

SCENE 11

Boots

MERRILL. I got my first pair of boots when I was 14. They were suede, and they were the answer to my need to be identified as a brooding, wounded, but potentially brilliant artistic subspecies of female with practically no genetic relationship to my miserable screaming family. My dog Corky got them confused with an entree and ate a hole in them, so I took a bus to Sausalito and got a new pair. They were olive green leather and came up above my knees. By the time I got to Berkeley, where I was an art student, I was all boots all the time. Freshman year I had two pairs. One was golden brown, one was deeper brown, and I wore them with really, really short skirts. I thought my boots gave me a kind of mysterious, Bohemian charisma, tough but tender, rugged but sensuous, poetic but unself-conscious, like Joni Mitchell. It was a really happy time of my life, but then, one night, when I was sleeping, a guy broke into my apartment and raped me. They never caught him. I have no reason at all to think that he'd ever seen me before that night. But after the rape, when I walked down the streets of Berkeley in my boots and my short skirt, it suddenly seemed like everyone was staring at me. So I gave my short skirts to Goodwill. But not the boots. I love boots.