One More Forever

A short story adapted from a television script

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by

Bayle C. Langlois

Thesis Director

Dr. C.W. Vanderhill

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

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Spring Quarter
Winter was coming to town, and the land was preparing for its arrival. The dusty gravel road ached for snow, although it wouldn't come for another month or so. The leaves had begun to show their festive fashions, which would mark the beginning of their slow and fatal transformation into their brown, crusty funeral shrouds. Even the enthusiastic conversations amongst the crickets and the bullfrogs had ceased, only to be replaced by silence. It was an empty silence which patiently awaited the death; a death which would soon cover the countryside with a white, soundproof coffin.

Jen knew the feeling well. She had seen it come and go for 22 years, although each time she had dreaded it a little more. Even now, as she gazed over the wide expanse of hills and trees, she had a tremendous urge to turn and run from the death to a place where only birth existed. She yearned for a place where she could count forevers.

"Forevers," Jen humphed, smiling to herself. In a disciplined motion, she turned from the window and began to unpack her suitcases. She hummed softly to herself as she worked, and she was soon singing the words and playing the game.

"Socks in the right drawer, undies in the left. Long pants, sweaters, put 'em in the chest!" Jen began to sing louder, playing the game faster and faster until she became confused by the quickness of the chant and her own
intermittent giggles. She fell back on her bed, closing her eyes and smiling.

"Oh, Mom, the silly stuff you taught me," she said softly. She then rose from the bed, glancing about the room with a sentimental look. She walked through the bedroom door and down the hall to another room, much like her own. However, this room possessed an air of authority, giving off the type of power that could only be associated with a parent's bedroom.

To Jen, it looked the same as she had always remembered it. The huge oaken desk sat against the mahogany paneling, its antique lamp loyally hiding the scratch that Mom had put there years before. The brass bed still dominated the right corner of the room, its bold orange bedspread challenging the brilliant yellows of the curtains. Even the tiny carved soldier still stood at attention on the dresser.

Death had not overcome the room. It still spoke of Mom's indomitable spirit and her laughter, which was as bright and colorful as the bedroom's sunny hues. Even the coat rack by the door and the cedar chest next to it radiated the courage and confidence that Jen had always associated with her mother.

Jen walked to the window, adjusting the curtain and opening it to let the warm autumn air rush in. Down below she could still see the "burning pile" where Mom and her nursery school children had joyfully raked the leaves in late October. She could even make out the small indentation in the earth
that Mom had called her "nesting place". Jen had always found candy bars and dime store toys there as a child, put there by the "Giant Ma Bird". Or so Mom had said.

Jen turned from the window, still lost in her memories. She crossed the room and walked downstairs, allowing her mind to wander. That fireplace poker had come from Aunt Eleanor's attic. And the little pine coffee table Dad had built for Mom on their fifth wedding anniversary. The piano near the huge picture window had been a gift from Jen's parents on her fifteenth birthday.

Jen crossed over to it, gingerly pulling a sheet of music from the piano bench. It was creased and battered from hours of practicing, and as Jen looked closer at it, she realized that it was the same piece that she had used to audition for the study grant in Paris. The same piece that had taken her far away from home, allowing her to return only once, on the day of Mom's funeral.

Jen sat down and began to play the music softly. She closed her eyes as she played, for she knew these notes by heart. She had pounded them over many times in practice, and even after she had received the grant, the melody lingered in her memory. It was a song that Jen could never forget, even if she had wanted to. The music had been an introduction to her most difficult encounter with the real world. She closed her eyes tighter, and let the strains carry her back to a time three years ago; one that she had lived over many times before.
Jen walked to the music building in the center of campus. It was one of those early autumn days where the hint of cold weather just slightly lingered in the air. Jen would have given anything to have taken her shoes and socks off and waded in the clear little pond in front of the student union, but today was the day. If everything went well and she got all of the luck that Mom had been wishing her in the past few months, she would be flying to Paris before Christmas. And tucked under her arm would be a certificate of award, stating that she, Jennifer Anne Stillwell, had received a grant to study piano with Madame Dussault at the University of Paris.

Jen's stomach flipped at the thought. But she feared what she had yet to do much more than she anticipated what might be. She had heard that the judges assigned to her audition were the worst combination of judges she could have managed. She had met two of them already. Mr. Harding was a deceptive sort, with a tall frame and rather beady eyes. He seldom looked her straight in the eye, and Jen couldn't help attributing this to evilness rather than timidity. Mrs. Hartle was the prim and proper type, with large, plastic framed glasses and a long, straight nose. She didn't seem to miss a thing and Jen even feared that she might read a mistake or two into her performance that wasn't really there.
The red brick music building was always a welcome sight to Jen. It had served as her second home all through her undergraduate years at college, and now it would listen to her final audition.

The hallways were empty as Jen entered Howard Hall, and she breathed a sigh of relief. If she ran into any of her classmates, she might hear that someone else had gotten the grant or was being very seriously considered for it. And this was something that Jen had worked for since last Easter, practicing in the same building until late in the afternoon and then working until midnight at home. It had taken precedence over the Senior Banquet, the music festival and even the family's annual reunion. Jen felt a tinge of guilt at these sacrifices but then recalled her mother's words, which made her feel much better.

"Never give up, if you want something, Jen," Mom had said. "You can quit for awhile, but if you're going to be dreaming, you had better be willing to pay some dues."

Jen looked down at the music sticking out of her folder and sighed again. How she could be so excited over something and at the same time dread it so was beyond her understanding.

"Okay. It's time to pay up," she said aloud to herself, arranging the music on the stand. "I just hope I didn't miss Uncle Fred's bird imitations for nothing." She smiled, and then became immersed in practicing for her final performance.

She didn't hear the door open behind her, nor did she see her three judges standing in the dimly lit entrance.
They looked at each other silently as they listened to the strains Jen was creating, an odd look of approval and skepticism in their eyes. It was Mrs. Hartle that spoke first.

"That's a nice arrangement you've chosen, Jennifer, but shouldn't you wait until we are seated before you offer a stunning performance?"

Jen turned quickly in her seat as Mrs. Hartle spoke. The sight of the three people in the doorway, with the late afternoon shadows playing on their faces reminded her of a horror movie she had seen one late Saturday night. The sound of Mrs. Hartle's voice almost echoed through the large room, and Jen repressed an urge to shiver.

"Can we be seated?" Mrs. Hartle asked. The question was intended to sound stern, but the faint hint of amusement in Hartle's voice was not lost on Jen. She relaxed slightly, and even managed a smile.

"Of course, sit down," she said, motioning towards the three chairs at her left. The judges moved toward them, making quiet conversation among themselves. However, Jen's attention remained on the chairs. Something was wrong. She thought it might be the way the chairs were arranged, in a rather careless way with the center one pulled far behind the right and the left one way in front of the center. But no, Jen thought, it was something deeper, not a look but a feeling. Jen became confused and looked away from the chairs, her stomach twisting into a curious knot.

"Oh, please, please," she thought to herself frantically. "Please don't let me mess this thing up. It's the only thing I've ever really wanted..."
Mr. Brown, the third judge, smiled at Jen and then turned to Mr. Harding, whispering something Jen could not hear. Harding nodded and Brown turned back to her.

"You can begin the piece Jennifer, but first Mr. Harding, Mrs. Hartle and myself would like to tell you what we are looking for."

Brown's voice went on forever, Jen thought. The standards he was discussing were ones that Jen had read on the Grant Information Sheet over and over. She nodded at his words, pretending to be listening.

"And we must remind you, Jennifer, that the choice made is one that we have come to as a group, based on your performance and those of your classmates. We want to choose the best musician possible for this opportunity. We're sure you understand," Brown concluded. He then sat back in his chair and crossed his arms, looking like a triumphant child who had just finished a difficult arithmetic problem.

Jen tried to control the panic that was creeping up from within her. "This man makes it sound as though I lost it already," she thought to herself. The room seemed to darken around her as she turned to the keys and scanned the piece once more. The notes appeared to be shrinking before her very eyes and she blinked hard, trying to clear her head before the final moment.

"Begin, Jennifer." Hartle spoke the words, still trying to be firm, but still unable to hide the note of humanity in her voice.
However, this time Jen missed the note of good humor. The words were more of a command than a consent to her, and she suddenly felt as though she knew the feeling of the imprisoned slave before he was thrown to the lions. She nodded her head and slowly placed her fingers on the yellowing ivory keys.

What followed was the work of pure genius. The fingers barely touched the keys at each pianissimo, slid gracefully over them at every andante, and paused at each forte, just before they made the instrument sing out with loud, strong notes. There were no hesitations or discordant sounds.

The performer of this brilliant work was a different story, however. She strained at every measure, frantically sought out every sharp and flat and constantly listened for sounds of disapproval from her audience. Beads of sweat had appeared on her forehead and her usually neat hair had begun to fall into her eyes. She finished the arrangement with grace, but she felt as if it were an abrupt ending, both of the music and her musical career. She gazed at the keys for a moment and then looked up at the judges.

They sat quietly, watching her as if they expected her to continue with another song. Then the silence was broken as they stood up and began clapping and walking towards her.

"Not bad, not bad at all," Harding said, looking at the floor. Brown followed suit, encouraging Jen with
patronizing tones. Jen began to think he was consoling her rather than offering encouragement. She suddenly felt an uncontrollable urge to know what they would decide; to know what they had decided to do with her future.

"Well, was it good enough for the study?" she blurted, immediately ashamed at her outburst. She hung her head sheepishly, waiting for a huge cloud of reprimand to settle upon her.

Brown looked startled and began to stutter, looking over at Harding for assistance. Harding looked up from the floor and gave Jen a cool, informal stare.

"We'll certainly give it every consideration, Jennifer. Of course, you realize, we can't give you our decision now."

Jen nodded slowly. "Of course. Thank you very much."

She watched Harding and Brown leave the room. Brown's stubby little body bounded behind the gaunt Harding's with the motion of a small puppy. She couldn't help but feel contempt for the two strangers who held her future in their hands.

"It really was a fine performance, Jennifer," a voice murmured from behind her. Jen turned, surprised, for she had not noticed Hartle studying her music at the piano.

Hartle looked straight at her, and this time made no attempt to conceal the respect she had for Jen's music.

"You want this very badly, don't you?" she asked.

Jen was confused by the question, but she nodded. "But lots of my friends do too."
"Ah, yes, that ever-present competition. I remember it well." Hartle looked down at the music again. "But do you really want it, Jennifer? We can forget about your classmates for the moment."

Jen was still puzzled by Hartle's questioning, and began to feel she was being trapped. She hesitated, decided what lines she would answer the question on and began.

"Well you see, Mrs. Hartle, music has always been a big part of my life. My goal was to always further my education in it whenever it was possible. Even my philosophy of music is based on..." Jennifer stopped.

Hartle had looked up from the music, and stared at Jen with a mixture of amusement and disbelief. Jen understood immediately and began to smile.

"Yes. I want it very badly."

"Then you shall have it."

This is too simple, Jen thought. She considered laughing and going along with the joke, but decided to play the game instead.

"Will you be able to convince Mr. Harding and Mr. Brown?"

Hartle smiled. "Of course, my dear. Just between the two of us, those goats are easily swayed. If they ever had an opinion in the first place." She walked toward the door, her footsteps echoing across the empty room. Suddenly she turned and looked towards Jen who sat at the piano, looking very tiny against it.
"Uh, Jennifer."

Jen looked at the figure in the doorway.

"There is no catch, my dear. I'll be seeing you in Paris."

Jen's stare held Hartle's eyes for a moment. Then a slow smile made its way across her face.

Hartle winked and closed the door behind her.

The drive home was Heaven for Jen. She had never felt so close to the countryside. At each curve and stop sign, she marveled at the rolling hills and bright trees which surrounded her. She even stopped once to watch a squirrel dig for a hidden hickory nut. Even the radio seemed to sense her special mood, for it played several of her old favorites. She was humming one of them as she pulled into her driveway.

Jen was greeted by the shouts of children, although they weren't actually intended for her. They were for Jen's mother, who was happily raking a pile of leaves around one of the 4-year-olds. The others crowded around them, shouting and hopping around the pile.

Jen leaned back in the driver's seat and watched her mother with admiration. She was always smiling, always laughing and always full of life. Jen found it almost impossible to be sad or even slightly depressed around her mother. Whenever she was, Mom would come up with a pep talk that could make the world's greatest pessimist stand up.
and start clapping. In fact, Jen had never seen Mom waver under any pressure, including Dad's death six years ago.

Although she couldn't remember the exact words of the speech Mom had given her that day, she did recall the session Mom had conducted under the oak tree in the backyard. It had been the second day of spring, but the weather had been warm enough for them to be outside with only sweaters. Little sprigs of green grass were trying to poke their ways through the leaves, which Mom said had to be raked before April Fools Day or the snow would come in September instead of November.

Mom had taken Jen into her arms and talked of things like acceptance and time and the importance of living and going on. Of course, Jen hadn't really heard the words she said. She had just tried to absorb some of the strength Mom was giving her. And it had worked. With Mom's help, Jen had made it through the days of the funeral and the burial with a surprising amount of calm and even humor.

"C'mon and help us, Jen. We're having a leaf raking party!"

Jen put her memories away and waved at Mom, who was motioning her in her direction.

"It looks like you're losing more leaves than you're raking," Jen grinned, playfully poking at the child in the pile of leaves as she approached the workers.

"Nonsense," Mom smiled. "When you have professionals doing the job you can't go wrong, right gang?"
The children shouted their agreement as they gathered around Mom.

Mom handed the rake to Jen. "Why don't you and the kids finish up while I go in and start my latest experiment for dinner?"

"I'd like to, but I have some packing to do," Jen said as nonchalantly as possible, trying to disguise the excitement in her voice.

"Oh, okay." Mom took the rake from her absent-mindedly and began to work again. "Then why don't you go in and start..." She looked up and gazed at Jen in disbelief.

"Jen, you don't mean...Why, it didn't occur to me that... The audition...they gave the decision so soon?"

Jen, unable to conceal the news any longer, nodded her head wildly and broke into a dance, swinging the pre-schoolers around in circles. Mom joined in, and soon the entire group was singing and hopping madly about the Stillwell's back yard.

The excitement hadn't worn off by dinner. Jen and Mom sat across from each other as usual, but instead of discussing the day's activities between bites of Mom's latest recipe, Jen dominated the conversation with plans for her departure.

"Gosh, there's so much to do," Jen chattered. "I'm going to need new luggage and at least half of a new wardrobe. Can you imagine what my clothes will look like in Paris?"

She looked at her mother, who seemed to be staring into another focal plane.
Mom snapped to attention, giving her full attention to Jen. "I'm sorry, sweety. Everything has happened so quickly I can't figure out which end is up. Now tell me, what did you ask?"

Jen smiled. "Man, if I didn't know better, I'd swear you were thinking about missing me." She paused. "I was asking you if you thought I'd look a little silly with my blue jeans in Paris."

Mom grinned. "Anything for a new wardrobe, this kid. I'll tell you what. For Christmas I'll get you a whole truckload of the latest fashions, straight from New York."

"And in the meantime I wander about the glamorous Parisian streets with my bib overalls and football jersey, right?" Jen laughed, shaking her head.

The smile faded quickly and her voice took on a serious note. "Jen, what are you talking about?"

Jen stared at Mom blankly, and then suddenly realized what was puzzling her. "Boy, you are a space cadet, aren't you? I begin next month, remember?"

"But you said..."

"That was if the decision wasn't made until after Christmas. Since it's been decided already, there's really no reason why I shouldn't start right away. At least that's what I think is the case."

"You're absolutely sure about it? I mean, nothing is really final yet anyhow."

Jen looked confused. "This isn't like you Mom. I'd think you weren't happy about my going or something."
Mom smiled kindly at her daughter. "No, that isn't it at all, Jen, although you have to admit that three years is a long time without you around." She paused, still smiling, although Jen noticed a gentle, almost sad look in her eyes. "It's just that nothing is certain yet, and I don't want you disappointed by something Mrs. Hartle hasn't put in writing."

Jen gave Mom a long look and then stood up. "Okay, okay. If it will make you feel any better, I'll call to make sure." Jennifer walked towards the living room. She disappeared through the doorway but then poked her head into the kitchen again. "Hey Mom."

Mom, who had been staring into space again, raised her eyebrows in response.

"I'll miss you too."

Mom smiled, with the same sad look. Jen walked to the phone, hoping that her mother didn't know better this time. The voice on the other end of the line assured Jen that she didn't.

"The two old fellows agreed," Mrs. Hartle said confidently. "No fight at all. You should be getting the official statement in the mail within the next few days, Jennifer."

Jen sighed with relief. She thanked Mrs. Hartle and hung up, heading back towards the kitchen.

"You were wrong again, dear girl," Jen joked. "I set sail next month. For sure."

Mom looked up at Jen, smiling a genuine, good-natured Mom smile. "Jennifer Anne, I'm so proud of you."
Jen smiled back, feeling her mother's warmth and love. She crossed the room and put her arms around her. "I hope you're as happy as I am, Mom?"
"I'm happier."
Jen laughed and hugged her even tighter. But deep inside, she fought the same terrifying panic she had experienced earlier that day, when she had sensed that something was not quite right. Except this time, Jennifer Anne Stillwell felt that something was terribly wrong.

The sun had just begun to peek into her room, but Jen had been up for hours. There were travel arrangements to be made and packing to do, and Jen wanted to get them finished as soon as possible. She pulled her clothing out of the closet one piece at a time, surveying each one pensively.

"I can't understand how I got so many awful clothes. And all at one time," she muttered to herself, shaking her head. She finished at the closet and began pulling out the contents of her cedar chest. She eyed each of these articles thoughtfully also, setting each one gingerly on the floor after inspection. She was halfway through the chore when she heard the voices outside.

Jen got up off the floor and crossed over to her bedroom window. Mom's class had gathered around the oak tree, singing their good morning song and swaying back and forth. Mom stood among them, smiling and singing louder than all of them. She looked up at Jen and waved. Jen waved back and
turned to face the remainder of her job. She knelt and began sorting through her clothing again. "That mother of mine," she thought. "I'm sure going to miss her."

Miss her. The thought echoed in her ears and Jen stopped work abruptly, straining to hear her mother's voice. The thought of leaving all of a sudden seemed unbearable, and Jen was overwhelmed by an urge to run downstairs and promise the trees and the kids and Mom that she would never leave. Jen stood up quickly, dropping a pile of sweaters to the floor. She walked blindly to the door, overcome by anxiety. She would never go. Suddenly she didn't want Paris or Hartle or even her own music. All she needed were the sun and the grass and Mom. She paused, momentarily confused by a dark object standing at the top of the stairs.

It was Mom. She stepped out of the shadows, moving closer to Jen. Jen could make out her outstretched hand and took it. She felt a little better. Mom had given her comfort once more, without even knowing what Jen was afraid of.

"What's going on up here?" Mom asked, trying to peer over Jen's shoulder. She pushed past her and entered the room, looking curiously at its disorderly condition.

Jen expected her to smile at the mess, but the distressed expression Mom had on her face surprised Jen. She had only seen it once before. She suddenly felt weak, grabbing at the wall for support. She struggled with the rush of fear that spread through her body. Something terrible was about to happen.
"Are you alright, Jennifer?" Mom asked, a concerned look spreading over her face.

Mom had used her full name. Jen gripped the wall tighter, confused by the emotions that had come and gone in the last few moments. Mom was still calm. Jen was panicked. She nodded at her mother and walked into the bedroom again, trying not to stumble over her belongings on the floor. She sat on the bed.

"Packing already. Hmmmm. You'll be gone before I can say Howdy Doody."

Jen managed a smile, still overcome by her fear.

Mom was fingering one of Jen's sweaters. She stared at it a long time and then put it down. There was an air of finality in the motion, as if she had finally made a decision that she had been pondering over a long time.

Jen knew she didn't want to hear what Mom had to say.

"So when do you think you can join me in Paris, Mom? The way I figure it, you'll want to spend Christmas with the rest of the family, and I sure don't want to spend it alone, so I guess I can fly home the 25th and you can fly back with me on the first. Of course, it will cost some money and someone will have to take your class, but you haven't had a vacation for years and I'm sure you can get away for just one week." Jen's words had begun to trip over each other, and she tried to fight back tears. "And I don't even know why I want to cry," she thought miserably.

Mom had waited patiently for Jen's confused babbling to end, watching her with the same unsettling look. Jen felt the cloud lowering again, the way it had last week.
at the audition.

"I don't think I'll be joining you, Jennifer."

That full name again. Jen stared silently at her mother.

Mom never took her eyes off Jen. An odd look suddenly came over her face and she blinked, as though trying to hide something that she knew was impossible to hide. She smiled and her voice became very soft.

"Ever."

Jen was confused for a fraction of a second. Then she understood everything. The fear, the changing emotions, the confusion. Mom would never join her. Ever. Jen didn't want to see anything anymore, and the room around her went into a swirling blur. She didn't want to hear or talk or listen or least of all, accept. She felt Mom's arms go around her, but she didn't even want to feel this. She didn't care about the future anymore or the past or school or the oak tree in the back yard. She didn't care about Uncle Fred or Aunt Eleanor or even Dad. Nothing mattered. Her mother was going to die.

Jen had always loved the river. It always sang, even when it rained, and it gave homes to scores of wild animals. It was singing again today as Jen walked along its bank, trailing a long maple branch behind her.

The world had seemed a little brighter this morning. At least the tears were gone when she woke up and she was able to walk without holding onto things for support. When she left the house, Mom had been teaching the fundamentals
of shoe tying to her kids, and she had smiled at Jen as she
dwalked down the driveway. There was no sorrow in her eyes
this morning, Jen noticed. They looked the same as they
always had, sparkling and full of life.

But Jen had never had her mother's gift for optimism,
and she certainly couldn't muster any now. In fact, the only
time she ever felt comfortable with the world was when she
had her mother's positive words to lean on. And those wouldn't
be around much longer.

Jen shook her head violently, trying to shake off the
painful realization. She had to think clearly now. There
was so much to reconsider. The grant, for instance. She
couldn't take it. She couldn't be thousands of miles away
when Mon was at home, all by herself.......... She closed
her eyes, leaning back against a heavy tree trunk that
stood along the river's edge. Placing her head in her hands,
she sighed heavily, listening to the birds sing. "Why can't
I do that today?" she thought miserably.

"Maybe the hospital had the wrong person. Maybe it
was even the wrong test," she said aloud. Then she sighed. "I'm
grabbing at straws, I know it. Oh, this is the end of every-
thing. I don't think I'm going to be able to go on."

"Oh, yes you will. And you can."

Jen jerked her head up, startled. Her mother stood beside
her, a hand resting gently on the tree.

"May I sit down?"

Jen forced a smile and nodded.

"It's a beautiful day." Mom paused and watched the river
thoughtfully. She turned to Jen and took her face in her hands.

"Can you find the courage to talk?"
Jen looked into her mother's eyes and nodded very slowly.

"Mom, I'm sorry," she cried softly. "I'm sitting her crying when I know I'll be around for a long time to come."

Mom chuckled. "You're so sure." She became serious again. "It's okay. Sometimes it's harder to watch someone you love die."

The words brought more sobs from Jen, but Mom continued. "But you can't stop living just because that someone has, Jen. You have to continue with your music and your studies and your life. There never was a guarantee that I would be around forever. You only thought there was. And you'll find as you go on through life that there are no forevers."

Jen had quieted and was listening to her mother.

"Don't try to hold on to things that were always meant to slip away in the first place. I learned that when your father died. And I also learned that life goes on whether you go with it or not." She paused, staring at Jen intently. "You'll be able to laugh again, Jen."

Jen closed her eyes tight and shook her head, unable to speak.

Mom's voice dropped to a whisper. "Please, Jen, learn to go on." Mom had begun to cry softly now, but she gave Jen her handkerchief instead and silently walked up the bank towards the sound of children's voices. Jen watched her disappear into the brush and turned to the river. She did not leave until long after the sun had set.
The music just couldn't come out. Jen didn't know if it was her or the piece she was playing, but it didn't sound right, and she couldn't figure out what was wrong with it. She muttered under her breath as she worked on various chords, shaking her head, adding sharps, and adding more notes. She glanced at her watch. It was getting late and she hadn't even begun the third page. Mom would be finishing dinner soon.

"Aw, heck with it. I'm going home." Jen threw the sheet music into her folder and reached for her jacket.

"That's a poor attitude for someone who's going to be studying with a world-renowned pianist in one week."

Jen whirled around, dropping her folder and sending music around the floor of the practice room.

"I--uh-- have to get home. My mom's waiting with dinner."

"And such a fine attitude too." Mrs. Hartle smiled slightly, but Jen knew that she wouldn't win this one.

"You're right, Mrs Hartle. I need to practice the piece much more." Jen knelt to pick up the paper, placing it on the music rack.

Hartle crossed the room and sat in a nearby chair, folding her arms. "Quite frankly, Jennifer, I'm a little disturbed about what I've been seeing around here the past few weeks. You've only been in around 3 hours a day, yet your instructor claims you would practice nearly 6 a day before the grant." Hartle gazed coldly at her, expecting an answer.
Jen began to feel extremely uncomfortable in the room with this calculating woman. She wished she could shout at her to leave and stop staring, but instead she pretended to study the keyboard.

She finally gathered the courage to speak. "I usually did, but things have come up at home that need to be taken care of." Jen didn't mention the fact that she tried to get home earlier every evening so she could see more of Mom before she left.

"Well I appreciate your concern for your home life, but you must remember what you've been chosen for." Hartle's voice contained no emotion this time. She was being very professional. "I hardly see where anything at home can be more important than your career."

Jen repressed the rage which had suddenly welled up in her. She wanted to strike out at Hartle, shouting at her to shut up and leave her alone. She couldn't possibly know....

"You're right, Mrs. Hartle. I'll practice some more. Right now." The calmness in her voice surprised her. "This isn't me talking," Jen thought to herself.

Hartle nodded her head slightly, pushed her glasses up and rose gracefully. She reached back to straighten her hair and eyed Jen calmly. "See that you don't have these discipline problems when you get to Paris, Jennifer. It would be most unfortunate. For everyone." She wheeled around and walked out the door.

Jen stared incredulously after her. She wondered how someone could be so callous to actually say that music was
more important than anything! If she only knew......

Jen thought of Mom waiting with dinner. She looked at the music on the rack. She didn't even have the chords memorized yet. Mom's welcoming face flashed in her mind. The music stared at her, waiting. Jen sighed. She placed her fingers on the keyboard and played until midnight.

"I wish you weren't making me do this."

Jen was leaning on the observation deck railing, her hands twisting on the gate's latch.

Her mother smiled. "It's a chance of a lifetime."

Jen winced at her choice of words. She watched a 747 take off on the runway, its heavy nose pointing upward as the landing gear left the pavement. A private jet followed a few minutes later, and Jen wondered if they were going home or to some unknown city.

"It's amazing how heavy they are, and yet they still can fly." Mom was watching Jen as she spoke the words, waiting for a reaction.

Jen missed their meaning. "Aerodynamics. Those boys can figure anything." She turned and headed for the terminal door, carting her suitcase beside her. Mom followed her through the door.

"Don't be feeling guilty, Jen. It's what I want. You're doing it for me, if that helps at all."

"It doesn't."

They walked to the check in area and Jen stopped by the agent,
handing him her ticket.

"Smoking or non-smoking?"

"Non."

"Window or aisle seat?"

"Wind---no, aisle." He handed her the ticket and she sat down. She turned to Mom. "Do you know how hard this is?"

She was finished with tears. They had been replaced with a kind of numbness; a numbness which wouldn't allow any emotion to surface at all.

"For both of us, Jen. I never was good at goodbyes."

"Everyone says that."

"Everyone hates them."

"But not everyone says them to their mothers. Forever."

Mom looked at Jen for a long time. Jen looked back, trying remember everything about her---her clothes; her hair, her eyes. Mom broke into a warm smile and took Jen's hands.

"Ah, but nothing is forever, Jen."

The loudspeaker announced Jen's flight. Jen continued to stare at Mom, thinking that this was it. It was goodbye. She couldn't do it. This was crazy. She couldn't leave her mother at an airport and never see her again.

Mom sensed her thoughts. "You'd have to go sometime. Maybe in a year, maybe in two, maybe in a hundred."

Jen nodded, standing up. Her mother rose with her, never taking her eyes off her.

Jen blinked. Mom smiled. They hugged for a long time, but it was Jen who finally pulled away.

"Goodbye Mom."
"Goodbye Jen."

Jen turned and stopped at the entrance gate. It was here that Jen knew she couldn't go through with it. She turned and began to walk confidently towards her mother, towards her home, towards her life.

But Mom was waiting for the move and she stood several yards away, holding Jen's eyes with her own. Jen stopped in her tracks and let her mother deliver her much needed strength for one last time.

"Go on." Mom only mouthed the words.

Jen closed her eyes, but she still see her mother and still hear her words. She was smiling and holding Jen's hands. But they weren't at the airport. They were at a singing river and Jen was sitting on a tree trunk and crying, a long maple branch at her side.

"Please, Jen, learn to go on," Mom whispered.

Jen turned and walked into the airplane. She only looked back once, after the plane had left the ground. But Mom was gone by then. Gone forever.

"Ah, but there are no forevers." Jen smiled ever so slightly and leaned back in her seat.

It was a long way to Paris.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JENNIFER</td>
<td>She is the main character. She seems to be following a fairly normal life, when she is suddenly faced with a decision that will test her maturity. She is still normal, although she exhibits considerable strength in accepting her situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOM</td>
<td>A very strong person, Mom is more interested in her daughter's future than her own impending death. She is very dedicated, to both her daughter and her nursery school children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARTLE</td>
<td>A music authority, she is very intelligent. She speaks somewhat stiffly and seems stuffy, but she is a very understanding and thoughtful person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARDING</td>
<td>Also a music authority, he is the type of person who talks like a politician and never commits himself to anything or anyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROWN</td>
<td>He is a follower. He seems to imitate anything that Harding is doing, and seldom gives his own opinion about anything.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **EXT. LONG SHOT--MUSIC BUILDING--DAY**

The music building is red brick and set among other university type buildings. It is surrounded by green shrubs. Occasionally a student walks by the building. The sun is out and it is making shadows on the building. The theme is being played by an orchestra.

2. **DOLLY IN TO BUILDING TO FS OF OUTER DOOR**

3. **INT. DISSOLVE TO HALLWAY BEYOND DOOR AND DOLLY DOWN IT. DAY.**

The hallway is a typical looking college hallway. It is dimly lit and deserted.

4. **FS OF CLASSROOM DOOR**

The theme is still being played by an orchestra. Cross fade theme with theme being played by a single piano.

5. **DISSOLVE TO FS OF JENNIFER**

The sound of the theme being played by a single piano is the only sound that can be heard now. Jennifer is sitting with her back to the camera, and her head is down as if she is concentrating very deeply. The theme's tempo is moderately light.

6. **DISSOLVE SLOWLY TO CU OF JENNIFER'S HANDS**

They seem to dance over the keys. The tempo becomes quicker and the notes become stronger and slightly lower in pitch.

7. **DISSOLVE TO MS OF HARDING**

He is sitting with his index finger pressed against his nose and his chin is resting on his hand. He is sitting in a regular folding chair and leaning slightly forward, as if he is trying to hear Jennifer's every note.

8. **DISSOLVE TO CU OF JENNIFER**
A lock of hair has fallen into her face, but she doesn't seem to notice. She is watching the keys of the piano very intently as she plays.

9. DISSOLVE FASTER TO MS JUDGE BROWN

He has an almost silly grin on his face. He is nodding his head rapidly and to the beat of the music.

10. DISSOLVE FASTER TO CU OF JENNIFER

She seems even more intent on the music she is playing. Her eyebrows have become knit in concentration, and beads of sweat can be seen on her forehead. The music has become considerably stronger.

11. DISSOLVE TO MS JUDGE HARTLE

She sits straight up in her chair, with an intelligent yet almost expressionless look on her face.

12. CUT TO XCU JENNIFER'S HANDS

They seem to be pounding the keys now, and the music is very strong.

13. CUT TO CU OF HARDING AND PAN TO BROWN AND HARTLE

They have the same expressions on their faces.

14. CUT TO CU JENNIFER

More hair has fallen into her face, but she is concentrating very deeply now. Her whole body moves as her hands move up and down the keyboard. She plays the last notes of the piece, and as she plays these, her head jerks with each note. The piece is finished, but she stares at the keys. She then turns suddenly to the judges as if she has forgotten that they were there. Her expression is that of anxiety mixed with hope.

15. CUT TO LS OF PERFORMANCE ROOM
It is dimly lit and there seems to be a dark tinge to the whole room. There is dead silence for a moment, then Harding begins to smile and stands, applauding. He moves towards Jennifer. Brown follows suit, literally following in Harding's footsteps. Hartle rises slowly. She is smiling slightly and nodding her head in approval.

16. CUT TO MEDIUM THREE SHOT OF JENNIFER, BROWN AND HARDING

HARDING
Not bad. Not bad at all, Jennifer. You did a pretty fair job with that piece.

BROWN
(nods head vigorously)
Yes, yes, Jennifer. That was a pretty good performance.

Jennifer seems a bit distressed at their words. She turns hopefully to Hartle.

17. MS OF HARTLE

She begins to move toward Jennifer with the same slight smile.

18. MEDIUM FOUR SHOT OF JENNIFER, HARTLE, BROWN AND HARDING

HARTLE
A fine performance, Jennifer.

JENNIFER
(blurts out)
What about the study grant? Do you think that you can recommend me to study with Madame Vussault in Paris?

Jennifer looks at her feet as if she is ashamed to have spoken so bluntly.

19. CUT TO MEDIUM TWO SHOT OF BROWN AND HARDING
HARDING

(diplomatically)
Well, Jennifer, we'll certainly consider it.
(pause)
You have a pretty fair chance of getting it.

BROWN

(nodding)
Of course we'll consider you, Jennifer.

20. CUT TO FS OF JENNIFER

JENNIFER

(disappointed)
I see. Well........................
(pauses)
Well, thank you very much.

Jennifer picks up her music from the piano and walks away.

21. DISSOLVE TO WA OF JENNIFER

She is in the cloak room, putting on her jacket. Her head is down as if she is very disappointed. She is surrounded by several instrument cases and the muffled sounds of other instruments playing in nearby practice rooms can be heard. Jennifer bends to pick up her piano music off a bench.

22. CUT TO FS OF DOOR

Harle enters unnoticed. She closes the door gently behind her.

HARTLE,

(softly)
Do you mind if I bother you, Jennifer?

23. CUT TO MS JENNIFER

She looks up, startled.

JENNIFER

(stutters)
No.....no. I--I was just leaving.
24. CUT TO MS HARTLE

HARTLE
You're worried, aren't you?
(laughs a little)
I can remember when I was your age or younger.
I used to be so frightened at recitals like these that I could barely play a note. Those days were very trying for me.
(pauses as if remembering)
You want to study with Madame Dussault very badly, don't you Jennifer?

25. CUT TO MS OF JENNIFER

JENNIFER
More than anything.

26. CUT TO MS HARTLE

HARTLE
Then you shall.

(a devilish smile creeps across her face)
Those two silly creatures should be fairly simple to convince. I've dealt with men of their caliber before.

27. MS OF JENNIFER

She looks bewildered.

JENNIFER
(unsure)
But--but they didn't seem as if......

28. MS OF HARTLE

Puts her finger to her lips.

HARTLE
I mean what I say, Jennifer. Now goodbye, dear.
It was a pleasure. I'll be seeing you in Paris in about a month.
She turns and walks out the door.
29. DISSOLVE TO MS OF JENNIFER

She is sitting in a car, driving with the radio on. She checks the rear view mirror and begins to sing softly to herself. She starts to laugh and shakes her head as if she can't believe what has just happened. She stops the car and gets out.

30. EXT. CUT TO WA OF MOM. DAY

She is raking leaves with a group of pre-school children. She is young looking and dressed in yellow and orange clothing. She looks up when she sees Jennifer and waves. The children around her are laughing and throwing leaves at each other.

MOM
(shouts)
Come here, Jen. We're having a leaf raking party!

31. CUT TO MS OF JENNIFER

She begins to walk toward her mother.

JENNIFER
It looks like you're losing more than you're raking to me.

32. CUT TO MS OF MOM

MOM
Nonsense. These are professionals doing the job. There are none better. Right gang?

At this, she picks up an armful of leaves and showers the nearest child. There are squeals and shouts from the children. She smiles and shakes her head.

33. CUT TO MS OF JENNIFER

JENNIFER
Wish I could help, Mom, but I have some packing to do.
34. MS OF MOM

She stops raking and stares blankly at Jennifer.

MOM
(starts to speak slowly, then picks up speed)
Jennifer Anne, are you telling me....Are you
saying that--that--you---
(lets out a yell)
You did it, didn't you, Jen? By gosh, you
did it!

35. CUT TO FS OF JENNIFER AND MOM

Mom is holding Jennifer in her arms and hopping madly up and
down. Jennifer is smiling.

36. INT. DISSOLVE TO DINNER TABLE. NIGHT.

Jennifer and her mother are sitting across the table from each
other, eating dinner. There is the sound of clinking silver-
ware, and they pass food to each other. Jennifer is talking
excitedly, and seems not to notice the somewhat worried look
on her mother's face.

JENNIFER
(excitedly)
First I'll write Aunt Eleanor in Paris and
tell her that I can finally live with her.
She'll be so excited! And of course I'll
need a new music folder and then there's
the matter about the....Oh mom, I'm so
excited! There's so much to do! Of
course I'll need new clothes and.......
Mom, do you think my luggage is too beat
up to take to Paris?

Mom is barely paying attention. She looks up as if she has
just become aware that Jennifer is there.

MOM
(absent mindedly)
Uh...no. No dear. It should be just fine.

Jennifer still is not aware of her mother's distant behavior.
JENNIFER
Well, I hope so. I want everything to be just perfect. There's this dress that I've been wanting for so long.....Do you think I'll need a swimsuit in Paris?
(answering her question)
That's silly. Of course I will. And then..... (pauses)
Mom, are you listening?

37. CUT TO CU OF MOM

She looks up suddenly.

MOM
Oh Jen, I'm sorry.
(pauses, then talks slowly)
I was just thinking----I think that I have things a little messed up.
(pauses)
How soon did you say you were leaving?

JENNIFER'S VOICE
In a month.
(continues)
Of course, I'll have to call Uncle Jack.....

Jennifer's excited conversation with herself can still be heard, but Mom's eyes take on a frightened look. She does not even listen to Jennifer's words.

MOM
(echoing softly)
A month..........  

38. DISSOLVE TO WA OF JENNIFER

She is in her bedroom, humming to herself and obviously in a good mood. She begins taking her clothes out of her closet and holding them up to her as she looks in the mirror. She makes a face, then drops one and picks up another one. The room is lit brightly, and the walls are an off-white. There is a knock at the door.
JENNIFER
(shouts)
C'mon in!

39. CUT TO FS DOOR

Mom enters, almost timidly.

JENNIFER'S VOICE
I'm just trying to decide on these clothes, mom. Do you think this one looks a little shabby?

Mom ignores the question, as if she never heard it. She stands next to a chair that is placed next to the bed.

MOM
Please sit down, Jen. I have to talk to you... I have something to tell you.

JENNIFER'S VOICE
Mom, can't you tell me while I'm doing this? Really, there's so much.......

MOM
(interrupts)
Jennifer, please. Please sit down.

Mom looks straight ahead and grips tightly to the chair as if she is bracing herself for what she is going to say.

40. CUT TO MS JENNIFER

She looks at her mother with concern. She has finally noticed something is troubling her. She smiles kindly and hugs her mother. Then she sits cross-legged on the bed.

41. MEDIUM TWO SHOT OF JENNIFER AND MOM

JENNIFER
(apologetically)
Oh mom, I'm really sorry. I guess I've just forgotten all about you. I got so carried away.......Of course, I'm going to miss you....
42. CUT TO CU OF MOM

She puts her finger to her lips to tell Jennifer to be quiet and just listen. She looks as if she is having difficulty in controlling her emotions.

MOM
Jen, all I want from you now is for you to listen and......
(pauses, then sighs)
and hopefully for you to understand.

43. CUT TO MS JENNIFER

She looks at her mother in bewilderment.

44. CUT TO CU OF MOM

MOM
Jen, you have no idea how proud I am of you. I've wanted this for you more than you've wanted it for yourself. And your father would have been so proud.....We discussed it so often.

45. MS. OF JENNIFER

JENNIFER
But we can share it, mom. It will be so neat! You and I can share this whole thing together!

46. CU OF MOM

She looks at Jennifer as if to say, "You poor, naive child".

MOM
(softly)
No, Jen. That's what I'm trying to tell you.
(pauses)
How I hate to ruin this for you.
(pauses)
What I'm trying to say, Jen, is--well---that---I can't be a part of this with you. The hospital called the other day---they got the test results back. They said.......
(looks sadly at Jennifer)
MOM  (continuing)
I've been looking for the right opportunity
to tell...........

47. CUT TO CU OF JENNIFER

She looks frightened. She talks as if she is trying to stop her mother from saying what she is afraid to hear. Her words come out very rapidly, almost incoherently.

JENNIFER  (interrupting)
You have to go in for more tests, right? Well, that's okay. After all, if you can't see me off, you can join me in Paris later. Really mom, I AM 22 --I can take care of myself.

48. CUT TO MS OF MOM

She listens patiently to Jennifer, as if she knows what she is trying not to hear. She has total emotional control of herself.

MOM  (patiently)
I have leukemia, Jen. The results were positive. They've given me three months to a year to....

49. CUT TO MS OF JENNIFER.

She is looking at her mother as if she can't believe what she is saying. Then she stands up and looks at her directly. Her face takes on a look of horror.

(JENNIFER  (shouting)
NO! NO!
/she begins to pound on the bed/
I can't....I won't...........

She runs into her mother's arms.

JENNIFER
I will never let you go. You can't leave me now......or ever.

Jennifer is sobbing, and hugging her mother. Her mother is not crying. She merely holds Jennifer and her eyes are closed.
50. DISSOLVE TO FS OF JENNIFER

She is straightening her bed. The sun is streaming through her bedroom window. She straightens up and walks to her mirror, then gazes blankly at her reflection. She puts her forehead in her hand in despair, then pauses as if she hears something. She turns towards the window, and walks towards it. By now, shouts of laughter can be heard clearly. Jennifer reaches the window and looks down toward the ground.

51. CUT TO FS OF MOM

She is playing a game with a group of children.

52. CUT TO MS OF JENNIFER

She stares out the window at her mother. As she stares, the sounds of laughter cross fade with a bird chirping cheerfully. Jennifer looks up towards the chirping.

53. CU OF SMALL BIRD ON BRANCH

JENNIFER'S VOICE
(whispers)
How can you sing, you miserable animal?
Don't you know what's happening to her.... and me?

There is silence, except for the bird's chirping.

54. EXT. DISSOLVE TO WA OF JENNIFER. DAY.

She is walking quickly down her front stairs, looking behind her as if she is trying to avoid her mother. She walks out onto the road, turns and walks down a steep incline to a river. Running water can be heard, Jennifer walks slowly, not focusing on anything. She sits down on a fallen tree and puts her head in her hands as a gesture of helplessness and despair.

MOM'S VOICE
It's beautiful out, isn't it?
Jennifer looks up, startled. Mom comes around and stands by her.

MOM
May I have the pleasure to share your worthy throne?

Jennifer forces a smile and Mom sits down beside her. Mom is watching the river.

MOM
I think that now it's time to talk, Jen.

Jennifer nods, but there is a long silence. Jennifer begins to talk, but very slowly. As she goes on, she picks up speed.

JENNIFER
I have decided not to go, Mom. You and I will take all our money and go to Hawaii. You've always said that you would go there if it was the last thing you....
(pauses)
I just can't go, Mom.

MOM
You'd make me very unhappy if you ever even considered turning down that study grant, Jen. It's a dream come true for both of us.

JENNIFER
Well then, come with me. We'd turn Europe upside down! We could go all over Europe and.... and....
(sounds frustrated)
We could go to a different hotel every weekend and eat out and.......

Jennifer puts her head down in hopelessness, and Mom puts her arms around her.

MOM
(softly)
I can't leave this place behind, Jen. I love my nursery school classes and my whole life is here. I can't leave it all behind.

Jennifer looks up at her mother as if to say, "Why do
we have to go through all of this? Mom looks understandingly at Jennifer and holds her a little closer.

55. CUT TO CU MOM

MOM
(patiently)
Jen, you have to let go. You can't try to hold on to things that you know will slip away from you.

JENNIFER'S VOICE
(softly, through tears)
And you are one of those things?

MOM
(very soft)
Yes, Jen, I'm one of those things.
(pauses)
You know, I learned when your father died that you can't stop living just because someone you love has. Life goes on whether you go with it or not.

There is a pause. Jennifer's sobs are quieter, but they are still quite distinctive.

MOM
(whispers)
Learn to go on, Jennifer.

56. DISSOLVE SLOWLY TO MEDIUM TWO SHOT OF JENNIFER AND MOM

Jennifer looks up at her mother after these words. Her face is wet from her tears. Mom hands her a blue handkerchief.

MOM
(calm, yet cheerful)
Now here, kiddo, take this and get rid of those tears. I have a swarm of bees up at the house, and I'll bet you any money that they're pretty tired of swarming in their hive by now.

Mom stands up to leave.
57. CUT TO FS OF MOM

She is climbing up the bank with her back to the camera.

58. CUT TO MS OF JENNIFER

She is sitting on the log, staring at the water when she suddenly drops the handkerchief in the river, out of her reach. She attempts to recover it a few times, then gives up. This seems to upset her considerably more, and she sits heavily on the tree again.

59. XCU OF HANDKERCHIEF

It is trying to move down the river with the current, but it has become entangled in a branch that has fallen into the river.

60. INT. DISSOLVE TO FS-SIDE ANGLE OF JENNIFER. DAY

She is practicing the piano in the same performance room as before. The room is dimly lit, although there is a high intensity light attached to the piano. As she plays, she hits many discordant notes. She stops playing, stares at the keyboard for awhile, then pounds the keys.

JENNIFER
(to herself)
I'll never get this right, and I don't care!

WOMAN'S VOICE
(stern, but with a touch of humor)
What a fine attitude! I knew from the start I picked the right person to become Madame Dussault's protege.

Jennifer turns, startled.

61. CUT TO MS OF MISS HARTLE.

She is standing in front of the door, her arms crossed over her chest. She walks forward to the piano.

62. PAN TO OVER THE SHOULDER SHOT OF HARTLE
HARTLE
They told me that I could find you here, Jennifer. Frankly, I'm beginning to wonder if it was such a good idea to come down to see you once again before Paris. (pauses, giving Jennifer a look of concern)
What's the problem, Jennifer? This isn't the same girl I talked to a few weeks ago. At that time, the study grant represented the ultimate to you.

63. CUT TO OVER THE SHOULDER OF JENNIFER

JENNIFER
I'm really sorry, Miss Hartle. Please--please don't misunderstand. I DO want the grant. It's just that--that...... (pauses)
Well, it's just that some of the circumstances have changed.

64. CUT TO OVER THE SHOULDER OF HARTLE

HARTLE
(dropping the subject)
I see. Very well, Jennifer. Just remember that there are several people who are depending on you to make this experience worthwhile. Mind that you don't ruin it for them ------or for you.

Hartle turns to leave,

HARTLE
I'll talk to you later, Jennifer.


65. MOVE TO XCU OF JENNIFER'S EYES

66. CUT TO FS OF MOM

It is the same shot as the earlier one where Mom showers the child with an armful of leaves.
67. CUT TO XCU OF JENNIFER'S EYES

68. CUT TO FS OF JENNIFER AND MOM

It is the same shot as before when Mom hugged Jennifer when she found Jennifer had received the study grant.

69. CUT TO CU OF JENNIFER

She is sitting at the piano, staring blankly after seeing these images in her mind. Then she speaks softly, slowly and to herself.

JENNIFER
Okay, I won't. I won't ruin it for any of you.

70. EXT. DISSOLVE TO LS OF MUSIC BUILDING. DAY.

Jennifer walks out with her jacket slung over her shoulder.

71. DISSOLVE TO MS OF JENNIFER

She is in the parking lot. She comes to her car, opens the door and throws her books in. She sighs and begins to put her head on the steering wheel in despair when she gets into the car, but then jerks it up in an effort to be strong.

JENNIFER
(trying to maintain control)
How on this green earth am I ever going to be able to live through this?

Shakes her head, sighs and puts the car in gear. She drives away.

72. DISSOLVE TO FS OF JENNIFER

She is getting out of the car. She straightens up and upon seeing her mother playing tag with the children, she smiles, although somewhat reluctantly. She is so intent upon watching her mother, she doesn't notice the child that
runs up to her. He tags her a bit roughly and she drops her books. She looks at the child somewhat surprised.

CHILD
(loudly)
You're it!

Suddenly a wide smile crosses Jennifer's face, and she runs after the child.

73. DISSOLVE TO LS OF WHOLE GROUP-JENNIFER, CHILDREN, MOM

Jennifer is pursuing her mother. There is lots of laughter. Mom runs around a tree, but Jennifer is right behind her. Then Mom runs through the pile of leaves and among the children, but Jennifer is still right behind her. At last Jennifer tags her. By now everyone is laughing very hard.

74. DISSOLVE TO MEDIUM TWO SHOT OF JENNIFER AND MOM

They are laughing and holding each other by the elbows.

JENNIFER
 stil laughing)
You're it, Mom.

MOM
(still laughing, but there is a serious note in her voice)
And you're laughing, Jennifer.

75. CUT TO CU OF JENNIFER

She looks at her mother as if to say, "I am, aren't I?"
They hug.

76. INT. DISSOLVE TO MS OF JENNIFER. DAY.

She is in her bedroom, doing the final packing. She closes her suitcase, snaps it and sets it on the floor among several others. The room looks more bare than earlier. Nothing is on the wall, and the shelves and dresser hold fewer articles. Jennifer walks over to the window.
77. CUT TO FS OF DOOR

Mom walks in. She is dressed neatly, and is ready to see Jennifer off. She smiles cheerfully.

MOM
About ready to head out, Jen?

78. CUT TO MS OF JENNIFER

She turns from the window and walks toward her mother and the doorway.

JENNIFER
(quietly)
Yeah Mom, but in a minute, okay? I just want to take a short walk before I leave.

Mom nods in understanding as Jennifer walks past her and out the door.

79. EXT.---DISSOLVE TO FS OF JENNIFER--DAY.

She is walking along the river bank. Her hands are in her pockets and she is kicking thoughtfully at sticks and stones that lay at her feet. A bird's chirping can be heard clearly, and Jennifer is standing by a tall tree as she looks up to see a bird of the same species she saw earlier.

80. CUT TO CU OF BIRD

81. DISSOLVE TO MS OF JENNIFER

JENNIFER
(to herself)
Are you saying goodbye, little fella? Is it that easy for you?

She smiles sadly.
JENNIFER
(to the bird)
Well, goodbye to you too, little birdie.
You won't see me anymore because ........
(pauses)

The sound of Mom's voice is soft, as if echoing

MOM'S VOICE
Life goes on whether you go with it or not.
(pauses)
Learn to go on, Jennifer.

JENNIFER
Because it's time to go on.

Jennifer turns and starts to walk up incline toward her house.

82. DISSOLVE TO CU OF HANKERCHIEF

It is the same one that Jennifer lost earlier. It is still entwined in the fallen branch, but still trying to move with the current. However, it finally breaks from the branch and begins to move downstream with the current.

83. FADE TO BLACK