

Bailey Bros. Building & Loan

motion picture production, LLC

Synopsis

“SEEKING...” by Melton Eduardo Cartes

Melanie Vincent arrives home from a doctor's visit. She has a sheaf of papers in her hand and as she enters her apartment, she collapses on her couch, without unburdening herself, and stares at the papers. The top sheet is a printout of lab test results; all are Clear or Negative. She reads and re-reads the printout as tears of relief run down her face. She lets out a huge sigh of relief, several in fact, as the tears and crying take over. But soon she is smiling through her tears as she drops her purse, keys and coat and walks over to a window to stare outside. The doctor's visit is heard as a voice-over. The doctor finally summarizes it for her, her leukemia is in remission and has been for a year.

Melanie putters around her apartment and plops down on her unmade bed with her “certificate of reprieve.” She just stares at it and into space, contemplating what this means. A montage of tests and medical equipment and Melanie in various stages of illness and treatment play as she sits there thinking.

Then she hears a moan and a creak. Her mental replay of her last ten years is interrupted as her attention tries to identify the source of the moaning and creaking. The noise becomes more rhythmic and it quickly accelerates as she just as quickly figures it out. It's shocking at first and Melanie catches her breath, as if she were found peeping through someone's window. A sudden “Oh god!” from a gasping female voice confirms it for her and she just as suddenly jumps up and moves over to the common wall between units. She presses her ear against the wall and tries to listen more closely to the clear sounds of fucking.

Melanie's face shows a variety of emotions as she listens in. She's intensely curious, amused, and ultimately aroused. She runs around her house looking for a new vantage point, but finds nothing better than the adjoining wall. Now the sex is in full gear and the creaking is actual thumping against the plaster.

Melanie is surprised as the thumping stops suddenly. No, it can't be, she seems to think. She leans in and scrunches her eyes closed and hears some shuffling and murmuring. Then the thumping continues but it's totally different. Melanie figures it out seconds later, the couple changed positions, clearly to something offering more leverage, judging by the sustained rhythm of the thumping.

This eavesdropping is almost making Melanie sweat. Her breathing is definitely shallow and her blood pressure is up. Her own arousal is increasing, especially as the woman becomes much more vocal, albeit redundant.

When the couple climaxes, simultaneously it seems, Melanie slumps to her bed, almost as exhausted as her neighbors.

Melanie is shocked by the ferocity of the feelings she's just experienced. She tries to hear what's happening now, but then gets a glass of water from the kitchen, all the while thinking about the experience.

She gradually composes herself and turns her attention to whatever is next in her agenda. She goes to her computer and checks her email and then she's interrupted by a deep moaning coming from next door. Her ears perk up. She's confused at first, but then she figures it out. She's suddenly exasperated with her neighbors, as if they were simply showing off. She can't believe that they have more in them after that grand spectacle earlier.

Melanie grabs her keys and coat and leaves.

Melanie is with her friend Deb as they walk home from work. Deb gets Melanie some temp work at her office periodically and so they're walking to the Muni station together.

Deb is just mindlessly talking about her latest date when Melanie blurts out that she heard her neighbors "fucking." Deb is not a prude but the comment stops her momentarily. She chortles as she asks for elaboration. Melanie tells her the sordid story and Deb applauds them, blessing the fact that somebody "is getting some."

Melanie is surprised by her comment. She asks Deb if she isn't getting some with her new beau. A little on the spot, Deb defends herself, admitting that yes, she is getting some. But then she trails off with a "...you know..."

The problem is that Melanie doesn't know. She eventually reveals to Deb that she hasn't gotten laid in ten years. Deb is shocked. She immediately goes down a list of crushes, guys, boyfriends, friends that Melanie has had in and out of her medical treatments, clinics, and the periods of relative normalcy in between, such as college.

Melanie shrugs, confirming that she did have those friendships, but that none of them ever went further than that. Deb is shocked, having thought that Melanie had scored with a few of those men. Melanie admits that she may have made it sound like that, but no, nothing ever happened. When Deb asks why, Melanie responds that it never really came up. Whenever it came close to being a possibility, either she "was throwing up or losing her hair or weaker than shit or they were."

Deb immediately understands, but she's still surprised to hear and realize that Melanie's a virgin. Melanie quickly disabuses her of that notion. She is not a virgin. Chuck Stipanek was her first, between her sophomore and junior year in high school. Deb seems to remember that, but her frame of reference has been radically jarred by this conversation. Melanie then explains that time with Chuck wasn't all that, and that she fully intended to find a better partner ("...like that hot Jason Allen, high school quarterback, etc., etc."), but then life interrupted her plans. Deb knows all about her diagnosis. To be clear, Deb asks Melanie if the fact is that she's not had sex with anyone else since high school. Melanie confirms that. Deb lets out a long, slow whistle and Melanie then hits her hard on the shoulder. Deb apologizes for her lack of sensitivity and they walk on.

As Melanie and Deb ride their train to their different destinations, Melanie seems very conscious of the many men and women around her age nearby, all

of whom seem to have social lives. She looks at their clothes, their accessories and their seemingly incessant texting, and cellphone use.

Melanie is out with Deb and some other friends at a bar. She spots a guy and approaches him. He's a bit surprised that she just walked up to her and started a conversation. But he rolls with it.

He buys her a few beers and she tries her best to flirt with him in a clear way. For his part, the guy looks around to see if his friends are catching this. He figures this is proof of his worth.

Later, Melanie and this guy stumble into her apartment and quickly shed their clothes and wind up on her bed. He wants a blowjob from her but she demurs and suggests intercourse. He's too drunk to argue. He grabs a condom from his jacket and clumsily rips the package open. He sits on the side of the bed as Melanie waits for him to roll the condom on.

They're both pretty drunk and the room sways as they have awkward sex. Melanie tries to get into it and open her body up, energetically, to the act. But there doesn't seem to be any finesse to the guy's method and his thrusting seems preoccupied and self-interested. That's confirmed as he comes and rolls off of her, done. She is frustrated but not so much as to want to go through that again for her own satisfaction.

He drunkenly looks at his watch and gathers his clothes and gets dressed. He mumbles some false promises of seeing her again. Melanie gets up and throws something on to show him to the door. He gives her a perfunctory hug and leaves. Melanie slides down the closed door and sits on the floor, depressed and annoyed.

The next morning, at her local cafe, Melanie has a massive hangover and can't remember all of the details of the night before. She can't remember the guy's name. Todd? Terry? Tory? Rory? She does remember that he used a condom, and that it was terribly unsatisfying. But the rest is hazy. She meets a guy who claims to be her next-door neighbor, Scott. She manages a smile, small-talk, and then excuses herself.

Melanie goes to her survivor support group and listens to one of the members, a fifty-something year-old woman, tell how she is still a virgin, but that she's finally ready to do something about it and that she's taking some direct actions to achieve her goal. Most of the support group is taken aback by her revelation, but they all support her and none judge her. Melanie drinks some water and takes some painkillers to deal with the residual hangover.

Melanie contemplates this woman, from the back of the room, and compares herself to her, realizing that she does not want to wind up like her when she's fifty-something.

As she returns to her seat someone else is pointing out how they realized that they haven't let go of their old patterns and fears and how they're not "being" healthy. They're just fighting disease off, with the help of potent and toxic drugs. Someone else chimes in that they believe that is how they became ill in the first place, "being" unhealthy in their life until their body caught up to them. They punctuate this point by declaring that they don't know how to "be" healthy... but they're willing to learn.

Melanie is unpacking some glasses from a cardboard box from her recent move. She distractedly flattens the newspaper she used so that she can throw it away without it taking up too much space.

The pages these glasses were wrapped in were from one of the local tabloid weeklies, the escort, massage, and phone sex ads. She looks more closely at the ads, pictures of curvaceous women, barely dressed, in provocative poses, the opposite page has ads with men pictured in them. Melanie realizes that there are services out there for every whim.

Melanie is at her computer checking out Craigslist. She's browsing the posts and mumbling as she reads some of them to herself. Her reactions run the gamut, from surprised, amused, disgusted and unbelieving. "Hello!" she says as she finds some promising clues. The post she's looking at is for a sex surrogate. She finds their website and reads more about their services. She does some more clicking and searching and then stares out her window with a cup of coffee.

That night she gets some emails that she reads anxiously. She has reached out to some of the people she found online and they've responded.

Melanie then goes through a series of "appointments" at different cafes and one at a park where she meets the different sex surrogates she contacted. They range from the guys clearly scamming for sex or to get paid for sex to earth muffins who are barely in their bodies and variations in between. The different conversations, or interviews, she has with them reveal a variety of things. Melanie is left slightly put off and frustrated.

The next day, Melanie tells her friend Deb about her latest exploit. Deb is surprised but supportive. When Melanie explains her conclusions and frustration Deb suggests that she contact a female surrogate. Melanie explains that she's not into girls. But Deb explains that she doesn't have to do the chick, she just has to get a referral from her. As a woman, she would hopefully understand Melanie's trepidations.

Melanie sees her point and agrees. The next chance she gets Melanie searches online for a sex surrogate, but a woman this time. She finds one she likes instantly.

Melanie meets the surrogate, Kate, and tells her story, how she fought and apparently survived a ten-year battle with a terminal disease. She was convinced that she was going to die and now she's apparently got a life to live. Now she would like to catch up and learn what she's missed in the sex department. After all, she's almost 30!

Kate is very supportive and listens closely. At first Melanie just wants information and Kate answers all of her questions: "a sexual therapist works with a client's emotional problems concerning sex, while a surrogate works with a client's body." Kate's attitude is that her work is not just remedial or therapeutic. She puts a lot of importance on her clients learning to have fun with their sexuality. You don't have to be "broken" to benefit from her services.

Melanie tells her about her history, including her most recent experience with lame sex with the drunk guy.

Kate asks Melanie what she would like to do. Melanie has no idea where to start. So, Kate gives her some homework she can do in the meantime. She

tells Melanie to check out different porn, that she recommends, and to keep a journal to learn what she likes and what she doesn't like. Melanie is very happy with this idea and eager to get started. Melanie agrees to hire Deb as her "coach" or advisor. Lastly, they discuss payment and Melanie agrees to move forward.

Melanie has her stack of "homework" and she's watching it. She has a range of reactions to what she watches. Some of it is okay, some a total turn-off and some starts to get to her. She winds up masturbating to the stuff she likes and records her thoughts in her diary.

At work or in her neighborhood, Melanie runs into a guy she finds attractive. She doesn't meet him but he does make enough of an impression on her that she thinks about him.

Melanie meets with Kate again and shares her journal. Kate discusses various aspects of sex with Melanie, such as if she masturbates, how often and how successfully. She asks her about her sexual experiences, her preferences, and where she feels she is lacking. Kate assigns Melanie the homework of getting herself a dildo/vibrator of her choice. She tells her to use it to learn what areas of her vagina react the most to penetration, what she likes, what doesn't work for her, size, shape, motion, etc.

Melanie goes to a sex toys store and browses the vibrators and dildos on display. It's a very confronting experience, but she gets help from a friendly lesbian. Melanie makes her choice, her purchase and goes home.

At home, Melanie recalls Kate's instructions and tries out her new toy...with some success.

For the next phase in Melanie's "training" Kate suggests a guided masturbation. A batik curtain in Kate's apartment will separate the two of them and Kate will verbally lead Melanie through masturbation. Kate teaches Melanie how masturbation is much more than just "getting off." It is a deep and personal way of getting to know oneself and one's body. It's not as easy as it looks.

The whole idea of masturbating with someone else in the room, someone she's not having sex with, to Melanie is very strange and hard to accept. But Kate is a very good and persuasive coach and after a while Melanie manages to be less self-conscious and focus on her sensations.

Afterwards, Melanie is very excited and surprised by how well her training went. She feels empowered by her decision and feels she's on the road to mastering her sex life.

Melanie sees the new guy, the target of her affection at her local cafe and tries to meet him. But he leaves before she can make the connection. Instead, another guy taps her on the shoulder; it's Scott, her next-door neighbor. Scott clearly finds Melanie attractive but Melanie doesn't think the same about him. She's nice enough and they part ways.

Next up with Kate is that she's brought a male sex surrogate to work with Melanie. The three of them meet and Kate introduces them and explains how things work. She basically asks Melanie if her choice works for her. The male tutor is Jeff, the guy Melanie was trying to meet at her cafe. Melanie consents and keeps her attraction to him secret.

Kate tells Melanie what the task at hand is with Jeff. She is to have sex with him to simply familiarize herself with being with a man and learning what makes her feel good and what makes him feel good. Likewise, Jeff will be attentive to her and help her discover her erogenous zones.

(Kate could have Melanie watch her have sex with Jeff, as the first part of her training....)

Melanie is very nervous at first and Jeff takes it really slow, not touching her or doing anything sexual for a while. They strip down to robes and talk for a while. Jeff asks her a lot of questions about what she likes or what she would like to try.

They start by kissing and at each stage they take a break and talk about what's going on in Melanie's mind.

Melanie starts to relax as she lets herself enjoy the experience with Jeff. Jeff is a magnificent lover and Melanie goes through the full spectrum of her arousal.

Afterwards, Melanie goes home on cloud nine. She never knew sex could be so good. She shivers with delight as she replays the experience in her mind.

The next day, she goes about her business, but part of her attention is clearly on Jeff. As the day passes she is clearly thinking about him more than she should be if he were just her tutor.

She doesn't have Jeff's phone number and she doesn't know where he lives or how to contact him. She calls Deb and tells her all about it. Deb can already tell that something's not right, but Melanie can't hear her. She does keep an eye out for Jeff at her cafe, but doesn't see him.

At her next session with Kate, they talk about her previous experience and how great it was. Kate is happy for her and makes a mental note. She asks Melanie what she wants now and Melanie tells her she'd like to do it again with Jeff. Kate asks her why and Melanie just tells her plainly that it was so good. She then asks if it's always that good. Kate sees the benefit of some more sessions, answering that no, sex isn't always the same. She elaborates about the peculiar nature of sex surrogacy and "how good" it is on a consistent basis. She explains to Melanie that sex is a communication and it's only as good as the two people are at communicating. Melanie looks like she's listening but she's just waiting for her next chance.

Kate schedules another session and Melanie has sex again with Jeff. This time Melanie is more demanding and Jeff complies, but it's a bit funny. She wants to try more things, like going down on him and she talks about anal sex, but doesn't try it yet (she's curious). He cautions her that they don't have to try everything all at once.

The next day, Melanie is head over heels in love with Jeff and walking on air. She calls Kate and wants to schedule another session with Jeff. Kate tells her she'll have to check with him but pencils her in.

That weekend, Melanie spots Jeff at the cafe. She excitedly approaches him and gives him a hug and kiss that catches him off guard. He then introduces her to his girlfriend and their daughter, a little girl. Melanie is shocked and has a

hard time hiding her dejection. She makes some lame excuses and leaves in a hurry. Jeff isn't certain, but he suspects that something is up.

Melanie goes to her next session and Jeff shows up as well. They have sex and Melanie has a desperation to her that he notices. She starts crying and he stops them. She admits her feelings for him and fights her emotions, feeling embarrassed by the situation and that she's having this conversation with a naked man in bed, having sex... Or having had sex.

He explains that he's in a relationship. Melanie doesn't get it— even though she's been seeing a sex surrogate for several weeks now— she doesn't understand how he can have a girlfriend and do what he does. Do they have an open relationship? He explains that they don't, at least not emotionally. He tells her that his girlfriend is a sex surrogate too. They have a clear understanding about what they do, as therapy, helping other people, but that it doesn't involve their emotions, at least not as in “falling in love.”

Melanie is disappointed and having a hard time understanding. Jeff tells her “Sex is different for everyone.” Jeff decides that it's better if they stop for now and that she talk to Kate. Jeff leaves.

Kate reminds Melanie of the boundary issues and how they apply to “real world sex” for Melanie. Part of what she's learning in their sessions is to become comfortable with sex, de-mystifying it, and learning to enjoy everything it has to offer her, Melanie. Relationships are another matter.

Melanie goes home depressed. She runs into Scott, her neighbor and gets past him without being too rude. She calls Deb and tells her all about Jeff.

After a while, Deb tells Melanie that she's confusing sex with happiness. One can contribute to the other, but they're not a guarantee for each other... she thinks...

Melanie mopes around, depressed that she can't have Jeff. She has a fantasy about having sex with him again and being in a committed relationship and then it is rudely interrupted by her neighbors having sex again. She pounds on their common wall and she hears a sudden silence followed by a suppressed laughter. Melanie gets pissed off and goes into her other room.

At their next session Melanie brings up the idea of having sex with Kate. She wants to try it, with a woman. Kate is amenable but she asks why Melanie suddenly wants to. She thought Melanie was clearly not bi-curious. Melanie explains that she may not be, but she wants to test her boundaries. They talk more about it and then proceed to have sex.

Kate takes it slow, like she does with everything, making sure that Melanie is getting a benefit out of the experience.

Kate then starts to figure out that Melanie's mind is elsewhere. Melanie is kind of having an “angry fuck.” Melanie confesses to being messed up about Jeff and just wanting to be happy. Kate understands and recommends that Melanie go home because she needs to be alone and meditate on her feelings and what she wants...

Melanie goes home and tries to relax and let go of her feelings for Jeff, or at least this desperate need she seems to have, as if he is the answer to her prayers or so. Exasperated, she gives up trying and leaves her apartment.

Then a thought occurs to her as she sees her neighbor come home. She goes back inside and knocks on his door. He's very happy to see her and invites her in, or more to the point she invites herself in. He doesn't mind though.

She then seduces Scott,-- actually, she basically sexually assaults him -- he doesn't mind, but he's definitely aware of the suddenness of it all. They have sex and when they're done he wants to cuddle and wants her to linger, but she goes back to her apartment abruptly.

Scott definitely feels used and a little bothered but doesn't know what else to make of this sudden development. Maybe she's shy or something, he wonders...

The next day at work, Melanie learns that Deb was in a car accident and is in the hospital. She hurries to visit her and is confronted with her own various memories of being sick and in hospitals. She hates it. It brings back too much.

She visits with Deb for a bit, makes sure she'll be fine and then leaves.

Outside, she runs into a guy she recognizes from high school, Jason Allen. He was her object of desire and would have been her next conquest if she had had her druthers, after her disappointing first time with Chuck Stipanek. He was visiting an aunt who is in the hospital as well.

They talk and decide to have a date later.

Melanie rushes through their dinner and then takes Jason to her place. They start to have sex.

Outside Melanie's apartment, Scott arrives home and as he's walking to his door he overhears Melanie and Jason having sex in her apartment. His feelings are hurt, hearing that she's moved onto someone else or what they had meant nothing to her.

The great big stud from high school, the quarterback all the girls did or fawned over, turns out to be lame in bed. Again, sex is awkward. He seems to be playing out porn fantasies as if he were the star of some hidden camera. This turns her off and when they're done she quickly makes excuses so that he'll leave.

As he leaves her apartment she seems to accept that sex does not equal "boyfriend."

She goes to her survivor support group again and someone talks about discovering their belief patterns and how they are trying to change them. Melanie sees that she's been living as if a "sex life" would answer some need she has and that what she should do is just be.

She has another session with Kate and discusses what she's learned with her and Jeff and tells her that she's decided that she's done. She realizes that she needs to stop forcing the issue and let life bring her someone. She has demystified sex, enough, and feels comfortable about it. But now she needs to learn to be alone with herself, as Kate had recommended.

Scott is at home and his doorbell rings. He opens the door and finds Melanie. She apologizes to him for... assaulting him. He listens and admits that he felt that it had been odd and accepts her apology. She explains what she was going through and that she shouldn't have taken it out on him. He invites her in but she takes a raincheck. She leaves, he closes the door. The doorbell rings

again; it's Melanie again. She asks him for his phone number. He reacts like that's an obvious blunder. He fishes out a business card and hands it to her. She smiles, accepting it and leaves. Scott still doesn't quite know what to make of her, but it seems to him that he'll find out eventually.

Melanie is at home and she hears her neighbors having sex again and she smiles and silently sends them her blessings.

Logline: A young woman decides to get a sex tutor after she realizes that surviving a ten-year battle with a terminal disease has left her at a sexual disadvantage that women her age don't have.

Premise: Self-expression (Awareness) leads to fulfillment