

127. INT. MAX'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MONDAY, FEBRUARY
25TH

MAX and his wife, LOUISE, in the middle of an ugly domestic scene. LOUISE sits erect on an overstuffed chair, her eyes wet with imminent tears; MAX strides around the room. He is clearly under great stress.

LOUISE
(shrilly)

How long has it been going on?

MAX
(prowling around the room)

A month. I thought at first it might be a transient thing and blow over in a week. I still hope to God it's just a menopausal infatuation. But it is an infatuation, Louise. There's no sense my saying I won't see her again because I will. Do you want me to clear out, go to a hotel?

LOUISE

Do you love her?

MAX

I don't know how I feel. I'm grateful I still feel anything. I know I'm obsessed with her.

LOUISE
(stands)

Then say it! Don't keep telling me you're obsessed, you're infatuated -- say you're in love with her!

MAX

I'm in love with her.

LOUISE
(erupts)

Then get out, go to a hotel, go anywhere you want, go live with her, but don't come back! Because after twenty-five years of building a home and raising a family and all the senseless pain we've inflicted on each other, I'll be damned if I'll just stand here and let you tell me you love somebody else!

(now it's she striding
around, weeping, a
caged lioness)

Because this isn't just some convention weekend with your secretary, is it? Or some broad you picked up after three belts of booze. This is your great winter romance, isn't it?, your last roar of passion before you sink into your emeritus years. Is that what's left for me? Is that my share? She gets the great winter passion, and I get the dotage? Am I supposed to sit at home knitting and purling till you slink back like a penitent drunk? I'm your wife, damn it! If you can't work up a winter passion for me, then the least I require is respect and allegiance! I'm hurt! Don't you understand that? I'm hurt badly!

She stares, her cheeks streaked with tears, at MAX standing at the terrace glass door, staring blindly out, his own eyes wet and welling. After a moment, he turns and regards his anguished wife.

LOUISE

Say something, for God's sake.

MAX

I've got nothing to say.

He enfolds her; she sobs on his chest.

LOUISE

(after a moment)

Are you that deeply involved with her?

MAX

Yes.

LOUISE

I won't give you up easily, Max.

He struggles to restrain his tears. She releases herself from his embrace.

LOUISE

I think the best thing is if you did move out. Does she love you, Max?

MAX

I'm not sure she's capable of any real feelings. She's the television generation. She learned life from Bugs Bunny. The only reality she

knows is what comes over her teevee set. She has devised a variety of scenarios for us all to play, as if it were a Movie of the Week. And, my God!, look at us, Louise. Here we are going through the obligatory middle-of-Act-Two scorned wife throws peccant husband out scene. But, no fear, I'll come back home in the end. All her plot outlines have me leaving her and returning to you because the audience won't buy a rejection of the happy American family. She does have one script in which I kill myself, an adapted for television version of Anna Karenina in which she's Count Vronsky and I'm Anna.

LOUISE

You're in for some dreadful grief,
Max.

MAX

I know.