

NOBODY BELIEVED ME  
The Paulette Conti Story  
Screenplay LES THOMPSON

Based on the book 'NOBODY BELIEVED ME' by PAULETTE CONTI and  
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EXT. LARGE OPEN AREA ON EDGE OF FOREST. IN THE FOREGROUND A 12-YEAR-OLD CHILD, DRAGGING A RAG DOLL BESIDE HER IS RUNNING TOWARDS A LARGE WEATHERBOARD HOUSE. ON THE VERANDA IS A RED-HAIRED WOMAN, IN HER LATE 30S, STARING BLANKLY OUTWARDS. DAY

OPENING TITLES:

As the child gets closer she shrieks 'Momma, Momma'! the house begins to retract slowly further into the forest. The child runs faster, but the house keeps gradually retracting. The sequence continues until the house disappears completely into the trees.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CHATTAHOOCHEE HOSPITAL WARD, FLORIDA. A 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL IS SEEN AWAKENING WHILE SITTING IN A WOODEN WHEELCHAIR IN A WARD WITH DARK WOODEN PANELLED WALLS. DAY

The girl's vision is blurry; her eyes are only half-open as she casts them around, trying to recognize something familiar in her surroundings. She focuses on something odd; the window has bars on it!

The young girl is snapped into full consciousness by the shrill sound of a woman screaming.

CONFUSED WOMAN PATIENT #1  
(SCREAMING MOURNFULLY)  
LET ME OUT OF HERE! LET ME OUT OF  
HERE! LET ME OUT OF HERE!

The girl, frightened by the screaming, looks down at her arms and realizes that she is restrained, inside the wheelchair.

Another patient, a middle-aged woman in an oversized drab dress, is walking back and forth between rows of beds with no pillows; she is singing a lullaby to herself and holding her arms as if she is carrying a baby.

CONFUSED WOMAN PATIENT #2  
(Singing) )  
Rock-a-bye, baby, in the tree  
top...rock-a-bye-baby...rock-a-bye-baby...rock-a-bye-baby...

The girl, twists her nose as if detecting a terrible odor. Her eyes turn further down the room and stop at the sight of another woman on the floor, playing with feces. There are more shouts as two women begin fighting; others are pulling at their hair and even dislodging strands from their own heads!

The girl begins to sob. She begins muttering also.

PAULETTE  
(QUIETLY TO HERSELF)

I'm only 12 years old! Surely I  
couldn't have done anything so bad  
that I've ended up in Hell?!

Paulette also begins to scream loudly and relentlessly.

The nurses' station, protected by iron bars covering its  
glass front, is positioned directly behind Paulette. A nurse  
comes running to her when she hears her screams.

NURSE DONNA  
Paulette! You're awake!

PAULETTE  
(incredulous)  
Where am I?

NURSE DONNA  
I want to call your doctor.

The nurse hurries back to the nurses station, has a brief  
telephone conversation and rushes back to Paulette.

NURSE DONNA (cont'd)  
(reassuringly)  
Don't worry, sweetie! Everything  
will be alright. I'm just taking  
you downstairs to the doctors  
office. He will explain everything  
that's going on.

FADE.

INT. DOCTORS OFFICE. DOCTOR IS WEARING WHITE COAT. DAY.

The doctor gives the child a neutral look, as she is wheeled  
into his small office space and he is positioned in front of  
his heavily cluttered desk. He speaks in a composed voice -  
neither tough nor gentle--as he looks for some sign of  
cognition in the pitiful child facing him.

DOCTOR STEWART  
Do you know where you are?

PAULETTE  
I think I'm in Hell.

DOCTOR STEWART  
 (WITH SLIGHT LAUGH)  
 No, you haven't been dispatched to  
 Hell.

The child remains silent and looks confused. The doctor softens his tone.

DOCTOR STEWART  
 But something happened to you. Do  
 you remember?!

PAULETTE  
 (almost crying)  
 No, I don't.

DOCTOR STEWART (MORE SERIOUSLY)  
 We'll get to that later. You went  
 into a state of shock and your  
 mother had no insurance and she had  
 to put you here. It's a state  
 hospital, called Chattahoochee  
 State Mental hospital.

PAULETTE  
 (weeping)  
 Where is my mommy?

The doctor, fearing an outburst, adopts a reassuring tone.

DOCTOR STEWART  
 She is not here and you won't be  
 able to see her for a while. Well,  
 until we can get the right  
 treatment for you and you get  
 better.

PAULETTE  
 (rising to hysteria)  
 I don't remember anything..and why  
 am I tied to this chair? Why am I  
 in this place for 'crazy people'.

DOCTOR STEWART  
 (FIRMLY)  
 We will talk some more later.  
 Nurse, please return the child to  
 the ward.

INT. CHATTAHOOCHEE HOSPITAL WARD. THE SCREAMING AND RAVINGS ARE CONTINUING UNABATED. DAY

Paulette in her chair is repeating one word to herself.

PAULETTE

Why?!

She moves her chair to look through the barred window.

PAULETTE (cont'd)

How could my mother put me in a place like this with a bunch of crazy people?

Startled by more screams she turns to witness another kind of madness, violence towards the women, as a guard begins beating up a woman, shouting that she had spat at him and another had tried to hit him.

Paulette shivers visibly, seeing at close quarters both the aggression by patients towards each other and between the patients and their 'carers'.

INT. NIGHTFALL IN THE WARD. THE WOMEN ARE STILL DRESSED IN THE DRESSES THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN IN THE MORNING. A FEW PATIENTS HAVE TORN CLOTHING DISPLAYING BLACK AND BLUE MARKS FROM THE BEATINGS BY STAFF MEMBERS. LIGHTS ARE DIMMED.

When the child finally gets to sleep, she is, like the others, on a cot with a blanket but no pillows, in a big room with many beds and many patients -- most of them are by now restrained in straitjackets.

Not all 'dangerous' patients are controlled though. One woman that wasn't moves over to Paulette and takes off her slipper and starts to hit her, shouting at Paulette to get out of her bed.

Paulette screams at the top of her lungs and soon a nurse comes in and they then put the deranged woman in a straitjacket. She looks pitifully at the nurse.

PAULETTE

(WEEPING)

Nurse I'm too scared to sleep here. Please don't leave me.

The night nurse recognizes the small child's vulnerability and takes her quietly away to the nurses' station where she puts down a blanket and lets Paulette sleep there that night.

FADE.

INT. NURSES STATION. EARLY MORNING

Paulette is ushered away to change into the hospital-supplied clothing, the ludicrously oversized dresses.

After changing, she moves into a large canteen-style 'dining' room to eat. A patient sitting next to her explains more about the food.

SARCASTIC PATIENT

Hey girlie..if you're wondering where this gruel comes from they have huge vats over in the kitchen where witches paddle this brew up for us all.

Paulette doesn't reply but turns to listen to the woman.

SARCASTIC PATIENT

Don't you just love these slops?

PAULETTE

But they're tasteless...and horrid. They're powdered eggs!

SARCASTIC PATIENT

Don't worry dearie. Wait for our special dinner menu tonight!

Stew is the meal of the day here....every day!

Oh and the dessert...to die for! Prunes!

After telling the child how terrible every meal was, the sarcastic patient loses interest and wanders away from the table, giggling foolishly to herself.

FADE.

INT. FLASH FORWARD TO 1962 GOWANDA PSYCHIATRIC CENTER IN NEW YORK STATE. PAULETTE STEWART IS NOW A TEENAGER, TALKING TO A DOCTOR INSIDE AN OPEN WARD OF THIS FACILITY WHERE PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM VARIOUS TRAUMATIC EVENTS ARE BEING ASSESSED. DAY.

DR. GORMAN

Miss Stewart...that is your name  
isn't it. Paulette Stewart?

PAULETTE

(calmly)

Yes, Doctor.

I was born in Kingman, Arizona in  
1946. My father's name is Clarence  
Stewart.....My mother's name is  
June.

I have two brothers, Richard &  
Danny but the family split up when  
my father went overseas with the  
air force. Both my brothers  
eventually went to live with my  
father's parents. Danny went first  
but Richard stayed with our mother  
and me in Arizona until he was 8  
years old and I was 5.

DR. GORMAN

And it seems that you have had many  
disruptions since, moving to live  
with your mother & her mother,  
Grandma Beulah in Jamestown and  
then after she married your  
stepfather you moved back to  
Florida with a new half-sister,  
named Debbie...correct?

PAULETTE

(Wistfully)

Yes. And it was lovely to have a  
baby sister. Then by the time I was  
11, we were back in Florida where  
my half-brother, Frank, whose  
nickname was Buddy, was born.

We did make a move to San Diego,  
California, when I was 12, but we  
were not there for very long; we  
came back to Florida six months  
later. My mother was the type of  
person that loved to move to  
different houses and apartments and  
for some reason she could never  
stay in one place. She was always  
moving and I hated it. I went to 5  
schools in one year; I seemed to be  
always in different schools.

DR. GORMAN

That's what I mean...many  
disruptions.

But then back in Florida something  
happened and your mother admitted  
you to Chattahoochee and I  
understand your first consultation  
there was with a Doctor Stewart.

PAULETTE

Yes, as he had the same surname as  
me he once told me that he wished  
he could take me to live with his  
family.

DR. GORMAN

Really? But on the first days at  
Chattahoochee, you weren't even  
told why you were there! By the  
way, I know all about  
Chattahoochee's reputation and I  
believe reforms are being  
introduced there.

PAULETTE

Oh doctor, I hope so!

DR. GORMAN

So waking up in this very strange  
hospital environment, how did you  
feel?

(cont'd)

Doctor, I was a terrified kid. I  
was locked away and dressed like a  
rag doll. And nobody would tell me  
why!

I had lovely long blonde-ish hair  
before I arrived at that hospital  
from hell! And on my second day I  
realized that they had cut it off.  
I was shattered. I was so confused,  
I cried for days. I complained to  
the nurse that it wasn't right. Her  
response was that they had to keep  
everyone's hair short in the asylum  
because too many people wanted to  
pull hair. I soon realized that if I  
didn't get out of there, I was  
going to really go crazy myself.



DR. GORMAN

OK, Miss Stewart...I really want to know what happened in those first days at Chattahoochee.

**ACTION NOTE: As Paulette begins to relate her experiences at Chattahoochee, the horrific incidents are illustrated in quick 'flash back' segments in the same manner that she continued to see them throughout her life after Chattahoochee.**

FLASHBACK:

PAULETTE

What I saw was scary and brutal. two guards took patients away to certain places and when they came back, the patients looked like they had either been beaten or had had a serious fall. Already I had seen women attacked and, in one case, a woman's head had been pushed onto the concrete floor, supposedly to subdue her.

All the time I insisted on being told why I, a completely sane 12-year-old girl, was being kept at the hospital. That's when they started to give me medication.

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN

But you must have been hysterical!

PAULETTE

I had been constantly crying for my mother and, when a patient hit me or knocked me down, or kicked me and hurt me, I would end up screaming for help. I was beaten a lot by patients; 90% of them were not sane.

DR. GORMAN

Surely some patients must have tried to stop them.

PAULETTE

No! The rest of them would just sit around in a large room, where everyone gathered in the daytime.

FLASHBACK:

In the room there was a long wooden table, attached to the wall. Underneath it were tall, wide cupboards. Out of desperation I opened a cupboard and I crawled into it. There was some light entering from the lamp on the ceiling and from the windows. I curled up and stayed there because I felt safe inside the cupboard. Even so, as I huddled there, I could still hear the screams and noise and lots of people jabbering.

BACK TO PRESENT

I felt so abandoned. I cried and cried. I prayed and prayed that someone would come and get me.

DR. GORMAN

What about at night. Did it continue this way?

FLASHBACK:

PAULETTE

I felt exposed to all kinds of dangers at night. For instance, when we showered it was in a large space with a lot of showers but no curtains. Patients wanted to come to me and do things with me, and I knew they were crazy!

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN

What did you do?

PAULETTE

All that I *could* do! I hurried through my shower and then pulled that awful dress on ...along with the enormous underwear that resembled those old-fashioned bloomers. My small, thin body was drowning in them.

DR. GORMAN

So what did the nursing staff do for you?

PAULETTE

During the daytime the nurses knew I was hiding away in the cupboard and they told me that it was OK for me to stay there.

DR. GORMAN

And if you had all this going on what about Dr. Stewart? What did he do about it.

PAULETTE

It took a long time before anything happened, Doctor,

Over the following days, which quickly turned into weeks, the doctor had regular chats with me. Little by little, everything started to come back to me. I remembered the terrible events that had taken place and why I had been 'put away' and forgotten.

DR. GORMAN

What did you remember?

I don't really have the words to explain it. But I guess I had started to look for some kind of a mental road map to see where I had been pushed off the track. I felt I would need an aerial view of such a dense maze with all its twists and turns to find my way out.

But slowly the puzzle began to unravel. I knew I was born in Arizona.

FLASHBACK:

I now know from a picture, that I still have, that we lived in an old-fashioned weatherboard house with a garage and my brother Richard says we used to go out in the rain and loved it because we made 'mud pies' together. He remembers that my hair was curly and light blonde and that I would curl up with him on the couch at night and he would read me children's stories. He's a fabulous brother and I love him dearly.

My mother is a 5-foot-tall redhead, with bluish-eyes, and I knew even then that she was sort of restless.

BACK TO PRESENT

You know the rest about our moves and about her divorcing my dad, marrying my stepfather in Jamestown and moving back to Florida.

My mother told me that she was six months pregnant with me when my father had to leave and that she had suffered a nervous breakdown when I was born. Her mother, Grandma Beulah, had then 'stepped up to the plate' to take care of me almost all the time. Even though my mother eventually recovered, she had to work and so Grandma took care of me.

My grandmother was not healthy; she was in and out of hospital all the time but I loved her so much. Because she was in hospital so much, my life then became a string of different foster homes and, because I was such a timid and quiet child, I was often blamed for not only my mistakes but also for what the other kids did while I was in foster care.

DR. GORMAN (cont'd)

What *kind* of problems did you have there?

FLASHBACK:

PAULETTE

Well at one of the foster homes I objected to being served liver but I was ordered to eat it, with the woman telling me sternly: 'You eat it.... and you will sit there until you do!'

I remember that the liver was on a plate, alongside a bowl of jello and whipped cream, which made it seem even more repugnant.

(MORE)

PAULETTE (cont'd)

I sat and slept at the table all night. By morning, the whipped cream and jello had melted.

When the woman reappeared she was furious with me and yelled at me.

"That will be your breakfast," she said. "So, EAT!!"

I then ate the liver as fast as I could and promptly gagged on it. The jello and whipped cream tasted spoiled but I gulped it down and then rushed to the bathroom and threw it all up. I hate liver and jello to this day.

BACK TO PRESENT

Crying had no effect on her. She always told me that, if I cried, she would catch my tears in a bottle and when she had enough, she would put the tears in my clothes, because there was 'nothing like tears to get white clothes even whiter'.

Another time when I was being fostered in the same place, the woman, who always kept a small bowl of fruit on the dining room table, told me that it was for visitors only to eat.

She told me that it was very expensive and she just had it there for 'company' to enjoy.

FLASHBACK

Then one time that I went downstairs while everyone else was asleep and took one piece of the precious fruit and then plumped up the rest of the bunch to make it look like nothing had been removed.

The apple that I had taken the first time had tasted so good that I decided I would try another raid on the fruit bowl. This time I took a pear.

The next day the woman had questions to ask about fruit that had gone missing. She glared at me, as if she were a Gestapo officer about to interrogate her helpless victim and snapped the question: "Who took fruit from the bowl that was on the table?!"

I had never been able to lie convincingly, so I blurted out, "I did." I sensed that severe punishment would follow such an admission.

It came fast and furiously. That night when she was sure that the two of us were alone, she ordered me to follow her into the kitchen.

She steered me to a seat in front of the kitchen table and told me to sit down. Before me on the table was a very large bowl of fruit.

"You want fruit, you will have fruit," she said, with little emotion in her voice.

At first I felt happy as she gave me apples and pears and white grapes, and then pushed bananas forward for me to eat.

But then she made me eat one banana after another. I begged her to stop forcing me to eat at which she shoved them into my face. Soon I was throwing up. That didn't stop her; she fed that to me too!

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN

So all these memories came back to you at Chattahoochee. Did you think this was the reason you were there?

PAULETTE

Doctor, as I said, I was trying to remember who I was. All these memories slowly gave me a picture of who I was.

I remembered that between foster homes I lived with my Grandma off and on and then came the news that my mother was marrying again. At first, I welcomed the idea, thinking that perhaps I could finally become part of a 'normal' family. I thought everything was going to be wonderful. My half-sister, Debbie, was born and then not long afterwards, in Florida, along came my half-brother, Buddy.

DR. GORMAN

So were you getting anywhere in remembering the real reason why you ended up in a mental hospital?

PAULETTE

Yes, it was after Buddy was born that my hopes for a happy family life fell apart.

FLASHBACK

It began one day when my stepfather came into the room where I was changing Buddy's diaper. He came over to me and told me that I was being a wonderful sister, especially because I changed the baby's diapers and gave him baths.

I felt him put his arm over my shoulder as he said, "You are going to be one beautiful mother someday."

As he said those words he began to slip his hands down into my blouse, and started massaging my little breast. I felt terrible and I told him to stop.

"This is how I got your Mom's breast big," he said. "Don't you want a nice big breast?" adding, "Men like that!"

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN

Couldn't you have forced him to stop?

PAULETTE

I was frozen to the spot and I just wanted him to stop touching me. He sensed that my fear was real so he told me not to say anything to anyone.

"It's our little secret," he told me, with a threatening tone, as he left the room.

DR. GORMAN

Did you tell your mom?

PAULETTE

I felt betrayed and I wished that someone could stop him molesting me. But I knew that if I told my mother, she wouldn't believe me and would punish me for 'making up stories'. Then I thought that maybe he wouldn't risk being discovered and that he would stop.

But he didn't!

DR. GORMAN

So you're saying he continued his sexual advances?

PAULETTE

(agitated)

YES!

FLASHBACK

He became bolder, within a matter of days. He went from massaging my breasts to fingering my small vagina. As I protested and tried to pull his hand away, he told me that he wanted to teach me things that would be 'important in a marriage'.

I hated what he was doing and I hated him for doing it!

My mind couldn't comprehend why a married man who had accepted the role of being my stepfather, my

(MORE)



PAULETTE (cont'd)  
 legal guardian, could betray that  
 trust and responsibility.

I wept openly whenever I knew he  
 was going to come near me alone. He  
 did many things on many occasions  
 and each time it was getting more  
 difficult to try to act normally in  
 front of others. I felt like a  
 trapped animal that just had to  
 accept the will of the hunter who  
 had caught his prey. I knew that  
 adults didn't accept the words of a  
 child; the attitude was that  
 'children should be seen, not  
 heard'.

BACK TO PRESENT

Fear paralyzed me. I felt unable to  
 turn to my mother, grandmother, the  
 police or my teachers. Deep down I  
 knew that they would somehow blame  
 me and I would be the one to suffer  
 further punishment if I made  
 accusations against him. Nobody  
 would believe me.

DR. GORMAN  
 Hmm....so then?

PAULETTE  
 So he continued to abuse me.  
 Finally, one night--one month  
 before my thirteenth birthday--when  
 he and Mom were out playing cards,  
 he decided to come home earlier  
 than expected. My mother had  
 decided to stay on and my aunt was  
 going to bring her home.

FLASHBACK

He came back from the card game and  
 went to his room; my room was right  
 next to the main bedroom and it  
 sounded as if he had fallen asleep.

There was a television set in their  
 bedroom and around 11pm programming  
 ended and a TV station pattern  
 automatically switched on. It was  
 noisy, making an endless swishing  
 sound.

I couldn't stand the noise, so I got up and went into the room, thinking that he was sound asleep. A 12-year-old can so easily make a foolish move.

I went to shut off the TV set, but as I passed by the bed, he pulled me down.

I started to scream--he had always told me each time that he did awful things to me, that if I told anyone, he would kill me, and he threatened me again. But this time my mother came in! I was still screaming. I couldn't stop!

BACK TO PRESENT

At that point I went into total shock, couldn't talk and was at the mercy of what my stepfather, a pedophile, would say and what my mother, without any health insurance, would do with me.

I now know that her easiest solution was obvious; she committed me to a mental institution--the 'hospital from Hell' that they called 'Chattahoochee'.

DR. GORMAN

So you told all this to Dr. Stewart as you remembered it?

PAULETTE

Yes, But then as I began to tell him all the things that my stepfather had done to me, when it came to the rape, I just screamed and screamed.

DR. GORMAN

How did Dr. Stewart react?

PAULETTE

Dr. Stewart was a kind man and his words calmed me.

I remember his words. He said "We have something out now that is fairly new and it might help you."

He wanted to try something called 'shock treatments', which he said could be helpful.

I was only a kid, but I knew that I had gone into 'shock' so the term didn't scare me; it seemed that they were recommending treatment for the shock that I had suffered from being raped.

Dr. Stewart said he would have to get my mother's permission first.

My mother agreed.

DR. GORMAN

Did they proceed with the shock treatment.

FLASHBACK

PAULETTE

Yes, the day came when they took me to where the shock treatment room was located. I was terrified as they began placing wires that I think they call electrodes all over my head and put a padded stick in my mouth and then they turned on the machine that would send me into what I now know was an electro-induced convulsion. It was too awful for words. I was tied down, didn't understand that they were deliberately sending brief electric pulses through my body and, by creating seizures, that they believed they could rid my mind of depression. They wanted me to forget the rape and they thought that if I had the shock treatments they could erase negative thoughts.

But the side effect was to erase many of my early childhood memories!

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN

Did you tell Dr. Stewart what was happening?

PAULETTE

When I told Dr. Stewart that I didn't like the shock treatments, he said that they wouldn't be giving me a lot of electricity, that it was a 'new thing out' that could help me forget what had happened to me.

Well, the truth is that after I was released from that terrible place, I suffered seizures and when they tested for the cause they detected irregular brain wave patterns. So they did damage with their 'new thing'..!

It never helped me--it just took a lot of my childhood away. I became so fearful of the shock treatment that when they came for me, they had a hard time catching me ...and I was a fast runner.

Many patients were struck if they didn't go for the treatment or they were put in chains and handcuffs.

DR. GORMAN

Did they tie you up as well?

PAULETTE

No, I guess, because of my age, I got off lightly. When I resisted, they spanked me, and since I weighed only 80 pounds at the time, when they caught me they had no trouble picking me up.

I did receive many spankings in that place though. And I did suffer some severe injury.

FLASHBACK

There was one time when I was thrown to the floor by a patient and kicked in the side so hard that I eventually had to undergo emergency surgery as a result of the injury. At first the nurses said that the doctor couldn't come for a few days. I was hurt so badly that I passed out. They then took me to a regular hospital and took

(MORE)

PAULETTE (cont'd)  
 my appendix out. They must have  
 operated just in time because I was  
 told that they had almost burst on  
 the table. I wasn't allowed to say  
 anything about how it happened.

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN  
 Are you saying that you were  
 threatened by the hospital staff.

PAULETTE  
 I was warned that I shouldn't tell  
 anyone about it..or there were  
 would be trouble.

But Doctor...I was already scared  
 out of my mind because of what I  
 had already seen happen inside that  
 place!

DR. GORMAN  
 What things?

FLASHBACK

PAULETTE  
 Well when I wanted to take a  
 shower, a nurse would usually give  
 me a pass to go there because it  
 was all open space in the shower  
 area.

It was a very large room with pipes  
 on the ceiling running down the  
 side of the wall to where the  
 showers were attached.

One night, I entered the shower  
 room as usual, looked up, and then  
 I saw her!

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN  
 Saw whom?

PAULETTE  
 (WEEPING)  
 I saw a woman hanging from one of  
 the pipes!

DR. GORMAN  
Oh dear! What did you do?

FLASHBACK

PAULETTE  
I screamed so loudly that it must  
have echoed throughout the entire  
building!

Then I ran to get the nurse and she  
came back with me, telling me that  
the woman was 'better off dead'!

I couldn't get the sight of that  
poor woman's corpse out of my mind;  
I sat for days alone and crying in  
my cubbyhole.

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN  
Did you talk about this incident  
with anyone else...other than the  
nurse?

PAULETTE  
Finally I did get to talk to Dr.  
Stewart again, but I don't think I  
said much. I just kept asking him,  
"Where's my mommy?" Then I added,  
"Why doesn't she come and get me?"

Dr. Stewart kept telling me that my  
mom would come as soon as they  
could find the right treatment for  
me.

DR. GORMAN  
Didn't you tell him about what  
you've just told me?

PAULETTE  
Yes, I did! But he didn't believe  
me!!!

I told the doctor about the  
dreadful things that I had  
witnessed and explained what was  
really going on in there.

DR. GORMAN

Then, how did he respond to that?

PAULETTE

"Oh, I think you're over reacting," he said.

I begged him to believe me about what was going on.

It was all totally useless; the doctor always had something to say to make me think that it wasn't as bad as I thought.

DR. GORMAN

Then, how did you get out of there?

PAULETTE

(CALMLY)

Finally, after the emergency operation on my appendix, my mother came to the hospital and somehow I was released.

DR. GORMAN

Do you remember how you felt when they released you.

PAULETTE

Angry, I suppose. That my mother had put me there, Furious that they allowed a kid who had been raped to be put with violent, mental patients and that they experimented on me with shock treatments that made things worse.

But to be totally honest with you...I was so hurt..that nobody cared...that nobody believed me!!

DR. GORMAN

Paulette, I understand. But you must admit it would have been hard to believe that absolutely nobody cared...perhaps they were unable to do anything about it.

PAULETTE

The only pleasant recollection that I have of that evil place is of the three nurses who allowed me to hide

(MORE)

PAULETTE (cont'd)

away in a cupboard, and who always made sure my transistor radio was working and who, on a couple of occasions, let me sing to them and they liked my voice.

DR. GORMAN

(Curious)

In the midst of all that, you were able to sing?

PAULETTE

Yes. I was drawn to music from a young age. I had sung on Ted Mack's Amateur Hour on radio and I had got to sing five songs at an RCA Victor party in Florida, before this all happened.

So the transistor radio was a wonderful gift from one of the nurses who made a cupcake with one candle on top to celebrate my thirteenth birthday!

That meant that while tucked away in that tiny cubbyhole I could play music and listen to singers like Roy Orbison and Elvis Presley and I learned their songs by heart. It meant that I didn't have to listen to the constant 'jibber jabber' from the patients outside the cupboard. Can you understand how important that became to me?

DR. GORMAN

Yes, of course. But was that how you survived all the horrible things that you've told me about?

PAULETTE

(continuing cautiously)

There was something else I had to do, Doctor!

FLASHBACK

The truth was that to keep my sanity I imagined that I had a 'pretend' person called Evon (pronounced EVE-varn). I thought she was simply part of a game of

(MORE)



PAULETTE (cont'd)  
 pretend, as all kids play; Evon was my imaginary playmate that I conjured up to let me feel that I wasn't so alone and so totally unprotected.

There was also a secret wish of mine to somehow get 'even' with those patients that had been so violent to me and who had been beating up on me. I knew that I couldn't call her 'Even' so I called her 'Evon'. But the main reason I called her by that name was because I needed someone who was strong, although I knew she was imaginary, to help me survive.

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN  
 Are you sure you didn't think she was real, Paulette?

PAULETTE  
 No.

DR. GORMAN  
 Have you seen her here at Gowanda?

PAULETTE  
 Yes.

The doctor reaches for a sketch pad and some pencils and begins sketching his patient.

DR. GORMAN  
 (SMILING)  
 Don't mind me...I like to draw portraits of people. But keep talking...why did you need to imagine Evon here in this hospital, Paulette?

PAULETTE  
 Well for the first 2 days here, I was again in a ward surrounded by a crowd of mentally ill people.

I remember saying to myself 'I guess I'm meant to be in a place like this'. So once more I had to

(MORE)

PAULETTE (cont'd)  
 call on my pretend friend, Evon, to  
 help me cope. I couldn't handle it  
 alone.

The doctor continues to draw his patient as they talk  
 together.

DR. GORMAN  
 But you do know we had to assess  
 you because your mother brought you  
 here after you had been hurting  
 yourself. Right?

PAULETTE  
 Yes.

Dr. Gorman shows Paulette the quick sketch of her that he  
 has just completed.

DR. GORMAN  
 (SMILING)  
 Do you like it?

PAULETTE  
 Yes....you're very clever.

DR. GORMAN  
 (seriously)  
 OK let's go back to what has  
 happened from the time you were  
 released from Chattahoochee.

PAULETTE  
 When I got out, at last I felt the  
 gates of Hell had shut behind me  
 and that I would now return to live  
 with my mother who would surely  
 protect me from any further abuse.

The reality was that I didn't  
 figure at all in my mother's  
 immediate plans; she was planning  
 to move North again and that meant  
 that I would be placed with my  
 mother's father and stepmother

DR. GORMAN  
 So she couldn't take you to  
 Jamestown with her?

PAULETTE

Well my mother did promise that it would only be until she could find a place and then she would have me join her. In the meantime my new home would be with Grandma & Grandpa Lamb but the thought of not being with my own mother was unnerving because after I got out of Chattahoochee, I was so scared. I was always looking around me to see if someone was there and if someone was going to come and get me or beat me up or take me back to that hell hole.

DR. GORMAN

Surely she understood that?

PAULETTE

My mother was adamant; I would be living with the Lambs. If I hadn't been through the horrible ordeal of the rape and then Chattahoochee it would probably have been something I would have really liked.

DR. GORMAN

So you liked where your grandparents lived?

PAULETTE

Oh yes! The Lambs owned a zoo and I loved helping to take care of the animals. I stayed close to my Grandma and hardly left her side. I slept on a rollback bed, the kind that opens to become a bed and it was placed next to their room. But I was constantly haunted by terrible nightmares and really vivid dreams of my ordeal so I had to sleep with a light on and I still do.

Grandma and I played card games at night, especially cribbage. They also had a pet monkey; his name was Tony. They dressed the monkey and I used to help Grandma sew and make the diapers for him.

DR. GORMAN

It sounds like it was a good way to get over your ordeal.

**ACTION NOTE: As Paulette continues her story these incidents are illustrated in 'flash back' form**

PAULETTE

But not that good, Doctor.

FLASHBACK

There were many nights when I had terrible dreams of what had happened to me and, seeing my distress, Grandma Lamb would try to calm me down. I tried to tell her what it was like inside that hideous hospital, but I really don't think she believed me.

She told me that she had never heard from my mother of anything bad going on inside Chattahoochee. I told her I hadn't been allowed to talk to her or to anyone from the outside about it. They had always told me that I should be silent about their procedures until they could find a treatment for me and got better.

When I told her that, she asked, "Didn't you receive any of the letters that I wrote to you and the little dolly that I sent for your birthday?" Again, she looked puzzled as I had to tell her, "No, Grandma, I didn't get anything from you." It was hard to see the hurt in my grandmother's eyes as she tried to work out what could have gone wrong with her attempt to reach out to a little girl in such distress.

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN

Poor Grandma Lamb. Did your mother keep her word about taking you with her?

PAULETTE

Yes. My mother came for me, just as she said she would do. It was a tearful parting from Grandma Lamb who had tried as best she could to comfort me immediately after I was finally 'freed' from Chattahoochee.

My mother arrived and she and I headed north by train to Jamestown, New York State.

DR. GORMAN

Did you feel safe about being back with your mom?

PAULETTE

When we arrived there at the train station, to be met by good friends of the family, I wasn't excited about being back in Jamestown; it was simply another new beginning.

We first stayed at the home of some friends, until we found a place to live.

FLASHBACK

The lodgings, if you can call them that, were uptown at a spot immediately above a bar. There were about six apartments and you could hear drunks walk up the stairs and fall right back down again. It was awful. The bathroom was out in the hallway so I really hated that. In our apartment we just had a kitchen, a living room and a bedroom where the bed was built into the wall, with a curtain covering it. But, for all her other faults, my mother was a house-proud woman and so she soon had nicely decorated that sorry-looking apartment.

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN

How did you get on financially?

PAULETTE

(AGITATED)

She got a job quickly, downstairs in the bar. She worked from 3pm to 11:30 pm behind the bar, serving drinks, and most of the time she would go out with boyfriends after work. I knew I had a promiscuous mother...so that was not a comforting thought for me. I told her that, since I would be alone there most of the time, I wanted three locks on the door. With the bathroom located outside the apartment it was so hard for me to adjust to my new home. In fact, after Chattahoochee, I was still traumatized by being anywhere in the outside world.

FLASHBACK

I tried to go to school, but I couldn't take it. It became terrifying inside the school corridors. When I would walk down the hallways and the kids were just talking, it reminded me of the menacing gibbering noise that I had heard all the time in Chattahoochee. As I walked down the narrow hallways and saw the kids coming towards me and then heard them talking behind me, I felt panic rising inside me.

I was genuinely scared. I lived with the fear of someone about to knock me down or beat me up. The only way that I was able to deal with it was to mentally call on my imaginary friend, Evon, again. I thought of her a lot and imagined that she was there and would always help me.

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN

So you were adjusting slowly..but some people must have been kind to you.. surely?

PAULETTE

I did meet some nice people. I met a guy named Bill who was very kind to me. By that time, we had only about three weeks of school left and he told me that he was signed up to go into the army. I got to talk to him a lot and I told him about what my step-dad had done to me. I also told him what my mother was like, but I didn't tell him about Chattahoochee.

DR. GORMAN

Why not?

PAULETTE

I thought it might scare him away.

One day when we went in his car for a picnic that we had planned together and where we had a lot of fun, he tried to kiss me and all I could do was freeze up. He tried to reassure me by saying, 'don't be afraid, I only want to steal a kiss and nothing more'. It probably sounds strange but all I could think was to bring to my mind Evon and let her kiss him.

Bill was the perfect gentleman and he told me that when he came back home on leave at Christmas time, he wanted to marry me.

DR. GORMAN

How did that make you feel?

PAULETTE

I couldn't believe that he wanted to marry someone that was so mixed up. That's how low my self-esteem was at the time. Of course, I certainly wasn't able to respond to anyone in any meaningful way when I hadn't been able to rid myself of so many demons.

But yes. It was sweet to realize that someone really loved me. He had my name tattooed on his arm, with the name surrounded by red

(MORE)

PAULETTE (cont'd)

roses. We did have a favorite song, 'Crying' sung by Roy Orbison. Bill wrote to me and I visited his mother a lot; she was also so nice, but all I really wanted was *my* mother.

I've tried to erase the memory of that longing I had for my mother. I hardly ever really got to see her. School was out so I stayed almost all the time in that apartment all alone. If I summoned up enough courage to go out to a movie or to the store, the only way I was able to do so was to imagine that it was Evon doing it.

I know it sounds crazy that I couldn't tackle such simple, everyday tasks as going outside. but I felt as though I wasn't able to breathe and I thought I was going to pass out. I just couldn't take crowds so I ended up alone so much.

I wanted to see my mother, but when I did see her she was always saying things to hurt me.

You see, Doctor...I keep having these 'flashbacks' where I experience the rape all over again. They're very real! Even household noises can set them off. It's terrifying!

DR. GORMAN

And your mother didn't understand this?

PAULETTE

The constant hurtful memory for me is that my mother refused to believe me, even though she had witnessed the attack herself.

After we had moved to Jamestown and she had started her 'new life' of bar room boyfriends and casual affairs, she was still in denial

(MORE)



PAULETTE (cont'd)  
about any responsibility for her  
actions after my stepfather had  
raped me.

DR. GORMAN  
What did she say to make you think  
that?

PAULETTE  
"Well, if you hadn't been running  
around with your baby doll pajamas  
on, maybe he wouldn't have got  
turned on!" she once screamed at  
me.

When I reminded her that the  
pajamas that she was talking about  
had been given to me by her, she  
got even madder with me.

She said "He told me that you  
teased him and sat on his lap!"

It was the first time that I had  
heard from my mother that she had  
chosen to believe the story told by  
my stepfather to justify her  
abandoning me at my time of  
greatest need of love and support.

DR. GORMAN  
Did you answer that accusation?

PAULETTE  
My honest answer to her was that I  
had no memory of ever sitting on my  
stepfather's lap, because, after  
all, he wasn't my real father. This  
response sent her into a real rage  
during which she suggested that I  
had also made sexy remarks to him,  
even though I was just a 12  
year-old girl!

Then she made the most hurtful  
statement of all.

DR. GORMAN  
What was that?

PAULETTE

She said "I don't know what to believe from you after all those lies about Chattahoochee!"

So there it was, spat right in my face. My mother had never believed my detailed account of all the horror that had been inflicted upon her own traumatized daughter inside that hospital from hell, Chattahoochee!

DR. GORMAN

Did she ever try to apologize?

PAULETTE

No! From that time on, we were always arguing when we did see each other; she often told me that because of me she had had to leave her babies and their dad.

I was now desolate. It was obvious that nobody believed me! I just wanted a good mother, one to love me and understand me.

I was so lonely and felt that life was hopeless.

FLASHBACK

I went up to a stone church one block away from where we lived and I was hurting so badly inside; in my head I kept repeating that I just wanted my MOTHER!!!!!!

I went up to the rear of the church and without purpose I began hitting my head against the stone building, over and over, until blood flowed. I don't know why.

At the time I remember feeling that the pain from hitting my head was nothing like the pain that was in my heart. Eventually I ran down to where my mother was working, but when she saw me and asked what had happened I felt that I couldn't speak.

(MORE)

PAULETTE (cont'd)

I just kept crying, so she took me to the back of the bar and wiped my head. She asked me if someone had attacked me.

When I remained mute she shouted, "Who did this to you?!" adding, "Why did they do this to you?!"

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN

Why didn't you tell her that you did it yourself?

PAULETTE

I remember thinking that she would take me upstairs and take care of my head and hold me and tell me I would be all right, so still I said nothing.

Instead of taking me home and caring for me, she took me straight across the street to the police station and told the police that she thought someone had hurt her daughter.

When the police asked me questions, I still couldn't speak. Eventually, my mother took me home and said, "Why don't you talk?"

She then told me, "See what I mean? I never know what to believe or to do with you!"

My response was to stay quiet and hope that the incident would somehow just pass, but within a couple of days my mother brought two doctors to the house to see me.

They asked me questions and I said nothing. I felt that I couldn't trust them enough to tell them what I had done. They then asked me if I wanted help; I remember saying yes, but to what specific question, I don't know.

DR. GORMAN

But that wasn't the end of the matter, was it?

PAULETTE

No. Within a couple of days I thought that everything had settled down. I was feeling fine and talking normally again.

It was then that my mother went out with her boyfriend and she had my half-cousin come and stay with me that night. We were talking and laughing together and having a nice time.

During the evening I passed by a small stand that had a scarf on it. I noticed that under the scarf there was a little piece of paper sticking out.

I pulled out the paper and started to read it. It said that I was to go here to Gowanda Psychiatric Center and that I was to be there the next day!

DR. GORMAN

Do you remember what you felt?

PAULETTE

(AGITATED)

I couldn't believe it! I shouted out, "NO! NO! NO!...NOT AGAIN!"

FLASHBACK

This time I wanted to kill myself and my half-cousin became extremely alarmed. She told me that she would call the police if I tried anything. I remember telling her that she should go ahead and call them, because I would be better off dead than alive.

She then called her father and she tried hard to stop me from hurting myself and we fought. Somehow, being heavy and strong, she managed to get me down and sat on me until her dad came.

They both stayed there until my mother arrived. I stayed by the window and prayed and prayed, constantly asking God, 'WHY????'

When my mother got home, my anger burst out. I yelled at her and told her that she had never loved any of us kids and that she was mean and that I hated her. I told her that all my life, all that I had wanted was her. I even asked her if it was so hard to love her child. I told her that I had so much love to give and I cared, so why couldn't she be that way to me? My pain burst its banks and I said, "You can love your men, but not your kids; your men have always come first!"

All the time that I was saying these things, she would try to respond but I paid no attention. I just kept on yelling at her, accusing her directly of sending me to another hell hole.

When I finally paused for breath, she finally got to speak, saying, "Paulette, you need help, you're mentally sick."

I went back to the window and prayed all night. Images of crazed people, assaulted and dead patients, menacing mad women and shock treatments had begun to cloud my mind along with echoes from Chattahoochee, as I awaited my fate for the next day. I felt my mother had once again betrayed me and I had nothing more to say to her.

BACK TO PRESENT

DR. GORMAN

So you were really fearful when you first came to us.

PAULETTE

Yes, but two days later, I was transferred down to an open ward, which meant that I could go outside and suddenly shafts of sunlight opened up for me.

DR. GORMAN

OK. So we seem to be making some progress now. Let's talk some more about your imaginary friend, Evon.

You say she came with you here. Tell me what she looks like, Paulette!

The doctor picks up his sketch pad and pencil as Paulette answers him

PAULETTE

Well, she has brown eyes, short brown hair and she looks very husky. She looks really tough as if she could pick you up and throw you out the window.

The doctor smiles and begins drawing a picture of Evon. After a few moments he shows the sketch to Paulette.

DR. GORMAN

Does this resemble her?

PAULETTE

Very close.

The doctor reaches for the sketch that he had earlier made of Paulette and holds up both sketches, placing Evon's sketch above that of Paulette's.

DR. GORMAN

There are two sketches, but do you see two people here?

PAULETTE

I don't understand.

DR. GORMAN (SOFTLY, BUT FIRMLY)

Evon was not born and didn't come from a mother and father. Paulette, she is you.

PAULETTE  
 (AGITATED)  
 No! She is my friend!

DR. GORMAN  
 Who are her parents?

Paulette is unable to answer. The doctor lets the full impact take effect on his patient.

DR. GORMAN (cont'd)  
 Paulette, you had to survive and the only way you could do that was to have someone that was strong to help you. But ....She is you. Say it... 'Evon is me'.

Paulette does as instructed but begins to cry.

DR. GORMAN  
 Paulette, it is nothing to be ashamed about. Even doctors and lawyers have done this. They have created the same device of the mind to escape harsh reality.

Remember. You had to survive!

FADE

EXT. GROUNDS OF GOWANDA HOSPITAL - BY A SMALL POND WITH DUCKS GLIDING BY. PAULETTE IS SITTING ON A PICNIC TABLE. DAY

Paulette gets up and walks to a little a store where patents can buy small things such as soda and candy and personal things. She walks to the jukebox inside the store and inserts money and to play Shelley Fabares singing 'Johnny Angel'. Joan, a brunette with shoulder length hair walks up to Paulette and listens to the music with her.

JOAN  
 Hi! I love this song!!

PAULETTE  
 (smiles)  
 Oh, me too! I wish I could find an angel to be my boyfriend...like she did!

JOAN  
 (LAUGHS)  
 It's only a song!

PAULETTE

I know. But sometimes I think about a lot about the words they sing.

JOAN

Oh yeah..especially the songs Elvis sings.

PAULETTE

Right! Like 'Good Luck Charm'! I'd love to have something like that so that maybe I could get lucky...and maybe life would change for me.

The two girls, 15-year-old Joan and 16 year-old Paulette, wander off from the store back to the pond and as they watch the ducks swimming, they are seen in deep conversation, obviously telling each other about the things that have happened to them.

PAULETTE (cont'd)

(SHOCKED)

And he was your *real* father?! And your mom didn't believe you, either?

JOAN

Yeah. Like you, it crushed me and I lost it. That's why I'm here. But I'm getting over it. How about you?

PAULETTE

Well the difference between here and Chattahoochee is like the difference between Heaven and Hell!

JOAN

I think we'll be OK. We've still got a fence around us, but people are nice and the food here is good.

PAULETTE

I know...and Joan I hope we can both get better. We have our whole lives ahead of us!

JOAN

That's a good way to think about it.

PAULETTE

But I do worry about some of the others here.



JOAN

Who?

PAULETTE

Well, I heard that there's a patient here who has something called M.S. OR Multiple Sclerosis and she can't walk.

There's nothing mentally wrong with her but they put her into a large room with a lot of mentally challenged people.

JOAN

You mean *slow* people. At least she's not in with any *crazies*.

PAULETTE

That's true, but I still feel so bad about her situation that I want to go to see her. Joan, will you come with me?

JOAN

(recoiling)

No! No! I don't think that's a good idea. We need to get better ourselves.

PAULETTE

Joan, we're young. We'd be good for her. She needs us! Come on, let's go and see her now.

Paulette sets off across the grounds and her younger friend follows, but when they reach the door of the room, Joan turns and runs away. Paulette opens the door alone and enters the room.

INT. SMALL HOSPITAL WARD. A WOMAN SITS IN A BED AT THE SIDE OF ONE WALL. SHE IS KNITTING. DAY

PAULETTE

(NERVOUSLY)

Hi! I came to see you. But I don't know your name.

MAGGIE (SOFTLY)

I'm Maggie.

PAULETTE

That's nice.

My name is Paulette. how long have you been here?

MAGGIE

7 years.

PAULETTE

That's a long time. Do you mind if I ask you why you are in a hospital ward like this one.

MAGGIE

No, that's OK. My welfare money was cut and there wasn't enough money to keep me in a nicer ward than this one.

PAULETTE

Oh, that must have been so hard for you!

MAGGIE

You are such a sweet, caring girl!

At first it was really hard to adjust but you get used to things when you have to, dear. I had no choice because I had no family to help me. So here I am at 48 years old.....but I'm not complaining. Look. Despite these silly hands being crippled, I worked out a way to still be able to knit!

PAULETTE

That's amazing! Do you have a hairbrush? Maybe I could brush your beautiful curly hair for you.

Maggie's hair is heavily tangled, but she hands the brush to Paulette who begins to work it up into a bun.

PAULETTE (cont'd)

I'll bring my mirror tomorrow so you can see how nice this looks. I could also paint your nails.

We see the pair becoming very close. Paulette changes Maggie's hairstyles around, sometimes turning it into pigtails and at other times brushing it out and making it wavy. Paulette also begins reading books to her. They talk and laugh together.

MAGGIE

(SOFTLY)

What did I do to deserve such a wonderful person like you?

PAULETTE

(spontaneously)

God knew that in time that I would be coming to keep you company.

MAGGIE

Paulette, I hope you know that I believe everything that you've told me about yourself.

PAULETTE

I do know that; you're just like a real mother!

FADE.

EXT. THE DOOR TO MAGGIE'S ROOM IS OPEN AS PAULETTE ARRIVES.  
DAY

Paulette pauses momentarily and then moves slowly inside. Maggie's bed is empty. Paulette rushes to a nurse.

PAULETTE

(anxious)

Where did Maggie go?!

GOWANDA NURSE

(gentle, but direct)

She died during the night.

Paulette screams and then starts to whimper.

PAULETTE

No, No, No!

GOWANDA NURSE

(softly)

Child, Maggie kept a box in her bed and she told me that if anything should happen to her, I was to give the box to Paulette Stewart. That's you, isn't it?

As Paulette nods, the nurse presents her with the small box and Paulette wanders away, still weeping.

Paulette moves outside and sits under a tree where she opens the box. It contains a charm on a bracelet; the charm is in the shape of a heart and inside is a letter. She wipes her eyes and strains to read Maggie's last words, as if she can hear her speaking them.

MAGGIE'S VOICE

This charm was given to me by my very best friend who lives in California; she gave it to me when we were in school.

I want you to have it, because you are my very best friend too and much more; we're like sisters.

PAULETTE

(very emotional)

Oh, Maggie. You were my best friend ..but you were so much more. You made me strong enough for whatever life has in store for me in the years ahead. I also now know..thanks to you..that my future goal is to *help people*. Maybe this 'Good luck charm' of yours' will make me a stronger, better person. It's September now, Maggie..with all the wonderful colors of Fall all around me! I came here in June....and they say they're now going to release me! Thank you!

FADE

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY ABOVE A BAR. JAMESTOWN NY. NIGHT

Paulette, dressed in a long red coat with a scarf around her neck is talking with Grandma Beaulah, who has 2 small children at her side.

PAULETTE

(with a sarcastic smile)

OK Grandma...I think it's time to go and visit 'my mother's church'.

GRANDMA BEAULAH

Well you be careful, dear. I'll put her two little ones to bed. But are

(MORE)

GRANDMA BEAULAH (cont'd)  
 you sure she'll be at that terrible  
 place?

PAULETTE  
 Where else, Grandma. She always  
 goes to The Ranch after work.

GRANDMA BEAULAH  
 Just do as I told you.  
 Don't look at anyone, just go get  
 your mom and come back!

EXT. SIDEWALK ON ROAD LEADING TO UPTOWN JAMESTOWN. NIGHT.

As Paulette walks, a 1961 black Chevy convertible, with all-red interior, drives alongside. Seated at the driver's side is a slightly swarthy guy, wearing a baby-blue sweater and sporting a healthy crop of curly black hair.

Paulette looks at him and he looks back.

She then hurries away and turns her head away as well.

A little further on she walks into an alleyway, turns her head as she hears a car and sees that he is driving up past her and then he stops in front of Paulette and won't let her pass! She tries to move up, but he moves the car up. She tries moving back; he also moves back. Finally she speaks to him.

PAULETTE  
 (EXASPERATED)  
 I have to get by!!

TONY  
 (speaking with a thick accent  
 and broken English)  
 Whatsa girl like you do uptown?

PAULETTE  
 (Not wishing to be rude)  
 I have to go to get my mom.

TONY  
 (concerned)  
 You mom uptown?

PAULETTE

Yes!

TONY

(incredulous tone)

No girl you age should be uptown.

PAULETTE

I need to go to a restaurant to get her.

TONY

All bars up here, no restaurant!

PAULETTE

(annoyed)

She went to The Ranch!

TONY

(strongly))

That is bar. No, you no go in bar!

I park car and I go get you mama.

Tony parks the car and the pair walk towards The Ranch.

TONY (cont'd)

(thoughtful))

What she look like, you Mama?!

PAULETTE

She has red hair and she's wearing a green coat.

Arriving at The Ranch, Tony disappears inside and comes out a few moments later.

TONY

She no there! Come! We look for you Mama.

The pair visits all the bars; Tony goes inside and Paulette waits outside.

the extensive search ends. tony shrugs his shoulders.

TONY (cont'd)

You mama no place! You like coffee?

PAULETTE

(slightly taken aback)

I like pop!

TONY

You want to go to 'Johnny's'?

Without speaking, they look at each other and head for 'Johnny's', a popular burger place, just two doors down from where they had finished searching for Paulette's mother.

INT. 'JOHNNY'S' - TYPICAL SIXTIES-STYLE EATERY INTERIOR.  
NIGHT

Paulette can't help but stare at Tony as he talks of his background.

TONY

I am Tony. I never go school in Jamestown

PAULETTE

(smiling)

Oh.....really?

TONY

You smile..but you don't know. I come to America from Italy. 1957. My home is history...from 11th century. How old, Jamestown?

PAULETTE

I don't know. I'm originally from Florida.

TONY

No matter...my home old. On hill in Sicily. My home *San Fratello!*

PAULETTE

That is impressive, Tony! How old are you?

TONY

(proudly)

I am 23 years old..And you haven't told me even name..and your age.

PAULETTE

(SHYLY)

Sorry. I'm Paulette and I'm 16.

TONY

Is beautiful name. You beautiful too. In Italy, I would say *Ciao Bella* to such beautiful young girl.

PAULETTE

Thank you. But you don't even know me.

TONY

In Sicily...old saying.

*Ciò che è dato da Dio non può mancare*

PAULETTE

What does that mean?

TONY

It say *what is given by God cannot lack anything.*

PAULETTE

That's very sweet. Are you religious?

TONY

I always tell people that even if I don't know God, he knows me!

PAULETTE

That's funny!

TONY

I no make joke. I know. Now, Signorina Paulette..I got date tomorrow...If I break date, will you come with me?

PAULETTE

You want to break your date to be with me? Why would you do that?

TONY

Also old saying.

*Quando bussa l'amore, essere sicuri di rispondere*

PAULETTE

Meaning?

TONY

When love knocks, you must be sure to answer!



PAULETTE

(Blushing)

Wait a minute! You don't ask a girl out and start talking about love!

TONY

Why not?

PAULETTE

Because my Grandma wouldn't like it! She doesn't even allow me to date!

TONY

You have nice Grandma? I can meet you Grandma!

Please!

Give me you phone number and I call Grandma tomorrow.

Paulette pauses, but then gives Tony her phone number. Smiling shyly, she hurries away.

INT. THE NEXT DAY. INSIDE GRANDMA BEAULAH'S APARTMENT. LOUNGE ROOM. NIGHT

GRANDMA BEAULAH

Well, Paulette, I told you not to expect that man to call me. It's almost 7 o'clock!

PAULETTE

(ANXIOUS TONE)

But I told you. He's the most wonderful man in the world and he is so cute and he really wants to meet you!! Maybe, he has been working.

The phone rings. Grandma Beulah looks sternly towards Paulette.

GRANDMA BEAULAH

Well! Don't just sit there! Answer the phone!

PAULETTE

(Nervously)

Hello?

TONY  
(VOICE ON PHONE)

Date broke! Grandma wants to meet me, OK?!

PAULETTE  
Yes, yes. She does. But she told me that you should come here to meet her. Do you know the bar that I mentioned last night? We live above that!

TONY  
(VOICE ON PHONE)  
I know bar. Tell Grandma I will be there in few minutes!

PAULETTE  
O.K.

Paulette hangs up the phone.

GRANDMA BEAULAH  
Well Paulette, I will talk to this man. But I don't think I will be able to let you go on a date.

PAULETTE  
Just remember what I said. He does not speak English very well. he was born in Italy..somewhere on a hilltop.

GRANDMA BEAULAH  
(laughing)  
You make him sound like a prophet or something.

PAULETTE  
No, Grandma. He's just a nice man..and he makes me laugh.

GRANDMA BEAULAH  
Well, we shall see. I'll make up my own mind.

Paulette sits on the lounge while Grandma Beulah goes to a small kitchen area. They wait for their visitor.

Within a few minutes, Paulette rushes to answer a knock on the door and Tony enters the room as Grandma Beulah steps forward as well.

TONY  
 (Smiling)  
 Hi, Grandma!

GRANDMA BEAULAH  
 (with surprised voice)  
 Wow!!! Are you as good as you look?

The two of them sit down at the kitchen table and appear to hit it off. After idle chatter, Tony looks directly at Grandma Beulah.

TONY  
 Can I take Paulette on a date?

GRANDMA BEAULAH  
 (matching Tony's earnest tone)  
 What are your plans, if you take her on a date?

TONY  
 I will be a good man...you see.

GRANDMA BEAULAH  
 (STARING AT TONY INTENSELY)  
 You had better be, especially if you know what's good for you.

TONY  
 (SINCERE TONE)  
 I be perfect gentleman!

Tony leaves and Paulette looks at her grandmother, waiting for a reaction.

GRANDMA BEAULAH  
 (smiling broadly)  
 Oh Paulette.....If only I was young and he was around ... I'd kidnap him!

EXT. AUTO INTERIOR, TONY IS DRIVING IN JAMESTOWN, PAULETTE IS LOOKING NERVOUS IN THE PASSENGER SEAT. DAY

PAULETTE  
 (ANXIOUS)  
 Don't you try anything, I will open the door and I'll jump out if you do!

TONY

What wrong with you? I take shopping at Jamesway. Buy clothes. Why you scared. I told Grandma. Perfect gentleman!

PAULETTE

I'm sorry Tony...I just got the jitters for a moment.

TONY

What is 'jitters'...you mean jitterbug like old days?

PAULETTE

(LAUGHING)

No it's not a dance...it's suddenly being frightened.

TONY

You scare easy. Fraidy Cat girl!

PAULETTE

(indignant)

No, I'm NOT!

TONY

Si! Gatto fraidy! That you!

PAULETTE

(calming down)

Well, maybe I'm a bit of a scaredy cat sometimes. Sorry.

The car arrives at the department store and Tony parks the vehicle.

TONY

Don't worry, Cara Mia. I teach you no be scared. Now, let's buy clothes.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE. MENSWEAR AREA. DAY

Tony is holding up a jacket and a sweater that he has just bought for himself

TONY

You like?

PAULETTE

Yes, they suit you perfectly.

Tony takes Paulette by the arm and leads her towards the women's clothing area.

TONY

I buy you BLUES!

PAULETTE

(puzzled)

What do you mean? Do you want to buy me something that's blue?

TONY

(adamant)

No! I buy you BLUES!

The pair reaches a rack of women's tops

PAULETTE

You mean a Blouse!

TONY

That's what I say. I buy you BLUES!

An elderly woman sales assistant is seen observing the talkative couple as Tony takes a blue blouse from the rack.

PAULETTE

(taking the garment)

Now that is pretty! And it's blue!

TONY

Si...a blue *blues*!

PAULETTE

(laughing, as she hands back the blouse so that Tony can buy it)

OK you win...you can buy me the blue *blues*!

The woman sales assistant moves towards the cash register as Tony and Paulette head towards her counter.

SALES WOMAN

So you are purchasing this item today?

TONY

Yes, my girlfriend like BLUES!

SALES WOMAN  
(dismissively)  
Really?

PAULETTE  
Oh yes, I love the BLUES!

The sales woman ignores the remark as she completes the sale. The couple walk away laughing.

TONY  
Good you laugh. Now we go dancing!

INT. SLEAZY BAR WHERE PEOPLE ARE DANCING IN DARKENED ROOM.  
EVENING.

Paulette stares at the dancers. The women are wearing short skirts and low-cut tops and the men are groping them as they dance. Tony senses that Paulette is upset.

TONY  
What wrong. Is Fraidy cat girl  
back?

PAULETTE  
(ANGRY)  
Don't call me that! This is a  
terrible place! Get me out of here,  
now!

EXT. OUTSIDE THE SLEAZY BAR

Paulette is still angry and begins shouting at Tony as they walk quickly away from the bar entrance.

PAULETTE  
Why did you take me to that smoky,  
filthy place with all those cheap  
people?!

Tony looks at her sheepishly and pauses a moment.

TONY  
I wanted to see kind of girl you  
are.

PAULETTE  
(Anger subsiding)  
Well I started wondering what kind  
of guy you are!

TONY  
 (Moving close to Paulette)  
 You make me happy tonight... I know  
 now you no just like your mom.

Tony places his new jacket around Paulette's shoulders and they are seen about to enter a nice restaurant. Both are smiling at each other.

PAULETTE  
 That's more like it!

INT. INSIDE TONY'S CAR PARKED OUTSIDE PAULETTE'S HOME.

Suddenly he tries to kiss Paulette. She moves back from him, looking fearful.

TONY  
 (Apologetically)

I no hurt you, just want to steal a little kiss from ya.

PAULETTE  
 (TEARFUL)  
 I am so sorry. Fraidy cat came  
 back. I have to go inside now.

TONY  
 I call you tomorrow.

PAULETTE  
 OK. Goodnight

TONY  
 Wait. I walk you to door.

Silently the pair walk to the door and Paulette disappears inside the building. Tony is seen staring upwards at the building from the empty street.

FADE.

INT. THE NEXT DAY. INSIDE GRANDMA BEAULAH'S APARTMENT.  
 LOUNGE ROOM. DAY

Paulette is having a phone conversation with Tony.

TONY  
 (on phone)  
 Cara Mia....I go see Mama on  
 Saturday. I want you come too. You  
 meet her.

PAULETTE

But Tony...you hardly know me. I don't think you realize...

TONY

(interrupting)

I know enough. You good girl. You Fraidy cat sometimes. I like you. You make me happy. You like me?

PAULETTE

(worried)

Yes, I like you...but there are things...

TONY

(interrupting)

No things. You like me. I like you. I make you happy. You make me happy. I think I marry you so you meet Mama.

PAULETTE

(SURPRISED)

Marry? Are you serious.

TONY

I no joke. You come...meet Mama, Saturday night, OK?

PAULETTE

(HESITANT)

....OK.

TONY

Good. We have date. Saturday. 6 o'clock!

FADE

INT. TONY'S HOUSE. AN OCTOBER SATURDAY EVENING. NOISY ACTIVITY.

Paulette is being ushered inside to a busy family scene. His mother is busy cooking, one of his sisters is ironing and another sister is dusting. Tony's father is chatting with his 3 youngest sons. All are talking to each other. The noise stops when they look at Paulette arriving.

MAMA CONTI

(warmly)

Come! Come in!!



While Mrs Conti leads Paulette to the dining table the sisters have started getting food and bringing it to the table. There are now 3 sisters bringing food from the kitchen. Papa and the 3 younger boys are seated with us. Soon there is so much fresh food on the table that there is just enough room for the dinner plates. After everyone is seated Mama Conti urges Paulette to start eating.

MAMA CONTI (cont'd)  
Mangiare, mangiare!

The family speaks rapidly with each other in English and Italian while Paulette begins to take some food. She is overwhelmed by the smorgasbord of lamb, cooked fish, black olives, pecorino cheese, stuffed artichokes and the nutty flavored Porcini mushrooms mixed with tomatoes, garlic & olive oil. Suddenly Tony's mother notices how underweight Paulette is.

MAMA CONTI (cont'd)  
Mangiare! You too skinny!

Paulette begins eating more food. The mother smiles at her as Tony and his sisters continue to discuss other matters, mainly in Italian, while the three young brothers leave the table to watch television in another room. Tony can tell that his family likes Paulette and that she likes them.

TONY  
(addressing all at the table)  
You see. I have won big prize.  
Paulette is TONY'S girl now!

The family members all chorus in with a noisy toast to Paulette. Sarah is the eldest (24)

SARAH  
(Raising her glass of  
Chinotto)  
Paulette, I can tell already, you  
are going to be my 'buddy'.

Tony and the girls join the toasts by raising their individual drinks, a mix of white wine and Italian cocktails. But Paulette seems a little distressed.

PAULETTE  
Thank you everyone. You are such a  
lovely family.....Tony, would it be  
OK if we have a little talk.

As Tony goes to escort Paulette to another room, the family members look surprised but they politely pretend not to notice Paulette's anxiety.

INT. CONTI HOME. TONY AND PAULETTE ARE SITTING ON CHAIRS IN TONY'S ROOM. NIGHT

TONY

(Looking concerned)

What wrong? You like family...or no?

PAULETTE

(TEARY-EYED)

Oh Tony I have never seen a family like yours. They are all so lovely ...and so kind to each other...and to me. And you mom is so very sweet and she looks at me in that special way!

TONY

How you mean?

PAULETTE

She looks at me with love in her eyes.....like a mother.

TONY

She is mother!

PAULETTE

But I don't deserve this. Your family should have a normal person as your girlfriend. I'm not the girl for you, Tony.

TONY

Why you say silly words. You are girl for me. Why you say that.

PAULETTE

I have to tell you what happened to me.....it all started when I was in Florida.....

The camera retracts from the bedroom scene and focuses on family photos depicting their closeness. Paulette's voice trails off. Slow dissolve as the bedroom scene returns and Tony is looking at Paulette with compassion and understanding. He finally speaks.

TONY

Cara Mia...that no make you bad girl.

PAULETTE

But I honestly don't know if I can be with any man after all those terrible things that happened to me. I am even scared to kiss you.

TONY

(confidently)

I make you forget; I love you and I want to marry you.

But I don't want you see your mom again. She no good.

PAULETTE

I know you're right. And you make me so happy. I've told you all those horrible things ..and you still want to marry me.

TONY

(seizing the moment)

So say YES! Paulette Stewart. I want marry you. Will you run away with me and we marry?

PAULETTE

(HAPPY)

Yes, I have known you only two months, but I will marry you because I need you to love and to love me and you keep saying that you need me.

The pair embrace...fade to black.

SUGGESTED SONG FOR DISSOLVE INTO NEXT SCENE 'YOU NEEDED ME'  
BY ANNE MURRAY.

INT. JAMESTOWN CATHOLIC CHURCH RECTORY. DAY.

Tony and Paulette are seen exchanging vows with the priest officiating solemnly and leading Paulette, who has converted to Catholicism, through the ceremony.

FADE.

INT. SAME DAY. BEDROOM AT JAMESTOWN MOTEL. DAY.

As the couple sits together on the large bed in the motel room, Tony is talking to his mother on the phone to break the news that they are married. A squeal is heard from the phone, but Tony keeps talking.

TONY

(conspiring smile at Paulette)

It gonna be OK, Mama. I know  
furnished apartment.

Another squeal is heard from the phone so Tony holds phone up so Paulette can hear his mother's voice.

MAMA CONTI

(commanding)

No! No! Antonio...you come home.  
Bring wife. You don't lie on other  
bed!

Come home and we find place and we  
get bed and things.

TONY

(MEEKLY, LIKE A SMALL BOY))

OK, Mama.

Tony puts down the phone and takes a red nightdress from his suit case. He hands it to Paulette.

TONY

This for you! Stay here first  
night! Now, you go change. I wait  
here.

Paulette takes the nightdress and disappears inside the bathroom. She is there for a long time as Tony gazes at the closed door.

TONY

Are you alright?

There is no reply, but Tony doesn't move. he just stares towards the door and waits. Eventually, Paulette appears.

TONY

(wide-eyed)

What beautiful wife!

Tony pulls down the covers of the bed, picks up his bride and gently lowers on to it. Within a few moments he begins to make love. Suddenly Paulette freezes beside him.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. 1959 RAPE SCENE - BEDROOM IN FLORIDA APARTMENT. NIGHT

Paulette at 12 years old is screaming. Her step-father is raping her. Her mother bursts into the room.

BACK TO PRESENT

Tony hovers above his petrified bride.

TONY  
(startled)  
What I do? I do wrong? I hurt you?  
What?

PAULETTE  
(ashamed)  
No, I'm so sorry...you did nothing  
wrong. I can't continue.

Tony is gentle but he finishes what he has started and Paulette lies motionless.

TONY  
You OK?

PAULETTE  
(sobbing)  
It's not you, Tony. It's what I  
tried to explain about me.

TONY  
But why you sad?...why you cry?

PAULETTE  
I don't know... but it felt as if  
the whole rape had taken place  
again! I am so sad.

TONY  
I'm sad too. It's our wedding  
night!..let me hold you now.

PAULETTE  
No, I can't, Tony. I know you  
thought you could destroy the bad  
memories with love. But they just  
(MORE)

PAULETTE (cont'd)  
 ..they just burst through. Please  
 just let me be by myself.

FADE OUT.

INT. CONTI HOME. PAULETTE IS SITTING IN THE ROOM SHE SHARES  
 WITH TONY. NIGHT

Paulette is talking to her girlfriend on the 'phone.

PAULETTE  
 So Maria, did you have your husband  
 followed last night...like you said  
 you would?

Paulette listens to her friend's response

PAULETTE (cont'd)  
 So was Tony there with him?

Paulette listens to her friend's response

PAULETTE (cont'd)  
 Hmm...hmm. Were there any girls  
 with them?

Paulette listens to her friend's response

PAULETTE (cont'd)  
 (surprised)  
 No! Both of them were with girls?  
 Are you sure?

Paulette listens to her friend's response

PAULETTE (cont'd)  
 OK Maria. I will have to do  
 something! I can't lose him!  
  
 I know! I'll make him a pretend  
 girl...I'll call her 'Tony's Girl'.  
  
 Thank you so much, Maria. I'll talk  
 to you later.

Paulette hangs up the phone and smiles to herself as she  
 thinks of her plan to win back her husband.

DISSOLVE TO:

Tony enters the bedroom and sees Paulette with a mischievous  
 look in her eyes.

PAULETTE

I have a surprise for you tonight!

Tony gives her a curious look as she goes off to the bathroom. Within a few minutes Paulette returns in the red nightdress looking very sexy.

TONY

WOW! Oh, Wow!

PAULETTE

(Sexy voice)

Hi! I'm Tony's girl. Could you take me to bed with you please?

TONY

(undressing)

Si! Come!

The two of them leap into the bed and make love passionately. After a torrid time with his 'girl', Tony falls back against the pillow, completely satisfied.

TONY

(looking into Paulette's eyes)

I love Tony's girl!!!

FADE.

INT. 2 MONTHS LATER. SMALL COFFEE SHOP NEAR CONTI HOME. DAY

Paulette is talking with her girlfriend, Maria

PAULETTE

Yes, Maria...of course we know it's a game!

MARIA

But he will get used to this pretend lover, won't he?

PAULETTE

Yes, he already has...we've been using this sex solution for 2 months now...and he shows her so much love..and compassion....and he's so tender with her!

MARIA

You sound like you're jealous of her!

PAULETTE

I am! I want to be his girl!!

MARIA

Oh, poor girl! What will you do?

PAULETTE

I invented her ...so I can replace her. I've been trying to trick myself into believing that the sex wasn't happening to me. I had to survive and I felt this was the only way; I couldn't lose such a wonderful man and his family.

MARIA

But how can you replace her now?

PAULETTE

(DETERMINED)

Maria, tonight I'll make love to my husband..for the first time!!

Maria, gulps her last drop of coffee and smiles, giving her friend the *thumbs up* gesture of approval.

FADE.

INT. CONTI HOME. TONY ARRIVES TO HIS BEDROOM TO FIND PAULETTE, SCANTILY CLOTHED, ON THE BED. NIGHT

Tony wastes no time in making love to Paulette, realizing that she is now herself and no longer an imaginary lover. The love scene is both tender and torrid. At the end, both are weeping with happiness.

TONY

I told you. I make all bad memories go. Now we be happy!

PAULETTE

I hope so! I hope so!

INT. CONTI HOME LOUNGE ROOM. PAULETTE IS TALKING TO ANTOINETTE. DAY

PAULETTE

I am so excited that I will be your Maid of Honor, tomorrow, Antoinette.

(MORE)



PAULETTE (cont'd)

It is such a special privilege for me..and you will be such a pretty bride!

ANTOINETTE

But I will need your help, Paulette!

PAULETTE

Anything...what do you want me to do?

ANTOINETTE

(tapping her hair)

Look at this terrible blonde hair. I have to change it...darker....now!

PAULETTE

What color do you want then?

ANTOINETTE

(excitedly)

I have some red dye in the bathroom. I want to be a redhead!!!

The two girls giggle and move to the bathroom as Antoinette fetches the bottle of red dye and Paulette sets up a chair. Antoinette immediately sits in the chair and Paulette wraps a towel around her top.

ANTOINETTE (cont'd)

OK, Paulette. Make me beautiful!

PAULETTE

Are you sure about this, Antoinette?...your BIG day is only hours away!

ANTOINETTE

Oh I am! I've got everything you need. Take the dye..and on the sink, there's the developer. You mix them first. But wait!

Antoinette jumps out of the chair and reaches into a cupboard and hands Paulette plastic gloves and a hair comb and brush then she takes a small jar of Vaseline from the same cupboard and hands it to Paulette. She returns to the chair.

ANTOINETTE (cont'd)

OK...This is so cool, my best friend doing my hair. Can you start with the Vaseline? I'm sure you know...you just make an oily line along my hairline so that the dye goes on neatly.

PAULETTE

(applying the Vaseline)

That's good.... now let me just comb your hair out a bit.

ANTOINETTE

This is fun! So now you just pour the dye into that plastic container and add the developer from the other container. Same amount as the dye..and then mix them. Take your time.

When the mixture looks right, Paulette picks up the strange looking solution, and starting at all points on the hairline, she begins to apply the dye to Antoinette's hair.

After a few minutes, a look of concern appears on Paulette's face. Seeing the facial expression in the bathroom mirror, Antoinette looks closely at the color appearing on her hair and screams!

ANTOINETTE (cont'd)

It's turning GREEN!!!!

Mama Conti, Sarah and Mary hear the scream and come running into the bathroom.

SARAH

What are you two doing?

ANTOINETTE & PAULETTE

(SIMULTANEOUSLY)

Dyeing hair!

SARAH

You dingbats! Don't worry, I know how to fix it. Come with me green-haired monster..we have to change you back into a Princess by tomorrow.

As Sarah takes her sister to rid her of the dye, the others start laughing.

MAMA CONTI  
Nobody sleeps tonight!

FADE OUT.

INT. SMALL COFFEE SHOP NEAR CONTI HOME. DAY

The two friends, Paulette & Maria, are again chatting about recent events in Paulette's life.

MARIA  
So how's it all goin'? How was Antoinette's wedding ..after the hair disaster.

PAULETTE  
(enthusiastically)  
Well the family still calls us both 'dingbats'..but she looked so beautiful! Sarah worked her magic and she became a gorgeous Brunette for her BIG day.

MARIA  
It seems that you're now really part of the family...and you're so close to them all.

PAULETTE  
(thoughtfully)  
I am..but, you know, I feel that I'm not worthy of all their love and understanding.

MARIA  
How can you say that? Of course you are!

PAULETTE  
You haven't seen how they've had to put up with me. I suddenly get spooked and start crying and have to go to my room, just to get out of sight.

MARIA  
I thought you were over all that.

PAULETTE  
NO! There are so many triggers, Maria. I can't stop it. I hear kids just jabbering away as they  
(MORE)

PAULETTE (cont'd)  
walk behind me in the street and I  
relive the memory of those crazy  
women jabbering and running after  
me. So I have to run back home and  
I burst through the door as an  
emotional wreck.

MARIA  
Oh you poor thing. Do the family  
understand?

PAULETTE  
That's it...they do! They hug me  
and calm me down. But I feel that  
it must be terrible for them. I  
don't deserve their support and  
their understanding.

MARIA  
That's what families do...they  
support each other.

PAULETTE  
I've never had a family before,  
Maria.

MARIA  
I know..but now you do. And I'm  
sure that you are getting better at  
dealing with all this.

PAULETTE  
(distressed)  
No, I'm not. Just yesterday Mary  
plugged a toaster into a socket and  
blew a fuse. I immediately saw  
myself back in the shock treatment  
room and felt the electric current  
running through me. I know it  
doesn't make sense, but I can't  
stop these normal everyday sounds  
from alarming me so badly.

MARIA  
Well maybe it's time for you and  
Tony to get that place of your own,  
away from such a busy household.

PAULETTE  
(brighter voice)  
Oh that's the news that I haven't  
told you. We're moving next week  
(MORE)

PAULETTE (cont'd)  
 into our own apartment...and  
 despite all my problems I'll make a  
 good life for my husband...and we  
 are trying to have a baby.

MARIA  
 (SMILING BROADLY)  
 That's the spirit, Paulette! And  
 when you have a child that will  
 make all the difference to you.

PAULETTE  
 Oh, I hope so.

FADE.

INT. HOSPITAL MATERNITY WARD. 15 SEPTEMBER 1963. DAY

Tony is standing beside the bed, where Paulette is holding a  
 baby girl.

PAULETTE  
 (HAPPY)

What a miracle, Tony! My first child!

TONY  
 Our first child, Cara Mia!

PAULETTE  
 I know, darling. But look at  
 her...little Susan. When I first  
 saw her and held her I was crying  
 so hard because I felt that I now  
 have something so precious that no  
 one can ever take away from me.  
 That's what I meant. She is ours,  
 but she is mine! I have never had  
 that feeling in my life because  
 before she was born it seemed that  
 what I had was always taken away  
 from me.

TONY  
 (compassionately)  
 No one take her away..ever! And we  
 make more kids too!

The new parents embrace with the baby asleep in Paulette's  
 arms.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SAME HOSPITAL MATERNITY WARD. 26 SEPTEMBER 1964. DAY.

A baby is crying in Paulette's arms as she tries to soothe him. Tony stands beside the bedside with a 1-year-old in his arms.

TONY

(pointing to the baby)

Look Susan. You have baby brother!

PAULETTE

(soothing the infant)

There, there Sebastian. It's OK you have your family here now. You will be fine. We will all take care of you.

I am so happy, Tony.

TONY

(SMUGLY, BUT SMILING)

I told you.... we make more kids!

PAULETTE

Well, I still want to go to work and help others, Tony.

TONY

No! You help kids first.

PAULETTE

Of course, the children need me now. I'm just saying that I still want to think about a job later on.

TONY

If you work, you find a job and you stay home in daytime with the children and I watch them at night.

PAULETTE

Thank you, Tony...that's fair. You know all that night school study has helped me...and so maybe soon I can go back and study hard enough to do all the exams to become a nurse!

TONY

That's OK with me, Cara Mia. You go to school nighttime and I play with bambini!

PAULETTE

Aw, you are both a good  
husband..and a good Papa!

TONY

(proudly)  
Certamente!!

FADE.

INT. MATERNITY HOSPITAL CORRIDORS 1966. NIGHT.

Paulette in nurse's uniform is seen checking on patients and their babies. She appears confident and happy as she puts into practice all that she has learned. She attends to the nurse's routine but takes time to chat with various patients.

Then, as part of her duties, she wanders through the rows of new born babies in cribs. Suddenly she begins to check one of the new-born babies and with stethoscope in hand she discovers the child is dead. She drops her stethoscope, runs for help and as other staff hurry to the crib of the dead child, Paulette runs from the hospital.

INT. CONTI APARTMENT. TONY IS ASLEEP IN A CHAIR AS PAULETTE BURSTS THROUGH THE DOOR. NIGHT

TONY

(Startled by Paulette's  
appearance)  
Paulette. What happened?

PAULETTE

I found a baby dead in the  
hospital...so I ran away!

Tony sits her down and comforts her. He lets her cry for awhile and says nothing.

PAULETTE (cont'd)

I love helping people..but Tony I  
couldn't take it!

TONY

Morning will change everything. You  
did what you had to do.

INT. NEXT DAY CONTI APARTMENT. MORNING.

The phone is ringing. Tony, sleepy-eyed, answers.

TONY

Hello! Who is this.....OK, I'll  
put her on.

Tony hands the phone to Paulette

Your Boss. She say all OK. She say  
she Director of nursing. All OK

Tony watches as Paulette talks on the phone with the  
Director of Nursing. He hears Paulette tell her that she has  
to quit her job. He waits until the call ends.

TONY

But all OK, right?

PAULETTE

You heard me tell her I believe I  
should quit nursing. But she just  
said that I was too good a nurse to  
leave.

TONY

So all OK!

PAULETTE

She said that I should try a job in  
a nursing home until I could learn  
how to 'accept death'.

TONY

You want to do that

PAULETTE

Yes, I still want to help people, Tony.

TONY

OK Cara Mia, we find new job!

FLASHBACK:

INT. 1967 BUSY ACTIVITY IN NURSING HOME

Paulette is seen in many nursing situations. She tells the  
story as a voice over the visuals.



PAULETTE

(voice over)

And we did find me a new job.

I got a position in a brand new nursing home and I began to take care of older people who hardly ever had any company.

I worked from 3 until 11pm. After I got them washed up and got them into bed I would go around and read to them. Somehow it reminded me of my time at Gowanda with Maggie.

I even got to take care of my own Grandmother in there and then my own Great Grandpa and Great Grandma in that nursing home.

Remember Tony saying we make more kids? After 2 years, I wanted another child. I was blessed; I had a beautiful baby boy, Anthony Jnr., on September 21, 1969.

It was a wonderful time. Tony was so proud of me and I just couldn't believe it--me, a nurse!!! I worked that shift so that I was with the kids all day except for those hours and Tony had them from 3pm until I got home. He had always believed that both parents should share caring for the children. I had agreed and together we had made it happen.

In 2013 I told my story to an Australian journalist and asked for him to help me get my story to people who had suffered and still suffer at places like Chattahoochee. Most of all I wanted to let young girls who are abused know that they are not to blame and even though people don't believe them they must seek help and survive as I have done.

This writer probably now knows as much about me as I know about myself. After we had finished

(MORE)

PAULETTE (cont'd)  
 getting the book done together,  
 mostly by emails he said there was  
 still one more thing that people  
 would want to know....'did I ever  
 meet my mother again?'

Well yes, I did...twice. the first  
 time was when I went to her home.

It had occurred during a severe  
 bout of depression where I had run  
 out in the snow, with no shoes, all  
 the way across town to tell my  
 mother how badly she had treated  
 me. I didn't feel the pain from my  
 frozen feet; I just wanted to get  
 there and tell her how she had  
 messed up my life. I had yelled at  
 her and she had just sat there and  
 cried. I remember thinking that for  
 once in my life *she* was crying and  
 not *me*.

But the most meaningful time was  
 during my second pregnancy when I  
 had had serious problems.

FLASHBACK:

INT. RENAL UNIT GENERAL HOSPITAL JAMESTOWN DAY  
 I had a kidney obstruction. They  
 removed the obstruction, but the  
 kidney didn't straighten out.  
 During this time I was placed on a  
 dialysis machine, where the machine  
 acts like a human kidney to perform  
 the cleansing of toxic material  
 from the body.

FLASHBACK CONTINUES:

INT. CONTI APARTMENT PAULETTE & MOTHER ARE TALKING. DAY  
 The procedure made me very sick and  
 it was during this time that my  
 mother called and begged me to  
 forgive her. Amazingly, she even  
 came to my house everyday by bus,  
 to help me with my housework and  
 watch over the children. I forgave  
 her and yet I still couldn't get

(MORE)

too close to her. I think perhaps that I was scared that she would do something or say something to hurt me again. Actually, I felt sorry for her.

FLASHBACK CONTINUES

VIGNETTES OF EARLY FLORIDA & JAMESTOWN SCENES DEPICTING PAULETTE & HER MOTHER.

It's true that although she had abandoned me during my childhood, she had treated my stepsister, Debbie, and my stepbrother, Buddy, differently. They loved her in return. So it means that people can change.

She was not an outright mean type of person; she only lashed out when she was really riled. But with her first batch of kids she was just not the motherly type. At first she would always take me and leave my brothers behind as she moved around. Then she deserted me at times when I needed her most.

The damage for me had been done, by my stepfather and by the inmates and doctors who subjected me to those shock treatments at Chattahoochee.

FLASHBACK CONTINUES:

VIGNETTES OF PRESENT-DAY JAMESTOWN SCENES DEPICTING PAULETTE & TONY LIVING IN A NICE HOUSE IN JAMESTOWN.

I know that I could never have felt as good with any other family as I have felt with Tony's family. They have treated me so wonderfully; Mama taught me how to make bread and all the Italian dishes. The language barrier was formidable as we could hardly understand each other's words, but I think that sometimes you learn more with your eyes, than you do with your speech.

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Like all couples, Tony and I have had many problems and many good times too. One thing that I know for certain is that what has kept us together has been our love for each other.

I was always doing funny things and at first he had some doubts but he knew that I was always trying to please him, even right to the present time. He does the same for me and he is always telling me how much he loves me.

It was never going to be easy after my childhood experiences. The psychiatrist made me see why I had to do what I did, why I had the imaginary friends.

I still call them pretend friends that helped me when I needed help. I recognize that it was my method of survival and I did go on to live as close to normal a life as I could.

I know now that she's not real; I know that it was me, but it's still very hard for me. When Dr. Gorman got me to understand how I had created her, I felt a loss. Without her I was constantly scared. If I went out on the deck I had to go to each end of the house to make sure that nobody was around because my heart would beat so fast I would be scared. When I'm with Tony, my husband, I'm OK. To put it simply, without Tony I would be dead.

I couldn't even go into a store without physically hanging on tightly to Tony. When I had Evon, I wasn't so scared. I knew that Evon was there and if anybody was around, she'd take over and protect me. Tony has had a very difficult time understanding that. He was aware of things happening and had noticed that when Evon took over,

(MORE)

my mood changed. He has said that I would switch from being a nice, soft person into someone very different. Although I tried to explain what was happening then he still had a problem fully understanding the transformation.

So now I have to be truly myself and only now that my story has been told can I live close to a normal life. So many people now contact me and share their experiences and I know that I am helping them

I've told you how for so many years nobody believed me about the rape and nobody saved me from the horrors of the hospital from hell, Chattahoochee. The doctors even made it worse by experimenting with electric shock treatment on a young girl! The truth about my stepfather's crime and my mother's neglect is now known.

The reality of the torturous treatment, physical and mental, of patients - some of whom were of sound mind - is also now well documented.

Many parents will be thinking, 'Thank God sexual abuse didn't happen to my child'. How can they be sure that it didn't?

Because sexual assault offenders are so often not brought to justice, what kind of message does that send to a child who is abused? The crime is often kept as a dark secret that erodes the personality of the young victim and creates confusion and abhorrence of sexual relations in their adult lives.

It's continuing today. I ask everyone to consider just what does happen after innocence is stolen from a child. It is a widely acknowledged fact that rape and

(MORE)

sexual violence are crimes that take away an individual's power.

They can no longer function normally within the society that let them down so badly. The entire 'rest of your life' becomes a matter of survival. Just doing ordinary things can trigger dark emotions and scare you witless. You try desperately to adapt, but even then you may behave very differently from the 'norm' ...without even realizing it.

I still have periods of low self-esteem, but I count my blessings.

My wonderful Tony and I have 3 beautiful children, 10 grandchildren, two of which are identical twins, and 2 great-grandchildren.

END THEME: 'You Needed Me'

END TITLE: Paulette Conti is now in her late 60s. She lives in New York State. Paulette and Tony have been married now for more than 50 years. She still helps abused women.