



BLIND SUNDAY



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by Arthur Barron

► All the kids are at the pool. Jeff sees an attractive girl, but he is shy. She breaks the ice. They talk and smile. Then, suddenly, he realizes she is blind. What is it like to be blind, and just how should you treat a blind person? Jeff and the girl come up with an experiment that will help him find out.

CHARACTERS

Eileen, a teenager

Jeff, a teenager

Mrs. Hays, a woman who works
with blind people

Dad, Jeff's father

Marge, a friend of Eileen

Eric, a friend of Marge

Waiter

Lifeguard

Cabdriver

Man

Ticket taker

Scene 1

Early June, late afternoon, at a public swimming pool. Eileen is swimming. Mrs. Hays is sitting at the side of the pool. Jeff tests the diving board, then executes a rather good jackknife. In a moment, he emerges from underwater.

Eileen: Hey, neat dive!

Jeff: Thanks.

Eileen: What do you call that?

Jeff: Jackknife.

Eileen: Oh—right. Can you do a half gainer?

Jeff: No. That's outta my class.

(There is a pause as Eileen waits for more conversation, but Jeff is shy. He nods at Eileen, swims over to the side of the pool, and gets out. As he dries himself, Eileen swims over to him and speaks from the edge of the pool.



Eileen: I'm Eileen.

Jeff: Uh, I'm Jeff.

(Eileen feels in front of her, then pushes herself out of the pool. She smiles. Jeff returns the smile but is confused and doesn't know what to say.)

Eileen: Where do you go to school?

Jeff: Western.

Eileen: I go to Eastern.

(At this moment, Mrs. Hays appears.)

Mrs. Hays: Lee, hi! How's the water today?

Eileen: Great. Warmer than yesterday. Mrs. Hays, this is Jeff. He goes to Western. Jeff, this is Mrs. Hays. She's the librarian at Eastern—and my friend.

Jeff: Hi.

Mrs. Hays: Hello, Jeff. *(pause)* Well, this water looks terrific. I'm going to get some exercise. Nice to meet you, Jeff.

(Jeff nods.)

Eileen: Lee's my nickname. *(Jeff does not know what to say.)* Hey, you're the strong silent type. huh?

Jeff

Eile

Jeff

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Jeff: Yeah, I guess so. (*trying to think of anything to say*) Hey, you want some peanuts?

Eileen: Why not?

Jeff: I've got some in my jacket. (*He stands, goes for the bag of peanuts and returns, setting the bag in front of Eileen.*) Help yourself.

Eileen: Thanks. (*She doesn't know where the bag is, of course, and has to feel for it. Jeff notices, watching intently. He is perplexed and shocked. Finally, he pushes the bag under her hand. She takes a handful.*) Unsalted, huh? (*Jeff can't speak.*) What's the matter? (*Jeff can't find the right words.*) So didn't you ever eat peanuts with a blind girl before? (*Jeff stares, his lips trying to say something.*) Hey, are you okay?

Jeff: Uh—yeah.

Eileen: Relax, will you?

Jeff: Sure.

Eileen: You're funny.

Jeff: I am?

Eileen: (*laughing*) You should see yourself.

Jeff: (*smiling finally*) Yeah, I guess so.

Eileen: Well now that you're okay again, hold the peanuts for me. I feel a half gainer coming on.

(She walks to the diving board, climbs the ladder, walks to the edge of the board. Jeff stares at her. The lifeguard watches. Mrs. Hays, just out of the water, watches with a smile.)

Mrs. Hays: Okay, Lee, it's all clear.

(Eileen gets set, takes a breath, executes a nice half gainer, and breaks from under the water with a smile.)

Eileen: Like it?

Jeff: That was fantastic!

Scene 2

Breakfast. Jeff is eating as his father enters.

Dad: Hi, Jeff.

Jeff: (*without enthusiasm*) Hiya, Dad.

Dad: How are you doing?

Jeff: Okay.

Dad: (*pouring himself a glass of orange juice*) You don't look any too terrific.

Jeff: I've been thinking. You know—wondering. How do you talk to somebody?

Dad: What?

Jeff: I mean, how do you make conversation? You know, when you just want to be friendly?

Dad: Oh—you mean like small talk?

Jeff: Yeah, that's it.

Dad: Maybe you try too hard.

Jeff: Yeah, I get tongue-tied. Nothing comes out.

Dad: I suppose you know that everything you say doesn't have to be earthshaking or super-ha-ha funny. Just relax. Be yourself.

Jeff: You know this school dance that's coming up, after the game?

Dad: Yes?

Jeff: I'd kinda like to go. You know—but if I did, what would I talk about?

Dad: Anything.

Jeff: Did you ever know a blind person?

Dad: (*pause*) I see you do.

Jeff: Yeah.

Dad: And this blind person's a girl?

Jeff: Yeah.

Dad: And you don't know how to talk to her?

Jeff: No.

Dad: But you kind of like her?

Jeff: (*pause*) Yeah. Guess so.

Scene 3

It is the end of the school day. Students are mixing outside school on the street. Eileen, using her cane, enters with Marge. Eric joins them.

Marge: Hi, Eric.

Eric: Hi, Marge. Hi, Lee.

Eileen: Hi.

(They stroll along the sidewalk.)

1 FOR YOURSELF

Eric: So how'd the French test go?

Marge: Awful!

Eric: Yeah?

Marge: If I made a D, I'm lucky.

Eric: Man, and your French is better than my English.

(They reach a corner. Marge and Eileen start to turn left, but Eric taps Marge on the shoulder and silently indicates she should stop.)

Eric: I got a history final tomorrow.

(While talking, he points to another boy and girl standing a few feet away to the right. In pantomime he indicates that Marge should leave Eileen and join him and the other couple. Marge shakes her head no, indicating she can't leave Eileen.)

Marge: Oh, well. I guess you'll have to hit the books tonight.

Eric: *(insisting she come, in pantomime)* Yeah, and there's this great movie on TV, too.

Marge: *(beginning to weaken)* Well, uh—well, I guess you'll have to miss it.

Eric: Yeah. *(He smiles as Marge shakes her head "yes.")* Yeah, it's too bad. *(He winks at Marge.)* Well, see you.

Marge: Okay, see you.

(Marge turns to Eileen, who has been listening to this encounter and sensing what's going on. Eric walks away and joins the other couple to wait for Marge to join them. Marge and Eileen walk a few steps along the sidewalk.)

Marge: Oh, gee—

Eileen: What's the matter?

Marge: I gotta go back, Lee. I forgot something.

Eileen: Okay. I'll wait here.

Marge: No! No—uh—I'll be awhile. I gotta find something.

Eileen: Hey, listen, Marge. If you want to go off with Eric, it's okay with me. Really.

• encounter (en KOUN tur) a meeting

Marge: *(feeling guilty)* What?

Eileen: I mean, don't you think I heard all that "signing"* going on? He did everything but send smoke signals.

Marge: What do you mean, Lee?

Eileen: I mean it's perfectly okay if you want to be alone. I know three's a crowd—only don't be hypocrites.

Marge: *(feeling bad)* Oh, gee, Lee. I—

Eileen: Hey, go on, willya. I'll get home all right. *(smiling)* I could do it in the dark.

Marge: *(turning to look at Eric, who waves impatiently)* Lee, I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything.

Eileen: Sure, I know. Look, I'll see you tomorrow. *(touching Marge's arm)* Have fun. Okay?

(Marge walks off and joins the other couple. Eileen stands alone for a moment. Her face shows how she feels, but not for long.)

Across the street, Jeff appears. He has been hurrying. He stops, looks, and notices Eileen. Eileen prepares to cross the street, sweeping her cane in front of her. Jeff quickly crosses the street and joins her.)

Jeff: Uh—hi.

Eileen: Hi.

Jeff: Remember me?

Eileen: I think so. Say some more.

Jeff: Gee—uh—what should I say? Uh—the light changed. Can I help you cross?

Eileen: *(nicely)* No, thanks. I can manage.

(She crosses with Jeff following along. She comes to the opposite curb.)

Jeff: You're at the curb.

Eileen: Now I know who you are. You're Fido, the guide dog.

Jeff: *(hurt)* Oh.

Eileen: I'm sorry. You see, I like to manage myself. You're the guy I met at the pool, right?

Jeff: Yeah.

*Signing is the hand language of deaf people.



Eileen: You go to Western.

Jeff: Right.

Eileen: What are you doing over here?

Jeff: I had an errand do to.

Eileen: Well—it was nice seeing you.

(She starts to walk on. He pauses, then catches up with her.)

Jeff: My errand's done. I'm going this way. Maybe I can join you.

Eileen: Sure—it seems you already have.

Jeff: *(trying to relax)* I'm kinda hungry. Do you want a hamburger or something?

Eileen: *(pleased)* Why not? May I take your arm?

(Dissolve to: A restaurant. Jeff and Eileen enter. Among the kids crowding the place are Marge and Eric. Marge notices Eileen and looks uncomfortable as Eileen walks by. Jeff and Eileen sit in a booth, Eileen feeling her way in.)*

Jeff: *(making conversation)* Well, here we are.

Eileen: Yeah.

Jeff: Nice place.

Eileen: Uh-huh.

(Another silence is relieved by the waiter, who approaches, puts down glasses of water in front of them, and notices Eileen is blind.)

Waiter: *(to Jeff)* What'll you have?

Jeff: Uh, a burger—and a shake and—uh—fries.

Waiter: What's she gonna have?

Eileen: *(angry)* She will have a cheeseburger, a vanilla shake, and french fries.

(Waiter shrugs, gives Jeff a look, and leaves.)

Eileen: That makes me mad.

Jeff: I noticed.

*"Dissolve to" is a term used in television productions. It means that the original picture on the screen fades away to be slowly replaced by the new picture.



Eileen: Blind people aren't supposed to know what they want.
(pause) Sometimes people ask me the dumbest things.

Jeff: Like what?

Eileen: Like—how do you find your mouth with your fork? A lady asked me that once. Or—do you sleep with your eyes open or closed? That's another.

Jeff: Dumb is hardly the word for it. *(He is still uncomfortable.)* You know—

Eileen: In case you're wondering—I can't remember ever being able to see.

(The waiter returns and puts their order on the table.)

Jeff: Thanks. *(He watches as Eileen carefully arranges her dishes.)*
Can I help?

Eileen: No, thanks. I can manage.

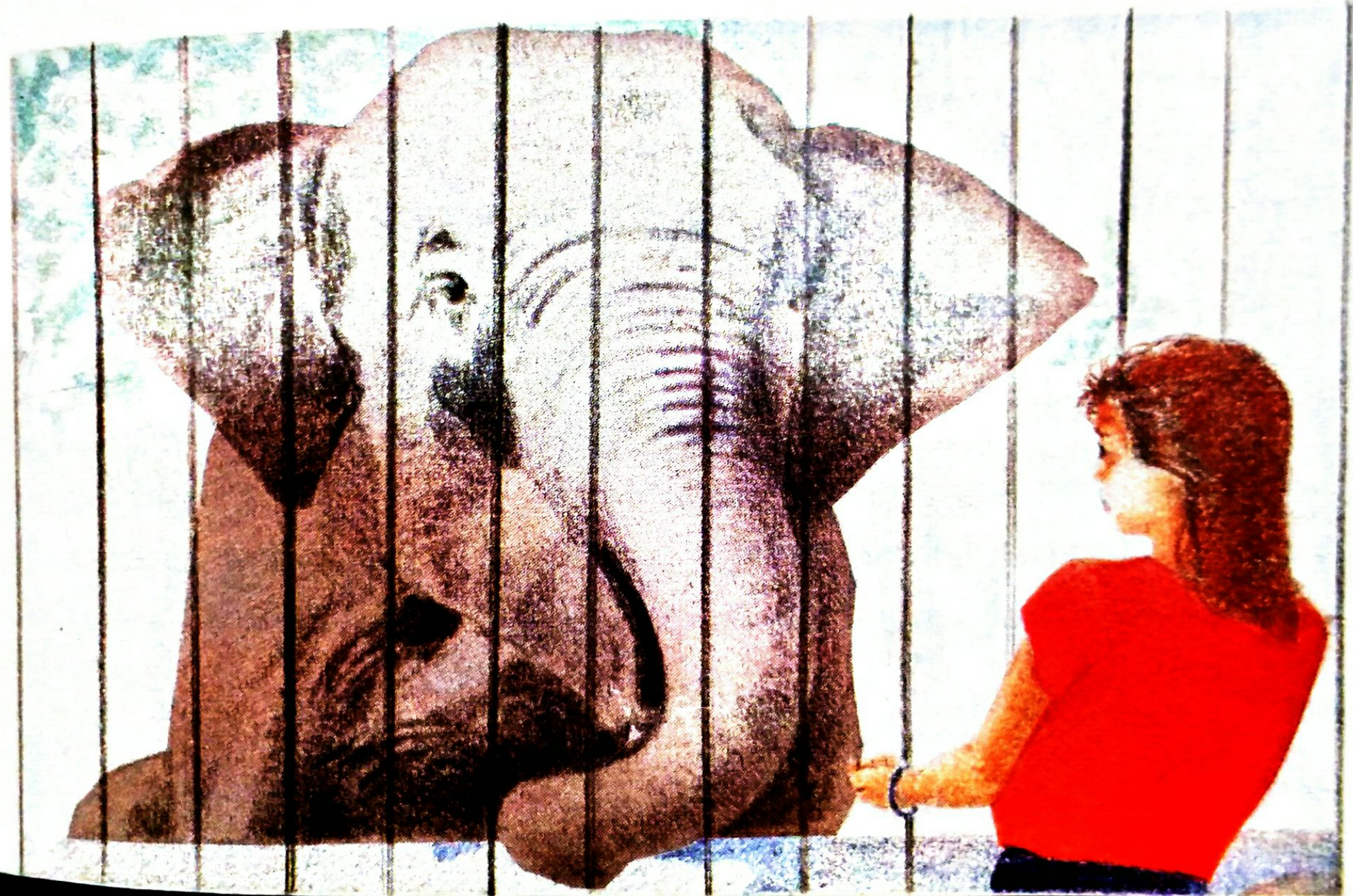
Jeff: Sorry.

Eileen: You don't have to be sorry. Look, I just want to be treated like everybody else. You see that girl over there? The one with the long hair?

Jeff: Uh-huh.

Eileen: Well, that's my girlfriend Marge. Now would you ask her if she wanted help with her food?

Jeff: No. Hey, how'd you know she was there?



Eileen: I heard her when we passed by. Now here's how I manage my food. My plate's a clock.

Jeff: A clock.

Eileen: Uh-huh. And my cheeseburger's here at twelve o'clock. My french fries are at seven. And my pickles are at eleven. *(Pauses while Jeff studies.)* Now where's my shake?

Jeff: *(twisting his head around to see from her point of view)* Three o'clock.

Eileen: Thanks. *(She picks up the shake and pretends to pour it on her french fries.)* That's the way blind people eat french fries, right? *(Jeff laughs, then looks at her with appreciation and pleasure.)*

Scene 4

Jeff and Eileen are walking to Eileen's house.

Eileen: What color are your eyes?

Jeff: Blue.

Eileen: Color's the hardest thing.

Jeff: What do you mean?

Eileen: I mean the hardest thing to visualize. What's blue, for example?

Jeff: The sky—

Eileen: No. I mean, what is blue? I know what *things* are blue. But what does blue look like? *(Jeff doesn't answer.)* Stumped, huh?

Jeff: Guess so.

Eileen: Color's the thing I miss most—I guess.

(Dissolve to: Another street scene as they approach Eileen's house.)

Jeff: I don't know. I like working with my hands. An engineer maybe. What about you?

Eileen: A lawyer. Or maybe a model—the kind that just stands around looking glamorous, and they take pictures of you and you make hundreds of thousands. Hey, this is where I live. Want to come in?

Jeff: Uh, no thanks. I better get home.

Eileen: Okay. I had fun.

Jeff: Me too. Well—so long.

Eileen: Bye.

Jeff: Do you want to go to the park tomorrow?

Eileen: Oh, sure! Why not? That would be fun.

Jeff: Great! See you tomorrow.

Scene 5

The park. Jeff and Eileen walk past someone sitting on a bench listening to a portable radio.

Eileen: Do you like to dance?

Jeff: Well, I'm not very good at it.

Eileen: I love it. I love music. All kinds.

Jeff: Yeah?

(Dissolve to: The zoo. They are standing in front of a lion cage. The lion provides them with a roar.)

Eileen: Hey, there's a lion.

Jeff: It sure is.

Eileen: When I hear that, I expect a movie to start.

(They laugh. They wander past other cages. Jeff is holding a bag of peanuts. Eileen helps herself from time to time.)

(Dissolve to: Another zoo scene. Some people are feeding an elephant, whose trunk reaches through the bars. Eileen feeds the elephant some peanuts.)

Eileen: That's a vacuum cleaner, right?

Jeff: *(laughs)* Yeah—with big ears.



(They wander on, passing an area with gorillas.)

Jeff: Gee, they look sad.

Eileen: Who?

Jeff: Oh, I'm sorry!

Eileen: Don't be. Who looks sad?

Jeff: The gorillas. I hate seeing them penned up. Come on, let's go.

Scene 6

Another day, another park. Jeff and Eileen are riding a two-seater bicycle. Jeff is sitting in front and steering. They come down a hill, picking up speed. Jeff begins to brake.

Eileen: Don't brake! Come on, faster!

Jeff: Okay.

Eileen: Wow! I love it! Love it! Love it!

(Her hair is blowing. Her head is back as she enjoys the sensation of speed. Suddenly Jeff has to swerve to avoid hitting someone.)

Jeff: Oh, no! *(He slows, braking hard.)*

Eileen: What's wrong?

Jeff: I'm stopping.

Eileen: How come?

(Jeff gets off the seat, standing astride the bar.)

Eileen: Why'd you stop? That was some fantastic ride!

Jeff: It was dangerous.

Eileen: You were worried about me. Look, I told you, just treat me like everybody else. Can't you understand?

Jeff: Now wait a minute. I was worried about myself. *(After pause, he chuckles.)* And you, too.

Eileen: Chicken!

Jeff: I'm not kidding, Eileen. I just—

Eileen: Hey, call me Lee.

• **astride** (uh STRYD) with one leg on each side

Jeff: Okay, Lee. But you're changing the subject.

Eileen: Yeah, that's because nicknames are more interesting. What's yours?

Jeff: I don't have one.

Eileen: Well then I'll just have to think one up. *(pause)* So how about "chicken"?

(They laugh and ride off.)

Scene 7

Jeff's house, in the driveway. His father is washing the car as Jeff enters.

Jeff: *(cheerful)* Hi, Dad.

Dad: What's happening?

Jeff: Not much.

Dad: Hey, grab a rag, will you?

Jeff: Okay. *(He starts to work.)* You know that dance I was telling you about the other day?

Dad: Dance? Oh, yeah.

Jeff: *(Pause)* Well, it's a pretty important one. It's a dance sponsored by Western and Eastern. I've been thinking about taking somebody.

Dad: That nice girl you've been seeing?

Jeff: But I feel funny about it. I mean, everyone would be staring at us. They'd think I was desperate for a date or something.

Dad: You like being with her, don't you? You must have fun together. *(pause while they continue working)* And—uh—is she pretty?

Jeff: Yeah.

Dad: *(long pause)* Well, I guess you don't think too highly of yourself. Is that it?

Jeff: *(surprised)* What do you mean?

Dad: It seems to me you care more about what other people think than what you think.

Jeff: Oh, I don't know about that.

Dad: Well, let's face it. If you worry too much about what other people think, it means you lack self-confidence.

Jeff: *(starts working hard)* I'll have to think about that.

Scene 8

The school library. Mrs. Hays and Eileen are working quietly. After a moment, Eileen speaks.

Eileen: You know what I'd want more than anything if I could see just one thing?

Mrs. Hays: What?

Eileen: My face.

Mrs. Hays: You have a very nice face.

Eileen: I don't think so.

Mrs. Hays: Why not?

Eileen: I don't have dates. I mean, I have friends and all. People like me. But boys don't ask me out.

Mrs. Hays: What about Jeff?

Eileen: We have fun together. *(pause)* But I think he's more like a friend.

Mrs. Hays: Maybe it will develop into something else.

Eileen: But suppose I am ugly?

Mrs. Hays: But you're not. You're very attractive. What is all this, anyway? You know it's the person inside you that counts.

Eileen: I guess so.

Scene 9

The swimming pool. It is crowded. Eileen sits with Marge and Eric. Mrs. Hays is in the background, talking to a friend. The lifeguard is standing and yelling at some kids in the water to stop horsing around. Eric jumps in the water and yells to Marge.

Eric: Hey, Marge, hurry up.

Marge: Okay.

Eileen: *(to Marge)* You know that guy I've been seeing?

Marge: Jeff?

Eileen: Yeah. I was thinking of inviting him—to the dance. I mean—

Marge: That'd be neat, Lee.

Eileen: But you know—it was just a thought.

Marge: It sounds like a good idea to me.

Eric: *(from the water)* Hey, you guys, you coming in?

Eileen: Yeah, in a second.

(Marge jumps into the pool. Jeff walks over to Eileen.)

Jeff: Hi, Lee.

Eileen: Hi. Crowded today, huh?

Jeff: Yeah.

(There is a lot of activity, a lot of horseplay. A couple of boys are trying to throw girls into the pool. The girls are shrieking with mock fright, but really enjoying themselves. Soon Eric and Marge are out of the pool and joining the horseplay. Jeff watches as Eric throws Marge in. Marge shrieks with delight and swims away.)

Jeff: There goes Marge. She just got thrown in.

Eileen: Yeah. *(She sounds as if she is missing out on the fun. Jeff notices her tone of voice. He stares at her, looks at all the kids having a good time and makes up his mind.)*

Jeff: *(grabbing Eileen)* You're next. *(And he pushes her in.)*

(Eileen screams, and she isn't kidding. She's startled and frightened. She hits the water and goes under. After a moment, she comes to the top, but seems confused. She opens her mouth to yell, swallows a mouthful of water. She coughs, chokes, and becomes even more alarmed. The lifeguard dives into the pool. He tries to help Eileen, but this only infuriates her and she tries to push him away. Jeff has seen all this with horror. Kids rush to the side of the pool. Marge and Mrs. Hays join Jeff there.)

Jeff: Here, take my hand, Lee.

Eileen: I'm okay.

(Eileen climbs out herself. She slips on a wet tile, losing her balance, but she does not fall. She feels that all eyes are on her, and she is humiliated. Mrs. Hays offers her a towel, but Lee doesn't take it. She wants to be left alone.)

Jeff: Lee, I'm sorry. I'm awfully sorry.

Eileen: *(trying to hide her embarrassment)* It's okay. I'm fine.

• infuriate (in FYOOR ee ayt) make angry



Q FOR YOURSELF

Jeff: You said it seemed like fun. You know, I thought you wanted to be treated like everybody else. I didn't mean it like this.

Eileen: *(softly, pleadingly)* Please, I just want to get out of here. I've got to get out of here.

(She walks away quickly but with dignity. Jeff looks confused. Mrs. Hays walks over to him and puts her hand on his arm.)

Mrs. Hays: Jeff, let's have a talk, okay?

(Dissolve to: Jeff and Mrs. Hays off to one side, the pool and the noises in the background.)

Jeff: I feel terrible.

Mrs. Hays: I know you must feel bad about it.

Jeff: I mean, she's angry with me.

Mrs. Hays: I don't know about angry. She's embarrassed. She doesn't want her embarrassment to be the center of attention.

Jeff: I tried to understand what it means to be blind. I mean, *really* understand. It's like being in a different world—I mean, I can't imagine what it would be like.

Mrs. Hays: Shut your eyes, Jeff.

Jeff: Huh?

Mrs. Hays: Shut them. Keep them shut.

Scene 10

Sunday noon. Jeff is sitting in the back of a taxi. He is wearing dark patches over his eyes and dark sunglasses. The cab pulls up to Eileen's house. Jeff gets out, and walks to the front of the cab, feeling his way with a cane and his hands.

Jeff: How much?

Driver: Three-fifty.

Jeff: Thanks. Keep the change. *(gives the driver four bills)*

Driver: Thank you. Can I give you a hand, buddy?

Jeff: No, but you can put me in the direction of the front door.

Driver: Straight ahead up the driveway. Then up the steps to the right. Okay?

Jeff: Thanks.



(The cab pulls away. Jeff turns in the direction of the house. He taps carefully with his cane, making agonizing progress. He comes to the steps, feels with his cane, and gently kicks the bottom step with his toe. It seems like Mt. Everest to him.)

He takes the steps one at a time, planting both feet solidly on the first, before going on to the second. He continues slowly. A truck passes on the street, grinding gears. Jeff tenses, freezing until it passes.

There is a slight concrete rise, not high enough to be called a step but high enough to create a raised level in front of the door. Jeff's cane passes over it without his noticing. He stumbles as his right foot hits it. He falls awkwardly, banging against the door. He fumbles for his cane, gets up, and searches for the bell. He feels everywhere but can't find it. He gives up and knocks on the door. No one comes. He knocks harder and harder until he is pounding.)

Jeff: It's me! Hello!

(Someone comes to the door. Jeff hears the knob turning and steps back a bit as the door opens. It's Eileen.)

Eileen: Jeff!

Jeff: It's me—Jeff.

Eileen: Why didn't you ring the doorbell?

Jeff: I couldn't find it.

Eileen: Why not?

Jeff: I'm blind.

(Dissolve to: Total blackness.)

Scene 11

(A park where Jeff and Eileen are walking. He is holding onto her elbow. She is guiding him.)

Jeff: So I decided I wanted to know how it felt to be blind. I mean, I've done so many dumb things.

Eileen: That's great.

Jeff: I mean, I felt real bad about making mistakes all the time.
(Eileen giggles.) What are you laughing about?

Eileen: You're shouting.

Jeff: *(loudly)* I am? *(much quieter)* I am?

Eileen: That's one of the tricky things about being blind—learning just how loud to talk.

Jeff: I didn't know that.

Eileen: It's true.

(Dissolves to: Another area of the park. A hot dog stand is in the background. Eileen and Jeff are each eating a hot dog and holding a soda. Eileen eats with practiced ease. Jeff is having difficulty.)

Jeff: Do people cheat you with change and stuff?

Eileen: No. See, I always fold my bills differently so I know how much I'm giving. Like I fold fives in half and tens lengthwise and ones I don't fold at all. And of course I can feel change. Anyway, I think most people are pretty honest, don't you?

Jeff: Sure.

Eileen: I guess I'm a pretty positive person. I think life is great.
(Pause. Then she begins to giggle.)

Jeff: What's so funny now?

Eileen: At this place for the blind where I trained they also train sighted people, like Mrs. Hays. And those people have to go

around for a time like you—with goggles and stuff on. And once I went out with this man and we had lunch, right? And he asked me to order for both of us. So I ordered spaghetti for him. *(She laughs.)* What a time he had with that stuff. It was sliding all over the place.

Jeff: You're mean, you know that?

Eileen: *(laughing)* I know.

Jeff: *(smiling)* Like I probably have mustard all over me. *(He feels around on his shirt and touches something sloppy.)* Oh! oh! I feel something. *(They both laugh.)*

(Dissolve to: One of the tunnels in the park. It leads to the zoo. As they walk through the tunnel the camera and sound effects create the experience as Jeff undergoes it. The screen grows black. Sounds are loud, echoing. There are strange noises. The black screen wavers.)

Dissolve to: A bear cage. Eileen and Jeff pass by.)

Jeff: What's that?

Eileen: A bear.

Jeff: How can you tell?

Eileen: He smells like a bear.

Jeff: What does a bear smell like?

Eileen: Like a bear.

Jeff: Do I have a smell?

Eileen: Sure!

Jeff: *(nervous)* What do I smell like?

Eileen: *(smiling)* Like a Jeff.

(Dissolve to: The bird house. Jeff and Eileen appear. Then we slowly move to Jeff's point of view—the screen goes black. We hear the weird, strange, frightening screams of birds—trills, caws, yelps, whistles, etc. Slowly, then, the screen grows light and we see Jeff and Eileen walking through the bird house. Jeff is growing nervous.)

Eileen: It's all right.

Jeff: Let's get out of here.

Eileen: Okay.

(They exit. Outside Jeff stops and Eileen turns to him.)