

HERE'S AN EXCERPT FROM A COMING OF AGE, RETRO SCRIPT TITLED 'CHOICES'. BRIEF SYNOPSIS: RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRAD MICHELE IS DRIVING HER BEST FRIEND SARA OUT TO CALIFORINA TO ATTEND COLLEGE THERE...

ENT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE -MORNING

Michelle is loading up the last of her bags in her trunk. She shuts it and walks inside the back door to the kitchen. Her mother ANN, is holding a list. She's a slightly overweight woman but looks very much like her daughter but shorter. She's in her early 40's. Her grandmother, ROSIE, is at the counter, making a pastrami loaf sandwich on wheat bread. She's in her late 60's to early 70's. A radio in the background is playing Van Halen's "Jump" as her grandmother sings along in the style of David Lee Roth.

ANN

Now I've got all the numbers for the state police departments out to California so if you have any trouble you can call.

MICHELLE

Yes Mom.

ANN

And I packed some Dr. Peppers in the cooler too because I know Sam likes Dr. Pepper.

MICHELLE

Yes Mom.

ANN

And be careful where you stop. Make sure it's always well-lit. Park under a streetlight, if you can.

MICHELLE

(sighing)

Yes Mom.

ANN

I know. I'm being a pest but I just want you to be safe.

MICHELLE

I will Mom. I promise.

ROSIE  
She is 18, you know? A legal  
adult?

ANN  
Mom, I didn't ask for your  
opinion.

Rosie winks at Michelle and Michelle smiles.

ANN  
Got your license and your keys?

MICHELLE  
Check.

ANN  
Your sinus pills?

MICHELLE  
Check.

ANN  
How about-?

ROSIE  
She's got everything she needs and  
if not here's an extra \$50.

Rosie reaches into her pocket and hands it to Michelle. She  
holds up her finger to make Michelle wait.

ROSIE  
One minute.

She walks into the living room and comes back with a  
cassette tape. She tosses it to Michelle who turns it over  
to see the title.

MICHELLE  
Cool! B-52'S 'Cosmic Thing'.  
Thanks Gram.

ROSIE  
Now it's just a loaner for the  
trip. I expect to get it back in  
one piece. (beat) Just like you.

MICHELLE  
(chuckling)  
Why does your 'mothering' sound so  
much better?

Michelle grins at her mom and grandmother.

ROSIE

Because I've got more experience.  
(beat) Just know that your mom  
loves you a whole bunch, which is  
why she's so particular about  
things.

Michelle nods.

MICHELLE

I know. I love you both too.

She hugs her grandmother and then her mother.

MICHELLE

I gotta get outta here. I'm late  
already.

ROSIE

Have a safe trip.

Michelle starts to leave out the back door.

MICHELLE

Tell Dad I said bye. I'll give a  
call when we stop tonight.

ANN

Take care kiddo.

Michelle slides across the hood and then hops over the door  
of her car.

MICHELLE

Will do.

She starts the car up and puts it into gear leaving the  
driveway but not before popping the tape inside. 'Cosmic  
Thing' by the B-52s starts to play.

FADE TO:

EXT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Michelle pulls up to Samantha's house as 'Dry County' by  
the B-52's is playing on her stereo. She turns the car off  
and the tape pops out of the player. When it's quiet she  
hears a commotion in Sam's house and lets out a sigh. She  
opens the car door and walks up the steps. She knocks once  
on the door. No answer. She knocks again. Still no answer.  
She finally decides to walk inside. She sees Sam's parents

fighting. Sam's father, GREG is yelling at her mother, RACHEL.

GREG  
For once can't you cook something  
that isn't burnt!

He pushes a plate off the table making Rachel jump. He looks over and sees Michelle standing there.

GREG  
Do you know how to knock?

RACHEL  
Greg, don't.

GREG  
Don't tell me what to do!

Michelle doesn't seem effected by his angry tone. Instead of scared, she looks rather angry herself.

MICHELLE  
I did knock. (beat) Maybe if you'd  
stop screaming you'd hear  
something besides your own voice  
for a change.

Greg stands up from the table and shouts upstairs.

GREG  
Sam! Your deadbeat friend is down  
here!

Michelle smiles.

MICHELLE  
Takes one to know one.

GREG  
Why you little-.

Greg starts to charge over to Michelle as Samantha runs downstairs with a book bag on her shoulder. Michelle reaches into her pocket. Rachel dashes over stepping in his path.

RACHEL  
Why don't you calm down a min-.

He grabs her by the face and pushes her against the wall. Sam reacts and jumps on his back. He slams her back into a wall and Sam lets go, landing on her bottom. Michelle pulls

a butterfly knife and opens it with a flip to and fro of her wrist. Greg starts to laugh.

GREG  
(to Michelle)  
You're bluffing. You ain't got the guts.

Michelle takes slow, menacing steps toward him. The smile slips from his face and he starts to walk backward.

MICHELLE  
You know (beat) in the four years I've been coming here nothing has changed. And I racked my brain tryin' to think of the perfect graduation gift for Sam. (beat) I think I just found it.

Michelle doesn't stop. She keeps moving toward him. Greg looks to Sam and Rachel who are silent, now standing next to each other watching.

MICHELLE  
Oh no. Neither of them will help you so don't bother looking over there. (beat) I just came to get your daughter out of this mess as quickly and as quietly as possible.

Greg looks scared. He clears his throat and as his back hits the wall in his retreat, he jumps a little.

MICHELLE  
Scary to be at someone else's mercy (beat) isn't it?

Greg musters up some courage but Michelle sees through it.

GREG  
You're all talk.

MICHELLE  
Sam's got a full scholarship waiting for her in L.A. She'll make her mark despite her bastard of a father. (beat) As for me? I'm a guitar playing grease monkey who'll be stuck in a dead end job for the rest of her life.

Michelle comes inches away from him. The knife pressed against his throat.

MICHELLE

Now you tell me. (beat) How serious am I?

Greg and Michelle stare each other down. The only sound is coming from the TV, which is showing a video of 'Voices Carry' by Til Tuesday. After a few moments, Michelle takes a step away and motions to the door.

MICHELLE

Take a walk and cool off. Come back in about an hour. We'll be gone by then.

Greg looks over to Rachel and Samantha but both look away. He looks back at Michelle who hasn't taken her eyes off him. His cockiness returns.

GREG

I'll be back but I'm bringing the cops. No one threatens me in my own house.

MICHELLE

Please do.

Indignant, Greg storms from the house. Michelle continues to speak to Greg as he leaves.

MICHELLE

Just make sure they're gone before you start slapping your wife around. The cops might not be too sympathetic to your plight.

As the door slams shut, Samantha turns to her mother.

SAMANTHA

Maybe I should stay. It won't be safe when he comes back.

RACHEL

No. You go.

SAMANTHA

But mom-.

RACHEL

Listen sweetie I've made  
arrangements to leave. I'm going  
to a safe house tomorrow.

MICHELLE

You might not make it to tomorrow.  
(beat) Any chance they'll take you  
tonight? We've got an hour to pack  
some things.

Rachel grins at Michelle before turning serious.

RACHEL

I don't know.

SAMANTHA

Mom please. I won't leave you here  
alone with him.

Rachel nods and makes her way toward the kitchen.

RACHEL

Let me make a call.

Once Rachel is gone Michelle notices the five bags next to  
the sofa.

MICHELLE

These yours?

Samantha just nods as Michelle starts to pick two of them  
up and heads out the door. Samantha grabs two bags and  
follows.

SAMANTHA

I'm worried about her.

MICHELLE

She's a grown woman Sam. She's not  
your responsibility.

Michelle opens the trunk and they start to load it.

SAMANTHA

Yeah but she's still my mom.

Michelle packs the bags as tight as she can.

MICHELLE

I just can't believe you offered  
to stay.

SAMANTHA

What am I supposed to do? Leave  
her here?

Michelle stops and puts her hands on her hips facing  
Samantha.

MICHELLE

Yeah Sam, that's exactly what you  
do. She's made the decision to  
live with him this long. It's not  
your fault she hasn't gotten out.

Michelle goes back to packing the trunk. She can't fit the  
last bag and tosses it in the backseat. Rachel appears at  
the front door.

RACHEL

They can take me tonight. I'm  
going to get a suitcase ready if  
you don't mind.

MICHELLE

That's good Mrs. J. Pack quick  
though, just in case he comes back  
early.

Rachel nods. Michelle turns to Samantha as Rachel goes  
inside.

MICHELLE

There - she's getting out. Can we  
leave now?

Samantha tosses her book bag into the front seat briskly.

MICHELLE

What?

SAMANTHA

You don't get it. You live with  
great parents and a grandmother  
who's cooler than half the kids at  
school.

MICHELLE

You're right I don't get it. I  
don't understand any of this.

Samantha looks like she's going to cry but holds it back.

SAMANTHA

You know why I got that  
scholarship?

MICHELLE  
Yeah, you're smart.

Samantha lets out a sigh of frustration.

SAMANTHA  
Do you know why I'm smart?

MICHELLE  
Certainly can't be genetics from  
your father's side.

Samantha ignores the attempt at humor and continues.

SAMANTHA  
Because I spent all my time  
studying. (beat) I'd stay at the  
library as late as I could so I  
wouldn't have to come home. When  
they were closed I'd go to my room  
and turn my stereo up as high as I  
could. That way I didn't have to  
listen to them fighting.

Michelle starts to kick at an absent pebble at her feet.

SAMANTHA  
It's ironic. The reason I'm a  
great student is because I have  
lousy parents.

MICHELLE  
Your mom's not lousy. (beat)  
Misguided but not lousy.

SAMANTHA  
Yeah I know. And you're right.  
(beat) She should have gotten out  
years ago. (beat) Promise me that  
if I'm ever headed in that  
direction you'll let me know.

MICHELLE  
That won't happen to you Sam.  
You're smart and-.

SAMANTHA  
Just promise me, okay?

MICHELLE  
Okay, okay. I promise.

Rachel returns with a suitcase and Michelle makes room in the backseat as Samantha goes up to take the suitcase from her mom. Once everyone is inside Michelle starts the car and puts on her '50' style 'diddy bop' sunglasses. Tumbuk three's 'Futures So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades' is on the radio. Michelle smiles.

MICHELLE

They're playin' your song Sam.  
You'll need these.

Michelle pulls the glasses from her face and places them on Samantha who grins. They pull away from the house.