

NURSES ON OUR OWN

By

Robert S. Thompson

and

Gwen Bagni-Dubov

Based on the Book

By

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ACT ONE

FADE IN

Main Title Sequence

INT. PSYCH WARD, CHICAGO GENERAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

It is evening. "7-E" appears like any other hospital ward -- except that the windows are barred and the door at the end of the long corridor is securely locked. A few Christmas decorations dot the otherwise barren walls. Somewhere in the b.g., CAROLS are being played over a radio. NURSE KARON GIBSON opens the door for TWO VISITORS to leave the ward.

KARON

Good night.

VISITOR

Good night.

Karon locks the door behind them.

ANGLE ON CORRIDOR

Karon moves down the long, deserted corridor. She is an attractive, vital, sexy woman in her late twenties, with a strong extroverted personality that exudes confidence. She HUMS along with an accompanying CAROL as she goes through the nightly routine of making bed checks.

ANGLE ON KARON

She reaches one of the patient's rooms, opens the door, and reacts.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

The bed is empty, the covers thrown off, the restraint straps broken and dangling loose.

KARON

Alex?

(beat)

Come on, Alex. I'm not in the mood for this tonight.

Cautiously, she scans the room -- then moves toward the closed bathroom door.

CONTINUED

KARON (contd)
You in there, Alex?

No answer.

KARON (contd)
Ready or not, here I come.

She pushes the door open at arm's length and flips on the light switch.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT It
is clearly empty. ANGLE ON
KARON Now she is very
concerned.

KARON
(to herself)
Darn!

She quickly turns back toward the corridor.

Main Titles Out

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Karon quickly moves to the Nurses' Station and picks up the phone.

KARON
(into phone)
Security? This is the Charge in
Psych. I'm checking on a patient
who's not in his room. I'm afraid
he might have slipped out with some
of the visitors..... All right.

She hangs up.

ANGLE ON KARON

For a moment she stands looking about warily, then crosses to the main door and makes sure it is securely locked. With relief, she pats the keys in her uniform pocket. Then she turns to start back to the Nurses' Station.

ANOTHER ANGLE - CORRIDOR

ALEX looms in front of her, wearing an oversized overcoat.

CONTINUED

For a long, terrifying instant they just stare each other other. Then Alex moves toward her.

ALEX
Give me the keys.

KARON
You'd better go back to your room,
Alex.

ALEX
I said, give me those keys!

Karon shakes her head -- and involuntarily drops her hand to the keys. They JINGLE slightly. Alex reacts. Karon starts to edge toward the phone, but Alex blocks her way.

KARON
I don't want you to get in trouble --
(beat; a thought)
Look, if you don't return to your
room -- right now -- I'm going to
have to call J. Edgar Hoover and
report you. You don't want that,
do you?

Alex frowns, thinks about it -- then suddenly brightens.

ALEX
I'm not as crazy as you think I am.
It's late at night. J. Edgar Hoover
won't even be there!

ANOTHER ANGLE - CORRIDOR

Alex starts toward her. Karon tries to dart away, but he catches her and manages to rip the pocket off of her uniform. The keys CLATTER to the floor. Alex reacts, releases Karon and scoops up the keys. Anticipating him, Karon quickly moves to block his path to the door with her body.

KARON
(out of breath)
Alex -- you -- you know what'll
happen when Mr. Hoover finds out!
He'll be very upset, Alex! I
don't want to tell him about this
-- but if you don't give me those
keys and get back in your room --
right now -- I'll have to! I'll
have to report you, Alex!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

He hesitates, momentarily confused -- then:

ALEX

No. You can't tell. Not if
you're dead!

Instantly, he lunges at her and grips her tightly around the throat. Now Karon is fighting for her life. There is a SHARP CLICK of the lock turning from outside.

ANGLE ON DOOR

NURSE JOY CATTERSON and an ORDERLY enter. They react quickly.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Joy and the orderly struggle to pull the crazed Alex off of Karon. When they finally manage to free her, Alex abruptly becomes docile and withdrawn. He submits quietly as the orderly leads him away. Karon tries to catch her breath and calm down. Joy checks her out.

JOY

Are you all right?

KARON

Yeah. I think so.

JOY

You sure? You look a little
woozy. Come on. Let's sit you
down over here.

She takes her arm and leads her toward the Nurses' Station.

INT. NURSES' STATION - NIGHT

Joy treats a small laceration on Karon's arm. Joy is in her early thirties. She is a sweet-faced, soft-voiced, gentle person who tends to be rather shy in dealing with anyone outside her most intimate circle. Typically, at this point she seems more upset about the incident than Karon.

KARON

Just one of your average, run-
of-the-mill evenings on your
friendly, neighborhood psych
ward --

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

Maybe you should go downstairs
and get checked out.

KARON

I'm all right. You guys showed
up before he did any real damage.
(glancing at Joy's
nametag)
Look -- uh -- Patterson.

JOY

(displaying the name-
tag more clearly)
That's -- uh -- Catterson.

KARON

Oh, yeah. I'll get it right
sooner or later. Would you find
Curtis for me? I'd like both of
you to help Christine finish up
room checks tonight.

JOY

Sure.

She exits.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

A fragile-looking young woman named MARTHA sits
impassively on the edge of her bed, holding a rag doll.
Joy meticulously checks the contents of a waste basket
and goes through Martha's few simple toiletries. She
opens a small drawer and rummages through items of
clothing. She takes out a folded t-shirt -- and a pair
of surgical scissors CLATTER to the floor. Joy picks
them up and glances at Martha.

JOY

I'm glad we found these, Martha.
The nurses have been looking all
over for them.

She watches the woman cradling the battered doll, then
moves toward her.

JOY (contd)

(softly)
Why don't you let me take care of
her for you --

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

She reaches for the doll, but Martha pulls away fearfully,

MARTHA

(frightened; unstable)
NO! N-no. You'll hurt her!
I have to take care of her --
she needs me -- t-to protect
her ^~

JOY

(with compassion)
We don't want to hurt her, Martha.
We just want you to get well --so
you can go home, with your real
baby.

Martha turns her back on Joy and croons softly to the rag doll. Hurting for her, Joy exits with the scissors and the waste basket.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Joy emerges from Martha's room and dumps the contents of the wastebasket into a rolling bin. NURSE CHRISTINE PURDY, a rough-edged, crusty sort in her mid-forties, who's seen it all and lived to tell about it, comes out of an adjacent room with another wastebasket and a rat-tailed comb.

CHRISTINE

If this don't take the cake!
Rootin' around in the garbage
like a couple of hogs!

Joy laughs, not taking Christine seriously. Karon moves over and takes the comb away from Christine.

KARON

This isn't going to be another
"Why-did-I-Become-A-Nurse?" speech,
is it?

CHRISTINE

Well, if I didn't have this job
to complain about, I'd've run out of
conversation years ago!

KARON

Where's Curtis? Why isn't he
helping you guys?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

I looked for him. He just disappeared.

CHRISTINE

Follow me. I know where to find him.

Karon follows her down the hall.

INT. STORE ROOM - NIGHT

It is crowded with miscellaneous hospital supplies. CURTIS, a tall, somewhat gangly MALE NURSE in his early twenties, is sound asleep on a cot. An open anatomy textbook is on his chest. Other textbooks are piled next to him. The door to the corridor is abruptly opened. The ceiling light is switched on by Christine -- shocking Curtis awake.

CHRISTINE

(pointing; mispronouncing the French)

Voila!

Karon moves to the open door and looks in disgustedly. Curtis sits up, orients himself.

KARON

Pardon me for disturbing you, Curtis, but I was under the distinct impression that you were working this shift!

CURTIS

(groggy)

Hey, man. I'm sorry. I just shut my eyes for a second, you know? I got my anatomy final tomorrow.

KARON

If your job as a nurse is interfering too much with your education, maybe we should make some other arrangements --

He gets to his feet.

CURTIS

Hey, come on. No problem. What do you need?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON
I need you to help finish up
room checks --

CURTIS
Right. Check. I'm on my way!
Pardon me, ladies.

The women step aside and let him through.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Karon shuts off the store room light and shuts the door.
She joins Christine watching "Super Nurse" make his way
into one of the ward rooms.

CHRISTINE
(scowling)
Fat chance one of us ever getting
away with something like that!

INT. OUTSIDE WARD - NIGHT

A YOUNG INTERN -- DR. AUSTIN -- waits outside the locked
door. With him is an ORDERLY and a PATIENT -- a COMATOSE
YOUNG WOMAN -- on a gurney.

KARON
(o.s., through speaker)
Yes?

DR. AUSTIN
(impatient; annoyed)
Dr. Austin. I have a patient
from E.R. Will you open up,
please?

The ward door is unlocked. Karon opens it and steps out.
She looks down at the patient, with immediate concern
and confusion.

KARON
Doctor -- are you sure she's been
sent to this ward?

DR. AUSTIN
(sarcastic)
No, I'm not sure. I've just been
rolling her around from ward to
ward until I can find somebody
to take her off my hands.

(MORE)

CONTINUED

He shoves the form at her.

DR. AUSTIN (contd)
See for yourself. Possible
schizophrenic catatonia.

He impatiently checks his watch while Karon scans the form.

KARON
But - it says here ~ she was
brought in by her husband, who
thinks she might have overdosed.

DR. AUSTIN
The man was incoherent. Look! Is
this going to take all night? Her
shrink has been notified. He'll be
in tomorrow to check on her, all
right?

KARON
But shouldn't she be re-checked
before she's put in this ward,
Doctor - just in case --

DR. AUSTIN
Nurse! I'm an intern. That is not
my responsibility! Just do your
job. Okay?

With that, he turns away. With a worried look at the patient, Karon nods to the Orderly to bring her in.

INT. PATIENT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Karon hovers over the comatose young woman - who is now secured in bed and dressed in hospital garb. Karon has difficulty taking her pulse, and is alarmed by the girl's pupillary reactions as well. She also checks the eye-lids, lips, fingernail beds - then quickly starts for the door.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Karon opens the door to the room and spots Joy.

JOY
What's the matter?

KARON
Come in here.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Joy follows Karon into the room.

KARON

Her chart says schizophrenic
catatonia. How do you read it?

Joy glances at the chart, then moves over to examine the
young woman.

JOY

Pulse?

KARON

Weak and irregular.

JOY

Retina response?

KARON

Fainter than it was. Her pupils
are slow to react to light.

Joy examines the woman's hands and fingernails.

JOY

Beginnings of cyanosis. It --
it looks like an overdose to me.

KARON

Bingo! Just like her poor incoherent
husband said!

Karon snatches up the phone and dials, while Joy continues
to monitor the patient's vital signs.

KARON

This is psych. Your schizo-
catatonic up here -- we read it
as an overdose. This patient
should be put in ICU. I know
she has a private psychiatrist,
but I also know cyanosis when I
see it!

(she listens with
increasing frustration,
as she exchanges looks
with Joy)

No. No trauma to report. No
arrest. Just "nurse's opinion!"
(beat; exasperated)

Well, keep after him, will you?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

She hangs up.

KARON (contd)
They want her doctor to see her
first.

JOY
(alarmed)
Well, is he coming?

KARON
He will be notified, just as soon
as they find him. Over and out!

She exits. Joy watches her.

INT. NURSES' STATION - NIGHT

Curtis is there studying the charts. Karon emerges from the nurses' locker room, buttoning an expensive-looking cashmere overcoat. She walks up to the Nurses' Station.

KARON
Keep an eye on Room 12, will you?
Anything changes at all get her
down to ICU.

CURTIS
No problem.

KARON
Thanks. Have a good night.

Karon moves away.

CURTIS
Good night.

INT. FIRST FLOOR CORRIDOR - JUST INSIDE HOSPITAL EXIT -
NIGHT

Joy puts on her coat as she starts down the corridor toward the exit. Karon emerges from the elevator and calls after her.

KARON
Hey! Catterson! Wait up!

Joy waits for her to join her.

KARON (contd)
See? I told you. I got it
(NORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON (contd)
right that time. Catterson,
with a C.

JOY
Right.
(studying Karon's nametag)
And you're Gibson.

KARON
With a G. But you can call
me Karon.

JOY
Joy.

They smile and officially shake hands.

KARON
Look/ Joy. I just wanted to
tell you - I'm glad you trans-
ferred to my shift. You're a
good nurse.

JOY
(pleased)
Thanks. You're not so bad
yourself, Gib ~ Karon.

They move outside through the glass doors.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING AREA - NIGHT

Joy and Karon emerge from the hospital.

KARON
See you tomorrow.

JOY
Right. Good night.

They move in opposite directions toward their cars. A
police car pulls into the parking area, and both
women react. They hurry toward it - and Joy gets
there first.

ANGLE ON PATROL CAR

RALPH GIBSON, a uniformed patrolman in his mid-thirties,

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

stocky but handsome, good-natured. Joy hurries to his open window and stops in her tracks.

JOY
(taken aback)
Oh. I'm sorry. I thought you
were my husband.

Karon moves up behind her and reacts, amused.

KARON
Don't tell me we're both married
to cops.

RALPH
Who else would put up with a
nurse's crazy hours?

KARON Who else would
put up with cops?

They laugh, comfortably.

KARON (contd)
Joy Catterson - this big, good-
looking guy here is my husband,
Ralph Gibson.

JOY
Hi. Sorry about - you know,
thinking you were -

RALPH
Forget it. I love it when strange
women try to pick me up.

Joy reddens. Ralph gets a thought.

RALPH (contd)
Catterson? Gordon Catterson?

JOY That's right.
You know him?

RALPH Yeah. Patrolman,
8th District.

JOY
I'll tell him I met you. Well.
Goodnight. I'll see you tomorrow.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

RALPH AND KARON

Goodnight!

Joy hurries away across the parking lot. Ralph watches her with knitted brow. Karon moves close to the car door.

KARON

What's the matter?

RALPH

Nothing. I was just trying to remember if her husband's the same one I met. No big thing.

KARON

(brightening)

So! To what do I owe the honor of your presence here?

They kiss warmly.

KARON (contd)

I needed that!

RALPH

Yeah? Me, too. The deputy chief's throwing a Christmas party. Get in. We'll pick up your car later.

KARON

(genuinely sorry)

Oh, honey, I'm sorry. I just can't tonight. I'm dead on my feet.

RALPH

(sympathetic)

Tough shift?

KARON

No worse than usual.

(beat; warm)

Would you mind terribly if we spent a nice, quiet evening home alone, just the two of us, you and me -- you know, "together"?

Ralph smiles broadly.

RALPH

First one home chills the glasses and puts a log in the fireplace.

INT. JOY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joy unlocks the front door to her modest home and enters the darkened hallway. She looks around, listens, then moves toward the living room. The SOUND of TELEVISION STATIC can be heard in the b.g. A skateboard and a pair of roller skates are lying on the hall floor, and Joy stoops to pick them up.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Joy steps into the room, carrying the skateboard and skates, and looks around. The TV set is still on after sign-off.

JOY

Gordon?

Joy's husband, 38-year-old GORDON CATTERSON, is asleep on the couch, still wearing his rumpled police uniform. Several beer cans and a liquor bottle are strewn about, also a crumpled potato chip bag and a bowl of burned popcorn. Joy registers dismay, anger -- then sadness. She sets down the skateboard and skates -- then crosses to Gordon and gently shakes him awake. He looks up, confused, disoriented.

JOY (contd)

Gordon. Come on, honey. Time to go to bed.

She moves over to turn off the TV set. Gordon tries to stand, but stumbles and falls back onto the couch. Joy quickly crosses to him.

JOY (contd)

Let me help you.

She steadies him, helps him to his feet. He leans on her for support.

GORDON

I'm sorry, honey. I really am.

JOY

(she's heard it before)

I know.

(beat)

What about the kids? Did they get the supper I left -- ?

GORDON

(not sure)

Yeah. I guess. Debbie had them in bed by the time I got home.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Joy registers her frustration at this state of affairs.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

They move down the hall, Gordon leaning on Joy for support.

GORDON

I only meant to have one beer --
so help me God -- just something
to get to sleep on. That's all.
It was real bad tonight. This
kid got knifed in a gang fight
-- blood all over the place --
sometimes it just gets to me,
you know?

JOY

(sadly)

I know, honey. I know.

EXT. CHICAGO GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

INT. PSYCH WARD - DAY

Joy hangs up her coat, puts away her purse and moves out to the ward -- accompanied by the broadcast CHRISTMAS MUSIC.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Joy stops at the open door to the comatose patient's room.

POV - ROOM

The room is empty.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Joy turns and hurries to the Nurses' Station, where Christine is sipping a cup of coffee and going over the prescribed medication on the charts.

JOY

Christine --

CHRISTINE

I see you forgot my Christmas
present, Catterson. You want
(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CHRISTINE (contd)
me to cover for you while you
hurry back home and get it?

JOY
(ignoring this)
Where's the patient in Room 12 --
the O.D. from last night?

CHRISTINE
She's gone. The chart says they
took her down to ICU early this
morning.

JOY
Where's Karon Gibson? Does she
know about this?

CHRISTINE
She went scootin' down there
the minute she got in.

Joy hurries away, alarmed.

CHRISTINE (contd)
Hey! Wait a minute! What's
going on -- ?

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE ICU - DAY

Karon, her face grave, steps out of the door, just as Joy
exits from the nearby elevator.

JOY
Karon. How is she -- ?

The ICU door opens behind Karon. A sheet-covered body
is rolled out by an Orderly and taken away. Karon and
Joy exchange looks. A MALE PSYCHIATRIST emerges from
ICU, reading a chart on a clipboard. He starts to move
past them, but Karon impulsively stops him.

KARON
Doctor. I'm the nurse who tried
to get that patient rediagnosed
and transferred to ICU before my
shift broke last night --

PSYCHIATRIST
(recognizing her)
Oh, yes. From the Psych Ward.
(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

PSYCHIATRIST (contd)

It was a borderline diagnosis, nurse. ER Admitting is not to be faulted. It's just one of those unfortunate things that sometimes happen.

He starts to move on, but again she detains him.

KARON

If I could have the authority to make a decision like that myself, without waiting for a doctor to do it – this kind of thing might not happen. She would have been down there hours sooner –

PSYCHIATRIST

In all likelihood, it would have been the same result.

KARON

We'll never know for sure though ~ will we?

This stops him cold. Joy looks on uncomfortably, as Karon faces down her superior.

PSYCHIATRIST

(annoyed) What is your name?

KARON

(indicating her nametag) It's right there. The same one I've had every time you've been up on my ward. But why don't you just call me what you always call me – Nurse!

Karon turns on her heels and walks away. Joy gulps in astonishment and hurries after her.

ANGLE ON ELEVATOR

Karon punches the "UP" button and waits, staring at the doors defiantly. Joy moves up beside her. They exchange glances. The doors open and they step inside. Karon looks at Joy – then holds up her hand to show that it is shaking with both fear and exhilaration.

FADE OUT

End of Act One

ACT TWO

FADE IN

EXT. CHICAGO GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

ANGLE to ESTABLISH. It is early in the year. There is snow on the ground.

INT. PSYCH WARD - DAY

All the Christmas decorations have been removed. Joy and Karon are going over the patients' charts near the Nurses' Station. They hear LAUGHTER O.S. and react.

POV - ANGLE ON DR. CASTRO

DR. JOHN CASTRO is an elegantly charming Cuban in his early forties. He is somewhat aristocratic in accent and attitudes with an irrepressible personality. He has Christine and ELAINE, another nurse, laughing at a story he is telling them -- with floridly elaborate gestures and an illustrative dance step.

ANGLE ON JOY AND KARON

They look on -- Joy in amusement; Karon, annoyed.

JOY

Who in the world is that?

KARON

Don't tell me you haven't had the privilege of being cornered by God's gift to the nursing profession! That's Dr. Castro -- or as he's known around here, "Don Juan."

JOY

Why "Don Juan"?

INT. NURSES' STATION - DAY

Dr. Castro cheerfully moves over to the Nurses' Station.

DR. CASTRO

Aah! The glorious senorita Karon --

KARON

(feigning boredom)
That's senora, Doctor. You know it's senora.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

He grabs Karon around the waist and swings her into a rumba step.

DR. CASTRO
(good natured teasing)
Tell you what. Have dinner with me tonight -- and we'll discuss the difference between Senora and Senorita.

Karon frees herself, retaining her businesslike composure.

KARON
Aren't you supposed to be running Cuba, or something?

DR. CASTRO
You have me mixed up with that other fellow -- the one with the beard and the army uniform.
(beat)
Although I would look very handsome with a beard, no?
(zeros in on Joy)
And who is this lovely shy little flower?

KARON
(wryly)
You're on your own, kid.

JOY
Nurse Catterson, Doctor --

He grabs her hand and kisses it -- causing Joy to blush.

DR. CASTRO
Nurse Catterson --
(he checks her nametag)
"Joy!" Aah! What a beautiful name for you --
(hopefully)
-- senorita.

Before Joy can protest (or before she thinks about protesting), Dr. Castro launches into a poetic recitation.

DR. CASTRO (contd)
(emoting)
Allegria y vida y amor y plasir,
el corazon canta --
(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DR. CASTRO (contd)
 (intimately to Joy)
 "Joy and life and love and
 pleasure, the heart sings."

Joy is tremendously embarrassed by all this attention.
 Karon tries to disguise her own amusement.

Dr. Castro's BEEPER goes off abruptly.

DR. CASTRO (contd)
 Ah! Que Lastimo!

He kisses her hand and moves over to the phone. Joy
 stares after him in amazement, still holding her hand
 in the position he left it.

JOY
 (an afterthought)
 It's -- Senora -- ?

Christine crosses over and joins them in watching
 Dr. Castro's back as he talks on the phone.

CHRISTINE
 (an aside)
 Can he help it if he's gorgeous?
 When you got it, flaunt it, baby!

She makes a motion of grabbing Dr. Castro's buns.

INT. NURSES' STATION - DAY

The room is plain, the furniture used and worn. There
 is a coffee machine and a vending machine (neither of
 which work consistently). Christine gets a cup of
 coffee and watches RUTH, a dark-haired, attractive nurse
 in her mid-thirties, pound angrily on the candy machine
 until she manages to extract a chocolate bar.

CHRISTINE
 You better watch them calories,
 honey. You want hips like mine?

RUTH
 I don't care. I need my chocolate
 fix.

Obviously upset, she crosses the room and sits across
 from Elaine. Joy and Karon enter and cross to the
 coffee machine.

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CONTINUED

KARON

Hey, Ruth. What happened down on five this morning?

RUTH

Oh, you know that Doctor Harmon -- the young one from Ortho?

CHRISTINE

He's not so young. He's got this bald spot right on the top of his head.

RUTH

(ignoring her)

A hip transplant fell out of bed -- and naturally he blamed me. Of course, he didn't bother to put restraint on the chart, but he's still blaming me.

Karon hands Joy a cup of coffee and puts a coin in.

ELAINE

Well, it doesn't do any good to get all upset. There's nothing you can do about it.

RUTH

I just hope it doesn't go down on my record.

CHRISTINE

You can bet your little fanny it won't go on his record!

KARON

You know what I really envy about doctors? It's not so much the money or anything like that. It's having an office and making your own schedule.

CHRISTINE

I know what you mean.

RUTH

I read about a nurse in California who sort of did that. She set up a table in front of a supermarket, and started giving blood pressure tests.

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CONTINUED

Karon responds sharply.

KARON

Are you sure? -- What a terrific idea! A nurse having a career outside a hospital!

RUTH

I don't think it was like that, she just set up a card table or something.

CHRISTINE

How 'bout urinalysis? Can't you just see all these little specimen bottles lined up out in front of the A and P?

She roars at her own joke, but Karon, Joy and Ruth basically ignore her.

JOY

But -- I don't see how she could charge for that. I mean, if she was just a nurse --

KARON

"Just a nurse"? Well, my God! It's no wonder nothing ever changes for us.

Joy reacts, shyly -- as if she said the wrong thing. In Karon's mind, the wheels are turning.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Joy moves out of the exit and starts toward the parking lot. Karon appears at the glass doors, spots her, and hurries to catch up.

KARON

(calling)

Joy! Wait a minute!

Karon hurries over while Joy waits for her.

KARON (contd)

Look, I didn't mean to come on so strong back there.

JOY

That's alright.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

It wasn't you. It's just that I get all worked up when I think about this trap we all fall into -- of thinking less of ourselves than we ought to think. Believe me, it was nothing personal.

JOY

Oh, I know that.

KARON

You sure? Come on. Let me buy you a cup of coffee.

They move off across the parking lot together.

INT. SMALL COFFEE SHOP - DAY

This is a hospital hangout. Several nurses, orderlies and interns mill about in the b.g. Karon and Joy are seated at one of the cramped booths, drinking coffee.

JOY

(pensive)

Actually -- what you said. It's one of my worst faults. I tend to go around apologizing for what I do -- and who I am --

KARON

It's an occupational hazard, I'm afraid.

(beat; eyeing Joy)

Did you always want to be a nurse?

JOY

(brightening)

Yes. As long as I can remember. It's really the only thing I ever wanted to be.

KARON

Me, too. I was naive enough to see myself as a cross between Florence Nightingale and some great angel of mercy -- you know, lifting the sick out of their misery and delivering them to a land of health and plenty.

(beat)

Some fantasy, huh?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

Oh, I don't know. I saw myself
the same way.

EDDIE, the counterman and father-confessor/busy-body of
the coffee shop, breezes in with a coffee pot.

EDDIE

How 'bout another round, ladies?
What you don't drink today, you
get to drink tomorrow.

Karon shrugs and grimly holds up her cup for a refill.

KARON

Then this stuff must be left
from last month!

EDDIE

(to Joy)
How 'bout you, baby face?

JOY

No thank you.

He winks away to another booth. Karon sips the coffee
and wrinkles up her nose.

KARON

I was right.
(looks around; sighs)
Well -- here we are, Joy. Two
frustrated Florence Nightingales
-- fluffing pillows and sifting
through garbage --
(beat; a thought)
I wonder how things worked out
for her?

JOY

Who?

KARON

That nurse in California. The
one who went into business for
herself.

JOY

I was a little curious about that,
too.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

It's a real good idea. Maybe there'd be a way to do more than just blood pressures in front of a supermarket.

JOY

You heard Christine, you could add urinalysis.

KARON

I'm not kidding, Joy. There's really something here. It could be a chance to practice full-time what we were really trained for -- helping people.

JOY

It's not for me. I could never give up the hospital.

KARON

When I have to think something through, I treat myself to something expensive.

Karon gets up to leave.

KARON (contd)

Come with me, I'm going to buy a dress.

JOY

No, thanks. I don't need to be tempted.

KARON

(seriously)

I need the company.

JOY

O.K.

They leave.

INT. SMART DRESS SHOP - DAY

Karon tries on an attractive, daring cocktail dress in front of the triple mirrors. Joy looks on, still wearing her nurse's uniform. A SALESLADY is nearby.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

It just sounds so crazy. I mean,
what would people think?

KARON

They'd think, "God, those ladies
are smart!" That's what.

(checking her image)

How do you like it?

JOY

You look -- beautiful.

KARON

(looking at herself
approvingly)

I agree.

(to Saleslady)

I'll take it.

Joy reacts in disbelief. Karon winks at her and grins.

KARON (contd)

Come on, Joy. You can't take
it with you.

JOY

(a little envious)

I was just thinking about all
the shoes -- and braces -- and
school lunches you're wearing --

INT. DRESS SHOP - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

Karon is getting back into her own clothes inside the
changing booth. Joy waits outside, examining the elegant
dresses on hangers (and their equally elegant price tags).

KARON

(from inside the booth)

There could be a real need for a
private nursing service. You
know Mr. Bergin? When he gets
discharged from the hospital
he'll still need regular shots
and blood tests and white counts.
And his insurance won't pay. We
could do all that -- outside,
cheaper than any doctor or
hospital.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

But setting up an office -- who knows how much it'd cost? Or how long it'd be before we started to make anything?

KARON

You're probably right.

JOY

(reacts to price
on dress)

Anyway, I just can't take the chance. We need everything I bring in from the hospital just to get by --

Karon pokes her head out of the curtain.

KARON

But that could be the beauty of it. Maybe we wouldn't have to quit our jobs at the hospital.

JOY

What are you saying?

KARON

Come zip me up.

Joy moves over and helps Karon back into her nurse's uniform.

KARON (contd)

What if we run the practice on our own time, in between shifts -- just like the staff doctors at the hospital who have private practices. Let's say we work the three-to-eleven shift, that would give us the morning for the business --

Joy reacts, confused and uncertain, as she finishes doing Karon up.

KARON (contd)

Thanks. Now what are you frowning about?

JOY

I know there are a thousand different
(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY (contd)
 different reasons why this whole
 idea is totally ridiculous --
 but somehow it's sounding better
 and better.

KARON
 Thatta girl! Just keep thinking
 those positive thoughts.

The Saleslady returns with Karon's dress in a box.

SALESLADY
 Here you go, Mrs. Gibson. Will
 there be anything else?

Karon glances at Joy, then abruptly moves her in front
 of the Saleslady. Behind them is a rack of expensive
 evening gowns.

KARON
 (pointing to rack
 of gowns)
 Yes! Mrs. Catterson would like
 to see something in her size!

JOY
 (protesting; turning
 red)
 No. I couldn't.

SALESLADY
 I believe we have something that
 will fit you beautifully.

She moves away. Joy is embarrassed. Karon is having a
 wonderful time.

JOY
 Karon! Are you out of your mind?
 I can't afford anything in this
 shop.

KARON
 It won't hurt anything to try it
 on, will it? Will it?

JOY
 (hesitant)
 I -- I guess not --

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

You're damn right it won't!

Joy looks at Karon -- and grins like a little girl about to enjoy some forbidden activity. By the time the Saleslady returns with a formal gown, both Joy and Karon are giggling like a couple of kids.

INT. JOY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joy makes lunches for tomorrow at the counter. An ironing board is still set up in one corner of the kitchen, with several freshly ironed blouses and shirts on it. Beyond the slightly ajar door to the back porch we FAINTLY HEAR 12-year-old DEBBIE counting as if between breaths. From a farther room there is the SOUND of a TV. Joy crosses to the back porch door, pushes it open, REVEALING Debbie doing dance exercises in sweater and tights and leg-warmers.

JOY

Debbie. Do you want an apple
or a plum for tomorrow?

Debbie continues her dancing, annoyed at being interrupted.

DEBBIE

I guess a plum -- no, they're too
messy. Oh, I don't care.

JOY

It's so drafty out here. Why don't
you move into the den?

DEBBIE

'Cause I can't have any privacy
in there, that's why!

Joy sighs and shuts the door. As she turns back to the counter, 9-year-old SANDRA and 7-year-old JIMMY enter to raid the refrigerator.

JOY

Don't you both have homework to do?

SANDRA

As soon as the program's over.

JIMMY

Please, Mom? Please. Can't we
finish watching?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

(playfully mussing
his hair)

All right, but you get on that
school work as soon as it's over.
You hear me?

JIMMY AND SANDRA

Thanks, Mom!

They race back toward the TV. Joy smiles and returns to
the ironing board.

INT. JOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It is late. Joy sits in the double bed with the spread
tucked up to the top of her nightgown. Gordon is
dressing to leave for work. On his dresser is a bottle
of liquor. He sips at a drink. He seems preoccupied,
moody. Joy seems very worried about upsetting Gordon.
She speaks very tentatively.

JOY

Of course, it's just an idea of
Karon's now -- but we think we
could really provide an important
service.

She waits eagerly for some response, but gets none.

JOY (contd)

(hopefully)

What do you think about it, Gordon?

GORDON

I guess it's all right, if that's
what you want.

JOY

What do you think about it?
Would you mind? I mean, Karon
and I would have to work more
weekends and nights at the hospital
so we could have days free for
patients. But I could hire a
regular baby sitter, and Debbie
can help out a little more around
the house --

Gordon finishes checking his service revolver and secures
it in his holster, takes another gulp of Scotch.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GORDON

I'll see you in the morning,
when I get off shift.

He starts out. She is suddenly very insecure.

JOY

But do you think I should do it?

He stops and finally looks at her.

GORDON

Look. You're the one doing this.
It's not up to me --

JOY

But you're my husband --

GORDON

So? Does that mean I'm supposed
to have all the answers? God,
Joy! You're always asking me to
decide things for you -- like I'm
supposed to know everything.
Well, I don't.

JOY

(taken aback;
frightened)

But, Gordon -- I --

GORDON

(interrupting)

This thing with you and Karon has
nothing to do with me. Why don't
you make up your own mind for
once, and leave me out of it.

With that, he turns and walks out.

ANGLE ON JOY

She stares after Gordon, somewhat shaken. Suddenly she
feels very much alone. On instinct, she throws the
covers aside, slides out of bed, and hurries toward the
bedroom door.

JOY

Gordon -- !

She stops at the SOUND of the front door closing.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

She looks around the room, uncertain as to what to do next. She will make the decision herself. Her eye falls on the bedside telephone. She takes a deep breath, struggling with the agony of decision -- and finally makes up her mind.

INT. KARON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Karon and Ralph are asleep in each other's arms. A STEREO PLAYS SOFT MUSIC in the b.g. Suddenly, the PHONE RINGS. Groggily, Ralph gropes for it and pulls it to them.

RALPH
(disoriented)
Yeah? Hello -- ?

He listens, then extends the phone over and taps Karon with it.

RALPH (contd)
(mumbling)
It's for you --

He immediately turns over and goes back to sleep. Karon struggles to wake up -- and to find the phone among the sheets.

JOY'S VOICE
Karon? Karon, are you there?

At last, Karon pulls the phone up by the cord and puts the receiver to her mouth.

KARON
(sleepy)
H-hello -- ?

INTERCUTS - JOY AND KARON

Joy cradles the phone, nervously excited.

JOY
Karon? It's Joy.

KARON
(incredulous; glancing
at bedside clock)
Joy? What -- ?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

Karon -- if you really mean it
-- I mean, if you're serious
about it -- I wouldn't want you
to ask me if you didn't --

KARON

Joy -- what the hell are you
talking about?

Joy takes a deep breath to calm herself -- then:

JOY

I want to do it, Karon. I want
us to start our practice together.

Karon sits up, gathering the sheets around her. Now she
is fully awake.

KARON

You mean it?

JOY

Yes. If you still want to --

KARON

Nurse Catterson, you've got
yourself a partner!

ANGLE ON KARON

She hangs up the phone, grinning from ear to ear.
Suddenly, she outs out a LOUD WHOOP. Ralph rolls over
and looks up sleepily. Karon grabs him by the ears and
kisses him on the top of his head.

ANGLE ON JOY

She slowly puts the phone down. For an instant there is
the familiar self-doubt -- oh, God, what have I done --
then, there is an unfamiliar feeling of anticipation.
She permits herself a very tentative, hesitant, yet
nonetheless very real smile.

FADE OUT

End of Act Two

ACT THREE

FADE IN

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

Karon and Joy, dressed in street clothes, stand together on the sidewalk, looking up at a very tall office building.

JOY

A lawyer with an office in this building has got to charge a fortune!

KARON

Come on. You get what you pay for. If we're going to do this, we want to do it right, don't we?

JOY

I guess.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

CLINTON BRODERICK wears a tailored three-piece suit and is settled back comfortably in his swiveled chair. Both he and the office exude expensive, elegant taste. Karon and Joy sit opposite the attorney, very uncomfortable. Broderick flips through several papers in a folder, making the two women wait. After what seems like an inordinate amount of time, he closes the folder, drops it onto his desk, and CLEARS HIS THROAT loudly.

BRODERICK

Ladies. I would like to offer you both a bit of unsolicited and perhaps unexpected advice -- on the house.

KARON

(hesitant)
What is it?

BRODERICK

Forget it. Save your time and don't waste your money.

Joy is visibly startled. There is a pause during which it looks like Joy might agree. She looks to Karon as if to say, "let's go." Karon is annoyed.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

We're not here to get your approval, Mr. Broderick. We've already decided to do this. If you're not interested in representing us, we'll leave.

BRODERICK

No. That's not it. It's just that you should both be fully aware that this will not be an easy process. Especially as it is without a precedent.

KARON

All right. Now that we got that out of the way, can we get down to it?

Joy reacts to Karon's spunk, impressed. Broderick leans forward and abruptly assumes an all-business manner.

BRODERICK

(rapid-fire, legal delivery)

You'll need what any small business needs: that is, the necessary license and permits from City Hall -- adequate insurance, and, in your case, that should include malpractice insurance -- a business name -- a professional address -- and bank account. Can you establish a line of credit -- the two of you?

Joy and Karon are almost overwhelmed by all this.

KARON

I -- I don't see why not.

BRODERICK

Do you want your husbands' names included on the papers of incorporation, as officers and/or owners of the business?

JOY

(alarmed)

Is it necessary -- ?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

(sharply)

No. No way. We're going to see it through ourselves. It has nothing to do with them.

BRODERICK

Very well.

He re-checks the material in the file. Joy looks helplessly at Karon, but Karon indicates "piece-of-cake."

BRODERICK (contd)

I see you have touched base with the appropriate professional organizations. It seems to me, the next thing is to line up a good doctor -- someone you can depend upon to back you up.

He glances at them, settles back in his chair and folds his hands in front of him.

BRODERICK (contd)

(with a Cheshire cat smile)

Well, ladies. Any questions?

Joy slumps back weakly in her chair. Karon shrugs and grins sheepishly.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Karon's 4-year-old intermediate American-made sedan makes its way through the suburban streets.

INT. CAR - DAY

Karon is driving. Joy is beside her. The back seat is piled up with curtains, lamps, a table, and other used knick-knacks and furnishings. Both women are casually dressed, in jeans and sweatshirts.

KARON

Of course it's not perfect, but we had to take it. There were two other tenants waiting to rent it.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

I just thought -- well, maybe
it should be a little more in
the center of things.

KARON

Where? The Loop? The rent
there was five times higher.
We got a bargain.

EXT. SUBURBAN SHOPPING CENTER - DAY

The car pulls into the parking area and stops in front
of a small, two-story office building that sits among
the shops and stores of a modest shopping center that
has seen better days. Parked in front of the office
building are two polished and gleaming limousines,
looking strangely out of place.

ANGLE ON CAR

Joy and Karon get out and look at the building.

KARON

Well? What do you say?

JOY

It's -- uh -- nice.

KARON

Don't worry. It'll grow on us.
Come on, I want to show you
something.

They move off toward the building.

ANGLE ON BUILDING

Karon directs Joy to the row of business shingles that
individually show the names and businesses of the tenants
-- "DEFINO, INSURANCE -- ALL KINDS" -- "ALICE COURTLEY --
SECRETARIAL AND ACCOUNTING" -- "AAA LIMOUSINE AND LIVERY
SERVICE, E. BERRINGER" -- Joy scans down the line of
shingles -- then breaks out in a squeal of glee when
she sees the last and newest one.

ANGLE ON SIGN

It reads: "REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL
NURSES, INC.
A Professional Corporation
Karon White Gibson, R.N.
Joy Smith Catterson, R.N."

ANGLE ON JOY AND KARON

They react to each other, pleased.

JOY
Registered Professional Nurses!
That's us! It's really us -- !

They hurry back to the car and start unloading the furniture, scarcely able to contain their excitement.

INT. PSYCH WARD - DAY

Karon pushes open the door and moves briskly down the hall. Joy follows close on her heels, pressing a point.

JOY
-- but, Karon, you ought to at least think about it before you say "no" --

KARON
Forget it.

JOY
I don't even know if he'll do it, but I've asked around. You should hear what people say about him! He works harder than any resident on staff -- and he's always on call. You have to admit, he does treat the nurses with courtesy.

KARON
(stops; big reaction)
"Courtesy"! I don't care if he can do a coronary bypass blind-folded, we're not taking Dr. Don Juan into the business!

She moves around the corner, with Joy following.

INT. CORRIDOR - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

Karon and Joy round the corner and stop in their tracks. Speak-of-the-Devil, Dr. Castro has Elaine cornered and is referring to a PATIENT strapped onto a gurney nearby. The man -- an old, bearded, filthy drunk -- was left unattended in rather desperate condition. He breathes in a harsh wheeze. Karon and Joy look on with interest during the following:

DR. CASTRO
What is this patient doing here?
Why isn't he being treated?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

He checks the patient's vital signs, while Karon, Joy and Elaine look on.

DR. CASTRO (contd)

Get him to Intensive Care --
right away. He needs pulmonary
assistance.

ELAINE

No one has authorized it, Doctor.
He's a charity patient. He has
no private physician --

DR. CASTRO

Well, he has one now! I don't
give a damn if he pays, the
county pays or nobody pays!
The man is sick. This is a
hospital!

He motions for an ORDERLY to come forward.

DR. CASTRO (contd)

Get this man down to ICU! Tell
them I authorized it --

The orderly takes the gurney and wheels it down the hall.
Dr. Castro walks away, MUTTERING to himself. Joy looks
expectantly at Karon.

JOY

Well?

Karon rolls her eyes, exasperated.

KARON

I'll think about it!

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Joy drives up in the family station wagon and parks beside
one of the limousines. An attractive, "hip" young man --
AL BERRINGER -- polishes it to a fine gloss, while he
listens to LOUD ROCK MUSIC blaring forth from a large
radio. Joy gets out of the car and starts toward the
building. She carries a large house plant with her.

AL

(shouting over the music)
Hey! You one of the nurses in the
new office?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY
 (taken aback)
 Yes ... My name is Joy Catterson.

AL
 Al Berringer. Me an' my brother,
 we run this here limo rental.

He flips the polishing cloth out of his right hand and slaps Joy's outstretched hand. She jumps, startled.

AL (contd)
 Maybe I'll take you for a ride
 sometime, when they ain't rented
 out.

JOY
 (not sure)
 Sure.

She turns and enters the building. Al polishes the limo, keeping time to the PULSATING ROCK MUSIC.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Joy enters, trying to clear her hearing. The office is partially furnished, but still in disarray. The phone rings. Karon picks it up.

KARON
 (to Joy)
 Hi --
 (indicating plant)
 I like it!
 (into phone)
 Registered Professional Nurses,
 Inc.
 (louder, slower)
 Registered Professional Nurses,
 Inc.
 (listens, nods)
 Yes. I understand. No problem.

She hangs up. Joy looks for a place to put the plant.

KARON (contd)
 I'm going to speak to the phone
 company. Our number must be
 similar to some dry cleaner's.
 People have called all day to
 know if their laundry was ready --

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

Maybe we could start a new side-
line -- "Registered Professional
Nurses and Laundresses -- "

KARON

One fiasco at a time, please.

(beat)

I got in touch with some labs
and insurance companies -- and
County Health and Welfare about
having us come around and take
blood pressures.

JOY

Any luck?

KARON

They're willing to talk about it.
That's a start, anyway.

(beat)

Have you eaten yet?

JOY

Not much.

KARON

(rising)

I've got some stale donuts and
some very strong coffee.

Joy sets the plant aside. THE CAMERA MOVES WITH THEM
into the small back room. Karon pours them each a cup
of coffee and offers the donuts to Joy.

KARON (contd)

We'll get going pretty soon.

Joy looks at Karon with a great deal of doubt.

KARON (contd)

People just have to find out about
us, that's all.

They are interrupted by the sound of the OFFICE DOOR
OPENING. Thinking it might be a patient, they get up
quickly and move to the front.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Half-disappointed, Joy and Karon see Dr. Castro, elegantly
dressed and smiling. He bears gifts -- flowers,

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

champagne, and a bed pan filled with enema syringes, speculums, urine test bottles, etc., all tied up in bows and ribbons.

DR. CASTRO

A little something to warm the office, and --
 (indicates champagne)
 -- the insides!

JOY

(delighted)
 I knew he was the right man for the job!

Dr. Castro gives Joy the flowers and the champagne.

DR. CASTRO

Flowers, champagne, and --

He hands the bed pan to Karon.

DR. CASTRO (contd)

-- something especially for Senora Karon. Everything but the little envelopes to send the bills to the patients.

KARON

First we need patients.

DR. CASTRO

I'm sure the Mayo Brothers didn't do too well their first day. Do you know how long before my first patient? -- and then it was this Armenian lady who did not speak English. I did not either then, not very much. However, being young and brilliant, I cured her anyway --

(beat)

-- at least, I hope I cured her, for she did not come back -- ever.

(to Karon)

A good luck toast -- to your success.

He takes the champagne bottle from Joy and holds it up. Karon wants so much to be annoyed with this big flirt, but she is charmed.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

It is early morning. Dressed in his patrolman's uniform, Ralph exits the front door and heads toward his car. Karon appears behind him, wearing a dressing gown and carrying an armload of bright yellow 8x10 flyers.

KARON

(calling)

Ralph! Wait, honey! You forgot these!

Ralph stops and waits for her to catch up with him.

KARON (contd)

Now don't forget. Give these out to everyone you see --

RALPH

(good-natured teasing)

Great! I can just see it now:
"Alright, turkey! You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to an attorney. And if you're smart, you'll get your butt over to my wife's nursing service -- "

KARON

Wise guy!

She hands him the flyers and gives him a quick kiss before she starts back toward the apartment building.

EXT. SHOPPING CENTER PARKING LOT - DAY

Debbie, Jimmy and Sandra fan out among the various vehicles parked in the shopping center lot. They are placing bright yellow 8x10 flyers on the windshields. A WOMAN SHOPPER, carrying a load of groceries, moves over to her car and picks up one of the flyers.

CLOSE - FLYER

It advertises the "Registered Professional Nursing Service."

ANGLE ON WOMAN SHOPPER

She shrugs and drops the flyer. She fumbles in her purse for the keys to her car, when Jimmy scoots over. He picks up the flyer.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JIMMY

Excuse me. You dropped my mom's
flyer.

He hands it to her and dashes off. The woman looks after
him, startled.

INT. NURSING OFFICE - DAY

Joy and Karon sit in the office -- now fully decorated
and furnished -- waiting! Joy's eyes fall on the rate
chart.

ANGLE ON CHART

It lists the rates for the various services: BLOOD
PRESSURE - \$3.00; DIABETES TEST - \$3.00; BOTH - \$5.00;
OFFICE VISIT - \$5.00; OFFICE VISIT WITH INJECTION -
\$5.00 PLUS COST OF MEDICATION; HOME VISIT WITH ONE
PROCEDURE - \$10.00; HOME VISIT FOR INJECTION ONLY -
\$10.00 PLUS COST OF MEDICATION; HOME VISIT WITH ENEMA
- \$2.00 EXTRA.

JOY

(sipping a cup of coffee)
I don't know. Maybe we're charging
too much.

KARON

How would we know?

THE PHONE RINGS loudly. It startles both of them. For
an instant, they stand frozen -- however, on the SECOND
RING, they both start for it. They reach it at the same
time. Joy grabs it.

JOY

(brightly, into phone)
Professional Registered --
Registered Nurse -- Registered
Professional --
(beat; helpless)
May I help you?

Karon nervously starts drinking Joy's coffee.

KARON

(whispering)
It's "Registered Professional
Nurses, Inc."!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY
 (aside; wincing)
 I know!
 (she listens;
 brightens)
 Yes, sir. We do make house calls.

Immediately, they both scramble for pencil and paper.

JOY (contd)
 Hot flashes? How old is your
 wife, sir? Fifty-two?

KARON
 (whispering)
 It sounds like menopausal
 depression --

JOY
 (aside)
 I know!
 (into phone)
 Yes, sir. It does sound like
 depression, but we couldn't be
 positive without seeing the patient.
 Just have her lie down -- with her
 feet elevated -- and apply a cool,
 damp cloth to her forehead. Yes,
 sir. We'll be right over --

She starts to hang up. Karon SCREAMS and Joy snatches
 the receiver back up to her ear.

JOY (contd)
 Could I have that address, sir?

Joy writes furiously, while Karon looks on. She starts
 to take another sip of the coffee, then realizes what
 she is doing and puts the cup down.

JOY (contd)
 Got it. We'll see you in about
 twenty minutes. Goodbye. And
thank you! Thank you very much!

Joy hangs up. She looks at Karon. Both are ecstatic.

JOY (contd)
 Karon! A patient! We've got our
 very own patient!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON
We did it, kiddo! We did it!

Suddenly and simultaneously, they break into laughter, hug each other, and all but dance.

MONTAGE

EXT. GHETTO STREET - DAY

A group of kids are cooling off in water from a fire hydrant. Joy and Karon, carrying their medical bags, weave their way through them to a cluttered alley. They walk up to a door, knock and are admitted by an undernourished-looking young woman with a frail child in her arms.

INT. BATHROOM OF OLD APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joy and Karon are giving a tub bath to an elderly woman.

INT. NURSES' STATION AT HOSPITAL - DAY

Karon is looking over a chart. Joy is talking to her.

INT. NURSING OFFICE - RAINY DAY

Karon is looking down a black child's throat with a tongue depressor, as the child's mother looks on.

INT. PSYCH WARD - NIGHT

Karon is ushering the last of the visitors out of the ward as Joy is escorting a frazzled patient back to her room.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Christine hurries up to Joy and Karon as they approach the elevator.

CHRISTINE
I'm glad I caught you guys before
you left.
(glancing around
cautiously)
Listen. Stay out of the Chief's
way. She's really hot about this
private practice thing.

KARON
What!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CHRISTINE

I said something -- just clowning around -- you know, how you guys had the right idea, going into business for yourselves -- and the CNA heard me! God, she crawled all over me! So, I thought I'd better warn you.

KARON

(grimly)

Terrific! Just what we need!

Joy reacts, very worried.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Joy and Karon emerge from the hospital exit, wearing their coats. They both look concerned after the meeting with Christine. They look up to see Dr. Castro driving into the lot and parking at his space.

KARON

Come on.

They hurry over to his car.

ANGLE ON PARKING LOT

Joy and Karon move over to where Dr. Castro is getting out of his sports car.

DR. CASTRO

Ah! Buenas dias! How are my lovely co-workers today?

KARON

Dr. Castro, have you --

DR. CASTRO

Karon. If we are to work together, I must insist that you call me "John" -- okay?

JOY

Okay -- John.

DR. CASTRO

That's better.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

Look -- John. Have you heard anything -- anything about the hospital being upset because we opened our own practice.

JOY

We just ran into Christine Purdy. She told us the Chief Nursing Administrator was acting like we've done something wrong.

DR. CASTRO

You should know hospital administrators by now. If there is the slightest thing that is even a little different, someone is upset!
(beat)

What you are doing is a good thing. You must not worry about what they think.

KARON

You have heard something -- haven't you?

DR. CASTRO

It was nothing. A formality. The Chief Administrator asked me what was going on -- that's all.

JOY

(terrified)

Oh, dear God! We really can't let the practice get in the way of our jobs here. It's not like we're making a living on the outside. And even if we were, one bad word from the people here and no one would use us.

DR. CASTRO

What you are doing is important. If I did not believe that, I would not be involved.

(brightly)

Do not be so sad, my beauties!
Everything will be fine. You'll see. Adios!

He quickly moves off toward the hospital. Joy and Karon look at each other, concerned.

FADE OUT

End of Act Three

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

INT. JOY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

As the CLANG of an alarm clock wakens her, automatically she drags herself up, reaches out, and fumbles to shut off the alarm. For a moment, still tired and worn, she clings to the bed. But then she forces herself up, starts toward the closet. But, seeming to sense something from the corner of her eye, she stops.

ANGLE WIDENS as she turns back to look at the double bed. Gordon's side of the bed has not been turned down and is still made and unmussed. He's not there, and obviously he hasn't been. But, just as obviously, from her expression of puzzlement, he should have been. Then, concerned, she shrugs into a robe and starts out of the room to check.

CAMERA MOVES with her as she crosses into the front room, where there is no sign of Gordon. She peers toward the rear of the house, calls in a whisper:

JOY

Gordon...?

But there is no answer. She turns back toward the hall, then hears the SOUND of the TELEVISION from the den. She moves to the door, pushes it open, peers in.

INT. DEN - ANGLE TO SHOW GORDON

He's passed out in a chair in the den, the TV set still on, a half-empty bottle on top of it.

REVERSE ANGLE ON JOY

Annoyance flares across her face. She walks into the den.

JOY

(waking him up)

Gordon.

His eyes open.

JOY (contd)

(frustrated, but unable
to get really angry)

You've got to get yourself cleaned up. I don't want the kids to see you like this.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Gordon begins, slowly and groggily, to get up.

GORDON

Why do you care, anyway? You're never home anymore.

JOY

I'm doing the best I can.

Gordon looks at Joy angrily -- just before exiting the room.

GORDON

If you really cared you'd give up all the extra work and spend some more time around here.

JOY

Maybe you are right, Gordon. But your drinking isn't helping things.

Joy stares into space as Gordon exits room. She then begins to clean the mess left behind by Gordon.

EXT. MODEST HOUSE - DAY

Carrying their medical bags, Joy and Karon cross to the front door of a small, frame house and knock. Parked in the driveway is an ambulance with the rear door still open. AN ORDERLY opens the door and gestures them inside.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

The house seems neat, but sparsely furnished. The white-jacketed Orderly looks them over.

ORDERLY

You the two the County's put on this?

KARON

Yes. I'm Karon Gibson.

JOY

Joy Catterson.

ORDERLY

We've got her all set up in bed. Here's her chart.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Karon takes the medical chart, scans it, frowns at what she reads.

ORDERLY (contd)

Yeah, pretty hopeless. You chicks know how to change a sub-clavian? It's pretty tricky.

KARON

I think we "chicks" can manage.

ORDERLY

(shrugs)

Well, I wouldn't count on this being a source of long-term employment -- if you get my drift.

A SECOND ORDERLY enters from the bedroom just off the hall.

The orderlies exit, closing the door after them. CAMERA FOLLOWS Joy and Karon as they cross the hall to the bedroom. They give a warning KNOCK on the ajar door and start in.

INT. JEAN DAWKINS' ROOM - DAY

Joy and Karon enter. JEAN DAWKINS is about forty. A one-time WAC and former waitress, she was obviously once a bouncy, even brassy "ol' gal" full of fun and wisecracks. Even now, despite being pale and drawn, she has enough of that feistiness left almost to belie the hopelessness of her condition. Propped up in the bed, an IV tube disappearing beneath her white gown into her chest, she smiles weakly at Joy and Karon.

JOY

Mrs. Dawkins?

JEAN

Call me "Jean." Either of you broads got a cigarette?

JOY

You shouldn't be smoking in your condition --

JEAN

Figure it'll stunt my growth, do you?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

No -- but it could set you on fire. Let's check that IV.
 (looks it over, nods)
 Try not to move around too much. You might pull it loose.

JEAN

You mean I gotta cut down on the bedroom gymnastics?

KARON

(amused)
 That's up to you. We'll be here every day to change the IV anyway.

JOY

Is there anything you need right now, Mrs. Dawk -- Jean?

JEAN

Hell, yes. How 'bout a new stomach, a fancy bleach job, and a millionaire who looks like Paul Newman? You know, I had one once -- oh, not a millionaire, but damned if he didn't look a little like Paul Newman.

She responds to the SOUND of the FRONT DOOR OPENING, and calls -- with effort -- toward the hall.

JEAN (contd)

Suzie! In here, kid!

Jean's daughter, SUSAN, enters from the hall, carrying a drugstore sack. She is about 22, and somewhat plain -- though seemingly more by choice than by nature. She is shy, soft-spoken and rather dependent upon her mother.

JEAN (contd)

This is my daughter, Susan. What d'you think, kid? Two fancy private nurses for one broken-down hash slinger!

Susan nods a greeting to Joy and Karon.

SUSAN

Hi. I got all the things they said from the drugstore.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JEAN
(pantomimes smoking)
How about the butts?

SUSAN
Mom, I don't know if you're
supposed to --

She looks questioningly toward Joy and Karon.

KARON
I guess she can have one -- as long
as there's someone here to watch.

Shd takes the pack from Susan, opens it, takes out one
cigarette, then hands the rest back.

KARON (contd)
You better hang on to them.

SUSAN
Mom, I'm going to put these things
away -- okay?

JEAN
Sure, kid. I ain't goin' nowhere.

Susan exits. Karon lights the cigarette for Jean and
holds it for her to take a puff. Jean exhales, coughs
slightly, and shakes her head.

JOY
Are you alright?

JEAN
Hell, I'm A-okay, Number-One,
Peachy-keen.
(glares at cigarette)
I been lookin' forward to that for
so long, I thought the first time
would be better --
(beat; mischievous
twinkle in her eye)
-- but that's an old story, ain't
it, girls?

She settles back, motions for Karon to take the cigarette
away, and glances out the bedroom door.

JEAN (contd)
(softer)
You wouldn't think she was mine,
would you?

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JEAN (contd)

(beat)

Listen. I want you to do me a big favor. I -- I never got around to tellin' her -- how bad it is with me. Don't let on. Okay?

JOY

But she's bound to ask us about you? She'll want to know how you're doing?

JEAN

So lie to her.

(intensely)

Look. She's my kid. I know her -- and I know she's not up to it. Not yet.

(beat)

So I got to ask you -- don't say nothin' to her.

Joy and Karon react to this with sympathy, but also with concern and misgiving.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Karon bursts through the door and hurries across the living room.

KARON

(breathless)

Sorry I'm late, honey. I hope you went ahead and fixed yourself something to eat --

She almost makes it to the bedroom door, when Ralph steps out of the kitchen. He is dressed in a suit and tie. He does not look very happy. Karon sees him and reacts.

KARON (contd)

Oh my God! I forgot! Tonight's the -- the --

RALPH

The retirement dinner for Chief Eckhardt.

She quickly crosses to him.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

Oh, Ralph. I'm so sorry. Things have just been so crazy -- Can you forgive me?

RALPH

(checks his watch)

Well -- if you hurry and change, we can still make it.

Karon reacts, crestfallen.

KARON

I -- I can't. We had to switch and take the shift at the hospital tonight -- to balance our schedule at the office --

RALPH

(furious)

That's just great!

(beat)

Damn it, Karon! You've known about this for three weeks! I've told you how important it is for me to put in an appearance at these things! You think I want to be stuck in a uniform the rest of my life?

KARON

I know, honey. I'm really sorry this happened -- but it just couldn't be helped.

She moves closer, touches him softly.

KARON (contd)

I'll make it up to you. We'll have more time together -- as soon as things settle down --

(beat)

Why don't you go to the dinner without me?

He looks at her, still visibly annoyed.

RALPH

Looks like I'll have to, doesn't it?

He pulls away and quickly exits. Karon looks after him, feeling frustrated and helpless.

INT. PSYCH WARD - NIGHT

Karon is at her desk. The CHIEF NURSE ADMINISTRATOR enters. She is an elegant but rather icy-looking woman of about 45 who wears a white smock over a tailored suit.

CNA

Where's Catterson? This concerns both of you.

KARON

She's checking on a patient.

Joy comes into scene in b.g.

CNA

I would have preferred discussing this during regular hours, but since you both seem to work only night shifts now ...

JOY

Here I am.

CNA

I've been told that you both did shifts this last weekend ... but there is no indication of that on the rotation roster. I assume you know that any and every change of shift has to be filed with my office -- in writing.

JOY

(relieved)

Oh ... I can explain that. We were tied up with an extra psychotherapy session in the ward. We asked Christine to tell your office. Didn't she do that?

CNA

Yes -- but not in writing. And that is the rule.

Karon restrains herself, merely sighs wearily.

KARON

All right, we'll make double sure that we file the notice from now on.

CNA

That hardly takes care of this time, does it?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Rather abruptly, she turns and starts out of the ward.

CAMERA HOLDS on Karon and Joy looking thoughtfully after her, seeming both puzzled and concerned.

JOY

I guess we'd better make sure
we file all the right papers
with her office from now on.

KARON

In triplicate.

INT. NURSING OFFICE - DAY

Joy unwinds the manometer pressure band from a PATIENT's arm and takes the EKG electrodes from his chest. Karon is speaking on the phone, while the PATIENT'S YOUNG WIFE looks on with concern. They are a couple in their early twenties -- apparently poor and somewhat uneducated.

KARON

(on phone)

Fine. I'll tell him, Doctor.
Adios.

She hangs up and smiles reassuringly at the wife and husband.

KARON (contd)

All your tests are fine -- except
your blood pressure is a little
high. Dr. Castro's prescribed some
medicine for you. He's going to
phone it in to the pharmacy and
you can pick it up there.

PATIENT

Then I'm okay? Nothin' real serious?

KARON

Nothing real serious. Just take the
medicine.

The man and woman look at each other, relieved. Then:

WIFE

We -- we ain't got much money
right now -- not till he gets
called back to work --

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

That's all right. You can pay us then. The main thing is to make sure your husband is well.

MAN

We sure appreciate it.

WIFE

Thanks again. Bye.

They move out of the office.

KARON

(kidding)

It's a good feeling, isn't it?
Giving away the business -- free
of charge.

JOY

They'll pay us.

There is a LOUD KNOCK on the door. BARRY DEAL, a young man wearing a blue blazer, sticks his head in.

BARRY

You Karon Gibson and Joy Catterson?

KARON

That's right.

BARRY

Barry Deal. Channel 6 ON-THE-
SPOT-NEWS.

(quickly surveys
the office)

This is it? Okay. We'll set up
here.

(turns his head; SHOUTS
back into hall)

All right! This is it!

(checks his watch)

Let's move it, you guys! We've
only got twenty minutes to get
this! Come on!

He exits impatiently. Joy looks at Karon, somewhat taken
aback.

JOY

Do you know what this is all about?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

(uncomfortable)

Oh, didn't I tell you? I -- uh
-- I called the television stations
-- to tell them about our service.

JOY

What! Why didn't you tell me?

KARON

Well -- I guess I thought you
wouldn't want to do it.

JOY

You were so right!
(beat; exasperated)
I ... I just can't believe you
did this behind my back --

KARON

(irritated)

Behind your -- ! Sometimes I
just don't understand you, Joy!
You said yourself, we need to
get the word out -- to become
known. Can you think of a better
way -- ?

JOY

That's not the point. If we're
going to be partners in this
business, then I should be
included in the decision making
-- especially on something like
this!

KARON

If I waited for you to make up
your mind, we'd still be sitting
around talking about it instead
of doing it! I swear to God, Joy.
Half the time I feel like I'm
dragging you into this thing
kicking and screaming.

JOY

(very upset)

I don't see anything wrong with
being cautious!

KARON

"Cautious!?" Try "paranoid!"

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Just when it appears that Joy and Karon are about to attack one another, Barry reappears at the door, followed by an ENG video camera operator and a soundman.

BARRY

All right, girls. It's showtime!

INT. ACTIVITIES ROOM, PSYCH WARD - NIGHT

The television set is fastened high up on a shelf, out of reach of the patients. It is turned on to the Channel 6 6:00 PM news. There are PATIENTS in the room, NURSES -- including Elaine, Ruth and Christine, ORDERLIES -- including Curtis, along with Joy and Karon, both of whom are very nervous. There are REACTIONS from the various persons in the room when Joy and Karon appear on screen. The REACTIONS are INTERCUT with the videotaped television program.

TELEVISION PROGRAM (VIDEOTAPE):

-- Barry Deal stands in front of the nurses' office building.

BARRY DEAL

This is Barry Deal, On-The-Spot News Profile. Tonight we'll be exploring a brand new concept in medicine. Here in this modest building, two enterprising local nurses are bringing health care to those who otherwise might not be able to obtain it.

-- Joy and Karon are stiffly situated behind their desk, staring awkwardly into the camera.

BARRY'S VOICE

Karon White Gibson and Joy Smith Catterson -- two modern-day Florence Nightingales, have launched what they call "Registered Professional Nurses, Inc."

-- Close on Karon working with an elderly patient.

INT. ACTIVITIES ROOM - NIGHT

While most appear excited and happy for Joy and Karon, Elaine looks on with open disgust and irritation. Before the segment ends, she moves out of the room, unnoticed.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PSYCH WARD NURSES' STATION - NIGHT

There is a great deal of miscellaneous ward activity around and about the Nurses' Station. Christine escorts a vociferous patient back to his room; Elaine walks Martha down the corridor, trying to coax the rag doll away from her. At the desk, Karon and Joy are going over the individual patient's files.

KARON

Apparently Mrs. Bracken stayed in her room all day. She was doing better before -- oh, I see. They increased her dosage. Hmm. The doctor ordered Mrs. Dobbs back on restraints. You did a chart round on her. How was she?

JOY

She was quiet. Somebody must have said something about her bird. That's the only time she gets upset and needs restraint.

KARON

Her bird?

JOY

Yeah. You know, the one nobody can see but her.

Ruth breezes by the desk, carrying a tray of medication.

RUTH

Hey! Congratulations, you guys! You really came off great! All the patients loved you -- especially the ones on artane and thorazine!

She moves off down the hall. Joy winces. Karon looks at her.

KARON

(brightly)

Come on. You're not still mad at me, are you?

JOY

I should be.

(beat; a smile)

But, I've got to admit -- it was kinda fun!

The PHONE RINGS and Karon picks it up.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON
(into phone)
Psychiatric. Gibson.
(listens; puzzled)
Right away.

She hangs up and looks at Joy.

KARON (contd)
That was the CNA's office. She
wants to see us.

INT. CNA'S OFFICE - DAY

Joy and Karon enter. The Chief Nurse Administrator is seated behind her desk, going over some papers.

CNA
Sit down, please.

They do so, anxious.

KARON
(hesitantly)
Excuse me. Will this take long?
As usual, Psych's crazy --

This attempt at humor brings no response from the CNA.

CNA
No. Let's get right to the point.
You won't be working in Psych
anymore.

JOY
We're being transferred -- ?

CNA
No. I'm sorry it has come to this,
but the Board and the Administration
have arrived at a firm decision.
I'm afraid you're both being
terminated. Immediately.

Neither Joy nor Karon can fully comprehend what is being said to them.

KARON
Is this some sort of layoff or
something?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CNA

You are being terminated.
Permanently. For cause,
outside interests.

Joy and Karon are stunned.

KARON

That's ridiculous! We've never
had a single mark on our
records, either one of us!

JOY

You can ask anyone - doctors,
nurses, patients. We've always done
our work ~

CNA

That was before. Unfortunately, your
so-called private practice has
interfered with your duties and your
schedules.

JOY

(desperate)

That - that's not true. We're both
working full shifts. We've never
missed a single -

CNA

But you've been doing a lot of
switching around on your shifts
lately. Suppose all the nurses
decided to choose their own hours? We
would have utter chaos on the wards.
That's why we have a system of
assigned rotation ~

KARON

Look. If you've got a specific
complaint, I'm sure we could explain
--

CNA

I'm afraid it's gone beyond the point
of explanations. You have only
yourselves to blame. You both know
perfectly well that nurses cannot
have the same staff privileges as
doctors.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

(holding back tears)
Dereliction of duty? There's
no way we would act like that.
You can't really believe that.

CNA

It doesn't matter what I believe
personally. It's not my decision.
It's the Board's.

KARON

With this on our records, there's
not a hospital in the state that
would take us.

The CNA rises and moves to the door.

CNA

I'm afraid they felt an example
had to be made in your case.

She opens the door for them. Karon rises and crosses to
her, her rage simmering. Joy follows, but she moves as
if her worst fears have come true.

FADE OUT

End of Act Four

ACT FIVE

FADE IN

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

ANGLE to ESTABLISH.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Joy and Karon are sitting at one of the booths. Karon is angry, while Joy is emotionally shaken. Various MEDICAL PERSONNEL move about in the b.g.

JOY

How can I face Gordon? He let me take money out of our savings account to help us get started --

KARON

So did Ralph.

(beat)

They'll understand. They have to.

JOY

What you said is true. No hospital will ever hire us.

Eddie, the counterman, is wiping off the next table. He has heard the conversation.

EDDIE

(trying to be funny)

All right, you guys. Let's have it. What's the real dirt? What'd you do, bump somebody off?

Joy is horrified. Karon is furious.

JOY

(defensive; hurt)

We didn't do anything! How can you say that?

Very upset, she gets up and walks to the door.

EDDIE

(taken aback)

Hey, come on. I didn't mean nothin'. I was just goofin' around.

Karon throws money down on the table.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON
 What do you use for brains, Eddie
 -- coffee grounds?

Karon gets up and follows Joy out.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Joy is unlocking the car door as Karon approaches.

KARON
 (muttering)
 Creep!

JOY
 (upset)
 That's what everyone will think!

KARON
 Come on. Don't let a jerk like
 that get to you --

JOY
 No, Karon! Don't you see?
 Being fired from a hospital is
 not like being fired from an
 office or a store! People will
 just assume we did something
 wrong.

KARON
 Not people who know us -- people
 we've worked with. We've got a
 damn good record -- a perfect
 record --

JOY
 -- that now says we were fired
 for dereliction of duty!

ANGLE ON CAR

They get in and shut the doors. Joy stares out the wind-
 shield, frightened and upset. Karon looks at her
 sympathetically.

JOY
 We're not going to be able to
 keep the business open, Karon.
 As soon as people hear about this,
 (MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY (contd)

they're going to stay away from us. We may still be nurses, but I don't think there's going to be anyplace we can do our jobs.

Karon is silent. She realizes things look very bleak.

JOY (contd)

I was afraid we were going too fast, without really thinking it through.

KARON

Hey. Wait a minute. Are you blaming me for this?

JOY

(desperate)

You're the one who brought the TV people --

KARON

That's not fair. You wanted to do this as much as I did -- at least, you said you did!

JOY

I did! But you said we could do it without jeopardizing our jobs at the hospital --

KARON

All right! I was wrong! So sue me!

There is a long pause, filled with tension. Karon draws a deep breath, calms herself, and reaches over to touch Joy's trembling hand.

KARON (contd)

(softer)

I'm sorry. You know I've got a big mouth. Look. It's not going to help anything to jump all over each other. We've got to stick together right now.

(beat; hopefully)

What do you say? Still partners?

Slowly, Joy looks up. There are tears in her eyes, but she manages a tentative smile.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

(nodding)

Partners.

(beat; earnestly)

Karon -- what are we going to do?

Karon takes a moment to think.

KARON

We're going to make the practice pay. And we're going to fight the hospital. What they've done to us isn't right.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BRODERICK'S LAW OFFICE

Karon and Joy are anxiously perched on chairs across from Broderick.

BRODERICK

The hospital isn't covered by Civil Service, or even a union contract so, in effect, they can make their own rules ...

KARON

You mean, they can get away with it?

BRODERICK

(uncomfortable)

Your dismissal was clearly inequitable, but unfortunately not illegal ... Actually, litigation is not my specialty ... You are free to seek some other legal representation ... Perhaps file a breach of implied contract suit ... A long, costly process.

DIRECT CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY OF FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY (MOS)

CAMERA PANS the lobby listing of government agencies in the building -- to Karon and Joy, scanning the listing for the one they seek.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BRODERICK (V.O.)

(continuing over)

There just might be an actionable case if a Federal agency became involved ...

Karon and Joy have found the listing they seek. Move to elevator.

BRODERICK (V.O. contd)

You can file a complaint on your own to, say, the National Labor Relations Board.

INT. AN N.L.R.B. OFFICIAL'S OFFICE

Karon and Joy are now seated across desk from OFFICIAL who is perusing a legal document while they wait anxiously for verdict.

OFFICIAL

Your request for a review and appeal of your discharge from employment seems to be drawn up properly ...

KARON

Does that mean your agency will prosecute the case for us?

OFFICIAL

I'm afraid not ... While I personally am very sympathetic with your circumstances, there is no evidence here that your dismissal was in any way connected with labor practices or union activities.

DIRECT CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Karon's car makes its way along a rain-soaked highway.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Karon drives, closely watching the road ahead through the sweep of the windshield wipers. Joy is beside her in the front seat. Dr. Castro, dressed in a tuxedo, is stretched out across the back seat.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

And without that, he said, his hands were tied. I've never seen so many tied hands in my life.

DR. CASTRO

Where do you go next?

KARON

We'll try the League of Nurses attorneys and the Equal Opportunities Employment people, soon as they can schedule us. It may take a while.

DR. CASTRO

You must not give up. Because you are right!

JOY

How much further?

KARON

Shouldn't be too far. Mrs. Cernac said it was two miles past the Kingery highway.

EXT. LOWER MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD

Karon's car traverses streets of old, shabby neighborhood shops in transition from foreign-born to racially mixed, turns corner to residential street.

EXT. CERNAC RESIDENCE

Small house 60 or more years old in a neighborhood well past its prime. Car pulls up, stops.

INT. CAR

Dr. Castro is dead asleep on back seat.

KARON

(gently)

Doctor ... we're here ...

He comes awake immediately, totally professional, begins reassembling himself.

INT. CERNAC RESIDENCE - ANGLE AT FRONT DOOR

A lifetime of living evident in the worn furnishings, Old World European influence in the faded lace curtains, antimacassars, etc. MRS. CERNAC, late 70s, near blind, wearing thick-lensed glasses, and walking with cane, answers the doorbell. (The Cernacs still retain flavor of their country of origin in their slightly accented English.)

MRS. CERNAC
(peering at them)
You are the nurses?

Karon, Joy, with case, Dr. Castro, with case, enter.

JOY
Yes, Mrs. Cernac ... and this
is Dr. Castro ...

MRS. CERNAC
Thank God you came ...
(calls)
Hugo, they came ...

She leads them through small front parlor into small, dimly-lighted bedroom.

INT. CERNAC BEDROOM

Propped upright on the bed (to facilitate breathing) fully dressed, is MR. CERNAC, fragile, close to 80, extremely ill. Speech requiring too much energy, he raises a frail hand in greeting.

DR. CASTRO
Mr. Cernac, I'm Dr. Castro ...
(indicating Joy
and Karon)
Nurse Gibson, Nurse Catterson ...
Let me listen to your chest, hm?

Karon puts thermometer in old man's mouth, takes his pulse. Dr. Castro listens with stethoscope. Joy moves to Mrs. Cernac, who hovers anxiously nearby, frightened.

JOY
Are you all right?

Mrs. Cernac, attention riveted to her husband, waves away concern about herself.

JOY (contd)
How long has he been ill like
this?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MRS. CERNAC

Like this ... one day ... But
ill? We are both old.

ANGLE ON DR. CASTRO

He takes stethoscope from ears, gives the old man gentle
pat on head, moves to Mrs. Cernac. Joy moves to help
Karon make the patient comfortable.

DR. CASTRO

(quietly, with great
gentleness)

Mrs. Cernac, we're going to have
to get your husband to a hospital.

Cernac, who has heard this, shoves Karon, who is adjusting
pillow behind his head, out of his view.

CERNAC

No hospital ... no.

MRS. CERNAC

(despairing)

I tell him hospital, he says he
will not go.

CERNAC

(insistent, agitated)

In fifty-five years we are never
one night apart ... I do not leave
my wife ... no ... no hospital.

Mrs. Cernac moves to him, comforting him.

Dr. Castro signals Joy and Karen to join him just outside
bedroom door.

ANGLE ON CASTRO, JOY, KARON

DR. CASTRO

He's critical ... needs oxygen
... but to move him, in that
agitated state, could be as life-
threatening for him as his pneumonia.

Joy opens case, takes out card.

JOY

I have the emergency number of a
24-hour medical supply house ...

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY (contd)

Couldn't we have oxygen brought
here ... ? The police could
bring it ...

DR. CASTRO

It could be an all night vigil ...

Castro's eyes seek theirs: a look of agreement is shared
by the three. Karon takes card from Joy.

KARON

I'll make the calls.

DIRECT CUT TO:

INT. CERNAC'S BEDROOM - LATER NIGHT

Cernac is now in bed, hooked up to oxygen. A towel is
draped over the lamp so that only the barest light
illuminates the room. Dr. Castro sits on a straight
chair at bedside, his whole being focused on the patient.
Karon steps silently into room with an extra blanket
which she puts over the patient. Without taking his
eyes off the patient, Castro nods approval.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CERNAC'S BEDROOM - LATER

The light is similarly shaded. Karon has fallen asleep
sitting up in a chair in the corner. PULL BACK for
Dr. Castro, on his feet, stethoscope to Cernac's chest,
listening. Joy completing taking Cernac's pulse. Karon
comes awake, takes in the critical scene, quickly moves
to the bed.

KARON

(as Joy completes
pulse reading)
The same?

JOY

(concern)
Same ...

KARON

Didn't mean to drop off ...

Both look to Dr. Castro, who puts away stethoscope.
Again sits down, gravely observing his patient.

JUMP CUT:

CLOSE - THE WINDOW

as light FADES UP from darkness to dawn. PULL BACK -- Karon moves to lamp, turns it off. Reacts, pleased, to find Cernac lying quietly, eyes open.

KARON

Well, Mr. Cernac, feeling a little better ... ?

ANGLE INCLUDES Dr. Castro, seated on chair in corner, having dropped off in a doze. He comes guiltily awake, moves to bed. Face breaks into smile at the improvement he sees.

DR. CASTRO

Good morning ...

CERNAC

My wife ... where is my wife?

ANGLE TO DOOR

Mrs. Cernac, aided in walking by Joy, comes into the room.

MRS. CERNAC

(relieved)

Hugo ... Hugo ...

Dr. Castro, Karon, Joy withdraw from the room.

SHOOTING PAST CASTRO, KARON, JOY - FOR THEIR POV

Mrs. Cernac, sitting on the chair beside the bed, holding her husband's hand, stroking it, raises his hand to her lips, kisses it.

DR. CASTRO

If there is any satisfaction in the world greater than seeing a patient through a crisis, I have yet to hear of it.

They leave.

INT. NURSING OFFICE - DAY

It is Sunday. The office is closed. Joy is in jeans and t-shirt at typewriter, writing out bills. Coffee pot at her elbow. Karon, in jogging suit, enters from street.

JOY

Run all the way over?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

Yeah, with my foot on the gas pedal.

JOY

You could use the day off. Why didn't you take it?

KARON

Why didn't you?

JOY

I'm beginning to worry about money.

KARON

Move over.

Karon gets her own coffee mug, pulls up a chair and begins putting bills into envelopes, sealing and stamping them.

KARON (contd)

Didn't the Carmichael's pay their bill?

JOY

Check bounced.

KARON

I didn't count on patients being so slow paying.

JOY

Lot of things we didn't figure in this whole thing.

KARON

(nods)

We haven't been tough enough with collections. We could make a lot more money not doing house calls in pairs. Maybe we shouldn't do tub baths. Bed baths go more quickly.

JOY

Tub baths are better for the patient. Maybe we spend too much time talking to patients.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

Who else have some of them got
to talk to? We do too many
freebies.

JOY

You going to stand in the doorway
and turn away people who need us?

They share a rueful smile at their vulnerability, continue
with their work.

KARON

How are things with Gordon?

JOY

The same.

Another unspoken moment of empathy, then Karon, about to
stuff a bill into envelope, tears bill up.

KARON

Why waste the postage?

Joy glances to see name on bill, nods agreement, drops
torn bill into wastebasket. They continue with their
work.

CUT TO:

INT. SAVINGS AND LOAN OFFICE - DAY

Karon is making a pitch to a Vice President (so labeled
on his desk) who studies the presentation she has handed
him.

KARON

You could use it as a special
promotion offer to new savers --
\$2 for blood pressure reading,
\$1 for diabetes testing ... We've
even devised a motto for you --
"Save Money, Save Your Health,
Stay Alive and Save More ... "

The Vice President, with polite negative smile, hands
presentation back to her.

INT. BOARD OF EDUCATION - CLOSE ON TELEPHONE DESK - DAY

SECRETARY ON TELEPHONE DESK

Board of Education ...

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SECRETARY ON TELEPHONE DESK (contd)
 Superintendent's Office ...
 I'm sorry, that line is busy,
 if you care to hold ... Board
 of Education ...

PAN TO JOY, sitting outside a door marked: SUPERINTENDENT.
 She rises eagerly as a FEMALE AIDE comes out, and with
 negative smile returns presentation to her.

AIDE
 We appreciate your having brought
 this to our attention, but we
 wouldn't be interested at this
 time ...

JOY
 (fighting against her
 shyness, blurts)
 But did you explain that our
 rates are negotiable ... And
 how important on-site health
 testing is for teachers who
 don't have time to seek medical
 attention ...

But the Aide has already moved away to her own desk.

INT. TRAVEL AGENCY - DAY

Both Karon and Joy on another side of desk from TRAVEL
 EXECUTIVE.

KARON
 But don't you see ... you'd be
 doing your clients a valuable
 service if, prior to sailing,
 or on an overseas flight, you
 provided them with complimentary
 blood pressure tests ...

TRAVEL EXECUTIVE
 What if they find out they've
 got high blood pressure, and
 cancel the ticket?

He hands presentation back to them.

TRAVEL EXECUTIVE (contd)
 You're bright, you know that?
 (MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

TRAVEL EXECUTIVE (contd)

If you two ever want a job on
any of our ships -- 'course we
got all our nurses booked for the
season -- leave your application
on the way out ...

With an exchange of rueful looks, Joy and Karon exit.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK (FUN CITY) - DAY

CAMERA PANS Karon (uniformed, with case) crossing the
children-clogged midway of the gaudy, noisy amusement
center. Clowns. Hoopla. Cotton candy. Organ grinder
with monkey, surrounded by kids. CAROUSEL MUSIC over
all -- to small FIRST AID STATION in temporary bungalow.
A makeshift sign reads:

Services provided by
REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL NURSES, INC.

INT. FIRST AID STATION - JOY AND CHILD

Joy has just finished cleaning and bandaging child's
knee scrape, wipes child's face clean of tear streaks,
hands him back his cotton candy. The child exits
happily.

JOY

(calling after him)

Try not to get dirt on it, okay?

KARON

The traffic ... but I made it.
Anything to tell me before I
take over?

JOY

Yeah. After eight o'clock, the
mosquitoes and the weirdos come
out. But it's work.

KARON

Thanks.

There is a SOUND outside. A car turns into the parking
area behind the first aid station. Its tires SQUEAL.
Joy and Karon look up and react. They step outside.

POV - CAR

It is Gordon. Gordon maneuvers his car into the parking

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

area and slams on the brakes, barely missing another parked vehicle. He fumbles to open the door and gets out, staggering as he walks toward the first aid station. Many bystanders stop and look.

ANGLE ON JOY AND KARON

Joy reacts, horrified. Karon looks on with concern.

JOY

Oh dear God!

EXT. FIRST AID STATION - NIGHT

Joy meets Gordon at the door. He is very drunk and has difficulty standing. He surveys the small, dingy first aid station with disdain.

JOY

Gordon -- what are you doing here?

GORDON

(too loud)

I came to see you. Anything wrong with that? Can't a man come see his own wife when he wants to? Hell, I never see you around the house anymore --

He stumbles again and falls. Joy supports him. Karon moves over to help, but Joy motions her back.

JOY

I've got him.

(beat)

Come on, Gordon. Let's go home.

GORDON

(more subdued)

Home? Sure, let's go home.

Joy supports him, then looks back.

JOY

Karon? I --

KARON

Forget it. I'll see you tomorrow.

Joy nods and guides Gordon out to the parking lot.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

He has lost his belligerence and has become more like a helpless little boy.

ANGLE ON KARON

She watches Joy guide Gordon over to her car.

FADE OUT

End of Act Five

ACT SIX

FADE IN

INT. JOY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Joy straightens up the breakfast dishes. The kids have eaten and are gone. Gordon enters, hesitantly. He wears his bathrobe. Joy does not acknowledge his presence.

GORDON

No breakfast this morning.
Just some coffee.

JOY

(without looking
at him)
On the stove.

He moves to the stove with a cup, stops.

GORDON

I'm sorry about yesterday. I
got reassigned again. I was
upset.

No response from Joy. He bristles.

GORDON (contd)

Look. Don't you think I feel
lousy enough about it without
you carrying on like a damn
martyr?

Joy turns and faces him. She appears composed, strong.

JOY

I'm not going to fight with you,
Gordon. I've got too much to
think about right now. Later --
when you calm down -- we'll talk.

She starts to go out.

GORDON

Where you going? Back to that
damn office?

JOY

(quietly)
I have an appointment with a lawyer.

GORDON

About us?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

No. It's about the hospital --
but -- sometimes, I think it
might just as well be about us.

She exits. Gordon is shaken and confused.

DIRECT CUT TO:

INT. LEAGUE OF NURSES OFFICE

A MALE LAWYER is sitting behind an impressive executive desk, Karon and Joy opposite him.

LAWYER

As Counsel for the League of
Nurses, my sympathy is clearly
with your cause ...

KARON

(wryly)
But your hands are tied ...

LAWYER

Look, right or wrong aside, any
lawyer you'd go to at this point
will likely suggest you drop the
matter, give up your private
practice ... and, in time, the
hospital can likely be convinced
to reinstate you ...

JOY

(outraged)
Give up our practice?

KARON

After all we've gone through.
Just pack it in.

LAWYER

You said yourselves that the
hospital job paid better than
the private practice, which was
barely breaking even.

JOY

It's not just the money.

KARON

It's the principle.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

The Lawyer looks at them, slightly bemused at their militancy.

LAWYER

I wish you well, but in relation to the State Nursing Act, Section 15, your grievance does not fall within our domain.

He rises, dismissing them.

LAWYER (contd)

Well, good luck.

Karon and Joy nod, turn to exit. Just as they reach the door.

LAWYER (contd)

'Cause you're going to need it.

DIRECT CUT TO:

INT. JEAN DAWKINS' BEDROOM - DAY

Joy checks on the IV while Karon prepares the medical kit. Jean tolerates them, while Susan looks on.

JOY

We're going to have to change the needle today. You up to it?

JEAN

Sure. Let's get it over with.
(to Susan)
You go on, kid.

SUSAN

I -- I thought, maybe I'd stay and watch them do it. Then maybe I could help sometime --

JOY

It's a simple procedure, Mrs. Dawkins. We'd be happy to show Susan how to do it.

JEAN

No! You go on, baby. Get some rest.

Reluctantly, Susan leaves. Joy and Karon exchange looks.

CONTINUED

KARON

You really ought to let her help out, Jean. She just wants to feel useful.

JEAN

Look. I ain't kiddin' myself. I know I ain't goin' to be around much longer -- but I intend to spare that child as long as I can.

(beat; pensive)

Sometimes I think -- maybe I made things too easy on her, lookin' out for her the way I done. I don't know. Now I ain't sure how she's goin' to handle it -- when my time comes.

Jean reaches out and touches Joy's hand. Their eyes meet.

JEAN (contd)

Be straight with me. How long have I got?

JOY

Only a doctor could tell you that.

JEAN

(a sigh of resignation)

Let's get a doctor, then. So long as I know when it's comin', then I can face it my own way.

KARON

(softly)

Jean -- when you know -- I think you ought to tell Susan. Don't you think it's going to be pretty hard for her to face, unless you let her share what you're going through.

Jean turns her face away, trying to hide the turmoil in her eyes.

INT. NURSING OFFICE - NIGHT

It is after hours. The shades are drawn. Joy and Karon are changing from work uniforms to cocktail dresses, freshening make-up, hair-dos, etc. It is quiet.

KARON

You're not very talkative today.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

Nothing much to say.

KARON

(difficult admission)

You know ... maybe I was wrong and you were right. I was pushing too fast. Publicity, and all that. Maybe we ought to do what that last lawyer said, close up, and ask for our jobs back.

JOY

(incredulous)

That what you want?

KARON

I was thinking of you. Having the kids, problems. We just can't make it over the top without agencies and corporations. And they don't want us as long as there are doubts about our firing.

JOY

We can't go back now, Karon. I've thought about it, too. Publicity or not, it would have happened anyway. The hospital wanted us out because of what we were doing outside. I'm not going to give up the fight.

Joy is startled to have said so much with such strength.

KARON

Listen to you!

Karon walks over to Joy, gives her a long hug. Joy's new-found strength moves her.

KARON (contd)

I'm with you. We still have the Equal Employment Opportunities people. Maybe we'll have a chance with them.

JOY

I can't tell you how much I am not looking forward to tonight.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

I'm not all that excited about it either, but I feel like I have to go. After all, the Policeman's Ball only comes once a year -- and it's important to the guys.

JOY

It's hard for me to feel any obligation to Gordon after the way he's been acting.

(beat; pensive)

Sometimes I just wish he could see himself. Maybe that would sober him up for good.

She mulls it over as she completes getting dressed.

INT. POLICEMAN'S BALL - NIGHT

CAMERA MOVES with WAITER as he carries a tray of several cocktails, all frothy pink ladies, between tables of cops and their wives or dates. Some of the men are in dress uniform, complete with commendation medals, but most are in formal attire. The women wear elegant gowns and many have corsages pinned to them. Groups are seated at individual tables off the dance floor. In the b.g. a BAND is playing. Several couples are dancing beneath the streamers and other decorations.

JOY'S VOICE

(calling loudly)

Hey, waiter! Over here with the pink ladies!

The waiter responds.

ANGLE ON TABLE

Joy is at a table with Ralph, Karon, Gordon, and another OLDER COUPLE. Four empty cocktail glasses are in front of her. She's already bubbly, giddy and uncharacteristically loud. The other couple is pointedly trying to ignore her. Ralph is mystified. Karon is amused, but trying to play it straight. Gordon is actually embarrassed to the point of staying sober.

JOY

Hey, over here! Move it, Charley!

WAITER

Yes, madam.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Even as he is setting the glasses on the table, Joy starts downing them. Gordon ducks his head to one side and covertly whispers to her.

GORDON
Come on, Joy! Cut it out.
You've had enough.

JOY
(loudly)
Don't tell me what I've had!
I know when I've had --
(burp)
-- enough, and I haven't! So
there.

GORDON
All right! Just hold it down,
for God's sake!

JOY
You're the one who's talking!
I'm not talking! You hold it
down!

Gordon looks around, humiliated. Ralph leans over and whispers to Karon.

RALPH
What the hell's got into her?

KARON
(innocent)
What do you mean?

Then -- aside and secretly -- she gives Joy a wink. In the meantime, Joy has started to SING ALONG to the band, waving her full cocktail glass about in the air.

GORDON
Joy! Come on! Stop it!

He reaches for the glass -- but she spills it all over him.

GORDON (contd)
Now look what you did!

JOY
(overly contrite)
Oh, I'm so sorry. It's all my
fault! Everything's my fault!
I'll apologize to everybody --

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GORDON
(humiliated)
Damn it, Joy! You're embarrassing
me!

JOY
I am? Gosh, I'm so sorry.

She starts to climb up on her chair to address the assembled multitude -- but Gordon forcefully restrains her.

GORDON
All right! That's it! We're
going home!

He grabs her arm and starts tugging her out. Joy momentarily balks, looks back at Karon, and allows herself to be led out. Ralph looks at Karon, confused. Karon maintains her innocent demeanor.

INT. JOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joy is taking her make-up off in front of a mirror. She's composed now, but still a touch tipsy -- when she inadvertently smears one side of her lipstick, she matches it by equally smearing the other side before wiping it all off. Gordon comes INTO SCENE from the bathroom where he has been trying to remove the spilled pink lady from his jacket. He inspects it, then tosses it aside, and stares at Joy.

GORDON
How could you do that to me?
You were disgusting. I've never
been so embarrassed in my whole
life.

JOY
Now maybe you know how I feel.

GORDON
Don't try to turn it all around.
That's different.

JOY
No it isn't. It's just the same.

He studies her closely, suspiciously.

GORDON
You did it on purpose, didn't you.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

(nods)

I'm sorry.

(but then:)

No, I'm not. I wanted you to see
how I felt, to understand.

He reaches into a drawer and takes out a pint bottle. Pointedly, he tips it up, takes a long, deep swallow. Then he holds it out toward her.

GORDON

Here. Maybe it's not as fancy
as a pink lady -- but it works
just as good.

Without seeming to change her expression, she slaps her hand at the bottle, knocks it from his grip, and sends it splattering against the wall with a CRACK.

Gordon reacts with surprise, almost shock. He stares at the stained, splattered wall ... then back at Joy.

GORDON (contd)

What's wrong with you?

She turns -- deliberately -- to the closet and starts taking some of her clothes from it. Gordon watches her for a moment with surprise and confusion.

GORDON (contd)

Come on, don't do that -- let's
forget it.

(when she does not
answer)

Look, you don't know what you're
doing -- you're still drunk from
the party.

(he tries to stop her,
but she goes right on
packing)

All right! All right -- what d'you
want?

JOY

You know what I want.

(moves to him)

I love you, and no matter what
happens between us, I'll still
love you. But you have to under-
stand. If you don't stop, I will
leave.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GORDON

It's just ... I don't know if I could.

JOY

Yes you can. That's something else I found out. It's not that hard to change. Once you set your mind to it, you can make it happen.

Gordon's sober, almost stricken look indicates clearly that he does understand, that he does recognize that Joy has changed, and that he senses it is a crucial moment between them.

INT. FEDERAL BUILDING CORRIDOR - CLOSE ON A DOOR LABELED:
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION - DAY

INT. EEOC OFFICIAL'S OFFICE - DAY

A desk separates Joy and Karen from the EEOC OFFICIAL. They wait anxiously while he peruses government forms on their case.

KARON

(hopefully)

You can see it's an open and shut case of sex discrimination.

EEOC OFFICIAL

I don't know how you expect to make that stick, Miss -- Mrs. --

KARON

Ms. Gibson.

JOY

(more forceful
than usual)

And Ms. Catterson.

KARON

Why can't we make it stick?
We were dismissed for having an outside practice -- it's the same thing doctors do all the time --

EEOC OFFICIAL

That would only be germane if you were on the same level. Let's

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

EEOC OFFICIAL (contd)
face it -- they're doctors and
you're nurses.

JOY
But isn't that what this whole
thing's about?

EEOC OFFICIAL
You don't understand ... If female
physicians were discharged without
cause, while male physicians were
kept on -- or vice versa -- that
would qualify as sex discrimination
in employment ... I'm sorry, there's
really nothing I can do for you.

JOY
It's taken all these weeks to tell
us that?

EEOC OFFICIAL
We have very heavy caseloads,
these things take time.

KARON
You're telling us ... Well, thanks
anyway.

Discouraged, Joy and Karon start for door. Official,
whose attention has gone back to their forms, again
swivels away so that back of his chair is to them.

EEOC OFFICIAL
It's too bad, really ... because
you were treated badly. Now,
if only there'd been a male nurse
who --

Karon and Joy, about to exit, whirl back to him -- excited
-- circling with him as he turns his chair back to desk.

KARON
Wait a minute ... there was!

JOY
Curtis!

KARON
Curtis Johnson!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

EEOC OFFICIAL
Who wasn't fired for outside
involvement ... while you were?

JOY
Oh, he didn't open a practice,
he was going to college.

KARON
With permission to sleep while
on duty -- and a record of
absenteeism as long as your arm.

EEOC OFFICIAL
And he was still there when you
were fired?

JOY
He's still there. You can check
with anybody at the hospital.

Official gets up, recharged.

EEOC OFFICIAL
That casts an entirely different
light on your case.

KARON
Does that mean the hospital will
be forced to settle with us?

EEOC OFFICIAL
No. But it means you've got a
case providing, of course, every-
thing checks out. We'll have to
investigate your allegations.

JOY
How long will that take?

EEOC OFFICIAL
It's hard to say. Just give us
time. I'll get back to you when
I have something to report.

Karon and Joy exchange a rueful look: So what else is
new?

INT. JEAN DAWKINS' HOUSE - DAY

Joy and Karon have just entered and are in the foyer.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

You know, for the first time, I
dread seeing her.

JOY

Maybe she won't ask. Dr. Castro
said she didn't.

KARON

That just means she already knew.

JEAN'S VOICE

(calling o.s.)

Hey, you guys! Get your fannies
in here!

They react to each other, and move toward the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Karon and Joy enter and find Jean sitting up, putting on
make-up and combing her hair.

JEAN

Hi, gals. Well, what do you
think -- about the paint job?
I figured, why spend the insurance
money on a mortician, when I could
still do it myself.

JOY

You shouldn't talk like that, Jean.

JEAN

Don't try to snooker an old
snooker shooter, kid. I could
tell from the long puss on Dr.
Good-Lookin' that the only thing
keepin' me goin' is that little
needle you two keep jabbin' in me.

(direct, pointed)

So -- no needle, no problem.

(a proposition)

Right? Okay?

JOY

Jean, you know we couldn't do that.

JEAN

Hell, I'm not askin' you to do it.
I don't ask nobody to do what I
can do for myself.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

We're not going to let you do it, either. Look. I know we promised we wouldn't, but now we're going to have to tell your daughter.

JEAN

Well, you're out of luck. She ain't here. I sent her off to Miami.

JOY

You shouldn't have done that, Jean. Suzie had a right to be here with you.

JEAN

And watch me turn into a glob of chopped liver? No way! It was my decision, and I made it.

KARON

It's got to be our decision, too. You're our patient, and you're not going to pull the plug on us!

There is a SOUND at the door. Jean looks up and reacts, startled. Susan enters the bedroom and sets down a suitcase.

SUSAN

I'm sorry, Mom. I know I always do what you tell me -- but not this time. This time I'm going to do what I want to -- and that's to stay right here with you.

Jean is moved, surprised -- perhaps really seeing her daughter for the first time. Tentatively, Susan moves over to her, reaches out and takes her mother's hand.

SUSAN (contd)

(softly)

How 'bout it, Mom? Are you going to let me take care of you?

Slowly, Jean nods as tears fill her eyes. Susan goes to her and they embrace, warmly, as Joy and Karon look on.

INT. NURSING OFFICE - DAY

There are a few patients waiting in the front office.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Joy and Karon are in the back. Joy is drinking coffee. Karon is pacing, nervously.

KARON

I don't know why this has to be so dramatic. He could have told us over the phone.

JOY

The guy's probably a sadist. Likes to deliver bad news in person.

The door opens and the EEOC Official enters.

EEOC OFFICIAL

Sorry to keep you waiting, but I don't think you'll mind. The Commission has found in your favor.

Joy and Karon react with excitement.

KARON

Then that means you'll sue for us -- and the hospital will have to pay the damages --

JOY

And we'll get out jobs back?

EEOC OFFICIAL

Well -- it doesn't work exactly like that. If you wish to follow up with legal action -- and I certainly feel that would be appropriate -- you'll be on your own. The manner in which you act upon this ruling is entirely up to you.

Rocked, they stare at him.

KARON

You mean ... you're not going to settle it for us?

EEOC OFFICIAL

Our job was merely to evaluate whether or not you have good

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

EEOC OFFICIAL (contd)
cause for action on the basis
of discrimination ... Oh, we'll
issue a Right to Sue notice, but
beyond that, any legal action you
must take on yourselves, at your
own expense.

They are deflated once again.

FADE OUT

End of Act Six

ACT SEVEN

FADE IN

INT. McDONALD'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Karon carries food to a table where Joy sits, pouring over a xeroxed list of pages and pages of lawyer's names.

JOY

How do you pick a lawyer out of a list like this?

KARON

Use a pin ... Here, eat.

They eat, dispiritedly.

KARON (contd)

No matter who we pick, it'll be some man who'll tell us ...

She stops: as both get the idea at the same time.

KARON (contd)

(excited)

You know something?

JOY

Yes ... this is about sex discrimination ... And we've been going to the wrong kind of lawyer all along.

DIRECT CUT TO:

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

MADELINE FARMER is an attractive, well-dressed woman about the same age as Karon. She has sifted through the EEOC forms and the other documents that she has on the desk before her.

FARMER

I think you've got a decent case here -- and I think I can do a good job for you -- but I want to caution you, it won't be easy.

KARON

I don't understand. You have the EEOC findings. Isn't that all we need?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

FARMER

It helps -- but it's not always that easy to prove discrimination in a legal forum where detailed evidence must be presented.

(beat)

I know what you've been through -- and I'm in complete sympathy with you. I just don't want you to get your hopes up too high.

Joy and Karon look at each other and react. They're getting used to this.

INT. NURSING OFFICE - DAY

Karon completes a blood pressure test of WALTER BARNES, a nicely-dressed, middle-aged patient.

KARON

Looking good, Mr. Barnes. Just be sure and stay on that low sodium diet we gave you.

BARNES

I will. Thank you, Nurse.

Joy moves over to him, holding his bill.

JOY

Mr. Barnes. Your account is in arrears. You owe for seven visits, fourteen shots --

BARNES

I'll take care of it. You don't have to worry.

JOY

That's what you said last week -- and the week before.

BARNES

(annoyed)

I said I'd take care of it. Now if you'll excuse me --

Joy quickly moves to block his path. Karon looks on, surprised at her aggressiveness.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

Mr. Barnes. You pay your garage bills on time, don't you? If you didn't, they wouldn't let you have your car back! Well, your metabolism is just as important as your transmission. You go to church every Sunday, don't you? What does the Bible say about the workman being worthy of his hire?

He has no reply to this. Grumbling, he takes out his check book. The PHONE RINGS and Karon answers it, while Joy revels in this small victory.

KARON

(on phone)

Registered Professional Nurses.

(listens with
growing concern)

Yes, that's correct. Very well.

We'll send someone right away.

Goodbye.

She hangs up and scribbles down the information. Barnes pays, hands his check to Joy and exits. Karon looks up.

KARON (contd)

Maybe you better take this one.

Joy looks at her, cautious. Karon hands her the note and Joy reads it.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Joy is ushered by a police OFFICER past other patrolmen at desks, on phones -- to a small, glassed-in cubbyhole office. The officer opens the door for her.

OFFICER

He's in there.

Joy enters. The officer shuts the door behind her. Gordon lies on a wooden bench, drenched with sweat. He looks up weakly, registers surprise.

GORDON

They said they'd sent for somebody. I didn't know it would be you.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Joy moves about in a professional manner, opening her bag, taking out the thermometer, taking his pulse.

JOY

(flat)

Registered Professionals applied to the division as an auxiliary medical service -- for when the patient doesn't require paramedics or E.R. The Desk Sergeant probably still had our card.

Gordon looks at her closely, confused. Joy goes about her business, checking his vital signs, without directly looking him in the eye.

JOY (contd)

How long have you had these symptoms -- ?

GORDON

Couple of days, I guess.

(beat; eyes her closely)

You might not believe this, nurse -- but I used to drink a lot.

JOY

And you don't now?

GORDON

Well, I tried for a long time to give it up. They even put me on the drunk wagon -- picking up winos and kids out of the gutter -- but I guess I needed a real kick in the head, you know?

Joy prepares a hypodermic needle, trying not to react.

GORDON (contd)

Couple days ago, I quit. It's kinda eatin' my guts out.

JOY

You're in withdrawal. Roll up your sleeve, please.

He does so. She gives him a shot.

JOY (contd)

This is B-12. It might help you
(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY (contd)
for now, but alcoholism is a
disease -- and it's going to
take more than shots to cure it.

She puts away her things as she talks. Gordon watches
her closely, hoping for some warmth or human contact.

JOY (contd)
We recommend professional counseling
-- a good nutritional program --
and exercise --
(beat; avoiding
his gaze)
And -- we strongly suggest a
support group -- AA -- your
friends -- family --

She starts to leave.

GORDON
(sincerely)
You know something. You're a
damn good nurse.

For the first time, she really looks at him. Their eyes
meet significantly.

INT. NURSING OFFICE - NIGHT

Joy opens the door and steps into the office. She is
surprised to find Madeline Farmer sitting across the
desk from Karon.

KARON
How'd it go?

JOY
(with a smile)
Not as bad as I thought. I think
everything's going to be just fine.

She sits down wearily and kicks off her shoes.

KARON
(trying to contain
her excitement)
Well -- we've got some news that
might perk you up a bit.

JOY
What's that?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

FARMER

I just came by to tell you --
I've filed your case against
the hospital. Believe it or
not, you're finally going to
get your day in court.

Joy looks at Karon and reacts, scarcely daring to believe
it.

EXT. COURTHOUSE BUILDING - DAY

ANGLE to ESTABLISH.

INT. COURTHOUSE BUILDING CORRIDOR - DAY

Joy, Karon and Madeline Farmer move briskly down the
corridor, with the lawyer briefing them as they go.

FARMER

You'll be under oath. Everything
you say will be scrutinized by
the other side for any flaws or
discrepancies, so be accurate,
factual and concise. This is a
deposition, so I won't be permitted
to cross-examine, although I will
be present to observe. Just don't
let the hospital's lawyer intimidate
you. Remember -- we are convinced
that we're right.

INT. DEPOSITION CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

It is a large, panelled room with a long conference table.
Joy and Farmer face the HOSPITAL LAWYER, while a STENO-
TYPIST keeps the record.

HOSPITAL LAWYER

Mrs. Catterson. Would you say,
in your own estimation, that your
conduct was always competent and
professional while you were
employed by Chicago General?

JOY

Yes.

HOSPITAL LAWYER

Was following established rules
and procedures part of that pro-
fessional competence?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

Yes. I followed the rules -- even when I didn't always agree with them.

HOSPITAL LAWYER

(interested)

Oh? Can you give an example of a time when you felt your own personal judgment superceded the judgment of your superiors at the hospital?

JOY

(flustered)

That's not what I meant. I --

(beat; getting control)

There were times on Psych when patients under our care needed a change of medication -- or to be transfered to the ICU -- and we were not permitted to make those decisions without the supervision of a doctor. We -- I think that nurses are capable of making a decision like that -- especially when a doctor is not available.

HOSPITAL LAWYER

In other words, you believe that you -- a nurse, with comparatively little medical training -- actually know as much as a doctor.

JOY

I didn't say that. What I meant was --

HOSPITAL LAWYER

We know what you meant; Mrs. Catterson. No more questions.

FARMER

For the record, may I ask Mrs. Catterson a question?

HOSPITAL LAWYER

Go ahead.

FARMER

Mrs. Catterson. Did you in fact ever countermand a doctor's order

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

FARMER (contd)

-- or take any action not specifically called for by a doctor or other medical superior?

JOY

No. I did not.

FARMER

Thank you.

INT. ANTEROOM - DAY

Joy and Madeline Farmer exit the conference room. Karon rises and goes over to them. CAMERA FOLLOWS as they cross the room and out the door.

KARON

How'd it go?

JOY

I don't know. I was petrified.

FARMER

You both did fine.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

CAMERA MOVES with them out into the hallway.

JOY

I don't know. I shouldn't have said that -- about nurses making decisions that doctors usually make --

KARON

Oh my God! I said the same thing!

FARMER

Will you two knock it off? You handled yourselves very well in there. I was proud of you.

KARON

What happens now?

FARMER

They'll take depositions from everybody at the hospital --

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

FARMER (contd)
the administration, nurses,
doctors -- and try to load
their case against you. In
the meantime --

JOY
I know. We wait.

FARMER
That's about the size of it.

INT. NURSING OFFICE - DAY

Karon and Joy, in jeans and t-shirts, scarves around their heads to keep dust out of their hair, are cleaning the office: Joy, washing one of the side windows. Karon, running the vacuum, pushes desk out of way, vacuums under it. They work silently, doggedly, a few moments. Then Karon turns off vacuum, gets the crick out of her back, stands, watching Joy, who is working by rote, her mind elsewhere. Dipping sponge in bucket, she starts to wash window.

KARON
You realize you've washed that
window twice?

JOY
(taken aback)
I have ... ?

Joy drops sponge into bucket, squeegees again. Karon pours herself a cup of coffee, takes a sip of it, and starts dusting the furniture. Both working with a vengeance, to try to work off some of their tension, worries.

KARON
You'd think the landlord would
take more off the rent, doing
our own cleaning. Though it
doesn't make a heck of a lot of
difference. A few more months
like this, we may not even be
able to come up with the rent ...

There is a KNOCK at the door. Dressed very neatly in a traveling suit, is Susan, Jean's daughter. She walks in.

SUSAN
Hi.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JOY

Susan, come in and have some coffee or something with us.

SUSAN

No, I can't really. I've finally put the house up for sale, and I'm leaving. I just wanted to thank both of you first for everything you did.

JOY

I only wish we could have done more.

SUSAN

Oh, I know you couldn't have saved Mom. No one could have. But I never would have been with her right to the last, except for you.

(beat; a smile)

Actually, I think you'd have been proud of me. I remembered all the things you taught me -- how to take care of her, just like you did.

(beat)

At the very end, Mom said -- "Hold me, kid. Hold on tight." Then she gave me this little wink, you know? I was still holding her when she died.

JOY

(moved)

I hope it wasn't too hard for you.

SUSAN

It wasn't really -- It was one of the nicest times we had together.

(beat)

That's why I want to thank you. Without you, I could never have done it. I guess I'd never even have known I could have ... So you see, in a way, maybe you did save someone. Me.

She gives them each a quick hug, then exits. Joy and Karon look at each other.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KARON

You know something, partner?
If I didn't realize it before,
I certainly do now. Lawsuit or
not, I wouldn't change a damn
thing.

JOY

Whether we win or lose.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

One of Al Berringer's limousines pulls up. Out step Joy,
Karon, Ralph and Gordon.

KARON

Thanks for the lift.

AL

Good luck!

The four head towards the courthouse.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

It is a small courtroom. On one side, Joy and Karon sit
with Madeline Farmer at the plaintiff's table. Opposite
them are the Hospital Attorney, the CNA and the HOSPITAL
ADMINISTRATOR. Sitting in the back for moral support
are Ralph and Gordon, wearing "civies." Also, Dr. Castro.
THERE ARE SEVERAL CLOSE ANGLES to show the hospital team
engaged in whispered conversation, while Joy, Karon and
Farmer look on. Abruptly, the JUDGE enters and moves to
the bench.

HOSPITAL ATTORNEY

(rising)

May we approach the bench, Your
Honor?

JUDGE

Yes.

Farmer gives Joy and Karon a reassuring pat, and moves
over to join the attorney in front of the judge.

ANGLE ON BENCH

The judge and the two lawyers are engaged in a hushed
conversation.

ANGLE ON RALPH, GORDON AND CASTRO

They are curious and a little nervous.

ANGLE ON JOY AND KARON

They look on, anxiously. They cling to each other's hands for support.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The conference breaks up, and Farmer returns to the desk. Ralph and Gordon lean forward, trying to hear what's going on.

FARMER

They're ready to settle. They have agreed to offer you your jobs back and are ready to discuss payment of damages --

JOY

What about the letter clearing our names?

FARMER

They balked on that. They won't put anything in writing.

JOY

(firmly)

Then you tell them we reject their offer. Without that letter there is no deal!

FARMER

Are you sure? You understand, they might very well withdraw the entire package and send us back to square one.

KARON

Tell 'em what they can do with their package!

FARMER

(a grin)

I was hoping you'd say that.

She marches back toward the bench, joined by the other attorney. Joy and Karen look on anxiously, as do Ralph and Gordon.

ANGLE ON BENCH

Madeline Farmer gathers up her courage and addresses both the judge and the hospital attorney.

FARMER

My clients reject the settlement. Their demands are as follows: one, the hospital must delete the terminations from their records; two, their files must indicate they left in good standing; three, the hospital must agree to supply letters of recommendation reflecting my clients' years of honorable service; four, the hospital must agree to an acceptable financial settlement to compensate my clients for damages and court costs -- and, finally -- the hospital will agree to offer my clients staff positions comparable to the ones from which they were dismissed.

JUDGE

Am I to assume that your clients are unwilling to negotiate or to compromise on these demands?

Farmer glances over at Joy and Karon, then looks back at the judge.

FARMER

That is correct, Your Honor. We will accept nothing less than full restoration of their previous professional status.

She waits, expectantly. The judge looks at the hospital attorney, who is not at all happy with this turn of events.

ANGLE ON JOY AND KARON

They wait with increasing anxiety, fully realizing that their future careers ride on what happens in the next few minutes. HOLD this ANGLE --

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

The doors open. Joy, Karon and Madeline Farmer step out,

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

followed by Ralph, Gordon and Dr. Castro. They move down the steps a few paces, pause and look at one another. Suddenly, they erupt in joyful celebration. They laugh, shout, hug each other like happy school children as CAMERA PULLS BACK TO FULL SHOT. WE HOLD on the group to truly enjoy the moment.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NURSING OFFICE - DAY - LATER

It is the same office, but it looks quite different. It has been modernized. There is a full waiting room, a receptionist and a few other nurses. We see Joy and Karon at work and Dr. Castro in a small, but nicely designed and furnished office in the back. With the three principals in shot, we

FREEZE FRAME

LEGEND

JOY CATTERSON AND KARON GIBSON DID NOT RETURN TO THE HOSPITAL. THEY CONTINUED THEIR INDEPENDENT NURSING PRACTICE AND HAVE MADE IT INTO A SUCCESS FOR THEIR PATIENTS AND THEMSELVES. DUE TO THEIR PIONEERING EFFORTS, THERE ARE TODAY, IN STATES WHICH SANCTION ALTERNATE HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS, MORE THAN 200 NURSES ENGAGED IN THE KIND OF PRIVATE PRACTICE JOY AND KARON FOUGHT SO HARD TO ESTABLISH.

FADE OUT

THE END