

LOVE HONOR OBEY

SHORT FILM

Written by

Suzette Jewett

Adaptation based on the poem "Amanda Barker"  
In Edgar Lee Masters Spoon River Anthology

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Suzette.Jewett@outlook.com

\*FADE IN:

INT. BARKER'S WATERFRONT PROPERTY - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

AMANDA BARKER (19) white-blond hair, violet-blue eyes, and a wispy pale frame presses against the sofa's back pillow in a nightdress. Her knees push deep into the cushion.

Amanda's shaky callus fingertips push aside the drapes and peers through the picture window in the dimly lit room.

A pair of headlamps swerve up the driveway.

Amanda's breath HITCHES. She bounds off the sofa and lands on bare feet. She sprints down the long hallway, glances back, then crosses over the threshold and BACKHANDS the door shut as she passes by it.

INT. AMANDA AND HENRY BARKER'S MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Amanda runs in the room. On an abrupt halt, her thighs bump into her vanity. Her diabetic meter, test strips, lancets, and perfume bottles KNOCK together then tip over, TINKLING.

Out of breath, she DIALS the phone with pricked fingertips.

AMANDA

MARG pick up, pick up. Pick up  
the phone!

MARG NETTERS (20) Native American Indian, caramel skin, short, dark hair, and a raspy Southern accent.

AMANDA

He's home!

MARG (O.S.)

(sarcastic)

Well, hello to you too.

AMANDA

Marg--

MARG (O.S.)

So, what! It's his home too.  
Where'd you s'pect him to go?

Amanda stares at the door and clutches the phone to her ear with both hands. Her chest rises and falls with each breath.

AMANDA

I don't know. Someplace else.  
Anywhere but here!

Amanda paces in front of her vanity.

AMANDA

And he's drunk! We know what  
he want. You know what he'll...

MARG (O.S.)

(scolds)

He has rights too, you know! It's  
your job as his wife to have his  
kids and keep a happy home.

Amanda trembles.

AMANDA

I married him, after all. Didn't I?  
Isn't being his wife enough?

MARG (O.S.)

(authoritative)

You vowed to love, honor, and obey  
in sickness and in health till  
death do you part. Now, let the  
chips fall where they may.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Was I just told I was sold?

Amanda sits at her vanity, and stares at her reflection. A  
foggy graveyard appears in the mirror. She shakes her head.  
The image vanishes. Amanda lifts the receiver to her lips.

AMANDA

B-But this is my body. Where the  
chips fall will lead me to my  
grave. You know what the Doc said:  
"I'll never survive a pregnancy."  
Why can't he let it go and leave me  
alone?

MARG (O.S.)

(exhales a sigh)

What do you want from him?

AMANDA

(whispers)

I don't know, love m-me enough to--

MARG (O.S.)

Choose you over having his child.

Amanda stands up and looks down at her flat stomach.

AMANDA

(whispers)

Yes.

The barn door SCREECHES.

Amanda stares at her panic-stricken face in the mirror.

MARG

(clucks tongue)

It doesn't seem so...

AMANDA

I got lucky last month. I won't  
this time. I just know it.

The barn door SLAMS shut.

Amanda whips her head toward the bedroom door.

AMANDA

(panics)

He's coming! What do I do? Where do  
I go?

MARG (O.S.)

Stop! You'll be fine. Talk to him.  
He's a reasonable man.

AMANDA

No, he's not. He'll kill me!

MARG (O.S.)

Calm down. Imma stay on the phone  
with you till--

Amanda pulls the phone away and glares at it.

AMANDA

(yells)

Why can't you believe me?

INT. AMANDA AND HENRY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

HENRY BARKER (20) Southern accent, blond hair, green eyes,  
and lithe build in jeans and T-shirt, enters the house and  
SLAMS the kitchen's back door shut.

INT. AMANDA AND HENRY BARKER'S MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Amanda holds the phone to her chest. She stares at the closed door and breaths HARD.

HENRY (O.S.)

(mocks)

I'm home! Ready for me, darling?  
You've kept me waiting long enough.

Henry STOMPS up the stairs.

HENRY (O.S.)

It's time to earn your keep.

Amanda runs toward the closet, then trips on the rug in the center of the room. The phone CLATTERS on the floor. On hands and knees, she crawls and grabs the phone.

The door BANGS open against the wall.

Henry staggers in and saunters toward Amanda.

Amanda clutches the phone to her chest. On her knees, she waves a hand at Henry.

AMANDA

Henry, no. Please. No.

Henry crosses the floor and pulls Amanda up with an arm around her waist, then leans into her face.

Amanda arches back.

HENRY

(emphasizes)

I'm taking what's rightfully mine  
and you ain't got a say.

Amanda pushes off Henry's chest with a look of disgust. She GAGS from Henry's hot stale breath of Jim Beam and Skoal chaw smokeless tobacco.

Henry holds Amanda's face away as her body RETCHES.

HENRY

(spittle's)

Stay put!

Henry pulls Amanda upright.

AMANDA

Henry. No. Please stop.

Amanda struggles to push the phone upward.

Henry stifles Amanda's struggle with a chest-to-chest hug.

HENRY

(snide)

Where do you think you're going?

Amanda throws her head back and stares up at Henry.

AMANDA

(defiant)

Sleep it off and leave me alone.

HENRY

(stern)

Now, lookie here, Missy. You're my wife or did you forget? Cause I didn't. You remember what you said on our wedding day? Those promising words you said but can't remember as of today.

Henry grips Amanda's biceps and squeezes.

Amanda CRIES out, then goes limp in his arms.

Henry's conquering smile spreads across his face.

Amanda's head drops onto his shoulder with tears in her eyes.

Henry pulls her chin up.

AMANDA

(whispers)

Don't Henry. Just don't.

Henry peers down into Amanda's eyes.

HENRY

(smiles without mirth)

Your vows. Remember em', darling?

Henry inhales a long deep BREATH from Amanda's neck to her chest, then runs his tongue along her collarbone.

Amanda shakes with adrenaline. She bucks her hips.

Henry loosens his grip.

Amanda pushes her arm up in a forward motion, then swings the phone at Henry.

Henry grabs the phone and throws the phone onto the bed.

AMANDA

Henry, don't. I remember. I  
remember you promised--

Henry shakes Amanda.

Amanda's mouth snaps shut. She rears her head back and  
squints at Henry.

HENRY

You promised to love, honor and  
obey. Remember? Honor what I say  
and remember to obey.

Amanda HICCUP-SOBS.

AMANDA

You c-can't do this. You know this  
will k-kill me. You know it's true.  
P-Please let me go. P-please leave  
me alone.

HENRY

I'll make you pay for the lies you  
told and the love you gave away. I  
will uphold you to your vows, until  
your dying day?

AMANDA

(whispers)

I meant my vows, Henry. I never  
lied to you. I've given you all I  
have but it isn't enough for you. I  
cannot honor and obey your wishes  
without losing my life. Don't you  
love me enough Henry?

Amanda stares into Henry's eyes.

Henry gazes over her face and hair reverently. He shakes his  
head. Anger spreads across his face as it reddens.

HENRY

Yea, I do. Now, give me something  
that can love me back.

Henry turns her around and holds her back to his side as he  
UNZIPS his pants.

Amanda SLAPS and struggles to get free.

Henry puts his open hand flat on Amanda's back and forces her  
to bend her forward, then anchors her to him by the waist.

Amanda thrashes against him and SCREAMS.

Henry pulls up her nightdress from behind.

Amanda lunges forward and her nightdress drops down.

HENRY

(roars)

Stop!

Henry pulls her hair back.

Amanda CRIES out, and her back arches from Henry's grip on her hair. WHIMPERS escape her still form.

Henry quickly wraps both of his arms over her arms, locking them against her waist. He restrains her arms with one arm, then he explores under her nightdress with his hand.

Amanda kicks Henry with her heels.

HENRY

Do as you're told!

AMANDA

No. No, no--

Amanda STAMPS her feet until she lands on Henry's foot.

Henry lifts up his foot. His arms fall to the side.

Amanda runs with an outstretched arm toward the phone.

AMANDA

Marg!

Henry snatches Amanda up by the waist.

Amanda's legs pump, scissor, and slice through the air. Hysterically, she scratches Henry's arms.

AMANDA

Help!

Henry shoves her onto the bed.

Amanda lands on her stomach then reaches over for the phone.

Henry reaches over her and grabs the phone before tossing it onto the neighboring pillow.

AMANDA

No!



Henry flips her over.

Amanda crab-crawls away from Henry until her head HITS the headboard.

Henry grabs Amanda by the ankle and pulls her down the bed.

Amanda scrambles away from Henry.

Henry climbs on the bed with a smirk then pounces on her.

Amanda struggles.

Henry covers his body over hers and subdues her beneath him.

Amanda's head presses against the headboard with Henry's aggressive body on top of her. She CRIES into the pillow.

HENRY

(speaks into Amanda's ear)

Shh, don't cry darling. You're my wife and this is my right.

INT. MARG NETTER'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The stove's overhead light halos Marg on a stool at the breakfast bar.

Marg's hand covers her mouth with a frighten expression.

Marg sucks in a BREATH and listens to the bed ROCK and SQUEAK, Amanda's CRIES, and Henry's victorious GRUNTS.

INT. AMANDA AND HENRY BARKER'S MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

AMANDA

(sorrowful whisper)

You got what you wanted. Now, leave me alone.

Henry's LADEN feet walk across the room. The bedroom door CLOSES eerily.

Marg's SOBS come through the phone.

Amanda's chest convulses and her hand trembles. On a deep BREATH, she grabs the phone and pulls it her chest.

MARG (O.S.)

I didn't know.

Amanda looks up and out the open lowly-laid window, where gusts of wind HOWL and kick up dirt and dust from the earth.

FADE OUT.