

MISS KOWALSKI  
an original screenplay by  
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INT. MISS KOWALSKI'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

A beautiful summer day.

From inside a window, someone looks out at some neighbors who are moving out. A little girl (CLARA, 8, messy hair, dirty clothes) sits quietly on the lawn, watching her FATHER (30s, long hair) pack things into a truck with his BUDDY (30s). The father's girlfriend (JADE, 20s, attractive) helps out, occasionally giving orders.

MISS KOWALSKI (O.S.)

There she is. Poor little one.  
Never says a word. Look at that  
unwashed hair. And those clothes!  
Where are her ribbons? Doesn't stand  
a chance in all of that, especially  
with this new one. Never seems to  
get it right, does he? Have you  
seen this one, Max? Ice cold, she  
is. But of course he can't see it...  
not yet. I'm so glad you're not  
blind, Max.

MISS KOWALSKI (70s vibrant, wearing a lot of makeup - some of it smudged under her eyes) frowns at Clara's father, who turns and catches a glimpse of her frown. She moves away from the window.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)

Wise is more like it. And you spoil  
me so, Max.

Miss Kowalski fastens her housecoat.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)

(coyly)  
No... Don't even think about it.  
I've got things to do today.

The old lady looks into a piping hot teapot. She prepares two place settings at a small table.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)

Some tea for you, Max?

She pours tea into the teacups.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)

What a wonderful night it was! You  
are such a nimble dancer. I was 25  
again!

Miss Kowalski sits down and takes a sip of tea.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
 Shhh.. Now now.. The others will  
 hear you! Do you want that nosy  
 Leila to ruin another perfect morning?

Miss Kowalski eyes Clara out the window. The girl is doing cartwheels on the front lawn, occasionally landing in front of Miss Kowalski's house.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
 Max? Are you listening to me?

Reveal Max, a small *palm tree*.

EXT. CLARA'S HOUSE - LATER

Clara is sitting on the lawn, near the pathway to her house. Jade comes out of the house with a huge box and nearly trips over Clara's feet.

JADE  
 Move out of the way!

Clara quickly pulls her feet aside.

JADE (CONT'D)  
 (to Clara's father)  
 I swear your daughter's tripping me  
 on purpose.

Clara's father frowns at Clara, who gets up and does cartwheels on Miss Kowalski's lawn.

Suddenly, Miss Kowalski exits her house carrying a sturdy tote bag. Her demeanor has completely changed. She is now timid, mousy and wearing no makeup. She avoids eye contact with Clara and the others.

Clara's father notices the old woman.

CLARA'S FATHER  
 (to Clara)  
 Hey kid! Get over here.

Clara eyes Miss Kowalski, then approaches her father. He pats her on the head.

There's junk all over the sidewalk. Miss Kowalski waits as Clara's father moves a few things out of her way. She heads off down the sidewalk.

Jade, Clara's father and his buddy share a smile.

CLARA'S FATHER (CONT'D)

(shaking his head)

It'll sure be nice having normal neighbors for a change.

BUDDY

I think having a nutcase in your neighborhood gives it character.

JADE

What? They're creepy.

Clara's father and his friend attempt to stuff a large chair into the already overloaded truck. They try different ways but cannot fit it in.

JADE (CONT'D)

Why didn't you put that in first?

EXT. STRANGER'S HOUSE - LATER

Miss Kowalski steals a few lavender stems from someone's garden. She smells them before stuffing the stems into her tote bag.

The resident comes out of his house. He doesn't see the old woman. Miss Kowalski runs away with the goods.

INT. MISS KOWALSKI'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - LATER

CLOSE UP of a hand spreading lavender stems over a cookie sheet.

PULL BACK to reveal Miss Kowalski as she slides the cookie sheet into the oven. She closes the oven door.

MISS KOWALSKI

That'll keep us stocked for a few months, won't it Bronte? I'll have to check on the mint supply, later.

She eyes Bronte, a beautiful flaming nettle plant.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)

That's right! There will be enough for visitors, too.

Miss Kowalski carries Bronte into

THE LIVING ROOM

Miss Kowalski sets Bronte down on a living room table. She approaches the window and eyes Clara near the moving truck. Her father and friend stare at the truck, trying to determine their next move.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
Not the brightest bunch, are they  
Bronte?

Clara looks over and notices the old woman in the window. They stare at each other. Clara starts doing cartwheels, edging her way closer to Miss Kowalski's window.

Miss Kowalski suddenly winces and eyes a snake plant on a small table.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
(distraught)  
Did you hear what she said to me,  
Bronte?

The old woman fearfully looks over at the snake plant.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
Why does Leila always try to make me  
look crazy?  
(beat, more calmly)  
You're right, Bronte.

Miss Kowalski suddenly stands straight and appears more relaxed.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
You're right. I'm not crazy. I  
don't know why I always let her do  
this to me.

She walks over to a small African Violet plant.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
(baby talk)  
And how are you my little one? You  
are so quiet today. What's the  
matter? Did that nasty Leila say  
something to upset you? You shouldn't  
listen to her.

Miss Kowalski picks up the African Violet and start humming a beautiful, soothing melody. She dances gently with the plant in her arms.

EXT. CLARA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Clara notices a makeup kit in one of the boxes on the lawn. She looks through many colors of eyeshadow. She dips her finger in some turquoise eye shadow. Jade approaches and YANKS the makeup box out of Clara's hands.

JADE

Keep your hands off my makeup!  
Hello.. That's not a toy!

Jade re-packs the makeup kit and tapes the box shut.

Clara does a few more cartwheels on the lawn. She overhears Miss Kowalski humming in her house and approaches the window.

On the sidewalk, Jade notices Clara at Miss Kowalski's window.

JADE (CONT'D)

(to Clara's father)  
Your daughter's at that crazy woman's  
window, again.

CLARA'S FATHER

Hey.. What did I tell you?

Clara doesn't seem to hear him.

CLARA'S FATHER (CONT'D)

(yelling)  
Clara! Now!

Clara heads back over to them.

JADE

(to the two men)  
Don't forget about that folding table  
and bench inside.

The three adults head inside their house.

Clara eyes Miss Kowalski's window. The humming has stopped. Suddenly, Miss Kowalski's front door opens. Nobody comes out but the door stays open. A hand opens the door wider, waiting...

Clara approaches Miss Kowalski's door and heads inside.

INT. MISS KOWALSKI'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Miss Kowalski and Clara stand before Max, the palm tree.

MISS KOWALSKI

This is Max, my special friend. He  
is a wonderful dancer.

CLARA

(smiling)  
He's your boyfriend?

MISS KOWALSKI

Yes, my boyfriend. And a gentleman,  
too.

Clara does a little curtsy.

CLARA

Nice to meet you, Max. I am Clara.

They move on to Bronte, the flaming nettle.

MISS KOWALSKI

And here's Bronte. She is my best  
friend. I can tell her anything and  
she never judges me. I get my  
strength from Bronte.

CLARA

Hi Bronte. I am Clara.

Miss Kowalski picks up the African Violet plant.

MISS KOWALSKI

And this is my baby. Isn't she  
pretty? My little precious jewel.

CLARA

The one you sing to?

MISS KOWALSKI

That's right!

Miss Kowalski hums a few bars.

Clara smiles and touches the little leaves on the plant.

Clara notices Leila, the snake plant.

CLARA

What about that one?

MISS KOWALSKI

(increasingly agitated)

Oh she's a gossip. I don't like  
her. She always tries to make me  
feel bad.

(suddenly calmer)

Bronte... right as usual.

(to Clara)

How about a cup of lavender and mint  
tea?

Clara nods.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
You wait here. I'll be back.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MISS KOWALSKI'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

At the table, Clara takes a sip of her tea. She's not sure if she likes it. She takes a cookie off a plate and stuffs it into her mouth. She sneaks another cookie. Opposite her, Miss Kowalski pours herself more tea.

MISS KOWALSKI  
(beaming)  
We have a special guest for tea today,  
Bronte.

The old woman suddenly cringes and looks over at Leila.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
Why does she always put my friends  
down?

Clara eyes Leila suspiciously. Miss Kowalski suddenly relaxes after looking in Bronte's direction.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
You're so right, Bronte. What does  
Leila know?  
(to Leila)  
Grouch!

Outside, Clara's father and his buddies have now emptied the truck and are re-loading it carefully. Jade watches on.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
Bronte wants to know where you're  
moving to.

CLARA  
We are moving into Jade's apartment,  
Bronte.

MISS KOWALSKI  
And how do you feel about that?

Clara shrugs her shoulders & looks away. She eyes Max, the palm tree.

CLARA  
Where do you dance with your  
boyfriend?

MISS KOWALSKI  
 Right here! Have you ever danced  
 before?

CLARA  
 No.

MISS KOWALSKI  
 (grandly)  
 Then, you really haven't lived at  
 all!

Miss Kowalski escapes to a fantasy world. Clara eyes Leila  
 suspiciously.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MISS KOWALSKI'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Loud, slightly distorted music plays as Miss Kowalski shows  
 Clara how to dance. Miss Kowalski's make-up is smudged in  
 different places. She grins from ear to ear.

MISS KOWALSKI  
 One two three.. one two three..

Clara laughs, as she and Miss Kowalski go round and round at  
 dizzying speed.

From outside..

CLARA'S FATHER (O.S.)  
 Clara! Clara!!

Miss Kowalski is lost in thought and doesn't seem to hear.

CLARA  
 My father's calling me.

The old woman stops dancing.

CLARA'S FATHER  
 Claraaaa!

MISS KOWALSKI  
 So he is, isn't he?

Clara heads toward the front door.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
 Wait..

Miss Kowalski picks up Bronte and carefully brings her over  
 to Clara.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
Bronte wants to come with you.

Surprised, Clara looks at Miss Kowalski and then at Bronte. She gently takes the plant in her arms.

CLARA  
Really?

MISS KOWALSKI  
(to Clara)  
Yes really! And who are you again?

Clara just stares at her.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
Say it.

CLARA  
I am Clara.

MISS KOWALSKI  
And again..

CLARA  
I am Clara.

MISS KOWALSKI  
Once more..

CLARA  
I am Clara.

MISS KOWALSKI  
Yes you are. And whenever you start to forget that, just go into a room with Bronte and keep repeating it until you remember.

CLARA  
I am Clara. I am Clara.

MISS KOWALSKI  
That's right!  
(beat)  
And for Bronte... A bright window, regular weekly watering but no drowning! And when Bronte's time is up, you go and get yourself another beautiful flame nettle. There are plenty of Brontes out there!

Miss Kowalski opens the door and Clara walks out with her new plant.

EXT. MISS KOWALSKI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Clara's father and Jade notice Clara emerging from Miss Kowalski's house.

CLARA'S FATHER

What were you doing in there? What's that?

CLARA

Bronte.

CLARA'S FATHER

What?

Clara sits on a chair on the lawn and puts Bronte down beside her.

INT. MISS KOWALSKI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Miss Kowalski approaches her window.

Outside, Jade oversees Clara's father, as he and his friend stuff the remaining few items into the truck. Clara's father approaches Jade and hugs her from behind. She turns and they kiss passionately. They twirl a few times and bump into Clara, who shifts over in her chair. She keeps her head lowered.

Miss Kowalski picks up the little African Violet.

MISS KOWALSKI

We're so worried about that child.

Suddenly, Miss Kowalski winces and looks over at Leila.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)

Stop saying that, Leila. You're wrong as usual. I'm not crazy!

Miss Kowalski looks over to where Bronte used to sit. She becomes very agitated.

Outside, Clara seems dejected, alone. Miss Kowalski rocks the African Violet plant in her arms, as she stares at Clara.

Clara suddenly looks over at Miss Kowalski in the window and smiles warmly.

Miss Kowalski jumps slightly.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)

Oh..

The old woman relaxes and grins at Clara.

Clara picks up Bronte and holds the plant on her lap.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
Well.. Will you look at that!

The old woman puts a hand over her heart.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
Max are you paying attention?

INT. MISS KOWALSKI'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Miss Kowalski stands before Max, the palm tree. She is all dressed up and wearing colorful makeup (smudged in a few places).

She smiles coyly and tries to straighten out the wrinkles in her dress.

MISS KOWALSKI  
Thank you, Max. It still fits after all this time.

Miss Kowalski winces and looks back at Leila.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
Stop saying that! I'm not crazy!

Miss Kowalski becomes agitated and approaches Leila.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)  
No no no no no you don't! No more.

Miss Kowalski picks up Leila, heads into the kitchen.

INT. MISS KOWALSKI'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Miss Kowalski dumps Leila into the garbage.

MISS KOWALSKI  
And good riddance!

INT. MISS KOWALSKI'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

The only source of lighting are two softly colored lights (pink and yellow). Miss Kowalski giggles coyly in front of Max.

MISS KOWALSKI  
You're so thoughtful, Max. You always say the right things.

The old woman laughs out loud.

MISS KOWALSKI (CONT'D)

Naughty boy.

She giggles and pours out two cups of tea.

THE END.