

LARS AND THE REAL GIRL

by
Nancy Oliver

Nancy Oliver
427 S. Westminster Ave. Apt. 113
Los Angeles, CA 90020-4639
213-480-3040
Nancyobiz@aol.com
WGA Registered #916327

LARS

EXT. MIDWEST WINTER LANDSCAPE -- EARLY MORNING

The beginning of winter. Dead cold fields; pine and bare tree woods; a highway that leads to a small town, a lake. Beautiful in a stark winter way but very cold.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE

Establishing.

EXT. LARS'S GARAGE APT. -- MORNING

Establishing.

INT. LARS'S GARAGE APT. -- MORNING

Lars is dressed for church. He wears an old, hand-knitted baby blanket like a shawl. He looks out the window, watches smoke rise from the chimneys in the neighborhood. He watches the family next door--husband, wife, children--in an ordinary Sunday morning routine. His breath mists the glass.

His rooms are sterile: bed, computer, one bowl, one plate, one cup; furniture he must have grown up with. We see a wedding picture of his parents, a wedding picture of his brother Gus and his sister-in-law Karin.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: BACKYARD -- CONTINUOUS

From the main house, KARIN, early 30's, pregnant but not showing yet, hurries across the backyard, past a big stack of firewood, to the garage. She's thrown a sweater over her bathrobe and wears slippers. She's the kind of woman who looks good in cold weather and no make-up.

INT. LARS'S GARAGE APT.--WINTER--CONTINUOUS

Lars opens the door. He's awkward and nervous with her, and concerned to see her in the cold.

LARS

Karin!

KARIN

I'm inviting you for breakfast.

Lars puts his blanket around her shoulders, careful not to touch her.

LARS

Sorry, I'm on my way to church.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN

After church, then. Come on, we haven't seen you for so long.

LARS

You're going to have a baby, run back in the house, what if you get sick?

KARIN

Come on, please.

She reaches to touch him, he takes a little step back. It's a subtle, practiced move, he does it unconsciously with everybody, most people don't notice. But today she does.

LARS

Yes, yes, okay.

KARIN

Promise?

LARS

Promise.

He watches her run back to the house--he wants to make sure she arrives safely. The house, to Lars, seems very far away.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Karin enters.

GUS

(sleepy)

Well?

Karin crawls back in bed with GUS, 40, a bigger, stronger, warmer version of Lars.

KARIN

You owe me five dollars.

GUS

Not till he's sitting at the table.

KARIN

Something's going on with him. I'm worried.

Gus doesn't pay much attention. He nuzzles her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

You keep saying that. Your maternal instincts are kicking in.

KARIN

He never lets me touch him.

GUS

Well, we're not like your family.

KARIN

What does that mean?

GUS

A million brothers and sisters fighting and hugging all the time.

KARIN

That's the way it's supposed to be.

GUS

He's shy, he'll grow out of it. I sure did.

He pounces on her, making her laugh. They forget about Lars. We hear church bells.

EXT. CHURCH - MORNING

A small Protestant church, friendly, not forbidding. We can hear sincere, bad Protestant singing.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

It's bright inside, white walls, stained glass, full of ordinary working- and middle-class people. Behind REVEREND BOCK the choir sits, among them MARGO, same age and type as LARS. She looks out and notices Lars, he doesn't see her. As usual with sermons, no one's listening.

REVEREND BOCK

Now, we have books and books and books of laws. But in all the world, there's really only one law.

During the sermon, Lars's POV: he looks at the cross, candles, flowers, a stained glass portrait of Mary and baby Jesus, other people's families, the little dramas in every pew. His gaze pauses on Margo who is looking through her music. Next to Lars, a restless little boy drops a stuffed animal. Lars picks it up, hands it back. He and the little boy look at each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REVEREND BOCK (CONT'D)
We need never ask, "what should I do?" We need never pray, "Lord, what should I do?" Because the Lord has told us, "Love one another." That, my friends, is the one true law. "Love one another" is God in action.

The choir rises to sing badly again.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

People file out after the service. A brisk older lady, MRS. GRUNER, 60's, tries to lift an unwieldy flower arrangement.

LARS
Need help, Mrs. Gruner?

MRS. GRUNER
Thank you, dear, it's my turn to drop them off at the hospital.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT -- LATER

Lars carries the flowers as they walk to Mrs. Gruner's car. She looks him over, approving.

MRS. GRUNER
You're a handsome fella, Lars.
Where's your girlfriend?

This is a question that causes Lars pain.

LARS
I don't have one.

MRS. GRUNER
Are you gay? Wouldn't bother me. My grandson's gay, I know all about the gays.

LARS
No, I'm not gay.

MRS. GRUNER
What are you waiting for?

LARS
I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. GRUNER

Well, don't wait too long, it's not good for you.

She hands him a flower from the arrangement.

MRS. GRUNER (CONT'D)

Give this to somebody nice, for a start.

She drives away. Margo walks up behind LARS.

MARGO

Hello, Lars.

He turns and steps back.

LARS

Hello, Margo.

Neither of them can think what to say.

MARGO

See you at work tomorrow?

LARS

Uh-huh.

Lars starts to walk away. Margo is disappointed. Then he turns back and thrusts the flower at her. She lights up.

MARGO

Oh! Wait--

But Lars power-walks away.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: KITCHEN -LATER

Gus cooks as he and Karin argue in a friendly way.

GUS

He's 30 years old. Maybe he WANTS to be left alone.

KARIN

That's NOT what he wants.

GUS

How do you know?

KARIN

Because that's not how people are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Through the window, we can see Lars sneak past, gradually increasing speed.

GUS
(spots him)
Whoops, there he goes!

He and Karin run to the door.

GUS (CONT'D)
Lars!

Lars dashes toward his apartment.

KARIN
You promised!

Lars waves and disappears inside.

GUS
Five bucks.

KARIN
Is that normal?

Gus shrugs, turns back to cooking. Karin turns back to Lars's apartment, a determined look on her face.

INT. LARS'S GARAGE APT.--WINTER--NIGHT

Lars rocks in the rocker, still wearing his church clothes, his bed made. It's 4 AM. He's been awake all night.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: DRIVEWAY -- NEXT MORNING

Haggard, Lars drives out. Karin watches him from the house.

EXT. LARS'S CAR - DAY

Lars drives to work through small-town landscape, winter bleak.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK -- LATER

Lars parks his car.

INT. COMPANY LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

Tired Lars enters, greeted by CINDY, the curvy African-American receptionist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY
Morning!

LARS
Hi, Cindy.

CINDY
Party hard this weekend?

LARS
(lying)
Oh, yeah. Woo.

He's very aware of her curves, they make him anxious, yet he can't make himself move away from them. Cindy is fond of Lars and likes to fix people up.

CINDY
The new girl's cute. You and Margo,
what do you think?

Lars struggles to speak but can't, makes a few strange noises.

CINDY (CONT'D)
(mystified)
Lars?

Mute, Lars waves and walks away.

CINDY (CONT'D)
Take care!

INT. OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Discouraged, Lars enters a room with three cubicles. KURT, a knee-jiggling co-worker, is already at his computer. Each cubicle features personal items: KURT's is full of action figures. Margo's has plants and a teddy bear. Lars's is spare - maybe a small picture of Gus and Karin. We hear the distinctive REAL GIRL music theme.

KURT
You gotta see this!

LARS
I'm not in the mood for porn.

KURT
It's not porn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lars gives him a look.

KURT (CONT'D)
Okay, it is, but check it out!

Lars joins him reluctantly. We can't see what's on the screen.

KURT (CONT'D)
Huh? Huh?

Lars looks closer.

LARS
Inflatable?

KURT
Nope. Real. Like if she'd weigh a hundred twenty-five pounds, she weighs a hundred twenty-five pounds.

LARS
No.

KURT
Look, you can customize everything. They have all these different heads and parts. You can design your own woman!

LARS
Huh.

KURT
Mine has the "Monique" head and the "Jennifer" boobs and the "Tracy" waist and the "Veronica" butt and the "Roxanne" legs.
(man to man)
Lars, she's anatomically correct. You can do anything with her.

LARS
Even--?

Kurt nods emphatically, Lars is repelled.

LARS (CONT'D)
But that would be like--tupperware.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KURT

No freckles, no zits, no hair.
BETTER than skin.

LARS

Don't tell me you're gonna get one.

KURT

Nah, they cost six thousand bucks.
I'm wiped out from the new X-box.

Enter Margo. She and Kurt have a playful, adversarial relationship.

MARGO

Morning.

They don't notice her. She tries again, louder.

MARGO (CONT'D)

Morning!

KURT

Whoa!

He zaps up a screensaver. Lars is embarrassed.

MARGO

(to Lars)

Hello.

Lars ducks his head, acknowledging her, scoots back into his cubicle. Kurt turns on his headbanger work music. Lars jumps, nerves raw. He has to tell Kurt this every day.

LARS

Headset!

KURT

Lars, it's your day to get us
coffee.

He puts on his headset, but also watches Lars and Margo.

MARGO

I was thinking, we're the only ones
from the lake, maybe we could
carpool.

Lars scoots out. Margo looks after him, not understanding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KURT

You know what your problem is,
you're too aggressive.

MARGO

Oh, shut up.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Lars is extremely frustrated by his inability to respond to Margo. He mutters to himself, runs his hands through his hair, leaving it spiky and disheveled.

INT. OFFICE: COFFEE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

STEVE, a co-worker on his way out with a plate of frosted Pop Tarts, looks at Lars.

STEVE

You okay, buddy?

LARS

Sure.

As soon as Steve leaves, Lars opens the refrigerator freezer and sticks his head in to revive himself. But when he takes his head out, he feels the same.

EXT. OFFICE - DUSK

Lars steps out of the building and watches the winter sunset. It's cold. He's not wearing hat or gloves. A razor wind blows.

EXT. OFFICE PARKING LOT -- LATER

Margo's car is next to Lars's car. She pretends to fumble with her keys, watching him approach. He's troubled, remote.

LARS POV: He sees Margo, small and far away although she really isn't. He stops at a distance from her.

MARGO

Hi.

LARS

Hi.

Both of them wait for the other to do something.

LARS (CONT'D)

Seeya.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGO

Bye.

They get in their cars and drive off in the same direction.

INT. MALL -- LATER

Lars wanders aimlessly. SANDY, 30's, stylish, waves at him from her dress shop, he waves back, joyless. Lars sits at the mall fountain. He sees nothing but families and couples. At the food court, same thing. He buys mall food but can't eat. He feels his isolation like a physical illness.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: DRIVEWAY -- LATER

As Lars drives in from work, Karin stands in the middle of the driveway with a flashlight, flagging him down like the airport person on a runway. He slams on the brakes and jumps out of his car, fearing disaster.

LARS

Are you okay? What happened? What's wrong?

KARIN

We want you to come for dinner.

Lars is immediately wary. Karin bounces a little on her toes, preparing to move.

LARS

(lying) I can't. I brought work home.

He tries to dodge her, she blocks him.

KARIN

No, you didn't.

LARS

If I don't get it done, I'm in trouble.

He dodges, she blocks.

KARIN

We miss you.

LARS

(lying)
I'll be there in a minute.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dodge, block.

KARIN

Oh, no, you don't!

He breaks for the garage, she chases and tackles him. They struggle on the ground.

LARS

I hear my phone!

KARIN

Salmon, rosemary potatoes!

LARS

I have other plans!

KARIN

Broccoli and pie!

LARS

(claws at the lawn or
snow)

Thank you but let me go!

KARIN

No!

She straddles him and holds him down. Lars goes limp. She's won.

LARS

Okay, okay.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: DINING ROOM -- LATER

The end of the meal. Lars is distant and quiet, he's hardly eaten anything. Gus and Karin exchange looks. Hers says, "Talk to him!" His says, "What do I say?"

KARIN

(to Lars, gentle)
If that's all you can eat...

LARS

Delicious.

Karin begins to clear the table. Lars starts to help her, eager to escape.

KARIN

Nope, my turn. You boys talk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She leaves, giving Gus another pointed look. Gus and Lars sit in silence.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

They sit in silence.

GUS
(finally)
She thinks you have a problem.
Staying by yourself so much.

LARS
What do you think?

GUS
I don't know. Dad was kinda like
that.

LARS
Well, I'm not Dad!

Gus is startled by his vehemence.

LARS (CONT'D)
He was more like a refrigerator
than a man.

GUS
No, he wasn't.

Lars looks at him, he concedes.

GUS (CONT'D)
Only after Mom died. I wish you
could have known him before.

LARS
I wish I could have known HER.

Gus is sympathetic but more occupied with his own discomfort than Lars's feelings, of which he is barely aware. He makes an offer, just short of sincere.

GUS
You know, we'd really like it if
you move in.

Lars shakes his head no. He knows Gus doesn't really mean it.

GUS (CONT'D)
The house is half yours.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS
I can't.

GUS
I don't see why.

Lars shrugs. They have nothing else to say to each other. They sit there.

LINDSTROM HOUSE: BACK DOOR -- LATER

Karin and Gus walk Lars to the door. Karin gives him tupperware.

KARIN
Here are leftovers for you.

LARS
Thanks. I was wondering--my blanket?

KARIN
(to Gus)
It's by the--

GUS
I'll get it.

He goes. Lars is distant, preoccupied. Karin tries to converse.

KARIN
It's a beautiful blanket.

LARS
My mother made it for me before I was born.

KARIN
She loved you very much. Like we do.

She reaches to hug him, he steps back.

KARIN (CONT'D)
Are you mad at me?

LARS
No!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN

Then why don't you want me to touch you?

LARS

I think you're imagining things.

Gus returns and hands the blanket to Lars.

LARS (CONT'D)

Thanks. Night.

GUS

Night.

KARIN

Night.

Karin leans against Gus and he hugs her. They watch Lars walk across the yard to his dark apartment.

KARIN (CONT'D)

Gus...

GUS

We talked, he's fine.

LARS POV: At his threshold, he looks back over his shoulder, sees Karin and Gus in each other's arms, they seem a million miles away. He closes the door, which fills the frame and everything goes black.

SIX WEEKS LATER

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: FRONT DOOR -- AFTERNOON

The doorbell rings, Karin opens the door, it's FRED, the UPS man.

KARIN

Hi, Fred.

FRED

Hi, Karin. Package for Lars.

She signs for it.

KARIN

You can give it to me, I'll take it back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRED

Too heavy. I'll bring it around
with a hand truck and Gus can carry
it when he gets home.

He unloads a coffin-like box. It's heavy even for Fred.

EXT. LARS'S GARAGE APT.-- LATER

Karin unlocks Lars's door, Gus drags the box inside. Karin
carries a casserole dish.

INT. LARS'S GARAGE APT.-- CONTINUOUS

Gus sets the box on the floor and stretches his back.

GUS

Jesus Christ.

KARIN

I couldn't read the shipping label.

She puts the casserole in the refrigerator.

GUS

See, he's taking an interest in
things.

KARIN

He is a lot more cheerful lately.

GUS

Must be expecting this.

KARIN

We'll give him a call.

They leave. The box lies on the floor.

INT. OFFICE -- LATER

In his cubicle, Lars hangs up the phone, his eyes shining.

LARS

Oh...

He bursts into a flurry of activity, cleaning his workspace.
Margo's head pops up over one cubicle wall, Kurt's over the
other. They watch him tear out of the office.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: DRIVEWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

He pulls into the driveway as if it were a pit stop.

INT. LARS'S GARAGE APT. -- MOMENTS LATER

He flings open the apartment door, looks at the box.

INT. LARS'S BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

He brushes his teeth, combs his hair and straightens his tie. He looks at himself critically in the mirror. Not quite right.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

He's changed into a more casual, sporty sweater, likes it better. And he's put on music--bachelor jazz, lots of sax. He has an expectant look.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: KITCHEN -- EVENING

Someone knocks firmly on the back door. Gus answers, it's Lars. He's surprised and pleased, LARS never does this.

GUS

Come in, come in.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: FAMILY ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Fire in the fireplace. Karin does pregnant woman yoga. She's surprised, too. Lars is hesitant, but there's something a little more bold about him.

LARS

I have a visitor.

GUS

That's great!

KARIN

A visitor!

LARS

She's not from here.

KARIN

She?

Karin's so pleased she punches Gus in the arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS

I mean she's from another country.

GUS

Wow, what do you know. Where'd you meet her?

LARS

On the internet.

KARIN

Everybody does that now.

LARS

She doesn't speak much English.

GUS

Oh, that's okay. Same with guys at work. We manage.

LARS

And she's handicapped.

This takes Gus and Karin aback, but only a little.

GUS

Well, so what? We don't care.

LARS

The thing is, she can't stay with me. We're both young and single and she's religious, it wouldn't be right. So...

Gus and Karin are excited and pleased.

KARIN

We'll put her in the pink room, and there are new towels. Just give me half an hour to pick up and get something in the oven.

LARS

(pleased with himself)
Okey doke.

Karin starts to hug him but remembers she can't. Instead she starts cleaning.

GUS

(proud, to Lars)
Man, you quiet ones...

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Karin and Gus frozen on the living room sofa, they have washed up and changed to better clothes. Their faces are dull with shock.

LARS (O.C.)

This is Bianca.

(to someone who doesn't
speak English))

Bianca, this is my brother Gus and
my sister-in-law Karen.

Lars and BIANCA, a life-size sex doll, sit across from them. Bianca is a cafe au lait color with long wavy red-gold hair. She wears a gold lame miniskirt, tight over-the-knee black vinyl boots and a see-through black mesh midriff top over a brief gold lame bra. Lars is oblivious to this.

LARS (CONT'D)

She's a missionary, but she's on
sabbatical to experience the world.

Karin nods slowly, Gus can't move.

LARS (CONT'D)

She's shy. Everything is so new.

KARIN

(hoarse)
Are you hungry?

LARS

Starving.

GUS

We--uh--

KARIN

Kitchen.

LARS

Come on, Bianca.

He lifts her in his arms, awkward but confident.

LARS (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I gotcha.

He carries her into the dining room.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Gus and Karin put food on two plates and talk in intense whispers. We catch glimpses of Lars arranging Bianca in a chair. Gus is flipping.

GUS
He's crazy!

KARIN
Calm down. Calm.

GUS
We have to put him in a hospital!

KARIN
Nobody's putting anybody anywhere.

GUS
I can't believe it. My little
brother's insane!

KARIN
(firm)
Pull yourself together. If we show
how we feel, who knows what could
happen. We can do this. Honey, we
can. We have to.

Gus gets a grip, wipes his eyes.

GUS
Yeah.

KARIN
She's our guest.

Gus nods, he's on board. Karin looks at the plates in her hands, shaken herself.

KARIN (CONT'D)
Lars.
(hands him the other
plate)
Bianca.

She walks toward the dining room.

GUS
Karin, she can't eat!

INT. DINING ROOM -- LATER

Wooden but trying, Gus and Karin sit across from Lars and Bianca. Lars eats from both plates, enthusiastic, careful to include Bianca in the conversation.

LARS

Bianca's from the tropics. She's half Brazilian and half Danish. That's where she gets her exotic coloring.

KARIN

Ah.

GUS

Mm.

LARS

Unfortunately, her luggage was stolen. They even took her wheelchair.

KARIN

I'm so sorry.

GUS

That's terrible.

LARS

I was wondering if you could help her out.

Karin cocks her head with a strained smile, not sure what he wants.

LARS (CONT'D)

With clothes.

KARIN

I'm not sure we're the same--type.

LARS

That's okay. Bianca doesn't care about superficial things.

INT. PINK BEDROOM -- LATER

Lars and Bianca sit on the bed, Karin and Gus stand looking at them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN

Gus had a good idea.

Gus looks at her blankly.

KARIN (CONT'D)

He's concerned about Bianca's health. Change of climate, travel...

GUS

(catching on)
Stress. And stuff.

KARIN

I'll make an appointment with Dr. Bergen for, mm, tomorrow? Early.

GUS

We'll all go.

LARS

That makes sense. I'm taking off work to shop for wheelchairs.

He stretches and yawns.

LARS (CONT'D)

Well, we better hit the hay.

(intimate)

Good night, Bianca. I'm glad you're finally here.

Gus looks over his shoulder helplessly at Karin as he follows Lars out. Karin looks at the doll. Bianca falls over on the bed, staring sightlessly.

KARIN

Wait!

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: UPSTAIRS HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

She steps into the hall with Lars and Gus. She has to work to keep her voice steady.

KARIN

Any idea how long she'll stay?

LARS

(brightly)

Nope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lars and Gus continue downstairs, Gus looks back at Karin, wild-eyed. Karin stands alone for a moment in the hall, then girds herself to return to Bianca.

INT. PINK BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Karin is overcome with curiosity: she peeks under Bianca's skirt.

KARIN

Oh, my GOD.

EXT. LARS'S GARAGE APT. -- LATER

Lars drags the box out of his apartment, Gus stands in the yard, not knowing what to do.

LARS

Gotta put this in the recycling.

Gus grabs it.

GUS

I'll do it.

LARS

Thanks, Gus.

GUS

No problem.

Lars goes inside. Gus attacks the box, tearing at it, looking for information. He finds the packing slip.

INT. STUDY -- MOMENTS LATER

Gus sits at his computer. We hear REAL GIRL theme music. He clicks his mouse and a 1-900 woman's voice speaks.

COMPUTER

Natasha escaped from Moscow where she was forced to be a stripper for the Russian Mafia. Now all she wants is a good American male to love.

Gus clicks again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COMPUTER (CONT'D)

Samantha is a coed. Someday she'll be a personal fitness trainer, but now she's taking time off school to find the perfect guy.

Gus clicks again.

COMPUTER (CONT'D)

Midori left a high-paying job in Tokyo because she was unsatisfied as a woman. Looks don't count, it's the inner spirit that truly excites her.

Gus clicks again.

COMPUTER (CONT'D)

Tammy dropped out of high school to ride in the rodeo. Are you the right cowboy to tame this wild filly?

INT. PINK BEDROOM - LATER

Bianca, in a flannel nightgown, lies under the covers in the glow of a nightlight.

INT. GUS AND KARIN'S BEDROOM -- LATER

Gus and Karin lie in bed, freaked out and wide awake.

KARIN

The doctor will tell us what to do.

GUS

She's family practice. We need a shrink.

KARIN

She's a psychologist, too.

GUS

Oh.

KARIN

She says you have to be, this far North.

GUS

What will people think.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN

We can't worry about that.

They worry.

GUS

Right.

They don't sleep.

INT. LARS'S GARAGE APT.-- LATER

Under his mother's blanket, Lars sleeps like a baby.

INT. GUS'S CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Gus, Karin, Lars and Bianca drive through town to DAGMAR's office. Gus is grim. Lars gives Bianca a tour, Karin listens.

LARS

...and there's the library and Town Hall. My father had his office in there. He was a--well, I don't really know what he was. Gus?

GUS

(through gritted teeth)
Water and Power.

KARIN

(caught up in the flow of conversation)
My job's at the School Department. I miss everybody, but there's so much to do on the house. I'll go back when the baby's old enough and --

Gus gives her a look, she realizes what she's doing and goes quiet.

LARS

Huh. Water and Power.

INT. DR. DAGMAR BERGEN'S WAITING ROOM -- DAY

The waiting room is packed with other townspeople: an old man, a middle-aged woman, a young mother and her toddler, a couple of teenagers. Karin, Gus, Lars and Bianca, in her new wheelchair, sit with them. Karin nods and smiles bravely at the other people. Gus suffers. Lars offers magazines to Bianca.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS

Good Housekeeping? Ladies Home
Journal? Reader's Digest?

Everyone stares at Bianca. The toddler gurgles.

INT. EXAM ROOM -- LATER

Lars and Bianca sit with DAGMAR, a woman in her 60's, understated and humorous, with a carefully controlled intensity. She's seen everything, but Lars and Bianca really interest her. Dagmar checks the cuff on Bianca's arm.

DAGMAR

Well, her blood pressure's low.

LARS

Is that serious?

DAGMAR

Could be. We'll have to wait and see.

Lars is distressed though he tries not to show it.

LARS

I knew she had health problems
but...

DAGMAR

I want you to bring her in every
week for a special treatment. Will
you do that?

LARS

Of course! Whatever she needs.

He explains to Bianca, making sure she understands.

LARS (CONT'D)

Every week. Special treatment.

DAGMAR

You set that up with Joanne at the
desk, while I talk to Gus and
Karin. I assume they'll be
involved...

LARS

Oh, yeah. They're crazy about her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAGMAR

I look forward to getting to know you, Bianca.

LARS

Thanks, Doc. Here we go.

He accidentally drives the wheelchair into a wall.

LARS (CONT'D)

Oops. Watch your feet.

INT. DAGMAR'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Karin and Gus sit in front of Dagmar, arguing, with some heat.

GUS

I'm telling you, he belongs in a hospital.

KARIN

No! My Uncle Garth went to one of those places and never came back.

GUS

Karin, he needs more than we can give him.

KARIN

How do you know? We haven't given him anything yet.

GUS

(to Dagmar)
Could you explain to her--

KARIN

(to Dagmar)
Would you tell him not to--

DAGMAR

If I may.

Karin and Gus subside.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)

Has Lars been functional? Does he go to work, wash and dress himself?

GUS

So far.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAGMAR

Has he had any violent episodes?

KARIN

Never! He's a sweetheart, he never even raises his voice. That's abnormal too, isn't it.

GUS

You gotta fix him. Can you fix him?

DAGMAR

There isn't a pill for lonely, Gus.

This quiets both of them.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)

Of course I encourage you to get a second opinion. But I don't believe he's psychotic or schizophrenic. I don't think this is caused by genes or faulty wiring in the brain.

GUS

So what the hell is going on?

DAGMAR

He appears to have a delusion.

GUS

What's he doing with a delusion, for Christ's sake?

DAGMAR

That's what we have to find out. Chances are he's been decompensating for some time.

They look at her, perplexed.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)

Losing his psychological balance.

Karin and Gus look at each other, both full of guilt for not noticing.

KARIN

I guess we didn't notice.

DAGMAR

Have there been changes in the family in the past year or so?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

No, everything's exactly the same,
except Karin's pregnant and Lars is
nuts.

Dagmar thinks about this.

DAGMAR

You know, this isn't necessarily a
bad thing.

They look at her in disbelief.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)

What we call mental illness isn't
always just an illness. It can be a
communication or a way to work
something out. The delusion.

GUS

Great. When will it be over?

DAGMAR

When he doesn't need it any more.

Gus and Karin try to take it in.

KARIN

How do we help?

DAGMAR

Go along with him.

KARIN

Oh, no.

GUS

Pretend she's real? I can't do
that.

DAGMAR

She IS real. I mean, here she is.

GUS

I can't stand this.

DAGMAR

You won't be able to change his
mind anyway. Bianca's in town for a
reason.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

But--

DAGMAR

It's not really a choice.

KARIN

(determined, she commits)
All right. Okay. Okay. We'll come
right out with it. We'll tell the
world.

GUS

Everybody's gonna laugh at him.

DAGMAR

(matter-of-fact)
Him AND you.

Gussuffers.

INT. DR. BERGEN'S WAITING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Karin and Gus return to find the toddler in Bianca's lap. The kid is captivated by Bianca, making kid sounds that have everybody laughing. Lars looks at Karin and Gus with pride.

LARS

Bianca LOVES children.

EXT. THE TOWN -- DAWN

The winter sun rises on all the small-town middle-class houses, doughnut shops, random trailers, open fields, empty roads, 24-hr gas station/convenience stores.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: DINING ROOM -- MORNING

Gus, Karin, Lars and Bianca sit at the breakfast table. Gus's attitude is not good. He's unshaven and still in his pajamas.

LARS

Aren't you going to work?

GUS

I don't feel good.

LARS

Bianca can help. She has nurse's training.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

No, she doesn't, Lars. She's not a person. She's a big plastic THING.

KARIN

Gus...

LARS

(oblivious)
She says that's why God made her.
To help people.

KARIN

(to Lars)
You'll be late.

LARS

I'll call this afternoon. And oh--

He looks at Bianca, turns red, begins to tremble. There is something he wants to say. Karin and Gus wait, frightened. Is he going to stroke out? Gus starts to move toward him, Lars blurts.

LARS (CONT'D)

(to Bianca)
You look pretty today!

Gus slumps back down at the table and buries his head in his hands.

LARS (CONT'D)

Bye, hope you feel better.

He leaves, cheerful. Karin looks at Gus. He's defensive.

GUS

Well, I had to try.

Karin keeps looking at him.

GUS (CONT'D)

What?

KARIN

We've been all wrapped up in ourselves. It's true, we have.

GUS

This is not my fault.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN
Come on, Bianca.
(to Gus))
We'll be on the phone.

Karin wheels Bianca away. Gus feels angry and guilty.

INT. OFFICE LOBBY -- LATER

Lars whistles as he walks in. He is again drawn to Cindy's curves, but in a more cheerful way.

LARS
Morning, Cindy.
(less of a struggle)
You look pretty today.

CINDY
Thank you, Mr. Sunshine.

She hands him an envelope, a party invitation.

CINDY (CONT'D)
Way in advance, but I get so excited.

LARS
For me?

INT. OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Lars enters, reading his invitation. Kurt and Margo are arguing, Kurt is very upset. Lars sets the invitation carefully in his cubicle, like an exhibit.

KURT
Where are they? I know you took 'em.

MARGO
Did not.

KURT
Did too. This is your revenge.

MARGO
For what?

KURT
The fake rat in your drawer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGO
Oh, that.

KURT
(to Lars)
She stole my action figures.

LARS
Your turn for coffee.

KURT
(to Margo, with feeling)
They are very important to me,
Margo. If I don't see them on my
desk pretty damn soon, you better
tell that teddy bear to watch his
back!

He storms out. Lars looks a question at Margo, shy but
curious.

MARGO
I'll return them. One at a time.

She takes an action figure from her pocket and puts it in a
funny place on Kurt's desk and winks at Lars, who smiles. She
smiles back, encouraged.

MARGO (CONT'D)
Are you going to Cindy's party?

LARS
No.

MARGO
I was hoping you were. I wish you
would.

LARS
Wait, maybe.

MARGO
Great!

LARS
You think it's all right if I bring
my girlfriend?

MARGO
(surprised)
Oh.
(lying)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGO (CONT'D)

Yeah, I'll probably bring somebody,
too.

MARGO's disappointed.

INT. MALL FOOD COURT -- DAY

Karin lunches with three friends: SANDY from the dress shop, DEB who runs the daycare center, and LAUREL, the yoga teacher. She has just told them about Lars and Bianca.

DEB

You're serious?

SANDY

But that's fascinating!

LAUREL

When can we meet her?

INT. GUS'S LUNCHROOM -- DAY

A Home Depot kind of place. RUSSELL, MOOSE, and SEAN eat lunch with Gus, HECTOR and NELSON. Gus has just told them about Lars and Bianca. HECTOR, who is Hispanic, describes Bianca in Spanish and mime to a confused NELSON, who is Vietnamese.

SEAN

(impressed)

Dude!

RUSSELL

Does she have a sister?

MOOSE

I wish I owned a woman who couldn't
talk.

INT. CHURCH MEETING ROOM -- DAY

A poster board on an easel, "BIBLE STUDY CLASS." Karin and Gus have just told the Bible Study Class about Bianca and Lars. Mrs. Gruner, MR. HOFSTEDTLER, MRS. PETERSEN, MR. SHAW, MRS. SCHINDLER and Reverend Bock, all in their 50's and 60's and 70's, are bemused. MR. HOFSTEDTLER is a negative control freak.

MR. HOFSTEDTLER

We don't want anything to do with
her. She's a golden calf. Remember
what happened with THAT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. SHAW is always anxious to do the right thing.

MR. SHAW

He's not worshipping her, they're just dating.

MRS. SCHINDLER likes to look on the sunny side.

MRS. SCHINDLER

She's a missionary. That's good, isn't it?

MRS. PETERSEN loves to disapprove.

MRS. PETERSEN

I never heard of such a thing!

MR. SHAW

But if we go along, are we encouraging bad habits?

MR. HOFSTEDTLER

These young people have no will power.

GUS

He's SICK.

KARIN

We thought if we came to you, you could help--pave the way--a little. If you could try to understand. Please.

The group mumbles, not knowing what to do. Mrs. Gruner gets impatient.

BIBLE STUDY CLASS

Well, I don't know...never thought something like this...shouldn't expose the children...but if he needs help...belongs in a loony bin...

MRS. GRUNER

Oh, for heaven's sake, what's the big deal?

(to Mrs. Schindler)

Sally, your cousin puts dresses on his cats.

(to Mrs. Petersen)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. GRUNER (CONT'D)

Hazel, your nephew gave all his money to a UFO club.

(to Mr. Hofstedtler)

Arnie, everybody knows your first wife was a klepto.

MR. HOFSTEDTLER

She wasn't!

MRS. GRUNER

Then how come she's buried in a pair of my earrings?

REVEREND BOCK

Now, that's enough now.

MRS. GRUNER

These things happen. Lars is a good boy. You can depend on me.

GUS

Thank you, Mrs. Gruner.

MR. HOFSTEDTLER

Well, he can't bring her to church, can he, Reverend Bock. Absolutely not.

The others look at Reverend Bock.

REVEREND BOCK

The question is, what would Jesus do?

INT. CHURCH -- MORNING

Karin and Gus stand in a pew next to Lars and Bianca. Bianca wears a Sunday dress and has a hymnbook in her lap. Everyone is on their feet finishing a hymn, but Lars is the only one really singing since all the other people are staring at Bianca. When everyone sits, Margo stays standing in the choir, astonished, till somebody pulls her into her seat.

REV. BOCK

We'd like to welcome all our new members and visitors today...

EXT. CHURCH FRONT -- LATER

People file out of the church, but hang around for a closer look at Bianca. Gus and Karin wait, tense, as REV. BOCK talks to Lars and Bianca. The Bible Study Class stands in a group to the side. Mrs. Gruner holds a flower arrangement.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REV. BOCK
We're happy to have you, Bianca.
Come back next week, won't you?

LARS
Oh, we will.

REV. BOCK
God bless. (to the dumbstruck
couple behind them) Ted, Agnes,
good to see you.

The Lindstroms and Bianca proceed past the Bible Study Class.

BIBLE STUDY CLASS
(tentative)
Hello, hello, good morning, nice to
meet you...

Mrs. Gruner places a flower arrangement in Bianca's lap.

MRS. GRUNER
These are for you.
(to LARS)
She has a darling figure.

LARS
(to Bianca)
This is my friend Mrs. Gruner.

Karin and Gus look at each other, a little relieved.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT -- MOMENTS LATER

Gus, Karin, Lars and Bianca go to their car. Children follow them, enchanted by the big doll. Unseeing, they pass Margo, who watches them, wheels turning in her mind.

INT. PINK BEDROOM -- LATER

With difficulty, Karin wrestles Bianca out of church clothes and into outdoorsy young matron clothes.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: BACKYARD--WINTER--MORNING

Lars and Gus carry Bianca out of the house and put her in Lars's car, now equipped with a wheelchair thing on the back and a handicapped sticker. Lars is very cheerful. Gus is worried.

GUS
Where are you going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS

I want to show her around the lake.
She asks so many questions. She
wants to know everything about me.

GUS

Oh. That's nice. Have fun.

As Lars gets in the driver's side, Gus arranges Lars's blanket carefully over Bianca's legs and closes the passenger door. Gus waves, then stands, depressed, watching as they drive away.

EXT. HIGHWAY

Lars and Bianca drive out to the lake, the only car on a long road through the winter landscape.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE - DAY

Still in her church clothes, Margo stands on the sidewalk in front of the house. After a few moments, she walks toward the door.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Karin opens the door to Margo.

EXT. WOODS BY THE LAKE -- LATER

Lars tramps through the winter woods carrying Bianca slung over his shoulder like a sack of flour. He stops to catch his breath and look around.

LARS

Forts all over! Leaf forts. Snow
forts. So many places to hide. Tree
fort--part of it's still up there.

He sets her down, compelled to climb up to the tree fort.

LARS (CONT'D)

Hey, Bianca, watch this!

He hangs upside down by his knees, trying to impress her.

LARS (CONT'D)

Look at me!

EXT. WOODS -- LATER

Lars has been talking to Bianca from the treehouse for a long time, a child's endless, wandering monologue.

LARS

In the summer, Gus and I used to fish here. Even my father sometimes. And in the winter play hockey. That was so much fun. There was a big pack of little boys running around. Me and Peter and Brian and Doug and Stuey and oh, all of us. They're grown up and married now, it's all different, they got so far ahead, I don't know how that happened. You can watch me chop wood, I'm really good at that...

He goes on and on.

INT. GUS'S OFFICE -- LATER

Gus sits at his computer, heavy-hearted. He types "Mental Illness" into a search engine. He starts to concentrate, studying, his interest engaged. He clicks around, seeking information.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: KITCHEN

Margo and Karin have tea and talk. They are kindred spirits, instant female rapport. Karin shows Margo family pictures.

KARIN

This is their mother. And this is when Gus joined the Air Force. He was eighteen, Lars was eight. That's their father in the background.

MARGO

He looks so sad.

KARIN

Poor Mr. Lindstrom. He did the best he could, but without his wife--

MARGO

There's no substitute for a woman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN
Gus is taking this very hard.

MARGO
Who wouldn't?

Karin is also taking it hard. She starts to cry. Margo tries to comfort her. She seems to know something about sorrow.

KAREN
We should have known, we should have done something sooner. What's going to become of him?

MARGO
Try not to worry, it never changes anything and it won't help Lars. Tell me about the baby. Do you know if it's a boy or a girl?

KARIN
I forgot I was pregnant.

Margo, matter-of-fact, closes the photo album and hugs Karin.

MARGO
Karin, life goes on. In my experience, you have to find happiness wherever you are, even in the middle of desperate times. You have to fight to be happy and never give up, no matter what.

Her belief in what she says gives Karin strength.

KARIN
You're right. At least Lars looks happy now.

MARGO
See? That's something.

The women feel more positive.

EXT. CEMETERY -- LATER

From a distance, we see Lars wheel Bianca down the empty winter cemetery path.

We see the simple markers for LARS's parents: "Elinor Lindstrom 1942-1972, Beloved Wife and Mother." "Paul Lindstrom, 1935-1998, Beloved Husband and Father."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lars stands close to Bianca and looks at the graves.

INT. EXAM ROOM -- DAY

Bianca lies on the table. Dagmar looks at her, thinking. There's a tap on the door and Lars steps in. They keep their voices low.

LARS

I couldn't wait any more. Is she all right?

DAGMAR

After the treatment, she has to rest. It doesn't work without the resting.

They watch her for a few seconds.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)

Keep me company?

They tiptoe out.

INT. DAGMAR'S OFFICE -- LATER

They sit together, it doesn't feel like a therapy session at all.

LARS

Bianca doesn't deserve this, she's a good person. She's warm and giving and loving.

DAGMAR

I can see that. She doesn't have any parents?

LARS

They died when she was a baby.

DAGMAR

Oh, that's not fair.

LARS

But she doesn't feel sorry for herself. She's determined to make the best of things. More than anything, she wants a normal life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAGMAR

She has a lot of courage, I admire that.

Lars looks at a framed picture of a laughing man that sits on Dagmar's desk.

LARS

Your husband?

DAGMAR

Yes. He died.

LARS

Children?

DAGMAR

No.

Lars touches the frame, compassionate.

LARS

You must get lonely.

Dagmar tells him the truth.

DAGMAR

Lars, sometimes I get so lonely I forget what day it is and how to spell my name.

Lars looks at her--a connection is made.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)

How about you?

INT. MALL -- DAY

Karin, Bianca, Deb, and Laurel in Sandy's shop. Sandy shows them a dramatic red dress.

SANDY

What do you think?

KARIN

I don't know...

DEB

Look what it does for her hair and that gorgeous complexion.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN
She's half Brazilian and half
Danish.

LAUREL
This is a terrific dress.

KARIN
She'll never wear it, she's too
conservative.

SANDY
With that body? What a waste.

They continue to look through the rack of clothes.

INT. GUS'S LUNCHROOM -- DAY

Gus in an intellectual discussion with Sean, Moose, Russell,
Hector and Nelson.

RUSSELL
So what's the difference between a
delusion and a hallucination?

GUS
Hallucinations are when you see
stuff that's not there at all.

SEAN
Bianca, like, is.

NELSON
Not halos.

HECTOR
Delusion.

GUS
False perception versus false
belief.

RUSSELL
Okay. So when Sean thinks the FBI's
after him--

HECTOR
(he can relate)
DEA.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NELSON
(he can relate)
INS.

MOOSE
(he can relate)
IRS. ATF. Triple A.

GUS
That's a delusion.

SEAN
Dude, they ARE after us.

The men agree.

GUS
Bad example.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: BACKYARD

Lars chops firewood as Bianca watches. He works in just a shirt, sweating, concentrating, showing off, he burns off his sexual energy.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Passing a window, Karin is caught by the sight of them. She notes the sexiness of Lars, which she's never noticed before.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Unaware of his sexiness, Lars happily swings the ax.

INT. LINDSTROM BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Gus and Karin give Bianca a bath. Bianca's hair is in a shower cap. They scrub her diligently and carefully, working as a team.

GUS
One, two, three...

KARIN
Flip.

They flip Bianca over to wash the back of her. It's hard work. They take a break, sit back. Bianca floats face down in the water. Gus looks sad. Karin pokes him with her toe.

KARIN (CONT'D)
Oh, come on. It's a LITTLE funny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It IS a little funny. They start to laugh. Gus tosses his sponge in the air.

INT. DAGMAR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Lars and Dagmar talk casually.

DAGMAR

Tell me about Karin, I don't know her very well.

LARS

Oh, she's wonderful! Gus and I are darn lucky with women. But she--

He stops.

DAGMAR

We don't have to talk. Let's find you something to read.

LARS

Between us?

DAGMAR

Of course.

LARS

Karin has a problem.

DAGMAR

Oh. Maybe you shouldn't tell me.

LARS

I can't let her hug me and she gets upset.

DAGMAR

Angry?

LARS

More frustrated. She's very affectionate, she likes to touch people. But I can't let her.

Dagmar picks up some papers and looks at them.

DAGMAR

Hm.

LARS

It hurts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAGMAR

Like a cut? Or a bruise?

Lars has to think about it.

LARS

Like a burn. Like when it's fifteen below and you've been out in the snow for a long time and you come inside and your feet start to warm up. That kind of burn.

DAGMAR

Happen with everybody?

Lars shrugs, not wanting to admit.

LARS

Not Bianca. Not so much.

DAGMAR

So you don't let people touch you. Isn't that a little hard to get away with?

LARS

Not here.
(indicates his clothes))
With all the layers. You know.

Dagmar thinks about it a second.

DAGMAR

You're right. Well, we can't change Karin, but there is a cure for the burning.

Lars is skeptical and hopeful.

LARS

Really?

DAGMAR

Sure.

LARS

Will it hurt?

DAGMAR

Especially at first.

Lars considers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS
Well, all right. For Karin's sake.

CUT TO:

INT. EXAM ROOM -- DAY

Dagmar tests Lars by touching him. She pushes him with one finger.

LARS
Nothing.

She puts her hand on his arm.

LARS (CONT'D)
Uh...

DAGMAR
Hurt?

LARS
Not too bad.

She puts her arm around his shoulder, Lars jerks away from her.

LARS (CONT'D)
Whoa, whoa, whoa.

Dagmar quickly moves away from him.

DAGMAR
Okay. That's too much.

LARS
(out of breath)
Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

DAGMAR
We'll try this.

She holds his hand lightly. He winces.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)
It'll get easier.

LARS
(dubious)
If you say so.

They hold hands. It's a lot of work for him.

EXT. CINDY'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Lars wheels Bianca to the door. He's nervous.

INT. CINDY'S HOUSE: LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The party in progress: booze, no drugs, a little yuppie-ish but good music, everybody from work is there. Fire in the fireplace. Cindy dances with her husband BAXTER. Margo stands around, a little lonely, Kurt plays video games with other knee-jigglers. There's a knock. Cindy and Margo exchange a look, they both move toward the door. Cindy opens it.

CINDY'S POV: Lars looks scared and hopeful. Bianca's hands are wrapped around a bottle of wine.

CINDY

Mr. Sunshine! And is this Bianca?
Welcome, welcome, come on in.
Baxter, help us with the chair.
Lars, this is my husband.

Everyone has been briefed. They try to act normally. In a strange way, the party starts to come alive.

BAXTER

Hey, Lars, how you doing. Bianca...

LARS

Nice to meet you.

CINDY

(takes the wine)
Is that for me, Bianca? Thank you!

MARGO

I'll take your coats.

LARS

(he helps Margo take off
Bianca's coat)
Hi, Margo.

MARGO

Hi.

They smile at each other while they care for Bianca. Lars looks around: there is color, warmth, life. Kurt slaps Lars on the back. He is beaming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KURT
You are a WILD man!
(boast, to others standing
around)
I introduced them.

The other people approach, cautious and curious.

INT. SAME -- LATER

Margo stands by the food table with co-workers JERRY, a jerk,
and LISA, a twit. Jerry eats constantly. They're watching
Lars and Bianca.

LISA
It's a good thing you sent that
memo. I would have FREAKED. It's so
bIZARRE.

MARGO
(watching Jerry)
It's a disorder. Like compulsive
eating.

It goes right over Jerry's head.

JERRY
What a weirdo.

MARGO
When you were little, didn't you
believe your toys were alive?

JERRY
That's different. They're only
alive at night when you're asleep.

Lars whispers something in Bianca's ear.

LISA
He's creepy, he scares me.

MARGO
Lars?

JERRY
Look at him. He's in love with that
slutty hunk of rubber.

MARGO
Her name is Bianca and you don't
even know her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LISA
Bianca? What kind of name is that?

JERRY
Ethnic.

LISA
Does he have sex with her?

JERRY
That's what she's FOR, babe.

LISA
Ew, how CAN he?

MARGO
Well, she's prettier than a lot of
people and definitely smarter.

LISA
They should lock him up and toss
the key.

Jerry agrees with his mouth full.

MARGO
I heard you two are getting
married.

JERRY
No!

LISA
Yes!

Jerry and Lisa turn on each other. Pleased, MARGO moves on.

INT. CINDY'S HOUSE: LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Lars stands with a couple of guys, they talk about computers or sports. He keeps an eye on Bianca, who is off to the side. Kurt talks animatedly to Bianca about himself. Lars notices Margo laughing with ERIC, who's tall, good-looking in a bland Viking way. Lars doesn't quite know how to feel about it. He can't help but appreciate Margo's curves, how attractive and nice she is.

INT. CINDY'S HOUSE: LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Lars and Bianca sit with co-worker women: Cindy, Margo, TERRI, and VICTORIA. The women are kind of drunk and talking all at once, like birds. Lars is delighted, surrounded by women, he's never had so much female attention.

INT. SAME -- LATER

Baxter dances around Bianca's wheelchair, Cindy dances enthusiastically with Lars who is so shy he just stands there, Kurt dances with Margo.

INT. FIREPLACE -- LATER

Lars sits on the floor and watches the fire as the party goes on around him. He looks up at Bianca and smiles at her. He's very happy.

EXT. CINDY'S DOORWAY -- LATER

Cindy and Margo wave from the open doorway as Lars and Bianca drive away. Margo is wistful.

CINDY

I like her, but that's a big waste of a good guy.

MARGO

Yeah.

CINDY

So, you and Eric, what do you think?

Margo perks up.

MARGO

Maybe.

They close the door.

INT. LAR'S CAR -- LATER

Lars and Bianca drive home.

LARS

That was the best night of my life.

He bravely puts his arm around Bianca and she falls against him like a log.

INT. MOVIE THEATER

Gus and Karin watch a movie, holding hands. Lars and Bianca sit next to them, also holding hands.

INT. HOCKEY RINK

Kurt, Baxter, Lars and Bianca watch a hockey game. The guys have put all their food in her lap and her hands so they don't have to hold it.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Sitting in the pew behind Lars and Bianca, Mrs. Gruner leans forward and whispers.

MRS. GRUNER
Bianca wants to spend Thursday
afternoons with me.

LARS
(to Bianca)
You do?

MRS. GRUNER
She wants to volunteer at the
hospital.

LARS
(possessive)
I don't know. Her blood pressure...

MRS. GRUNER
Lars. Think of the little bald
children. Won't they love her!

He has to admit they will.

INT. PINK BEDROOM -- DAY

Lars sits with Bianca. Across the hall he sees Karin who is doing something in her bedroom. He notes her swelling belly, his face unreadable.

INT. DAGMAR'S OFFICE

Lars and Dagmar sit next to each other, arm in arm, lightly.

DAGMAR
Pain?

LARS
I can take it.

We can see Lars's need for and appreciation of female contact and comfort. Dagmar decides to broach what she knows is a loaded subject.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAGMAR

You must be excited about a baby on the way.

LARS

Uh-huh.

He shifts position. One of his hands grabs tight to the other.

DAGMAR

Don't you want to be an uncle?

LARS

Yeah, I do. I think about it all the time.

Dagmar watches him like a hawk. He twists his hands without knowing it.

LARS (CONT'D)

You know, Bianca can't have children. Because of her condition.

DAGMAR

That's a shame.

He gets up and paces.

LARS

Not really. At least she's safe. In Bianca's culture, there's a high rate of infant mortality. And her mother, well, when Bianca was born, her mother died right in the middle of things.

DAGMAR

Like yours.

LARS

Yeah. Strange.

DAGMAR

You have a lot in common.

He sits down with her again, agitated, wringing his hands.

LARS

If anything goes wrong with Karin, it'll kill Gus.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS (CONT'D)

He loves her so much. He doesn't even know how much he loves her.

DAGMAR

Things are different now. We've learned a lot, we haven't lost a mother in years.

LARS

But it could happen again, Dagmar. It could.

Dagmar won't lie to him.

DAGMAR

Yes. It could.

LARS

That would be the end of everything.

He's pouring sweat.

LARS (CONT'D)

They have no idea of the danger. No idea.

Lars is finding it hard to breathe.

DAGMAR

Put your head between your knees.

He does. She rubs his back in circles, gently. He reacts with pain, but lets her continue.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)

That's a lot of pressure, Lars, to be the only one who knows the danger. Maybe we could talk to them about it.

LARS

No, no! What good would it do. Don't say anything. Let them be happy while they can.

DAGMAR

But what about you?

Lars keeps his head between his knees trying to catch his breath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS

I'm fine.

He's not fine.

DAGMAR

Most of us walk around in a dream, taking everything and everyone for granted. It's hard to be the person who knows it's a dream. Because YOU understand we're not just talking about a baby here. We're talking about life and death.

Lars raises his head.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)

You see the big picture.

LARS

I wish I didn't.

DAGMAR

I know. But somebody has to.

Lars sits up a little more.

LARS

What kind of world is it? When someone's born someone else has to die.

DAGMAR

That's what it's all about. Everything comes and goes. Can't be summer all the time.

Lars sits up more, stubborn.

LARS

It can in the tropics.

DAGMAR

Oh, yeah? Ask Bianca about the rainy season.

Lars hasn't thought about this.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)

This is life, Lars. Mother Nature. She has to take her course.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He's worn out, the tail end of the savage anxiety attack.

LARS

I guess...

Dagmar links arms with him again.

LARS (CONT'D)

Ow.

But he carefully leans his head on her shoulder, thinking.

INT. MALL

Lars happily wheels Bianca around the mall. Some people greet them, some stare. Sandy beckons them to her dress shop.

INT. SANDY'S DRESS SHOP WINDOW -- LATER

Bianca models the red dress, propped on a mannequin stand as Lars looks at her proudly, outside the window with Sandy.

SANDY

How about afternoons Monday and
Wednesday and then all day
Saturday?

INT. BEAUTY PARLOR

Bianca sits in the chair as Margo, Cindy and a stylist discuss how to cut Bianca's hair.

STYLIST

You better be sure, 'cause it's not
growing back.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE/DAYCARE CENTER - DAY

Bianca sits in front of a group of rapt children, books on tape playing in her lap. In the midst of another task, Deb glances at Bianca, pleased.

INT. COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM

Bianca demonstrates a yoga pose in Laurel's class as Laurel teaches.

INT. GUS'S BUSINESS -- DAY

Bianca sits inside the door, holding a sign that tells what's for sale.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gus, in home-improvement conversation with an ignorant customer, looks over at her and loses his train of thought. She seems to be looking at him.

CUSTOMER

Gus?

Gus tries to shake it off.

GUS

Sorry. What were we--?

CUSTOMER

Drywall.

Gus still feels her looking at him.

GUS

Er, drywall.

INT. LARS'S GARAGE APT. -- NIGHT

Lars and Bianca have a romantic dinner with candles.

LARS

(tenderly)

Fried walleye?

He tempts her, playfully waving a loaded fork around, coaxing.

LARS (CONT'D)

Beer batter...

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Karin looks at the garage apartment, the silhouette of Lars and Bianca. She watches their shadows entwine.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: FAMILY ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Gus sits in a favorite chair, staring into space. He looks tired and sad. Karin enters and sits on his lap. They don't speak for a few moments, communicating telepathically.

GUS

He's not going to get better.

KARIN

Probably not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS

He's a one-woman man, like my father, like me. He'll love her for life and it's all my fault.

KARIN

It isn't. Nobody meant any harm.

GUS

I left home as fast as I could, I never thought about him. And then the two of us move back here fat and happy while he moves into the goddamn garage like the family dog. And I let him.

KARIN

(thinking of her own crimes)

Leftovers.

GUS

My own brother. How could I be such a bastard? No wonder he orders a fiance in a box.

KARIN

We can't change what we did. We can only keep going and try to be good to each other.

GUS

I'll make it up to him. I don't know how, but I will.

They hug, Gus's arm around her belly. The baby kicks.

KARIN

Oh!

GUS

Oh!

KARIN

Kick. Feel.

Their mood lightens immediately as they concentrate on feeling the baby kick.

INT. TOWN HALL -- NIGHT

Bianca in attendance at a town meeting, seated between Lars and Mr. Hofstedtler. In front of them, a panel of citizens reports its findings. Lars is bored. MR. FOX is the universal droning bureaucrat.

MR. FOX

Pursuant to standard procedure, the Athletic Funds Allocation Committee has responded to the request of the Extracurricular Activities Panel by investigating the possibility of purchasing a new or perhaps pre-owned volleyball.

LARS

Mr. Hofstedtler, I think Bianca's bored.

MR. HOFSTEDTLER

Well, she wanted to see American politics. That's what she told me.

Lars sighs.

MR. FOX

We will now open discussion to community input regarding same.

Mr. Hofstedtler leaps to his feet.

MR. HOFSTEDTLER

I'm a Republican and I object!
Who's on board?

He raises Bianca's hand.

INT. OFFICE -- DAY

Kurt plays with his action figures. Lars arranges pictures in his cubicle--candid photos of Bianca with other people. He notices Margo and Eric flirting in the hall. Kurt catches Lars's eye, points at them and makes kissing noises.

MARGO

Lars, have you met Eric?

LARS

No.

He joins them reluctantly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERIC
(good-natured)
You're famous around here.

Margo gives Eric a warning look as Lars and Eric shake hands. The strength of Lars's grasp surprises Eric.

LARS
Hi.

ERIC
That's a hell of a grip, pal.

LARS
That's right.

Lars returns to his desk, irritated, without knowing why.

INT. MARGO'S CUBICLE -- LATER

Margo works diligently at her computer. There is now a picture of Eric in her cubicle. Lars's head pops up on the other side of the partition. He looks annoyed.

MARGO
Yes?

LARS
Nothing.

INT. LARS'S CUBICLE -- CONTINUOUS

He sits down. He is full of feelings he can't understand or identify.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: KITCHEN -- EVENING

Lars enters the empty kitchen, in a bad mood but not knowing why. Being a guy, he expects Bianca to fix his mood.

LARS
Bianca!

KARIN (O.C.)
We're up here!

INT. PINK BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Karin and Mrs. Gruner have just finished dressing Bianca in a party dress. Lars appears in the doorway. He's miffed and sulky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS

What's this?

MRS. GRUNER

The hospital volunteer banquet at
the VFW. Doesn't she look
beautiful?

Lars doesn't care.

LARS

We were supposed to play chess.

KAREN

Are you sure? Her schedule's on the
refrigerator, did you check?

LARS

No, I forgot.

MRS. GRUNER

Well, they're giving her an award,
she has to be there.

LARS

Could we have a couple of minutes
alone, please?

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS -- MOMENTS LATER

Karin and Mrs. Gruner listen to LARS's muffled, semi-raised
voice. Mrs. Gruner's eyes narrow.

KAREN

They NEVER fight.

MRS. GRUNER

I don't like his tone.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: STREET -- MOMENTS LATER

Bianca sits in the car. Lars and Mrs. Gruner stand outside,
arguing. They're both angry.

MRS. GRUNER

Now, you listen to me. Bianca has a
life of her own.

LARS

Yeah, but--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. GRUNER

No self-respecting woman is going to be at your beck and call, Mister, the sooner you learn that, the better.

LARS

A girlfriend should--

MRS. GRUNER

You're away at your job all day, is she supposed to wait for you? Would you do that for her? Would she even ask you to?

LARS

No, but--

MRS. GRUNER

Bianca's out there contributing to others less fortunate, you should be proud of her.

LARS

She's always busy. What about me?

MRS. GRUNER

Big baby. You're just like my husband!

Mrs. Gruner gets in her car and slams the door.

MRS. GRUNER (CONT'D)

She'll be home at 11.

LARS is very angry as Mrs. Gruner and Bianca drive away.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: FAMILY ROOM -- LATER

Lars storms through the Lindstrom house stopping to yell at Karin, who is doing pregnant woman yoga in the family room.

LARS

She's my girlfriend, she can't just go off like that!

Karin falls out of her pose.

EXT. BACKYARD -- MOMENTS LATER

Lars paces around by the firewood, muttering to himself in a little boy's rage. Karin comes out to see what's going on. She's surprised, he so rarely exhibits emotion.

KARIN

Lars?

LARS

What if I took off and left her alone. What if I abandoned her. How would she feel?

KARIN

Stop yelling, she didn't abandon you, she'll be home at--

Lars doesn't stop yelling.

LARS

How do I know that? I don't know that. You never know who's coming back and who isn't. People do whatever they want, they just go, they don't care, they don't think about how I feel! They don't care about me!

Karin gets mad.

KARIN

Now wait just a darn minute. We do care, we all care.

LARS

No, you don't! Nobody cares about me!

KARIN

That is not true! Every person in this town bends over backwards to make Bianca feel at home! Why do you think she has so many places to go and so much to do?

LARS

Because--because--

KARIN

Because of YOU, because all these people love YOU.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN (CONT'D)

We push her wheelchair, we drive her to work, we drive her home, we wash her, we dress her, we carry her, we get her up, we put her to bed, and she is not petite, Lars, Bianca is a big girl! None of this is easy for any of us, but we do it, for YOU. So don't you dare tell me how we don't care.

She walks back in the house and slams the door. Lars, spent, tries to figure it all out.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: DRIVEWAY -- LATER

Lars stands beside Bianca, who sits in her wheelchair, a plaque in her lap. Mrs. Gruner prepares to leave. Karin peeks out a window to watch.

LARS

Thank you, Mrs. Gruner. Before--I didn't mean it.

Mrs. Gruner cuts him a break.

MRS. GRUNER

Well, at least you're man enough to admit you're wrong. Unlike my husband.

They share a little laugh. Mrs. Gruner holds out her arms to him.

MRS. GRUNER (CONT'D)

Oh, come here, you big goof.

Lars lets Mrs. Gruner hug him. It's work, but he does it.

INT. PINK BEDROOM -- LATER

Bianca's in bed. Lars buttons her last button, and tucks her in. Gus opens the door and is surprised to find him there.

GUS

Hey!

LARS

How was basketball?

GUS

The cheese inspectors beat the crap out of us.

(confused)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS (CONT'D)
Everything all right? I mean, I usually put Bianca to bed.

LARS
(resolute)
Not any more. That's my job now. Baths, too.

Gus is slightly scandalized.

GUS
Well, I don't know...

LARS
Bianca's culture is very comfortable with nudity. I was the one who felt funny. But we're close enough now to--

That's all Gus wants to hear.

GUS
Okay. Well. That's up to you. G'night.

LARS
Thanks, Gus.

GUS
I didn't do anything.

LARS
Yeah, you did.

INT. GUS AND KARIN'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Karin lies with her feet up, reading, as he enters, suspicious.

GUS
What'd I miss?

KAREN
(excited, good news)
We had a big fight!

GUS
No!

KAREN
Yes!

They're both delighted.

EXT. LANDSCAPE -- DAY

It's sunny. An icicle melts. Water flows into a street drain, you can hear it run through pipes under the pavement. A bird sings. There's mud.

INT. EXAM ROOM -- DAY

Lars looks at Bianca. Dagmar looks at Lars, sensing something different about him. They keep their voices low.

DAGMAR

My office?

LARS

I'm going to stay with her. She's feeling pretty lousy.

DAGMAR

We'll both stay.

She watches Lars who watches Bianca, troubled.

LARS

Last week, I asked her to marry me.

Dagmar tries not to look dismayed.

DAGMAR

Congratulations! When's the happy day?

LARS

She said no.

Dagmar knows this means something but is not sure what.

DAGMAR

Oh, my.

LARS

I couldn't believe it.

He reaches over and takes Bianca's hand.

LARS (CONT'D)

She said she'll think it over.

He holds her hand against his cheek. Dagmar considers this development.

INT. OFFICE: COFFEE ROOM -- DAY

Lars goes to the soda machine. He secretly watches Margo and Eric eating lunch together. They laugh, intimate. Lars punches the soda machine button with force.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Lars sits in the pews by himself. Bianca, robed like the others, sits in the choir. Margo manipulates Bianca's hand to make her wave at Lars, but his attention is on the minister.

REVEREND BOCK

When we are children, we behave as children. But the time comes when we must surrender childish things.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: BACKYARD -- DAY

Bianca sits in the sun while Karin paints a piece of baby furniture. Karin checks her work.

KARIN

What do you think? Too yellow?

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Gus cooks. Lars watches Karin and Bianca through the window. Something important is on his mind. Karin, with her automatic thoughtfulness, adjusts Bianca's wheelchair so that the doll stays in the sun.

LARS

In Bianca's culture, people have a shaman to teach them.

Gus is absorbed in creating, he's not really listening.

GUS

Shamu?

Lars talks half to himself, half to Gus.

LARS

Shaman. A wise person. There are rituals and ordeals and if you live through them, then you have new powers, and you know you're an adult and it's time to take your place in the community. How did you know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS
What?

LARS
How did you turn into a man?

Gus's focus remains on spices.

GUS
Couldn't tell you.

LARS
Was it the Air Force? Should I kill something?

He picks up a carving knife. This gets Gus's attention.

GUS
No, jeez, no, put that down.

Lars puts it down and looks at Gus expectantly.

GUS (CONT'D)
Gimme a minute.
(can't find the words)
I never thought about it.

LARS
Is it sex?

GUS
(uncomfortable)
Well, it's kinda sex, but not, you know, I don't know, it's--well.
Damn. Hmm.

LARS
I really need to know.

The dryer buzzer goes off.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Gus puts clothes from the washer into the dryer.

GUS
You should ask Dagmar.

LARS
I did. She said who's someone you admire and I said Gus and she said ask you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gus pauses, surprised and moved. He clears his throat. He starts putting dirty white things into the washer. He kicks the laundry basket full of dry clothes toward Lars.

GUS

Fold those, willya? And pass me the bleach.

Lars does.

GUS (CONT'D)

I can only give you my opinion.

LARS

That's all I want.

He listens hard. Gus thinks, figuring it out as he talks.

GUS

It's not like you're all one thing or the other. There's still a kid inside. But you grow up when you decide to do right. Not what's right for you, what's right for everybody. Even when it hurts.

LARS

Like...

GUS

Well, don't jerk people around. Don't cheat on your woman, take care of your family. Admit when you're wrong. Look out for poor folks and sick folks and old folks. Try, anyway.

He tries to find more to say, but can't.

GUS (CONT'D)

Uh, that's all I can think of. Sounds pretty easy, but for some reason it's not.

LARS

(heartfelt)

Nothing's easy.

GUS

Like Dad. He didn't have to raise two boys alone, he could have given us away, people do that.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUS (CONT'D)

But he loved us and he tried to do right, even though he didn't know how. Even though he had a broken heart.

LARS folds laundry, quiet, thinking.

LARS

Yeah.

Pause. Gus decides to be a man. He apologizes with difficulty. He faces the biggest failure of his life.

GUS

Lars, I shouldn't have left you alone with him. He was too sad, it scared me and I just--I just ran. That was selfish. I should've taken better care of you. I'm so sorry.

He and Lars look at each other. They both know it's true.

LARS

(lightly)

'S okay. It's all over now.

GUS lightly cuffs LARS, full of relief, affection, love. LARS smiles at him.

EXT. POND -- DAY

Lars and Bianca sit and talk, face to face. We can't hear what he says, but he's intense about it.

EXT. POND -- LATER

Bianca sits while Lars walks around, close to her but restless. He doesn't talk, he's quiet, thinking. He looks at things on the ground. He looks at the buds on trees.

EXT. TREEHOUSE

Bianca leans against the tree trunk. LARS sits in the treehouse and looks at things from above.

INT. DAGMAR'S OFFICE

Lars moves around, restless, as Dagmar pretends to read a magazine. For a little bit he says nothing, then speaks abruptly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS

I'm not sure the treatments are helping.

Dagmar looks at him sharply.

DAGMAR

No?

LARS

She goes everywhere and does everything, but some days her heart's not in it, I can tell.

He sits to face Dagmar.

LARS (CONT'D)

Do YOU think they're helping? The treatments?

Dagmar decides to take a chance.

DAGMAR

I'm not sure. I'm sorry. We knew it was a long shot.

It's the answer he expects, but it still hurts.

LARS

What happens now?

DAGMAR

You tell me.

Lars thinks. Dagmar waits, interested.

LARS

Is this the only chance we've got?

DAGMAR

You could take her to the city and see different doctors who might know more.

LARS

She doesn't want that. She loves it here. She trusts you.

DAGMAR

We can always keep trying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS

You never know. She might turn a corner.

DAGMAR

She might.

LARS

She loves me. But when I say let's get married, she says no, not yet, or she doesn't say anything at all. More and more, she doesn't say anything at all.

He lowers his head, discouraged. But Dagmar watches him with a little smile, her eyes bright.

INT. OFFICE -- DAY

Time has passed, the appearance of the cubicles has changed. Kurt's has a different configuration of action figures. Margo's is rearranged, with more plants. Lars's features a Sears-like studio portrait of himself and Bianca. Lars works as Kurt and Margo fight. Margo is very upset, she holds her teddy bear, which has a noose around its neck.

MARGO

You crossed the line!

KURT

You keep swiping my action figures!

MARGO

I hide them, I don't hang them!

KURT

You're too old for that thing, anyway.

MARGO

Take off the noose.

KURT

No.

MARGO

Take it OFF!

KURT

Face it, Margo! That bear is dead.
Ha!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kurt puts on his headphones and returns to work, jiggling his knees triumphantly. Margo starts to cry and runs out of the room. Lars follows her, cuffing Kurt.

LARS

Moron.

KURT

You play, you pay.

INT. OFFICE: COFFEE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Margo sits at a table holding her strangled bear. Lars enters and sits with her. Kindly, gently, he takes the bear away from her and starts to take the noose apart.

MARGO

It's not only the bear. I broke up with Eric.

Lars offers insincere sympathy.

LARS

Sorry to hear that.

MARGO

I didn't even have a good reason. He just wasn't very -- interesting.

LARS

Then why was he your boyfriend?

MARGO

(defensive)

I get lonely, is that so hard to understand?

LARS

No.

He returns the repaired bear to her. He almost pats her in sympathy, but can't quite manage to touch her.

MARGO

What are you and Bianca doing Friday night?

LARS

School Board meeting with Mr. Hofstedtler.

(proud)

Bianca got elected.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGO
Wow! That's great.
(disappointed)
Okay.

LARS
Why?

MARGO
I was thinking we all could go out
somewhere.

She shrugs and starts to walk back to the office, blue.

MARGO (CONT'D)
Never mind.

LARS
(impulse)
After I drop her off I'm free.

Margo turns and smiles at him.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY -- NIGHT

Margo concentrates as she raises a bowling ball in front of her face, then hurls it down the alley with appropriate body language. She makes a spare.

Lars takes his turn, knocking three off the right. Margo cools her hand over the air vent. Lars knocks one pin off on the right. He's annoyed with himself.

MARGO
You're not following through.

LARS
I know, I know.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY ENTRANCE -- CONTINUOUS

Moose, Hector, Nelson and Sean check for available lanes. They each have their own gear. Russell works behind the desk, spraying shoes.

RUSSELL
Sorry, we're full up. Next week's
the Ladies League Tournament.

Except for Lars, the lanes are full of fiercely bowling women. The men are disappointed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SEAN
Nada?

HECTOR
Dude.

NELSON
Tell dem lady go.

RUSSELL
No way, Nelson, they'll shred me.

MOOSE
Is that Lars? Hey, buddy!

INT. SCORECARD PROJECTION -- LATER

Margo and Nelson are neck and neck for the lead, then Moose, Lars and Sean.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY -- LATER

They are all bowling together having a wonderful time. Margo watches Lars when he's not watching her. He makes her smile and he makes her sad.

NELSON
(to Margo, tesing)
Mahgong, kick you butt!

MARGO
No, Nelson, I kick YOU butt.

Lars watches Margo while she's not watching him. She makes him smile and she makes him sad.

MOOSE
(to Margo)
Baby, where you been all my life?

Moose winks at Lars as Margo laughs.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY -- LATER

Margo and Lars sit at a table behind the other bowlers, changing out of their bowling shoes. Something is on Lars's mind. She looks around the bowling alley with a little burst of happiness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGO

This was exactly what I needed,
things look so much better. Thanks
for bowling with me, Lars.

She is very close and very pretty. Lars can smell her
perfume.

LARS

(blurting)
Don't get the wrong idea. I'll
never cheat on Bianca.

Margo is shocked and appalled.

MARGO

Oh, no! I would never! I hope you
didn't think -- Lars, no. I can't
compete with her, I'd never try.

LARS

A man doesn't cheat on his woman.

MARGO

Absolutely. And vice versa.
Besides, I don't need to steal
anybody's boyfriend. One of these
days, I'll find a man of my own and
we'll be happy, too.

Lars is not so thrilled to hear this.

LARS

Yup. That's the way it works.

EXT. BOWLING ALLEY ENTRANCE -- MOMENTS LATER

Lars and Margo stand outside. It starts to snow.

LARS

I'd better go pick up Bianca.

MARGO

Snow.

They watch snow fall for a moment.

LARS

I was hoping winter was over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGO

Only a thaw. Winter won't be over
till Easter.

They watch the snow fall for another moment.

MARGO (CONT'D)

Thanks again.

LARS

Night.

As Margo turns to leave, he suddenly pulls off his glove and sticks out his bare hand at her. Margo is taken by surprise.

MARGO

Ah!

Lars takes a step closer, his hand still extended, as Margo realizes what he wants. She takes off her glove and they shake hands. The touch of her flesh sends an electric current through Lars. Kurt was wrong. Nothing's better than skin. Lars's hand buzzes with sensation. He feels it all over his body. Margo takes her hand away slowly.

MARGO (CONT'D)

Night.

She walks away. Lars puts his hand to his cheek.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Bianca's balanced on the edge of the tub in a towel. Lars dries her slowly, tracing the lines of her face. Then the outline of her body: her neck, her shoulder, her arm, gathering information about the female form. It's bizarrely tender, sensual and intimate.

INT. FAMILY ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Karin lies down, her feet elevated into Gus's lap where he massages them diligently. Gus stops massaging and listens.

GUS

It's too quiet up there.

KARIN

Don't listen.

GUS

But --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN

Gus, I really can't think about it.

GUS

You're right.

He massages again, they both think about it, uncomfortable.

INT. EXAM ROOM

Dagmar takes Bianca's blood pressure as Lars watches. She looks at him and shakes her head slightly. Lars rubs his face.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: BACKYARD -- DAY

Green shoots in the garden. Karin, muddy, inspects carefully. Bianca holds the garden tools.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: BABY'S ROOM

Gus and Lars paint the walls, listening to sports on the radio. They converse without much thought, if any.

LARS

You care if it's a boy or a girl?

GUS

Nah.

LARS

Me, neither.

GUS

I just want a kid. Don't know why.

LARS

Yeah, me, too.

Gus give him a look, but Lars is happily painting.

INT. LARS'S GARAGE APT.-- EVENING

Bianca lies on Lars's sofa, as if she's ill, in his arms. LARS blots her face with a cool cloth. He kisses her forehead and looks worried and loving.

INT. OFFICE -- DAY

Lars ducks in his cubicle as, on either side, Margo and Kurt throw things at each other--balls of paper, paper clips, pens, staple removers, etc.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS

Cut it out! I mean it! Right now!

They pay no attention to him. Cindy appears at the door.

CINDY

Margo, are you coming to lunch or not?

MARGO

Yes! Wait for me!

She grabs her purse and dashes out to Cindy, laughing as Kurt pelts her with objects.

CINDY

This place is a big kindergarten.

KURT

Margo, you loser!

A few moments quiet after the big battle. Lars stretches out.

KURT (CONT'D)

I think she likes me.

LARS

Not a chance.

KURT

All that girly energy? She's ready for a man.

LARS

Not you.

KURT

Like a ripe peach on the tree. Watch me pick her off. (sound effect) Thp.

LARS

Not in a million years.

KURT

You'll see. Thp.

Kurt jiggles his knees, cocky. This really bugs Lars who suddenly whips a ball of paper at him.

KURT (CONT'D)

Hey!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They continue the war.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: BACKYARD -- EVENING

Lars chops firewood with abandon as Bianca watches. Karin watches from the kitchen and calls out the back door.

KARIN

Lars, we have plenty, it's almost April.

But Lars keeps chopping.

INT. EXAM ROOM

Thoughtful, Dagmar looks at Bianca on the table.

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Lars waits nervously. JOANNE walks by him. He catches her arm and blurts, desperate for reassurance.

LARS

Dagmar wanted to see her alone today.

Joanne, compassionate, gives him a squeeze, he accepts it.

JOANNE

You hang in there, Lars.
Everything's gonna be okay.

He tries to smile at her.

INT. DAGMAR'S OFFICE -- LATER

Dagmar holds both of Lars's hands, which doesn't seem to bother him at all now. She's very serious.

LARS

Just say it.

DAGMAR

I think you're right. Bianca's not responding to the special treatments.

It hits Lars hard.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)

How's she been with you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS

Not good. Not good. What do we do?

DAGMAR

I don't think there's anything we can do.

(cautious)

Have you thought about sending her back to the tropics?

LARS

No! She doesn't want to go, she doesn't want to leave me.

DAGMAR

I understand.

LARS

She doesn't ever want to leave me.

Dagmar makes a move toward him to comfort, but he turns away.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: GUS'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

On his way to bed, Gus shuts off the light in his office. Then the light in the kitchen.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE -- NIGHT -- CONTINUOUS

We watch the various lights go out.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: GUS AND KAREN'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

From the doorway, Gus admires Karin. She's now very pregnant. Feeling his gaze in her sleep, Karin wakes a little.

KAREN

Come to bed?

GUS

Be right there.

KAREN

'S cold.

INT. PINK BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Senselessly, but because it's his nature -- he does this every night -- Gus opens the door to check on Bianca and, seeing her safe, closes the door quietly, so as not to wake her.

INT. LARS'S GARAGE APT.-- CONTINUOUS

Lars tosses and turns in bed, the baby blanket thrown off him. He's asleep but his unconscious is working hard.

INT. PINK BEDROOM -- LATER

Bianca lies in bed with her nightlight, serene.

INT. GUS AND KARIN'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Gus and Karin sleep.

LARS (O.C.)
(panicked)
Gus! Gus!

Gus is out of bed in an instant, completely disoriented but ready for action.

GUS
Yeah!

He locates the door and runs out as Karin struggles to get up.

INT. PINK BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Bianca lies in bed, still in her pajamas, Lars stands beside her, Gus runs in.

LARS
She won't wake up, I think she's
unconscious!

Gus is stumped. How do you tell if a doll is unconscious?

GUS
Wh--huh--are you sure?

LARS
Yes!

GUS
(at a loss)
Uh...

Karin enters. Gus looks to her.

GUS (CONT'D)
Bianca's unconscious!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN
Uh...call 911!

Lars dashes out.

GUS
911?

KARIN
I don't know! You always expect me
to know what to do!

EXT. TOWN--LATER

An ambulance speeds through the streets, Gus and Karin follow
in their car.

INT. HOSPITAL -- LATER

Swinging doors burst open as, lying on a gurney, Bianca is
rushed to a treatment room. Gus, Karin and Lars follow. NURSE
AMY stops them, compassionate.

NURSE AMY
I'm sorry, you'll have to wait out
here. Dr. Bergen's on the way.

Gus puts his arm around Lars's shoulder pulls him away from
the door. Lars is distraught.

LARS
I want to be with her!

GUS
It's okay, it's okay...

They step away, Gus tries to talk LARS down. Karin and Amy
share a few private words.

KARIN
Thank you, Amy.

NURSE AMY
She's Volunteer of the Year, we
love her. So much nicer than a real
patient. When are you due?

KARIN
Three weeks. Seems like a lifetime.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE AMY
(been there)
Oh, I know.

KARIN
I'm so excited. A baby!

NURSE AMY
Karin, there's nothing like it.

INT. TREATMENT ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Two nurses put a hospital johnny on Bianca.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM -- LATER

Lars sits, pale and waiting. As in the time before Bianca, he seems far away. Dagmar enters and sits with them. She looks serious. Karin senses bad news.

KARIN
Oh, no.

DAGMAR
Bianca's very sick.

Karin looks at Lars. She and Gus are alarmed.

KARIN
No, she isn't. She couldn't be.
Lars?

LARS
She didn't want to tell you. She
didn't want you to worry.

Karin is shocked.

KARIN
No.

GUS
How sick is very sick?

Dagmar looks at Lars.

LARS
She's dying.

No one knows what to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KAREN

Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

She starts to cry. Gus is thoroughly bewildered.

GUS

But--

LARS

How long do we have?

DAGMAR

That's up to her.

LARS

Does she know?

DAGMAR

She knows. She's a brave girl.

No one knows what to say.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)

We'll observe her till she's
stable, but she wants to go home
with you tonight.

They all try to absorb this. Lars stands.

LARS

Where is she?

Dagmar and Lars walk away as Gus and Karin look at each other, at a total loss.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY -- LATER

Outside the door to Bianca's room, hospital personnel and other patients peek to see Lars at Bianca's bedside, holding her hand, his head bowed. Nurse Amy steps in, softly closes the door, and addresses the troops.

NURSE AMY

If anybody laughs or bothers that
boy, you're on the next bus to
Siberia, I kid you not. Move along.

She shoos them away.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- LATER

In a different position, Lars sits next to Bianca. He looks like everyone else who waits at a hospital bed with a dying loved one.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM -- LATER

Karin, Gus and Dagmar in discussion. Dagmar is excited in her own calm way.

KARIN

What's it going to do to him?
How can we let it happen?

DAGMAR

We're not letting it happen, it's
Lars. It's always been Lars.

Gus defends him.

GUS

He didn't ask to be lonely or sick
in the head.

DAGMAR

No, no, of course not. But do
you see? He's making the decisions.
He's the one who found her
unconscious, he's the one who said
she's terminal.

KARIN

You saw his face. Why would he put
himself through this.

DAGMAR

Partly, I think it's your mother. I
think he's reliving the greatest
loss of his life. Only he's not a
helpless infant now, this time he
has a chance to come through it
whole.

GUS

But that doesn't connect. Mom's
heart stopped on the table. Lars
never even knew her.

Karin holds her belly, realizing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN
Oh, he knew her.

DAGMAR
Everything connects.

INT. GUS AND KAREN'S CAR -- NIGHT

Karin and Gus are quiet in front, holding hands as Gus drives home. Bianca reclines against Lars in the back.

KARIN
(tentative)
Okay back there?

LARS
(distant)
They gave her something. She's asleep.

They drive in silence.

GUS
You know, anything you want.

KAREN
Anything we can do.

There's silence for another little while.

LARS
We'd like to stay together in the pink room.

INT. PINK BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Lars and Bianca, in pajamas, are asleep in bed, their arms around each other. Gus opens the door, checks on them, closes the door.

INT. OFFICE: COFFEE ROOM -- MORNING

Margo's making coffee, Cindy enters, her eyes full of tears.

MARGO
Cindy, what?

CINDY
Baxter's sister Candace called.

MARGO
The nurse?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY
It's Bianca.

INT. MALL -- DAY

Sandy tells other people in the mall about Bianca.

INT. GUS'S LUNCHROOM -- DAY

Moose tells everybody about Bianca.

INT. CHURCH MEETING ROOM -- DAY

Mrs. Gruner tells the Bible Study Class about Bianca.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE/DAYCARE CENTER -- DAY

Deb tells the children about Bianca

INT. COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM -- DAY

Laurel and her yoga class meditating. Laurel hits a little gong and speaks in her meditation voice, but she's also emotional.

LAUREL
And as we end our meditation, let's
visualize Bianca and Lars
surrounded in healing rays of
bright white light and divine love
as we pray for the best possible
outcome for all beings.

A few moments of meditation.

LAUREL (CONT'D)
Namaste.

CLASS
Namaste.

They bow to the divine in each other. Laurel hits the little gong.

EXT. TOWN -- MORNING

It's raining.

EXT. LAKE -- DAY

Raindrops fall on the lake, sending ripples over the surface.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE -- DAY

Rain.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: KITCHEN

The answering machine blinks and blinks. The phone rings and rings.

INT. GUS AND KAREN'S BEDROOM -- DAY

The phone in the room is unplugged, we hear the ringing far away. Karin naps. The windows are open enough so that wind makes the curtains billow, as if they're breathing. A dream-like look and feel. We can hear the rain.

INT. PINK BEDROOM -- DAY

Lars lies in bed asleep, holding Bianca. The doorbell rings. He wakes to see and hear the rain, as the doorbell sound dies away.

LARS

Spring.

He gets out of bed. Still in his pajamas, his hair messy, he leaves the room.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: STAIRWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Lars walks down the stairs and opens the front door.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: PORCH -- CONTINUOUS

The mail truck drives away, a couple of houses down. The Lindstrom porch is full of flowers, gift baskets, candles and Get Well balloons. There is a bag of mail. Astonished, Lars walks down the steps into the rain, looking after the mail truck. He looks back at the porch, a vivid display of color on a grey day.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: FRONT DOOR -- NIGHT

Doorbell rings. Gus opens the door to find Mrs. Gruner, Mrs. Schindler and Mrs. Petersen each bearing casseroles.

INT. PINK BEDROOM -- LATER

Lars sits by the bed in his rocking chair, holding Bianca's hand and rocking. There's a soft knock on the door, enter Mrs. Gruner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS
Hi, Mrs. Gruner.

MRS. GRUNER
How is she?

LARS
Weak, but no pain.

MRS. GRUNER
Let's bring her down to the family
room.

LARS
I don't know...

MRS. GRUNER
She wants to.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: FAMILY ROOM -- LATER

Mrs. Petersen and Mrs. Schindler sit with Lars and Bianca.
They have brought crocheting, knitting and needlepoint to do.

MRS. SCHINDLER
We sent Gus and Karin off to the
movies.

MRS. PETERSEN
They didn't like to leave you.

LARS
No, it's good they went. I feel
awful about this, when the baby's
almost here.

MRS. PETERSEN
That's how life is, Lars.

MRS. SCHINDLER
Everything at once.

Mrs. Gruner enters with a plate of food for Lars.

LARS
Thanks, I'm not hungry.

MRS. GRUNER
Well, keep it in your lap. Bianca
may want to pick.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They sit in companionable silence. Mrs. Schindler hums to herself. Lars starts to eat, first picking, then building appetite.

LARS

Is there something I'm supposed to do?

MRS. GRUNER

No, dear. You eat.

MRS. SCHINDLER

(placid)

We came over to sit.

MRS. PETERSEN

That's what people do when tragedy strikes.

MRS. SCHINDLER

They come over and sit.

They sit.

MRS. GRUNER

Don't you feel a little better?

LARS

Yeah.

They sit.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE: FAMILY ROOM -- LATER

The same. The women crochet, knit and do needlepoint. Lars listens closely to the conversation.

MRS. GRUNER

Of course there's an afterlife.

MRS. SCHINDLER

Look at Jesus.

MRS. PETERSEN

My grandfather always said, "When you're gone, you're gone. There's nothing but nothing."

MRS. GRUNER

Mean as a snake, that man. Famous for it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. PETERSEN

We were so grateful when he had the heart attack and fell into a coma.

Mrs. Gruner and Mrs. Schindler agree, with feeling.

MRS. SCHINDLER

Mm-hmm.

MRS. GRUNER

Oh, yes.

MRS. PETERSEN

Well, he was about to die. Didn't even twitch all night. Then all of a sudden he rears up in bed with his eyes wide open and he says,
(joy and surprise)
"Oh!" Then, clunk, he was dead. I was there, he saw something, I know it in my bones. He never looked so glad, like a boy.

MRS. SCHINDLER

Oh, yes, that happens.

MRS. GRUNER

No doubt in my mind.

Lars looks at Bianca.

EXT. LINDSTROM HOUSE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Walking down the street from opposite directions, deep in thought, each bearing casseroles, Dagmar and Margo meet each other on the walk to the Lindstrom front door.

DAGMAR

Oh, hello.

MARGO

Hello. I'm Margo.

DAGMAR

I'm Dagmar.

They go up the walk together.

MARGO

Isn't it awful about Bianca.

Dagmar is not sure if she's serious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAGMAR

Unfortunately, we all have to go
sometime.

MARGO

But so young! Poor Lars.

Dagmar is charmed by her sincerity.

INT. LINDSTROM HOUSE -- LATER

Karin and Dagmar try to fit the casserole dishes into a
refrigerator already filled with casserole dishes. Margo
lurks at the door to the rest of the house, her mind on Lars.

DAGMAR

Darn it. I thought about a ham.

KARIN

We have four hams. And three
turkeys.

DAGMAR

You should freeze them, for when
the baby comes.

KARIN

Oh, you know, I think I will.

All Margo's energy is directed upstairs.

MARGO

This is the part that's so hard.
The waiting. Are you sure he's all
right?

They look at Margo. Dagmar looks at Karin, raises her
eyebrows. Karin raises her eyebrows back.

KARIN

Pretty sure. But he won't leave her
and he won't bring her down. It's
like that some days.

DAGMAR

(to Karin)

Should I go up there? I trust your
judgment.

MARGO

(unconsciously
territorial)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGO (CONT'D)
I'll go up. Lars and I are very
good friends. We went bowling.

DAGMAR
(amused)
Then you outrank me.

They both look to Karin for advice.

KARIN
Honestly? I feel like he wants to
be alone with her. They're in their
own world.

DAGMAR
Okay. He knows what he's doing.

MARGO
Not many men would be so devoted.

Dagmar and Karin exchange another little look, pleased with
Margo.

EXT. CHURCH -- DAY

A sunny Palm Sunday.

INT. CHURCH -- CONTINUOUS

The church is filled with palms and lilies. Reverend Bock
passes out palms to the children and people who file down the
aisle.

CHOIR
"O'er all the way green palms and
blossoms gay/Are strewn this day in
festal preparation/Where Jesus
comes to wipe our tears away/E'en
now the throng to welcome him
prepare...Hosanna...

Even though she knows they're not there, MARGO checks the pew
for Lars and Bianca, but there's only space.

INT. PINK BEDROOM - DAY

Lars continues his vigil with Bianca. Karin knocks softly and
opens the door, Gus behind her.

KARIN
I have spring fever, we're going
out to the lake. Wanna come?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS

She's so weak. I think she's in pain but she won't admit it.

KARIN

She wants to get out for a little while, Lars.

GUS

Come with us. Do everybody good.

KARIN

Bianca, don't you want to see this glorious day?

EXT. LAKE -- LATER

Gus, Karin, Lars and Bianca on the shore of the lake. They check the sky--a northern spring sky, part promise, part threat.

GUS

Is that a storm over there?

KARIN

The weather said no.

GUS

Looks like a storm to me.

KARIN

Honey, I need to stretch my legs, maybe it'll blow over. Let's take a chance.

GUS

Lars?

LARS

You go. Bianca wants to stay and look at the water.

GUS

We won't be far.

KARIN

Holler if you need us.

LARS

Don't worry. Let's not worry any more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gus and Karin walk off hand in hand. Lars watches them go, fondly. He likes watching them together.

CUT TO:

SAME, A LITTLE LATER

Lars sits next to Bianca in her wheelchair. They watch the water. He speaks from the bottom of his heart.

LARS

We still have so much to talk about. Everything is different because of you. I thought that we'd have years and years.

He takes her hand, kisses her palm.

LARS (CONT'D)

Thank you.

EXT. ACROSS THE FIELD -- LATER

Gus looks at the sky again, Karin looks toward the lake.

GUS

See? I was right. Here it comes.

Karin starts moving back toward the lake, not sure of what she sees.

KARIN

Gus...

GUS

We'll just about make it home before--

Karin starts running.

GUS (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

KARIN

Gus!

At the edge of the lake, we can see Bianca's wheelchair where it's rolled into the water. GUS immediately understands.

GUS

(already moving, to Karin)
You okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN

Go! Go!

Gus sprints past her toward Lars who holds Bianca in his arms, a strange reverse pieta. Even in a long shot, we can sense the intensity of Lars's grief. Bianca is dead.

EXT. CEMETERY

A funeral on a beautiful, sunny spring day. Around the grave, people stand or sit in folding chairs. No one wears black. Almost everyone we've seen is present except children. Lars sits with Karin, Gus and Dagmar. He has just finished a crying spasm, is distant and quiet for the moment, in the space between waves of grief. The mourners are a little restless, unsure of how to behave at such a curious occasion.

REVEREND BOCK

Lars asked us not to wear black today. He did that to remind us that this is no ordinary funeral. Oh, no. Instead he would like us to join together in celebration of Bianca's extraordinary life.

The mourners settle, interested.

REVEREND BOCK (CONT'D)

Without even trying, Bianca brought to this town the warmth, the laughter, the vivid color of her native tropics. She was a listener and a teacher. She was a lesson in courage and constancy. Did you ever once see her yield to disability or despair?

People shake their heads, no, they never did. Everyone is moved in their own way.

REVEREND BOCK (CONT'D)

There is not one among us who could match her work ethic or her serenity in the face of illness and even death.

The word touches them all and makes it real.

REVEREND BOCK (CONT'D)

From her wheelchair, Bianca touched all of us in ways we could never have predicted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The mourners agree, this is very true.

REVEREND BOCK (CONT'D)
And she left us with glowing memories of her generosity, her delightful company and her love of humanity. Oh, yes. We can be sure Bianca loved us all. Especially Lars.

Everyone becomes aware of him. They watch him, compassionate.

REVEREND BOCK (CONT'D)
ESPECIALLY him. But Lars, don't forget, she was first and foremost a missionary. A servant of God.

Lars nods. He won't forget.

REV. BOCK
So let us not grieve for her. Let us not suffer. Let us rejoice. Bianca has not gone, she has gone AHEAD, where we all must go one day. And she will be there to greet us on that day, when we too return to our true home, safe forever in the bosom of the Lord. Amen.

PEOPLE
Amen.

He begins to recite the Twenty-Third Psalm. Everyone knows the words, some say it along with him.

REV. BOCK
"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, He leadeth me beside still waters, he restoreth my soul..."

EXT. CEMETERY -- LATER

The service is over, people disperse, talking. Gus and Karin talk to various configurations of friends and neighbors. Dagmar watches Lars as he accepts condolences, hugs, shakes hands, reaches out. Margo, too watches Lars from a distance.

GUS
Come back to the house. Please. Bring the kids. We'd love to have you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KARIN

We finally decided. Paul Lars if
it's a boy and Elinor Bianca if
it's a girl.

It's clear that everybody will gather at the Lindstrom house.

CUT TO:

SAME -- LATER

Gus approaches Dagmar. They look at Lars.

GUS

Can Lars drive with you? We have to
be home when people start showing
up and I don't want to rush him...

DAGMAR

Of course.

GUS

What comes next?

DAGMAR

As usual, I have no idea.

They marvel at the strange and wonderful person Lars is.

GUS

He's--unbelievable.

DAGMAR

The most creative, resourceful--and
he's strong, Gus, he's really
strong.

GUS

I never knew. I never knew him.

Gus is full of emotion.

GUS (CONT'D)

I don't know what to say. How to
thank you. Without you...I mean,
he's my brother...

He can't find the words.

DAGMAR

It's a privilege.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Karin motions to him from a distance.

KARIN

Gus!

GUS

See you at the house?

DAGMAR

I'll be there.

He hugs her warmly, he goes. Dagmar stays in the background watching, as people leave. She is amused and moved by the whole experience.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY -- LATER

The cemetery is empty except for Lars, Margo and Dagmar, who stand quite apart from one another. Margo and Lars are unaware of Dagmar. Lars looks at the headstones, his mother, his father and "Bianca, Beloved Friend." Dagmar starts toward him, but from another direction, Margo joins Lars at the grave. Dagmar stops and watches.

LARS

We used to come here sometimes. She liked it, even in winter.

MARGO

I like it, too. Peaceful.

They stand together looking at Bianca's grave. Dagmar watches the simple scene. We can hear birds.

LARS

She asked me to let go, she said she was ready. She told me not to be sad. But I can't help it.

MARGO

Me, neither.

LARS

We'll feel better as time goes on. That's what people say.

MARGO

It's true, I think, in a way. But there'll never be anyone like her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS

Never.

They stand for a few more moments, remembering Bianca. Then Lars wipes his eyes, looks around at the day and takes a breath. Dagmar smiles and walks away, leaving them alone.

MARGO

(doesn't really want to)
I guess we should catch up with
everybody else.

LARS

(doesn't really want to)
In a while. You wanna take a walk?

MARGO

Yes.

They wander off into the sunlight together.

(CONT'D)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: