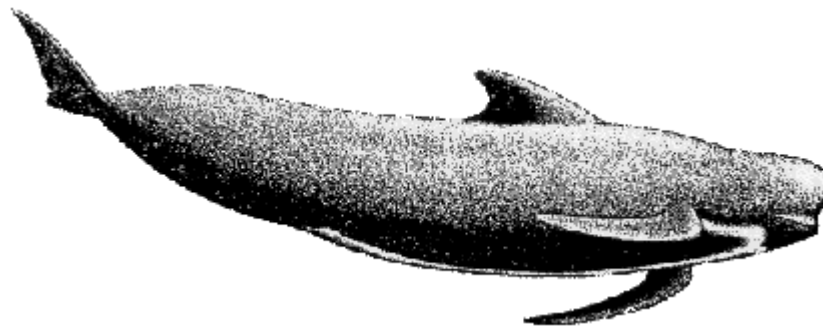


WHALES IN THE CHANNEL

A Feature-Length Screenplay

By Richard Medugno

Based on his original stage play



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FADE IN:

EXT. ABOVE THE ATLANTIC OCEAN - NEAR CAPE COD - NIGHT

SUPER: Cape Cod 1995

We are flying slowly over the ocean. There is a full moon on the horizon. Below, a pod of pilot whales are swimming in shallow waters and heading for the shore. Moody, mystical music is heard along with the pounding of the surf on the shore.

EXT. BELOW SURFACE OF THE OCEAN - NIGHT

As we dive into the water, the pounding surf gets muffled and the squeaks and clicks of the whales are heard. Underwater, we see a lot of chaos as the whales thrash about.

EXT. BARBARA'S BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

An establishing shot of a remotely situated Cape Cod beach house that has a few lights on inside.

INT. BARBARA'S BEACH HOUSE'S ART STUDIO

BARBARA, a middle-aged, attractive, and petite Asian-American woman, is working on a painting of a moonrise above the ocean, basically what she sees through her picture window. It's a moody impressionistic work that exhibits some talent but is unlikely to be commercial because it is a fairly dark scene.

Then the phone is heard ringing in another room. Barbara puts down her brush and grabs a rag as she walks out of the studio.

INT. BARBARA'S KITCHEN

Barbara walks into the kitchen and approaches the phone. She sees the caller's number displayed and sighs.

Barbara walks out of the kitchen leaving the phone unanswered. It stops ringing after a few seconds.

INT. BARBARA'S ART STUDIO

Back in front of her easel, Barbara tries to start painting again, but she doesn't like what she's doing. She grabs a brush, sticks it in a glob of white paint, then paints a big white X across her painting.

BARBARA

Too dark.

EXT. BOSTON - BACK BAY NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Establishing shot of a high-end townhouses in an upscale neighborhood. We hear a couple arguing and the slamming of drawers but can't make out what is being said.

EXT. BARBARA & WARREN'S BACK BAY TOWNHOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Establishing shot of a one of the townhouses in the middle of a block. It's a red brick building with a patch of grass in the front and some flower boxes with dying flowers. Near the curb, there is a large, old tree with its leaves in vibrant fall colors. The argument continues, though words are still unclear.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM (FLASHBACK)

Barbara and WARREN, a clean-cut, middle-aged man in a sports shirt and slacks, are in the middle of a big argument. Their bedroom is stylish and a bit austere—a lot like an IKEA catalogue setting.

BARBARA

It's too much.

WARREN

It's not. You just need to relax.

Warren hops on the bed and lies back on a pillow.

BARBARA

Easy for you to do. You're not the one who is going to have to endure months of your body getting fat and ugly.

WARREN

You're just scared about a few months—

BARBARA

No, I'm scared about what happens after nine months. What's going to happen to my life? What's going to happen with us? Who's going to have to sacrifice...

WARREN

You know you can count on me—

BARBARA

Honestly, Warren, I don't know that.

WARREN

Seriously?!

BARBARA

Seriously.

WARREN

Why do you say that?

BARBARA

It's not even noon and you're already drinking. I think you have a problem.

WARREN

(not defensive but astonished)

No, I don't.

Barbara walks out of the room. Warren sits up shaking his head in disbelief.

EXT. BARBARA & WARREN'S BACK BAY TOWNHOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Barbara emerges through the front door with a suitcase. She slams the door and starts down the steps. A window on the second floor opens and Warren sticks his head out.

WARREN

Barbara! Where are you going?

BARBARA

To the Cape.

At the curb, Barbara opens the trunk of her late model Audi sedan and tosses in her suitcase.

WARREN

Okay. I'll call you later.

BARBARA

No, please don't. I need the weekend.

Warren is not happy. He slams the window shut. Barbara shrugs. She gets into her car and drives off.

INT. BARBARA'S BEACH HOUSE'S ART STUDIO

Barbara is back in her studio painting a sunrise, the ocean, and the dunes and the shoreline in foreground. Through the window, we see a person walking across the beach with a flashlight and a big dog.

EXT. ON THE BEACH - NIGHT

An elderly woman BEACHCOMBER is walking along the shoreline with a big dog and a flashlight. When she directs the beam of light on the shallow water, she sees two small whales beached in front of her. She stops in her tracks and realizes what she's seeing. The dog barks.

BEACHCOMBER

Oh no...

She turns and quickly charges up a dune trail with the dog.

INT. THE CAB OF A BIG RIG - NIGHT

HEATHER, an African American woman truck driver, is driving on a highway. She's a full-figure gal with short hair who dresses like a male driver with ball cap, flannel shirt, vest, blue jeans, and boots. The radio is on.

NEWS ANNOUNCER

Enjoy a few more days of Indian Summer on the Cape, things will turn cold on the weekend...And we have a report just coming in of another whale beaching..

HEATHER

Goddamn! It's happenin' again!

Heather hits the brakes.

EXT. THE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Heather's big rig skids to a stop, creating a traffic hazard as the vehicles that were behind her honk and swerve to get around her truck.

The truck makes an incredibly dangerous U-turn and starts to go back from where it came. We hear the breaking of wood and the shattering of glass from inside the back of the truck, as cargo inside goes flying around.

INT. IN THE CAB OF THE BIG RIG - NIGHT

Heather appears to be possessed as she drives like a crazy person down the highway and sounds her truck's horn repeatedly to get cars out of her way.

HEATHER

I'm comin' for you, babies!

INT. BEACH HOUSE LIVING ROOM

Barbara has dozed off in a big, padded chair. There's some smooth jazz playing on her stereo. She is in pajamas.

On a side table, there is a book titled "What To Expect When You're Expecting."

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

Heather pulls her big rig up and parks it in an open area near Barbara's house. She has her truck's headlights aimed out towards the dunes and beach. In the distance, it looks like there's a couple of big rocks on the beach.

INT. BEACH HOUSE KITCHEN

Barbara is startled awake when the phone across the room rings. She gets up groggy and then irritated, picking up the phone.

BARBARA

What do you want, Warren? (pause)
I'm fine.

Suddenly, there's a rapping at her front door.

BARBARA

I gotta go. There's someone at the door.

We can hear Warren's voice through the phone, trying to continue the conversation as Barbara hangs up the phone and leaves the kitchen. There's more rapping on the door.

INT. BEACH HOUSE LIVING ROOM

Barbara walks through the living room to the front door.

BARBARA

Who the hell...?

INT. THE VESTIBULE IN BEACH HOUSE

Barbara flicks on the lights for both the vestibule and for her porch. There is more rapping on the front door.

Barbara peeks through the peephole and sees a face she doesn't know. She turns and grabs an umbrella from a nearby coatrack. More rapping on the door.

HEATHER(O.S.)
C'mon, open up. Emergency.

BARBARA
Who is it?!

HEATHER(O.S.)
You don't know me.

BARBARA
What's the emergency?!

HEATHER(O.S.)
Whales.

BARBARA
What?

HEATHER(O.S.)
Whales!

BARBARA
Whales?

Barbara opens the door to reveal Heather, who's now wearing hooded sweater shirt over her other clothes.

BARBARA
What's the emergency?

HEATHER
They're back.

BARBARA
Who's black?

HEATHER
Back! Whales. Here. On the beach.

BARBARA
Whales on my beach?!

HEATHER
(exasperated)
Yeah! What I'm sayin'. C'mon,
time's a-wastin'. I'll show
you...You won't need that...

Heather grabs the umbrella from Barbara throws it aside,
then takes her by the hand and pulls her outside.

BARBARA
Wait—I need my sandals!

EXT. THE DUNES - NIGHT

Heather is pulling the smaller Barbara like a mother
pulling a child through the sand with one hand while
pointing a flashlight in the direction they're headed.

HEATHER
...It happens here every year...On
this beach...There! I tole you.
There's a couple right there!! I
tole you. Look!

BARBARA
Where? I don't see any—Hey! Stop.

Heather jerks Barbara like a ragdoll as they head into the
darkness.

EXT. THE BEACH - NIGHT

With the flashlight, Heather leads Barbara to the dark
bodies lying on the sand, near the shoreline. One is full
grown and the other is a third its size.

HEATHER
There they are!

The whales chirp once or twice.

HEATHER
Will you look at them. Yeahoo!

BARBARA

I was expecting something much bigger.

HEATHER

Bigger?! How big is big to you?! The mom's 10, maybe, 12 feet long. Probably weighs over one thousand pounds!

BARBARA

Yes, but when you said whales, I thought big like Moby-Dick whale.

Heather shakes her head "no."

HEATHER

Pilot.

BARBARA

Pilot?

HEATHER

Not sperm.

BARBARA

Not pilot's sperm? What are you talking about?!

HEATHER

Whales! Types of whales. Lord, haven't you heard of pilot whales or sperm whales?

BARBARA

Oh. Yes, I guess I have...

Heather pats the whale's back.

HEATHER

Hello, girl. Poor thing...

Heather circles the animal, inspecting it.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Not bad. Just a few scratches...The

HEATHER (CONT'D)

little one is almost a newborn.

Heather finds a few stones around the whales. She picks them up and tosses them off.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Awesome, ain't they?

BARBARA

Yes. They must be sick.

HEATHER

No. They just got lost and stuck.
So whattaya do?

BARBARA

What do you mean?

HEATHER

How ya pay the bills?

BARBARA

Oh, I'm an artist...I paint-

HEATHER

Oh, yeah, I figured you for one of
them artsy-fartsy types. C'mon!

Heather starts to head back through the dunes towards Barbara's house.

EXT. THE DUNES - NIGHT

Heather is marching through the dunes. Barbara is trying to keep up. She falls into the sand. Heather helps her up.

HEATHER

We need buckets, blankets, and
towels.

BARBARA

Why?

HEATHER

They need to be kept wet or
they'll dry out and die.

BARBARA

They look dead already.

HEATHER

(furiously)

No! They ain't dead already. They
fine. We just gotta push 'em back
out when the tide come in.

BARBARA

We're pushing them back out?!

HEATHER

Cain't just leave 'em here.

BARBARA

Just the two of us?

HEATHER

No! 'Course not.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Barbara and Heather are loading up a wagon with buckets,
blankets, towels, a lantern, and miscellaneous items.

HEATHER

You must be new 'round here.

BARBARA

We bought the place last spring.

HEATHER

Didn't yo' neighbors tell you
'bout this? Everybody here knows.
It happens every year and all
kinds of peeps show up to help
out.

BARBARA

So more people are coming?

HEATHER

Oh, yeah! Big news. Now, c'mon,
let's cut the yakkin'. Chop, chop!

EXT. ON THE BEACH NEXT TO THE WHALES - NIGHT

Heather and Barbara are trudging back towards the whales with the wagon of items, when the whales let out squeaks.

BARBARA

Was that...?

HEATHER

Wasn't me...(to the big one) Hello,
girl! I'm Heather and this is...
What's your name?

BARBARA

Barbara. Nice to meet you whale.

HEATHER

Ok, Barbara, shake her flipper.

Barbara cautiously touches the big whale.

BARBARA

Wow....So smooth.

The little whale lets out another squeak.

HEATHER

Ah, don't worry, baby, we'll get
you and your momma back out there
where you belong. Okay, let's get
to work.

Heather and Barbara unpack the wagon.

Heather throws the plastic buckets towards the water's edge. Then she grabs a blanket and unfurls it.

BARBARA

What do you want me to do?

HEATHER

Grab the other end. We're gonna put this over her.

BARBARA

Are they cold?

HEATHER

Don't be a dumbass. We gonna throw water on this on top of 'em so they stays damp and don't dry out.

BARBARA

Oh. Okay.

The two women place the blankets and towels on top of the whales. Then head to the water with the buckets. Barbara kicks off her sandals, quickly rolls up the legs on her pajama bottoms and then the arm sleeves.

Each woman scoops water out of the sea and walks the bucket back to the whales and tosses the water on the blankets and towels on top of the whales. The whales chirp.

HEATHER

Yup. Gotta keep 'em wet.

EXT. THE BEACH NEXT TO THE WHALES - NIGHT

Heather and Barbara have turned the buckets over and are seated on them near the whale. Both are breathing heavily.

HEATHER

Good workout.

BARBARA

Yes. Listen, I'm feeling a chill. I need to go back inside.

HEATHER

Okay. Go put some more clothes on and then please bring out some drinks and food.

BARBARA

Uh, you know, I'd love to help out
but I'm sorry, I'm really not
feeling this...

HEATHER

You can't help no more? You wanna
quit and we ain't even done shit?

BARBARA

I'm really busy right now with...

HEATHER

Busy with what?

BARBARA

Dealing with something...And with a
painting.

HEATHER

Well, honey, your paintin' can
wait, these animals cain't.

Barbara considers the possibility of staying, then shakes
her head "no."

BARBARA

Look, I'm really sorry, but I'm
just not interested in helping
tonight...

HEATHER

What! "Just not interested in
helpin'?!"

BARBARA

No. I'm not.

HEATHER

What if this was you? Wouldn't you
want some to be "interested" in
saving your ass?

BARBARA

Of course, but—

HEATHER

But what? What makes you think you're better than these whales?

BARBARA

I don't think I'm better than a whale. Honestly, I just don't think the two of us can make a difference. And I don't want to freeze to death out here trying.

HEATHER

I already told you: There. Will. Be. Others!

BARBARA

(mocking her)

Well. Where. Are. They?!

HEATHER

Don't worry. They'll be here soon. In the meantime, we've gotta help 'em. Now, are you gonna hurry up and get some food and drink or am I gonna hafta kick your little Chinese butt?

BARBARA

I'm not Chinese. I'm Japanese-American.

HEATHER

Whatever. Ching-ching-ching-chong. Get us some chow now. Please.

BARBARA

Wow. Ok, all right, racist. Fine. But I can only help until the others come...I'll be right back.

Barbara marches through the dunes back to her house.

HEATHER

"I'll be right back."

Heather returns to bailing and pouring water on the whales.

HEATHER

Why do y'all keep doing this?!
It's suicide for Christ's sakes.
Why? Damn mystery. So where the
others? Where's your pod?

Heather steps back and looks down the beach one way and then turns and looks down the other way.

HEATHER

Looks like mother and chile are on
their own tonight. Don't worry
'bout nothin'. Heather's gonna get
you back out there. It may take
some time, but it won't be like
last year. I promise you that.
You'll be swimmin' free soon.

INT. BEACH HOUSE BEDROOM

Barbara is pulling on some blue jeans and a sweatshirt over her leotard. She pats her stomach when she realizes her clothes are a little tighter. When the phone rings, she looks to see the caller ID. She sighs. She doesn't answer and finishes dressing, pulling her hair into a ponytail and adding a baseball cap.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALES - NIGHT

After dumping another bucket of sea water on the whales, Heather falls on her back into the sand. She looks towards Barbara's house.

HEATHER

Where that Jap girl?

Heather lies back down.

HEATHER

What a beautiful warm night...Didya
come outta the water just to see
the stars tonight?

Heather closes her eyes.

INT. BEACH HOUSE KITCHEN

Barbara is packing a picnic basket with fruit, bottled water, and snacks. She pulls out some sliced bread and makes some sandwiches. Then her home phone rings again.

BARBARA

Oh my God, Warren, give it a rest...

She stops sandwich-making long enough to see the caller ID. She shakes her head and goes back to making sandwiches, while the phone continues to ring.

EXT. THE BEACH - NIGHT

Heather is napping in the sand. Suddenly, TOM appears. He is an elderly, raggedy, and obviously homeless man. He lightly kicks the sole of one of Heather's boots.

TOM

Hey, you alive?

Heather rockets upright.

HEATHER

Ow! What! Jesus Christ, you scared the shit out of me!

TOM

I'm not Jesus. I'm Tom.

Tom points to the whales.

TOM (CONT'D)

Looks like you have some dead blackfish.

HEATHER

They ain't a fish and they ain't dead. You here to help?

TOM

Maybe. Maybe not.

HEATHER

Well, keep movin' upwind until you decide. Whew! Jesus, you stink.

TOM

I told you I'm not Jesus. I'm Tom. You gonna try to save that blackfish?

HEATHER

I tole you they ain't fish. They are whales.

TOM

Once upon a time here they were called blackfish and potheads.

Heather losing her patience starts moving on him.

HEATHER

You're a pothead. Beat it.

TOM

Public beach.

Heather points at her right foot.

HEATHER

Private boot. Now, move along or you'll get it in yo' nutsack..

TOM

Then that would be a pubic breech. Haha. Get it?

HEATHER

You're gonna it, you old drunk.

TOM

I am not an alcoholic.

HEATHER

Like hell. I smell you from here. My father was a drunk. So I don't put up with that shit no more. Now make like an egg and scramble.

Heather feints a run at Tom as Barbara comes into view from the dunes, carrying the picnic basket. Barbara is now wearing jeans, coat, rubber boots, and knit cap. Tom walks away muttering.

TOM

I'm going...I'm going...You gorgon.

BARBARA

Who was that?

HEATHER

Some ole boozer.

BARBARA

He wasn't here to help?

HEATHER

He'd be no help. Trust me. He's a stinkin' drunk...All right, all right! Let's get bailin' again! Before these poor babies shrivels up and dies.

As they talk, Heather and Barbara repeatedly scoop up water, carry it back, and toss it on the whale.

BARBARA

This is so arduous...

HEATHER

Yeah, it's hard on us. But they needs us. Hey, Barbara, we gotta give this beautiful mother a name.

BARBARA

Ah, I really don't want to get emotionally involved with it.

HEATHER

Ya can help me name her.

BARBARA

I'm just here until someone else shows up.

HEATHER

All I'm askin' is for a little help namin' her. What's wrong with you? Cain't even try and come up with a good name for her?

BARBARA

All right, just call her—Hey, how do you know it's female?

HEATHER

Baby whale there is my first clue. Besides, they always are. Whales that beach is always female or calves. Sometimes they pregnant too. They always women and children.

BARBARA

Really? That's so odd.

HEATHER

Just like people. Whenever there's trouble you can count on the guys causin' it. And then they're never around when the gals need 'em.

BARBARA

Funny, I was just thinking the same thing.

HEATHER

Don't get me started. We be here all night...

Barbara laughs.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

I got it. Let's call her Brenda.

BARBARA

The whale? Brenda?

HEATHER

Yeah. I knew a Brenda once in high school. She was gorgeous.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
(singing) Brenda Jean, the
homecomin' queen, had everythin'.

BARBARA
And this whale reminds you of her?

HEATHER
No! I just always liked that name.

BARBARA
It doesn't really matter to me, but...

HEATHER
But what?

Heather takes another break from bailing water.

BARBARA
I don't think Brenda's a good name
for a whale.

HEATHER
Why? What's wrong with it?

BARBARA
Too anthropomorphic.

HEATHER
What hell does that mean?

BARBARA
Too human-like. I'd call her
Bertha or Betsy or Mabel.

HEATHER
Those are cow names! This is a
beautiful whale. I like Brenda.
I'm stickin' with Brenda.

BARBARA
End of discussion?

HEATHER
Yup.

BARBARA

You know, I think you're a bully.

HEATHER

What?! Me? A bully?

BARBARA

Yes, you. You're a my-way-or-the-highway gal.

HEATHER

No, no, no. You got me pegged all wrong, sista. I'm very sweet. Really, I'm just a bit rough on the outside. That's all. Have to be tough when you a lady trucker.

Barbara drops her bucket and walks to a sand dune.

BARBARA

I have to stop.

HEATHER

Okay.

EXT. THE TOP OF A DUNE - NIGHT

Heather turns over her bucket and sits on it next to Barbara who is lying back in the sand.

HEATHER

When the others get here, we'll work in shifts.

BARBARA

Shouldn't we contact a marine biologist or somebody like that?

HEATHER

Shit no! Marine biologist! (spits) No way. We need normal people. People who have common sense and wanna try and save 'em. Those scientists just want to stick 'em with needles and kill 'em.

BARBARA

Oh. Really? Why?

HEATHER

They like playin' God. They say
they keepin' them from sufferin'.
How they know they sufferin'?

Heather pulls a long knife from inside of her boot.

HEATHER

I'm prepared for them this year.

BARBARA

(alarmed)

What's that for?!

HEATHER

Protection from creeps and kooks.
I drive a big rig all over the
country all by my lonesome.

Heather returns the knife to inside her boot.

BARBARA

Really?

HEATHER

Shore do. I have a shipment of
500,000 condoms and 10,000 light
bulbs over there. I was halfway to
NYC when I heard about the whales.
I turned right around. Came here.

BARBARA

You're kidding me?!

HEATHER

Nope. If there's a baby boom in
Brooklyn nine months from now,
it'll be all my fault. (*chortles*)
Yeah, I'm always on the move, but
when I hear about these whales,
well, it's like my own flesh and
blood. I roll to the wherever the
action is.

BARBARA

Wow, you're really dedicated.

HEATHER

I try to do what I can. Hey, what 'bout your neighbors? Maybe you can ask them to come out and help.

BARBARA

I don't know any of them.

HEATHER

Why? Ain't you friendly? People today just so unfriendly.

BARBARA

I'm friendly! I let you into my place and I didn't even know you.

HEATHER

That wasn't friendly. Just stupid.

BARBARA

Thank you. You know, you have a real way with people.

HEATHER

Yup, it's a gift. I got two. One is how I deals with people so good. And two is rescuin'.

Heather stands and scans the shoreline.

HEATHER

Well, damn it, there should be mo' people here by now. Last year, we had a ton of people here, helpin'.

BARBARA

What exactly happened last year?

EXT. - THE BEACH - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Heather stands dejected on a beach surrounded by expired pilot whales.

HEATHER (V.O.)

We saved some. Pushed them out.
Though some came right back. Damn
marine biologists put 'em to
sleep. We didn't let 'em at first,
but then we couldn't stop 'em. You
should have seen it...A whole pod
all along the shore here. Dead.

EXT - THE BEACH - NIGHT

Barbara is taking snacks and drinks out of her picnic
basket.

BARBARA

So after all the work to push them
back out, they came back ashore
and died anyway?

HEATHER

Yeah, some did.

BARBARA

Well, what's the point then?

HEATHER

Some died. Some swam away.

BARBARA

But the odds aren't good for these
ones here then?

Barbara begins to re-pack the picnic basket.

HEATHER

I don't know odds. This ain't
Vegas, ya know. They'll be fine if
we get some help. C'mon, let's
bail again.

BARBARA

Sorry, I'm going to have to go in.

HEATHER

You just gonna give up on them?

BARBARA

Heather, it's pretty clear we're not going to make a difference—

HEATHER

Don't say that! I hate that. I hate when people give up. They act like they don't make a difference. Don't anybody believe, "Every little bit helps" anymore?! I mean, I'm not gonna sit on my fat ass and say, "I ain't gonna help, they're all gonna die." C'mon, don't give up, Barbara. If you stay a little longer, you'll fall in love with these animals like I did. (beat) At least stay until someone else comes. Please?

Barbara sighs and drops the picnic basket into the sand.

BARBARA

All right, I'll help you a little while longer. But—

HEATHER

Good! You'll see, Barbara, we'll make a big difference. If ya wanna make a difference in the world, here's yo' chance to be a hero!

BARBARA

Okay. I said I'd stay. But I can't be out here all night.

Heather digs drink and food out of the basket.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALE - NIGHT

Heather and Barbara are bailing water on the whale again.

HEATHER

You live out here all by yourself?

BARBARA

No. Just here for the weekend.
Husband's back in our townhouse in
Boston.

HEATHER

You don't like married life.

BARBARA

Not right now.

HEATHER

I could tell. You don't need my
advice, but I say divorce him if
he's a jerk.

BARBARA

I'm not ready to do that. There's
still something there...

HEATHER

A joint-bank account!

BARBARA

(laughing)

No, it's more than that! There's a
history and I still have a vision
of us together in the future. But
right now, it really sucks.

HEATHER

Sounds like you're stuck like these
whales until you figure some shit
out. Or somebody give you a push.

Heather gives Barbara a gentle nudge and they both laugh.

HEATHER

Got any kids?

BARBARA

Nope. Not yet.

HEATHER

He shootin' blanks?

BARBARA

Nope. In fact...

Barbara pats her stomach.

HEATHER

Wow! Really? Not very far along.

BARBARA

Five or six weeks...

HEATHER

Good for you. Everybody should have kids.

BARBARA

I strongly disagree with that idea.

HEATHER

I mean, anybody who wants 'em, should have 'em. I want 'em, but I can't have 'em.

BARBARA

Oh. I'm sorry.

An awkward beat.

HEATHER

Yeah. Well, it's not like I could be a stay-home mom or anythin'. I had a partner once and we talked about her havin' them, but she wasn't ready.

BARBARA

Oh.

HEATHER

Yeah, I'm a lesbian. Gotta problem with that?

BARBARA

No. Of course not.

HEATHER

You bi?

BARBARA

No! I don't think so. No.

HEATHER

(laughing)

Had to ask.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALES - NIGHT

Heather and Barbara are sitting on their buckets.

HEATHER

We lucky it's not too cold tonight. And we got a full moon risin'.

BARBARA

So, Heather, where are you from?

HEATHER

All over, really. I was born down South. Moved around a lot. My dad was in the military.

BARBARA

Where is he now?

HEATHER

Dead.

BARBARA

I'm sorry. Your mother?

HEATHER

Dead, too. He killed her. Then killed hisself.

BARBARA

Oh, my God, I'm so sorry.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF HEATHER'S PARENTS HOME (FLASHBACK)

In a dark living room, a middle-aged MAN stumbles in, mumbling nonsense. A WOMAN and small CHILD cower in fear.

HEATHER(V.O.)

He was a drunk. An angry drunk.
When he wasn't drinkin', he was
all right...but he was always
drinkin'.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALES - NIGHT

Heather and Barbara stand in the shallow water, facing each other, with empty buckets in hand.

BARBARA

So when did it happen?

HEATHER

When I was a teenager.

BARBARA

That's terrible.

They both pick up some water and walk back to the whale.

HEATHER

I was there when it happened.

Heather tosses her buck of water on the whale.

BARBARA

Oh, my God...

HEATHER

Yeah.

Barbara accidentally dumps her a bucket of water on Heather's backside.

HEATHER

Hey!!! What the fuck?!

BARBARA

Oh, sorry!

HEATHER

Jesus Christ!

BARBARA

My arms are so out of shape-

HEATHER

You gotta whole fuckin' whale to shoot for!

BARBARA

It slipped. I'm really sorry.

HEATHER

"I'm really sorry." I'm really fuckin' wet, goddamn it!

BARBARA

I'll go get you a dry towel..

HEATHER

Hey, that's a fuckin-amazin' idea!

BARBARA

I'll be right back..

Barbara starts up the path to through the dunes to her house.

HEATHER

Ok. Hurry. (quietly to herself)
"It slipped." What a dumbass.

Heather begins to circle the whales again. She stops when she sees something on the big one's back.

HEATHER

That's quite a scar...Something or someone took a piece out of you..

Tom shuffles quietly back into view, unseen by Heather. He holds a hand-held metal detector. He sneaks up on her.

HEATHER

The awful shit people do to
animals...

Tom waves the metal detector at Heather.

TOM

BUUUUUUUUUUUUUZZZZZZZZZ!

Heather nearly jumps out of her skin.

HEATHER

Ow! What the fuck! You again! You
old piece of shit.

TOM

(happily singing)
Evening!

HEATHER

Quit sneakin' up on me.

Tom waves the metal detector at her again.

TOM

BUUUUUUUUUUUUUZZZZZZZZZ! You're
all wet.

HEATHER

No kiddin', Einstein. What's that?

TOM

Metal detector.

HEATHER

Does it even work?

Tom waves it over his own head.

TOM

BUUUZZZZ-DING-DING-DING-DING! Yep!
It just found the metal plate in
my head.

Tom waves the metal detector over Heather's body.

TOM (CONT'D)

BUUUZZZZ-DING-DING-DING-DING! Yep!
Found some heavy metal.

HEATHER

Haha. Very funny. Get out of here!

TOM

I want to stay and help you. I
hate to see animals in distress.
When I was a kid, I once saw some
classmates...

EXT. A SCHOOL'S BLACKTOP PLAYGROUND - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A fledgling sits on the blacktop chirping as a group of
kids wearing 1950s school attire are grouped around it.

TOM(V.O.)

...Pick up a baby chick that had
fallen out of it's nest. And I
thought they were going to try to
save it. I thought they wanted to
take care of it, but...

A BOY in the group of kids picks up the chick. As he walks
away, the other kids follow him, cheering excitedly.

EXT. A RED BRICK SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Some kids are playing stickball and using the school
building as a back stop. These kids stop playing as the boy
with chick approaches with the other kids follow him.

Suddenly, the boy with the chick in his hand rears back and
goes into a wind-up like a baseball pitcher and throws the
chick against the wall. It splats and dies.

The children have a mixture of responses. Some of the girls
scream in horror. Other girls are stunned into silence.
Some of the boys are confused, others are impressed, and
others shake their heads in disgust.

One SCHOOL GIRL angrily confronts the bird killer.

SCHOOL GIRL
I'm telling!

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALE - NIGHT

Heather and Tom are facing each other on the beach. Heather is horrified by the story. Her mouth is agape.

TOM (CONT'D)
...And twenty years later, that little girl became my wife.

HEATHER
That's disgustin'!

TOM
Well, I must disagree. We loved each other dearly. I miss her—

HEATHER
Jesus Christ, that's a fuckin' terrible story! Why did you have to tell me it?! It makes me so mad. I wanna kick you in the head just for tellin' me that story.

Tom steps back, ready to defend himself.

TOM
Hey, don't boot the messenger!

HEATHER
Damn, you're depressin'.

TOM
Sorry. May I stay and help you?

Heather looks him over, sizes him up, and looks up and down the coast. Seeing no help in sight, she sighs and nods.

HEATHER
Yeah, you can stay. If you help. But stay ten feet away from me. And stop being so fuckin' weird.

INT. BEACH HOUSE KITCHEN

When the phone rings, Barbara comes into the kitchen holding a beach towel. She goes to the phone, picks it up.

BARBARA (on phone)
Warren, please stop calling me.

WARREN (O.S.)
Are you all right?

BARBARA (on phone)
Yes. I'm rescuing whales with a truck driver. I have to go. Bye.

As Barbara hangs up the phone, we hear Warren's voice "Whaaaa?!"

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALE - NIGHT

Heather and Tom bailing water out of the sea together. Barbara arrives with a beach towel and tosses it to Heather.

BARBARA
So your friend's back.

HEATHER
He ain't no friend of mine. He's a goof with a metal detector and he tells awful stories.

Heather dries her hair with the towel. Tom approaches with a bucket of sea water and tosses it on the whales.

HEATHER
Let's make a chain so that we don't walk so much. I'll stand in the water since I got boots, then you Jap girl, then you freaky old man. When you get the bucket, dump it on THEM, not on me!

They do as Heather instructed, passing one bucket back and forth between them.

BARBARA

By the way, we have names. I'm Barbara and she's Heather.

TOM

Well, how do you do, Barbara and Heather. I'm Tom. You live around here?

Barbara points to her house beyond the dunes.

TOM (CONT'D)

Nice place. I used to have one.

HEATHER

No, sir!

TOM

Yes, ma'am. I was an English professor.

HEATHER

Right! And I'm Ginger and she's Mary Ann.

TOM

I'm retired. And alone. Now, I just drift now. And the beach is my world. And the world is my oyster.

HEATHER

Hey, dump that water on different parts of them, not all in the same spot.

TOM

(whispering to Barbara)
She's so crabby and mean.

HEATHER

I heard that. I ain't mean, just I care too much. I'm too sensitive. That's my problem. I had to get a hard shell, otherwise I be dead by now.

TOM

You may need a hard shell to survive, but you need a soft heart to really live.

HEATHER

You're soft in the head, you believe that crap.

BARBARA

Well, given the choice, I'm with him. I'd rather be a sucker than a cynic.

HEATER

What's that supposed to mean?

BARBARA

It means I'm willing to give people the benefit of the doubt.

HEATHER

Well, I can't afford to be so trustin' of everybody.

TOM

Trust will set you free.

Tom opens his arms wide and falls backwards into the sand. It's a "trust" exercise but no one is there to break his fall. He laughs at the women's fear that he's hurt himself.

HEATHER

Old dude's gonna kill hisself.

Barbara stands over Tom and extends a hand to help him up.

TOM

Thank you, my dear.

BARBARA

You're an interesting character, Tom. Tell us about yourself.

TOM

I'm just a rudderless old soul

TOM (CONT'D)

missing the love of my life. When she died, I sold everything. That really bothered my dear daughter. Enough about me. What about you?

BARBARA

I'm from Northern California. My maiden name is Miyazki. Born and raised in San Jose's Japantown. My grandparents and parents on both sides spent time in internment camps during World War II. When they came home, they opened a Japanese Foods store on Jackson Street. I have an older sister who is a doctor. She went to Stanford and I went to art school out here. I met my husband Warren at an art gallery...

INT. ART GALLERY IN BOSTON - (FLASHBACK)

In a small boutique-size art gallery. A younger looking Barbara is studying a painting. A younger looking Warren, holding a glass of wine, approaches her. He stands next to her, studying the painting, too.

WARREN

Do you like it?

BARBARA

Yeah. Do you?

WARREN

How much is it?

BARBARA

A couple thousand.

WARREN

(whistles)

Not at that price.

BARBARA

(laughs)

Maybe I should lower the price.

WARREN

(embarrassed)

Oh, geez! Yours?

BARBARA

Yup.

Warren and Barbara both laugh and smile at each other.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALE - NIGHT

Heather, Tom, and Barbara are still baling water.

BARBARA

...And then we got married and ten years later, here we are. Well, here I am.

TOM

No kids? No, art initiating life?

BARBARA

No, uh...No, not yet.

HEATHER

She's expecting!

TOM

Congratul—

HEATHER

But she might not keep it!

BARBARA

I never said that.

HEATHER

Didn't have to. I sensed it. It's true, right?

BARBARA

Well...that's why I'm out here alone. I'm thinking and trying to make a decision...I don't know why I'm talking to two strangers...

TOM

Well, you didn't ask for it but here's my advice: children are a wonderful addition to life. Enrich you in so many ways. But don't let them try to tell you want to do when you get old.

HEATHER

(sarcastic)

Great advice from a garbage picker.

Barbara is winded and drops her bucket.

BARBARA

Ok. That's it for me. I'm done.

HEATHER

You can take a break.

BARBARA

Yeah. I'm sorry. I'm going in.

HEATHER

Don't leave me alone with him.

BARBARA

I said I'd help until someone else came...

HEATHER

He ain't someone. He's no one. And he smells.

TOM

I stink. Therefore I am.

Barbara laughs and starts to walk back to her home.

HEATHER

Can you at least knock on doors
and ask neighbors to help us?

BARBARA

Sure. I can do that.

Barbara walks through the dunes towards a neighbor's house.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Barbara walks onto a dark porch. There are lights on
inside, so she knows someone is home. She knocks on the
screen door. Immediately a big dog starts barking. She
steps to the side and accidentally knocks over the dog's
water bowl on the porch, near the door.

BARBARA

Shit!

After a moment, the porch light comes on. The door opens
tentatively, revealing the Beachcomber, who is a petite and
senior citizen woman.

BARBARA

Hi, I'm Barbara. I'm your next-
door neighbor.

BEACHCOMBER

Yes. I've seen you around.

BARBARA

Bought the place a few months ago.

BEACHCOMBER

Welcome.

BARBARA

So there's some whales-

BEACHCOMBER

I know. I saw them. I called the
authorities.

BARBARA

Oh, great. So there's just three of us trying to help save them. I wonder if you could help us.

BEACHCOMBER

We tried last year. They all died.

BARBARA

Really? Wow. That must have been disappointing.

BEACHCOMBER

Yes. It was.

BARBARA

So can you help us now?

BEACHCOMBER

Sorry. No. It's a lost cause. Good night.

Beachcomber closes the door. As Barbara stands processing the quick rejection, the porch light goes out on her.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALES - NIGHT

Heather and Tom are each moving slowly but steadily dumping buckets of water on the whale when Barbara returns.

BARBARA

No one wants to help. They say it's a lost cause.

HEATHER

No! Brenda Jean and her baby are not a lost cause! Don't ever say that. Here, it's your turn.

Heather tosses the bucket at her.

BARBARA

Heather, I can't help anymore.

HEATHER

Trust me, people are comin'.

BARBARA

Okay, maybe I'll come back out
when more people arrive.

HEATHER

Wait!

Heather goes to the baby whale, sizing it up.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Let's the three of us try and pull
the baby back out now.

BARBARA

Doesn't it need its mother?

HEATHER

Yeah, but let's get the baby back
out there and it can rejoin their
pod. Then momma will follow.

BARBARA

How do you know the pod is around?

HEATHER

You can't see 'em. But they're out
there.

TOM

Have faith in pod.

HEATHER

Shut up, ya old fool and help me.

Heather and Tom go to the baby whale and try to pick it up.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Grab the tail and pull and I'll
lift the head. One, two, three.

They are almost able to do it. Both whales begin to chirp
and squeak. Brenda Jean begins to beat her tail on the
sand, seeing what's happened to her child.

HEATHER

Come on, Barb! Help us!

BARBARA

Brenda Jean isn't happy.

HEATHER

She doesn't understand. But once we get the little one out, she'll wanna go out there too.

Barbara sighs and joins Tom at the baby whale's tail and they work in unison to move the baby whale a few feet at a time, until it's near the water's edge. Brenda Jean continues to protest.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

At a quiet intersection near a Cape Cod town, JANE, a young woman in a flowery, flowing dress, looking angelic, stands under a streetlight hitchhiking and holding a hand-drawn sign that reads "Save the Whales." A few cars drive by without stopping. One honks. Teenagers yell. Finally, a Volvo station wagon stops. Jane jumps for joy.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

The Volvo drives up and parks. Warren jumps out of his car. He is followed out of the car by Jane. Warren knocks on the door.

WARREN

Barbara? Hello, Barbara? It's Warren.

JANE

Cool place.

Warren tries the doorknob. It's locked. He starts around the back. Jane starts to follow and then stops.

JANE

Let's go to the beach. The whales are out there.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALES - NIGHT

Heather, Tom, and Barbara are at the shoreline with the baby whale now in a few inches of water.

HEATHER

Now, we can swing her around.
Let's put her head facing the
water.

They do as Heather commands and the baby whale is now facing the sea. The baby whale is starting to splash a lot in the water.

HEATHER

Let go of the tail.

Tom and Barbara release the tail and step out of the water as Heather with a bear hug around the top of the whale repeatedly heaves it and herself forward into deeper water.

BARBARA

Wow. She's getting it out there.

TOM

Indeed.

Brenda Jean is now struggling and beating its tail, squeaking and chirping like crazy.

TOM (CONT'D)

Momma's not happy.

Barbara goes to the momma whale and pats it.

BARBARA

It's all right, Brenda Jean.
She'll be all right.

Heather is now in the water up to her waist and with one more heave, using all her strength, heaves the baby whale forward into deeper water. The baby whale swims off and Heather raises her arms in victory.

HEATHER

Yes! Yes! Go, baby, go!

Tom and Barbara are applauding.

BARBARA

We did it!

Heather comes marching out of the water celebrating and dancing. Barbara grabs some towels and brings them to Heather to dry off.

HEATHER

See! I knew we could do it. I knew it! Now, all we need is a few more people and then we can push Brenda Jean out there. Let's get some more water on her.

Tom grabs a bucket of water and tosses it on Brenda Jean, who is still very unhappy. Barbara looks up after having re-arranged a blanket on the whale. She sees Warren and Jane coming over the dunes.

BARBARA

What's he doing...?(to the others)
It's my husband. Warren, why are you here?

WARREN

I was worried—

JANE

OhmyGod! There's a whale right here!

BARBARA

Warren, who's this?

JANE

Hi, I'm Jane.

BARBARA

Hello. I'm Barbara, Warren's wife.

WARREN

I picked her up—Not in a bar!

JANE

On the street!

WARREN

I had to. She was all alone and needed a ride. She had a "Save the Whales!" sign.

JANE

You have a very nice husband. Everyone else was just driving by, honking and laughing at me. My stupid piece of junk car died on me and along came Warren in his Volvo like a mighty Swedish Knight on his white steed to rescue this damsel in distress. I knew he was the one to bring me to the right place. Here. So I'm ready to save the whales!

HEATHER

Good. I'm Heather.

Heather extends a hand to Jane, who shakes it.

JANE

Hi, there.

HEATHER

We need all the help we can get. Here's a bucket. Come over and meet Brenda Jean.

JANE

Okay, great! Who's Brenda Jean?

HEATHER

The whale. Soon as the tide comes in, were going to try push her back out.

WARREN

Seriously?! Is that possible?

BARBARA

We just helped Heather pushed a baby whale out there.

WARREN

Really?

HEATHER

Yup, but that means the clock is ticking. Baby needs her momma, so we gotta get Brenda Jean back out there as soon as we can. (to the whale) Brenda Jean this is Jane. She's here to help you too.

Jane pats the whale's back.

JANE

Nice to meet you, Brenda Jean. Oh, you're so beautiful.

HEATHER

She sure is. You here last year?

JANE

Not physically, but I was in spirit. I made a promise to myself that I would come and help out y'all the next time it happened. So here I am!

TOM

(mocking her in a nice way)
"So here I am!" So sweet.

Jane smiles at the old man and extends her hand like a proper southern belle.

JANE

Hi, I'm Jane.

TOM

You Jane, me Tarzan.

Tom pounds on his chest ala Tarzan. Then coughs and then laughs.

TOM

Haha. You aren't old enough to get that reference, are you?

JANE

Oh, I get it. (giggles) He's cute.

HEATHER

I guess, if you like wrinkly old smelly old farts...

TOM

This from the face that munched a thousand chips.

JANE

What's your real name, Tarzan?

TOM

Tom.

JANE

Pleasure to meet you, Mr. Tom.

TOM

The pleasure's all mine, Miss Jane. (to Warren) And nice to meet you, sir-

Tom waves to Warren, who waves back.

HEATHER

Can we cut the chit-chat and get back to savin' this whale, please? There's a baby out there that needs his momma.

JANE

Ok. What do y'all need me to do?

HEATHER

We have 'nough people to rock her now. It's important to move her around so she don't settle or we'll have a hell of a time movin' her later when the tide comes in. So let's have two on each side...

Heather and Jane get on one side of the whale and Tom on the other.

WARREN

Barbara, can we go inside? I was hoping we could talk...

BARBARA

Well, I'm kind of busy, now, Warren.

HEATHER

C'mon, Warren, Barbara, we need you. Let's rock Brenda Jean's world.

BARBARA

Ever touched a whale before?

WARREN

No, I don't think so.

JANE

She feels incredible, Warren. (to the whale in almost baby-talk)
Yes, you're a beauty...I can sense you have a beautiful spirit...Yes, a beautiful spirit...

BARBARA

Go ahead and touch her, Warren.

WARREN

These are \$200 shoes, Barbara.

BARBARA

Just reach out and pat her.

Warren gingerly reaches out and touches the whale.

WARREN

It feels rubbery...Cool.

HEATHER

Okay, push her to us and then we'll push her back to you...Yeah, just like that back and forth... Yeah, that's it...

They push the whale back and forth for a moment or two.

WARREN

Are we really doing anything?

HEATHER

Hell yeah! It's like a whale
massage. They get cramped up just
lyin' 'round. She won't be able to
swim, if her muscles all stiff.

JANE

Heather, how do you know so much
about whales?

HEATHER

I've been studyin' them at the
library. And there's a place
called the Whale Rescue Center.
They send you stuff that tells you
what to do in the case of a whale
beachin'.

JANE

Wow! That's wonderful!

The whale begins to whistle.

JANE (CONT'D)

Hey, she's talking to us.

HEATHER

Yeah, she's sayin' she needs more
water. C'mon, let's get bailin'
again...Got keep her wet and cool.
Let's make a chain from the water
to the whale...C'mon, old man, you
know the routine...C'mon, Warren...

WARREN

Barbara and I need a few minutes
to talk.

Warren grabs a hold of Barbara's hand and pulls her towards
the dunes.

BARBARA

All right, but let's not be gone too long. (to Heather) We'll be right back.

As Heather, Tom, and Jane make a chain for bailing water on the whale, while Barbara and Warren stroll up to the dunes out of earshot of the others.

EXT. THE DUNES - NIGHT

Warren and Barbara sitting on the top of a dune with the whale and the others on the beach below them.

WARREN

I got worried when you said you were with a truckdriver. You're out here all by yourself. My imagination got going...

BARBARA

I'm not seeing anyone, Warren.

WARREN

Well, good. I'm glad. (beat) So have you been thinking about the pregnancy?

BARBARA

It's all I've been thinking about.

WARREN

Well, I've been thinking we should go back to the counselor-

BARBARA

Hmmmm. Maybe we should...Maybe not.

Long pause, as they look at the scene on the shore.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Why do you think these whales do this, Warren?

WARREN

I don't know. To be honest, I don't really care. So I'd like to know what you intended to do?

BARBARA

I need you to stop pressuring me.

WARREN

I'm not. I'm just asking...

BARBARA

Let's get back.

Barbara jumps up and heads back down the dune to the whale and Warren follows her.

WARREN

No. Wait...

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALE - NIGHT

Heather, Jane, and Tom continue to bail water and toss it on the whale. Jane stops and walks around the whale, studying it with her hands raised, trying to feel its aura.

JANE

I believe these whales are trying to communicate with us. I don't know what they wanna tell us, but I've had this feeling for a long time. Whales wanna share with us. Really they do.

HEATHER

How they communicate with us, if they cain't talk?

TOM

Maybe they can tap out Morse code with their tails.

Tom claps out some Morse code with his hands. Heather stops the bailing.

HEATHER

Maybe you can shut your big fat trap! (to Jane) Girl, you pullin' my leg?

JANE

No, I'm serious. I believe these beachings are some kind of message from Nature to us.

HEATHER

Yeah, well, I may believe monkeys can fly out my butt, but that don't make it true.

Barbara walks into view. She's not happy. Warren is following her. His not happy either.

HEATHER

(waving them over)
Hey, Barbara! Come here!

Barbara and Warren come to Heather.

BARBARA

What's wrong?

HEATHER

Want yo' opinion. Jane, here, believes the whales are beachin' themselves 'cause they got a message for us.

JANE

I think it's a sign, ya know. Suicide attempts are really cries for help.

HEATHER

What do you think, Barbara?

BARBARA

Well...that's a very interesting idea. What do you think, Tom?

TOM

Well, I'm of two minds. On the one hand, a beached whale may be just a beached whale. On the other hand, I have had some profound conversations with animals before.

JANE

Hey, y'all, I wanna try something. Will you be cool with it?

HEATHER

Depends on what you wanna do.

JANE

Okay, don't freak out, now, but I wanna try channeling the spirit of the whale.

A long pause as all look at Jane, dumbstruck.

HEATHER

You wanna do *what?*!

JANE

I want to commune with the whale's spirit. See if she wants to speak through me to y'all.

TOM

You're really weird...I like that.

WARREN

You're not serious, are you?

JANE

Yes, Warren! I'm a sensitive person. I can channel spirits.

WARREN

Jane, do you take drugs?

JANE

No! I know it sounds strange, but if you believe in the spirit world then you realize that anything is

JANE (CONT'D)

possible. I wanna try and see if
this whale will communicate with us.

BARBARA

I'm sorry...(laughs) This is just
too bizarre.

HEATHER

So what you do to channel spirits?

BARBARA

Are you going along with this?

HEATHER

I don't know! (beat) Guess I kinda
believe it's possible. After my
mom died, a bird came to me when I
was sittin' on a park bench. It
hopped right up to me and just
stared at me for the longest time.
I had been cryin', thinkin' 'bout
her and then it started chirpin'
at me. And I had the strongest
feelin' that bird was my mom. It
was so strong.

TOM

My wife came back to me once as an
alley cat.

JANE

Wow! Awesome. You see. That's why
I want to give it a try. I just
feel there's a message here.

BARBARA

This is really out there..

HEATHER

(to Jane)

How you go 'bout gettin' Brenda
Jean to talk?

Jane drops into the sand and demonstrates her technique.

JANE

Well, when I'm channeling, I just sit down and start meditating and swaying and rocking. Then when my mind is free, I just open myself up and spirits come in and start talking.

WARREN

How do you know this whale speaks English? It could be a Russian whale.

BARBARA

Oh, wouldn't that be disappointing if the whale started speaking in a language none of us understands?!

TOM

Whales do not speak Russian. They speak Welsh.

There is a pause for the joke to register and then everyone has a chuckle, but Heather. She doesn't get it but she doesn't like him, so wouldn't laugh if she did.

HEATHER

You so lame, old man.

JANE

There's some kind of universal language in the spirit world. It's like you translate what is being said into your own language of understanding.

WARREN

Oh, sure. Why not?

The whale starts chirping again.

HEATHER

She's wants water. Let's get the bucket chain goin' again. Old man back in the water. Warren and Barbara, take over for us.

Warren doesn't like being ordered around but doesn't want to give Barbara another reason to be angry at him.

WARREN

I'm really not dressed for this...

HEATHER

Jane and I need to take a little break together.

BARBARA

C'mon, Warren, a little physical exertion will be good for you.

As Tom, Warren, and Barbara get the bucket chain going again, Heather and Jane stroll over to a dune away from the whale.

EXT. ATOP A DUNE - NIGHT

Heather and Jane are sitting in the sand.

HEATHER

Ok, what do I do?

JANE

Nothing. Just sit and listen.

HEATHER

Okay, so do it. Go ahead.

JANE

All right. I need to quiet my mind and slow down my breathing...And take nice deep breathes...Inhale...

Jane follows her own verbal instructions. Heather watches her closely, while drinking from a water bottle.

JANE

Exhale...Inhale...Exhale...Inhale...Exhale...Shoulders up...Shoulders down...Up...Down...In...Out...

Jane closes her eyes and falls to her side in the sand.

HEATHER

Jane?! (pause, no response) Jane,
you in the spirit world now?
(louder) Jane?!

JANE

(with her eyes closed)
Hush! She's coming...

A SPIRIT in female human form, emerges from the whale. It begins to dance about in the night air and floats over and above Jane. Heather can't see the spirit, but she feels something different is happening in the air around them. The Spirit flies back and forth, creating a small draft of air that blows across Heather's face.

HEATHER

She here? I can't see nothin'...

Then the spirit dives into Jane. Jane bolts up, sitting in the sand with her eyes open but glazed over. She speaks for the Spirit, with a deep voice.

SPIRIT/JANE

Hello.

HEATHER

Hello?

SPIRIT/JANE

It is good to be free, if only in spirit.

HEATHER

You the whale?!

SPIRIT/JANE

I am the one whom you call Brenda Jean.

HEATHER

You Brenda Jean!

SPIRIT/JANE

Yes.

HEATHER

Holy shit!

Heather turns and yells at the others on the beach.

HEATHER

Hey, you guys! Come here! Come here! Quick!!

Tom, Barbara, and Warren cease the bailing of water and run up the dune to where Heather and Jane are.

BARBARA

What's going on?

HEATHER

Jane's channelin' Brenda Jean's spirit. And she's talkin' to me!

BARBARA

Jane, are you all right?

SPIRIT/JANE

Jane is fine.

HEATHER

You the whale's spirit?

SPIRIT/JANE

Yes.

TOM

I want to ask her a question.

HEATHER

Go 'head.

TOM

Are you a Democratic or a Republican?

SPIRIT/JANE

I don't understand.

HEATHER

That's a dumb-ass question.

Heather pushes Tom away.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Go ahead, Barbara, ask her a serious question.

WARREN

This is ridiculous.

BARBARA

Let's just play along...So why are you speaking to us?

SPIRIT/JANE

I wish to communicate with you.

BARBARA

What do you want to tell us?

SPIRIT/JANE

I ask for your help. Please help.

HEATHER

We're tryin'. We've been throwin' water on you and givin' you massages—

SPIRIT/JANE

I am separated from my child. I must be with him. I must return to the sea.

HEATHER

When the tide comes back in, we'll push you out and then you can get back with him.

WARREN

(whispering to Barbara)

This is totally crazy...

BARBARA

Why are whales beach themselves?

SPIRIT/JANE

We are messengers. We need to

SPIRIT/JANE (CONT'D)
communicate with you. It is
necessary for our survival.

BARBARA
But it's suicide, isn't it?

SPIRIT/JANE
Some are chosen to take the risk—

HEATHER
But you have a child!

SPIRIT/JANE
—so others may live. I was chosen.

HEATHER
Well, what's so damned important
that you have to nearly kill
yo'self to tell us?

SPIRIT/JANE
You are destroying our world. Why
are you humans poisoning our home?
Why are you killing us?

WARREN
(laughing)
Oh, this is just some kind of
Greenpeace skit!

HEATHER
(fiercely)
Shut the fuck up!

The Spirit is frightened out of Jane and whooshing around them for a few circuits, then disappears in a poof of vapor into the whale. Jane comes out of the trance she was in, deeply shaken.

JANE
Ah, Heather, you scared her away!

HEATHER
What? She gone?

JANE

Yes. Your anger scared her away.

HEATHER

He was laughin' at her.

TOM

You're too angry.

HEATHER

Shut up! I am not!

JANE

Yes, Heather, spirits are very sensitive. You have to approach them with love and peace.

BARBARA

Well, that was very interesting, Jane. How do you feel?

JANE

Fine. Did y'all get the message? The whales want us to know we're ruining the world.

WARREN

Well, if they want to lobby humans, the whales should swim up the Potomac and beach themselves in D.C. Right now, I'm picturing a whale in my congressman's office.

HEATHER

Stop jokin' 'round, Warren. This is a serious thing. These whales are dyin' to tell us this stuff.

WARREN

Oh, c'mon, this is crazy stuff. Channeling whale spirits. Give me a break!

TOM

(to Warren)

Watch it, she might.

Heather is a bit frantic and gets in Jane's face.

HEATHER

Jane, can you get her spirit back?

Jane's not feeling very comfortable now.

JANE

Maybe. But I don't want to try right now. I'm kind of tired. You know, channeling is not as easy as it looks.

HEATHER

Okay. You think you could try again later? Do you think you could contact, you know, channel my mom, too?

JANE

I don't know about that. I might be able to if she wants to talk with you. Do you feel she wants to communicate with you?

HEATHER

I think so. I hope so.

JANE

We can try later. The vibe around here is not good right now.

Energized, Heather is like a football coach giving a half-time speech to lackluster players.

HEATHER

Yeah. Okay. Let's get back to tryin' to save Brenda Jean's body and soul. Come on, people! Her baby needs her out there.

Heather, Jane, and Tom return to the whale while Warren holds Barbara back.

WARREN

I need a drink. Join me.

BARBARA

No, I want to see this through.

WARREN

These people are nuts.

BARBARA

Maybe.

WARREN

Why are you doing this?

BARBARA

I've invested a lot of time now
and I want to see the results.

WARREN

What about us? Our relationship?
I've invested everything in you
and—

BARBARA

Warren, let's just put us aside
for now and do something that has
nothing to do with us. Let's just
try and save this whale. If we can
do this together, maybe we
can...Maybe there's hope for us...

WARREN

Okay. I don't know about this,
Barbara...But if this is important
to you, I will try. I just need to
change my clothes. I'll be back.

INT. BEACH HOUSE LIVING ROOM

Warren is now dressed in more appropriate whale-saving attire, sweatshirt, jeans, and old running shoes. He pours himself a shot of bourbon on the bar. He turns and spies a framed photograph of Barbara and himself in happier times. He toasts the picture and then downs his drink. Then there's a knock at the front door.

INT. BEACH HOUSE VESTIBULE

Warren opens the front door, revealing IAN. He is a younger man wearing a windbreaker, ball cap, and rubber boots, carrying a medical case and a flashlight. Behind him we can see there's a commercial van with "Sea Life Research Center" painted on the side. It's parked next to Warren's Volvo.

IAN
Good evening!

WARREN
Lemme guess, you're here about the whale?

IAN
Is there one beached around here?

WARREN
Yes, sir. It's over there. On the other side of those dunes.

IAN
Only one?

WARREN
Just one whale and four people.

IAN
Great.

Ian extends a hand. Warren shakes it.

IAN
Ian Patterson.

WARREN
Warren O'Dwyer.

IAN
I'm a marine biologist with from SLRC. There's a whole pod beached down the coast. Twenty or so.

WARREN

Wow. Really? So why are you here?

IAN

We have a rescue team there. I am out here searching for any other beachings. Strays.

WARREN

Great! Somebody who knows what the hell he's doing. Come have a look at this one.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALE - NIGHT

Warren is leading Ian down from the dunes and onto the beach as the others continue to pour water on the whale.

WARREN

Hey, everyone, this guy Ian knows what to do! He's a marine biologist!

HEATHER

(suddenly furious)
Oh, no! Not you again!

IAN

(groans)
Ahhhh...Just my luck.

WARREN

You two know each other?

IAN

Unfortunately.

HEATHER

Yeah, this is the stupid jerk who killed Hallie last year.

IAN

Nice to see you again, too.

HEATHER

What's your stupid-little-jerk-chicken name again?

IAN

Dr. Ian Patterson.

HEATHER

Yeah, that's it. E-anne.

BARBARA

Heather, you're being so rude.

HEATHER

Duh! There's a reason, Barbara.

IAN

Don't worry, she doesn't bother me.

BARBARA

Hi, I'm Barbara. Nice to meet you.

They shake hands. Jane and Tom move to greet Ian.

JANE

Hey, Ian, I'm Jane. And this is Tom.

TOM

A pleasure to meet you, Doctor.

IAN

(shaking their hands)
Nice to meet you. And you.

JANE

(turning to the whale)
And this is Brenda Jean.

HEATHER

Don't introduce her to him!

Heather blocks Ian's path to the whale.

IAN

Excuse me, I need to see it.

HEATHER

No, you don't.

IAN

Look, I'm not going to take any
crap from you this year. I'll call
the cops. I mean it.

HEATHER

You can call the goddamn Coast
Guard and the Marines, too. You
ain't killin' this whale.

IAN

I need to examine it.

HEATHER

She has a name. Brenda Jean.

Warren steps between Heather and Ian.

WARREN

Come now, Heather, let the man do
his job.

Heather steps aside but doesn't take her eyes off Ian.

HEATHER

Just remember what I said.

IAN

Do not interfere with me.

HEATHER

"Do not interfere with me."

BARBARA

Heather, leave him alone. If he's
a marine biologist, he'll know
what to do.

HEATHER

He don't know nothing.

WARREN

He can help the whale survive.

HEATHER

He couldn't help an old lady stuck in traffic. He'd push her in front of a car and claim he was puttin' her out of her misery. That's what he'd do.

JANE

Why are you so angry at him?

Ian is trying to examine the whale but is feeling crowded by the group.

IAN

Could everyone move back some?

WARREN

Come on, Heather, let's give him some room so he can do his job.

Warren guides Heather back from Ian and the whale.

HEATHER

You don't know this dude like I do...You'll see.

JANE

We've been throwing lots of water on her.

IAN

Okay. Good to know.

Ian pats the whale's back.

IAN (CONT'D)

Hmmmm...It's breathing rough.

BARBARA

Is she going to be all right?

HEATHER

She gonna be fine!

IAN

When you were pouring water on it,

IAN (CONT'D)

did any go into the blowhole?

BARBARA

I don't know. It's possible. Why?

HEATHER

Didn't I tell y'all to watch out
for the blowhole?

WARREN

Nobody told me that...

HEATHER

Ah, Jesus H. Christ!

JANE

Did we do something wrong?

IAN

It's a mammal like you and me. It
doesn't do too well with water in
its lungs.

BARBARA

Is she going to be all right?

IAN

I don't know.

HEATHER

She'll be fine.

IAN

Oh, I'm sorry, I guess I'm not the
expert here.

HEATHER

You the death-pert. That's what
you are.

IAN

Look, it's not a big thrill for me
to euthanize animals.

HEATHER

Yeah, I think you love playin'
God.

IAN

That's total nonsense.

Ian opens his case and fishes around for something.

HEATHER

What do you think your doin'?

IAN

I need a blood sample.

HEATHER

No, I don't think so. You're not
gonna touch her again.

WARREN

What's the deal, Ian?

IAN

If it's been beached as long as
the others, the chances aren't
good. There may be too much
internal damage.

HEATHER

Yo' brain damaged if you think I'm
gonna let you get near her with a
needle.

IAN

So you'd rather see it suffer?

HEATHER

She's not suffering.

WARREN

Ian, were you able to save any of
the whales that beached down the
coast?

Ian realizes he must do some selling of the process. He
addresses the group as if giving a lecture to a class.

IAN

Yes. A couple of calves. We loaded them on to some trucks and took them back to the aquarium. We're going to nurse them back to health and when they get strong enough, we'll release them back to the sea.

JANE

Wow! And they'll able to live a normal whale life?

IAN

Hopefully, if another pod accepts them. Whales are highly social. They need to be in a group.

JANE

Just like us.

HEATHER

How many did you kill tonight?

IAN

We had to euthanize eight of them.

HEATHER

Dirty bastards!

IAN

They were dying. A slow, painful death. You know, when it's on land, a whale is literally crushing itself to death under its own weight. And when they are out of the water, their insulation works against them. They overheat quickly. It's called hyperthermia.

HEATHER

I know that.

BARBARA

Do you know why they're beaching themselves?

IAN

We don't really know why. There are theories...

BARBARA

I thought whale were really intelligent animals.

IAN

Yes, they are.

BARBARA

But if they're so smart, then why are they doing this? Doesn't make sense to me.

IAN

It's a mystery, right now. But one of these days, science will figure it all out. Personally, I think it has to do with the social structures. If one of them gets lost or stuck in shallow waters, they all follow by instinct and stay with it, refusing to leave until it's too late.

BARBARA

Wow. They're very humane.

TOM

More humane than humans.

JANE

Ian, do you think Gaia is sending a us a message using whales as the messenger?

IAN

Ah, no. Not really.

HEATHER

Who the hell is Gaia?!

IAN

There are a lot of way-out

IAN (CONT'D)

theories about whale beachings. Some even think they're committing suicide. (chuckling) That the whales are depressed and don't want to live anymore.

WARREN

Well, there's a career for you: whale psychiatrist. You'd need a pretty big couch.

Only Tom laughs at Warren's joke.

TOM

Good one, Warren.

WARREN

Of course, the most famous whale psychiatrist is Seaweed Freud.

BARBARA

Please stop, Warren.

WARREN

I miss the days when I could make you laugh.

BARBARA

Me too.

JANE

Maybe there's a bigger picture to look at here, Ian. Maybe y'all are missing it.

IAN

What are we missing?

JANE

Maybe the beachings are really an attempt to tell us something.

IAN

Tell us what?

JANE

Stop polluting the seas. Stop drilling for oil. Stop over-fishing. Stop—

IAN

Stop whaling?

JANE

Yeah! For sure.

IAN

Well, they should be stranding themselves on beaches in Norway and Japan because those are the only countries still harvesting whales now.

JANE

Maybe they will. Maybe they are.

TOM

Kamikaze whales! Look out, Japan!

HEATHER

(to Barbara)

Those your people eating whales?

BARBARA

No! And my "people" have been in this country since 1901.

IAN

Listen, folks, if you want to try and save this one whale, I'm willing to give it some time. But if it doesn't improve soon, the humane thing to do is euthanize.

HEATHER

It's not gonna happen. Brenda Jean is going to revive as soon as the tide comes back in. We will save her. So you can just forget about your needle, E-Ann.

IAN

Well, if you want to save it, then the whale needs to be turned to facing the shore, with its tail towards the water so that when the tide comes back it will feel a wave coming and have time to shut its blowhole. Otherwise, it could drown.

HEATHER

Okay, let's do it.

IAN

Before we do that, we need to remove anything sharp like shells and rocks.

HEATHER

I already did it. There's nothin' around her that could cut her.

IAN

Good work. Now, when we move it don't grab the flippers or tail. If you grab them and try to lift or pull on them, you could do more harm than good. We're just going to have to push it into the right position. We should all get on one side and push and hopefully it'll swing into place.

HEATHER

C'mon, everybody, on this side.

They all get on one side of the whale.

JANE

Doesn't she feel wonderful?! She's so smooth.

IAN

If we all push on this end, the head will swing up.

Heather pushes Tom closer to the whale.

HEATHER

C'mon, ya bag o' bones, give us a hand.

Everyone is leaning into the whale now.

IAN

All together on three. One, two, three.

The six people push in unison and the whale slides as expected with it tail now pointed towards the water. The whale squeaks and then chirps.

JANE

I think she liked that.

IAN

Well done. Okay, now, we need to dig some holes under the flippers, so they're hanging free. Then we need to fill the holes with water. This'll help prevent overheating.

HEATHER

Okay, I'll get this side. You guys get the other. Tom, get a pail.

TOM

(astonished)

You said my real name.

HEATHER

Shut up, ya old douche bag, and just get the water!

TOM

Ah, that's the gargoyle, I know and love...

Heather and Jane dig out a hole on one side of the whale, while Barbara and Warren work on the other. Ian and Tom gather up a couple of buckets and scoop the water up, carry it, and pour it into the new holes.

BARBARA

How's that?

IAN

Good, good.

JANE

Look, she's winking at me!

HEATHER

Yeah! Maybe she thinks you're sexy.

JANE

Oh, stop! She's just thanking us.

HEATHER

Yeah? I think I know a lesbian whale when I see one.

JANE

How?

HEATHER

"It takes one to know one."

JANE

Oh, Heather. You're not that big.

HEATHER

Hey, I'm okay with my blubber. It protects me. That whale eye reminds me of a game I used to play with my momma when I was little—Well, I was never little—when I was young..

INT. A BEDROOM — (FLASHBACK)

A pudgy YOUNG HEATHER is lying on a bed on top of her YOUNG MOTHER. They act out what Heather describes.

HEATHER (V.O.)

We called it whale-eye. She would lay face down in bed and I would lay on top of her. And she'd have

HEATHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
one eye open and one eye closed.
And I would slide to one side or
the other. If I slid to the open
eye side, then we would see each
other and laugh. Then it would be
my turn to be the whale.

Heather's Young Mother climbs on top of the young girl and
smothers her with kisses.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALE - NIGHT

Heather is smiling as she relishes the memory. She comes
back to the present when Jane speaks.

JANE
Sounds like you had a fun mother.

HEATHER
Yeah, she was...I miss her.

Heather walks to the shoreline with an empty bucket to fill
up. Tom, Jane, and Barbara go with her. While they are out
of earshot, Warren approaches Ian.

WARREN
(to Ian)
So what now?

IAN
We keep it wet and wait to see
what happens. If it's still
responsive when the tide arrives,
we try and get it back out there.

WARREN
The tide is still hours away from
coming in. Does it really have a
chance?

IAN
The odds aren't good. In the past
even after getting them back out,
lots of whales come back in.

WARREN

Sounds like a big waste of time
and energy.

IAN

It could go into shock at any time
now and then we might as well
forget it and inject it with
sodium penobarbital. It painlessly
puts the animal too sleep.

WARREN

How will you know it's in shock?

IAN

When it no longer responds to
stimuli.

WARREN

Like what?

IAN

Like if you shine a light into the
eye and it doesn't close.

EXT. THE BEACH - NEAR THE SHORELINE - NIGHT

Heather and Barbara are scooping up water into buckets when
Heather motions towards where Warren and Ian are talking.

HEATHER

Look. Wonder what they're up to?

BARBARA

Just talking.

HEATHER

Nope. They schemin'.

BARBARA

About what?

HEATHER

Killin' Brenda Jean.

Ian comes the shoreline with Warren following.

IAN

(calling out)

Would someone like to be responsible for checking the whale for shock? You'd just have to shine a flashlight into one the eyes every so often. Keep track of its breathing. If it doesn't respond, we know it's in trouble.

BARBARA

I'll do it. I've got a pocket flashlight.

Barbara digs a small flashlight out of her coat pocket.

EXT. ON THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALE - NIGHT

With the others standing around her and the whale, Barbara shines the flashlight into the whale's eye. The whale closes her eye.

BARBARA

She closed her eye!

Ian gives her a thumbs up and the other cheers.

JANE

I wonder if Brenda Jean's hungry. Ian! Is there anything we can give her to eat?

IAN

They won't eat when they're beached. But I can give her a shot of vitamins and antibiotics.

Ian opens his medical case, pulls out a large syringe and begins to fill it a solution from a bottle. Heather confronts Ian.

HEATHER

Whattaya think you're doin'?

IAN

I am preparing a syringe with-

HEATHER

You ain't sticking Brenda Jean with that.

IAN

Look, I said I'd help. A shot of vitamins and antibiotics could help.

HEATHER

No shots from you.

IAN

Believe me, it's nothing harmful.

HEATHER

I said no!

Ian relents and puts the syringe back.

IAN

Fine. It probably wouldn't have helped that much anyway. You know, if it goes into shock, I'm obligated to euthanize.

HEATHER

And I'll be obligated kick your ass if you try do anythin' to her.

IAN

You really think you're running the show here, don't you?

HEATHER

I really am. Get used to it.

TOM

The queen hath spoken!

HEATHER

(threatening)

I ain't jokin' anymore, old man.

WARREN

Hey, Tom, it looks like you could use a drink. I know I could. C'mon. (to everyone) We'll be right back!

BARBARA

Go easy on the drink, Warren.

WARREN

For someone who doesn't want to be a mother, you sure enjoy acting like one.

That's a blow that really hurts Barbara and she retreats from the group a few steps.

As Warren and Tom head up into the dunes and disappear into the darkness, Ian circles the whale studying it and shaking his head. Heather moves into his path.

IAN

You know, I could have you arrested for interfering with me.

HEATHER

Ain't no cops here.

Jane feels the growing tension and steps in between them.

JANE

Hey, you two, what's going on?

HEATHER

Nothin'.

Heather walks away from Ian and Jane, joining Barbara who is massaging the whale.

EXT. A NEARBY DUNE - NIGHT

Jane and Ian are sitting side by side looking out to sea.

IAN

That woman is mentally unbalanced.

JANE

Well, she's has a lot of passion.
She cares so deeply and you can
see she's been hurt by life...

IAN

Maybe. I don't want to talk about
her. I just want to do my job.

Ian opens his backpack and roots around in it.

IAN (CONT'D)

You hungry?

Ian unwraps a power bar as they both sit down in the sand.

JANE

Sure.

IAN

So, what do you do when you're not
out rescuing marine animals?

JANE

I'm a model.

IAN

Really?

JANE

Yeah!

Jane strikes a pose, holds it a second, then laughs.

IAN

Like a fashion model?!

JANE

Oh, no. I'm an artist's model. You
know for sculptors and painters. I
model mostly for art classes.

IAN

Oh. Ah, so nude?

JANE

Yes, sir.

IAN

Wow. You're comfortable with that?

JANE

Of course. I'm a professional, you know. The human body is beautiful.

Ian sneaks a peek at Jane and nods, liking what he sees.

INT. BEACH HOUSE LIVING ROOM

Warren is pouring some whiskey into shot glasses while Tom nods approvingly. They pick up the glasses and toast.

WARREN

Cheers!

TOM

Mud in your sty!

They clink glasses and down the shots. Then Warren immediately begins pouring them another round. Tom looks at a portrait photo of Barbara on the wall.

TOM

Sir, you have a very pretty wife.

WARREN

Thanks. We're kind of an odd couple. But I love her. We had plans to have a family. But now, I feel like I'm losing her...I don't know what she's thinking.

TOM

Maybe it's not too late. Take action, my boy! Be a man. Show her that you can take care of her and a family. Prove to her that you're ready to do whatever it takes.

They down another shot together.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALE - NIGHT

Barbara bends down and uses the flashlight to shine in the whale's eye while Heather looks on.

BARBARA

Oh, no.

HEATHER

What? What's the matter?

Barbara rushes to the other side of the whale and tries the other eye.

BARBARA

She's not closing her eyes anymore.

HEATHER

Let me do it.

Heather takes the flashlight from Barbara and goes to the other side of the whale and shines the light into the whale's other eye.

HEATHER

C'mon. Close it. Close it! C'mon!
Goddamn it, Brenda Jean!

Heather throws the flashlight down into the sand.

BARBARA

What are we going to do now?

HEATHER

Don't know...

Jane and Ian, who's carrying his black case and backpack with him coming running up to the whale.

IAN

What's going?

BARBARA

She's not shutting her eyes anymore.

HEATHER

Don't tell him that!

Ian picks up the flashlight and shines it into the whale's eye. After a moment or two, he shakes his head.

IAN

Unresponsive.

BARBARA

She's not squeaking anymore either.

IAN

It's in shock now. It's dying.

HEATHER

Stop callin' her "it." She's a she. She. She. She. And she ain't gonna die, you sonofabitch!

IAN

She is.

Ian hands the flashlight to Heather and digs into his case. Heather throws the flashlight into the ocean and faces Ian as he pulls out the syringe.

HEATHER

You ain't gonna stick her.

IAN

It's inhumane to let it go on like this!

Warren and Tom come jogging up to the whale.

WARREN

Hey, what's going on?

BARBARA

The whale's not responding to light anymore.

Heather is pressuring Ian as he attempts to open his black case.

HEATHER

You just wanna kill her and move on. But she'll be all right when the tide back. You know that! You seen it happen.

Ian stands upright and faces off with Heather. He's not going to be bullied now.

IAN

Tide's not coming in fast enough.

HEATHER

It's comin' back, right now. Look!

BARBARA

Ian, isn't there any chance?

IAN

No. She's too weak now. She'll just end up back on the beach.

HEATHER

Who made you God!

Warren steps forward, and uses his "take charge" voice, though he slurs some words.

WARREN

Hey, the man has training in the field of marine biography. He's a professional for Christ's sake, let him do his fuckin' job.

BARBARA

Warren, are you drunk?

JANE

She beached herself for a reason.

WARREN

The reason is it wants to fuckin' die.

BARBARA

How do you know that, Warren?!

WARREN

You can't save something that
wants to fuckin' die, Barbara.

TOM

Doctor, why not let nature take
its course?

HEATHER

Yeah, listen to the old man. This
time he's not full of shit.

IAN

Listen, folks, let's just calm
down now. I have a responsibility
and I'm going to do what's right.

Ian bends over his black case. Heather approaches him,
threatening him with clenched fists.

HEATHER

Don't open that!

IAN

Stay away from me.

JANE

No violence please.

HEATHER

I'm warnin' you!

WARREN

Come on now, stop it, Heather.

Warren tries to pull Heather away but she throws him off
quickly and easily.

HEATHER

Keep yo' hands off me. (to Ian)
You leave that needle in there.

IAN

You interfere with me and you
could end up in jail.

As Ian is opening the case, Heather puts her foot up on his side and pushes him away. Then she quickly bends down and pulls the knife out of her boot.

HEATHER

And you could end up dead.

Barbara pulls Warren back from Heather and Ian. Jane and Tom back off too.

BARBARA

She's got a knife!

JANE

Oh, my God, Heather! What are y'all doing?

HEATHER

Protectin' Brenda Jean.

After a tense moment of everyone holding their positions, Warren moves towards Heather.

WARREN

Now, let's just calm down and take a deep breath.

BARBARA

Yes, Heather, this is not that important—

HEATHER

Yeah, it is, Barbara! It's a matter of life and death. Ain't you fuckin' payin' attention?

BARBARA

Heather, please. Let's be reasonable. I'm sure Ian can be convinced to compromise without this...this is too much...

JANE

We're here to save the whale, not kill each other.

HEATHER

He wants to kill her.

BARBARA

But if the animal's suffering—

HEATHER

Brenda Jean is not suffering!

IAN

Don't try to reason with her. It won't work. She's the type who would kill a doctor to prevent abortions and then consider herself a hero.

HEATHER

You should have been an abortion!

BARBARA

Heather, stop it!

WARREN

Yes, put the knife down.

HEATHER

Nope. Now, you three men pick up buckets and start bailing again.

IAN

Fine. But I hope you realize you've gotten yourself into big trouble this time. Serious ramifications are going to come of this.

HEATHER

"Serious ramifications." Fuck you! I do not care!!! Just shut the fuck up, get the pail and bail.

When she feints jabbing at them, the men scramble to the buckets and go to the whale. Barbara turns away and begins to walk towards her home.

BARBARA

This is ridiculous...

HEATHER

Where you going, sista?

BARBARA

Home. I don't want to be a part of this anymore.

HEATHER

Gonna call the cops?

BARBARA

No. I was going to go...Just go.

HEATHER

Well, sista, you cain't just go. Hey, everyone, stop and listen! Nobody leaves here 'til Brenda Jean's back in the water. If somebody tries to leave, I'll cut the person closest to me. (mocking Jane's accent) "Y'all" understand?

They all nod their heads.

HEATHER

Good.

Heather waves the knife at the men.

HEATHER

Now, get back to work, boys.

BARBARA

Heather, this isn't the way...

HEATHER

You figure out a better way, you let me know, Barbara.

JANE

Heather, I think this would be a really good time for some

JANE (CONT'D)

meditation. You know to calm down
and get centered.

HEATHER

You go ahead, honey. I'ma sit this
one out. I don't need any
meditation or mediation or
medication. I just need everyone
to do what the fuck I say. Okay?!
I am gonna stand guard here. We
gotta give Brenda Jean a chance.
At least, 'til the tide come back.

JANE

Okay...

Jane sits yoga-style in the sand and begins to hum.

HEATHER

What time is it?

Barbara checks her watch.

BARBARA

Almost two-thirty.

Jane closes her eyes and begins to sway back and forth.

JANE

Hey, y'all, I'm feeling like
Brenda Jean wants to come through
again.

HEATHER

Let her come.

JANE

Okay...she's coming...

The whale's spirit emerges again, hovers, and then dives
into Jane.

HEATHER

Brenda Jean, you here?

SPIRIT/JANE

I am in pain. There is too much
anger and fear here.

WARREN

What's going on? Is she—?

BARBARA

(quietly)

She's channeling the whale's
spirit again.

Ian and Tom join them but keeping their distance from
Heather who still has her knife out.

IAN

Is she all right?

WARREN

She's claims to be a medium.

SPIRIT/JANE

Before I leave, I must know one
thing: Why do you kill?

BARBARA

That's a very good question.

HEATHER

Sometimes we gotta kill,
'specially when we're cornered.

SPIRIT/JANE

But why do you kill when you are
not threatened?

IAN

What is this?!

BARBARA

Shhh! Just listen.

Spirit/Jane jumps to her feet.

SPIRIT/JANE

Let me share a memory. Help me

SPIRIT/JANE (CONT'D)
understand why it happened. When I
was much younger...

Spirit/Jane begins to dance around in the sand.

EXT. THE OCEAN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A pod of pilot whales is swimming near an island cove. Then a couple of small speed boats with bright spotlights and loud propellers herd the pilot whales into a cove.

SPIRIT/JANE (V.O.)
We tried to swim away, but soon we
were surrounded by them. It was
noisy and frightening and we
couldn't communicate with each
other. Soon we were trapped. They
moved us into shallow waters and
we were forced closer and closer
together. When we could move no
more, the violence began. It
rained steel on us.

The pilot whales are now thrashing and splashing about as Japanese men in boats and on piers, and the shore begin harpooning. The noise and mayhem grow as the whales are desperate to get away and the water around them turns red with blood.

SPIRIT/JANE (V.O.)
We were being sliced apart. No
longer cool and blue, the seas
began to boil. Hot and red with
our blood. The guardians were
helpless to protect us. All were
in a panic. The young ones
defecated; the pregnant ones
miscarried. The old ones went mad,
ramming their heads into the sea
floor. The slashing, sticking, and
stabbing continued until I saw
above me a man with my death in
his hands. He raised the spear,
then stopped as if he finally

SPIRIT/JANE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
heard our cries of "Why?! Why?!
Why?! Why?!"

The HARPOONER drops his weapon and looks into Brenda Jean's eye. Brenda Jean dives under the Harpooner's boat and escapes out of the cove swimming back out to sea as the Harpooner is powerless to stop her.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALE - NIGHT

Jane is still in a trance with the Spirit of the whale inside her. She dances uncomfortably close to each human.

SPIRIT/JANE
Few of us escaped. Somehow, I was
one. Why? (beat) Still, no one
answers my question. Why do you
kill us? Why do you hate us?

They all exchange looks. No one knows what to say.

SPIRIT/JANE (CONT'D)
Have you an answer for me?

BARBARA
No. No, we don't.

SPIRIT/JANE
I must leave.

Suddenly, Jane dashes away from them and begins to sprint into the dunes and towards the houses beyond.

BARBARA
Jane! Where are you going? Come
back!

HEATHER
Shit! Look at that girl run.

TOM
What now, chief?

HEATHER

We stay here. Barbara, go get her.

Barbara dashes after Jane.

EXT. THE DUNES - NIGHT

Spirit/Jane is nearly flying from dune top to dune top as Barbara is in pursuit but falling further and further behind.

BARBARA

Stop! Stop! Jane, Stop!

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALE - NIGHT

Heather, Ian, Warren, and Tom watch the two women running through the dunes and up into the neighborhood of sparse houses. Ian shakes his head, very confused.

IAN

She told me she's a model. Is she some kind of actress-slash-environment-activist, too?

WARREN

No, I think she's just another crazy woman.

HEATHER

Shut up, dipshits! Get back to bailin' water!

IAN

There's no chance this whale going to survive. Look at this dorsal fin! There's no muscle tone now. We have to put her out of her misery.

HEATHER

Not gonna happen, E-Ann. I made a promise to her. I keep my promises.

EXT. FRONT OF BARBARA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Spirit/Jane dashes by the front door. Then she stops and runs back to the front door and begins pounding on it.

BARBARA (O.S. in the distance)
Jane! Jane?!

Spirit/Jane can't wait any longer and dashes off.

EXT. A ROAD IN BARBARA'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Spirit/Jane is sprinting down the road, but she is starting to tire. She begins to moan.

SPIRIT/JANE
Save me! Save me! Please save me!

Barbara is gaining on Jane now.

BARBARA
Jane, please stop!

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE BEACHCOMBER HOUSE - NIGHT

Spirit/Jane is now walking, exhausted, and moaning in an other-worldly whale-like wail. Then Spirit/Jane hears a dog barking wildly and the Beachcomber's porch light comes on.

Spirit/Jane approaches the Beachcomber's porch cautiously. She crouches and goes up the steps to the porch. Suddenly, the front door opens and through the screen door we see the Beachcomber in her bathrobe and slippers and the big dog that is still barking wildly.

BEACHCOMBER
Who are you?! What do you want?!

Spirit/Jane quickly grabs the dog's water bowl on the porch and pours its contents into her mouth and then projectile vomits through the screen at the dog.

The Beachcomber and the dog are stunned into silence. The dog runs off into the depths of his house to hide.

The Beachcomber begins to quake in fear.

SPIRIT/JANE
Why are you killing us?!

BEACHCOMBER
What?! I'm not—

SPIRIT/JANE
I'm dying!

BEACHCOMBER
Are you high?!

SPIRIT/JANE
No, I'm low. Very, very low.

Spirit/Jane begins to crumble to the porch floor as the Spirit leaves Jane and Barbara appears.

BARBARA
(breathing heavy)
Jane! Oh, thank God...

JANE
Barbara...

Jane closes her eyes and slumps against the handrail on the steps up to the porch. Barbara goes to help Jane up.

BARBARA
Jane, are you all right?

JANE
(exhausted)
Oh, wow. That was something—

BARBARA
(to the Beachcomber)
She had the whale's spirit inside her.

BEACHCOMBER
(nearly in tears)
This is supposed to be a drug-free neighborhood!

The Beachcomber slams her front door and switches off the porch light.

EXT. THE BEACH NEAR THE WHALE - NIGHT

Barbara helps Jane slowly walk back towards the whale's body and the group. Barbara and Jane drop into the sand near the supplies.

JANE

I'm exhausted...

BARBARA

Me, too. Heather, please put down the knife. It's dangerous. Something could happen. Something bad. Someone could get hurt.

HEATHER

I can't. He wants to kill her. We need to protect her. Gotta have the knife on these dudes.

Warren goes to Barbara's side. She immediately rolls away from him.

BARBARA

Leave me alone.

WARREN

Barbara, are you all right?

HEATHER

Leave her the fuck alone, Warren!

WARREN

I'm so sick of this shit...

Warren moves away from everyone and towards Ian's case. Ian tosses his water on the whale, then throws the bucket down.

IAN

This is a waste. We're just prolonging the inevitable. She won't survive.

HEATHER

She will!

IAN

No, she won't. And if she does live long enough to get out there, she'll be so weak, she'll drown.

HEATHER

Well, at least she dies out there where she belongs.

IAN

And in the meantime, you're torturing this animal.

HEATHER

I am not. I am doin' my best to keep her alive.

Ian playing to his audience now.

IAN

If she really cared for Brenda Jean, she wouldn't let her suffer.

HEATHER

She's gonna live! I have seen too much God-damned death in my life. Do you understand me? I cain't take any more!

IAN

You need to face facts. That animal is dying.

HEATHER

She's not dyin'! And the next one who says she is gonna be sorry.

During the ensuing dialogue, Warren removes the syringe from Ian's case.

IAN

Please listen to me. When a whale is beached for any length of time,

IAN (CONT'D)

its muscles are damaged. Its circulation becomes impaired. Its liver and kidneys no longer function properly. Slowly, its lungs fill up with fluid.

HEATHER

How do you know? You got X-ray eyes?!

Ian shaking his head and looking to the heavens.

IAN

Ack! She's impossible.

HEATHER

Get back to bailin'.

Warren quickly grabs the bucket to hide the syringe.

WARREN

I've got it, Heather.

HEATHER

If you got it, then get to it. That whale is lookin' awfully dry to me.

JANE

I'll help you, Warren.

Jane gets up with some effort, but Warren waves her off.

WARREN

Nah, it's okay, Jane. You rest some more.

HEATHER

(to Ian, softly)

Let things be...Why you gotta play God?

IAN

I don't like seeing it suffer.

HEATHER

She's not suffering! Does she look like she's suffering? She's not flopping around or anything.

IAN

It doesn't have the strength!

HEATHER

Stop calling her "it"! She! Not "it"! She! She! She!

IAN

Fine! *She* doesn't have the strength. (beat) You know, I think I've got you figured out now. You believe this animal needs you. In your own empty and shallow life you don't have anyone. No one needs you. No one wants to be around you. No one wants anything to do with you and corrosive personality and your negativity. And I think you identify with this whale because it's just like you: stranded, all alone, and drowning in its own bile. And I think you enjoy seeing something else suffer for a change. And as long this whale's alive, you have something to distract you from your own pathetic life—

JANE

Ian! You're being cruel.

A beat.

HEATHER

Maybe there's something to what you're sayin'. Maybe it's all true. May be no one loves me. But I'll tell you somethin', that's some terrible shit to say to another human being, even if it might all be true.

IAN

Well, I'm sorry, but you're doing
a terrible thing here.

HEATHER

What is so terrible?! All I'm
tryin' is to save a whale.

Heather indicates the whale with the knife causing the
others to step back, revealing to her Warren sticking the
syringe in the whale.

HEATHER

SON-OF-A-BITCH!!!

BARBARA

Warren, no! Don't!

IAN

What are you doing?!

Heather charges Warren as he injects the whale.

BARBARA

Heather, no!

Warren jumps back from the whale as Heather arrives. She
swipes the knife across Warren's arm. He screams in pain
and fear. He grabs his arm and runs away from the whale.

Barbara runs to Warren's aid, while Heather pulls the
syringe out. Ian, Jane, and Tom stand stunned. The
following dialogue is nearly simultaneous.

HEATHER

You bastard! You fuckin' bastard!

BARBARA

Warren...Why?...

WARREN

She cut me! She cut me!

HEATHER

Oh, Brenda Jean, what he do to
you? What he do...?

IAN
(to Heather)
May I please have the syringe?

HEATHER
This is all your fault.

JANE
Heather, please, stop it!

IAN
Let me have the syringe please.

Heather threatens Ian with the needle.

HEATHER
I should stick you with it.

Ian holds up his hands and backs off.

IAN
It's just vitamins and
antibiotics! It's not going to
kill her!

HEATHER
What?

IAN
It's not lethal. Remember I filled
it with vitamins and antibiotics.
It will help her.

HEATHER
It's not that poison stuff?

IAN
No.

HEATHER
Really?

IAN
Really. Please give me the syringe.
Carefully.

Heather gives it to him carefully.

IAN (CONT'D)

Thank you. Now, may I please have
the knife?

After a moment, Heather carefully hands the knife to Ian.

IAN (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Ian takes the knife and the syringe and puts them away in
his case. He closes and locks the case.

Barbara is tending to Warren, applying a towel and pressure
to his arm. He is clearly in pain and angry.

BARBARA

Warren, what were you thinking?!

WARREN

I don't know! I just wanted to get
this over so you and I could get
on with our damned lives. Jesus
Christ! I didn't think the crazy
dyke-bitch would really cut me.
Let's get out of here before she
tries something else.

BARBARA

Just calm down. Come on...

Barbara guides him away from the whale and the group.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

You're going to need that stitched
up. Keep pressure on it.

Barbara pushes Warren towards the dunes and their home.
Warren goes quickly up the path, passing Tom.

TOM

Nice meeting you, Warren.

Warren growls and shakes his head.

BARBARA

Heather, you just committed a crime. We're going to the hospital and then we're going to the police.

HEATHER

He was tryin' to kill Brenda Jean.

BARBARA

That's no excuse.

HEATHER

(yelling)

I'm sorry, Warren!

WARREN (O.S.)

Fuck you! Please, Barbara! For the love of God..

HEATHER

Barbara, we need you...Look the tide's comin' back!

BARBARA

I have to go! He needs me.

HEATHER

But you comin' back.

BARBARA

No! Of course not.

Barbara leaves, following Warren through the dunes. Heather drops to the ground and begins to sob quietly into her hands. Jane comes to Heather and tries to comfort Heather.

JANE

Heather—

HEATHER

Leave me alone!

Jane moves away from Heather and then notices the whale's tail is moving up and down.

JANE

Look! Look at Brenda Jean!

IAN

She feels the water.

JANE

That's a good sign. That's a good sign, right?

TOM

Doctor, it appears she's not in shock anymore.

IAN

May be that injection of vitamins helped her...

JANE

Amazing.

IAN

I am very surprised...

JANE

Heather?

HEATHER

I said leave me the fuck alone!

TOM

Heather, darlin'...It's Stinky Tom.

Heather raises her head and wipes away tears.

HEATHER

What?

TOM

Brenda Jean is moving again.

Heather looks at the whale and is revived. She jumps to her feet and runs to the whale, screaming with excitement.

HEATHER

YES!!! You see what I've been

HEATHER (CONT'D)
tellin' you! I told you it wasn't
hopeless. I told you!

JANE
Hope is a powerful thing.

TOM
Hope is a thing with flippers!

HEATHER
Yeah! C'mon, let's start pushin'!

IAN
Okay, let's work together...

HEATHER
(to Tom)
C'mon, you old douche-bag, she
needs your help, too!

They converge on the whale throwing the blankets and towels
off and splashing water on it with their hands and rocking
it back and forth.

The sound of crashing waves on the shore grows louder and
louder. The whale begins to chirp excitedly.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Barbara is holding his car door open as Warren gingerly
climbs into the passenger seat. He is muttering.

WARREN
Goddamn...Crazy dyke-bitch...

BARBARA
Stop saying that.

WARREN
Please let me vent! Barbara. I've
got a fuckin' knife wound.

BARBARA
Ok. Sorry.

Barbara slams the car door and runs around the car. She jumps into the driver's seat and backs into Ian's van, leaving a dent. Then she puts the car in drive and speeds over the front lawn and knocks down the mailbox, before getting on the road.

EXT. AT THE SHORELINE - NIGHT

Ian, Jane, and Tom are on the shore, in ankle-deep water. They are trying to rock the whale from side to side in water.

Heather is near the head of the whale trying to pull her beyond the breakers.

HEATHER

C'mon, baby! C'mon! You can do it.
You almost there. C'mon! You so
close!

The whale suddenly surges forward and begins to swim on through the breaking waves.

HEATHER

Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Go, baby, go!

Heather grabs onto the whale as it makes its way into deeper water. Heather is holding on to a fin and patting the whale as they move through the water beyond the breakers.

Still in ankle-deep water, Ian, Jane, and Tom are celebrating with high-fives and hoots of joy. Then they look back to see Heather and the whale moving further and further into the ocean.

IAN

Heather! Come back!

JANE

Heather! Y'all are too far out.

TOM

Come back! Come back!

IAN
She can't hear us.

JANE
She's staying with her...My Lord...

IAN
She's going to drown out there.

TOM
I think she wants to...

IAN
(looking around)
We need a boat...

Ian dashes up the path through the dunes to Barbara's house.

JANE
Heather, please, come back!

TOM
She doesn't want to come back.

JANE
(nods, sadly)
Yes, I know...Still, we have to try
to save her.

TOM
(calmly)
Indeed, we do.

Eerie, otherworldly music is heard with the sound of waves crashing and swirling water.

EXT. IN THE CHANNEL (UNDER WATER) - NIGHT

A delighted Heather swims into view followed by the whale. Then the whale is pushing Heather in front of her. It is a joyful experience for both.

Then they start doing what looks a little like synchronized swimmers do: spins, flips, and somersaults together. It's almost like a Sea World killer whale and trainer show.

Then Heather embraces the whale and they both dive deeper, disappearing into the murky blue depths.

INT. THE HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM

Warren sits on an examination table while Barbara sits in a chair nearby. It's a small-town healthcare facility, so it's not a busy place. The DOCTOR, a middle-aged woman, finishes wrapping up the bandage around Warren's forearm, applying medical tape.

DOCTOR

Ok, let's get you a sling. Be right back.

BARBARA

How are you feeling, hon'?

WARREN

Like I just had 50 stitches.

BARBARA

Don't exaggerate. She said 47.

WARREN

How are you?

BARBARA

Tired. But I could be worse. So do you want to go to the police after this?

WARREN

No. I want to go home.

BARBARA

Here? Or Boston?

WARREN

Wherever you are is my home.

BARBARA

You want me to nurse you?

WARREN

I want you to mother our child.

They look at each other for a long time. Barbara nods.

**EXT. ON A SMALL MOTORBOAT IN THE OCEAN NEAR CAPE COD
SHORELINE - DAY (DAWN)**

Ian is steering the boat while Jane who wears an orange life vest sits next to him. They are both scanning the water looking for Heather. Jane is exhausted and crumbles.

JANE

Can you turn that off?

Ian cuts the engine. Jane yawns.

JANE (CONT'D)

Maybe we should go in and call the Coast Guard or somebody for help.

IAN

Yeah. Probably a good idea.

Jane moves off the seat and sits in the bottom of the boat and puts her arms and head in Ian's lap and closes her eyes. Ian smiles and pats her head gently. She smiles.

EXT. THE BEACH - DAY

A different part of the beach, down the coast a bit, not so near Barbara's house. The tide is going out again and we hear waves softly crashing on a distant shore.

The baby whale and Heather lie dead in the sand, not far from each other. Tom sits with his legs crossed next to Heather's head. He is slowly and tenderly removing seaweed from her hair and brushing sand off her face.

TOM
(singing softly)
*Bring back, bring back, bring back
My bonnie to me...*

Barbara appears and rushes up to Tom.

BARBARA
Tom?!

TOM
Oh, hi, Barbara.

BARBARA
My God...

TOM
Yes. They've passed on.

Barbara falls to her knees next to Heather and grabs her cold hand.

BARBARA
Oh, my God, this is so terrible...

Barbara puts Heather's hand down wipes away some tears.

TOM
Yes, but maybe they're both
happier now.

BARBARA
Yes. Well, maybe. Maybe.

TOM
How's Warren?

BARBARA
Fifty stitches. He'll be fine.

TOM
How will you be?

BARBARA
I'll be fine.

TOM

Will you be fine together?

Barbara sees the dead baby whale and goes to it.

BARBARA

Poor thing...It's so sad to see a little one die.

TOM

Yes. I lost my metal detector last night, too.

BARBARA

I'm sorry.

TOM

Now, I need a metal detector to find my metal detector.

They both share a sad laugh.

BARBARA

I better go make a call.

TOM

Yes. I'll stay out here. Keep 'em company.

BARBARA

Okay.

Barbara starts to walk away.

TOM

You didn't answer my question. I know it's not my business...

Barbara stops and turns back to Tom.

BARBARA

I really don't know yet.

TOM

What about that little one that swimming inside of you? Keeping it?

BARBARA

Oh, yes.

TOM

Good for you two. I'm going to call my daughter today. I miss her.

BARBARA

Good for you, Tom.

Barbara walks away as Tom continues to tend to Heather.

TOM

(singing softly)

*Bring back, bring back,
Oh bring back my Bonnie to me, to
me,
Bring back, bring back,
Oh bring back my Bonnie to me...*

FADE OUT.