

PLEASE NOTE:

Dialogue which is only signed,
not spoken, is in brackets.

"CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD"

FADE IN:

1 EXT. ISLANDS AND WATER - HIGH ANGLE - DAY -- SILENCE 1

Mist floats over the sea, appearing and disappearing, so that the islands are there and then not there... isolated and mysterious. As we move through the fog, a lighthouse appears, then an island of pines, another of rocks, another blanketed in fog.

FADE TO BLACK

In the darkness, we HEAR the SOUND of a TRUCK'S ENGINE, the beat of heavy rain on a windshield, the rhythmic slap of the wipers. As the sounds grow louder...

FADE IN:

2 INT./EXT. THE CAB OF A PICK-UP TRUCK - NIGHT 2

Headlights barely penetrate a fierce rainstorm -- a dim glow on a desolate highway.

JAMES LEEDS, the driver, PEERS through the rain and fog, at the wavering white line, trying to keep the truck on the road, pressing on with late-night determination.

He's about thirty-five, at the moment unshaven, anxious and dazed from sleeplessness.

As he drives he tries to keep a station tuned on the RADIO, but the MUSIC is drowning in STATIC, growing fainter. It drifts away entirely, and James switches the radio off impatiently.

His isolation is complete now, silent, heavy as a physical weight, driven home by the monotonous pounding of the rain, the wipers, the turning of the wheels.

Light from a distant sign passes through the windshield, and the streaks of rain reflect against James' face, almost like tears.

3 INT. WINDOW - NIGHT 3

In the same storm, the wind BANGS a loose shutter violently against the side of a house. The NOISE comes as a shock, loud and frightening.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

The gate-latch windows RATTLE half off their hinges -- then the latch gives, and the wind blows the windows open, SMASHING them against the wall, nearly shattering the panes.

Below the window SARAH NORMAN sleeps undisturbed, her beautiful face suggesting the calm, the dreaminess of a sleeping princess.

Around her bed are shadowed objects, textures -- a jar of sea glass, a piece of old lace, a spray of dried flowers -- enhancing the dream-like quality.

As the wind blows across her face and hair, we SEE her sense it, drifting up out of sleep. Then a few drops of rain blow onto her cheek. She's awake now, but she doesn't open her eyes, just reaches up and wipes the rain away from her face. She, then, slowly opens her eyes.

4 SARAH'S POV - THE GAUZE CURTAINS

floating above her, like two ghostly, outstretched arms.

5 EXT. FERRY - DAY

James sits in his parked truck, gazing across the grey water at an island, concentrating on it, as though he's working himself up to something.

He's clean-shaven now, wearing a studiously ruffled, but well-tailored suit.

After a beat, he swivels the rear-view mirror around so that he can look at himself. He rubs his chin approvingly, giving himself a slight, sideways smile.

JAMES

(under his breath)

Lookin' good, kid -- lookin' very good.

And, suddenly he does, as if - snap, he's on - ready for whatever. His eyes are bright, lit with energy and humor, his slight smile is full of charm, his shoulders are squared. We should sense that this is the side of James that he presents to the world, his darker side carefully shielded.

6 NEW ANGLE

as James opens the cab door and jumps out onto the deck. He, again, gazes at the island, closer now. He can SEE the small guard's station and a weathered sign.

(CONTINUED)

3.

6 CONTINUED: 6

His gaze is eager, almost greedy, as if he's just won this piece of turf in a raffle.

7 EXT. FERRY LANDING - DAY 7

James drives off the ferry and stops at the guard station.

8 EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - DAY 8

James drives along a road that runs through pines, green beside the turning fall leaves.

9 EXT. SCHOOL - DAY 9

The truck passes through the school gates. Ahead is a complex of wood and frame buildings.

10 EXT. THE SCHOOL - WIDE ANGLE - DAY 10

James parks his truck in a lot beside the buildings. He jumps out and strolls breezily across the campus, towards the main classroom building.

11 CLOSER ANGLE 11

as James reaches the wooden doors of the main building.

12 INT. THE BUILDING - DAY 12

James ENTERS and starts down the long, empty hallway, his HEELS ECHOING in the silence. Classrooms are on either side of him, visible through the windows that form the top half of the doors.

He passes one, then stops, turns back and stands so that he can't be seen.

13 JAMES' POV - THROUGH THE WINDOW 13

A YOUNG TEACHER, ORIN DENNIS, his back turned, is writing on a board in large chalk letters... The Battle of Hastings, 1066. The ten or so TEENAGE STUDENTS are stretched out in their seats, some with legs draped over the armrests, looking bored, fidgeting, waiting for the bell.

4.

14 BACK TO JAMES 14

moving to another room. Again, he stands beside the window so that he can't be seen.

15 ANGLE PAST JAMES THROUGH THE WINDOW 15

This is a smaller, darker room. There's a poster with phonetic sounds, various voice equipment, a small table with two chairs, and a mirror beside it. A TALL, THIN MAN with wispy blond hair, ALAN JONES, is contorting his mouth, exaggerating sounds, to a tense, pigtailed EIGHT-YEAR-OLD-GIRL. She adjusts her microphone, turns to the mirror and repeats the sounds.

16 FAVORING JAMES 16

As he moves on, we FAINTLY HEAR the CHILD'S VOICE, a high sing-song... "Bow, cow, dow, fow, gow... "

17 NEW ANGLE 17

James approaches a TEENAGE BOY, GLEN STAUFFER, with a punk haircut, who's alone, leaning against a wall. James smiles and signs to him.

JAMES
Excuse me, I'm looking for Dr.
Franklin?

Glen jerks his thumb towards the office. As James makes the sign for "Thank you", the boy moves quickly away from the wall, turning his back, moving down the hallway. James tips an imaginary hat, murmuring to the boy's back:

JAMES
(continuing)
Very nice to meet you too.

James turns and continues along the hallway, a slight cockiness evident in his walk, his bearing.

18 INT. THE SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE - DAY 18

CURTIS FRANKLIN, the school's superintendent, looks up from a resume several pages thick, and stares at James. Franklin is forty-five, self-satisfied, a big fish in a little pond. Whatever idealism he came with, twenty years ago, has withered to a fraction of what it was. What he really cares about are his games -- bridge, poker, whatever relieves the boredom. His game, at the moment, is keeping James off balance.

(CONTINUED)

FRANKLIN

This is the most amazing resume
I've ever seen.

JAMES

I've been with some really good
schools -- the best.

FRANKLIN

All of them. All of the best.
One right after another.

He looks down at the resume with mock awe. As he does,
James' eyes shift to several letters, open on the desk.
He's trying to read upside down, hoping against hope that
certain ones are not there.

Franklin looks up quickly. So does James. He smiles.

FRANKLIN

(continuing;
without smiling)

You've also been with the Lucky
Erin Bar and Grill.

JAMES

That was in Pittsburgh --
bartending.

FRANKLIN

(overlapping)

A disc-jockey in Tulsa,
Oklahoma.

JAMES

(nodding seriously)

I used to broadcast in sign
language.

(does an imitation
of a signing d.j.)

It was --

Franklin doesn't crack a smile.

FRANKLIN

You've been all over the map,
Mr. Leeds.

JAMES

I've got a lot of energy.

FRANKLIN

May I be blunt with you, Mr.
Leeds?

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

James, please -- and I'd rather you weren't.

FRANKLIN

I hired you -- James -- because I couldn't get anybody else to come up here on such short notice. Of course, I'm grateful --

JAMES

You're welcome.

FRANKLIN

(talking over him)

And I'm sure you do have a lot of energy -- and a lot of new ideas. I did too, when --

(gestures vaguely behind him to the past)

But nobody's trying to change the world around here -- just trying to help a few deaf kids get along a little better. All the rest is razzle-dazzle, and it bores the hell out of me.

They stare at each other for a long moment.

JAMES

... Okay.

FRANKLIN

Just so all the cards are on the table.

James gives a look of undisguised challenge, before he adds lightly...

JAMES

Uh -- What are we playing?

James is sitting, perfectly rigid and deadpan, behind a desk -- a picture of a teacher from a school brochure. He is staring at a class of about six students.

The class is staring back, challenging him, feigning boredom with James and anything he might have to say. Not that they could hear him -- most of the kids have their hearing aids out.

Among them we notice Glen Stauffer, the boy with the punk haircut, sitting in the back row. Next to him, JOHNNY DeLUCA, doodles in a notebook, his wary eyes magnified by thick glasses. LYDIA HINES, pretty and outgoing, is up front beside DANNY BAKER, who's giving her sidelong looks.

James doesn't move, doesn't open his mouth, doesn't even blink. The kids begin to shift in their chairs.

Suddenly, James climbs up on top of his desk and leaps wildly onto the floor. As Lydia stifles a shriek, the others stifle their surprise. James does two cartwheels and sits back down again, resuming his "teacher pose".

Still gazing seriously at them, deadpan, James gets back on top of the desk and lifts himself, very slowly, into a Yoga-style head-stand. Upside down, his expression doesn't change. The kids start to look worried. Lydia giggles in spite of herself.

JAMES

Aha! We have a laugh.

Lydia starts signing to him.

JAMES

(continuing;
enunciating clearly;
still upside down)

What?

Lydia's signing becomes more emphatic.

JAMES

(continuing)

Can't hear a thing.

Lydia stops signing, frustrated. In one quick motion, James is on his feet and off the desk. He moves to Lydia, lifts the long hair that covers her ears, and we can SEE that her hearing aids are unplugged. She fits them into her ears and James speaks distinctly, signing at the same time.

JAMES

(continuing)

I can sign -- but I'm not going to make the effort if you don't.

Lydia signs again. James drops his hands.

JAMES

(continuing)

What? Sorry, I'm rusty -- I didn't get it.

(CONTINUED)

There's a beat before Lydia answers in a loud, SLURRED MONOTONE.

LYDIA
You are so weird.

JAMES
(smiling)
Thank you.

He turns to the back of the room and his eyes fix on Johnny, still doodling, removed, and on Glen, his punk haircut an expression of his insolence. Glen's hearing aids are noticeably hanging down from his shirt pocket.

James sticks his fingers in his ears.

JAMES
(continuing)
How about it?

Slowly, sullenly, Glen puts his plugs in. Barely glancing up from his notebook, Johnny sticks his plugs in his ears.

JAMES
(continuing;
after a beat)
Please shut the notebook.

Johnny simply looks at him.

JAMES
(continuing;
spacing the words)
Shut -- the -- notebook.

Johnny snaps it shut.

JAMES
(continuing;
exaggerated)
Thank you.

The rest of the class are quietly putting in their hearing aids.

JAMES
(continuing)
Thank you all.

He moves back to his desk and suddenly assumes the pose of a totally mad professor. With malicious glee, his voice rising, his fingers signing like claws, he squints at their faces.

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

(continuing)

Now, my beauties -- now that
you've all got your ears on,
we're going back to the same
old boring teaching you've
always had! Aba, baba, ca-ca!

There's an explosion of protests, laughs, questions, as most
of the class begins talking and signing at once.

James leans back -- smiles -- pleased -- He's got a response.

JAMES

(continuing;
taking charge)

Okay -- settle down.

(as they do)

Give me one good reason to
speak so you're understood.

As he glances around, CHERYL, a shy redhead, half raises her
hand.

CHERYL

(in discordant speech)

To go to a store.

ORIN DENNIS is approaching the classroom. He's twenty-six,
bearded and brooding, with an unexpectedly boyish smile when
it appears. He wears a small hearing aid in one ear. Over
this, we hear:

JAMES (V.O.)

Right! What would you buy?
... What's your favorite candy?

CHERYL (V.O.)

(struggling)

Alm -- alm --

(signing only)

[I can't say it.]

JAMES (V.O.)

Alm -- ond.

Cheryl struggles again.

JAMES (V.O.)

(continuing)

So pick another. What can you
say? Mounds? M&M's? Hey, that's
a good one -- M&M&M&M --

10.

21 INT. THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM - DAY 21
Orin is just passing the classroom. He turns back, curious, and looks through the glass window.

22 ORIN'S POV - THE CLASSROOM 22
James is clowning around again. Some of the kids are laughing.

23 BACK TO ORIN 23
just watching, his young face unreadable.

24 INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - WIDE ANGLE - DAY 24
It's lunch hour, crowded and noisy.

25 CLOSER ANGLE 25
as James moves along the line, pushing his tray that's piled high with institutional-type food. As he pauses to fill his coffee cup, something CRASHES just beyond the open swinging doors to the kitchen. James' eyes widen and his cup remains poised in mid-air, as:

26 ANGLE PAST JAMES THROUGH THE OPEN DOORS 26
A pot flies through the air, landing with a crack, o.s. The hands that have thrown the pot are slashing the air with indignation. They belong to a YOUNG WOMAN, in partial profile, wearing jeans and a sweatshirt, who continues to sign, furiously, to the cook, a large, greying BLACK MAN.

27 BACK TO JAMES 27
his eyes riveted.

28 JAMES' POV - SARAH NORMAN 28
The "sleeping princess" that we saw earlier seems to have turned into a "she-devil". As she backs up, stomping a foot, WE, and James, SEE her more clearly. She's twenty-five, vibrant and sensual. Her lips don't move and she doesn't speak, but she signs with her whole expressive body.

Sarah goes on, really letting the cook have it, as he tries to get her out of the kitchen. As she does, James translates to himself, his eyes fascinated and amused.

JAMES

(under his breath)

"... Take your pots, your...
what?... lousy food... stuff
them... "

As Sarah gives a rude gesture.

JAMES

(continuing;
laughing, quietly)

"You old... "

(in his own voice,
muttering)

Doesn't mince words, does she?

Sarah turns, slashing the air with both hands -- "finished" -- and moves quickly into the cafeteria. Her face is still flushed with anger as she catches sight of James, a man she hasn't seen before, who's gazing at her, intrigued. Sarah gives him a fleeting appraisal. We should sense that she's also intrigued, and somewhat embarrassed. This all takes place in the second before she moves quickly past him, heading for a corner table.

James resumes pouring his coffee. He picks up his tray and heads for his students' table. WIDEN TO SEE Franklin waving to James from one of the staff tables.

FRANKLIN

Join us, Leeds.

James nods, changes direction and begins to cross to Franklin. He glances toward the corner table where Sarah is sitting alone, peeling an orange, subduing her anger.

Franklin is in the midst of a conversation with Orin Dennis and MARY LEE OCHS, the assistant superintendent. She's in her forties, with bright eyes and a permanent that glows like blond brillo.

MARY LEE

If you have to sell the
parents something, sell them
something useful.

(CONTINUED)

As James shifts his eyes from Sarah and nears the table, Orin answers. We should notice the nasal quality of the hard-of-hearing.

ORIN
(with a straight
face)
You don't think Indian Totems
are useful?

MARY LEE
(laughing)
Good thing you're out of my
classroom.

James reaches the table and stands there awkwardly for a second.

ORIN
(wryly)
Or Pogo sticks? Now Pogo sticks
are useful.

FRANKLIN
(at the same time)
Sit down, James, sit down.

As James smiles, puts down his tray and sits:

FRANKLIN
(continuing)
Mary Lee Ochs, our assistant
super, Orin Dennis, English
and History, James Leeds --

They AD LIB "hellos" and "welcomes", and James turns to Orin.

JAMES
Did I hear Miss Ochs say you
were her student?

ORIN
(his boyish smile
appearing)
Yes -- I started here at five.

JAMES
(quietly)
Congratulations. I'm impressed.

ORIN
(with an edge)
For still being here?

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED (2):

JAMES
(flustered)
No, I meant --

He breaks off, realizing that whatever praise he was about to give is going to be taken the wrong way. He's saved by Mary Lee, who rises, picking up her tray.

MARY LEE
See you all later.

James watches her go and his eyes shift back to Sarah, now quietly sipping a cup of coffee.

JAMES
... Who is that?

Orin follows his gaze and his eyes soften for a moment.

ORIN
Sarah.

FRANKLIN
(fondly, protectively)
Don't mind her. She's a pain
in the ass, always been a pain
in the ass.

JAMES
But who is she? I mean, what --

FRANKLIN
(quickly)
She works here. Orin, what
about nutcrackers, things like
that?

ORIN
(shaking his head)
Too hard.
(to James; a
protective note
in his voice)
Sarah came at five too. We
grew up together.

JAMES
(after a beat)
She's rather --

As he glances again at Sarah, she's joined by GAIL and JULIE, two deaf dorm assistants.

(CONTINUED)

JAMES
 (continuing;
 searching for
 the word)
 Expressive, isn't she?

ORIN
 (after a beat;
 flatly)
 Is she? By the way, Mr. Leeds,
 I watched you work this morning.
 What do you do when you run out
 of routines?

JAMES
 (lightly)
 I'm forced to teach.

ORIN
 Oh, you teach?

FRANKLIN
 Oh, come on, Orin.
 (to James)
 He's got this funny prejudice,
 thinks the hearing shouldn't
 be teaching the deaf.

JAMES
 (smiling)
 I thought it was personal.
 (indicating Sarah)
 Is she a teacher?

FRANKLIN
 (quickly; defensively)
 Sarah's one of the brightest
 students we've ever had...

31 INT. BOYS' RESTROOM - DAY

31

A row of sinks. Sarah STEPS INTO THE FRAME, pushing a cleaning cart, and we realize that these are miniature fixtures, set low down on the wall, for kids. Sarah begins methodically cleaning them with a scrub brush. It should be clear that she's a maid.

32 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY (LATE)

32

The last of the students has left. James packs his books and papers into his briefcase and heads out. He's almost stooped from fatigue, and we can SEE what the effort of the day has cost him.

15.

33 EXT. THE FERRY - DAY (LATE) 33

James is standing wearily, near his truck, leaning on the railing of the ferry. The fog has lifted and James stares, absently, at the orange-pink sunset, the choppy water, the clapboard houses that dot the mainland shore.

34 OMITTED 34

35 EXT. DAIRY QUEEN PARKING LOT - ON THE TRUCK - NIGHT 35

James eats out of paper bags in the back of his truck.

36 INT. THE CLASSROOM - DAY 36

Except for Glen and Johnny, in the back, the kids seem almost eager. James has just asked Danny a question, and is waiting.

Danny gives a shy shrug. He's thin, small for his age, and clearly sensitive.

DANNY
(a slow sing-song)
I had a friend named Vic-tor-i-a.

Most of the class is straining, listening, lip-reading.

JAMES
(smiling)
V-Victoria -- Very good.

James turns to Lydia, whose hand is raised.

LYDIA
My Aunt Kathleen. She dead.

JAMES
(with empathy)
She died... I'm sorry.

James walks around the classroom and perches on a desk beside Glen and Johnny. He focuses on Glen, speaking directly to him:

JAMES
(continuing)
Did you have a favorite person,
Glen?

There's a silence. Glen, finally, signs, tossing it at him!

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

36

GLEN

[My cat.]

JAMES

(without reacting)

Your cat -- okay. Try saying
it -- CAT.

Glen struggles, then shakes his head.

JAMES

(continuing)

Good.

James turns to Johnny.

JAMES

(continuing)

Johnny -- a favorite person,
friend?

Johnny simply looks at him.

JAMES

(continuing; with
humor, clearly)Not E.T.?... Princess Di?...
(really reaching now)
The Terminator?Johnny's face is a careful blank. Around him, the class is
watching. The SOUND of the BELL CLANGS into the silence,
lights flash, and James rises.

JAMES

(continuing)

Next time...

37 EXT. OUTSIDE JAMES' APARTMENT - NIGHT

37

James climbs the outside stairs to the second floor of a
large, weathered house that's been broken up into separate
apartments. His steps are heavy, and he pauses on the
landing, looking out at the expanse of bay, the distant
island.

38 JAMES' POV - THE DARK WATER - THE LIGHTS OF THE FERRY

38

39 INT. THE SCHOOL'S INDOOR POOL - DAY (EARLY)

39

... Pre-dawn light, echoes, someone swimming alone. It's Sarah.

As her lithe body moves across the pool and we glimpse her nakedness, we should almost feel the sensual pleasure of the cool water on her plunging arm, the shimmering tiles, her escape into the silence of her senses.

40 INT. SARAH'S DORMITORY ROOM - DAY (EARLY)

40

In the first grey light, Sarah slips a worn, silk kimono over her bare shoulders. She's standing beside the open gabled window, smoking, blowing it out the window, the smoke curling through her wet hair and into the mist.

41 INT. JAMES' APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY (EARLY)

41

James seems refreshed, energized. Ignoring the unpacked suitcases, the piled-up cartons, he's carefully unpacking his records and tapes. His open windows overlook the bay, but a light rain is falling, obscuring the view. James moves to the kitchen area, in one corner of the large room, gets coffee and moves back to the records. As he unpacks, he finds a favorite and puts it on the stereo. We HEAR the SOUNDS of BACH'S CONCERTO IN D MINOR, SECOND MOVEMENT.

As he continues to unpack, James hums key phrases, conducts with his hands, head and body. We should sense that he's more involved with his own performance than with the beauty of the music.

42 INT. SPEECH ROOM - DAY

42

Cool sunlight streams through the window as James sits at a small table with Lydia. Next to them is a portable record player. James has his face up close to Lydia's and is speaking with careful enunciation:

JAMES

Good. Try it again.

Lydia turns to the mirror and struggles.

LYDIA

Ooo put e bob in te bob she
bob she bob --

JAMES

Good -- That's much better!
Keep going.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

LYDIA
 (to the mirror)
 Hoo put te ram in a rama lama
 ding-dong...

James claps his hands and jumps up.

JAMES
 All right, all right!

He sets the needle on the forty-five on the turntable and motions to Lydia to rise. As the SONG comes on, James signs -- Can you hear it? Lydia nods, James then sings along, doing a completely absurd Motown back-up singer dance routine.

The RECORD is incredibly loud, and so is James and, as Lydia tries to follow the dance routine, she joins in too.

JAMES, LYDIA & RECORD
 Who put the bop in the bop she
 bop she bop?
 Who put the ram in the rama
 lama ding-dong?

43 INT. FRANKLIN'S OFFICE - DAY

43

Franklin, involved in paperwork, looks up, startled by the unfamiliar sounds above him. He rises, frowning.

44 WITH FRANKLIN

44

As he hurries out of his office and starts up the stairs.

The SOUNDS grow CLOSER. He can now make out "Who put the bop in the bop she bop?" He quickens his pace.

45 INT. SPEECH ROOM - DAY

45

James and Lydia are still at it.

JAMES, LYDIA & RECORD
 Who was that man?
 I'd like to shake his hand,
 He made my baby fall in love
 with me.

46 INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

46

The SONG is now blasting through the walls.

This is probably the strangest thing that's ever been heard in this building. As Franklin ENTERS THE FRAME, other TEACHERS stick their heads out of classroom doors. Franklin's frown has turned into a scowl.

47 INT. SPEECH ROOM - DAY

47

JAMES, LYDIA & RECORD

Who put the dit in the dit ta
dit ta dit --

At this moment, Franklin strides into the room, rips the record off the machine, flings it onto a pile of papers and strides out. James shrugs sheepishly at Lydia and they sit back down at the table. James becomes businesslike again, and mouths to Lydia, with no sound:

JAMES

What a drip.

Lydia looks puzzled. James finger spells:

JAMES

(continuing)

D-r-i-p.

He makes a dripping motion with his hand and puts on a long, absurdly serious face -- enough like Franklin's to make Lydia dissolve in GIGGLES.

48 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

48

Franklin, walking away, HEARS Lydia's VOICE echoing through the halls, as she gets it:

LYDIA (O.S.)

Oh! What a drip!

In the interest of his dignity, Franklin chooses to ignore this.

49 EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

49

It's a bright, clear day. James shoots baskets with a couple of the older kids, doing comical bravura slam dunks. The kids roll their eyes, trying to be cool, but they're amused.

50 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

50

After school hours, James sits at the desk in his empty classroom and makes notes in a ring binder. The building is silent and still. After a beat, he HEARS a rhythmic SOUND, coming from the hallway. He rises and moves to the open classroom door.

51 JAMES' POV - THE HALLWAY

51

Sarah Norman is mopping the floor. Her face, watching the strokes of the mop, is distant, concentrated. A cleaning cart is parked against the wall nearby.

52 BACK TO JAMES

52

Startled to see Sarah cleaning. He's had no idea that this was her job. As he watches her graceful body, her lovely face, bent over the mop, his eyes are both fascinated and saddened.

53 ANGLE - JAMES AND SARAH

53

as she SENSES him, looks up quickly and SEES him. For a brief moment, Sarah looks intruded upon -- James looks unsure of himself. He covers this quickly by smiling his most charming smile, as he starts to move toward her. She holds up her hands, pointing to the floor -- it's wet. James backs up, apologetically, and gestures for her to come into the classroom. Sarah frowns, leans the mop against the wall, tiptoes across the wet floor and follows him into:

54 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

54

Sarah glances around to see what's wrong. She sees a full wastebasket and heads for it, assuming that he wants it emptied. James moves in front of her, shaking his head.

JAMES

(enunciating clearly)

No, that's not it. I just wanted to introduce myself -- James Leeds.

Sarah simply looks at him. There's an awkward pause. James breaks it, assuming that she can lip-read, and enunciates even more clearly:

JAMES

(continuing)

It's Sarah, isn't it? ... Would you like to sit down? Right here?

(CONTINUED)

He sits in a school chair with an arm rest and pulls up one for her. Sarah remains standing.

JAMES
 (continuing;
 after a beat)
 Okay, why don't we both stand?

He stands. Sarah sits. He's still unaware that she doesn't understand him.

JAMES
 (continuing; covering,
 lightly)
 I see -- very good -- you got
 me there.

He sits again. Sarah's eyes flick past him, checking out the cluttered room. James is getting frustrated and trying not to show it.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 Could you look at me, please?
 If you don't look at me, I
 can't --
 (as Sarah turns
 to him)
 So, Dr. Franklin tells me
 you've been here since you
 were five. When did you
 graduate?

Sarah's staring curiously at his mouth.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 And now you work here?
 (as she stares
 at his mouth)
 Are you reading my lips?
 (he finally understands)
 I don't think you're reading
 my lips...
 (signing and speaking)
 Gee, that was quick of me.
 Okay...

He loosens up his fingers and wrists and signs to her in signed English.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 You could have told me.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

[Why?]

JAMES

(non-plussed)

How about common courtes_f?

SARAH

[How about getting out of here
so I can mop the floors?]

James laughs uneasily as he repeats:

JAMES

How about getting out of here
so you can mop the floors...

There's a pause. Sarah appears to have checked out. James decides to switch tactics. He leans toward her, signing and speaking:

JAMES

(continuing; casually)

If you'd let me, I bet I could
teach you how to speak.

SARAH

(in rapid ASL)

[I bet I could teach you how
to mop the floor.]

JAMES

Hey, slow down -- you could
teach me how to -- but I
don't want to mop the floor.

SARAH

[Gee, that was quick.]

JAMES

Gee, that was quick... Ah, I
get it... and you don't want
to speak.

SARAH

(rising; heading
for the door)

[Brilliant.]

JAMES

(repeating; an
ironic mutter)

Brilliant.

(to himself)

... Schmuck.

Sarah is out the door, and James leans back in the chair,
... and heads down

Falling brown leaves are swirling in the wind as Franklin walks briskly around the playing fields, examining the turf. James is beside him, keeping pace with him. They're on two different mental tracks.

JAMES

It's a damn shame.

FRANKLIN

Costly too. Resodding is damn costly.

JAMES

I was talking about Sarah.

FRANKLIN

(his eyes on the ground)

Right, Sarah.

(moving ahead of him)

Look at this, will you? What a mess.

JAMES

(catching up)

Why doesn't she use her voice?

FRANKLIN

(turning to him)

She's not hard-of-hearing.

She's totally deaf, James -- born that way --

JAMES

Yeah, yeah, I know. That makes it real tough.

Franklin shakes his head at a particularly muddy patch of ground.

FRANKLIN

Rain's really lousing up the fields.

JAMES

(after a beat)

I just think it's a shame that a bright woman like that is stuck here cleaning toilets.

FRANKLIN

(muttering)

Doesn't bother her.

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

(flaring)

Oh no?

Franklin stops walking and looks James in the eye. His attitude is protective and defensive at the same time.

FRANKLIN

Look, hotshot, not everybody wants to be a star. Sarah's content. She had a rotten time as a kid, diagnosed as retarded until she was twelve. Well, we let her know how smart she was, we educated her --

JAMES

(cutting in)

For what?

FRANKLIN

She's productive, pays taxes --

JAMES

Oh, brother.

Franklin catches sight of another ripped up section of grass, and heads for it.

FRANKLIN

You want to try? I'll talk to her.

JAMES

(quickly; worried)

Huh?

FRANKLIN

(distracted; ending the conversation)

I'll talk to her.

(squatting; shaking his head over the grass)

Damn, it's gonna be two, three grand...

We MOVE IN ON James as he opens his mouth, then shuts it, wondering what he's gotten himself into.

James is seated at the small table, watching Danny finish reading a simple poem aloud.

JAMES

(as Danny looks up)

Really good, Danny. Just work on the R's.

Danny smiles, rises and exits, nearly running into Franklin, and a very reluctant Sarah. Smiling, Franklin leads Sarah into the room. James rises, nervous, caught off-guard, as:

FRANKLIN

Sarah's agreed to give you an hour, James, and she's really looking forward to it.

(signing to Sarah)

You're really looking forward to it, aren't you, Sarah?

Her eyes mocking, Sarah drops into the pose of an eager, panting puppy.

FRANKLIN

(continuing;
to James)

What'd I tell you?

James looks at Sarah. There's just a trace of vulnerability and fear behind her mocking eyes.

FRANKLIN

(continuing;
as he exits)

Have fun, Jim -- as usual.

James closes the door after Franklin. The nickname really makes him nervous. He turns to Sarah, who's now sitting at the small table, looking very bored.

JAMES

Well, Sarah...

He sits across from her. Sarah leans back in the chair, pulls out her cigarettes and matches and holds them up.

SARAH

[Do you mind?]

JAMES

(taken aback)

I do mind, actually. Fire laws and all that.

(CONTINUED)

Ignoring him, or not understanding, Sarah lights the cigarette, pulling a wastebasket toward her to use as an ashtray. She blows out smoke and waits.

For once, James seems to be at a loss. We should practically hear his mind running through possible approaches. He seems to find one -- he leans toward Sarah with a conspiratorial smile.

JAMES
(continuing)
Want to fake out Franklin?
Make me look real good?

SARAH
(unexpectedly)
[Faster, huh?]

JAMES
(thinking she's
agreeing to cooperate)
Great. Thanks.

Sarah's hands fly.

JAMES
(continuing)
I didn't get that.

SARAH
(signing very slowly)
[If you do not sign faster --]

It takes James a moment to understand "if" -- she's signing in exaggerated slow motion.

JAMES
... Oh, if! If - I - do -
not - sign - fast - er --

As Sarah goes on, her signing gets faster and faster, ending in a blur, James' voice trailing behind.

SARAH
[The hour will be over before
you finish your opening
speech!]

JAMES
The hour will be over --
(picks up speed)
-- before I finish my opening
speech!

(CONTINUED)

There's a silence. James has just lost another round.

Sarah stubs the cigarette out in the wastebasket. James waits for the flames... It smolders and goes out.

SARAH
(after a pause)
[No more jokes?]

JAMES
... I'm all out of jokes.

SARAH
[Good. You're not funny.]

JAMES
(muttering)
I'm not funny. If you could hear, you'd think I was a scream.

He looks away and Sarah stamps her foot to get his attention. He turns back.

SARAH
[Why scream?]

JAMES
Not literally "scream". That's a hearing idiom.

SARAH
[But I'm deaf.]

JAMES
(exaggerated;
with humor)
Oh, you're deaf? I'll try and remember that.

SARAH
(seriously)
[But you'll forget.]

JAMES
I'll forget -- No...

Sarah simply looks at him, her steady gaze full of distrust. James, again, tries for lightness:

JAMES
(continuing)
Tell me something -- did you do this to the last guy?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED (3):

56

JAMES (cont'd)
 Is he off in a loony-bin
 somewhere? Is that why they
 had to find a replacement so --

Sarah rises quickly and heads for the door. James jumps up
 and moves in front of her, pointing to the wall clock.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 I'm sorry, I was joking -- we've
 still got --

Sarah opens the door and brushes past him. James makes a
 gesture of frustration and dismissal.

JAMES
 (continuing;
 to himself)
 Oh, screw it.

But he watches Sarah's straight, lithe back as she moves
 down the hallway.

57 OMITTED

57

58 INT. THE INDOOR POOL - THE NEXT DAY (EARLY)

58

As Sarah dives beneath the surface, appearing and
 reappearing, with the playfulness of a dolphin, we should
 just GLIMPSE her nakedness. Alone, before dawn, she's
 delighting in her only real pleasure, her only real freedom.

59 OMITTED

59

60 EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY (LATE)

60

It's chill and overcast. James, wearing a sweat suit and
 jacket, is shooting baskets with a few of the toughest kids,
 including a tall, sullen boy named WILLIAM.

WILLIAM
 [That was a foul.]

JAMES
 (speaking and signing)
 What do you mean that was a
 foul? You were moving into me.

(CONTINUED)

William turns away and signs to the other kids behind his back.

WILLIAM

[Asshole.]

James stalks over and grabs William's shoulder, turns him around.

JAMES

You wanna call me an asshole,
say it.

WILLIAM

(defiantly; signing)
[Asshole.]

JAMES

(challenging;
aggressive)
No, no. Say it. Watch my
lips. As-s h-hole.

WILLIAM

(finally angry enough)
A-hoole!

JAMES

No -- as-s h-hole.

WILLIAM

Asshole!

JAMES

All right!

WILLIAM

Asshole!

He's LAUGHING now, at the sheer silliness of it. The other kids are LAUGHING too. James addresses the group.

JAMES

When you guys play with hearing
kids, what the hell good does
it do to sign asshole behind
their backs?

The kids seem to see the wisdom of this.

JAMES

(continuing)
You gotta say it.
(to William)
And it was still your foul.

(CONTINUED)

30.

60 CONTINUED (2): 60

William shakes his head bashfully, still not buying it. But something has changed between them. James grins, waves, and trots off toward the beach.

61 EXT. THE BEACH - WIDE ANGLE - DAY (LATE) 61

Cold, rocky and desolate. The woods border the dune grass and the sand, and beyond, the ocean reaches to the horizon. James COMES INTO VIEW, stops running and takes a deep breath, gazing out, his arms hugging his jacket.

62 CLOSER ANGLE - JAMES 62

as he walks the edge of the beach. Gulls swoop and CALL. He steps on dried seaweed, stoops, and picks up a sparkle of sea glass. As he pockets it, he stops, seeing a small, dark figure, shadowed by jutting rocks, fog and drizzle.

63 ANGLE PAST JAMES TO SARAH 63

as she leans against the rocks, watching the gulls. A hooded navy sweatshirt conceals her face.

James starts to turn back, partly because he doesn't want to disturb her solitude, and partly because he doesn't want to deal with her right now.

Sarah catches sight of him, at this moment, and begins to walk slowly toward him. James meets her halfway... he has no choice.

64 JAMES AND SARAH 64

as they eye each other, warily. Sarah breaks it:

SARAH
[You're smarter than most.]

JAMES
I'm smarter than most? What d'you mean?

SARAH
[You gave up.]

JAMES
Oh, I gave up. Well, how many have there been? How many speech teachers have --

(CONTINUED)

He goes on, in broad pantomime, slashing his wrists, hanging himself -- a grotesque look on his face -- then putting an imaginary gun in his mouth.

This just dies. He's bombing again. There's a silence. As a wave breaks, they back up a few feet toward the dunes. James breaks it this time, indicating the sand.

JAMES

(continuing)

Wanna play stand-up, sit-down again?

A fleeting smile crosses Sarah's face.

JAMES

(continuing)

Careful -- you almost smiled.

Sarah's face returns to its usual stony mask.

JAMES

(continuing;

heavy irony)

That a girl -- that's the Sarah Norman we all know and love.

SARAH

(turning on him)

[Your jokes are terrible and your signing's boring.]

JAMES

If my jokes are terrible and my signing's boring, what are you doing here?

(gesturing broadly)

There's a whole empty beach!

Sarah turns, heading back. She stops briefly, cupping her hand, lighting a cigarette against the wind. Annoyed with himself, James follows her, moving into step with her. He surprises himself by blurting out:

JAMES

(continuing)

I tried to call your mother, but --

Instantly upset, Sarah goes into a furious burst of ASL.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED (2):

JAMES
 (continuing; waving
 his hands, confused)
 Wait a second, hold it. I
 didn't mean to do whatever I
 -- look, what? What --

SARAH
 (mimicking)
 [What! What!]

JAMES
 That's my best sign -- what!
 Look, could we stop this,
 please? Why don't we...

There's a beat. James doesn't know what he's going to say.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 Uh, why don't we --
 (then, saying it)
 Why don't we go out to dinner
 tonight?
 (after a beat)
 There's this little place in
 St. Michael's.

Sarah just looks at him as if he were crazy.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 Just give me a yes or a no.

Sarah's expression changes.

SARAH
 [You mean take the ferry?]

JAMES
 Yeah, we'll take the ferry --
 we'll do something really
 exciting!

SARAH
 [... Yes.]

JAMES
 (smiling)
 Good -- I think. All right.
 I'll meet you at six, behind
 the swings. I'll whisper your
 name.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED (3):

64

SARAH
[You're not funny.]

JAMES
You know what? I think you
do think I'm funny, but you're
afraid if you smile you'll lose
something.

Sarah mimes a phoney smile at him, and her palms come
together sharply, and her curved fingers form the horns of
a bull.

SARAH
[Fuck you.]

She runs ahead.

JAMES
(running after her)
Hey, I know that sign! That's
one of the first signs I
learned...

65 INT. THE ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

65

Sarah, wearing a dress, is sitting across from James at a
small candlelit table. In the b.g., a three-piece COMBO is
PLAYING a medley of blues. There's a narrow, empty dance
floor. We can HEAR the CLINKING of GLASSES, of KNIVES and
FORKS, and the CHATTER of other diners. Sarah is studying
the menu, puzzled.

JAMES
It's in Italian. Can I suggest
something?

SARAH
[Only if your Italian's better
than your signing.]

JAMES
(laughing)
Gimme a break. My Italian's
worse than my signing.

There's a pause. James scans the menu. He looks back at
Sarah and, without signing, mouths the words, as if for a
lip reader:

JAMES
(continuing)
The veal piccata is good.

(CONTINUED)

Sarah looks away, rejecting this form of communication, forcing James to finger spell.

JAMES

(continuing)

Sorry... v-e-a-l p-i-c-c-a-t-a.
See, by the time I finish, they
may be out of it.

SARAH

[What is it?]

JAMES

Veal, sauteed in lemon and
butter.

SARAH

[What's veal?]

JAMES

What's veal? Let's see, what
the hell is veal? How'd you
sign calf? C-a-l-f?

SARAH

[Cow baby.]

JAMES

Cow baby -- makes sense. Would
you like some?

Sarah shakes her head, and James shudders, as:

JAMES

(continuing)

No, cow baby, sauteed in lemon
and butter doesn't sound too --

At this moment, the WAITER appears, nodding formally.

WAITER

(to Sarah)

Something to drink this evening?

Sarah doesn't respond. She turns to James.

JAMES

Something to drink, Sarah?

As Sarah thinks about this, the Waiter turns to James.

WAITER

Our house wine is very nice.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED (2):

65

JAMES
Would you like wine, Sarah?

As Sarah nods.

JAMES
(continuing)
Good.
(to the Waiter)
Fine, the house wine -- a
carafe, please.

The Waiter gives a slight bow, and moves off.

SARAH
(after a beat)
[He thinks I'm stupid.]

JAMES
He doesn't think you're stupid.
He thinks you're deaf.

SARAH
[To hearing people, it's the
same.]

JAMES
(smiling)
Only stupid hearing people
would think that the deaf are
stupid.

There's a pause as Sarah looks directly into his eyes...
There's a moment of connection.

66 ANGLE - SALAD BAR

66

as James and Sarah rise and approach the long, opulent
table. James gestures for Sarah to go first.

67 FAVORING SARAH

67

as she concentrates, making choices.

68 FAVORING JAMES

68

just looking at her, seeing her, not as a student, not as a
challenge, just as a very beautiful woman.

QUICK CUT TO:

James and Sarah are in the middle of dinner. Half the wine is gone. James is in the midst of:

JAMES

D'you really like being a maid?

As Sarah nods.

JAMES

(continuing)

Why?

SARAH

[I like working alone... in my silence.]

JAMES

There are other jobs where a person can work alone, in silence.

SARAH

[Not with toilet bowl cleaner.]

JAMES

(laughing)

Not with toilet bowl cleaner. You should've told me that was the attraction.

(leaning toward her)

You're smart as hell, you know --

Sarah concentrates on her food, closing him out. She then puts her palm flat on the table. Behind them, the COMBO has moved into a steady, ROCK BEAT. There's a long moment before:

SARAH

[Let's dance.]

JAMES

You wanna dance? Can you feel it?

SARAH

(deadpan)

[Vibrations -- through my nose.]

As James smiles.

SARAH

(continuing)

[I can feel it -- here.]

She indicates the table and James puts his hands flat on the table, trying to listen.

Sarah rises and takes his hand, leading him to the dance floor. Other couples are twisting and jumping to the beat.

JAMES

I'm not good at this.

SARAH

(starting to dance)

[I am.]

He moves with her, tentative, gradually loosening up.

Sarah is a wonderful dancer -- her whole, graceful body moves and twists to the rhythm. As he turns and moves back to her, James smiles appreciatively. He's stunned by her freedom, her sensuality. The COMBO shifts to a SLOWER BEAT and Sarah moves lightly into James' arms and they dance this way, an old-fashioned foxtrot for a minute or two. It's the first time that they've touched, and we should SENSE an electricity running between them, through their fingers, Sarah's head on his shoulder, James' hand at the small of her back. It increases -- an electric current. Sarah breaks it suddenly, backing up, signing.

SARAH

(continuing)

[Why did you become a speech teacher?]

James glances around, aware that other people are watching her sign. Sarah is aware that he's aware and signs even more broadly, as she repeats the question:

SARAH

(continuing)

[Why did you become a speech teacher?]

JAMES

I don't know why I became a speech teacher. Let's dance.

SARAH

[Dance and talk.]

JAMES

(pulling her to him)

It's too hard to dance and talk.

They dance again. Then she backs up.

SARAH

[Tell me.]

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

Maybe I like to hear myself
talk.

Sarah rolls her eyes. They dance and talk after all.

JAMES

(continuing; pulling
back this time)
I'm a really good teacher,
you know? You should let me
help you...

Sarah distorts her mouth, a dreadful imitation of deaf
speech, without making any sound.

JAMES

(continuing)
What's that?

SARAH

[Lydia, Danny...]

JAMES

Oh, come on. -- They don't talk
like that. Don't you want to
be able to get along in --

He gestures around to the hearing world.

SARAH

[No! ... Nobody wants your
help.]

JAMES

That's your opinion.

SARAH

[I don't want your help!]
(after a tense
silence)
[... I don't do anything I
can't do well.]

James is taken aback and struck by this as he repeats it.

JAMES

You don't do anything you can't
do well...

He starts to say something, stops, and they dance again, but
the electricity is gone.

73 EXT. OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL - NIGHT

73

The pick-up pulls up in the parking lot, outside the main building. James and Sarah get out of the cab at the same time, the tension between them still evident.

SARAH
[I can walk myself.]

JAMES
I'd like to walk with you.

They head for a path that leads to the dorm, walking separately.

74 EXT. OUTSIDE SARAH'S DORM - ON THE DOORWAY - NIGHT

74

as Sarah turns to James.

SARAH
(politely)
[Thank you.]

JAMES
(equally polite)
It was my pleasure.

Sarah finds a key in her purse and turns away first. After a beat, James turns and walks a few feet. His shoulders are slumped, his hands in his pockets. Sarah's shadowed face is tight, unreadable. She fits the key into the lock and, after a moment, turns. James turns at the same instant. He thinks he caught a SLIGHT SMILE on Sarah's FACE, but it's gone. She thinks she glimpsed a slight SMILE in his EYES, the curve of his MOUTH, but she's not sure. She turns back, PUSHING OPEN the DOOR.

75 INT. THE GIRLS' DORM - DAY

75

Sarah is vacuuming the lounge area with all her energy. THREE GIRLS are doing homework. A Soap Opera is on, the SOUND TURNED OFF. Lydia ENTERS, moves to the set and TURNS UP THE SOUND. It doesn't matter to the other girls -- they can't hear it either way.

76 INT. THE CAFETERIA - DAY

76

Lunch hour. James carries his tray toward the staff table. He glances around, sees Gail and Julie, where they usually sit... Sarah isn't there. We should SENSE the slight relief that crosses James' face.

77 INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

77

Large, steamy and busy. There's a racket of POTS, DISHES, the COOK'S VOICE. Oblivious, Sarah sits alone at the kitchen table, tucked behind shelves, eating her lunch.

Orin ENTERS, crossing to the refrigerator. As he takes out a container of milk, he catches sight of Sarah and moves to her.

ORIN
You hiding in here?

SARAH
(lying)
[No.]

She carefully removes the crusts from her sandwich and hands them to him. As Orin eats them, his eyes full of warmth for her, we should FEEL that they've been doing this since they were kids.

78
AND
79

OMITTED

78
AND
79

80 INT. A BAR - NIGHT

80

A JUKE BOX is PLAYING LOUD COUNTRY WESTERN. James, Mary Lee Ochs, ALAN JONES, the wispy-haired teacher we glimpsed at the beginning, and TOM SCHUYLER, the gym and shop teacher, are all talking at once, pouring beer, CLINKING GLASSES. The SOUND LEVEL is TOO LOUD TO HEAR what they are saying, but we should SENSE that they're relaxing with talk, lots of it -- easy talk that doesn't have to be signed or enunciated. As James cracks a joke...

81 INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

81

... A sharp return to SILENCE.

Sarah and Orin are seated at one end of a long table. Sarah is pointing out a passage in her book to him.

82 NEW ANGLE

82

as James ENTERS, heading for a particular shelf. He finds the book he wants, turns and catches sight of Sarah and Orin, their heads together. He EXITS as quickly as he'd entered.

41.

83 INT. THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY - DAY 83

as James stops short, remembering something, and moves back to the library door.

84 INT. THE LIBRARY - DAY 84

Sarah is now alone at the table. Orin has moved behind the stacks. James takes a second book off the same shelf, starts to leave but, instead, crosses to Sarah... drawn to her.

85 JAMES AND SARAH 85

Sarah is reading, her coat and scarf draped over the back of her chair. James sits across from her, opens his book and simply looks at her. She looks up at him. Both seem to be waiting, a bit warily, for the other to say something. Neither one does.

86 QUICK SHOT - ORIN 86

Watching, frowning slightly, from behind the stacks.

87 JAMES AND SARAH 87

After a long beat, Sarah rises, picking up her book, taking her coat, and EXITS.

James watches her go. He closes the book that he hasn't looked at and then notices that Sarah's scarf is on the floor beside the chair. He bends down and picks it up... worn red silk with frayed edges. Somehow, it couldn't belong to anyone else. James starts to pocket it, to return it to her, then stops suddenly, simply holding it, the silk between his fingers.

88 INT./EXT. THE CAB OF THE PICK-UP - DAY (LATE) 88

as James drives and peers ahead. He's on the outskirts of Wachusset, a small, industrial, port-side town.

89 EXT. A QUIET STREET OF SUBURBAN HOUSES - DAY (LATE) 89

James stands outside a front door as ANNE NORMAN, Sarah's mother, pulls the door open. She's in her fifties, her streaked hair pulled tight into a flawless braid around her head. Her face is pinched, partly from the tightness of her hair, partly from the determined avoidance of life's unpleasantries.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

89

JAMES

I'm James Leeds, Mrs. Norman.
I didn't call again because --

MRS. NORMAN

Because I would have hung up
again. I can also close the
door.

JAMES

It's sixty miles here and back.
Just five minutes?

MRS. NORMAN

(opening the door,
turning)

I just got home, Mr. Leeds.
This is my time to relax.
Discussing Sarah is hardly
relaxing.

JAMES

(as he enters)

Five minutes...

90

INT. THE NORMAN LIVING ROOM/DINING AREA - DAY (LATE)

90

as James follows Mrs. Norman to a beige sofa. The house is bland and furnished in sets. They sit on opposite ends of the sofa. Mrs. Norman lights a cigarette and sips the drink that she'd left on the coffee table. She, then, eyes James questioningly.

MRS. NORMAN

What did you come all this way
to ask me, Mrs. Leeds?

JAMES

(uneasily, carefully)
... You haven't seen Sarah in
eight years?

MRS. NORMAN

Let's get it straight -- Sarah
doesn't want to see me.

JAMES

Has she said why?

MRS. NORMAN

(drily)
We don't communicate too well.

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

Did you ever learn to sign?
Some of the parents --

MRS. NORMAN

Not well. Why should I?
(rising, pacing)
Sign to a retarded child?

As James reacts, shaking his head.

MRS. NORMAN

(continuing)

I know, I know -- First they
said she was, then they said
she wasn't -- I'm sick of it,
sick of you people coming
around every couple years,
asking the same questions,
blaming me.

Mrs. Norman is fighting for control, and losing it.

JAMES

No one's blaming --

MRS. NORMAN

Of course they are! They can't
blame themselves! So it's all
my fault -- fine -- I don't
give a damn anymore!

JAMES

Believe me, no one's blaming
you.

Mrs. Norman shrugs tightly.

JAMES

(continuing)

I'm sorry... I didn't mean to
upset you. I really just came
to ask one question?

Mrs. Norman gives a resigned sigh and moves to the window.
On the desk in front of it, there's a posed photograph of
two little girls... Sarah and Ruth.

JAMES

(continuing)

... What happened when Sarah
tried to speak?

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED (2):

90

Mrs. Norman turns, her eyebrows raised in disbelief.

MRS. NORMAN

What happened? She looked awful.
She sounded awful. People made
fun of her. What d'you think?

JAMES

Who made fun of her?

MRS. NORMAN

(talking over him)

Other kids. Her sister's
friends... Then she stopped
trying to talk and -- and well,
she was pretty, you know -- and
Ruth had a bunch of boys
hanging around, and they
started asking Sarah out, too,
when she was home on weekends.

She moves back to the window, looking off, smiling slightly,
absently moving her finger along the top of the photograph.

MRS. NORMAN

(continuing)

It was wonderful for her.
Those boys really liked Sarah,
treated her the same way they
treated Ruth, with respect and
-- and if you didn't know
there was a problem --

(her voice breaking;
very low)

-- You'd have thought she was
perfectly normal.

As she stops, her fingers gripping the edge of the desk...

91 EXT. STREET IN ST. MICHAEL'S - NIGHT

91

In light drizzle, James walks along the glistening pavement,
by himself.

92 INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

92

James eats dinner by himself, WATCHING older, slower couples
dancing. He looks down at his water glass and SEES the
surface of the water vibrating from the music.

93 OMITTED

93

INT. JAMES' CLASSROOM - DAY (EARLY)

Sarah, her hair still damp from swimming, her cleaning cart parked in the middle of the room, is sweeping the floor. James ENTERS, surprised she's here, startled to see her cleaning his room.

JAMES

(after a beat)

I didn't know you cleaned in here.

SARAH

[You're never here this early.]

JAMES

True, I'm early today.

SARAH

(moving to the cart)

[I'm going.]

JAMES

No, don't go. I wanted to talk to you anyway.

SARAH

[I can't talk and sweep.]

JAMES

Well, stop sweeping.

SARAH

[I don't want to talk.]

She starts pushing the cart to the door. James moves to her, stopping the cart on the other side.

JAMES

Look -- let me help you. I know you're scared.

SARAH

(angrily)

[I am not!]

JAMES

Bullshit! You got a sign for --
(finger-spelling)
B-u-l-l-s-h-i-t?

Sarah makes the sign... a bull's horns with her left hand, her right hand a fist at the other end of the bull (her left elbow). The closed fist springs open in James' face.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

JAMES
 (continuing)
 Wait a sec, I'm going to invent
 a little sign here. Deaf
 bullshit.

He makes the same sign with one horn stuck in his ear. Sarah pushes past him and storms out the door.

95 INT. THE HALLWAY - DAY (EARLY)

95

as James strides after Sarah. Franklin is approaching in the opposite direction.

JAMES
 Come back here, Sarah! Sarah!

FRANKLIN
 (as he passes;
 deadpan)
 Yelling at the back of a deaf
 person. That's very good, James.

James shoots his back a look that could kill, and continues after Sarah. He reaches her and grasps her shoulder, turning her.

JAMES
 You forgot something.

SARAH
 (seething)
 [What?]

JAMES
 Your cart.

Sarah throws up her arms and heads back to the classroom.

96 INT. JAMES' CLASSROOM - DAY

96

Sarah is pushing the cart to the door.

JAMES
 Why did you stop going home?

SARAH
 (stopping)
 [What?]

JAMES
 Your mother told me how popular
 you were, boys --

SARAH
 (outraged)
 [My Mother!]

JAMES
 Yeah, I went to see her...
 She's a barrel of laughs.

SARAH
 (ignoring this)
 [What was so important?]

JAMES
 It was important to me to find
 out some things.

Sarah, furiously, starts to push the cart out the door.
 James blocks her.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 ... What happened? Why did
 you stop?... When --

Sarah gives a harsh laugh, cutting him off.

SARAH
 [Sure, I was popular. Did she
 tell you I screwed them all,
 screwed just like hearing
 girls? Better! That was the
 one thing I did better!]

James is stunned, unprepared for this. He stammers.

JAMES
 You -- you screwed them all.
 That was the one thing you did
 better than hearing girls.

SARAH
 (at the same time)
 [When I went home the boys
 would be lined up on a waiting
 list my sister kept for me.]

JAMES
 When you went home they'd be
 lined up? The boys -- on a
 waiting list your sister kept.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

[No introduction, no talk --
we just went to a dark place
and fucked. They didn't even
take me for a Coke first.]

JAMES

(barely audible)
No introductions, no talking.
You just went to a dark place
and -- ... They didn't even
take you for a Coke first.

SARAH

(mockingly)
[Is that what you wanted to
know about me?]

JAMES

No -- no, that's not what I
wanted to know about you.

SARAH

[You thought you were such a
big deal, coming on to the
deaf girl, giving her a
thrill.]

JAMES

(translating,
for himself)
I thought I was such a big
deal, coming on to the deaf
girl, giving her a thrill? --
No, Sarah --

SARAH

[And all the time I was
laughing at you --]
(laughing; mimicking)
[Poor little deaf virgin.]
(then, very nastily)
[... Who spread her legs for
hundreds...]

JAMES

(repeating between
his teeth)
Poor little deaf virgin, who
spread her legs --
(in his own voice;
finally furious)
You think I'm threatened by
that?

(MORE)

96 CONTINUED (3):

96

JAMES (cont'd)
 You think I give a good goddam
 that you fucked every
 pimply-faced teenager -- well,
 I don't -- I don't give a shit!!

Forcibly, Sarah pushes the cart past him and out the door.

97 INT. DORMITORY BATHROOM - DAY

97

Sarah stares at herself in the mirror, her hairbrush poised in her hand... alone, we can see her vulnerability, her loneliness. There are recent tears on her face.

98 EXT. THE CAMPUS - DAY

98

James is walking slowly toward the cafeteria. He stops, for a moment, his thoughts churning, and half watches the five and six-year-olds in the playground. GAIL and JULIE, two Dorm Assistants, are pushing them on swings, helping them up slides, stopping fights, wiping away tears.

99 INT. CAFETERIA KITCHEN - DAY

99

Sarah is having a cup of coffee in the deserted kitchen. Beyond the swinging doors, a couple of the staff are cleaning up behind the food line.

100 ANGLE - THE SWINGING DOORS

100

as James ENTERS -- tentative -- carrying a Coke. He's clearly nervous, upset, not knowing how to say what he wants to say.

101 JAMES AND SARAH

101

as she looks up, her face a mask. James sits down across from her and pushes the Coke across the table to her. He tries to smile, his eyes full of apology.

SARAH
 (heavy sarcasm)
 [Oh, that's nice.]

JAMES
 (quietly)
 You don't understand. I like
 you, Sarah -- I really like
 you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

101

JAMES (cont'd)
I want -- I want to be able
to communicate with you in
whatever language we can both
learn to speak...

SARAH
[You want to be different from
all the rest of them? You
want to buy me a Coke first.]

JAMES
Yes, I want to be different
from the rest. I want to buy
you a Coke first. Sarah, I
want --

SARAH
[Great. You want to fuck?]

JAMES
(shaken, humiliated)
That's not what I meant.

SARAH
[Right here?]

She starts taking her blouse off. James grabs her hand to
stop her. She jerks away and keeps unbuttoning.

James pulls the Coke back roughly -- she pulls it toward her.
He rips it out of her hands and it flies all over the table,
soaking the front of her skirt.

She stands up, gives him a withering look, turns and exits
quickly.

102 INT. THE POOL - DAY (EARLY)

102

... Just before dawn.

Sarah takes off her robe, the only thing she's wearing, and
dives into the pool, entering her private, sacred world
again.

James -- unshaven, miserable -- looking as though he hasn't
slept all night, APPEARS in the doorway.

Sarah swims quickly to his side of the pool in order to hide
herself from him.

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

Please listen to me...

SARAH

[Go away.]

JAMES

I'm not going to go away. I said the wrong thing -- I'm sorry. I don't know what to say... Tell me what to say.

Sarah doesn't answer.

JAMES

(continuing;
after a silence)

... You're the most mysterious, beautiful, angry person I've ever met.

There's another silence. Sarah doesn't move. She's still hiding, pressed against the tiles, just looking at him. James comes and kneels above her at the edge of the pool.

JAMES

(continuing;
breaking it, finally)

Sarah, -- Sarah, I'm falling --

As he starts to sign "in love", Sarah reaches up and quickly stops his hands. He tries to hold her hand, to pull her toward him. She pulls away, and, without thinking, swims back, exposing her nakedness. In an instant, she's embarrassed, frightened, and so is he... they've both exposed their naked selves to each other. James breaks it with a nervous laugh, covering.

JAMES

(continuing)

Sarah -- Sarah, I'm falling --
into the pool with you --

He slides in, in all his clothes -- his coat, his shoes -- and swims towards her. Sarah doesn't move away. They tread water, looking at each other.

JAMES

(continuing; quietly)

My God, what a fellow has to go through!

There's a long beat before they kiss, still awkwardly treading water. James tries to say something else, but Sarah stops him, and peels him out of his heavy coat. It floats away. She dives beneath the surface.

103 UNDER THE WATER

103

Weightless, dreamlike, Sarah removes the rest of James' clothes, their bodies turning, their arms and legs touching, floating apart. Then Sarah opens her arms to him, drawing him to her in her private, sacred world.

104 EXT. THE CAMPUS - DAY

104

Franklin leaves his house, bright and early, and heads for the administration building.

FRANKLIN
(absentmindedly,
to himself)

Who put the bop in the bop --

He stops short as he SEES James, in his wet clothes, barefoot, running across campus to his truck. He's carrying one dripping shoe.

105 OMITTED

105

106 INT. FRANKLIN'S OFFICE - DAY

106

James sits across from Franklin. There's a shoe on the corner of Franklin's desk, but Franklin doesn't seem to notice it. He's all professional good cheer and concern, on the surface, but he's playing cat and mouse with James.

FRANKLIN
How are things going, Jim?

JAMES
(trying not to
look at the shoe)
Great -- just great.

FRANKLIN
Good. Glad to hear it.
(genially)
You know, we've got to get you
over to the house one of these
days.

JAMES
I'd like that.

FRANKLIN
I warn you I'm something of a
poker player.

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED:

106

JAMES
 (a nervous smile)
 So I've heard.

FRANKLIN
 You a card player, Jim?

JAMES
 No, not really. Tic-tac-toe's
 my game.

FRANKLIN
 So much the better.

James laughs with him.

FRANKLIN
 (continuing;
 ending the chat)
 Well, thanks for coming in...
 We really are happy to have
 you with us.

JAMES
 Thank you.

James rises awkwardly, hesitates, then takes the shoe.

FRANKLIN
 Your size?

James nods. Franklin nods back -- and looks directly at James. His eyes are penetrating, all pretense of geniality abandoned.

FRANKLIN
 (continuing)
 Be careful, Jimbo.

JAMES
 (completely rattled)
 Right...

107 INT. A MOVIE THEATRE - ON THE SCREEN - EVENING

107

A sensual movie is on the screen. We PULL BACK AND FIND James and Sarah near the back. They're on a "date", being somewhat formal with each other, not touching. James is signing, translating the dialogue for Sarah, his fingers in front of her, close to her.

108 ANGLE - SARAH AND JAMES 108

as his signing fingers accidentally brush the softness of her sweater -- her arm, her breast. He stops signing and she turns to him. They look at each other, letting the plot of the movie slide.

109 INT. JAMES' APARTMENT - NIGHT 109

as James and Sarah move through the dark living room, pulling off clothes, dropping them on cartons and on the floor, only stopping to kiss quickly, touch each other, unbutton buttons.

110 INT. THE BEDROOM - NIGHT 110

Sarah and James are lying beside each other on the bed, their damp, naked bodies glistening in the dim light of one yellow bulb. The bed is a tangle of sheets and blankets, the room warm, STEAM HISSING from the RADIATOR.

Their hands are raised, forming shadow puppets on the opposite wall.

111 NEW ANGLE - THE SHADOWS 111

Animal silhouettes with long ears and noses. Playfully, the shadow figures change as James and Sarah subtly shift the positions of their hands. After a moment, Sarah begins signing words that appear as shadows... "You're the nicest person I've ever known."

111A JAMES AND SARAH 111A

As James drops his hands and turns to her.

JAMES

(incredulous)

I'm the nicest person you've ever known? That's the craziest thing I've ever heard!

SARAH

(laughs, then)

[I thought -- after what I told you -- I wouldn't see you again.]

JAMES

You thought, after what you told me, you'd never see me again.

(opening his arms wide)

Here I am...

111A CONTINUED:

111A

Sarah moves into his arms, then backs up a bit and signs:

SARAH
[... Were you ever in love?]

There's a flicker of panic in James' eyes before he answers lightly, mocking his words.

JAMES
Yes, I was in love, but she
broke my heart.

SARAH
(teasing)
[I wish I could break your
heart.]

JAMES
(comic despair)
Oh God, no -- please don't
break my heart.

Sarah smiles and turns, nestling her back against him. His arms go around her so that they can still talk with their hands.

JAMES
(continuing)
Did anyone -- ever break yours?

SARAH
(after a pause;
shadowed)
[I never hurt from other people.]

JAMES
You never hurt from other people?
That's not true, Sarah. I know
people have hurt you. I know --

Sarah cuts him off, shaking her head vehemently. James moves in front of her.

JAMES
(continuing; gently)
Suppose you admitted that you
hurt?

SARAH
[... I'd shrivel up and blow
away.]

James reaches for her, holding her close, wanting to keep her in the safe circle of his arms.

112 INT. THE KITCHEN AREA - NIGHT (LATER) 112

James and Sarah are both naked as they raid the refrigerator. James takes out a bottle of wine and Sarah takes out some cheese and crackers. James indicates a box of donuts and she gets those too, and a bag of Oreo cookies. Like mischievous kids, they carry their loot back to the bedroom.

113 OMITTED 113

114 INT. THE BEDROOM - DAWN 114

James and Sarah are nestled together, under the tangle of blankets, the unfinished food and wine on the floor beside them. Sarah wakes first and gazes at James as he sleeps, the early light sharpening his features. He stirs and wakes, with a sleepy smile, and she touches his face, smiling into his eyes. James, half-asleep, forgets to sign and murmurs:

JAMES

Too early.

SARAH

(not noticing)

[Let's swim.]

JAMES

(remembering;

finding his fingers)

No! Swim at this hour? You're out of your mind.

A gust of WIND RATTLES the WINDOWPANE, whipping around the house.

JAMES

(continuing)

... Besides, it sounds like a tornado out there.

SARAH

[I can't hear it.]

There's an awkward moment before:

JAMES

You're lucky you can't hear it.

(after a pause)

What do you hear? Is it just silence?

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED:

114

SARAH

(a quiet smile;
tapping her
forehead)

[My secret. No hearing person
has ever gotten in here to
find out... no person.]

James moves close to her, signing near her face, whispering
into her hair.

JAMES

Let me, Sarah... Let me.

She rolls easily on top of him, gazing down at him. He puts
his arms around her, moving beneath her.

Sarah closes her eyes and stretches her arms out, moving her
hands in a gentle flying motion, a swimming motion, a light
breaststroke through the stratosphere.

115 INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - DAY (AN HOUR OR SO LATER)

115

James wakes again, blinks at the morning light and looks
around, confused. He's alone. His EYES CATCH SIGHT of
something on the dusty mirror. He FOCUSES on it. Sarah has
printed, in bright red lipstick, "So long, sucker!".

For a second, James is taken aback, but then he SEES that the
words are enclosed in a red heart, an arrow piercing it... He
laughs quietly, and leans back against the pillow.

116 EXT. THE FERRY - DAY

116

It's a rare, bright day.

Sunlight hits the water as one of the Baxter School Buses
drives onto the ferry, heading for town. James' kids are,
excitedly, hanging out of the windows.

117 EXT. OUTSIDE A GENERAL STORE - DAY

117

As the bus ENTERS THE SHOT and pulls up. James gets out and
his students file out nervously.

118 INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

118

James and the class are watching, very still, as Cheryl walks
up to the counter.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

THE STOREKEEPER

Help you, Miss?

CHERYL

(slowly, awkwardly)

Almond Joy, please.

It takes the Storekeeper a moment, then he understands. As he reaches behind the counter, Cheryl looks at James. He smiles, very pleased.

118A EXT. THE FERRY - DAY (LATER)

118A

The ferry is half-way across and the school bus is parked near the front. Through the windows, we can see the driver, dozing off, and Johnny, slouched in a seat.

ANGLE - THE DECK

A small tape recorder is PLAYING A TAPE of James' 45, and WE HEAR: "Who put the ram in the rama lama ding-dong --".

Lydia is teaching the song and dance to Cheryl, Danny and Tony. Glen is watching, leaning against the bus. The kids are, obviously, in high spirits, trying the song, the dance steps, laughing at their own mistakes.

James ENTERS THE FRAME, crossing from the other side of the ferry. He stops, grins at the kids, and rushes up to get in on the act.

JAMES

Hold it -- How about this?

He shows them some new moves.

JAMES

(continuing)

All right -- all together now.

(dancing over to Glen)

Who put the ram in the rama --

He grabs Glen's hand, keeping the beat, enunciating:

JAMES

(continuing)

Come on, join us.

Glen hangs back, but he's cracking up in spite of himself. Finally he tries the step.

(CONTINUED)

118A CONTINUED:

JAMES
(continuing)

Great!

James' eyes shift to the bus and he sees Johnny still slouched, gazing past him to the approaching island.

JAMES
(continuing)

Keep going!

Still dancing, he backs up and moves into:

118B INT. THE BUS - DAY

118B

As James moves down the aisle to Johnny. He stops beside the seat, speaking and signing:

JAMES
Come on, join us?

Johnny simply looks at him. After a beat, James tries another approach. He sits down beside Johnny and just signs to him -- as if "man-to-man", on his level.

JAMES
(continuing;
signing only)
[I know it's silly. I know
you think it's a drag, but,
come on, humor me --]
(glancing towards
the kids)
[-- Humor them -- they're
feeling really good.]

He smiles his most ingratiating smile. There's still no response. If anything, Johnny seems to withdraw even further into himself. James' smile becomes fixed, then fades. We can see his frustrations.

JAMES
(continuing;
speaking and signing)
What are you doing in my class?
... Why don't you get in it, or
get out?

Johnny looks at him, through his glasses, as if he were under a microscope. James' frustration increases. It's turning to anger. Before he really explodes, he rises and stomps down the aisle. Outside, the SONG and dance CONTINUES.

118C EXT. THE GRAVEL ROAD - NIGHT

118C

Sarah, wearing a skirt, a heavy sweater and boots, is walking briskly towards the ferry landing. Headlights appear behind her, illuminating the road ahead, and Sarah turns just as Orin pulls up in his VW Bug. He reaches across to the passenger door and pushes it open, as:

ORIN
What's your hurry?

SARAH
(getting in the car)
[I'm late.]

ORIN
(mockingly)
I'm late, I'm late -- for a very important date?

SARAH
[What?]

Orin guns the motor and continues towards the ferry.

118D INT. THE CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

118D

ORIN
I'm late for a very important date -- a song.

SARAH
(with a look)
[I can't hear songs.]

ORIN
(sarcastically)
Oh, you can't hear songs? I thought you'd suddenly stopped being deaf -- a miracle -- joined the hearing world?

Sarah simply gives him a look and turns away.

119 EXT. OUTSIDE THE FRANKLIN HOUSE - NIGHT

119

The ritual poker game has just ended. Franklin and his wife MARTHA are saying good night to Mary Lee Ochs, Tom Schuyler, Alan Jones, and James. James is clearly eager to get away.

MARY LEE
Well, thank you for a miserable night.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED:

119

FRANKLIN

(laughing; patting
his pocket)Thank you all for the pleasure
of winning back your meager
salaries.

TOM

James gave his away.

James shrugs sheepishly.

JAMES

Not my night, I guess.

MARY LEE

Did someone tell you we were
playing "Go Fish"?

As they laugh and continue talking, James heads down the path.

120 EXT. OUTSIDE THE DORMS - NIGHT

120

Alone now, James looks up at the dormitory to Sarah's window
on the top floor. The window is dark, but dim moonlight
touches shadowed, robed figures on opposite fire escapes. As
James heads for his truck he sees boys and girls signing to
each other across the gap between them.

121 EXT. OUTSIDE JAMES' APARTMENT - NIGHT

121

As James drives up. He sees Sarah sitting on the outside
stairs, waiting. She rises as the truck stops. James,
surprised, rushes up the steps towards her, taking her in his
arms.

122 OMITTED

122

123 EXT. THE PIER NEAR JAMES' APARTMENT - NIGHT

123

James and Sarah are walking along the pier, watching the
small, lapping waves. James breaks the contented silence.

JAMES

Did you know that waves strike
the average beach seven hundred
and fifty thousand times a day?

SARAH

[Bullshit.]

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

True. -- I just made it up,
but it's probably a good guess.

SARAH

(after a beat)
[I know what they sound like.]

JAMES

You do? What do they sound
like?

Sarah stops and concentrates a minute, then rocks back and forth. She traces a wave pattern rhythmically with her hands, punctuated by light flickings of her fingers, like foam running on the rocks.

JAMES

(continuing; smiling)
That is what they sound like.

She nods, satisfied, then walks ahead. James looks after her for a moment, then hurries to catch up.

JAMES

(continuing; teasing;
meaning it)
How did you get to be so
brilliant? And beautiful?

Sarah's answering look says -- it was easy.

JAMES

(continuing; grinning)
And pig-headed? The most
stubborn --

SARAH

(eyebrows raised;
all innocence)
[Who me?]

JAMES

Yes, you.

SARAH

[Stubborn!]

She huffs -- he must be thinking of someone else.

JAMES

Not stubborn, huh? Okay...
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED (2):

123

JAMES (cont'd)
 (not signing;
 enunciating
 very clearly)
 Hi, beautiful. What am I
 saying?

Sarah stares at him, visibly retreating, dropping a silent curtain between them.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 Hey, come on, it was just a
 joke.

SARAH
 [It's not a joke.]

It's clear that she's really upset.

JAMES
 Okay, it's not a joke.

She stares at him, challenging him to mean it.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 I'm sorry. I won't do it again.

She just keeps staring.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 I promise.

On her dubious look.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 I promise.

After a long beat, Sarah reaches for his hand, still uncertain.

124 INT. THE POOL - DAWN

124

James and Sarah are naked under the water. Their luminous bodies entwine, weightless, joining. They can't hold their breaths another second and suddenly burst to the surface.

125 CLOSE ANGLE - A SHOWER ROOM

125

as hot water streams on their heads and shoulders and they come together with a hard, pounding, physical union. Their passion is visceral this time, tenderness abandoned, their spirits removed... watching without participating in the pure joyous lust of it.

WIDEN TO SEE them silhouetted, at one end of the long shower room, the water and steam forming an opaque curtain around them.

126
THRU
136

OMITTED

126
THRU
136

137 EXT. THE CAMPUS - WIDE ANGLE - DAY

137

There an unusual number of cars and people. A banner blows in the chill wind... "WELCOME, PARENTS".

Uncomfortable-looking PARENTS of varying social status are walking the paths, hopeful smiles on their faces, as they amble toward the Assembly Hall.

138 CLOSER ANGLE

138

Franklin is escorting Glen's parents, MYRA and JACK STAUFFER, and Glen's YOUNGER BROTHER. The parents are well-heeled, well-dressed, and the boy looks as if he's just stepped out of a prep school (a distinct contrast to Glen's Punk style).

FRANKLIN

Glen is a fine young man. He's making --

JACK

Did you get him to change that idiotic haircut?

FRANKLIN

No. No, I like to give the kids a lot of leeway --

At this instant, William collides on the basketball court with another of the kids who have no parents here today.

WILLIAM

(unconsciously, but
incredibly loud)

Asshole! Shid for brains!

Glen's brother stifles a shocked laugh. Franklin smiles wanely and hurries them on.

139 INT. THE ASSEMBLY - DAY

139

Backstage, James and his students (except Johnny) are huddled -- nervous. They seem to be wearing matching shirts. In the b.g., some YOUNG CHILDREN are running onto the stage, into the lights, to the SOUND OF APPLAUSE.

139A AUDIENCE POV

139A

A THANKSGIVING MOTIF is a backdrop to the small stage -- cut-out pilgrims, turkeys, dried corn. PARENTS, STUDENTS and TEACHERS are sitting on folding chairs, some standing, crowding into the back. The young children, dressed as Indians, are taking bows. Please, embarrassed, they run off the stage.

James and his kids, two-step onto the stage. The T-shirts read, "THE NO-TONES". This gets ripples of LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE.

140 ANGLE - THE BACK OF THE ROOM

140

As Franklin, nervously, ushers in the Stauffers. He glances at them, their faces polite masks as they take in the stage. Franklin is, quietly, preparing himself for anything.

141 ANGLE - THE STAGE

141

as James puts the record on and they go into:

THE KIDS

Who put the bop in the bop --

James keeps time with the stick on the floor and counts with his fingers, as the kids SING, loudly and tonelessly, but clearly and almost in time with the RECORD, dancing a routine along with it.

142 QUICK SHOT - SARAH

142

as she ENTERS behind Franklin and moves forward, her eyes fixed on the stage.

143 FRANKLIN AND THE STAUFFERS

143

Jack frowns, the boy imitates his expression. Myra is wide-eyed.

JACK

(to Myra)

Glen is singing a song.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

143 CONTINUED:

143

JACK (cont'd)
 (after a beat)
 It's a really stupid song but,
 by God, he's singing it.

Myra and the boy both smile in agreement, the boy muttering
 -- big deal -- under his breath.

MYRA
 (happily)
 Just look at him, Jack.

Jack turns to Franklin with new respect.

JACK
 That's what I call impressive,
 Doctor.

FRANKLIN
 (nodding sagely)
 Anything that works, Jack.

Jack catches Glen's eye and signals -- all right! Glen rolls
 his eyes, hiding a smile.

144 ANGLE - SARAH

144

as she inches forward, watching.

145 SARAH'S POV - THE KIDS

145

So pleased with themselves, their faces exuberant.

146 SARAH'S POV - THE PARENTS

146

As she glances around at the Parents, their proud faces.
 Her eyes shift back to the stage.

147 SARAH'S POV - JAMES

147

Happy, excited, so proud of his kids. He catches sight of
 Sarah and winks at her, including her in his success.

148 BACK TO SARAH

148

Her eyes filling with pain. WIDEN as HANDS CLAP, SOUNDLESSLY,
 all around her. She turns, fighting for control, fighting
 back tears. She pushes past the Stauffers and Franklin, who
 glances sharply at her face, pushes through some students,
 who are blocking the door, and runs out.

149 QUICK SHOT - JAMES

149

Taking bows, seeing Sarah run out. His excited smile becomes fixed, his eyes anxious.

150 INT. GLASSED-IN CORRIDORS - DAY

150

Under tight control now, Sarah is heading for the Girls' Dorm. JAMES ENTERS FRAME, looking for her, seeing her, but separated from her by the glass.

JAMES

(signing, mouthing)

What'd you think?

SARAH

(signing back, quickly)

[Great -- just great.]

She starts to move down the hall. On the other side of the glass he tries to keep up with her.

JAMES

(puzzled)

What's wrong?

SARAH

(tightly; covering)

[Nothing.]

She taps her watch.

SARAH

(continuing)

[I'm late.]

She hurries off, and James is distracted by his kids as they rush up to him.

151 INT. THE DORM/GIRLS' BATHROOM - DAY

151

Sarah is scrubbing the sink with all her might, tears running down her face. Her sobs are unchecked now. She suddenly raises the scrub brush.

152 THE MIRROR ABOVE THE SINK - ON SARAH'S REFLECTION - DAY

152

As she stares at herself, the shapes of a WOMAN and CHILD appear, behind her. At the same instant, Sarah flings the scrub brush at her image, furiously, shattering the mirror. As glass FILLS THE SCREEN...

FRANKLIN (V.O.)
 Just a cut? Five stitches?
 You stupid sonofabitch -- it
 could have been the jugular!

James is standing there, very shaken. WIDEN TO SEE that Franklin is staring at him, shocked and angry. James doesn't know what to say to this -- it's obviously true.

FRANKLIN
 (continuing)
 It's going to stop. It's going
 to stop now.

JAMES
 What's going to stop? I don't
 know what got her so --

FRANKLIN
 (furious;
 suppressing it)
 You've got no right to mess
 her up. I'm not going to let
 you.

JAMES
 She is not messed up!

FRANKLIN
 I don't want to discuss this,
 James. Nobody is going to
 fuck with my students.

JAMES
 She's not a student. She's a
 twenty-five-year-old woman!

FRANKLIN
 Nobody is going to fuck with
 my employees either. It's
 going to --

JAMES
 (suddenly)
 She's quitting her job!

FRANKLIN
 What?

JAMES
 She's quitting her job. She's
 moving in with me.

(CONTINUED)

153 CONTINUED:

FRANKLIN

Oh, so she's gonna be your
maid now?

JAMES

(shouting)

Jesus Christ, Franklin!

James doesn't know what to say -- he's not even sure what he's already said. He looks at Franklin helplessly.

Franklin stares at James -- beginning to appreciate the emotional stake James has in all this. They both get down from their high horses and regard each other, not as boss and employee, but as men.

FRANKLIN

I'm sorry... that wasn't fair of me. It wasn't fair to Sarah either. I know she's a grown woman. If this is what she wants to do, I can't stop her. All I can say is, I think it's a mistake.

JAMES

Why?

FRANKLIN

I've seen this kind of thing before -- it just doesn't work.

JAMES

This isn't "this kind of thing"! This is us -- Sarah and me. I love her...

There's a pause as Franklin realizes that there's really nothing more that he can say.

FRANKLIN

... Just take good care of her, James.

HOLD, for a long beat.

154

INT. SARAH'S ROOM - DAY

154

Sarah is standing in front of the window -- smoking -- quick, short puffs -- and we can SEE that a bandage covers part of her right palm. James is standing near her, his eyes pleading with her.

(CONTINUED)

154 CONTINUED:

JAMES

Talk to me, please talk to me.

Sarah turns slightly and looks into his eyes, loss and fear on her face.

JAMES

(continuing;

repeating, gently)

Please talk to me...

SARAH

[I can't.]

This is what it's all about, but James still doesn't understand.

JAMES

Why can't you? We've talked about everything. Just -- just tell me what happened?

SARAH

(after a silence)

[Don't hate me for not learning to speak.]

JAMES

(incredulous)

Hate you? Hate you for not learning to speak? Sarah, I love you. I --

SARAH

[But they made you happy -- so happy.]

JAMES

(repeating, puzzled)

But they made me happy...

(beginning to understand)

Oh, the kids -- the kids made me so happy.

Sarah simply nods and looks at him, all her vulnerability evident. James answers with complete sincerity.

JAMES

(continuing)

You make me happy. How could you think I'd hate you for not speaking? ... No, sweet, no -- I love you for having the strength to be yourself.

(CONTINUED)

As Sarah stubs out the cigarette, relief spreads across her face. James gently lifts her chin and she smiles slowly. He, then, leaps into a whole other mood.

JAMES
(continuing;
looking around)
Now, where are your suitcases?

SARAH
(startled)
[What?]

JAMES
(moving to the closet)
I said -- suitcases...

Sarah follows him, grabbing his arm, getting his attention.

SARAH
[I know what you said. What
are you talking about?]

James acts as if this is another wonderful surprise, the magician, pulling another delight out of his sleeve.

JAMES
You're moving out, moving in
with me -- today!

Sarah's eyes widen. Before she can say anything, James opens the closet, pulls out a suitcase and begins filling it, dumping in Sarah's clothes.

SARAH
(stopping him,
forcefully)
[Wait!]
(signing very slowly)
[What - are - you - doing?]

JAMES
(after a beat,
softly)
Move in with me, Sarah. I
love you... I need you...

There's a silence as Sarah tries to take it all in.

SARAH
[What about my job?]

(CONTINUED)

154 CONTINUED (3):

JAMES

(a reassuring smile)

Screw your job -- I've got mine.

(gently; happily)

Don't worry. There's nothing to worry about. I'll take care of you.

SARAH

[No! No -- I can take care of myself! I'm safe here.]

JAMES

You can still take care of yourself... and you'll be safe with me.

SARAH

(torn apart)

[But what will I do?]

JAMES

You can do whatever you want.

He's starting to carry her along with him, take her fears away.

JAMES

(continuing)

What do you want?

SARAH

(after a pause)

[... I want you.]

JAMES

You've got me. What else?

Very slowly, Sarah's eyes grow bright with dreams.

SARAH

[A house?]

JAMES

A house.

(worried)

Uh-oh.

Sarah draws a wide picture with her hands, as:

SARAH

[So much!]

(after a beat)

[A blender!]

(CONTINUED)

154 CONTINUED (4):

154

JAMES
 (laughing)
 A blender!
 (then, acting out
 elaborately)
 How about a food processor?

As Sarah looks puzzled.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 That's a blender that's
 smarter than a blender.

SARAH
 (laughing)
 [I want one!]

JAMES
 You'll have it. What else?
 Come on, don't stop now?

SARAH
 (after a beat;
 quietly)
 [Children.]

JAMES
 ... Children.

SARAH
 [Deaf children.]

JAMES
 Deaf children.
 (after a silence)
 What d'you want me to say --
 that I want deaf children?
 I don't, but -- but if they
 were, that would be all right.

She moves into his arms and, again, his arms encircle her,
 trying to create a haven.

155 INT. THE SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY (LATE)

155

The sky, behind the pines, is shades of lavender as James and Sarah carry Sarah's suitcases to the pick-up. JULIE and GAIL are helping, carrying cartons full of Sarah's things.

156 EXT. THE ROAD TO THE FERRY - DAY (LATE)

156

as the pick-up truck heads for the ferry, into the darkening sunset.

157 EXT. THE FERRY - DAY (LATE)

157

Leaning on the railing, Sarah looks back at the island as it disappears behind them. Gently, James turns her so that she's looking straight ahead.

158

158

AND

AND

159 OMITTED

159

160 INT. THE APARTMENT - DAY

160

Sarah is alone, unpacking her cartons, arranging her few special things. She puts her sea-glass on the mantle, steps back and eyes it, her dried flowers on the windowsill. She holds her pieces of lace in her hand, looking around, not knowing what to do with them. She puts them down again and begins to unpack her one carton of books. James still has a bunch of unpacked cartons, pushed against the wall. Except for his records, the shelves are empty, and Sarah starts to put her books there. She stops, looking through one, becoming absorbed. There's a moment when she thinks she ought to keep working, but then realizes that she doesn't have to. With a slight smile, she lets herself curl up with the book.

161 INT. JAMES' CLASSROOM - DAY

161

James is trying another tactic with Johnny, clowning to the point of absurdity.

JAMES

A favorite animal -- come on,
I know you've got one. A baboon.

He hops, scratches. Johnny stares blankly.

JAMES

(continuing)

Not a baboon... a turkey!

He GOBBLES; flaps.

JAMES

(continuing)

A goddam chicken!

He pecks, CROWS, lays an egg. The rest of the class is falling all over themselves with laughter. Johnny simply stares at him. We should SENSE that James is beginning to really hate this kid.

162 INT. THE APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

162

James is standing on a stepladder, working on the ceiling light fixture. Sarah is sitting on the bed, sewing a button on one of James' shirts. She suddenly stops sewing, holding the shirt in her lap, and just looks at him, a slight, delighted smile on her face that seems to say... "He belongs to me. This wonderful man is mine." James feels her eyes, looks down and smiles, then goes back to the fixture. Sarah just keeps looking at him.

163 INT. THE APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

163

It's a Sunday morning and the sofa is covered with newspapers. The remains of breakfast are still on the coffee table. It's a contented mess. James and Sarah are still in their robes, their hair uncombed.

James is holding the sports section in one hand and his half-empty cup in the other. Sarah is flipping through the magazine section. After a beat, she rises, picks up her cup and heads for the kitchen area. James holds out his cup, his eyes still on the paper.

JAMES

Can you get me some too?

He realizes what he's done -- Sarah is already in the kitchen, oblivious.

164 EXT. A STRETCH OF ROAD - DAY (LATE)

164

The pick-up ENTERS FRAME, zipping along, James at the wheel.

165 INT. THE CAB - MOVING

165

James is glancing at Sarah's set face. He touches her arm, to get her attention, and signs with one hand.

JAMES

[We don't have to do this, you know? I think we should, that it's time, but...]

As Sarah gives a short nod...

166 EXT. ANNE NORMAN'S HOUSE - DAY (LATE)

166

Mrs. Norman, Sarah's sister, RUTH, and HARRY, Ruth's husband, are all on the front steps as Sarah and James walk toward the house. For a second, Sarah takes James' hand, then lets it go.

as Sarah and James reach the family. Mrs. Norman is smiling tightly, her hands at her sides. Sarah's hands are also at her sides. Ruth and Harry are smiling, welcoming, skeptical. Ruth is a paler version of Sarah, prettier but not as beautiful, much more placid and not nearly as bright. Harry is a policeman, a clever street kid who decided to grow up to be a "good guy".

Ruth breaks the ice, hugging Sarah.

RUTH

Hi, baby, this is Harry.
(trying to spell)
Oh, hell, I forget how.

SARAH

[That's all right.]

HARRY

(at the same time;
loudly)
Hi, I'm Harry.

RUTH

(under her breath,
to Harry)
Don't talk loud. It doesn't
make any difference.

JAMES

(overlapping)
Hello, I'm James Leeds. Hello,
Mrs. Norman.

MRS. NORMAN

Hello, James.

Mrs. Norman hasn't taken her eyes off Sarah and there's an awkward pause before:

MRS. NORMAN

(continuing;
struggling to
remember her
signing)
I'm so happy to see you, Sarah.
You're so grown up. You're --
(a nervous laugh)
-- You're all grown up. My...
eight years. I can't believe --
(to James)
-- I don't know how to say that.

(CONTINUED)

167 CONTINUED:

167

JAMES
 (making the sign
 for "believe")
 You're doing fine.

MRS. NORMAN
 I can't believe you're --
 (gesturing to
 the house)
 -- you're home.

SARAH
 [I'm home.]

She takes a tentative step toward the doorway...

168 INT. THE NORMAN LIVING ROOM - EVENING

168

James and Mrs. Norman are seated on the sofa, Sarah on a footstool opposite them. Ruth and Harry are in the kitchen, doing the dishes, and we can HEAR the WATER RUNNING, the SCRAPING OF PLATES, their easy LAUGHTER, in the b.g. The tension has increased between Sarah and her mother to the point where you could cut it with a knife. James is trying hard, a trapped look on his face.

MRS. NORMAN
 (after a silence;
 to Sarah)
 I don't know why you've come.

SARAH
 [I don't know either.]
 (after a pause)
 [To show you I've done fine
 without you -- maybe.]

She, subtly, moves closer to James. Mrs. Norman looks to James and he repeats Sarah's words, shocked by them, terribly uncomfortable.

JAMES
 Maybe, to show you she's done
 fine without you.

Mrs. Norman nods and her hands flutter in a nervous, helpless gesture. There's another silence. Sarah rises, walking around the room, touching knickknacks on the mantle, the photos on the desk.

(CONTINUED)

168 CONTINUED:

168

SARAH
 (turning back;
 to her mother)
 [I want to show James my old
 room.]

JAMES
 Sarah wants to show me her old
 room.

MRS. NORMAN
 (smiling; trying
 so hard)
 If she promises to make
 conversation with me when she
 comes down?

James signs to Sarah and there's a beat before:

SARAH
 [I'll try.]

JAMES
 She'll try.

MRS. NORMAN
 (very low)
 Yes, I remember that sign...
 try.

169 INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - EVENING

169

James and Sarah are standing in the middle of the small room.
 There's an awkward silence before:

SARAH
 [... No man has been in this
 room since I was five.]

JAMES
 No man has been in this room
 since you were five. Is that
 when your father left?

SARAH
 [He stayed with me the night
 before they sent me away to
 school. He cried. I never
 saw him again.]

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

(overlapping; softly)
He stayed with you the night
before they sent you away to
school. He cried. You never
saw him again.

(after a beat)

Your mother wanted very much
to touch you tonight, but you...

SARAH

(a helpless gesture)
[I can't give more than I gave.]

JAMES

I think you could. I think you
could give more than you gave.
You hardly ever get a second
chance to --

Sarah reaches for him, almost clutching him. After a long
beat, she pulls back.

SARAH

[I love you.]

JAMES

... I love you, too.

SARAH

[Don't let anyone ever come
between us.]

JAMES

No one will ever come between
us. I promise.

Sarah holds her two hands together, the sign for joined.

SARAH

[You and me... joined.]

JAMES

(placing his
hands on hers)
You and me... joined.

DISSOLVE TO:

It's cold and drizzly. James is on his way across the grounds
as William comes up to him.

(CONTINUED)

170 CONTINUED:

170

WILLIAM
 (speaking, with
 difficulty)
 Mr. Leeds, I don't think you're
 an asshole anymore.

JAMES
 No?

WILLIAM
 No. I think you're a dickbrain.

JAMES
 Dickbrain... That's fantastic.
 I got it right away.

WILLIAM
 Dickbrain.

JAMES
 Really excellent. Good work!

He pats William on the back and William saunters off cockily.

171 INT. THE APARTMENT/BATHROOM - ON SARAH'S REFLECTION - NIGHT 171

as she carefully puts on mascara. We should NOTICE that snapshots of James and Sarah border the mirror. Sarah's hand is trembling slightly as she smudges the mascara, then wipes it off impatiently. A list is taped on the mirror and her eyes go back to it, studying it. The list is the progression of poker hands...one pair, two pair, three of a kind, straight, flush.

James APPEARS in the mirror behind her and signals -- "are you ready?" Sarah nods and untapes the list, sticking it down the front of her new dress.

172 ANGLE - SARAH AND JAMES

172

as she turns to him.

SARAH
 [Test me.]

JAMES
 You look beautiful. You'd
 pass any test.

SARAH
 (making a face)
 [Franklin's going to expect
 me to speak.]

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED:

172

JAMES

No, Franklin's not going to expect you to speak.

(leaning close)

I told him in a moment of erotic madness I'd bitten your tongue out.

Before she can even laugh, he dives for her mouth and his nonsense turns into a long, loving kiss.

173 INT. FRANKLIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

173

The DOORBELL RINGS and Franklin opens the door to James and Sarah.

FRANKLIN

James.

(surprised)

Sarah!

He gives her a kiss on the cheek and she and James ENTER. As Sarah wanders over to the dip, Franklin takes James aside.

FRANKLIN

(continuing)

James, I thought you were going to bring someone from town.

JAMES

I did. I brought Sarah.

Franklin looks at him for a beat.

FRANKLIN

Don't tell me you taught her how to play poker.

JAMES

No, not me. She learned it out of a book.

Franklin rolls his eyes.

FRANKLIN

James, you know how seriously I take this game.

James shrugs and also heads for the dip, smiling to himself.

JAMES

Best I could do...

INT. THE FRANKLIN HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's the same group, except for the addition of Sarah.

The game is just about to start. Franklin rubs his hands together, moving everybody to the poker table.

FRANKLIN

(signing and speaking)

No husbands and wives --

(a look to James
and Sarah)

-- couples together. Let's
break it up here.

(as they take seats)

And no cheating, Sarah.

SARAH

[Cheating?]

FRANKLIN

I've seen deaf people cheat
like bandits. Draw for deal.

(as they take a card)

A scratch of the nose, a little
tug of the shirt --

JAMES

That sucks, Franklin.

SARAH

(at the same time)

[Who would I cheat with?]

FRANKLIN

Jim, of course. Together you
can clean up.

SARAH

[James won't cheat. He isn't
deaf.]

FRANKLIN

(laughing)

James won't cheat. He isn't
deaf. Very good, Sarah.

JAMES

(rising, angrily)

Neither would Sarah.

FRANKLIN

Oh, sit down, Jim. I know she
wouldn't. I just -- you're
high, Sarah, your deal.

(CONTINUED)

174 CONTINUED:

James sits slowly. Sarah shuffles with the expertise of a Vegas dealer. Franklin's eyes widen.

FRANKLIN

(to James)

Out of a book, eh?

SARAH

(signs, then deals)

[Five card draw, one-eyed Jacks
wild.]

They all look at her, startled. James smiles quietly, proudly.

FRANKLIN

(stunned)

Sorry -- what's wild?

JAMES

One-eyed Jacks...

FRANKLIN

(without signing,

to James)

You're really doing great with
her, Jim.

James looks pleased. Sarah picks up on this exchange and feels somewhat left out -- Why is James getting all the praise? How about what she's doing?

175 OMITTED

175

176 THE SAME - A SHORT TIME LATER

176

The game has just ended and Sarah's the big winner. Chips are being counted, money being tossed her way and, with delight and disbelief, she scoops up twenty dollars. James scoops her up in his arms, as she clutches her money, and swings her around. As he puts her down, the others laugh and shake their heads, impressed with Sarah and, particularly, with James. He's now beaming with pride.

177

EXT. PICK-UP TRUCK - THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD - NIGHT

177

Sarah finishes counting her money, down to the last cent. She holds it in her hand, rather than putting it in her purse.

178

INT. INSIDE THE CAB - MOVING - NIGHT

178

Sarah is very still and James glances at her as he drives.

JAMES

You did great. Happy with
your winnings?

SARAH

(nodding)

[Were they mad at me for winning?]

JAMES

Sure, they were pissed as hell
-- no, they were proud of you.

SARAH

[No, they were proud of you
for teaching me.]

JAMES

They were proud of me for
teaching you? Well, maybe a
little.

Sarah shrugs and looks out the window, fingering her money.
James touches her knee and she turns back to him.

JAMES

(continuing)

Didn't you have a good time
tonight?

(as Sarah shakes
her head)

I'm sorry -- I thought you did.

SARAH

[... I did.]

JAMES

You did?

Sarah nods and James eyes her, before swinging the truck
around and parking in front of the house.

JAMES

(continuing; teasing)

You afraid -- if you have a
good time -- somebody'll revoke
your angry deaf person's
license?

She simply opens the door and gets out and James opens his.

(CONTINUED)

178 CONTINUED:

178

James heads for the house and Sarah heads off toward the pier. James changes direction quickly and catches up with her.

JAMES
(continuing)
Can I come along?

Sarah shrugs and walks ahead, still clutching her money. She can't say what's the matter -- she doesn't really know.

179 EXT. THE PIER - NIGHT

179

James puts an arm around Sarah and she leans against him as they gaze out at the water. There's a silence before:

SARAH
[I like this best... what we
can do alone together.]

JAMES
You like this best? What we
can do alone?

SARAH
[I can think of something else
we can do alone together.]

She gives him a quick, teasing look.

JAMES
(laughing)
You can think of something
else we can do alone together?
What would it take to convince
you?

SARAH
[Nothing.]

JAMES
Nothing! I love a girl who's
hard to get.

Sarah laughs and darts out of his arms, running toward their doorway. James runs after her, catching her, picking her up in his arms. She's still clutching the money.

180 INT. THE APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

180

The only light is a candle glowing. James and Sarah are on the sofa, half their clothes scattered on the floor, partially covered by an afghan.

(CONTINUED)

They're lying side-by-side, legs entwined, their passion building. After a moment, James buries his face against Sarah's hair, whispering words that he knows she can't hear.

JAMES

Oh God, I can't ever get close enough...

He, then, takes her face between his hands, gazing urgently at her.

JAMES

(continuing)

Say my name... please, Sarah, just once... say my name.

Sarah stiffens beside him, her whole body becoming rigid as she pushes him away.

SARAH

[You promised.]

JAMES

(realizing what he's done)

I'm sorry. I needed --

SARAH

[You promised me.]

JAMES

I know -- I promised. I'm sorry.

Sarah sits up, moving to the corner of the sofa, away from him.

JAMES

(continuing;
sitting slowly)

It was for a second, Sarah, just --

He breaks off and there's a tense silence before:

JAMES

(continuing)

Oh, sweet, if you could just stop seeing this thing as a test of wills --

SARAH

[I'm not! I'm too old.]

JAMES

You're not too old to learn.

(CONTINUED)

180 CONTINUED (2):

180

SARAH

[I couldn't do it when I was little. I'd talk to people, thinking they understood me, but my mother was standing behind me translating.]

JAMES

(appalled at this, overlapping)
You'd talk to people, thinking they understood you but your Mother was standing behind you translating... I didn't know.

SARAH

[So stop lying! Stop saying you don't want me to speak when you do.]

JAMES

I'm not lying. I don't want you to speak if --
(miserably)
It just came out, Sarah. It just -- I'm sorry...

They lapse back into silence. Neither one moves.

181
THRU
183

OMITTED

181
THRU
183

184

EXT. THE CAMPUS - DAY (LATE)

184

James, Lydia, Cheryl, Danny and Glen are involved in an impromptu game of touch football. As Lydia gets the ball and dodges past James...

185

INT. THE APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - EVENING

185

as Sarah holds open the door and Lydia, Glen and Danny BURST IN with James. Sarah closes the door, wiping her hands on an apron she's wearing over her jeans.

LYDIA

Hi, Sarah. James said we could --

SARAH

[James said?]

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

Mr. Leeds, Lydia. James when you graduate.

LYDIA

Sorry. Mr. Leeds said we could watch this.

She holds up a video tape. Sarah gestures toward the bedroom and the kids move happily into it.

SARAH

[I don't want them hanging around here. I like my privacy.]

JAMES

They just want to watch this. It's good for their speech.

LYDIA

(reappearing; to James)
Can we have a soda?

JAMES

Sure, in the refrigerator.

SARAH

(as Lydia enters the kitchen)
[Now what?]

JAMES

Nothing important. What about your privacy?

SARAH

(mimicking James)
[Nothing important.]

She heads angrily into the kitchen. Lydia has taken the sodas into the bedroom and turned the TELEVISION UP FULL BLAST.

JAMES

I didn't mean to cut you off.

LYDIA

(calling out)
Did you say something?

JAMES

I said turn that damn thing down!

(CONTINUED)

LYDIA

What?

JAMES

Turn it down!

LYDIA

Then we won't be able to hear it.

The TELEPHONE RINGS in the living room.

JAMES

The phone's ringing!

LYDIA

What?

JAMES

The phone is ringing!

LYDIA

What phone?

JAMES

The one you can't hear because the TV is so goddamn loud!

He yells bloody murder, holding his head, and Sarah comes out of the kitchen, oblivious, holding out a jar that she can't unscrew.

SARAH

[What's going on?]

JAMES

(trying to unscrew the jar)

I yelled! The phone's ringing and the TV's blasting and, shit --

A TEA KETTLE SCREECHES.

JAMES

(continuing)

The kettle's whistling.

Sarah doesn't understand.

JAMES

(continuing)

Now, if someone would fire a bazooka through the window --

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

[What?]

There's a beat as James realizes that Sarah has no idea what's going on. He hands her the jar and picks up the phone.

JAMES

Hello? Would you hold on a second.

(to Sarah)

The kettle -- the water's boiling.

(as Sarah dashes off)

Hello, yes, I'm here. Who the hell is this? ... Ask him to wait a second, will you?

James moves into the kitchen area, finding Sarah making tea.

JAMES

(continuing)

It's for you. It's one of the dorm counselors translating a call from Don Juan --

SARAH

[Who?]

JAMES

Orin. It's Orin for you. Lydia, Danny - for Christ's sake!

The TELEVISION SHUTS OFF and the kids come out of the bedroom. James and Sarah head back to the phone.

LYDIA

It broke -- sorry.

They EXIT, SLAMMING the DOOR behind them.

JAMES

Thank God for small -- What?

Oh, to hell with it.

(into the phone)

Hello... okay, Sarah's here.

Is Orin there? Are you both

ready? We're both ready.

This is Sarah speaking to Orin.

SARAH

[Hi. Why are you calling?]

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

(into the phone)

Hi, why are you calling?

(to Sarah)

Because I'm having a small dinner party. I want you to come -- please?

(without signing;

to himself)

How about me -- please.

(into the phone)

No, don't translate that to Orin.

SARAH

[What?]

JAMES

(to Sarah)

Please --

SARAH

(cutting in)

[You're saying please?]

JAMES

No, I'm not saying please.

(into phone)

Hold on.

(to Sarah)

That was Orin saying please. My fault, I probably sounded like me instead of like the dorm counselor sounding like Orin. He wants you to come to a dinner party -- please.

SARAH

[Why me?]

JAMES

(into phone)

Why me?

(to Sarah)

Marian Loesser's back from D.C. She's dying to see you. Bring James. Friday, seven o'clock.

Sarah's eyes brighten. She looks to James. He nods.

JAMES

(continuing;

into the phone)

All right -- see you then.

(CONTINUED)

James puts down the receiver and it's suddenly silent. He cocks his head, listening.

JAMES
(continuing)
Either I've just gone deaf or
it's suddenly quiet in here.

SARAH
[You make everything a joke.]

JAMES
I don't make everything into
a joke.
(after a beat)
I possibly obscure -- how the
hell d'you sign "obscure"... ?

With resignation, he starts to fingers spell.

JAMES
(continuing)
O-b-s-c -- shit!

His fingers aren't working. They seem to lock. He shakes his hands, exasperated, then says steadily:

JAMES
(continuing)
I'm going to rest my hands and
my eyes and listen to twenty
minutes of B-A-C-H. You know
I haven't turned on my stereo
since you -- Hold it, that
sounds like --

SARAH
(a finger to her lips)
[Shhh.]

JAMES
I'm blaming you for me not
listening to music.

SARAH
[Shhh. You need a day off,
once a week, when you don't
have to answer the phone, or
translate or sign to me.]

JAMES
That's not what I meant. I
don't need a day off once a
week, or ever. I just --

(CONTINUED)

185 CONTINUED (6):

185

SARAH

[Rest your hands, listen to
your music.]

JAMES

Thank you, I will. I'll rest
my hands, listen to something
beautiful.

He moves to the stereo, picks out his favorite Bach piece,
and puts it on. The MUSIC FLOODS the room. Sarah watches
as James stretches out on the sofa and closes his eyes. He
gets deeply involved in the music, in another world. She
lights a cigarette and sits in a corner of the room, as much
in her own world, as he is in his.

186 NEW ANGLE

186

as James opens his eyes, watching her, realizing how separate
she is from him at this moment. He rises quickly, moving to
the STEREO and TURNS IT OFF.

SARAH

[Enjoy your music.]

JAMES

I can't enjoy it... I can't
because you can't.

There's a beat. They sit silently.

187 INT. THE BATHROOM - NIGHT

187

Sarah is alone, her face tired as she takes her makeup off.

188 ANGLE - SARAH'S REFLECTION - NIGHT

188

as she suddenly pauses, and leans close to the mirror. She
tentatively moves her mouth, imitating speech, but without a
sound, peering at her lips.

189 INT. THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

189

James is getting ready for bed. He's startled to HEAR the
BACH CONCERTO BEGIN AGAIN. Sarah has put it on. After a
moment, she ENTERS and moves to him.

SARAH

[Show me...]

(CONTINUED)

189 CONTINUED:

189

JAMES
Show you -- the music?

Sarah nods, and there's a pause before James puts his arms around her and moves her body to the rhythms of the Concerto. He holds her this way. It's a very intimate moment. Then he lets her go, and turns away.

JAMES
(continuing)
I can't -- not really -- I'm
sorry.

SARAH
[It's all right.]

JAMES
No, it's not all right. It
makes me sad for you, damn it.

SARAH
[Don't be -- please.]

JAMES
(after a beat)
All right, I won't be...

190 EXT. OUTSIDE ORIN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

190

James and Sarah get out of the truck, Sarah looking eager, James, in a coat and tie, already looking disgruntled.

191 INT. ORIN'S LIVING ROOM/DINING ALCOVE - NIGHT

191

The space is small and Orin has spread a buffet and drinks out on the dining table that's now pushed back against the wall. There are six guests, all deaf except James and Mary Lee Ochs. We should RECOGNIZE a couple of deaf TEACHERS from the school and then zero in on MARIAN LOESSER, the Guest of Honor, who is at the moment, holding court. She's in her forties -- dark, quick, with intelligent eyes and expressive hands. She could be an older version of Sarah, except that she glows with self-confidence.

192 ANGLE - JAMES

192

standing beside the table, somewhat removed, self-conscious, drinking more than he's eating.

193 JAMES' POV - THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

193

The group around Marian all seem to be signing in fast motion -- fingers fly and they laugh, exchange looks, in-jokes that don't need to be explained. Sarah is in the center of all this, beside Marian, and they seem to share a special connection. Sarah is as alive and unguarded as she's ever been with James.

194 RESUME SCENE

194

as James frowns, trying to follow their signing, feeling vaguely threatened by this dynamic woman, who communicates with Sarah in her way. It should be OBVIOUS that Marian doesn't speak, or move her lips, only signs.

Mary Lee comes out of the kitchen, sets a salad on the table, and moves to James' side. She also watches the group.

MARY LEE

She's something, isn't she?

(as James nods)

She's Franklin's pride and joy -- tells everybody they can grow up to be Marian Loesser.

JAMES

(with disinterest)

She's a lawyer or something?

MARY LEE

(shaking her head)

An economist -- in Washington now -- a math whiz.

JAMES

(wryly)

How thrilling.

MARY LEE

(with a look)

It is.

JAMES

I'm sure. It's just --

He gestures toward the animated, signing group.

JAMES

(continuing)

I feel like everyone's talking in some far-northern Hungarian dialect over there.

(CONTINUED)

194 CONTINUED:

194

MARY LEE
 (laughing)
 I know the feeling.

She picks up a glass of wine and moves off just as the group disperses, standing and sitting in two and threes. Orin picks up plates and heads for the kitchen, passing James, eyeing him.

ORIN
 Join us, James -- you're
 missing the fun.

We should SENSE that Orin is quietly enjoying James' discomfort.

JAMES
 (sensing this too;
 wryly)
 Thanks.

He focuses on Sarah and Marian, now beside each other on the sofa, their heads together, their fingers flying. They seem to communicate in every way, on all levels.

After a beat, James turns and fixes himself another drink, concentrating on getting just the right proportions.

195 ANGLE - THE SOFA

195

Marian is now signing with another guest, and Sarah sits quietly, her chin in her hands, watching Marian. We should sense that Sarah is feeling inadequate beside her.

196 ANGLE - THE DINING ALCOVE

196

James is again watching Sarah, seeing this. Orin comes out of the kitchen. He looks at Sarah, then shakes his head sadly.

JAMES
 What's that supposed to mean?

Orin simply shrugs. James bites his tongue and heads, with determination, for Sarah.

197 INT. JAMES' APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

197

Sarah is sitting on her side of the bed, smoking. James is getting ready for bed, taking change out of his pocket, unbuttoning his shirt. The air is heavy with tension and cigarette smoke.

(CONTINUED)

JAMES
 (breaking it)
 Come on, Sarah, what's eating
 you?

SARAH
 [I think Marian's great, don't
 you.]

JAMES
 Sure, Marian's great, but what's
 eating you?

SARAH
 [She has everything -- an
 education, a great job, money --]

JAMES
 (repeating, wryly)
 She's got it all -- an education,
 a great job, money -- Well, I'll
 tell you one thing she hasn't got.

SARAH
 [What?]

JAMES
 (expansively)
 Me!

SARAH
 (angrily)
 [We're not talking about you
 -- for once.]

JAMES
 (muttering)
 We're not talking about me,
 for once... True.

Sarah stubs out the cigarette and James sits on the edge of
 the bed, just looking at her -- her unhappy, tense face.

JAMES
 (continuing; gently)
 Let's crawl under the covers,
 sweetheart, and pretend we're
 in some romantic, distant place?

SARAH
 [We're not. We're here.]

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

(with a shrug;
covering)

Right, we're not, we're here...
So lets' deal with it? What's
making you so miserable?

SARAH

(reaching for
the light)

[Let's go to sleep.]

James grabs her hand, stopping her.

JAMES

No! You can't start a bonfire
in the bedroom and then go
night-night! Speaking of
bonfires, there's so much smoke
in here I can barely breathe!

He rises and moves to the window, throwing it wide open.
Sarah gets off the bed, picking up her cigarettes and heads
for the other room. James follows quickly and turns her
around.

JAMES

(continuing)

You can't start a bonfire and
run away, either!

SARAH

[Yes I can! I can do anything
I want.]

JAMES

You can do anything you want.
Oh, yeah? Like what?

This is it, and Sarah cracks, furious with him, furious
with herself.

SARAH

[Nothing! I can do nothing!
I'm equipped for nothing,
trained for nothing!]

JAMES

(overlapping)

Nothing -- you're not equipped,
not trained.

SARAH

[You have to translate
everything --]

(CONTINUED)

JAMES
(at the same time)
I have to translate everything --

SARAH
[I feel like an idiot. You
treat me like an idiot!]

JAMES
(overlapping)
You feel like an idiot. I
treat you like one. Wait a
sec...

SARAH
[And now I see Marian --]

JAMES
What about Marian?

SARAH
[Let me be me.]

JAMES
Let you be you? I don't?

SARAH
[You want me to be a deaf
person so you can change me
into a hearing person. You
don't want to help anybody
-- you just want to control
them, change them!]

JAMES
(overlapping)
Hey, slow down -- I want you
to be a deaf person so I can
change you into a hearing
person? I don't want to help,
just control people, change
them.

The impact of this hits him as he finishes and he turns
away, angrily.

JAMES
(continuing)
Good night.

Sarah runs in front of him, pounding his chest to get his
full attention, and James pushes her away.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

[You want me to speak!]

JAMES

You think I want you to speak --

SARAH

[And I just want to be me!]

JAMES

(at the same time)

And you just want to be you!
Well, who the hell are you?

SARAH

[I don't know! Just don't
pity me.]

JAMES

(his voice rising)

Don't pity you? I may be a
controlling sonofabitch, but
I have rights, too, you know.
I have the right to feel stabs
of sympathy for you even if
you are THE WORLD'S STUBBORNEST
HARDASS!

Sarah turns and runs out of the room.

It's minutes later and Sarah is alone, on the sofa, crying. It's a strange, rasping uninhibited sound because she can't hear it, moving and somehow, frightening. James ENTERS quietly, wearing a robe, listening. There's a long moment before he moves to her, sitting down beside her.

JAMES

(softly)

I never heard you cry before.

SARAH

[I'm not.]

JAMES

You are... I know because I
heard you.

He wipes her face with his fingers and strokes her hair until her face and body begin to relax.

(CONTINUED)

JAMES
 (continuing)
 ... Let's go back to just
 being alone together... Let's
 have a baby.

SARAH
 [A baby?]

James nods, and Sarah shakes her head.

SARAH
 (continuing)
 [If it were deaf, you'd hate
 it.]

JAMES
 If it were deaf, I'd hate it?
 That's a goddamn lie!
 (rising)
 If it were deaf and grew up as
 stubborn as its mother though --

He slams a fist on the mantle and Sarah rises and moves to
 him.

SARAH
 [I want to make love.]

JAMES
 (angrily)
 You want to make love -- now?

SARAH
 [Yes.]

JAMES
 (without signing)
 Fuck you, lady.

SARAH
 [That's what I want.]

JAMES
 Oh, that's what you want? You
got that, huh?

He reaches for her, roughly, and Sarah responds roughly.
 They're both hurting each other, crushing each other's
 mouths, digging into each other.

QUICK CUT TO:

199 INT. THE APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (A SHORT TIME LATER) 199

The LIGHT IS OUT and we can DIMLY MAKE OUT their shapes on the rug.

Sarah is on top, James' hand gripping her thighs, both of them venting anger. Their bodies shudder with a physical release, but the anger is still there, as Sarah rolls away from him and he rises and SNAPS ON A LIGHT.

JAMES

(after a silence)

That didn't help much.

SARAH

(rising)

[It helped me.]

JAMES

(wryly)

Yeah, we're into you tonight.
I've noticed... Jesus, what a night.

He puts on his robe, and Sarah exits briefly, returning in her jeans and sweatshirt.

JAMES

(continuing)

Where are you going?

SARAH

[Nowhere. This is what I came in. It's mine.]

JAMES

You're wearing what you came in -- it's yours -- right.

(heading for
the kitchen)

I need a drink...

200 ANGLE - THE KITCHEN AREA - NIGHT

200

James has fixed two straight vodkas. He carries them into the living room and hands one to Sarah. She's standing beside the mantle, fiddling with the sea glass.

SARAH

[Thank you.]

JAMES

(only signed)

[You're welcome.]

(CONTINUED)

200 CONTINUED:

200

He moves to the sofa, takes a gulp of the drink and shudders.

JAMES
(continuing;
to himself)
I think that helped.

Sarah sips her drink. There's a pause.

JAMES
(continuing; finally)
Tell me something -- we met,
we fought, we fell in love,
moved in together, and now
we're kicking each other's
teeth in... What happened?

SARAH
[... Maybe it was too fast,
too soon.]

JAMES
What was too soon?

SARAH
[Me moving in.]

JAMES
Ah, You moving in... maybe.

There's a silence as they both think about this, wonder about it.

SARAH
(breaking it)
[I've just decided something.]

JAMES
What've you just decided?

SARAH
[No one is ever going to speak
for me again.]

JAMES
(startled)
No one is ever going to speak
for you again? How are you
going to manage -- ?

SARAH
(cutting in)
[Did you hear what I said?]

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

(quietly)

Yes, I heard you. Did you
hear me? How d'you think
you're going to manage?

Sarah answers with intensity, fire and determination in her hands. Her words are coming straight from her soul. James translates, a beat behind her.

SARAH AND JAMES

Everybody's always said who I
am. And I let them. -- She
says, she wants, she thinks.
And most of the time they were
wrong -- they had no idea what
I wanted, thought, said. And
now they will.

She pauses, her breath coming quickly, and James nods and waits.

JAMES

(cautiously)

All right... I'll buy that.

SARAH

[Oh, no, you won't! How could
you?]

JAMES

I won't, how could I? ...
Because I love you.

SARAH

[Love has nothing to do with
it.]

JAMES

(to himself, a hurt,
angry mutter)

Love has nothing to do with
it. ... Wonderful.

(to Sarah)

Then what the hell have we
been doing?

SARAH

[Look! Look -- watch my hands!]

JAMES

Watch your hands... hard to
avoid them.

(CONTINUED)

Sarah goes on, the heart of the matter, and James translates, again a beat behind.

SARAH AND JAMES

This sign -- to connect --

(showing him)

Simple. But it means so much more when I do this --

(moving her hands between them)

Now it means to be joined in a relationship, to be separate but one -- Well, I want to be this way -- joined, but you speak for me, speak for Sarah, think for Sarah -- whoever Sarah is -- as if there were no I.

(after a moment)

Until you let me be an I, the way you are, you'll never be able to come inside my silence and know me... and I won't let myself know you... until that time -- we can't be like this -- joined.

There's a painful, thumping silence. James gulps his drink and tries desperately not to fully understand what she's just said.

JAMES

Well, you... that's all very... very moving. But -- but none of it answered my question. How'd'you think you're going to manage, speaking only for yourself when --

SARAH

[You didn't hear a word I said!]

JAMES

(rising; shouting)

I heard every word, goddamit! I translated for myself! It went from your hand to my brain and out my mouth. And you know what. I think you're lying. I don't think you think being deaf is so goddamn wonderful! I think you're scared to death to try -- I think it's stupid pride that's keeping you from --

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

[From speaking?]

JAMES

Right, from speaking! You want to be on your own, you don't want to be pitied, then you learn to read my lips and use that little mouth of yours for something beside showing me that you're better than hearing girls in bed!

Sarah reaches out and slaps his face. The SOUND REVERBERATES as she turns and tries to run. James follows and grabs her, turning her roughly, pinning her arms at her sides.

JAMES

(continuing)

Come on, ready my lips! What am I saying! What am -- ?

Sarah struggles to get free and James holds her fiercely.

JAMES

(continuing)

You want to talk to me, then you learn my language. Did you get that? Of course, you did! You've probably been reading lips for years, but it's a great control game, isn't it? I'm the controller -- what a fucking joke! Now, come on -- speak to me! Speak! Speak! Speak! Speak, goddamn you!

Sarah erupts in speech -- passionate and unintelligible, phrases but gibberish.

It comes from her throat like a primitive howl, tortuous and frightening to hear. She sees this mirrored on James' face as he drops her arms and stands there, in silent shock. Tears stream down Sarah's face and then she bolts for the front door.

She's gone before James is even able to move. He takes a step toward the door and then buries his face in his hands.

JAMES

(continuing;

barely audible)

Forgive me... Sarah, Sarah,
forgive me... God, forgive me...

107.

201 EXT. A STRETCH OF ROAD - NIGHT 201

Sarah, wearing her jeans and sweatshirt, her face blotched with recent tears, is hitchhiking. A truck, it's double LIGHTS GLOWING in the distance, is approaching. Sarah waves her arms, her thumb up.

202 EXT. THE GRAVEL ROAD - NIGHT 202

as the pick-up heads for the school.

203 INSIDE THE CAB - MOVING 203

James, dishevelled and exhausted, is driving, his eyes searching the school grounds for a glimpse of Sarah.

204 INT. THE NORMAN HOUSE - DAWN 204

The DOORBELL is piercing the quiet. Mrs. Norman is, nervously, throwing on a robe.

205 EXT. OUTSIDE THE NORMAN HOUSE - DAWN 205

It's grey and chill and Sarah shivers as she waits on the doorstep. She presses the doorbell again.

MRS. NORMAN'S VOICE
I'm coming! It's six in the morning, for --

She pulls the door open two inches, the chain still in place, sees Sarah and freezes, for an instant. Sarah tries to smile, but fresh tears come to her eyes. Mrs. Norman quickly unhooks the chain and throws open the door.

206 INT. THE NORMAN KITCHEN - DAWN 206

Sarah is sitting on a straight chair, hugging her knees, looking very young as Mrs. Norman pours scalding milk into two cups of hot chocolate. She smiles at Sarah, gesturing with her free hand.

MRS. NORMAN
You just sit there, rest... your favorite.

Sarah nods, smiles slightly, and watches her mother place the steaming cups on a tray.

(CONTINUED)

206 CONTINUED:

206

MRS. NORMAN
 (continuing)
 Anything else?
 (pulling them out)
 Donuts?

Sarah shakes her head, Mrs. Norman picks up the tray, and gestures, with her chin, for Sarah to follow her.

207

INT. THE NORMAN LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

207

Sarah is rolling her cup between her palms, looking into it, very far away. Mrs. Norman puts her cup down and picks up her cigarettes. She touches Sarah's knee, offering her one. Sarah nods, puts down her cup, and Mrs. Norman lights both cigarettes.

SARAH
 [Thank you. I left them. I
 left everything. I have --]

MRS. NORMAN
 (gently)
 Go slow for me. I'm an old
 fool, you know. You left
 everything. You have --

SARAH
 [I have nothing.]

MRS. NORMAN
 You have nothing... What
 happened, Sarah? He seems --
 so nice.

SARAH
 [He is nice -- too different --]

MRS. NORMAN
 He is nice -- but too different.
 Yes, that was bound to be true.
 (after a pause)
 Have you come home -- to stay?

SARAH
 [If I can -- for awhile.]

MRS. NORMAN
 Of course, you can -- as long
 as you like.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

[I need a job. There's
nothing I can do.]

MRS. NORMAN

You need a job but there's
nothing --

(after a beat)

I'll help. Ruth can help.

SARAH

[You never helped.]

MRS. NORMAN

You're right -- I never helped.

She rises, putting out the cigarette, tightening her robe,
looking for a way out.

MRS. NORMAN

(continuing)

More hot chocolate?

Sarah shakes her head and sits tensely, avoiding her mother's
eyes. Mrs. Norman moves to her side, touching her cheek, and
Sarah looks up at her.

SARAH

(quietly)

[Why did you hate me?]

MRS. NORMAN

(equally quiet)

I didn't hate you.

SARAH

[You sent me away.]

MRS. NORMAN

(very low; brokenly)

We sent you away because we
thought it best -- We were
pulling apart. He couldn't
-- couldn't accept you. He
felt he'd failed.

SARAH

(still quiet)

[And you hated me.]

MRS. NORMAN

(still very low)

You're right... I hated you
for driving him away... Forgive
me.

(CONTINUED)

207 CONTINUED (2):

207

There's a pause. It's broken by the SOUND of the PHONE.

MRS. NORMAN

(continuing)

The phone's ringing. What do I say?

SARAH

[I'm not here.]

In the b.g., Mrs. Norman moves to the phone. Sarah gazes around the room, touches the throw pillow beside her, her mother's needlepoint, looks at the photograph on the mantle -- her mother, young and smiling, holding a toddler -- Sarah or Ruth.

207A NEW ANGLE

207A

As Mrs. Norman returns, a tentative, questioning look on her face. Sarah looks up at her, as tentative as she. But Sarah's eyes are softer... the very beginning of forgiveness.

208 INT. THE APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY (EARLY)

208

as James stares at the phone, muttering:

JAMES

Lying bitch.

Sarah's jar of sea glass is on the coffee table in front of him. He picks it up, opens it, and slowly lets the little colored bits of glass -- a kaleidoscope of blues, greens and whites -- run through his fingers.

209 EXT. THE BEACH - DAY

209

James is walking slowly, alone, his head bent against the wind.

210 EXT. THE HARBOR NEAR THE NORMAN HOUSE - DAY (LATE)

210

The view is blocked by warehouses, smoke-stacks, machinery. Sarah and Orin ENTER THE FRAME, walking slowly, silently. Sarah's face is drawn, her eyes sad, and Orin glances at her, not sure what to do. After a beat, he puts an arm around her, reassuring her that he's with her. Instinctively, Sarah moves away, walking a pace ahead. Orin follows slowly, feeling almost as much loss as she is, at this moment.

111.

211 INT. A BAR - DAY (LATE) 211

James is alone, a beer in front of him. There's SOUND all around him -- the JUKEBOX, LAUGHTER, VOICES. After a moment, James puts his hands over his ears. He listens. He uncovers his ears and listens again.

212 EXT. A WACHUSSET STREET - DAY (LATE) 212

Sarah and Ruth are about to enter a shop. Sarah anxiously turns to her sister. Ruth smiles, crossing her fingers.

DISSOLVE TO:

213 INT. JAMES' APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY 213

The same Bach piece fills the room as James looks out at the bay, the pier, the trees that are just turning a new spring green.

214 CLOSE SHOT - JAMES 214

Really listening to the MUSIC, not humming, not conducting, just HEARING it. He's deeply moved, almost crying.

215 ANGLE PAST JAMES THROUGH THE WINDOW - DAY 215

Spring sunlight touches the water and a sailboat, out for a first run. A FISHERMAN turns his face to the warm breeze. The ferry is approaching, glistening with a new coat of paint.

216 INT. THE INDOOR POOL - DAY (LATE) 216

James is under water, floating, trying to hear the silence.

217 EXT. A WACHUSSET STREET - DAY (LATE) 217

Sarah is just about to catch a bus. It pulls to a stop, silently, and Sarah hops on.

218 INT. THE BUS - DAY (LATE) 218

Sarah drops in her coins (they too, are silent) and smiles at the BUS DRIVER as he speaks to her, his lips moving silently. She moves, confidently, into the bus, passing silent talkers, and finds a seat. She smiles slightly, pleased with herself, as the bus moves forward with a silent lurch.

219

INT. THE BAR - DAY (LATE)

219

James is sitting at a small table, a beer in front of him. Orin ENTERS, sees James, and crosses to him. Both men are, clearly, very down.

ORIN

... Can I join you?

JAMES

(with a shrug)

Sure. Misery loves company, they tell me.

ORIN

(shrugs, then)

How are you?

JAMES

(suspiciously)

And you?

ORIN

(quietly)

Oh, I'm fine.

Silence. The WAITRESS appears, holding a pad and pencil.

JAMES

Just another beer, please.

ORIN

For me too, please.

As the Waitress sticks the pencil in her ear and moves off...

220

THE SAME - LATER

220

James and Orin have finished off three beers apiece. Things have loosened up a bit.

ORIN

You know, I never liked you, James.

JAMES

Join the club.

ORIN

(after a pause)

Maybe I was wrong. Maybe you were good for her.

JAMES

... I was lousy for her.

(CONTINUED)

ORIN
 No, she made --
 (searching for
 the word)
 Progress.

JAMES
 (a bitter laugh)
 My claim to fame -- a stepping
 stone in the development of
 Sarah Norman.

ORIN
 I didn't get that.

JAMES
 It's just as well.
 (after a pause;
 quietly)
 Her silence frightened the
 hell out of me, Orin. I
 couldn't get in there. She
 was so... separate. When I
 try to be in that silence --
 I don't hear anything, don't
 feel anything -- I'm nothing.
 (very low)
 But, Christ, I love her so
 much...

ORIN
 (after a beat)
 Then let her be, let her go
 ... that's all you can do now.

James glances at him -- he's right -- then shrugs unhappily.

JAMES
 I don't know if I can.

221 INT. JAMES' CLASSROOM - DAY

221

The kids are full of beans, all except Johnny, who still sits,
 passively, in the back.

DANNY
 (his hand raised)
 Favorite books?

JAMES
 Good.

(CONTINUED)

221 CONTINUED:

LYDIA
(signing to Cheryl)
["Spider Woman".]

Cheryl giggles with her and James gives them both a look.

JAMES
(turning to him)
How about favorite books, Glen?

GLEN
(struggling)
Nort-west-passage.

JAMES
"Northwest Passage" -- Great.

He looks at Johnny, beside Glen, and then, rather than pushing him, he seems to decide to leave him alone. He goes on to the next kid.

JAMES
(continuing)
Tony?

As Tony begins to answer, a look of appreciation enters Johnny's usually wary eyes. It's the first time that James had left him alone.

222 EXT. THE CAMPUS - BESIDE THE SWINGS - DAY

222

James is standing there, half holding one of the swings, absently watching the younger children having a picnic on the grass. His view is suddenly blocked by a few kids, the Seniors, running across the lawn, carrying their caps and gowns. As one tosses his cap high in the air...

223 INT. SPEECH ROOM - DAY

223

In the same mood, James is just sitting there. There's a TAP on the DOOR and he looks up, surprised, to see Johnny standing there. He's holding a book.

JAMES
(a bit warily)
Come in.

Johnny ENTERS, also wary, and places the book in front of James. It's an old Andy Hardy mystery. James stares at it. It takes him a moment to put this together.

(CONTINUED)

223 CONTINUED:

JAMES
 (continuing;
 enunciating clearly)
 Your favorite book?

Johnny nods, and a smile lights James' face.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 Thank you, Johnny.

Johnny nods again and opens the book. Inside, there's a yellowed photograph of a Cocker Spaniel.

JAMES
 (continuing)
 Your favorite animal?

Johnny smiles, turns and goes out quickly. James sits there, amazed...

224 OMITTED

224

225 EXT. THE NORMAN HOUSE - DAY

225

James is standing on the doorstep, pleading with Mrs. Norman.

JAMES
 Look, I know she's here. I
 know she doesn't want to see
 me.

MRS. NORMAN
 She's made that very clear.

JAMES
 I know. But I have to see her.
 I was an ass, I was cruel -- I
 love her.
 (after a beat)
 Oh God, how can I get through?

MRS. NORMAN
 She'll let you know when she
 wants to see you. She's
 working, saving money. She
 wants to go to college.

JAMES
 That's fine, that's wonderful
 -- please? I've scoured this
 town...

(CONTINUED)

225 CONTINUED:

There's a pause as Mrs. Norman smiles slightly, softening.

MRS. NORMAN

(finally)

You probably haven't looked
in the beauty shops.

JAMES

(brightening)

The beauty shops -- Oh, my
God, thank you.

(racing to his truck)

Which one... ?

226 INT. A BEAUTY SHOP - DAY

226

Sarah, in a light blue uniform, is seated on a stool, bending over a woman's hand, finishing a perfect manicure.

227 EXT. OUTSIDE THE SHOP - DAY

227

as James races INTO FRAME. He's about to open the door as he catches sight of Sarah through the window. He stands there and watches.

228 JAMES' POV - THROUGH THE WINDOW - DAY

228

Sarah rises, smiling as the woman waves her fingers, drying her nails, saying what a beautiful job. She gestures to Sarah that she can't get her money out of her purse --

-- would Sarah do it? As Sarah nods, pleased with herself, and opens the purse...

229 BACK TO JAMES

229

watching Sarah, silently fascinated... she doesn't seem to need him... she's doing fine without him.

230 ANGLE PAST JAMES TO SARAH

230

as she pockets her tip. Her new confidence is evident, real rather than defensive, and it shows in her eyes, her bearing, her smile.

231 CLOSE SHOT - JAMES

231

as he turns, the neediness leaving his face. He's beginning to understand that he couldn't change her, keeping her tied to him... she's changed herself. As he walks off slowly...

232 INT. THE ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

232

Tom, Mary Lee and James are dressed for the school Senior Prom. They've finished an early dinner and are working on a second bottle of wine. James is obviously high, trying to have a good time.

233 INT. THE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

233

As James, Mary Lee and Tom enter. The prom is in full swing. The BAND, PLAYING one heavy ROCK BEAT after another, is so LOUD that only the deaf can enjoy it. Balloons and streamers are hanging from the backboards. James SPIES William hanging back by the wall, with a shit-eating grin on his face. He comes up to William.

JAMES

Have a good summer, William.

William nods conspiratorially.

JAMES

(continuing)

Language skills can be dangerous, William, use a little common sense, okay?

WILLIAM

I will, Mr. Leeds.

JAMES

So long, William.

WILLIAM

So long, fuckface.

James starts, raises his eyes, nods not bad, not bad at all. The CAMERA PANS the dancers and FINDS all of James' students dancing, celebrating. Franklin is doing something with his wife.

Sarah is dancing with Orin. She's wearing a short, lace dress, a sprig of lilly-of-the-valley in her hair, and she's dancing very freely, very beautifully, her body a perfect counterpoint to the beat.

234 NEW ANGLE

234

Mary Lee nudges James and puts her hands over her ears, rolling her eyes. James smiles as his eyes scan the large room. He sees Sarah immediately -- he can't miss her. He sucks in his breath and stands perfectly still. He shifts his eyes to Orin who is smiling at Sarah. James turns quickly and EXITS. But Sarah has seen him. The beat goes on without her as she stands perfectly still.

235 EXT. THE BEACH - NIGHT

235

James is walking on the stretch of sand where he and Sarah had walked together.

Clouds pass over a sickle moon and the ocean is gentle tonight, the tide going out, leaving shells and seaweed in its wake. Sarah APPEARS behind James, running, carrying her shoes. He senses her and turns, watching her approach.

See Sarah looking for James.

236 CLOSE ANGLE - JAMES AND SARAH - NIGHT

236

as she reaches him. They're silent for a long moment, simply ~~looking into each other's eyes.~~ Sarah drops her shoes on the sand and smiles slightly, ~~her eyes bright.~~

SARAH *(trying to cover)*

[Wanna play stand up, sit down?]

JAMES

(laughing softly), *relax.*

No, I don't wanna play stand up, sit down.

(after a beat)

I don't want to play anything...

(after a long moment)

I can't pull you into my world of sound anymore than you can bring me into your silence... I know that now.

SARAH *(reluctant)*

[And I know I can hurt and I won't shrivel up and blow away.]

JAMES

And you know you can hurt and not shrivel up and blow away... *(quietly)*

Help me...

SARAH

[How?]

JAMES

Teach me.

SARAH

(a slight smile)

[You're the teacher.]

JAMES

(wryly)

Sure, I'm a terrific teacher.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JAMES (cont'd)
 (mocking himself)
 Grow, Sarah, but not too much.
 Understand yourself, but not
 better than I do. Be strong,
 but not so strong that you
 don't need me. *cut*

SARAH
 [We have to meet in another
 place -- not in silence, or
 in sound.]

JAMES
 (very low)
 We have to meet in another
 place -- not in silence, or
 in sound. *What place?*

He searches her face, and she searches his. There's a long
 pause before:

SARAH
 [We may not work.]

JAMES
 I know -- we may not work.

SARAH
 [... I'll help you if you'll
 help me.]

JAMES
 (echoing her, with
 all his heart)
 I'll help you if you'll help
 me.

Sarah makes the sign for "join", her two hands moving between
 them, and James places his hands over hers.

fade
 SLOW FADE TO BLACK.

THE END