

Swing For The Fences

Original Screenplay by Mary M. Dalton

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FADE UP:

INT. SHELLEY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

A woman in her mid 30s, SHELLEY DAVIS, sleeps alone in an antique sleigh bed. A DIGITAL ALARM CLOCK on a bedside table turns to 5:30 and begins to BLARE. Shelley starts a little then turns OFF the clock.

CREDITS RUN throughout this sequence.

INT. SHELLEY'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Shelley washes her face and brushes her teeth. She is trying to wake up.

CREDITS RUN.

INT. DAVIS' ROOM -- NIGHT

Shelley walks into a kid's room illuminated by a nightlight. The room is brightly painted with murals of the sky and lined by bookcases filled with BOOKS and TOYS, lots of primary colors. She adjusts the covers around an adorable five-year-old boy, her son DAVIS FLETCHER, and kisses him first on the forehead then on the cheek. The kid looks a lot like Shelley.

CREDITS RUN.

INT. SHELLEY'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Shelley walks through a large living room where a man, CHRIS FLETCHER, sleeps in a sweatsuit on the sofa. The room is dim, but there's an eclectic mix of ANTIQUES, sophisticated ELECTRONICS, and PRIMITIVE FOLK ART pieces. She glances at the man then TURNS ON the television to a local morning news program before walking out of the room.

CREDITS RUN.

INT. SHELLEY'S HOME OFFICE -- DAWN

Seated behind her COMPUTER in her slightly messy home office, we see Shelley more clearly. She's awake now, working on a syllabus for an "Introduction to Film Studies" class. Pretty in an understated, wholesome way, she wears a long, white cotton nightgown. Her office is filled with various BOOKS, framed DIPLOMAS, a framed PHOTO of her and

Davis. PAPERS, FILE FOLDERS, JOURNALS, and other evidence of her work sit on various surfaces in the room. After a few more keystrokes, she begins to PRINT the syllabus.

CREDITS RUN.

INT. KITCHEN -- MORNING

Shelley works around the kitchen straightening up a few things and making Davis' lunch. She wears a black skirt and white blouse, colors she prefers with bright accents and slightly flamboyant antique or "art" jewelry. She often wears these basic black and white pieces with sweaters and shawls that she has knit for herself in bold colors. With a shower and fresh make-up she looks "put together" but not overly done. Davis sits at the table eating CEREAL and drinking JUICE.

CREDITS RUN.

Shelley's husband Chris breezes into the kitchen wearing a conservative business suit. Chris, mid 30s, is a slim man with light-colored hair and fair skin. He doesn't look at Shelley, just grabs a CAN OF COKE from the refrigerator and presumes her unspoken question.

CHRIS

I'll get something later.

Chris walks over to the table. He ruffles Davis' hair then kisses him on the cheek.

CHRIS

Hey, big guy. I'll try to get home before bedtime tonight.

Shelley stops her work a moment and looks at the two from across the room.

SHELLEY

Will you make it home for dinner?

Chris looks at her briefly.

CHRIS

Don't know yet. I'll give you a call.

Chris turns to walk away.

DAVIS

Bye, Daddy.

Chris turns back and kisses the boy once again on the top of his head.

CHRIS

Bye, buddy.

Shelley goes back to her work as the door SLAMS offscreen.

CREDITS END.

INT. DEPARTMENTAL OFFICE -- DAY

Shelley stands at the copier making copies of the syllabus. A SECRETARY and an ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, women in their 30s and 40s, confer at a desk nearby. Shelley's student assistant, an "alternative looking" guy named BRENDEN, walks up. He puts down a leather BOOKBAG.

BRENDEN

Hey, you want me to finish that?

SHELLEY

Yeah, Brenden, that would be great.
I'm running behind.

BRENDEN

(grinning)
No kidding? That's unusual...

Shelley gives him a little smirk then walks over to her office mailbox where she pulls out a CLASS ROSTER and assorted pieces of MAIL.

SHELLEY

Hummm...ten on the wait list.

BRENDEN

You're too nice. Don't let 'em in.

SHELLEY

We'll see.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

STUDENTS walk by on their way to class. An older student leans uncomfortably against the wall. JOE MARTIN is dark-haired, tanned and very athletic-looking. There is a real presence about him, something undefinable. Joe listens to a pretty SORORITY GIRL.

SORORITY GIRL
Did you get my message?

JOE
Yeah.

SORORITY GIRL
I thought you'd call me.

Joe fidgets a little, lowering his BOOKBAG. Shelley and Brenden walk by, and a couple of STUDENTS GREET HER enthusiastically. Joe sees his opening.

JOE
Gotta go.

SORORITY GIRL
I'll see you around...

JOE
(not meaning it)
Yeah.

Joe walks away as the girl looks after him, hurt.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Shelley sits on a STOOL behind a wooden PODIUM.

SHELLEY
Don't forget...your name, local phone number, e-mail address, hometown, class, and major. Then, the most important part...tell me something interesting about yourself...fun facts. I need to know something about you to be able to remember you.

MIKE, a baseball player sitting next to Joe raises his hand.

SHELLEY
Mike?

MIKE
What if you've had us in class before? Do we still have to write about ourselves?

SHELLEY

Yes.

MIKE

What if I write about Martin? He's full of fun facts.

A couple of FEMALE STUDENTS share a glance; they'd like to get ahold of those facts.

SHELLEY

Write, Mike, write. About yourself.

MIKE

But, he was a baseball star here who played pro ball for eight years. Didn't you ever hear about him?

SHELLEY

I don't follow baseball.

Shelley walks over to the board and writes "Introduction to Film Studies" followed by "Dr. Shelley Davis."

She turns to the class.

SHELLEY

While you complete your information forms, I'll introduce myself...let's see, I love movies and see everything, all genres. I like to knit and garden, and I'm a great cook.

KATHY, a pretty woman sitting in the front of the class, sees an opening.

KATHY

Are you going to have us over to your house for dinner and let us play with Davis?

SHELLEY

Maybe. It depends on how good your midterms are.

An UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT speaks from the back of the room.

UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT

Who's Davis?

SHELLEY

My son.

UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT

Davis Davis?

Joe notices that Shelley doesn't wear a wedding ring.

SHELLEY

(laughing)

No. Davis Fletcher. I didn't change my name. No doubt you'll hear about Davis once or twice this semester...

KATHY

Once or twice...

Shelley LAUGHS with a few of the students who've been in her class before.

MIKE

Dr. Davis, what are we supposed to call you? I hear people call you Dr. Davis and Professor Davis and just plain Shelley and Dr. Shelley and Ms. Davis. What's right?

SHELLEY

I'll answer to all of those...just don't call me Mrs. Davis because

SHELLEY

that's my mom's name. Hey, Mike, make yourself useful and hand out these copies of the syllabus. We have work to do.

UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT

Oh, it's the first day. Let us go.

SHELLEY

You're kidding. I had to pare down the syllabus as it is.

Mike begins handing out COPIES of the syllabus. Students RUSTLE PAPERS and FIDGET.

SHELLEY

My phone numbers are at the top of the page. It's okay to call me at

home, but don't call between six and eight p.m. My office hours are...

EXT. SHELLEY'S HOUSE -- DUSK

Shelley's house is an attractive, two-story woodframe house with a well-tended yard. It's an established, middle class neighborhood with mature trees. Shelley's VOLVO STATION WAGON is parked in the driveway.

INT. SHELLEY'S KITCHEN -- EVENING

Shelley is cooking dinner. Juggling several POTS on the stovetop, checking a DISH in the oven all while making a TOSSED SALAD, Shelley grabs a CORDLESS PHONE and DIALS the direct line to her husband's office.

SHELLEY

Hey. When're you gonna leave the office?

INT. CHRIS' OFFICE -- EVENING

Chris works in a standard "junior executive" type of office. There are few personal artifacts in evidence, but there is a framed PHOTOGRAPH of Davis on his desk.

CHRIS

In a half hour or so.

SHELLEY

You told Davis you'd try to be in before bedtime.

CHRIS

I did try.

SHELLEY

I've heard that one before.

CHRIS

Oh, cut it out, Shelley. I have to take enough shit around here everyday...

SHELLEY

Somebody's on the other line...

CHRIS

(slamming down a pen
in frustration)

And, I've heard that one before...is it Camille, or maybe Charlotte...oh, or is it one of your precious students?

SHELLEY

Chris...

CHRIS

Yeah, I know...I know...you gotta go...

He SLAMS down the phone.

INT. SHELLEY'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Shelley CLICKS the phone to take the other call. Her voice is less tense than when she was talking with Chris.

SHELLEY

Hello...

BRENDEN

Hi.

SHELLEY

Hey, Brenden.

She stirs something on the stove then moves effortlessly back to the tossed salad.

BRENDEN

I'm at the library. I was gonna pick up the laserdiscs for class tomorrow, and everything on the list is checked out...

SHELLEY

Oh, I got them this afternoon...

BRENDEN

Well, it's okay. I can get them from now on...

SHELLEY

That's great...oops! Somebody's on the other line...

BRENDEN

Bye...

SHELLEY

Bye..

Shelley CLICKS the phone to take the next call.

SHELLEY

Hello...

When she hears the woman's voice on the other line, Shelley smiles.

CAMILLE

Hey, girlfriend.

SHELLEY

Oh, I'm glad it's you, Camille...a friendly voice!

CAMILLE

I take it you've been talking with Mr. Wonderful...

Glancing quickly around the kitchen, she sees that everything is in order and takes a moment to sit at the kitchen table.

EXT. CAMILLE'S PORCH -- NIGHT

CAMILLE, a beautiful woman in her late 20s, lounges on her porch talking on her CORDLESS PHONE. She's overtly sexy, even when lounging around her house in casual clothes.

SHELLEY

Yeah...just more of the usual. Who knows when he'll make it home...no doubt some time before he makes partner...

CAMILLE

As long as that's all he's makin'.

SHELLEY

Sometimes I wish he were seeing someone else. It would give me the excuse I've been looking for.

CAMILLE

You already know how I feel about it.

INT. SHELLEY'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Still seated, Shelley leans her neck back and looks thoughtfully at the ceiling.

SHELLEY

I know.

INT. LIBRARY -- DAY

Shelley walks through the library carrying a STACK OF BOOKS. She sits down at a long table. She begins to thumb through the books making notes on a LEGAL PAD.

After a few moments, Joe walks through the library. When he notices Shelley working, he starts to speak to her but decides against it. A couple of women students look at Joe, waiting for him to notice them, but he is looking at Shelley instead.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

The class is dark as students watch the final moments of the Chaplin film "The Tramp." When the film ends, Brenden turns on the lights from the back of the room. As Shelley speaks, students alternately listen and take notes.

SHELLEY

Okay. I admit it. I'm in love with Charlie Chaplin. We've already talked about the politics of Chaplin's films, but we can't overlook the poetry. There is something about Chaplin...I guess I'm just an incurable romantic.
(pause)

Joe looks up from his notetaking. Shelley doesn't notice him or anyone else; she seems to be musing to herself out loud.

SHELLEY

We know from personal experience to expect sad endings, but we keep on hoping for a happy one...just like the Little Tramp. Pathos. Poignance. It's all so bittersweet.

INT. SHELLEY'S LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Shelley sits in "HER" CHAIR with her feet propped on a cushy OTTOMAN. She is reading a BOOK and occasionally glances up

to catch pieces of a NEWSMAGAZINE SHOW on TV. Chris walks into the room and paces back and forth, talking incessantly on the CORDLESS PHONE. Finally, he CLICKS off the phone and stands blocking the TV screen. Shelley looks up from her book.

CHRIS

I don't have a clean shirt in the closet. What am I supposed to do?

SHELLEY

Pick up your own dry cleaning...

CHRIS

Is your ass glued to that chair?

Shelley just looks at him. She's heard it all before and knows what's coming.

CHRIS

The only time I ever see you you're either sleeping or working on spreading out that fat ass while you read or knit. I just hate that fucking knitting...

SHELLEY

Are you finished?

CHRIS

What, you can't stand to hear the truth? Get out of that chair. Get some exercise. Clean the house. God knows you do precious little of that.

The emotional wall drops into place as Shelley shuts down assuming a nonthreatening monotone.

SHELLEY

You're standing in front of the screen.

CHRIS

You lazy goddamn fucking bitch!
You've got a problem.

When Chris has stalked out of the room beyond earshot, Shelley intones under her breath.

SHELLEY

Yeah, a big one...

She closes her book and looks dully at the TV.

EXT. CHARLOTTE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Charlotte's house is an imposing "modern" structure set on a richly wooded lot. Shelley's Volvo and Charlotte's sensible HONDA ACCORD are parked outside. A BLACK SEDAN CONVERTIBLE PULLS UP. Camille dashes out of the car and toward the house.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Shelley sits at a long dining table in Charlotte's homey kitchen. CHARLOTTE, a handsome woman in her mid-fifties with short, graying hair, wears khaki slacks and an oversized denim shirt. Charlotte is making three SANDWICHES and placing them on PLATES.

CHARLOTTE
Juice? Milk? Water?

SHELLEY
How about a glass of wine?

Someone is TAPPING on the door.

CHARLOTTE
(loudly)
Come in.

Charlotte pulls a BOTTLE OF WINE from the rack as Camille comes into the room.

CHARLOTTE
I know you prefer red, but...

SHELLEY
It doesn't matter.

Camille PLOPS her expensive PURSE on the table and sits across from Shelley.

CAMILLE
Wine at lunch...what's the occasion?
I mean, I do it, but Shelley...

CHARLOTTE
Wine at lunch is a good thing.
Young women are so cautious...

Camille gives Charlotte a look.

CHARLOTTE
I mean in general.

Camille CHUCKLES wickedly.

SHELLEY
I need to wind down.

Charlotte brings two filled WINEGLASSES to the table. They wait for Shelley to speak.

SHELLEY
I've come to a decision...
(deep breath)
I plan to tell Chris I want a divorce.

CAMILLE
Hot damn! It's about time.

SHELLEY
I kept telling myself that I knew it wasn't right for me, and Chris isn't happy either...but I just didn't know about Davis...

CHARLOTTE
And now?

SHELLEY
We can't tolerate one another. I don't want my son to grow up thinking that's the way it's supposed to be.
(pause)
And, if I stay in this marriage, I'm precluding the opportunity to be happy with anyone else. I'm just hardwired so I can't lie or cheat...

She looks at Camille.

SHELLEY
No offense.

CAMILLE
None taken. I do *not* view my situation through rose-colored

glasses. After all, I've made my bed...so to speak.

CHARLOTTE
(to Shelley)
How can we help you?

SHELLEY
I need a lawyer...a good lawyer...and that won't be easy.

CAMILLE
The sharks all swim together...

SHELLEY
...and they'll try to cut me to ribbons. This will make Chris furious, and he'll do whatever he can to punish me.

Charlotte walks over to drawer and pulls out some PAPER and a PEN. She gets out a PHONEBOOK.

CAMILLE
He'll cry and beg and promise to treat you better...

SHELLEY
No. That was last time. I think he'll just be really, really angry.

Charlotte puts a piece of PAPER down beside Shelley's glass. Shelley looks at it.

CHARLOTTE
She's a friend of mine and a very good attorney. She'll talk to you. She just loves to harpoon the sharks.

SHELLEY
Thanks, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE
You're stronger than you know.

SHELLEY
You think so?

CHARLOTTE
I know so.