

DINNER AT THE HOMESICK RESTAURANT

Screenplay by

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Based on the novel by Anne Tyler

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UNDER CREDITS

FADE IN:

Mid-morning on a sunny day. We are on Calvert Street in Baltimore. A well-maintained 10-year-old Buick drives slowly down the street past the row houses. They are all slightly different. One has dozens of roses struggling in the tiny front yard. In another, an illuminated madonna glows in the parlor window. Some houses have trims painted in astonishing colors.

The Buick comes to a stop across the street from Pearl Tull's house which has a bow of mourner's ribbon on the front door. Parked in front of this house is a black stretch limousine with a chauffeur at the wheel.

BECK TULL, for that's who is in the Buick, gets out of his car. He is a trim white-haired gentlemen of 75 in an old-fashioned and slightly gangsterish pin-striped suit.

He starts to cross the street but suddenly the front door of the house opens and CODY, 45, handsome and well-dressed, comes out followed by JENNY, 40, a beautiful woman who doesn't fix herself up. Her husband JOE, and a gaggle of children, follow. Bringing up the rear is RUTH, a skinny woman with faded red hair and last, 15-year-old LUKE. All are dressed in dark clothes.

Beck hesitates as they reach the limousine. The chauffeur gets out, comes around and opens the rear door. Everyone gets in, the children on the jump seats. Cody and Luke are in front with Luke next to the driver. The limousine starts off.

Beck returns to his car and follows the limousine down the street, a two-car funeral procession.

The cars drive through drab Baltimore streets past Linsey's Candy and Tobacco, Bobbie Jo's Barbecue with dusty artificial greenery on either side of the entrance. As they turn the last corner, there is a high school, built circa 1930s.

The limousine stops in front of the HOMESICK RESTAURANT where EZRA, 42, is waiting. He wears a loose-fitting khaki suit which seems oddly inappropriate for a funeral. There is a space between his collar and the knot of his tie. He looks his usual benign self, if a bit sadder.

CREDITS END

Ezra opens the back door of the limousine and starts to slide in next to Ruth. At the same instant, Cody opens the front door, gets out and directs Luke,

CODY

Son get in back. Ezra, there's room in front.

Luke, teary-eyed, gets in next to Ruth who puts her arm around him, as the limousine starts up. The Buick follows.

The cars pull up in front of the First Baptist Church. On the announcement board in front is, PEARL TULL SERVICE, 11 a.m. "...and they shall call Her blessed."

Everyone gets out of the limousine and start up the church steps, followed by Ezra and Cody. An elderly lady stops Ezra to murmur condolences.

ELDERLY LADY

So sorry to hear about your Mother.

EZRA

Thank you for coming.

As Cody impatiently waits for Ezra, he watches Beck, who has parked a little ways back of the limousine. Suddenly he recognizes who it is and turns angrily to Ezra.

CODY (in a loud voice)

For God's sake. Who in the hell invited him?

EZRA (quietly)

I did. Mother asked me to invite everyone in her address book to her funeral. And there it was. Beck Tull.

CODY

What did you say?

EZRA

This is Ezra. Mother has died and her funeral is Monday at eleven.

Beck has reached them. He stops one step below.

BECK

Hello boys. It's your Father speaking.

Jenny comes down the stairs and stops.

JENNY

Cody, what's wrong?

CODY (to Jenny)

Your brother went and asked our father to the funeral.

EZRA

Mother told me to.

JENNY (laughing)

Typical Pearl!

BECK

And this must be Jenny. Last time I set eyes on you, you were just about eight. Your favorite song was Mairzy Doats.

JENNY (taking Beck's arm)

Everyone's waiting. We'll have a chance to visit after the service.

Ezra and Cody follow them up the stairs.

CODY

Damnit. After what he did, he doesn't belong.

All enter church.

EXT. BACKYARD OF PEARL'S GIRLHOOD HOME

A summer afternoon 50 years ago. PEARL, a slender 30-year-old woman, still beautiful but with the faint beginnings of lines around her eyes, is kneeling in the dirt behind a frame house. Her pinafore is a mess, perspiration rolls down her back as she weeds the garden. The sound of piano scales comes from the house next door. Pearl hums to herself.

As she reaches for the trowel, around the side of the house comes a young, handsome blue-eyed stranger, Beck Tull, 25, in a loud plaid sport coat. His black hair is waved into a pompadour and his straw hat with a fancy band, is pushed back. Beck carries a bunch of flowers and a Whitman Sampler box. He juggles them as he unlatches the gate.

BECK

Hello. Hello. Anyone back here?

Pearl, absorbed, doesn't hear.

Beck sees her, crosses the yard and stops at Pearl's feet.

BECK

Pearl. Pearl Cody!

Pearl, surprised and flustered, looks up.

BECK

We met this morning at church. You said it would be all right for me to call. I represent the Tanner Corporation out of Norfolk. (He pauses.) Emmaline introduced us.

Beck puts his hand out and helps Pearl to her feet. Pearl smooths her hair which has becomingly escaped from the top knot. She desperately looks for a pocket for the trowel as Beck hands her the flowers and chocolates.

PEARL

Of course, I remember. Beck Tull.

INT. AUNT and UNCLE KITCHEN

AUNT BESSIE and UNCLE SEWARD are watching Pearl and Beck as they talk. Beck turns to go and Pearl walks towards the back door.

Aunt Bessie looks at Pearl, and then out the window in time to see Beck disappearing down the driveway.

Aunt Bessie and Uncle Seward busy themselves at the kitchen table with the Sunday paper as Pearl enters. She puts flowers down on sink and starts to fill vase.

AUNT BESSIE

Who was that, Pearl? You didn't ask him
him in.

Pearl turns off water, puts flowers in vase. Doesn't turn around.

PEARL

You'll meet him this evening. He's asked
me out.

AUNT BESSIE (disapprovingly)

Last minute...and on a Sunday night....

Pearl, carrying the vase, and candy, starts towards the back stairs.

PEARL

I don't care. I'm going.

Pearl continues upstairs. Uncle Seward puts down paper.

UNCLE SEWARD

For God's sake, Bessie, don't be so particular.
We're never going to get her off our hands.

INT. PEARL'S BEDROOM

Photographs, powder box, music box, brush, comb and mirror set on doily on vanity. Other knickknacks which will go with her throughout her life.

She places flowers on dressing table, opens drawer and takes out diary. She sits down and begins to write.

PEARL (voice over)

July 9, 1931. I went out behind the house to weed. I was kneeling in the dirt with my pinafore a mess...

INT. THE KIT KAT CLUB. NIGHT.

Pearl, now dressed in a flowered rayon dress, with a gardenia behind her ear, is dancing with Beck.

As they dance, Beck is describing the wonders of the Tanner Corporation, and himself.

BECK

Tanner has the finest line of farm and garden equipment over the entire Eastern seaboard. And their No. 1 salesman in Northwestern Virginia is yours truly!

PEARL

So you're just passing through. How did you ever meet Emmaline?

BECK

Oh, I make sure that come Sunday morning, I'm in a town where there's a Baptist church.

PEARL

I'm Episcopalian. I just went this morning
because Emmaline asked me.

BECK

Lucky for me.

The music stops, and Beck ends the dance with a flourish. Pearl starts to leave the floor but Beck continues to hold Pearl's hand. She starts to pull her hand away but Beck looks down, places his hand to hers, palm to palm.

BECK

You have the tiniest hands, Pearl.

He steps back and looks admiringly at all of Pearl.

BECK

And so refined.

The music starts. Pearl drops her hand and they resume dancing. He moves closer. She doesn't resist.

BECK

Mr. Tanner himself told me that I'm just
the kind of fellow that will go straight to the
top. He is giving me the Newport News
territory. No wife of mine will ever want for
anything.

Pearl steps back, looks seriously at Beck.

PEARL

Yes, I know.

Beck pulls Pearl closer and they continue dancing.

1935

INT. TULL LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

A neat but tiny living room with a dining table in an alcove. Beck and Pearl's wedding picture on the mantel of a fake fireplace.

Beck, wearing his salesman's suit, but with his tie loosened on his Arrow shirt, sits drinking beer at the table. His sample case, with the Tanner Corporation logo emblazoned, lies on the table.

Pearl sits across from him, mending socks. Their first-born, CODY, 2, plays with a small pair of boxing gloves. Half-size, but still way too large for a 2-year-old. Beck has brought them to him.

BECK

How does Richmond sound to you? There's a chance it could be a move up the ladder for me.

Beck takes another sip of beer.

PEARL

Move again? Seven times in 3 years. Can't we stay put.

BECK

Now, Pearl, this could mean a chance at a home office job. Wouldn't have to travel as much.

PEARL

Last week when Cody was so sick--and you on the road--where was I to find a doctor in the middle of the night. He could have died.

Cody is struggling with the gloves. Beck looks down and lifts Cody to his lap.

BECK

He's fine. You just worry too much. Here, Cody, let me do that.

He puts the gloves on.

PEARL (puts down mending)

I want more children. I need some extra. One little boy just isn't enough.

BECK (pleased and proud)

You think the champ needs a brother. All right, Pearl, my girl. Let's give it a try.

Beck, smiling, sets down the beer and gets up from the table. He sets Cody down on the floor and puts his arms around Pearl.

BALTIMORE, JULY 4, 1944

EXT. FORT McHENRY.

Cody is now 13. He is a handsome boy, very conscious of girls and how they view him. He wears a perfectly pressed plaid sports shirt neatly tucked into khaki pants.

Cody is carefully driving the Tull car, a 1940 Buick. Beck sits next to him. Beck, in the same pompadour hairstyle, wears a salesman's type suit but without a tie. Beck has been teaching Cody to drive but this is the first time he has allowed him to drive with anyone other than Beck in the car.

The others sit in the back seat. Pearl wears a slack suit. Next to her are "two extras"--Ezra and his sister, JENNY. Ezra, 10, is the "no trouble at all" second child. He wears a polo shirt which hangs outside his trousers. His baseball glove is on his lap and he fingers a tin whistle

On Pearl's other side is Jenny, a bouncy eight-year old, who sings Mairzy Doats as she looks out the window.

Cody turns into lot and parks head-on. He turns off the key, sits back and breathes a sigh of relief.

Beck leans over and removes key from ignition and places it in his pants pocket.

BECK

Now, put on your brake, Cody.

Cody sets hand brake. Beck turns to back seat.

BECK

Pearl, you can relax now. He got us here all in one piece.

PEARL

Cody, you did just fine. All right, children,
let's see if we can find an empty table.

All get out. Cody and Beck, carrying gloves and ball go off. Ezra and Jenny remain to help Pearl unload the car.

EXT. GRASSY PARK.

Pearl and Jenny are setting out lunch on a picnic table covered with a checked cloth. Ezra is nearby. Fried chicken, deviled eggs, potato salad and cupcakes with tiny American flag set in each. Lemonade in a thermos. And a bottle of beer for Beck.

JENNY

Mother, is this where Patrick Henry lived.
(Declaiming) "Give me liberty or give me
death."

PEARL

Oh, I don't think so, Jenny. Go ask your
Father. And tell them to come on. Lunch is
ready.

Jenny runs over to where Beck and Cody are playing catch. Jenny goes to Beck who bends down to listen to her question. Beck answers, but we do not hear question nor answer. Beck takes Jenny's hand and motions Cody to come on. All walk towards Pearl.

Ezra, playing his tin whistle, kicks an empty can and uncovers a coin in the grass. He picks it up, looks around and up at the nearby trees. He wanders back to his mother.

EZRA

Mother, if it turned out that money grew on trees just for one day--and never again--would you let me stay home from school and pick it?

PEARL

No.

EZRA

Why not?

PEARL

Because your education is more important.

EZRA

Other kids' mothers would let them, I bet.

PEARL

Other mothers don't have plans for their children to amount to something.

EZRA

But just for one day?

PEARL

You could pick it after school. Or before.
Wake up extra early. Set your alarm clock
ahead an hour.

EZRA

An hour! Only one little hour for something
that happens only once in the world.

PEARL

Ezra, will you let me be. Money on trees!
The things you think of. Lunch is ready.

Pearl goes back to setting table. Ezra stands there, forlornly, as
others approach.

EXT. GRASSY PARK.

Lunch is over. Beck, in shirt-sleeves, is finishing his beer. Cody and
Ezra pick up baseball gloves and starts to leave the table.

BECK

Hold on, boys. I want to get a snapshot
before it gets too dark.

Beck takes camera from picnic basket.

PEARL

I must look a mess.

Pearl straightens her slack suit and smooths hair.

BECK

All right, how about over there facing the sun with the fort in the background. Let's show the flag is still flying.

Pearl stand up and walks to where we can see Fort McHenry and American flag behind her. Ezra immediately goes to stand next to his mother. Jenny walks to other side.

CODY (as he moves her aside)

Jenny, you stand in front of me.

Cody puts one arm around his Mother's waist and his other hand on Jenny's shoulder. Ezra stands holding baseball glove. Pearl's arm is around his shoulders.

Beck glances over his shoulder, positions himself so that sun is behind him and in their eyes.

BECK

Ready, One, two three.

Click.

EXT. TULL HOUSE. DAY

Front porch of the house. Beck's car parked in front. Beck, in suit and tie, sits on a rocker with sample case next to him. Jenny, wearing Beck's hat, sits in his lap. Pearl, with nails in her mouth, hammers down a loose porch step.

BECK (describing his week's triumphs)

You remember Ed Ball used to have my territory--he never could get into to see Paul Anderson. Well, Thursday, I went in there and when I walked out, I had a \$270. order, net 30 days.

When I told Ed, he hinted there might be an opening in the home office. What would you think about Norfolk?

Cody, 14, handsome, and Ezra, 11, playing his bamboo whistle come up the sidewalk to the porch and greet their Mother. She removes nails and kisses each. They also greet Beck from the security of Pearl's arms.

BECK

Boys, you want to see what your Father bought you? It's on the back seat.

Cody and Ezra run to car and return with an archery set in a big box. Cody opens box and takes out bow and arrow.

PEARL

The things you spend your money on.

BECK

Archery isn't just a game. It's educational.
It'll teach the boys to stand up straight.
Give them good posture.

Pearl shrugs.

EXT. A FIELD. DAY

The whole family. Pearl picks dried flowers. Jenny sits buttoning and unbuttoning her sweater. Ezra chews a piece of grass and fingers his bamboo whistle. Beck still wears his salesman's clothes with the tie loosened. He finishes nailing the target to tree while Cody places an arrow against the bow's string.

BECK

Wait now, son. You want to do things right.

Beck crosses to where Cody stands and positions Cody.

BECK

Now, your left arm goes like this. You want to keep your wrist from getting stung, you see. And stand up straight...

Before Beck finishes his instructions, Cody lets go of arrow which hits side of target and falls to the ground.

BECK

Did I tell you to shoot yet. Did I? I wasn't even through explaining. You never listen. I don't know why I bother.

Beck walks over to retrieve the arrow as Cody mutters loud enough to be heard.

CODY

No way it could stick in that hard tree.

Beck picks up arrow and jams it into bull's eye.

BECK

Look at that. Steel-tipped. Of course it sticks. I chose that tree. Of course, it sticks.

PEARL (from a distance)

Did he hit it?

BECK

No, he didn't hit it. He never listens.

PEARL

Let Ezra try. Beck, let Ezra try.

CODY

Ha. That sissy.

BECK

All right, Ezra. Come and try. Just don't get carried away like Cody.

Ezra ambles over. Beck takes bow from Cody and hands it to Ezra with another arrow. Beck instructs him. Ezra is awkward but patient. Finally,

BECK

Let her fly, Ezra.

Ezra shoots and the arrow goes straight to the center of the bull's eye, splitting the arrow still jammed into the tree.

BECK (admiringly)

Will you look at that?

Pearl walks closer.

PEARL

Why, Ezra. A bull's eye.

BECK

See there, Cody. Just goes to show what happens when you follow instructions.

Cody takes bow from Ezra and places another arrow in bow. Ezra wanders to the target to look at his bull's eye. Cody aims at the target, moves to shrubbery, then to Beck's dusty blue Nash and back to Ezra where he stops. Ezra turns to see Cody pointing arrow at him.

EZRA (running towards Cody)

No. Stop, stop, stop. No.

Ezra knocks Cody to ground. Arrow leaves bow. Cody and Ezra wrestle in grass until Cody pushes Ezra off. Cody looks up to see Pearl leaning on his Father's arm. A circle of blood on the shoulder of her blouse. Jenny hangs on Pearl's skirt, crying.

BECK

Pearl, my god. Oh, Pearl.

CODY (to Ezra)

See what you've gone and done!

Cody stands up, brushes off his clothes and walks towards car.

INT. TULL LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Pearl, her arm in a bandanna sling, sits on a chair. Beck sits across the room with his Tanner case on the floor next to his feet

BECK

I'm being transferred to Norfolk.

PEARL

Oh, Beck. We're hardly settled here, not even a year.

BECK

I'm going alone.

PEARL (startled and angry)

Alone. Why, Beck? Why?

BECK (slowly)

I don't want to stay married.

Beck looks down at his hands. He looks like a young and belligerent schoolboy waiting out a scolding.

PEARL (lowers her voice)

Tell me, what is it?

BECK (slowly, pausing between words)

I just told you.

PEARL (unbelieving)

We'll sleep on it.

Beck stands and starts upstairs.

BECK

I'm going tonight.

Beck exits as Pearl sits unmoving.

Later. Pearl has turned on a table lamp but she is in the same chair. Beck returns to the living room carrying his suitcase. He picks up his Tanner case, and starts to cross the room.

PEARL

But the children. You'll want to visit the children.

Beck continues across the living room to the front door. Stops and turns.

BECK

No. I won't be visiting the children.

Beck opens the door and pauses.

BECK

I'm not an irresponsible person. I do plan to send you money.

Beck exits and the door closes.

INT. THE TULL KITCHEN. DAY

Jenny stands in the middle of the room wearing the bottom half of an Easter egg costume. The top half of the egg sits on the kitchen table. Pearl is adjusting the suspenders that hold on the bottom half.

Cody enters through the kitchen door. He has his sweater tied around his waist. Carries baseball glove and school books.

CODY

What's that?

JENNY

Can't you tell. I'm an Easter egg in the school play.

CODY (to Pearl)

You oughta make one of those for Ezra--as cracked as he is.

PEARL

Oh Cody. Why do you have to be so hard-boiled?

Cody taken aback. He's not used to his mother making jokes. Pearl continues adjusting the costume. Cody goes to the refrigerator, opens it, take a bottle of milk out and drinks from the bottle.

Ezra enters, hugs his mother, looks at costumed Jenny.

EZRA

Hey, that's really nice. Is it time for supper?

PEARL

Jenny, we're about through. Put all this up in my bedroom. Ezra, you set the table.

Pearl goes to refrigerator, takes out hamburger meat, and begins to prepare supper.

Later. All seated at the kitchen table. Ezra has set the table for five and there is one empty chair. Pearl begin's to serve dinner. It's hamburgers and mashed potatoes. The boys start to eat. Jenny looks at his mother.

JENNY

Shouldn't we wait for Dad?

PEARL

No. not tonight. He'll be away all weekend--business.

Pearl finishes serving and starts to eat.

CODY

Again! But we'll miss opening day. It's the Yankees!

PEARL

Well, if it's the Yankees on Opening Day, I
can take you.

All continue eating.

INT. PEARL'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Pearl is putting the finishing touches on the egg costume. She puts it on a hanger and puts away her sewing machine. Pleased at her handiwork.

Pearl, wearing nightgown and robe, leave the room carrying the costume. She walks down the hall to Jenny's bedroom and quietly opens the door. Jenny is sound asleep.

A nightlight glows. Pearl hangs the costume on the edge of the closet door so that Jenny will see it when she wakes. As Pearl exits Jenny's room, phone in hallway niche rings. Pearl catches it in middle of first ring.

PEARL

Hello. Hello. Who is it? Beck? Hello.

Pearl puts down receiver and she returns to her bedroom. She removes her robe, places it on chair and sits on edge of bed. She looks over at Beck's empty side and remains seated.

She get up, goes to bureau for her purse. The 4th of July picture has been framed and sits on top of bureau next to girlhood mementos. Opens purse and takes out envelope. Slits it open, takes out check and looks in envelope again for note. It's empty. She places check in purse, closes it and puts it back on bureau.

Pearl sits down at dressing table with the envelope, opens drawer, takes out address book and opens it to page where she carefully copies Beck's newest address. Replaces book. Closes drawer. Opens another drawer and places envelope inside on top of other envelopes.

She returns to bed and before she can get in, she thinks she hears noises downstairs. Putting on her robe, she exits bedroom.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Ezra is closing the refrigerator door. He has a sandwich in one hand. Sees his Mother.

EZRA

Night, Mom.

And leaves the kitchen. Pearl tidies Ezra's sandwich makings. Checks the kitchen door and windows. Looks out one window at empty yard.

A loud crash from upstairs. Pearl shrieks.

INT. CODY AND EZRA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

It is dark. The overhead light goes on and Pearl, carrying a baseball bat stands in the doorway. Jenny, in nightclothes and carrying a stuffed rabbit, is behind her.

PEARL

Good Lord preserve us. What happened?

From his bed, Cody stares at her with a sleepy expression. Ezra's bed has collapsed and he has disappeared into the bedclothes on the floor.

PEARL

Ezra, honey.

Pearl lays the bat down on the floor and sees magazines scattered around Ezra's bed. They are open to pictures of women in garter belts, black lace brassieres or in nothing whatsoever. Pearl picks one up and is astonished at what she sees.

PEARL

Ezra Tull!

Ezra peers over the edge of the bed and for the first time sees the magazines.

PEARL (dropping the magazine)

I never suspected that you would be such a person.

Pearl turns, exits, pulling Jenny with her.

Ezra emerges from his bed and jumps on Cody. He grabs a handful of hair, shakes Cody's head. Cody finally manages to knock Ezra off, who sobs.

Cody gets up and goes to closet and shows Ezra where he'd stashed the slats. Together they fit them into place, heave the mattress back on the frame and smooth the bedclothes. Cody turns out the light, they climb into their beds and go to sleep.

INT. BANK. DAY.

Pearl, wearing a WAC-style hat, stands in front of a teller's window. She removes check from purse, uses pen on counter, endorses it, and hands it to teller.

Teller stamps it, places it in drawer and counts out bills.

TELLER

Here you are, Mrs. Tull. 25 dollars

Pearl turns away from teller, places money in purse and walks quickly from the bank.

EXT. FRONT OF BANK. DAY

Pearl, unsmiling, stands in front of bank for a moment and then turns towards home.

EXT. SWEENEY BROTHERS PRODUCE AND GROCERY STORE.
DAY.

Pearl, still wearing her hat, stands in front of the store. Propped in the window is a faded sign. CASHIER WANTED.

INT. SWEENEY'S. DAY.

Pearl enters the store and crosses to Mr. Sweeney who is ringing up groceries at a cash register. He continues ringing as he listens to her.

CUSTOMER

Mr. Sweeney, this soup can's dented. Can I have something off?

PEARL

Soup's soup. Full price.

Customer looks at Pearl and then to Mr. Sweeney. Who is looking admiringly at Pearl. The job is hers.

MR. SWEENEY

That's right. Full price, ma'am.

He finishes ringing up the order, thanks the customer and moves aside. Pearl places her purse underneath the counter, and still wearing her hat, takes Mr. Sweeney's place at the register. She starts ringing up the next order as Mr. Sweeney instructs her.

EXT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH. DAY.

Pearl, wearing a pillbox hat with net, and her children, are exiting church. Pearl stops to speak to minister. Jenny talks to MELANIE, a schoolmate, whose Mother stands nearby.

JENNY

Oh, Melanie, I just love your dress.

MELANIE'S MOTHER (to Pearl)

How do, Mrs. Tull. Such a nice sermon. I haven't seen Mr. Tull lately. How is he?

PEARL (curt)

Away on business. He's in charge of the whole territory now.

Pearl continues walking and the children follow her. Ezra takes out his recorder and starts playing as Jenny takes her Mother's arm.

PEARL

Careful, Jenny. Your shoe might come untied.

INT. THE TULL HOUSE. DINING ROOM. DAY.

Cody and LORENA, a 14-year-old neighborhood beauty, sit at the dining room table doing homework. Cody is drinking beer. Ezra walks through playing his recorder on the way to the kitchen. He doesn't acknowledge anyone.

LORENA

Who's that?

CODY

My brother Ezra, dummy.

LORENA

Well, how should I know. He's sure good-looking.

CODY

Good-looking. Ezra?

LORENA

And he's so serious. He must be deep.

Lorena goes back to her homework.

CODY

Some people think he's dangerous. He has fits. All of a sudden, he'll be foaming at the mouth.

LORENA

I don't believe you.

CODY

When he gets that way, I'm the only one brave enough to go near him.

LORENA

I don't believe a word you're saying.

Lorena looks out of dining room window.

LORENA

Your Mother's coming.

Cody jumps up and starts removing beer bottle. Lorena laughs.

LORENA

I was just teasing. You ought to see your face. I don't even know your Mother.

CODY

The Sweeney Meanie. The cashier down at the grocery.

LORENA

Well, we do our shopping at Esmond's.
How come she works? Where's your
Father?

CODY

Missing in action.

LORENA

Oops, sorry.

She turn back to her homework as Cody swigs his beer. And from
the kitchen we hear Ezra's recorder.

EXT. THE TULL HOUSE. EARLY EVENING.

Cody sits on the porch glider. Ezra and Jenny carrying school books,
walk up.

CODY

Pearl's on the warpath. Better look out.

Reluctantly, all three enter the house. .

INT. TULL LIVING ROOM.

They hear Pearl slamming things around in the kitchen and talking
to herself. They exit living room towards the stairs.

INT. JENNY'S ROOM.

They enter the room. It's a mess. Heaps of clothes cover the floor. Empty drawers have been pulled out of the bureau. Jenny's dresses lay in a heap, the closet stands open, its hangers stripped.

CODY

Jen? What did you do?

JENNY

Nothing. Nothing, I swear.

All three pick up dresses and drawers and begin to straighten up. Jenny starts to cry as they work.

EZRA

I wish Dad were here.

CODY

Well, he's not, so shut up.

JENNY

Let's run away from home.

CODY

Where?

From downstairs, Pearl calls.

PEARL

Children, supper.

INT. TULL KITCHEN.

Cody, Ezra and Jenny are seated at the table. Pearl stands putting food on the table. Pearl takes Spam with fork from the can, places it on a plate and starts slicing.

PEARL (head down)

It's not enough that I have to work till 5. p.m. I come home and find the table not set, the breakfast dishes not washed, supper not cooked, floors not swept, mail in a heap on the mat-- and not a sign of any of you. I know what's going on. I know what you're up to. Savages.

Pearl hands Cody his plate.

PEARL

I know what people say. Customers are glad to tell me. "Mrs. Tull, that oldest boy of yours is certainly growing up." I know what they mean. (to Cody) They've seen you with a pack of Camels hanging around the hydrants with girls no better than tramps. Girls in tight sweaters and ankle chains. I just have to smile and take it.

JENNY (quietly)

But not me, Mama.

PEARL (icily)

I beg your pardon?

JENNY

I don't do any of those things.

PEARL

You! I know about you. I couldn't believe my ears. "Oh Melanie, I just love your dress." A cheap little number from Sears. The plaid wasn't matched, a bunch of artificial flowers at the waist. (Pearl turns to Cody) Oh, your sister says, I wish I had that dress.

Cody looks at Jenny who is crying silently. Ezra keeps his eye on his plate.

PEARL

And Melanie's mother. Well, it's just like opening the door to such a person. First thing she'll be walking in here as big as life bringing the catalogue. "Mrs. Tull, I know Jenny would love a dress like Melanie's." (Pause to look at all three children). What's wrong with us, I'd like to know. Aren't we good enough for my own blood daughter? I'm doing my level best to provide. Slaving away every day at that grocery...

Pearl looks at Jenny.

PEARL

We're family. We used to be so close. What happened to us? Why are you so disloyal?

Pearl sits down and reaches for the bowl of peas, starts to serve herself with a spoon. The subject is closed. Cody clears his throat.

CODY

But that was Sunday.

PEARL

Yes?

CODY

And this is Wednesday.

PEARL

Yes.

CODY

It's Wednesday, dammit. That's three days ago. Why bring up something from Sunday?

Pearl throws the spoon in his face, and then slaps him. She grabs one of Jenny's braids and yanks her off her chair. She turns the bowl of peas over Ezra's head. Peas fly everywhere.

PEARL (standing and spent)

Parasites. I wish you'd all die and let me go free. I wish I'd find you dead in your beds.

Cody, Ezra and Jenny look at her unblinkingly. Silence. No one speaks.

Pearl leaves the kitchen and goes upstairs.

The three Tulls clear the table, wash dishes, clean the kitchen, pull the shades in the windows and lock the back door. Silently, they go up stairs to bed.

THANKSGIVING 1945

EXT. TULL HOUSE. DAY.

A familiar car, a 1940 Buick, drives past the house. Beck is at the wheel. He goes to the end of the block, turns around and before reaching the Tull house parks, where he can remain unobserved.

Ezra sits on the front porch glider. He plays his recorder while idly rocking back and forth. Cody opens the front door and comes out. From inside the house, Pearl calls.

PEARL

Don't go too far. The turkey's almost ready.

Door slams behind Cody.

CODY (to Ezra)

Want to walk up to Sloop Street?

EZRA

What's up there?

CODY

Nothing much. This new girl at school.

EZRA

Oh, yes. Edith.

CODY

You know who she is. A black-haired girl.
Ninth grader. Edith Taber?

EZRA.

Yes, Edith! I was walking home yesterday playing my whistle and she caught up with me. Asked me if I wanted to see her recorder. So I went to her house and saw it. It's great. Plays sharps and flats with hardly any extra trouble.

CODY

Your were in her house? Did she know you were my brother?

EZRA

Her mother served us cookies. .

CODY

You met her mother!

EZRA

I wish I had a new recorder. Do you think Mother would get me one for Christmas.

CODY

You dunce. You raving idiot. Do you think she's got money for goddam whistles?

EZRA

Well, no. I guess not. (Pause) Are we going to Sloop Street?

Cody doesn't answer. He kicks a porch pillar, goes into house and slams door. Ezra follows him in.

We stay outside. Beck remains seated in the car.

INT. TULL DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

Thanksgiving dinner is over and the family sits companionably around the dining room table playing Monopoly. Jenny and Ezra are already out of the game. Cody has almost all the money stacked in front of him. It's Pearl's turn. She throws the dice and lands on Broadway, which Cody owns.

PEARL

That's it for me. I've only got three dollars.
Not enough for a mortgage. You win again,
Cody. We should have remembered not to
let you in this game. You always win.

All laugh as they start to gather the pieces of the game.

JENNY

Mother, please put on the skit. Please! It
wouldn't be a holiday without it.

PEARL

What do you say Cody?

Without waiting for Cody's reply, Pearl gets up from the table and begins. Pearl plays Ivy, a maiden in distress. Cody gets up and pretends to be the villain. He pretends to twirl a mustache.

CODY (as villain)

"Ivy, sweet sweet Ivy, lean upon my arm."

Pearl rolls her eyes and shrinks into a corner. She has it down perfectly--the blushing gaze and old-fashioned singsong of her responses.

It's time for the hero to appear. Pearl stops and looks at Ezra. Ezra shyly shakes his head and before Pearl can convince him, Cody goes to the other side of the room and enters as the hero.

CODY (bowing gallantly before Pearl)

"I will pay the money for the mortgage on the farm."

Cody dances Pearl into the living room where they collapse on the couch in giggles. Jenny and Ezra applaud. Cody and Pearl return to take an old-fashioned bow as the applause continues.

EXT. CALVERT HOUSE. NIGHT.

Beck's car is still parked. Beck's eyes are closed. He awakens and looks towards the house. Every light but Pearl's bedroom light is off. He watches as this window goes dark. Beck starts the car and drives slowly off.

EXT. TULL HOUSE. WINTER DAY.

Cody comes up the walk onto the porch, opens the front door and calls.

CODY

Anyone home?

No answer. He enters.

DECEMBER 20, 1945

INT. PEARL'S BEDROOM

Cody enters the bedroom. It is extremely neat. He goes to bureau and starts opening drawers. Cody finds a change purse. Opens it and removes one dollar. He continues opening drawers. His Mother's underclothes are neatly aligned. There is no sign of any of his Father's clothes. No socks, no underwear, no shirts.

Cody opens the closet. Pearl's clothes hang neatly. Her shoes in a shoe bag on the door. His Father's clothes are gone except for a hanger strung with faded, frayed and spotted ties. On the floor of the closet in a corner sit a pair of Beck's shoes so ancient the toes curl up.

Cody goes to the dressing table, opens the top drawer. Pearl's handkerchiefs, perfectly ironed are stacked as if in an invisible box. Another drawer. In this one there is a stack of Beck's letters. We can see they are addressed to Pearl Tull. He begins to open them. Reads one out loud.

CODY

Sorry the enclosed is little smaller than expected as I have incurred some... (he tosses it aside and opens another). Ed Ball is talking promotion and I expect a fat raise.

He goes quickly through the rest. The downstairs door slams. Ezra's recorder is heard. He replaces letters, slams drawer, looks quickly around and exits.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET. DAY.

Cody, Ezra and Jenny are shopping for a Christmas present for their Mother. They pause at SCARLATTI'S.

EXT. SCARLATTI'S.

It is the most elegant restaurant they know. Two urns decorated with red ribbon flank a handsome door on which a large wreath hangs. The front door opens and the Tulls stop to look inside.

The dining room has red-flocked wallpaper, soft lights in pink shades and a crystal chandelier. It has been decorated for Christmas. A pot of poinsettias is on every table, which are covered in snowy white linen with napkins folded in cones. The crystal and silver gleam.

MRS. SCARLATTI, a handsome woman of a certain age, comes out of the restaurant. She has dark hair swept back in a chignon and wears a severe black dress with strands of pearls a la Chanel. Not your usual Baltimore lady.

She stoops to adjust the bows on the urns and sees Ezra.

MRS. SCARLATTI

Is that my Ezra? And this must be Cody and Jenny. Doing your Christmas shopping? Well, have a Merry Christmas. (pause) And Ezra, I'll see you Saturday, regular time.

Mrs. Scarlatti checks the decorations again, turns, goes back into the restaurant and the door closes.

JENNY (amazed)

How do you know Mrs. Scarlatti, Ezra?

Ezra shrugs. There is no response.

CODY

What's next Saturday?

EZRA

I'm learning to fold napkins and set tables.
Last time, she paid me a dollar.

He reaches in pocket of jacket and hands it to Cody; and Jenny, thrilled at this additional money, suggests.

JENNY

Let's buy Mother a diamond ring.

CODY

That's really stupid. Even a dumb girl ought to know you can't buy a diamond ring for 3 dollars and twenty cents.

EZRA

Mother would think we wasted our money.

JENNY

I didn't mean a real one.

CODY

How about gloves?

JENNY

It shouldn't be anything to wear.

EZRA

Or that she needs.

Cody looks at Ezra, who is being agreeable as usual.

CODY

I know what you want for Christmas, Ezra.
World peace.

EZRA

World what! I'd like a recorder.

CODY

Well, you're not getting one. You're getting
a cap with turn down ear-flaps and
corduroy pants.

JENNY (pushes Cody)

Cody, you weren't supposed to tell.

A woman putting on her child's mittens stops in front of them. They
separate and go around her.

JENNY

Remember when Daddy bought us a sled
and Mother said it was silly because it
hardly every snowed. But then on
December 26th we woke up and there was
snow everywhere. We had the only sled in
town and Cody was charging for rides...

Jenny stops walking. Cody and Ezra also stop and look at her.

JENNY

Daddy's really not ever coming home again.
Is he?

CODY

Come on the store closes at six.

They resume walking three abreast and Cody takes a pinch of Ezra's sleeve so they won't drift apart in the crowd.

1955

INT. SCARLATTI'S KITCHEN. DAY.

It is 8 a.m. The kitchen is empty except for Ezra and Mrs. Scarlatti. Ezra is bigger than when we last saw him. He is unmarried, and still lives at home with his Mother. He is very much at home here, too, as he stirs a dish on the stove.

Mrs. Scarlatti sits at a table sipping soup. A stack of bills, etc., are pushed to the side of the table. Ezra watches her anxiously for an opinion.

MRS. SCARLATTI

20 pieces of garlic! I still don't believe it.

EZRA (pleased)

It'll settle your stomach. I'd like to put it on Sunday's dinner menu.

MRS. SCARLATTI

It's delicious, dear boy, but not a dish for our customers. Can you imagine putting gizzard soup on a menu.

She continues eating.

The back door opens and MR. PURDY, 60, enters carrying a bushel of vegetables. Greets Ezra and Mrs. Scarlatti as he places it on a counter and goes out for another. Ezra begins to unload the bushel.

EZRA (picks up an eggplant)

Aren't these beautiful, Mrs. Scarlatti? Mr. Purdy has brought us a whole bushelful. Shall I try an eggplant casserole?

Mr. Purdy returns with the last basket. Tomatoes. He takes one out to show to Ezra.

MR. PURDY

Look at this! I wasn't even going to bring them. There ought to be a state law against selling red plastic and calling it tomato.

EZRA

We shouldn't even serve tomatoes in the winter.

MRS. SCARLATTI

Dear boy, our clientele would get up and leave. Imagine, no tomatoes in the salad.

EZRA

We could have different vegetables--
whatever's in season.

MRS. SCARLATTI

At Scarlatti's people expect continental food,
no matter the season.

EZRA

I'd put up a blackboard--just like in France--
and write on it everyday. Maybe only two or
three dishes a day.

MRS. SCARLATTI'S

It wouldn't be Scarlatti's.

EZRA (continues unpacking the
vegetables)

Or maybe no menu at all. I'd just look at
people and say, "you look a little tired. How
about some oxtail stew--or maybe gizzard
soup. Made with love."

MRS. SCARLATTI

And 20 pieces of garlic! Angel boy, you'll
have to wait until I'm gone.

Purdy sits down at the kitchen table and Ezra serves him a plate of
gizzard soup, as Mrs. Scarlatti continues eating.

JUNE

EXT. TULL HOUSE. EVENING.

Jenny, 23 and beautiful, pays off a taxi. Her suitcase is next to her. The front door of the house opens and Pearl in a flowered dress, high heel pumps and a veiled hat walks out with Ezra, arm in arm. Cody, 28, dark and handsome in a New Yorkish business suit, follows. Pearl sees Jenny and stops.

PEARL

Ezra, when you say family dinner, you
mean family dinner!

Jenny walks to bottom of porch steps where Pearl waits. Pearl kisses Jenny.

EZRA (to Jenny)

I didn't know you'd come all this distance
just for supper.

PEARL

Ezra's got something he wants to say and
he's talking us all to Scarlatti's Restaurant.
Jenny, honey, you're thin as a stick. How
long are you planning to stay? Cody is
staying overnight.

CODY

No, I'm not. I'm not spending the night.
I'm on a schedule.

JENNY

Ezra, let me go in and change.

EZRA

No, no, you're fine.

Ezra takes Jenny's suitcase into house, and comes back out.

All walk to the curb where Cody opens the door of a shiny blue car and helps Pearl inside. Ezra and Jenny get in back seat.

CODY

What do you think? Smell that new car smell.

Cody pulls into traffic.

CODY

Of course, it's not paid for yet.

PEARL

Cody Tull. You're not buying on time.

CODY.

Mother, you forget. Time is my business.

INT. SCARLATT'S.

Pearl, Cody and Jenny are seated. Ezra talks to a waiter who brings another place setting. Pearl polishes a fork with her napkin.

CODY

Mother, do you know who called for a time and motion study last week. The Tanner Corporation?

JENNY

Tanner?

CODY

It's where our father worked. Where he still may be for all I know. Jenny, you should have seen it--such a nickel and dime operation. So tacky. That same afternoon, I went and bought my Pontiac.

PEARL

There never was the slightest thing tacky about the Tanner Corporation.

Waiter has come to the table with a wine bottle. He pours some into Ezra's glass. Ezra tastes it and tells waiter to fill other glasses.

CODY

Oh Mother, face it! The Tanner Corporation is a trash heap.

PEARL

Cody, why must you act this way to me.

EZRA

Please, Mother. Cody. It's a family dinner. Jenny, raise your glass. Mother, a toast.

PEARL

Thank you dear, but wine in all this heat would settle on my stomach like a rock.

EZRA

It's a toast to me. Mother.

Double doors to kitchen open and Mrs. Scarlatti crosses to table and puts her hand on Ezra's shoulder. All the Tulls look up.

MRS. SCARLATTI

Pour me some wine, honey.

Ezra does, He gives glass to her as he rises. Ezra takes a ragged dollar bill from his wallet and hands it to her.

EZRA

With this dollar I hereby purchase a partnership in Scarlatti's.

PEARL (looks at Ezra)

I don't understand.

MRS. SCARLATTI

Ezra's been my right hand for so long He's like my own son. I couldn't manage without him.

PEARL

What's going on here? Accepting such a gift. What will people think? And from a woman to boot. (pause) I thought you were going to college.

EZRA (matter of factly)

Mother, I like making meals for people.

MRS. SCARLATTI (as she sips wine)

He's a sweetie and so talented.

PEARL

Ezra how could you? You'll be beholden all your life.

CODY

Let him be, Mother. It's his life.

PEARL (rises and looks at Cody)

You don't care. None of you care if this family breaks up.

Pearl turns and marches out the door. Ezra goes after her. Mrs. Scarlatti tucks the dollar bill into her bosom, sips her wine and shakes her head at Cody and Jenny.

MRS. SCARLATTI

Mothers!

EXT. SCARLATTI'S RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

Cody and Jenny stand in front of the restaurant by Cody's shiny new car.

CODY

Want me to drop you at home. I should have been in Delaware an hour ago.

JENNY

Cody, if I ever get married do you think you can work it into your schedule?

CODY (laughs)

I'll try. (pause) So do you want a ride?

JENNY

No, I guess I'll walk.

Jenny kisses Cody on cheek. He gets in car and drives off as Jenny walks towards home.

EXT. BALTIMORE STREET. NIGHT.

Jenny walks slowly past Linsey's Candy and Tobacco, Bobbie Jo's Barbecue, a pharmacy, and stops in front of a smudged plate glass window with peeling gold letters--MRS. EMMA PARKINS. READINGS AND ADVICE.

Jenny sees Mrs. Parkins herself pacing the room. She is a fat drab old woman with a paper fan on a popsicle stick. Jenny hesitates, turns the door handle and walks in.

INT. MRS. PARKINS STOREFRONT.

MRS. PARKINS

Come right in. Have a seat.

Jenny sits down stiffly at a table near the door. Mrs. Parkins settles down with a groan in an armchair on the other side of the table. She still fans herself.

MRS. PARKINS

Seems like every year, the heat just hits me harder.

Mrs. Parkins takes Jenny's hand and studies her palm.

MRS. PARKINS

Long life, good career line...

JENNY (surprised)

How did you know I'm going to be a doctor?

MRS. PARKINS

No sense beating around the bush. Is there something special you want to ask?

JENNY

Should I get...well...married? I mean, I have this chance. I've been asked.

Mrs. Parkins puts down the fan and gazes at the ceiling.

MRS. PARKINS

Married! Should you or shouldn't you?

Jenny opens purse and takes out letter.

JENNY (looking at letter)

That's what I don't know. Harley's researched everything. How much we could save in medical school by sharing a single apartment and we could buy groceries in economy lots... and...

Jenny looks up.

MRS. PARKINS

And?

JENNY

And - he thinks I'm intelligent and he says he loves me.

Mrs. Parkins picks up Jenny's hand that still holds the letter.

MRS. PARKINS

You'll have other proposals.

JENNY

But not like Harley. He's a genius.

MRS. PARKINS

Here is my advice. Go on and get married.

JENNY

Get married? We've only had one real date.

MRS. PARKINS

Go ahead. Do it. Or don't. No matter.
You'll be destroyed by love.

Mrs. Parkins puts Jenny's hand down.

MRS. PARKINS

That'll be two dollars.

Jenny smiles as she searches through her purse. At Ezra's rate, she could buy two restaurants.

DATE

EXT. CALVERT STREET. LATE AFTERNOON.

Pearl, wearing her WAC-hat, walks home from work. As she approaches her house, she sees a man in suit, tie and hat with briefcase on his lap, sitting on her front porch. Her pace quickens. She stops at porch steps and looks inquiringly at man.

PEARL

Yes?

SALESMAN

Are you Mrs. Tull?

PEARL

Yes.

SALESMAN (removes hat and
takes a business card out of
brief case)

I'm from American Life Insurance and Indemnity...

PEARL (stricken)

Has something happened to Beck?

SALESMAN

No ma'am. He's just fine. We just need
your O.K. on the pension plan that the
Tanner Corporation is setting up.

Pearl climbs porch stairs and sits down next to salesman. He takes
out a clipboard and explains.

SALESMAN (reading)

As the wife, you are the primary
beneficiary. But if you pre-decease Mr.
Tull, we need an alternate beneficiary.
Would that be Cody?

PEARL

Oh no. All three children.

SALESMAN

O.K. Whatever you say. That's Cody, Ezra
and Jennifer. Right?

PEARL

Right. Equally!

SALESMAN (looks at papers)

I need your signature right here.

Pearl takes out eyeglasses, puts them on and looks over papers. She takes pen from salesman and signs.

SALESMAN

That does it.

Salesman tears off copy, hands it to Pearl, and stands up.

SALESMAN (replaces hat)

Sorry to have bothered you but Mr. Tull wanted to be sure everything was in order.

Salesman leaves. Pearl remains on glider looking at the copy that has been left her. We follow salesman down the street as he returns to parked car. Beck Tull is at the wheel. Salesman gets in and the car drives off.

DATE

INT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

It used to be Scarlatti's but it is entirely different. The red-flocked wall paper has been removed to show brick walls. Children's drawings, an Oriole baseball hat, plants and a motorcycle with a Marilyn Monroe cutout astride have become part of a very eclectic decor.

The wall between the kitchen and dining room is down and we can watch a very busy kitchen staff. Ezra believes a meal tastes better if it is eaten in the room where it is prepared. There is a feeling of a family kitchen except there are more cooks.

One stirs a soup, another removes a cake from the oven and RUTH, 19, a skinny red-headed young woman in bib overalls is grating potatoes and talking to Ezra. He gives last minute instructions as he tastes one of the dishes offered by yet another cook.

A plump waitress comes over to Ezra and points to the door where a group of well-dressed people wait to be seated.

The host of the little group does not look happy. As soon as Ezra approaches, he complains.

CUSTOMER

I used to say, don't knock Baltimore until you've seen Scarlatti's. Why, when Mrs. Scarlatti was alive, you could bring anyone here.

EZRA

There have been some changes but...

CUSTOMER

I'll say there are changes. What kind of name is HOMESICK RESTAURANT?

EZRA

We're still a fine restaurant. Why, tonight it's pot roast.

CUSTOMER

Pot roast! Pot roast I can get at home.

Customer claps on his hat and exits, followed by his out-of-town guests.

Ezra watches the door slam and with a shrug turns towards other more satisfied customers.

Seated at a small table near the door is a professorial-type gentleman. His book lies open next to his plate. He's obviously overheard the irate customer.

Ezra greets him politely.

EZRA

The pot roast the way you like it. Mr. Wakefield.

MR. WAKEFIELD (as he picks up his book)

Home is the place where when you go there
"They have to take you in." Robert Frost.

Ezra brightens as he walks towards the kitchen.

INT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT.

Later. Pearl and Jenny sit at a table set for five.

JENNY

Is Cody bringing someone?

PEARL

A different girl every week! Girls are so flighty. I guess he can't find the right one.

Cody and KAREN enter. They stand at the door and then spot the family table and cross to it. Karen is elegant, well-groomed, a beauty. She looks adoringly at Cody as he introduces her. She reluctantly lets go of his arm as he seats her next to Jenny. He sits next to Pearl.

CODY

Mother, you remember Karen. And my sister, Jenny. Where's Harley?

Jenny doesn't answer as Ezra comes to the table. He greets all. He carries a bottle of wine which he pours into glasses and then sits down next to Karen.

CODY (raising his glass)

To everybody's good health. To Ezra's food.

EZRA

To a happy family dinner.

CODY

That, too.

Everybody sips, including Pearl.

EZRA

The soup is on its way.

CODY

Are you having it brought by barefoot runners?

EZRA

It's fresh off the stove. Piping hot.

Later. Soup plates being removed by waiter. Cody talks to Pearl but stops and watches Ezra look at Karen, speculatively. Finally, Ezra leans towards her and touches her earrings.

EZRA

How did you get those little circles through your ears?

Cody starts to laugh but stops when he sees Karen raise her finger to her earlobe, mesmerized by Ezra.

CODY

Karen, let's go.

Karen hesitates, bewildered.

KAREN

But we haven't finished dinner.

CODY (rises)

I'm leaving. You can stay with Ezra if you want.

Karen, embarrassed, rises and follows Cody out of the restaurant. Ezra doesn't speak, equally bewildered.

JENNY (laughing)

Cody's impossible. It must have been the lukewarm soup.

PEARL

Who are you to talk against your brothers.
Married only six months--pregnant and
talking divorce.

Pearl gets up, gathers her purse and gloves and exits.
Jenny sighs, leans over to kiss Ezra and follows Pearl.

The waiter arrives with the next course and stands looking at the
empty places.

EZRA (to waiter)

They left. I guess they weren't hungry.

Ezra gets up, takes the tray from the waiter and walks to the kitchen.
He puts it on the kitchen table and looks at Ruth who is at the stove.

EZRA

I wish just once we could get through a
meal from start to finish.

Ruth quits what she's doing at the stove and crosses to Ezra.

EZRA

We once got as far as dessert. Does that
count?

Ruth takes two plates off the tray, moves it to side. Finds two knives
and forks. Sits Ezra down, pats his arm and sits next to him.

EZRA

I wished they'd tasted your pot roast.

RUTH

Doesn't matter.

She starts to eat.

RUTH

Back home, we saved our fights for
Saturday night--after dinner.

Ezra eats. Content.

DATE

INT. JENNY'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

A tiny apartment where Jenny and baby, REBECCA, live. In an alcove is a baby's bed. Medical books are stacked on makeshift bookshelves made of bricks and boards. A fan on top of the bureau turns noisily. An unmade Murphy bed. Dishes in sink. Baby is crying.

Jenny sits in armchair trying to concentrate on medical book she holds as baby continues crying.

Jenny reluctantly puts book down, crosses room, picks up baby who stops crying. Jenny puts baby back in crib and as she walks away, baby resumes crying.

JENNY (out loud)

Becky, please, darling. It's time to sleep.

Baby continues crying. Jenny returns to crib, reaches in for bottle, picks up baby. Baby cries louder.

JENNY

Stop it.

Jenny flings baby in crib, throws the bottle at her. It bounces off crib and falls to floor.

JENNY

Take it. Take it.

Baby, exhausted from crying, is quietly sobbing.

JENNY

I wish you were dead.

Baby again starts crying loudly. Jenny walks back to armchair, sits down. Stares into space. Phone rings. She answers. It's Pearl.

PEARL

Jenny. Don't you write your family anymore?

JENNY

Can't you leave me alone?

Jenny starts crying. Dry, ragged sobs.

PEARL

Jenny, hang up. Go lie down on the couch.
I'll be there as soon as Ezra can drive me.

Phone clicks. Jenny stands holding phone and then slowly she hangs up.

Two weeks later. The apartment is neat. A bunch of flowers on the table. Pearl sits in chair with baby on lap. She talks to Baby as she reads to her.

Cody is on the phone, finishing a business call.

Jenny lies in the Murphy bed which is made up with squared corners. Ezra sits on a chair next to bed. He holds an empty bowl. Jenny has just finished eating.

EZRA (to all)

Some people don't take to gizzard soup, but
Jenny has finished the whole bowl.

PEARL

Jenny must be getting her strength back.

Cody hangs up. Turns to Pearl.

CODY

Or maybe she's too weak to resist. (Pause)
Well, it's all arranged. I've hired a sitter,
Delilah Something. She starts tomorrow.
Full-time.

PEARL

Good, I've used up all my vacation time and
Jenny needs to rest awhile longer.

JENNY

I'm really well. I have to get back to the
hospital.

Cody, Ezra and Pearl look at each other. Jenny is still very fragile.

Cody walks over to bed, stands next to Ezra.

CODY

Not yet, honey. Not until you're 100 percent.

Cody slings his suitcoat over his shoulder, gives Jenny a little salute and is out the door.

Becky pulls Grandmother to finish reading book. Pearl goes back to reading to Becky and Jenny closes her eyes listening to familiar childhood story.

DATE

INT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

On a blackboard is tonight's menu. One dish. Oxtail stew.

Cody sits at a table with a reserved sign. Five settings, and high chair. Ezra comes over.

EZRA

Everything's planned for 6:30. What's keeping them?

CODY

What's the problem, it's only stew.

Ezra sits down.

EZRA

It's not only stew. It's more like.. you see, there's this cook, this real country cook and oxtail stew is the least of it. It's more like what you long for when you're sad and everyone's been wearing you down.

Cody looks towards the door. Pearl and Jenny and 3-year old Becky enter.

CODY

Here they are.

Mother and daughter carry no parcels but it is clear they've been shopping. Perhaps it is the frazzled cross look they share. Jenny's lipstick is chewed off. Pearl's hat is crooked. Pearl starts talking as she gets to the table. Jenny places Becky in high chair and sits down.

PEARL

Jenny and her notions. We found just the right thing. A nice pale gray with a crocheted collar. Suitable for a second marriage. Why are there five places set?

Pearl continues standing.

EZRA

Have a seat, Mother.

PEARL (as she sits)

First, she asks me to go shopping with her and then she throws a tantrum right in the middle of Hutzler's.

JENNY

Pale gray! Anthracite is what the saleslady called it. No way. I'm not getting married in a coal-black wedding dress.

PEARL

And then, only to spite me, she pulls out something white as snow.

JENNY

Cream-colored, Mother.

PEARL

Cream, white. What's the difference. You're marrying for the second time. The man has six children and his divorce isn't even final.

JENNY

I happen to like that dress.

PEARL

Well, I can see that nothing can satisfy you.

JENNY

Mother, I am satisfied. I love my cream-colored dress and so will Joe. Will you please just get off my back.

PEARL

I don't have to stay here and take it.

Pearl gets up, turns and marches back across the dining room, as erect as a wind-up doll. Jenny pulls out compact, looks in it, lets Becky look into it, then closes it and returns it to purse.

EZRA

Please, Jenny. Go after her.

CODY

Ezra, for once, just drop it. I don't think I'm up to a family dinner.

Cody starts to get up.

EZRA

Cody, Jenny, wait. This is important. It's an occasion.

Ezra gets up and goes to kitchen where he takes the arm of the red-headed country cook, Ruth. She walks jauntily, wiping her hands on her backside while Ezra hovers adoringly by her side.

EZRA

I'd like you to meet Ruth. Cody, Jenny. We're getting married in September.

CODY

Ruth?

JENNY

That's wonderful.

Jenny kisses Ruth on her cheek as Ruth sticks out her hand to Cody.

RUTH

How do.

EXT. TULL HOUSE. NIGHT.

Pearl sits on the glider, purse beside her, handkerchief in hand. Cody drives up, parks and comes up to the porch. He sits down next to her.

PEARL

You don't have to tell me, Cody. I know. I made a scene. He's going to marry that country cook. I knew it when I saw those five plates. Lord, right on top of buying wedding dress number two for my only daughter...

Cody reaches over and pats her hand as they continue to swing.

PEARL

Cody, you know I want you three to be happy. Why I wouldn't hold Ezra back for the world--though I don't know what he sees in her. I've never been one of those mothers who try to keep their sons home. I only want what's best for my children. I want Ezra to marry. Truly. You can manage on your own but Ezra needs someone. He's too good.

Cody gets up and moves to porch railing where he leans.

PEARL

Of course, I love all my children the same. Every bit the same.

Cody doesn't move.

PEARL

Sometimes, I look at Ezra and Ruth and I want to say, who do you think you are? Do you really believe you'll live happily ever after. That you're special.

Cody, I was special. Once to someone. I could just reach out and lay a fingertip on his arm and he would get all confused.

I had the most beautiful wedding. I had three beautiful children. And when you were little, I was the center of your world. Why, the moment you came in from school, "Mother, are you home?" Don't you remember.

Cody does remember.

PEARL

It's really not fair. I'm old and walk along unnoticed, just like anyone else.

Pearl continues to swing, alone.

INT. TULL LIVING ROOM. DAY

Pearl watches Ruth and Ezra play gin rummy on the floor. Ruth wears jeans, her combat boots, an old shirt and smokes a little cigar. Front door slams. Cody enters carrying roses.

PEARL

Cody, we didn't expect you. This is a surprise. Two weekends in a row.

CODY (to Ruth)

These are for you.

RUTH (looks at flowers and
back to game, draws
a card from deck)

What are they?

CODY

Well, roses.

RUTH

Roses. This early in the year?

CODY

Greenhouse roses. I especially ordered copper to go with your hair.

RUTH

You leave my hair out of this.

EZRA

Honey, don't take it wrong. Cody meant it as a compliment.

Pearl watches, unsmiling.

CODY

See. It's my way of saying welcome.
Welcome to our family.

EZRA

Cody, that was awful nice of you.

Ruth lays down her cards, smiles at Ezra.

RUTH

Gin.

Cody stands holding the flowers. Pearl gets up and reaches for them.

PEARL

Here, let me put those in water. Cody, I'll
need the tall vase.

She takes flowers and leads Cody to the kitchen. He goes to cabinet
and reaches vase down from a high shelf. Pearl fills it with water,
sets it on kitchen table and starts arranging flowers.

PEARL

I know what you're up to.

CODY

I beg your pardon.

PEARL

I see through you like a sheet of glass.
She's not your type. Ruth belongs to Ezra
and she's the only thing in the whole world
he's ever wanted.

CODY

You don't understand.

PEARL

This may come as a shock to you. I do understand. I may not be smart about a lot of things, but I understand my three children perfectly. I know what you're after. I see everything in your heart.

CODY

Just like God!

PEARL

Just like God.

They stand looking at bouquet.

EXT. STREET. LATE AFTERNOON.

Cody walks with Ruth and Ezra. It's been raining and Ruth in combat boots, walks right through the puddles. Carefree. Ezra plays his recorder, Ruth hums along. Ezra finishes the tune, puts the recorder in his pocket and circles Ruth with his arm. He pulls her close and she snuggles in. Cody watches.

RUTH

Tonight, let's do that Arab rice.

EZRA

And your country chicken.

CODY

I guess all you two ever do is slave away at that restaurant. Have you ever been to New York, Ruth?

Ruth shakes her head, no.

EZRA

Ruth, honey. Would you like to go?

RUTH

Sure, maybe on our honeymoon.

EZRA

Honeymoon! Isn't she something. Don't you just love her, Cody?

Ezra pulls Ruth tighter as Cody continues to watch.

INT. TULL KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Pearl irons as she listen to the baseball game on the radio. Ezra enters.

PEARL

What's wrong? Ezra? Why aren't you at work?

EZRA

It's Cody.

PEARL (clutching her heart)

Cody.

EZRA

He's gone off to get married.

PEARL (relieved)

Oh, married. Who to?

EZRA

To Ruth.

PEARL

Your Ruth!

EZRA

My Ruth.

PEARL (turns off iron and radio)

Oh, Sweetheart. It's your brother just being mean.

EZRA (despairing)

What does it matter why he did it. He stole her away.

PEARL

If she could be stolen, honey...why you don't want her anyhow.

Ezra stands stricken. Pearl, remembering loss of Beck, is unable to comfort him.

INT. PENN STATION. NIGHT.

Ruth, in a navy blue suit, walks unsteadily and unfamiliarly on high-heeled sandals. Her hair is frizzier than usual, her makeup is smeared. She looks as if she has been crying. Cody, carrying a suitcase, walks with her. He leads her to a bench and sits her down.

CODY

Are you all right? You're sure you want to go on with this?

Ruth nods.

CODY

I'll get the tickets.

He walks to a ticket window and gets in line. The line moves slowly and Cody, as usual, is impatient. A young woman with a child in front of him turns to survey the line. She smiles at him.

JANE

Cody Tull? It is Cody Tull.

CODY

Uh, Yes.

JANE

I'm Jane Lowery. Remember me?

CODY

Oh, Jane. Well, good to see you. And is this your little girl?

JANE

Say hello to Mr. Tull, Betsey. Mr. Tull and Mommy used to go to school together.

CODY

So, you're married....

JANE

Remember the day I came to visit you uninvited. I had such a crush on you. Lord, I made a total fool of myself.

CODY (remembers)

You played a game of checkers with Ezra.

JANE

Ezra?

CODY

My brother.

JANE

You had a brother?

CODY

I certainly did. Do. You played checkers with him all afternoon.

JANE

That's funny. I don't remember your having a brother.

The line moves forward and before Cody can answer, Jane is at the window. She buys her ticket, takes daughter's hand, waves to Cody and goes off in the crowd.

Cody is next. He hesitates and starts to turn away. Ruth is walking towards him, still wobbly on the high heels. Ruth, hair combed and make-up repaired, calls jokingly.

RUTH

I hope to get the knack of these things before long.

CODY

You don't have to wear them, you know.

RUTH (joins him at window)

Oh. I surely do. Cody, it's your turn. I can hardly wait to get on the train. Do you think they'll have an eating car?

Cody turns back to the window and buys the tickets.

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EXT. THE HOMESICK RESTAURANT. Late afternoon.

A car stops in front and a tall 14-year-old boy, LUKE, gets out. He looks the way Cody did at the same age. He's eager to say goodbye but the driver, a middle-aged woman continues talking.

DRIVER

Are you going to be all right? You're sure your folks are inside. And you tell them it's not safe for a boy to be hitchhiking.

LUKE

Yes ma'am. I appreciate your giving me a ride.

Luke turns and walks to front door. It is locked.

DRIVER

What's the trouble?

LUKE

I forgot. I have to use the kitchen door.

Luke walks towards the rear, then turns back to wave as the car starts up.

INT. THE KITCHEN.

Workers darting about preparing for the evening business. Luke stands in the doorway, unnoticed. He's almost forgotten why he came. Then he sees Ezra.

Ezra is cutting out biscuits, shirt sleeves rolled up, a spotless white apron around his waist. Luke crosses to him and stands waiting to be recognized. Ezra glances up, says Hi, and goes back to his work.

LUKE (squares his shoulders)

I'd like a job.

EZRA (looks up again and reaches
for a towel to wipe his hands)

Luke? It's Cody's Luke, isn't it.

LUKE

How'd you guess?

EZRA

Why, you did your shoulders just the way Cody does.
Where is he? Back at the house?

LUKE

I'm here on my own.

EZRA

Has something happened to him? Where's
your Mom?

LUKE

In Virginia. I left them there. I ran away.
I didn't plan to...but he said...

Ezra waits for Luke to finish. When he doesn't Ezra removes his apron, places it on a hook, takes Luke's arm and goes towards the door.

EZRA

I know. When we were kids, sometimes I got so mad at Cody, I could choke him. But I knew he didn't mean it--my only brother. He wouldn't hurt you for the world.

They exit.

INT. TULL KITCHEN.

Pearl is on the phone with Cody. Luke sits at the kitchen table with a glass of milk and a plate of cookies.

PEARL

Now, Cody, I'm sitting here looking straight at him and he's perfectly all right. I hope you'll let him stay awhile. (Pause). Police! Call them right back. You're making a lot of fuss over nothing. He just thumbed a ride to the restaurant, and Ezra brought him home.

Pearl stops talking. Luke imagines he can hear his father yelling. He must still be mad.

PEARL

All right, Cody. All right. I understand.

Pearl hangs up without a goodbye and turns to Luke.

PEARL

They'll be here as soon as they can. Your Father wants to come get you right now.

LUKE AND PEARL LOOK AT PICTURES

INT. TULL DINING ROOM.

Pearl and Luke sit at the dining room table with albums, loose photos, etc. spread out.

PEARL

And this is my Uncle Ben. You never knew him. He owned the first car in Macon County.

Luke turns album pages.

PEARL

Luke, look here. This is your Dad. Two years old and so handsome. Even then.

Luke looks at picture quickly and turns the page. He stops and points to another picture.

LUKE

Who's this?

PEARL (looking)

Why, that's Cody teaching Ezra to ride a bicycle.

LUKE

Dad said I looked like Ezra.

Pearl realizes why Luke ran away.

PEARL

Why, you're the spitting image of your
Father. Why would Cody say such a thing.

Luke looks intently at the photo and then, content, continues to turn
the pages.

PEARL

I wish your Dad would let you come visit
more often. (Pause, smiles) We could go
see the Orioles and I could have you all to
myself.

INT. TULL LIVING ROOM.

Cody and Ruth have arrived. Ruth wears expensive outfit, all
designer labels showing, but still finds it hard to walk on high heels.
Ruth puts her arms around Luke, half-crying, smoothing his hair.
Cody stands at the door. Handsome as ever.

CODY (to Luke)

May I ask what you thought you were up to.
Your Mother's been beside herself.

RUTH (to Pearl)

We almost lost our minds. I kept looking
out the same front window at the same
sidewalk. Empty. You just don't know.

PEARL (quietly)

I do know.

The front door opens and Ezra returns from the restaurant.

EZRA

Cody, Ruth. Good to see you.

Ruth still stands with her arm around Luke.

RUTH

Oh, Luke, sweetheart, didn't you think you'd be missed.

Pearl motions to everyone to sit down. No one moves.

PEARL

How about some iced tea?

CODY

No. We've got to start back. It's a long drive.

Cody takes Ruth's arm to get her moving. She shrugs it off and goes to chair and sits down.

RUTH

Luke, your father insisted on driving all the way himself. And too fast.

PEARL

Why not stay the night. All have a nice dinner at the restaurant. You could start fresh in the morning.

EZRA

You could taste some of our new dishes.

Cody looks at Ruth and then at Ezra.

CODY

I get more than enough new dishes at home. Why Ruth bothers, I'll never know.

Ruth gets up, signals Luke to join her and starts for the door.

PEARL

Well, maybe you will come for Thanksgiving.

EZRA

We'll have a family dinner at the restaurant. Jenny, Joe and all the kids...

CODY

Family dinner. I'm not even related to half those kids. Besides, I don't know where we'll be.

PEARL

What? You never heard of airplanes? Amtrak? Modern transportation?

LUKE

Please Dad, couldn't we. I miss seeing Grandma.

CODY (looking directly at
his son)

Well, I'll try. Ruth, you got everything.
Bye, Mother. So long, Ezra. I'll be in touch.

They exit. Pearl and Ezra stand in door as Cody and Luke get in front seat of Cody's newest Mercedes-Benz and Ruth gets in back.

INT. TULL DINING ROOM. DAY.

Ezra is carrying his mother down the stairs. He places her in bed in dining room. The furniture has been moved to accommodate her bed and an armchair has been brought in from the living room and placed next to the bed.

PEARL is frail and her eyesight has failed. She may have shrunk and aged, but her true, interior self is larger than life. Powerful. Overwhelming.

PEARL

Be sure you get everything out of my vanity.
I want everything where I can see it.

Ezra goes back upstairs. Pearl lays motionless. The front door slams.

JENNY (off-camera)

Mother, where are you?

Jenny comes in, stops when she sees her Mother in bed in the dining room.

JENNY

What are you doing in the dining room?
And where's Ezra?

Ezra re-appears carrying his mother's belongings.

PEARL

Ezra, is that everything? Put them on the
table.

JENNY (to Ezra)

I come and find everything's falling apart.

PEARL (to Jenny)

Jenny, did you bring the children?

JENNY

No, not this time. They're with Joe.
Mother, how are you feeling?

Jenny leans over to kiss her mother. She places a hand on her
forehead.

PEARL

I'm fine. Is Cody here, too?

EZRA

No, Mother.

JENNY (rises)

Mother, you're burning up. I'm going to call an ambulance.

EZRA

She won't go to the hospital. Dr. Vincent said we could wait.

JENNY

That quack!

PEARL

Jenny! Besides, I feel fine.

Jenny looks to Ezra for support. He shrugs.

PEARL (still in charge)

It was nice of you to come by Jenny.

JENNY

I worry about you. You're the only Mother I have.

PEARL (almost to herself)

You should have got an extra.

Pearl closes her eyes. Jenny, resigned, looks at her Mother again and then goes towards door.

JENNY (to Ezra)

I'll look in later. Call me if you need me.

EZRA

I will.

Jenny exits. Ezra sits down next to bed.

INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

Ezra sits by Pearl's bed. A cup of tea on the table. He is dozing.
Pearl in bed with eyes closed.

PEARL

Money doesn't grows on trees.

EZRA (awakening)

What, mother?

PEARL

But I should have let you stay home from
school.

Ezra stands and leans over the bed listening to what his mother is
saying.

PEARL

Shouldn't you get back to the restaurant.
You're like a mother hen about that place.

Ezra doesn't answer as he pats Pearl's hand.

PEARL

Ezra.

EZRA

Yes, Mother.

PEARL

Where is my address book?

EZRA

Here it is. On the table.

PEARL

Pay attention. Ezra. I want everybody in it invited to my funeral.

Silence.

EZRA

Funeral! You're not going to die.

PEARL

No, of course not. I have children.

EZRA

Let's not talk about it.

Silence.

PEARL (loud and clear)

Don't forget. The people in my address book.

PRESENT DAY

INT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT. AFTER PEARL'S FUNERAL.

It's empty except for one long table covered in white linen and set with crystal and china. Fifteen places including a high chair. Every seat taken. A waitress hovers.

EZRA

So! What do you think of this wine, Dad?

BECK

Oh, I'm not much for wine, son. I don't drink anything that has to breathe. A little shot of bourbon is more my style.

EZRA

How's the soup. It's eggplant.

BECK

What?

EZRA

You'll love it. One of our specialities.

Beck carefully tastes it. Look around the restaurant and to Ezra.

BECK

This is some fancy operation.

EZRA

And are you still with the Tanner Corporation?

BECK (looks at children in disbelief)

No. No, I'm retired. I put in 42 years of service. They gave me a wonderful banquet and this pocket watch. (Pause) To tell the truth, I miss it. I try to keep busy. Play cards with a few buddies at my hotel. And I got a lady friend I see. No disrespect to your Mother, but Claudette's a real fine lady. Even so, I still miss the action. You know what I mean, Cody.

CODY

I don't know what you mean.

EZRA changes the subject.

EZRA

Dad, did you know that Cody is an efficiency expert.

BECK

What's that?

EZRA

He's a time-study man. checks out factories and tells them what to do. He's one of the very best. He's always getting written up.

BECK (to Cody)

Is that so. Well, that's fine.

Beck turns from Cody and looks around the table.

BECK

This is some crowd. Just like on TV. A big happy family.

CODY

Don't let them fool you. Why, not more than two or three of these kids are even related to you. The rest are Joe's by a previous wife.

Jenny, smiling.

JENNY

We're what you call a blended family.

JOE

It was the only way I could be sure I had a doctor who made house calls.

Joe looks lovingly at Jenny.

Cody pushes his plate away and starts talking.

CODY

I've got this partner, Sloan. A bachelor all his life. Last year, Sloan ran into an old girlfriend. She was celebrating her little daughter's birthday. Sloan, just to be polite, asked, "Which birthday is it?" And when the woman told him, it rang a bell. He said, "Why, she must be mine." The woman just looked at him and said, "Yes, she is, as a matter of fact."

BECK

How strange.

Cody leans forward and explains.

CODY

Not at all. Sloan doesn't count. He wasn't part of the family. Not a real father.

All sit silently, Beck pushes back chair. At the other end of the table, something crashes to the floor. The baby starts crying. Jenny gets up and goes to end of table. Others get up and look.

JENNY

Let me have her. She's all right.

Picks up baby who stops crying. All sit down. Beck's chair is empty, a napkin discarded on his plate.

EZRA

Dad is gone!

Ezra gets up and goes to the front door. Opens it and looks out. Shakes his head and comes back to the table.

EZRA

Come on Cody. We can find him, bring him back and take up where we left off.

Ezra starts for the front door. Cody remains seated.

CODY

Or, we could finish the family dinner without him. That's always a possibility.

Ezra pauses a moment and then goes out door.

CODY (calls after Ezra)

Good hunting.

Everyone at the table looks down and slowly begin eating, except Luke. Cody pours himself another glass of wine, and starts to drink. Luke is staring at him. Cody puts down the glass.

CODY

Maybe I'll check on how Ezra is doing.

Cody pushes back his chair and exits.

EXT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT

Cody stands in front of the restaurant. Ezra disappears around a corner. Cody turns and goes in the other direction.

EXT. BUSHNELL STREET.

Cody comes out of alley and see Beck sitting on a bus stop bench, searching his pockets.

CODY

Anything wrong?

BECK

I can't seem to find the car keys. Sorry to eat and run. But Claudette will be expecting me. You know how women are. She depends on me.

Beck holds up his jacket, refolds it carefully and lays it across his lap.

CODY

So did we. We were just kids. You turned your back on us.

BECK

But Pearl...

CODY

She was a witch. You left us in her clutches.

Beck stares past Cody at the traffic. Cody slumps down beside Beck on the bench.

BECK

At first, I made your Mother very happy.
She thought I was so wonderful.
Everything was perfect. You ought to have
seen her face when I walked into a room. I
could do no wrong...

CODY (bitterly)

And then...

BECK

She used up my good points. (pause) I
guess she saw my faults. No matter how
hard I tried! I was on the road too much. I
didn't help with you kids. I didn't get ahead
in my work. I drank too much. I talked
wrong, ate wrong, even drove the car
wrong.

Beck stops. Takes a breath. He has been waiting 35 years to explain.

BECK (remembering)

Do you remember the archery set? It was a
good idea. Set up a target and shoot bows
and arrow. First, Pearl says its too
expensive. Jenny says its too cold. And
then you and Ezra get in some kind of fight,
shoot off an arrow and wing your Mother.
A disaster. A typical disaster.

CODY

It was my fault you left.

BECK (not at all)

It was the last straw. Everything I did turned out wrong. All at once, not even knowing I'd do it, I said "Pearl, I'm leaving." I packed a bag and walked out.

CODY

You walked out on us kids. We loved you and needed you. We need you to tell us things. And every Friday, we kept hoping you would come through the door.

BECK

I almost did. One time, maybe two or three years later, I was passing through Baltimore and parked across the street waiting. You came out of the house. I didn't even know you. You came down the walk, picked up the evening paper and flipped it and caught it. (pause) I saw that you could live without me. I knew Pearl would manage. And I was right. Jenny, a doctor. Ezra owns a fancy restaurant. And you, an expert. Own your own company. I'm proud of you. You all turned out fine. She did it.

Silence. Cody sits down next to Beck.

BECK

What will we do now that she's gone?

Cody and Beck sit on the bench. Everything has been said.

CODY

Ezra's found us. Let's go finish dinner.

Cody helps Beck to his feet and takes his elbow. They slowly walk towards Ezra.

INT. HOMESICK RESTAURANT.

Ezra and Cody, with Beck between them return to table and seat Beck. Luke smiles at Cody. There is not an empty seat. A family dinner.

As the camera pulls back, we dissolve to Pearl in her garden on the day she met Beck. He is coming towards her as her voice begins over:

PEARL

This afternoon, I went out behind the house to weed. I was kneeling in the dirt with my pinafore a mess and the perspiration rolling down my back. A bottle fly was buzzing and I could hear the Bedloe girl practicing her scales. I was kneeling on such a beautiful little planet. I was absolutely happy. Whatever else happens, I had this one moment.

THE END