is trying out for play this fall and working on her monologue.

JILL

Oh I will have to come see that one!

GINA

I envy his simplicity, I really do. But I can't help feeling like I'm suffocating, like the walls are closing in around me. Is it selfish to want more? To crave a life that's vibrant and full of possibilities?

JILL

Can I get two of the "Scratch N Win" tickets? The \$5 ones.

Gina is still talking. MR. THOMPSON gets the tickets and hands them to JILL. GINA takes the money for the tickets as she continues talking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

GINA

I don't know. But what I do know is that I can't keep living like this, pretending that his dreams are enough for both of us. They're not. And they never will be.

JILL starts applauding. GINA is not clear of why the applause.

JILL

Oh, Mrs. Thompson that was awesome. So dramatic! I could feel the ache in your heart as you were acting!

GINA

I wasn't acting.

JILL

Oh! Like Meryl Streep, you "become" the part! Wonderful.

GINA

Yes, like Meryl Streep. You know you never win.

JILL

Oh is this the start of another bit?

GINA

Bit? No. Those scratch tickets. You never win. Ever.

MR. THOMPSON

Well good luck, Jill! Thanks for buying the tickets.

JILL

Mr. Thompson do you have a coin I could use? I'll give it right back.

He opens the register and hands a penny to JILL.

MR. THOMPSON

Here this looks and feels lucky!

Jill scratches the ticket and exclaims:

JILL

I WON! I WON!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MR. THOMPSON

What did you win?

JILL

\$20 dollars! Jim, will never believe this! Mrs. Thompson now you can say, "sometimes people win!" Ok well I have to go, thanks for the batteries!

JILL exits. MR. THOMPSON smiles. GINA glares at him.

GINA

Well?

MR. THOMPSON

Nothing, dear.

He gives GINA a big hug and kisses her.

GINA

Oh you!

MR. THOMPSON

Let's close up for the day.

GINA

For the day? It is only 11am.

MR. THOMPSON

Yes, let's go "live a little," get out from these walls that may be suffocating us, both.

GINA

Really? Well where should we go?

MR. THOMPSON

What about that museum?

GINA

Oh, God, no. Shoot me.

MR. THOMPSON

OK! Any place but here!

He turns the window sign to "CLOSED," shuts lights and ushers GINA out the door. He smiles and sings "Rose Garden"

MR. THOMPSON

"So smile for a smile and let's be jolly.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MR. THOMPSON (CONT'D)
*Life shouldn't be so melancholy.
Come along and share the good
times while we can."*

The scene ends.

EXT: THE BENCH AT THE BUS STOP 3PM OCTOBER 10

MARGARET is seated at the bench. She is wearing a Fall coat, has a scarf around hair, an umbrella and a pull-along shopping cart. She waits for the bus. She looks at her watch. GINA enters.

GINA
Good afternoon, Miss Margaret. How are you today?

MARGARET
Fine, dear. Just fine.

Awkward pause.

GINA
I am fine too, thanks for asking?

MARGARET
Pardon me?

GINA
I said, "I am fine, too." Usually when someone asks how your are, common courtesy is you should ask them back.

MARGARET
I am sorry. Do I know you?

GINA
Miss Margaret, it is Gina. Gina Thompson.

MARGARET
Oh yes! It must be this afternoon light. Of course it is you, Gina Thompson. How are you?

GINA
Fine, thanks.

MARGARET
Good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Awkward silence. Both looking around. MARGARET looks at her watch.

MARGARET
I guess it is running late.

GINA
What's running late?

MR. THOMPSON comes over, warm welcome!

MR. THOMPSON
Miss Margaret! How are you today?

MARGARET
Wally, oh so good to see you. I am just wonderful. Have to do a little shopping. Michael will be home this evening. He has been traveling. I am going to make a pot roast. That is one of his favorite meals.

ANGLE ON: Gina, raising her eyebrow.

MR. THOMPSON
Oh I love a good pot roast. You always bring that to the Fall Social at the Library. You know that is this weekend. Would you like Gina and I to pick you up, we can all go together?

MARGARET
Oh Wally, that is so kind of you? I will check with Michael. He is very independent! But I think that would be lovely. Is Gina your new girlfriend? I did like that Louise. An Italian girl, I know her family. I look forward to getting to know, Tina.

MR. THOMPSON
Miss Margaret, it is Gina. She is right here.

MARGARET
Oh, why hello! Nice to meet you. How are you?

GINA
You already asked me that, sweetie. Are you ok?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGARET

Wally, your girl seems a little fresh. I am not sure she's the right one. She appears to be a little full of herself.

GINA

Now listen here.

MR. THOMPSON

Oh Miss Margaret, Gina is wonderful.

MARGARET

Well, if you say so, but she doesn't seem to have half the class as that Louise did. She's a fine girl. Fine family. Fine. Fine.

GINA

Fine! Jesus! Do you know where you are.

MARGARET

Well there is no need for language young lady. Simply no need.

MR. THOMPSON

Miss Margaret what are your plans for the day?

MARGARET

Well I was waiting for the bus

GINA

That bus hasn't been here

MR. THOMPSON

And sometimes the bus runs late. Can I give you a ride to the market Miss Margaret.

GINA

Did you just cut me off?

MARGARET

See, Wally, she's a little pushy. Louise is not like that. No thank you very much. I think I am going to move along. I am going to tell Officer Dylan about the lateness of the bus.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Looks like you have your hands
full with Miss Fresh Mouth Tina.

GINA

Gina! My name is GINA!

MARGARET

Gina, Tina, I am sorry. But,
manners young lady. Manners. No
need to shout or raise attention
to yourself. I think you need to
breathe more. Seems to me like
you are silently suffocating.
There is more to life than just
this wonderful town of Ravenwood.
See the world. Michael and I are
going to Paris this year.

GINA

You and Michael are going to
Paris? Really?

MR. THOMPSON

Oh that will be wonderful for you
both!

GINA

Wally how can you

MR. THOMPSON

Will love it! I've never been but
I hear is magical.

GINA

Did you just cut me off again?

MARGARET

Wally, that girl needs to breathe
and learn to not interrupt
conversations. Well I am off.

MARGARET gathers her empty cart and heads off. GINA is
fuming.

GINA

Wally, do not cut me off.

MR. THOMPSON

Well, Gina, why do you pick at her
so? What has she done to you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

GINA

She is off. Someone needs to tell her. She needs to wake up, like a few other people I know.

ANGLE ON Mr. Thompson acknowledges the cutting remark, then moves back to his happy self.

MR. THOMPSON

Well that someone doesn't have to be you.

GINA

Do you think it's true?

MR. THOMPSON

Is what true?

GINA

What that batty old woman said about me.

MR. THOMPSON

Which part? She said a few things!

GINA

I will ignore that, for now. She said I was "Silent Suffocating."

MR. THOMPSON

What do you think?

GINA

I asked you. No tell me do you think that is true?

MR. THOMPSON

Yes.

GINA

What?

MR. THOMPSON

Yes and it shows. A lot. You used to be happy, happier. Now most things seem like a chore or an obligation.

GINA looks away.

MR. THOMPSON

Am I wrong?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

GINA

No, I think you are right. I just didn't know it was obvious.

MR. THOMPSON

It is and I want to help.

GINA

So then, why don't you.

MR. THOMPSON

It starts with you. I used to think I made you happy, but the last few years that is not the case. We are just getting by rather than living.

GINA

Jesus, Wally. Where is this coming from?

MR. THOMPSON

Nowhere and everywhere. I love getting up each day. Can't wait to get going and you not so much. What do you want? Where would you rather be?

GINA

Anywhere but here. Somewhere past the point of no regrets.

The original song , Just West Of Nowhere" by Dennis Manning plays.

POV: Montage of scenes as the song plays showing the polarization of Gina and the rest of the town. Each finding joy, sorrow, hope or anguish in their days.

The scene ends

EXT: OUTSIDE THE HOUSE OF MARGARET. 3PM CHRISTMAS EVE

Snow on the ground. It is a crisp day. Overcast and it feels like snow will be coming. David approaches. He shakes his head. His wife LeeAnne is with him.

DAVID

Do you think it will be a White Christmas?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEEANNE

Oh that would be magical.

DAVID

Do you think this will be her last Christmas?

LEEANNE

David, it will be fine.

DAVID

She is getting worse and worse.
Not really sure how much longer I
can keep this up?

LEEANNE

Honey we don't have a choice. You
don't want to put her into a home.

DAVID

God no, that would kill her. That
would kill me. How can she not
know me. I am her son. I love
her. I never wanted anything to
be like this.

LEEANNE

None of us did. She does know you
from time to time.

DAVID

Why does she always know you but
seldom knows me?

LEEANNE

Well she knows you have a big
heart.

DAVID

Sometimes she looks right past me,
like I am not even there.

IN the background the line from the song, "The Heart in
my song" echoes as they approach the house.

*She looks like a window in a house
that belongs to be opened. Maybe
she's in a dream where she takes a
final bow. She says*

LeeAnne knocks on the door of MARGARET'S house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Inside the house playing loudly is the song by Barry Manilow, *"Weekend In New England."* MARGARET is singing full voice.

INT: INSIDE MARGARET'S HOUSE

She is dancing. Putting on decorations on the Christmas Tree. Sipping punch. There are cookies and appetizers set out for a party. Margaret sings to the music and is in a joyous state. Talking with David (the camera nor Michael and LeeAnne can see David).

MARGARET

*"Last night I waved goodbye now it
seems years I'm back in the city
where nothing is clear
But thoughts of me holding you
bringing us near And tell me when
will our eyes meet when can I
touch you When will this strong
yearning end And when will I hold
you again"*

EXT: OUTSIDE THE HOUSE OF MARGARET.

LeeAnne and David look at each other. They hear the music. David looks in the window and sees MARGARET dancing as if she is with a partner. They see her laughing and sipping. David and LeeAnne look inside the windows like they are looking at a Currier & Ives painting.

David wraps on the door louder.

DAVID

Ma! Ma!

He opens the door and the music swells. DAVID and LEEANNE enter. Their voices are muted. You can see their mouths move and their bewilderment. MARGARET sees them. She takes DAVID as her dance partner and she whirls him around the room with great joy.

MARGARET

Oh, my Michael, I love when we
dance.

She sings to the music.

*With you there's a heaven
So earth ain't so bad.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LeeAnne breaks in and the three of them dance and sing joyously.

DAVID, LEEANNE & MARGARET
*And tell me when will our eyes
 meet when can I touch you*

MARGARET breaks away and the shot goes to B&W. She is dancing with MICHAEL from 1977. They sing together. Margaret breaks away. David and LeeAnne dance.

INT: 1977 MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM

The shot goes to black and white as Margaret and Michael dance and sing

MARGARET AND MICHAEL (1977)
*When will this strong yearning
 end. And when will I hold you*

MICHAEL kisses MARGARET on the cheek and then drifts away. She looks in the distance.

MARGARET
Again.

Now with joy and regret.

MARGARET
Again.

She turns back to DAVID and LeeAnne and the shot goes to color.

MARGARET
Again.

The song ends. MARGARET looks in the distance.

LEEANNE
 Again? Margie you want to dance
 again? OK Let's do it!

MARGARET looks for a moment at LeeAnne and she smiles at LeeAnne and gently touches her cheek.

MARGARET
 Oh my dear LeeAnne! You came to
 visit!

They Hug. Warmly, lovingly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEEANNE

Why Margie, of course, I came!
It's Christmas Eve.

Margaret looks at David and gently touches his cheek.

MARGARET

Oh David, so good to see you my
son.

DAVID

Mom, you know me!

MARGARET

Yes! I baked and made some
appetizers. Pig in a blanket!
Those fancy meatballs and the
latest rage a "*Crudit  *!"

DAVID

Oh God! 1977 here we go again.

Margaret takes LeeAnne's hand.

MARGARET

And who is this handsome man? My,
my, LeeAnne, he is a catch!

David looks confused. Margaret just knew him and now she
doesn't

DAVID

David, it's me, David.

MARGARET politely holds out her hand for a handshake.

MARGARET

Well nice to meet you! You remind
me so much of my Michael. It is
something in your eyes. So warm.

DAVID

Ma, it's me, David.

MARGARET

LeeAnne as told me so much about
you. You remind me so of my
Michael. Your eyes. And why she
has kept you hidden from me for so
long I can see why! Well if I
wasn't already taken, but I am
taken!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGARET (CONT'D)

LeeAnne can you help me in the kitchen for a moment, Michael loves my Jell-O Ribbon salad and I need your help to unmold it.

MARGARET whisks off to the kitchen. DAVID looks at LEEANNE and shakes his head.

DAVID

Michael? "I am taken? She just knew me.

LEEANNE

Oh she just go confused. You do look like your father.

DAVID

It's like we are in a time warp, but I wasn't even around then. I was just a baby. What's next? Grandma and Grandpa showing up. God help us, it's going to be a long night.

The doorbell rings. DAVID goes to get it.

DAVID

Now who could that be on Christmas Eve?

He opens the door and a dozen people are there all saying holiday cheer lines. They have presents, a roasted Turkey, side dishes. It should feel like a "Currier & Ives" painting. DAVID is confused. The crowd comes in all festive. Hugging David and LeeAnne. LeeAnne joins right in.

PERSON 1

Happy holidays! I just took the turkey out of the oven 30 minutes ago. Hmmm smell that!

PERSON 2

I have my mom's sweet potatoes with the marshmallows!

LEEANNE

I LOVE sweet potatoes with marshmallows.

PERSON 3

I brought Olive stuffed celery and cheese fondue!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DAVID

What is going on?

People are bustling and humming all around him, like there is a wonderful "storm" and he is caught in the center of it.

PERSON 1

Margie! I have the turkey!

MARGARET appears, kitchen apron on.

MARGARET

Oh wonderful put that on the table at the center. LeeAnne can you help arrange all the food. Remember

They say this together and laugh

MARGARET & LEEANNE

Presentation is everything!

EVERYBODY EXCEPT DAVID

Presentation is everything!

DAVID

What is this?

PERSON 4

Margie told us that we are invited to a Christmas Eve party with a them of 1977.

DAVID

Who are you all?

PERSON 4

I work at the bank.

PERSON 1

Margie and I are in St. Luke's choir.

DAVID

What? She goes to church?

PERSON 1

Every Sunday!

MARGARET

David would you be a dear and put on some holiday music for us.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARGARET (CONT'D)

I love "*The Little Drummer Boy!*"
Rum-pa-pum-pum.

DAVID

She knows me. LeeAnne what is
happening?

LEEANNE

David it's a party go with it! Be
festive.

DAVID

But who are all these people.

PERSON 5

Margie, I will take care of the
music!

He puts on "*White Christmas*" by Bing Crosby

DAVID

Oh my God! I am in the wrong
story.

The entire room starts singing along to "*White Christmas*." David eventually joins in. Everyone laughs and toasts. MARGARET is making sure everyone has drinks and food.

MARGARET

LeeAnne pass around those little
pigs in a blanket (she snorts like
a pig and laughs) Those are
Michael's favorite.

LEEANNE

Sure thing Margie. Who wants
"little piggies!"

Everyone cheers. DAVID drifts over to MARGARET.

DAVID

Nice party.

INT: 1977 MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM

The shot goes to black and white as Margaret leans her head on Michael's shoulders. White Christmas is playing in the background.

MARGARET

Oh Michael, we love parties.

INT: MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM, CHRISTMAS EVE

DAVID

We?

ANGLE ON Margaret who "wakes up" from the 1977 memory. She politely steps back a foot and smiles. Always the lady.

MARGARET

Young man! While I find you very attractive, I want to remind you that I am taken! My husband, Michael, would always want me to be the proper host, but I must draw the line, even though you seem so familiar to me. Like I've known you before, but how could I, right.

She sips some punch.

MARGARET

Oh perhaps I put in too much rum in my rum punch!

DAVID

But you know me

MARGARET

And

She taps a spoon on her cup to signal dinner

MARGARET

Dinner is served! Now everyone let's get to the table. LeeAnne help with the seating. Put your man, David at the head of the table. Michael will be delayed. You can help me fix up a nice plate for him so he has that when he gets home. I do hope it doesn't snow.

PERSON 2

Margie maybe we will have a white Christmas!

PERSON 4

Margie are you singing "O Holy Night" at midnight mass this evening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGARET

Well, yes I am!

DAVID

You are singing at midnight mass?

PERSON 2

Oh she has a wonderful voice!

PERSON 1

Yes she is excellent.

DAVID

Where have I been?

PERSON 1

Maybe you should come. Always a seat for one more!

MARGARET

Dinner is Served!

The scene pans out the window as snow starts to fall, light a first and then steady. LeeAnne goes to MARGARET.

LEEANNE

Oh Margie, we are gonna have a white Christmas!

LeeAnne and Margaret hug.

MARGARET

It is going to be a wonderful holiday. Would you keep an eye out for my Michael.

LEEANNE

I sure will.

David looks and shakes his head at LeeAnne and mouths "*I sure will.*"

MARGARET

You are such a love.

LEEANNE

You, too, Margie! Merry Christmas.

MARGARET to the room, in joy and glee.

MARGARET

Everyone! From Michael and I, we wish you a Merry Christmas!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They all toast!

EVERYONE
Merry Christmas!

The song "*Little Drummer Boy*" plays. MARGARET turns

MARGARET
Everyone I will be right back just
going to check on my pies.

As she walks into the Kitchen alone the scene goes to
B&W. MICHAEL (from 1977) is in the kitchen with a smile.
He hums

MICHAEL (1977)
*Come they told me pa rump a pum
pum. I am a poor boy too pa rump
a pum pum"*

MARGARET
My love! You came!

MICHAEL (1977)
Margie, it's Christmas. I would
never miss Christmas!

They hug and turn and dance gently together. They sing

MARGARET & MICHAEL (1977)
"Rump a pum pum"

David enters the kitchen and sees MARGARET dancing alone
as if she is holding someone and sings

MARGARET
*"Rump pa pum pum, Rump pa pum pum,
Rump pa pum pum."*

Margaret turns and sees DAVID.

MARGARET
I just love that song.

DAVID
Yes I heard you singing.

MARGARET
I love to sing.

DAVID
I haven't heard you sing in years.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARGARET

Well how could you we only just
met.

LeeAnne comes in and breaks the awkward silence.

LEEANNE

Margie, you can't hide in the
kitchen! Now come, dear, the
guests are waiting to cut the yule
log and want you to lead in
singing Christmas carols.

MARGARET

Oh yes, where are my manners?
This nice man was chatting with
me. He has such a warm feeling.
Reminds me of my Michael.

MARGARET whisks back into the company of guest and in a
festive voice singing. All cheer and sing with her

MARGARET

"Rump pa pum pum"

EVERYONE

"Rump pa pum pum"

The scene closes with sounds of Holiday cheer from all.

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE OF MR. THOMPSON 3 PM NEW YEAR'S
EVE 2024

Wally Thompson and Gina are in the store counting
inventory. Gina going through the motions.

MR. THOMPSON

Ok, Gina one more aisle and then
we are done!

GINA

Sure.

MR. THOMPSON

What do you want to do tonight.

GINA

It doesn't matter.

MR. THOMPSON

Well we could go to the movies,
then dinner, dancing, home?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GINA

It doesn't matter. I don't care.
Anything is fine.

MR. THOMPSON

Jump off a cliff?

GINA

Sure.

MR. THOMPSON

Drive off a cliff?

GINA

Ok. Whatever you want.

MR. THOMPSON

Make love all night long.

GINA

Sure. You decide.

MR. THOMPSON

Honey you are not even listening
to me.

No response. Gina sits down and puts her head in her
hands.

MR. THOMPSON

Gina, what is it.

GINA

Everything. I hear the words come
out of my mouth but it's like it's
not me speaking them. My, God, I
want to scream.

MR. THOMPSON

So scream.

GINA

If I ever let this out, windows
would shatter.

MR. THOMPSON

Great, we can replace them.

GINA

There is so much bottled up inside
I feel if I let it out, I would
break.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. THOMPSON

So break. We can put you back together.

GINA

There would be no coming back if I let this out.

MR. THOMPSON

Try me. Come on. Consider this a "Don't shoot the messenger" pass.

GINA

Just "out with it."

MR. THOMPSON

Out with it.

Awkward pause. Mr. Thompson SCREAMS and Gina jumps.

MR. THOMPSON

Ahhhhhhhhhh!

GINA

Jesus, what was that? You scared the life out of me. What the hell?

MR. THOMPSON

I let it out! You try.

GINA

Right here? We are trying to finish the inventory.

MR. THOMPSON

What are you not saying, Gina?

GINA

You know, Wally, tonight... this New Year's Eve... it feels heavier than before. Every year, I sit here with you, watching the fireworks, pretending everything's okay. But it's not. It hasn't been for a long time.

She looks at him, her eyes pleading for understanding.

MR. THOMPSON

I am sorry about that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GINA

Ten years, Wally. Ten years we've been dancing around this emptiness. Pretending our dreams are just around the corner. But they're not. They're fading, slipping through our fingers like smoke.

She gestures vaguely towards the sky, where distant fireworks light up the darkness.

MR. THOMPSON

What can I do?

Her voice trembles with a mix of sadness and frustration.

GINA

I can't do another year of this, Wally. Another year of hoping that things will magically change.

MR. THOMPSON

Well, we are still here. We grow, together, right?

GINA

I'm tired of waiting for a sign. I feel like I have become just another piece of the scenery. Another item on these dismal shelves. I have 45 Beef, Bean & Green Chili Burrito. Jesus who even eats this?

MR. THOMPSON

45 burritos. Got it. Gina, you are the reason I wake up and cannot wait to get the day started. I get your coffee, have the paper out.

GINA

But why?

MR. THOMPSON

Gina, I love you. I love us.

GINA

I miss the laughter, the late-night talks, even the silly arguments about whose turn it was to do the dishes.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

GINA (CONT'D)

I feel like the world is slipping by. Just like Miss Margaret, sitting on the bench waiting for a future that will never arrive.

MR. THOMPSON

Well the future is always worth fighting for. If you don't want to fight for it, that's OK, I am strong for both of us.

GINA

Tell me, Wally, do you want to face another year of this emptiness? Or can we finally admit that something has to change? That we have to change?

MR. THOMPSON

The only thing that has to change is, we keep on changing. Keep realizing that I have you and you have me. I don't feel empty.

GINA

Because I can't do this. I need you to see me. To really see me. And to decide if there's still a chance for us, or if it's time to let go of these empty dreams and find something real again.

MR. THOMPSON

Gina, I do see you. Now let's take a moment and say it with me," It's a miracle. A true blue spectacle

Barry Manilow song play in their minds.

GINA

A miracle come true

MR. THOMPSON & GINA

A miracle is you.

The song plays louder as GINA and MR. THOMPSON get back to their inventory counting.

INT: MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM - VALENTINE'S DAY

Margaret is talking with Michael (we don't see him) about past Valentine's and David enters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGARET

Now don't you go spending money on flowers, I don't need two dozen roses! A single long, stem red rose will do!

Margaret humming "Daybreak" by Barry Manilow

MARGARET

"And it's Daybreak, you just got to believe."

David observes. Margaret does not see him yet.

MARGARET

"and let it shine, shine shine"

Margaret spins as Michael dances with her. The camera nor David sees Michael.

MARGARET

Oh my love another Day of Hearts for us! Another year of love! Let it shine shine shine, all around the world! Where would I be with out you.

DAVID

Mom. Mom! It's me, David.

Margaret turns and leads David in a dance around the living room. Singing. He follows her lead.

MARGARET

Oh my Michael, "let it Shine, Shine, Shine"

DAVID

Mom, it's David.

MARGARET

Where shall we dine tonight? Or should we stay in "'cause it's Daybreak. Shine, Shine, Shine"

DAVID

Mom.

David stops dancing. Margaret fades from the elation of her memory to present moment. This is a slow melt down.

DAVID

Mom, you know it's me, right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGARET

Well of course I know it's you,
silly, of course I do.

DAVID

Great. Who am I?

MARGARET

You don't know who you are? Maybe
you should sit down. Let me go get
you a glass of iced tea.

Margaret quickly leaves to the kitchen. David is left
there shaking his head. Margaret return with the iced
tea.

MARGARET

Here. Now take a nice sip. You
must have gotten overheated.

DAVID

It's February. In Illinois. It's
10 degrees out side.

MARGARET

And you don't know who you are?
Is there someone I should call?
Family or someone who can help
you.

DAVID

Stop it. We need to get a plan
here. You are slipping more and
more away.

MARGARET

Well, you seem to be the one who
is confused. Now what's the last
thing you can remember? Maybe we
can back into your story and help
you figure out who you are. Shall
we try that? Poor dear. On
Valentine's day and you don't seem
to know who you are.

DAVID

Mom! For God's sakes.

MARGARET

Language.

DAVID

Stop this. I know who I am.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARGARET

Well, now I am confused. Before you said you didn't know who you were and now you do. So I guess the problem is solved! So what are you doing for Valentine's Day? You must have a special someone, hmm?

DAVID

Stop, please stop.

MARGARET

Oh a shy one. My Michael is just like that. A shy one. He should be back from his trip this afternoon. He always brings me a Dozen red roses for Valentine's day! And I told him a single long stemmed red rose will do!

DAVID

Would you just stop.

MARGARET

I am not sure if we will dine in or go out. What will you and your special someone, oh I am sorry that is forward of me to even ask and you being shy much like my Michael. Funny you remind me of him.

DAVID

Mom this is killing me.

David's eyes well up. Margaret looks at him and looks and then sees it is David. She hugs him.

MARGARET

Oh dear, my David, you are going through a bit of a spell. Is everything ok with you and LeeAnne?

DAVID

Oh my God, stop this. Stop it. You know me, you don't know me.

Margaret steps back. Confrontation makes her slip from present moment. She says politely yet firmly:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARGARET

Young man, you came into my house. I was raised to be polite and my Michael always said, "lead with hospitality" but I don't know who taught you just to walk into a stranger's house. I have been nice and all, but I am now feeling uncomfortable. I think you should leave.

David breaking down.

DAVID

It's me, David.

ANGLE ON Margaret looking and searching like she is coming out of a fog. She comes back to the present. Tenderness and joy in her voice.

MARGARET

Of course I know who you are. I was doing a little "April Fool's" on Valentine's Day! Just teasing. I used to be quite the actress back in my day. Did I have you convinced that I didn't know you!

Margaret drifts back again.

MARGARET

They always said I should have gone to Broadway, but my Michael loves this little town. It's such a lovely evening, isn't it, Michael? The kind of evening where you can hear the crickets

DAVID

Mom, it's me, David. Michael... he's not here. Remember, Mom? It's just you and me, sitting here. We are not in the park. It's Valentine's Day.

MARGARET

Do you remember that night, Michael? We danced under the stars. You held me so close, said you'd never let go. I can almost feel your arms around me now

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

She wraps her arms around herself as if holding onto a ghost.

DAVID

Mom, please... you're talking about the past. Dad's... he's gone. It's been years, remember? It's just you and me now.

Margaret pauses and POV her recognition of present day.

MARGARET

Oh, David... you're always such a worrier.

DAVID

Mom, listen to me. You're confusing memories with what's happening now. Dad's been gone a long time. You need to stay here, with me, in the present. Maybe we should talk about a new place for you?

MARGARET

What are you talking about, David? I was just with him. He had a road trip the last two days. I think I will book that French restaurant for dinner for us. I think we will splurge and get oysters!

DAVID

You have to try to remember. You're here, with me. Dad's not coming back. He's... he's gone.

MARGARET

Oh David, people leave but they are never gone. You always hold them in your heart, that way it's like they have never left. My Michael always says, "No my love let's not ever say 'Good-by.'" Let's always say 'See you soon.'"

DAVID

Mom, I wish he was here too. I miss him every day. But you have to understand... you're slipping away from me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

DAVID (CONT'D)

You're getting lost in a world
that doesn't exist anymore. And
I... I don't know how to bring you
back.

MARGARET

Bring me back? Michael I never
left.

DAVID

David. I am David. Please, stay
with me.

MARGARET

I have this house. I don't need
to stay with you. That would be
odd. I don't think my Michael
would like that very much.
Although he would like your
spirit. So strong. A survivor!

DAVID

I think we need to think about a
solution.

MARGARET

A solution? To what?

DAVID

We'll face this together, okay?
Just... try to hold on to today,
with me. Please.

Margaret gets up in exuberance and sings

MARGARET

*"Let it shine, shine all around
the world!"*

David gets up and he and Margaret dance around the room.
Tears are in his eyes. Margaret laughs and sings. The
scene fades. Snow falls.

INT: RESTAURANT VALENTINE'S EVENING 6PM

Couples are at various tables. Officer Dylan is seated
with Marco, a dashing, Italian man in his early 40's.
They laugh, and gaze, Marco reaches across the table to
take Dylan's hand. They both smile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gina and Wally are seated at a nearby table and Gina cannot stop looking at and then commenting to Wally about the gay couple. This unnerves her. She cannot get past it. Willy is very accepting.

GINA

Do you see that? Over there, at the next table... those two men. Holding hands, for everyone to see. Officer Dylan, of all people. I didn't know he was like *THAT*.

MR. THOMPSON

Yeah, I see them. They look happy. What's the problem?

GINA

The problem? Wally, they're... they're together. In public. On Valentine's Day. It's just... I don't know, it's strange. Unsettling.

MR. THOMPSON

Strange? Gina, they're just a couple, like us. They're having dinner, enjoying each other's company. What's so unsettling about that?

GINA

Just like us? Just like us? Are you crazy.

People start to look.

MR. THOMPSON

Ok Gina, keep it down. Come on, we're out here to celebrate our love and not judge someone else's love.

GINA

Not judge? It is wrong. Plain and simple, right?

MR. THOMPSON

Gina, it is okay. They're just people, in love, like anyone else. Why should it bother you so much?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GINA

It's just... it's not what I'm used to, alright? I didn't grow up with this. Two men, together like that, it... it doesn't sit right with me

MR. THOMPSON

Gina, the world's changing. People are freer to be who they are, to love who they love. It doesn't have to be what we're used to. It just has to be right for them.

GINA

What about if it's not right with me? What about that? Shouldn't they keep that kind of thing to themselves? It's not something everyone wants to see.

MR. THOMPSON

Gina, love isn't something to be hidden. Everyone deserves to be happy, to be open about who they are. They're not hurting anyone. They're just living their lives. Maybe it's time we learn to accept that, even if it's different from what we're used to.

The Waiter comes to the table.

WAITER

Can I take your order?

GINA

Can you tell those two men, for God Sakes, Office Dylan and that gay man to stop flaunting themselves in public.

WAITER

I'm sorry?

MR. THOMPSON

Let's start with the French onion soup for each of us. And a bottle of the Chilean Malbec.

WAITER

Very good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GINA

It's just... hard for me to wrap my head around. I don't think I'll ever get used to it.

MR. THOMPSON

Just try to understand that their love is as real as ours. It's not about being comfortable; it's about respecting their right to be who they are.

Gina gets up and goes to the table of Officer Dylan and Marco.

Marco is a rugged man or 45, commanding in looks and gentle as a kitten. He loves life. Marco is a hugger. But, Marco will not stand for intolerance. Marco brings the joy of life out in anyone who will accept it.

GINA

Excuse me. I couldn't help but notice... (She gestures to their clasped hands) ...you two. What do you think you're doing? This is a family restaurant. Do you really think this is appropriate? And you, officer Dylan a man of the law.

MARCO

We're just having dinner. Is there a problem?

OFFICER DYLAN

Gina, I'm not sure what you mean by 'appropriate.'

GINA

A problem? Yes, there's a problem! You're flaunting... this (She waves her hand between them) in front of everyone. It's indecent. People are trying to enjoy their meals without having... this shoved in their faces.

OFFICER DYLAN

We're not flaunting anything. We're just being ourselves. If that bothers you, maybe you should ask yourself why.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

GINA

Why? Because it's not natural!
It's against... (She hesitates,
searching for the words) ...it's
just not the way things are
supposed to be!

Marco stands up. Gina takes a step back.

MARCO

With all due respect, ma'am, love
is love. We're not here to make
anyone uncomfortable. We're just
living our lives, just like you
are.

GINA

But/

OFFICER DYLAN

What we're doing isn't hurting
anyone. What's indecent is judging
people for being who they are. We
have as much right to be here as
you do.

GINA

But it's wrong! You can't just...
act like this in public. People
shouldn't have to see it. It's...
it's disgusting.

Officer Dylan stands up.

MARCO

What's disgusting is intolerance.
We're not doing anything wrong,
and it's sad that you can't see
that. We're just two people who
care about each other, trying to
enjoy a night out.

OFFICER DYLAN

We're not going to apologize for
who we are, Gina. If you have a
problem with that, it's something
you need to deal with. But we
won't be shamed into hiding just
because it makes you
uncomfortable.

GINA

And you look happy. How could you
be?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Gina goes back to the table. Marco and Dylan sit back down. Marco and Dylan talk quietly, then they resume holding hands across the table. Gina sits back down with Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON

How did that work out for you?

GINA

What are you saying. You agree, right?

MR. THOMPSON

No. I feel sad for you, for us. What is it. Are you not happy?

GINA

Jesus, you finally woke up!

MR. THOMPSON

Woke up? Gina, I've been awake. I've been trying to reach you, to understand what's been bothering you, but you keep shutting me out.

GINA

I haven't let you in for years.

MR. THOMPSON

That's the problem.

GINA

I'm tired. Tired of pretending everything's fine, tired of this act we put on every day.

MR. THOMPSON

Pretending? What are we pretending, Gina? I thought we were happy. I thought we were okay

The waiter brings the French Onion soup and the wine.

GINA

Take it back. We are not staying.

MR. THOMPSON

Gina, come on, it's Valentine's Day.

GINA

Just like any other day. God you suffocate me with your "Good Morning" every fucking day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

WAITER

So should I make the soup to go?

GINA

Yes to go.

MR. THOMPSON

Gina, there is no need to take your frustration out on the waiter.

GINA

Jesus, he is gay too, I bet! I've been feeling like I'm drowning, Wally. And you don't even notice. Night after night, like everything's perfect, but it's not. I don't know how to keep up the charade anymore.

MR. THOMPSON

Stop pretending. What can I do?

GINA

Nothing. Nothing you can do. My God, don't you see it? You are just , too nice.

MR. THOMPSON

It's just me.

GINA

And that is the problem. God I am so bored with you.

MR. THOMPSON

Stop it.

GINA

Bored with your interests. Bored with your laughter.

MR. THOMPSON

Gina we are out in public. Please. Why are you saying these things to me? Stop this now, please.

GINA

And for the love of God, bored with our sex life, you are so predictable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

Mr. Thompson throws his glass of water in Gina's face. Soaking her. She is stunned. He speaks in a cool tone.

MR. THOMPSON

I am leaving. I will pay the check. If you are not in the car in 2 minutes you can walk home. Or fly to Spain or walk off a God damned cliff. Your choice. I have choices to. Happy Valentine's Day, you ungrateful, person. Life is about the people you meet and what you create with them. I am going to go find that. I wish you the same. I want you out by tomorrow morning. 10 am tomorrow. Out.

Mr. Thompson stops by the table with Marco and Officer Dylan. He speaks in a humble tone.

MR. THOMPSON

Gentlemen. My apologies. I am so proud of you Officer Dylan. So very proud. I wish you both every happiness, every day.

Marco gets up and gives a big, bear hug to Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Thompson leaves. Marco sits back down. Officer Dylan gives him a wink. The restaurant still in limbo after the incident with Gina.

GINA

Can I get a napkin. Will someone bring me a God Damned napkin.

The scene fades.

EXT: OUTSIDE THE HOUSE OF MARGARET. VALENTINE'S NIGHT 8PM

Officer Dylan and Marco go visit Margaret. As they walk up to the door, the Barry Manilow song "Even Now" is playing and you can hear Margaret sing along.

Officer Dylan knocks. Margaret opens the door with Excitement

MARGARET

Michael you are finally home!

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, it's me, Dylan

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGARET

Well of course, of course it is.
Oh and who is that dashing man
with you!

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie. This is Marco.

MARCO

Miss Margaret.

MARGARET

Oh call me Margie. Come in! Come
in! Michael would always want me
to invite old friends in! Now you
men settle on the couch, let me
put the kettle on.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, no that's ok.

MARCO

Margie, I'll have a cuppa.

MARGARET

Wonderful!

OFFICER DYLAN

Ok count me in.

MARGARET

Great. Now give me just a moment.
Dylan I want to hear about the man
with you!

Margaret whisks off to the kitchen singing

MARGARET

"Even now when I have come so far"

MARCO

Is she ok? I thought Michael
passed away?

OFFICER DYLAN

Well, she get's a little lost
sometimes. I really wanted you to
meet her and for her to meet you.

MARCO

She seems nice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OFFICER DYLAN

Oh, Maggie is a love. My first love. We went out on two dates.

MARCO

But I thought you were, well you are gay right?

OFFICER DYLAN

Of course I am gay, always have been, but Margie was so, and is, wonderful. I knew it couldn't have lasted. She did too. She met Michael and that was it!

Margaret returns with tea and a Bundt cake.

MARGARET

Ok, boys I am back! First things last. I mean last shall go first. I mean/

Marco gets right up and gives Margaret a big hug and holds on. Then he breaks away.

MARCO

Margie I am Marco. Marco Rossi.

MARGARET

What a hug you give!

Officer Dylan gives a wink to Marco. He speaks easy to Margaret.

OFFICER DYLAN

Yep, Marco is a hugger.

MARGARET

Dylan, don't let go of him! I would take Marco in a heartbeat except I have my Michael and I can see that Marco is completely lost in your eyes.

OFFICER DYLAN

Oh Margie.

POV on Margaret and Marco as she talks of him.

MARGARET

No I can see it. Marco, is an old soul. So wise, I can feel his energy and love. Dylan you hang on to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

OFFICER DYLAN

Well that's why we are here.

MARCO

Margie, Dyan has told me so much about you. Wait a moment.

MARGARET

What is it?

Marco with over-the-top excitement.

MARCO

What is that I spy on the table?
A Bundt cake? No! It looks and smells like a cinnamon, sour cream Bundt cake! My mom used to make that.

MARGARET

Well you are correct, but you said your mom "used" to make that? This pan just came out a few years ago.

Marco and Dylan look and realize the Margaret is back in time.

MARCO

Well I mean she should take it up again. I will have to tell her. So are we slicing it?

MARGARET

Of course! What kind of host would I be? Michael always get's excited when I make this. He says, "And WE HAVE CAKE!" Oh I hope you get to met my Michael one day soon, Marco, I think he would like you.

Marco says in an excited tone

MARCO

"And we have cake!"

MARGARET, OFFICER DYLAN AND MARCO

And we have cake!

MARCO

I would like to meet, Michael one day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARGARET

Oh Dylan, look at how you and Marco look at each other. My God, I miss that look. Michael has been gone so long and he always tells me, "Keep the faith Margie."

Margaret slices and passes around the cake.

MARCO

Margie, delish! Just like I remember.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, you always have been the best baker!

MARGARET

How lucky am I to have not one, but two fine, handsome gentlemen in my house on Valentine's Day! OH, the neighbors will talk. The old Miss Tocket next store, she loves to be up in your business. Always asking questions. I smile and I waive, bless her heart.

MARCO

Margie, Dylan tells me that you two dated for a while.

OFFICER DYLAN

Marco!

MARGARET

Oh, Dylan is a very special man. I knew when we went out a few times that there was someone else for Dylan other than me. I love him, always did. My best friend.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, stop now, you are gonna make me cry.

MARGARET

Marco, you hold on tight to Dylan. Promise me. You hold on real tight.

Margaret starts to cry as she speaks in love and fighting to get her words out like she may never get them out again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, now don't get yourself worked up.

MARGARET

Marco, I mean hold on like you never want to let go, like you can't let go. Love is so special. Dylan you keep this fine man by your side always. You promise me.

OFFICER DYLAN

Yes Margie.

MARGARET

Now don't just say that! You are so important to me and I just have to believe and know in my heart that you are happy, Dylan. I want you to know love like I know love with my Michael.

MARCO

Margie, I will be right by Dylan's side.

MARGARET

Oh look at me, I am well of tears. I don't know what's come over me.

MARCO

The cake is wonderful. What's your secret.

MARGARET

Well I always under bake by about 5 minutes and then let it rest. Stays moist!

OFFICER DYLAN

I will have to try that.

MARGARET

Dylan, you, my old friend are not a baker. Marco, I bet you bake.

MARCO

I love to bake. Maybe we can do Christmas cookies together this year!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MARGARET

Plan on it. Now what was the reason you men stopped here to see me on Valentine's Day? My Michael got stuck in a snow storm up in Wisconsin, so he won't be home this evening as planned. No bother, I have my Barry Manilow!

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, I want to ask you something.

MARGARET

Anything? Dylan you seem so serious! What is all this about?

Marco reaches over to hold Dylan's hand and Dylan look's at Margaret and tears start streaming down his face. Margaret looks and she reacts.

MARGARET

Dylan, Dylan what is it? What happened.

Dylan now trying to pull his emotions together. Dylan is a tough man, a cop.

His voice breaks.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, I

Marco, gently steps in.

MARCO

Margie, Dylan and I are going to get married and we wanted you to be the first person we told.

MARGARET

My dear, sweet, loving men. How wonderful.

Margaret cries happy tears. They all do. Marco stands up and yells

MARCO

Group hug! Group Hug!

They all hug. For a moment in the background Barry Manilow is heard -

*Even now when I have come so far,
I wonder where you are*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

MARGARET

When is the wedding.

OFFICER DYLAN

April 10.

MARGARET

Well we will be there! Michael
will be thrilled. Oh, Marco, wait
till he meets you!

Marco looks at Margaret and then at Dylan and his heart
breaks as Margaret is lost in her memories. Tears coming
down his face.

MARCO

Margie I can't wait to meet
Michael.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, will you be there by my
side for the ceremony?

MARGARET

Me? Well I would love to but
should we let Michael do it?

OFFICER DYLAN

Just in case he can't be there
would you, stand up for me. It
would mean so much to both of us.

MARGARET

Well, but Michael, well, of
course! Of Course!

MARCO

Group hug!

OFFICER DYLAN

I love my Hugger Man!

As the scene fades we hear the conversation trail off on
wedding plans

MARCO

And We Have Cake!

MARGARET

Group Hug!

*The music swells to Barry Manilow "Even Now."
Even now when I have come so far,
I wonder where you are*

INT: CONVENIENCE STORE OF MR. THOMPSON

10am February 15, the day after the Valentine's Dinner.

Mr. Thompson is organizing, humming "Daybreak" by Barry Manilow. Gina comes in and his upbeat mood has not changed. Gina tries to recover from her actions from the night before.

GINA

Wally, about last night, I didn't mean for it to go that way.

Mr. Thompson still humming "Daybreak" by Barry Manilow.

MR. THOMPSON

Morning, Gina. Coffee's fresh if you want some.

GINA

Wally, I was out of line. I didn't mean what I said. Can we just forget about it?

MR. THOMPSON

No need to apologize, Gina. It's 10 am. I meant what I said. You should get to packing so you can be out of here.

GINA

You can't be serious. You are really kicking me out?

MR. THOMPSON

I am not kicking you out, Gina I am setting you free. Who wants a sad, boring life that I have offered you for all of these years? I think you should find what makes you happy. That would make me happy.

GINA

Wally, come on. You're just angry. We've been through worse than this. We can work through this like we always do.

Mr. Thompson still humming "Daybreak"

MR. THOMPSON

"Let it shine, shine shine all around the world"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GINA

Could you stop humming?

MR. THOMPSON

I am not angry, Gina. I'm done. It's not fair to me and it's not fair to you. You'll be happier when you are not tied down to something that doesn't work for you anymore. Maybe it never did? I am not sure. All I know is that our relationship, now, doesn't work for me.

GINA

We can fix this.

MR. THOMPSON

No.

GINA

I'll be happier, I promise.

MR. THOMPSON

No.

GINA

We can go to counseling, anything you want.

MR. THOMPSON

No. Gina, you deserve whatever it is that you want. Go find it. Go live your life. Go be happy. That's what I intend to do.

GINA

You are just throwing everything away! Everything we built.

MR. THOMPSON

What we built seems to have not been enough. You made that very plain. You said I suffocate you. My God, step outside and breathe in the air. Life is short. Go get lost so you can find yourself. Holding on and feeling nothing doesn't work for you as you have said. I hope you find what you want, because it isn't here.

GINA

So this is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. THOMPSON

This is it.

GINA

What will you do?

MR. THOMPSON

Travel. Stop watching TV. Put on music and enjoy every last bite of food. I hope to meet people and create with them and share my experiences.

GINA

I never thought it would end like this.

MR. THOMPSON

Neither did I. And here we are. Opportunities only come once, so I am going to seize this moment.

GINA

It's like you don't care.

MR. THOMPSON

Gina, I care. I care enough to set you free. I don't want to be the weight that pulls you down. I always wanted to be the rock you could stand on to see the view.

GINA

Wally, you are my rock.

MR. THOMPSON

And, now I am not. I took half of the money out of our accounts for you, so there is a certified check there for you for \$125,000. When I sell the store, I will give you 50% of the remaining profit. I am about close the store for the day in about 5 minutes. Can I get your keys? Take the sedan and I'll keep the Jeep. I have already contacted the DMV and insurances to make those changes.

GINA

What are you doing today?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MR. THOMPSON

I am going to go to that art museum we never went to and then have lunch.

GINA

I didn't know you wanted to go there? I can go with you.

MR. THOMPSON

It's ok. You said for years that "art bores me," no need to do things you don't like. I am bringing a sketch pad with me.

GINA

Wait you can draw?

MR. THOMPSON

I don't think I can and I can't wait to learn! I might be a natural.

GINA

Where do I start, now?

MR. THOMPSON

Start with what you know. You have a sizable check there. You have a car. The world is your oyster. Endings can be new beginnings, Gina. I am going to go wash up. You can let yourself out.

GINA

Can I get a hug good-bye?

Mr. Thompson stops and goes to Gina and gives her a brief hug.

MR. THOMPSON

I hope you find whatever it is that makes you happy.

He exits to the backroom. Gina is dazed. She looks around. Tears fill her eyes. She leaves the keys, picks up the check and give one last look around. Snow starts falling outside. She can hear Mr. Thompson continue to hum "Daybreak."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

GINA

Who knew he liked museums? He thinks he sketch? Wow. I never knew.

She leaves. Mr. Thompson comes back in and singing "Daybreak" as he turns the sign on the door from "OPEN" to "CLOSED" he locks the door and heads out to start his new chapter.

MR. THOMPSON

"Let it shine, shine, shine, all around the world. Shine, shine, shine, al around the world."

A clip of that sound plays louder as the scene ends.

INT: CITY HALL, APRIL 10, 1 PM WEDDING DAY FOR OFFICER DYLAN AND MARCO

Margaret is looking out on a sunny, warm, spring day. The sunlight casts a warm glow. She is looking in the distance with a longing feeling. Dylan enters, dressed in his finest officer uniform ready for the wedding. David enters as Officer Dylan speaks and he listens to their conversation. They are unaware he is present.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie, you are looking way off there in the distance. What has caught your eye.

MARGARET

Oh, Dylan. Look at how handsome and proper you look! I was just thinking that Michael would have loved to see you and Marco on this day.

OFFICER DYLAN

I would have loved to have seen him here, too.

MARGARET

He just couldn't get out of Boston in time. Seems there is a big thunderstorm.

OFFICER DYLAN

Well we can take lots of pictures for him so you can share them with him later.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Marco enters. Sporting a jacket, open white shirt and dress pants. He is thick and dashing and humble. He walks over to Margaret and Officer Dylan full of joy.

MARCO

Group Hug!

They all warmly hug!

MARGARET

My Michael would love your Group Hugs, Marco.

MARCO

Well then we will save some for him.

David walks over irritated. Margaret drifts to another window and does not hear their conversation.

MARCO

She looks happy, doesn't she?

DAVID

Who the hell are you?

MARCO

You must be David. Dylan's told me about you. I am Marco. Marco Rossi, Dylan's soon-to-be husband.

She's not here, Marco. She's stuck in some fantasy, and everyone just... plays along like it's okay.

OFFICER DYLAN

David, we're not pretending it's okay. We're just... letting her have her peace. She's been through enough, and maybe this is her way of coping.

DAVID

Coping? For twenty years? She's been living in the past for two decades, Dylan. And everyone's just letting her drift further away. You guys are getting married today, and she thinks... God knows what she thinks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARCO

David, we know it's hard. Believe me, we do. But Margaret... she's happy where she is. In her mind, she's with Michael, the love of her life. She's not in pain, she's not suffering

DAVID

Who in hell are you? What "we know it's hard" do you think you know.

OFFICER DYLAN

David, this is my soon-to-be husband, Marco. Have some respect.

DAVID

You're gay? I always thought so, that's cool. I am cool. But, what about the rest of us? What about me? I've been trying to bring her back, to make her see reality, but it's like... she's not even here anymore. And I'm the one who's supposed to just accept that?

OFFICER DYLAN

You've been by her side all these years, trying to help her, protect her. But maybe... maybe it's time to let her be where she's happiest.

Clerk comes over.

CLERK

The ceremony will start in 5 minutes.

MARGARET

Oh boys we have to get into place.

She notices David and smiles.

MARGARET

Oh I so glad you could make it. David, Do you know Marco? Dylan found a great love with that man. And, Marco is a hugger. He always yells "Group Hug!"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Marco comes and engulfs all four of them in a Group Hug. David is not amused. He looks like he is being "crushed" with love.

MARGARET, OFFICER DYLAN AND MARCO
GROUP HUG!

DAVID
So what, I just... give up? Stop trying to wake her up? Stop hoping that one day she'll remember who I am?

Margaret drifts again as tension starts to rise with David.

MARGARET
Oh, Dylan, this is the young man I told you about that seems to not know who he is. Well, he does and then doesn't know. It's kind of queer. What you boys are queer! Oh I think I made a funny!

MARCO
Margie you are sharp! Ok, we better get in into place.

MARGARET
I wish Michael would have made it in time

DAVID
Would you please stop.

OFFICER DYLAN
It's ok, Margie, we will take lots of photos! Now do you have the rings?

MARGARET
I do, right here in my purse. Now when exactly do I hand them to you.

MARCO
David, would you mind standing next to Margie and give her a little nudge when it's time for the rings?

DAVID
What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

OFFICER DYLAN

Marco that is an excellent idea.

DAVID

I just don't know how to let go.
How to accept that this

MARGARET

Oh, honey, love is love.

DAVID

No I mean I accept and I am happy
for Officer Dylan

MARGARET

You know Marco is hugger.

MARCO

Group Hug!

They all hug again. David gives into the moment and stops
trying to force Margaret into the present time, for now.

MARGARET

Honey I may cry a little. I love
weddings. It will be good to have
you by my side, is that ok?

DAVID

Yes. I will be honored to stand
with you.

CLERK

Ok we are ready.

Margaret calls Officer Dylan and Marco to the side.

MARGARET

David, just give us one moment.
This is not a secret, I just want
to talk to my boys.

David remains and they step aside to talk.

MARGARET

Marco, I am so happy that Dylan
has found you and that you have
found him. I want to share
something with you... something
that's been on my heart

OFFICER DYLAN

Of course, Margie. We're
listening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

POV Margie drifts back through her memories as she speaks.

MARGARET

You know, I've lived a long life,
seen more than my share of joys
and sorrows. I've loved deeply,
and through it all, there's one
thing I've come to understand...
one truth that has carried me
through the darkest of days. Love,
is the only thing that matters.
Not the kind of love you see in
the movies, or read about in fairy
tales... but real love. The kind
that holds on when everything else
falls apart. The kind that keeps
you warm when the world feels so
cold. The kind that makes life
worth living, even when it's hard.

ANGLE ON DYLAN

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie.

ANGLE ON MARCO, tears glistening.

MARGARET

When the world tries to tell you
that what you have isn't enough,
or isn't right, or isn't real. But
you must remember. You must hold
on to each other, no matter what.
My Michael, oh, how I love him. We
had our share of struggles, our
moments of doubt, but we never let
go. Even now, he's in every beat
of my heart, in every breath I
take... he's there.

She looks deep into there eyes. Tears are streaming down
the men's faces.

MARGARET

That's what I wish for you both. A
love that endures. A love that
stands the test of time, that
weathers every storm. A love that
becomes a part of who you are...
forever.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MARCO

Margie, you have given us the perfect gift.

OFFICER DYLAN

We promise, Margie. We'll hold on to each other, just like you and Michael did.

MARGARET

Good, that's all I ask. Love each other with all you have, and never let go. And when the world feels too heavy... just remember this moment, and know that you are enough.

She places a hand on each of their cheeks, smiling through her tears.

MARGARET

You both are so very loved. Never forget that.

Dylan and Marco, overcome with emotion, both lean in to hug Margaret, holding her tightly as tears stream down their faces. The three of them remain in that embrace for a moment, the world around them fading into the background. The camera pulls back, capturing the tenderness of the moment, as Margaret's wisdom and love surround them like a warm, comforting blanket.

Margaret walks over and gently takes David's hands.

MARGARET

David, will you escort me to the front and stand by me. We are the ring bearers.

DAVID

You know me!

Margaret pulls back and looks long into David's eyes. She touches his cheek. Tears start to stream down his face. She gently wipes them away.

MARGARET

Oh your eyes have so much love. I will always remember this moment and the gift of sharing it with you, David. You know I cry at weddings, too. Let's get to our position.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

In the background the song "Can't Smile Without You" is played. The camera pulls back a but and we see Dylan and Marco in front of the Justice of the Peace. Margaret and David are on the side. Words are said. Dylan looks at David who then gestures about the rings. Margaret takes the rings out of her purse. The men exchange rings. The men, David and Margaret have happy tears. Gestures of "I now pronounce you Husband and Husband" the men kiss. We can make out Marco exclaiming "Group Hug" and Marco, Dylan, David, Margaret and the Justice of the Peace all give a long hug. The Barry Manilow song plays.

THE SHOT DISSOLVES

EXT: PARK BENCH SEPTEMBER 4PM

Margaret is on the bench, waiting for the bus. David comes up to her.

DAVID

Hello.

MARGARET

Oh Hello. How do you do?

DAVID

Fine, thank you.

Margaret looks around, feeling a little awkward.

MARGARET

Can I help you with something? I am waiting for the bus.

DAVID

Mom, it's David.

MARGARET

Yes, yes of course I do. You are David. Although sometimes you forget who you are. That must be hard. How is today for you? Do you know who you are today?

DAVID

Yes. Yes. This is so hard.

MARGARET

Oh I am sorry. Can I help you in any way?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID

Where did you go? I mean you just left?

MARGARET

Left? I haven't been out of this town in 20 years. My Michael said he would take me to Toronto! Cross the border and live a little! I can't wait for that trip. Should be soon.

DAVID

See that's what I mean. No it won't be soon. The bus is not coming. Michael is not coming.

MARGARET

I'm sorry I am not sure what you mean.

DAVID

I mean no. No trip to Toronto with Michael. No Valentine's dinner next year with Michael. No Christmas cookies with Michael. No coffee with Michael tomorrow morning. Don't you know that?

Tears start to slip down his face.

DAVID

No Tuesday cribbage. No Friday movies. You know that's right.

MARGARET

David. I seem to have upset you in some way. I am sorry did you want to sit down with me? I will be just a minute as I am waiting for the bus, and I am happy to share this time with you.

DAVID

There is

He is holding back the tears. It doesn't work.

DAVID

There is no bus coming.

MARGARET

Oh it must be on the holiday schedule.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGARET (CONT'D)

I do lose track of time,
sometimes. What holiday is it,
today? For some reason, I just
can't remember.

Marco and Officer Dylan come over with very bright change-
the-subject attitude.

MARCO

It is Labor Day.

DAVID

What?

OFFICER DYLAN

Yes, buses don't run on Labor Day.

MARGARET

Oh, that explains it.

DAVID

But it is/

MARCO

Is a shame that you have been
waiting. Hey would you all like
to go have Dinner? I bet we can
catch the Early-Bird special.

DAVID

This is not helping. You are/

OFFICER DYLAN

You are right, Marco, an early
dinner would be great. We can
share our wedding pictures with
Margie and David.

MARGARET

Well that sounds lovely. I am a
little hungry. David would you
like that?

OFFICER DYLAN

Come on, David, let's take a break
and spend time together.

David looks lost. His face sullen and sad. Margaret
looks at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARGARET

Oh, David, no need to be sad. I always thought that life is about the people you meet and the things you create with them. Let's go make a new memory today, together.

DAVID

A New memory?

MARGARET

Yes! Sometimes I forget the old memories, or they just fade a little too far away, so I say, "Let's make a new memory today to replace the ones that have slipped away." OH, I rhymed!

MARCO

Margie!

Margaret gives David a gentle hug.

MARGARET

New memories.

DAVID

You know what I think I need?

MARGARET

What is that?

David speaks this softly as his heart is broken.

DAVID

Group hug.

MARGARET

Group Hug!

OFFICER DYLAN

Group Hug!

MARCO

Group Hug!

They all give a joyous hug! Scene dissolves as they walk off to have dinner. The sound of gentle laughter is heard. "Could it Be Magic" by Barry Manilow swells.

INT: MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM, CHRISTMAS EVE

The living room is decked out with the Christmas tree, presents, music is playing. Food and drinks. A feeling of love and hope is in the air. Officer Dylan and Marco are talking with David and his wife LeeAnne. Mr. Thompson is on the couch laughing with Jim and Jill Fletcher. Margaret is passing appetizers.

MARGARET

Ok who is going to have the final crab appetizer? And my cheese log is famous. Oh, Dylan, come. Do I have one more.

Dylan take the appetizer

OFFICER DYLAN

These are my favorite

MARGARET

My mother's recipe! Jill, could and Jim get everyone's drink refilled while I go to the kitchen?

JILL

Sure thing, Margie! Who wants another round of Rum Punch?

All cheer! Margaret goes to the kitchen.

INT: KITCHEN

Michael is in the kitchen and he is in B&W while everyone and everything else is in color. Only Margaret can see and hear Michael.

MICHAEL

Merry Christmas, Margie.

MARGARET

Michael it just wouldn't be Christmas without you!

MICHAEL

Are you happy?

MARGARET

Michael, I couldn't be happier.

David enters and hears Margaret talking. Michael is now no longer visible to anyone except Margaret

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGARET

Oh, Michael, all the people I care about are here. I am so glad that David, seems better. He can have such sadness sometimes, I wish I could help him. Sometimes, I can barely help myself.

DAVID

Mom, where are you?

Margaret turns to look at David

MARGARET

Well, I am in my kitchen! Right here with you, Michael.

DAVID

David, I am David.

Margaret looks and looks and then realizes who is in front of her.

MARGARET

Oh, good! I get worried when you don't know who you are. How has that been lately?

DAVID

Just fine. How are those appetizers!

MARGARET

Sometimes, I have to admit, I can get lost in a thought for a moment. Can you help me bring these out.

DAVID

Are these your famous Swedish meatballs?

MARGARET

Yes! Have you had them before?

David pauses. Thinks then smiles. He says thoughtfully

DAVID

I must have, but I am sure these are going to be the very best, ever!

MARGARET

My mother's recipe!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID

Well then let's get these out!

MARGARET

Ok you go and I will be right there.

David leaves. Black & White Michael is back. He smiles.

MICHAEL

Our guests are waiting.

MARGARET

Merry Christmas my love.

Margaret joins the group back by the Christmas Tree.

INT: LIVING ROOM

MARCO

I have holiday bags here for everyone to take home a tray of cookies. Margie and I baked!

All get up and go look at the cookie table. Each has a plate to assemble their take-home cookies. Lots of conversation and tasting and sharing! Voices overlap. Joyous feeling everywhere.

OFFICER DYLAN

I asked Marco, seriously how many more cookies can you make and he said/

MARCO

I don't no! Don't limit me!

MARGARET

You can just never have enough Christmas cookies!

DAVID

Oh, chocolate ship cookies, I love your chocolate chip cookies.

MARGARET

Well then take a few extra!

JILL

Peanut Butter blossoms!

MR. THOMPSON

Cutouts!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

OFFICER DYLAN

Spritz cookies!

All sample and share cookies. Much love abounds in the room. Outside the snow is falling.

Margaret goes to the tree picks up gifts for everyone and hands them out.

MARGARET

Jill and Jim Fletcher this is for you.

JILL

Oh, Margie, no!

MARGARET

Mr. Thompson here you go, Merry Christmas!

MR. THOMPSON

Margie, I don't need anything.

MARGARET

I know! Isn't that the fun of it all? Ok My boys, Marco and Dylan

This is a heavy box. She makes an over-the-top groan

MARGARET

Ouf! Here you go.

MARCO

Hey this is heavy.

MARGARET

Good thing you workout so much. Now if you could just get Dylan to a few more sit-ups!

OFFICER DYLAN

Hey! Hey!

Margaret picks up a small package and hands it to David.

MARGARET

David, Merry Christmas!

DAVID

Oh, Mom, you don't need to.

MARGARET

Oh hush now! Merry Christmas.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARCO

Margie, we have this for you.

He hands two packages to Margaret.

MARGARET

Oh, no, no. You shouldn't have.

OFFICER DYLAN

Well open it.

Margaret opens the first package. It is a framed 8X10 picture of the wedding with Marco, Dylan, David and Margaret

MARGARET

Oh me and my boys! Group hug!

Marco, Dylan, David and Margaret all do a group hug.

JILL

Wait a minute. Everyone! Group Hug!

Now, everyone does a group hug. Laughter and hugs from all.

MARCO

Ok Margie, open the second one!

MARGARET

Marco, now what could be in here that I might need.

MARCO

Margie, absolutely nothing!
Christmas is about surprises and magic!

She opens the package and it is a photo album of Margaret with pictures through the year with everyone. The wedding; At Mr. Thompson's store; At lunch with Jill & Jim, talking with David; last picture is Margaret on the bench waiting for the bus. Margaret looks and is taken aback.

OFFICER DYLAN

That is my favorite picture,
Margie with you on your bench.

MR. THOMPSON

So I had a sign made. This is
from all of us to you, Margie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

He unwraps a bronze plaque that says "Michael & Margaret's Bench."

MR. THOMPSON
Michael & Margaret's Bench.

Everyone applauds. Margaret is quiet. She smiles, tears gently flow.

MARGARET
Oh, you all! What a wonderful,
wonderful gift. Magic certainly
is in the air. Ok let's see what
your gifts are. Jill & Jim you go
first.

A small package. Inside is a PARIS travel book and a set
of airline tickets to Paris. They open the book

JILL
Paris?

JIM
Like France?

MARGARET
Is there any other?

They discover the tickets

JIM
Tickets? What in the world?

JILL
Margie, tickets to Paris?

MARGARET
Travel often. Go get lost! Go,
go, go!

They get up and hug Margaret.

JILL & JIM
Merry Christmas, Margie!

MARGARET
Bring back new memories!

All Toast!

EVERYONE
NEW MEMORIES!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MARGARET

Ok Mr. Thompson.

He opens a box with an artist sketch pad, charcoals and colored pencils and a French Beret.

MR. THOMPSON

Margie, what is this?

MARGARET

Well I've been watch you sketch here and there and I thought why not get you some supplies!

He gets up and hugs Margaret and puts on the Beret.

MR. THOMPSON

Oui oui! Joyeaux Noel!

MARGARET

Now, Marco and Dylan open yours.

OFFICER DYLAN

Margie it is heavy!

They open it. It is Margaret's 12" cast iron pan.

MARCO

Margie, is this your cast iron pan?

MARGARET

Yes! Already seasoned. Years of love in it.

MARCO

But how will you make your famous blueberry pancakes and Margie's famous Fried Chicken?

MARGARET

You will get to make it!

MARCO

Only if you show me how!

OFFICER DYLAN

GROUP HUG!

Everyone hugs.

MARGARET

David, open your gift, please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

Margaret smiles and she looks at Dylan and Marco. Dylan winks and Marco takes Margaret's hand.

DAVID

Oh, well, now there is no need to give me anything.

MARGARET

I know, and Christmas is about love and memories and hope.

David opens the box to find his father, Michael's, pocket watch with the engraving on the inside, "Keep the Faith. Spread it gently."

DAVID

Well, what is this? Wait I know this watch.

He opens the watch to see the inscription.

MARGARET

I think Michael would want you to, no, I know he would love for you to have this.

MARCO

What does it say, David

David is all choked up. He can barely get the words out

DAVID

Keep the faith.

He cannot finish the sentence. Margaret says in the warmest tone

MARGARET

Spread it gently.

There is a momentary hush. Then the lights dim in the house unexpectedly, except for the star on top of the tree. All are caught up in this magical, mystical moment. They look at the tree. There is an energy that everyone feels.

MARGARET

I do believe. Marry Christmas everyone.

The lights now come back up.

JILL

Did you feel that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

OFFICER DYLAN

What was that?

MR. THOMPSON

Margie how did you

MARGARET

I didn't do anything.

MARCO

I do believe.

DAVID

Keep the faith.

MARGARET

Spread it gently. Merry Christmas
everyone.Out of nowhere the record player plays, "Could it be
Magic"*Spirits move me, every time I'm
near you
Whirling like a cyclone in my mind
You are my life line, angel of a
lifetime
Answer to all answer that I can
find*

EVERYONE SINGS

*Baby, I want you come, come
Won't you just come into my arms?
Let me feel the wonder of all of
you
Could it be magic now, now
Now and hold on fast?
Could this be the magic at last?*The scene blurs into love and happiness. All enjoy the
moment of the moment. The camera pulls back as the song
"Could it be magic" plays on.

EXT. ROADSIDE MOTEL - NIGHT

The neon VACANCY sign flickers against the dark sky. Snow
lightly falls, but it doesn't stick to the ground. GINA,
now dressed more stylishly, stands outside a dingy
roadside motel, clutching a cigarette between her
fingers. She stares into the distance, her eyes a mix of
defiance and uncertainty.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is small, modestly furnished, and far from the glamorous life she imagined. Gina flicks the cigarette ash into a cheap motel ashtray. She's surrounded by half-unpacked suitcases, magazines scattered across the bed-travel brochures for cities like Paris, New York, Los Angeles—as if she's still trying to figure out where she belongs.

She gazes out the window at the small town lights in the distance.

Gina's Phone Buzzes.

A holiday text message pops up from an unknown number, maybe someone from her past wishing her well. Gina stares at it for a moment before deleting it, refusing to acknowledge the life she left behind.

Gina says to herself

GINA

Free, sure I am free to do what,
exactly.

She sits down, pulling out one of the travel brochures, flipping through it absently. Each city in the pictures looks vibrant, alive—so much bigger than Ravenwood. But the contrast to her current reality—this run-down motel, her isolation—is stark.

EXT: APRIL 2PM

ON SCREEN: 4 months later

A lovely spring day in the park

The sun filters through the trees, casting a golden hue over the park. Birds chirp in the distance, children's laughter can be heard faintly, and the scent of blooming flowers fills the air. The bench sits in its usual place, surrounded by soft, swaying grass and delicate flowers. A small brass plaque gleams on the back of the bench, reading: "Michael & Margaret's Bench."

Margaret walks slowly toward the bench, wearing a light spring coat and a scarf draped elegantly around her neck. She pauses in front of the plaque, taking out a delicate handkerchief and carefully polishing the brass. Her face, worn by time, shows both peace and sadness. She stands still for a moment, her hand gently resting on the plaque, lost in thought.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Michael joins her. He is in B&W. Margaret and everything else is in color. It is very peaceful.

MARGARET

Our bench, Michael, it's still here. Just like you.

MICHAEL

My dear Margie.

MARGARET

I've missed you.

MICHAEL

I am right here.

MARGARET

Remember our first date? You sat me down right here and said

MICHAEL

I am gonna marry you Margie

MARGARET

It was a day just like today

In the background the chorus to Barry Manilow's song "Somewhere down the Road" is heard

MARGARET

Oh do you hear it, *"I know that heart of yours will come to see That you belong with me"*

MICHAEL

One of our many songs.

David comes upon them, standing about 10 feet away. All he can see is Margaret talking. The shot goes from Margaret seeing Michael to David seeing only Margaret. Michael's words are heard even though the camera through the eyes of David cannot see or hear him.

MARGARET

I miss you everyday. You left so soon.

MICHAEL

I know. The road was icy and I skidded. I never knew what happened; all I could see was you and I never left.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGARET

I see you everywhere, everyday.
In the flowers, in the clouds, in
June, at Christmas, in a cup of
tea.

MICHAEL

And I am here.

MARGARET

This bench was always our place.
Our connection. People would pass
by and I would say, "I am waiting
for the bus." I know there is no
bus. It's been so hard. Waiting.
I am tired or waiting. I don't
want to wait anymore. I want to be
with you.

David now shaken comes up and gently shakes Margaret's
shoulder.

DAVID

Mom? Mom?

Margaret's eyes closed she is at peace.

MARGARET

I'm ready, Michael. I'm so tired
of being alone.

DAVID

Mom, who are you talking to?

MARGARET

Michael.

DAVID

Please, it's me, David, your son.
Can you hear me?

MARGARET

You were just a boy when we would
all sit here. You always wanted
to go run and play. I said don't
swing too high.

DAVID

Stay with me, please

The chorus from the song "The Heart in my song" plays

She looks off into the past.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARGARET

And your father would say, "Our David is strong. A Survivor. He will be just fine."

The town clock tolls the half-hour.

MICHAEL

Keep the faith.

David heard this. He looks over and he sees the B&W Michael.

MICHAEL

Keep the faith.

DAVID

Wait I can see you and hear you.
What is this? Am I going mad?

MARGARET

Spread it gently.

MICHAEL

My wonderful boy, thank you for
all of your love for all of these
years. Watching over your mother
like this. I will always.

DAVID

Dad, it has been so hard.

Michael fades away. David hears the final words.

MICHAEL

I will always be with you.

DAVID

No, no don't go. That's not fair.
I just saw you. I have so many
questions. Please.

MARGARET

Michael is waiting for me.

David sits down and holds her hand.

DAVID

Mom, no, not yet

MARGARET

He's calling me. You can hear him
right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DAVID

Mom I need you.

David hugs Margaret. Pleading.

DAVID

God, no. I am not ready yet.

MARGARET

You always wanted to go and play.
You are so strong.

DAVID

No, I'm not. I am not that
strong.

Margaret now pulls back and looks deep in David's eyes with love. She cups his face with her hands. She smiles. Margaret gives a gentle kiss on David's cheek. She lays her head on his shoulder.

MARGARET

Keep the faith. David my son, I
love you. I will always be with
you in your heart. You are so

DAVID

No, I am not that strong. You know
me. You called me your son. Mom,
don't, not yet.

Margaret passes away in David's arms.

MARGARET (V.O.)

If you expect something, then
there's always a price attached.
Gifts are free. That's it. That's
the whole secret of life, love, and
letting go. You release it. You
trust it. You let it breathe
without a leash. A real gift asks
for nothing. And love? It doesn't
need to be seen, or praised, or
repaid. It just needs to be...
given.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

David holds her. Her breath is gone. His isn't. Not yet.

Barry Manilow's "I Made It Through the Rain" begins quietly.

CAMERA PULLS BACK

They're framed by soft light. Two people. One moment. Time doesn't stop. But it slows. Just enough.

ANGLE ON DAVID

A quiet breath. Tears. Acceptance.

DAVID
(soft)
Go be with him.

THE END