

FLIRTING WITH DISASTER

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INT. BEDROOM - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

A thirty year old attractive WOMAN comes in wearing a kimono. She takes the robe off, with her back to the camera. She is wearing nothing under the robe. She opens a drawer and takes out a piece of lingerie, a teddie. She puts it on, with her back to the camera, and looks at herself in a full-length mirror. She self-consciously holds her tummy in to flatten it. She goes back to the drawer. Takes out a loose, flowing, short nightie. With her back to the camera, she takes off the teddie and puts on the nightie. She is happier with this loose fitting garment.

She now arranges herself attractively on the bed, lying back on a pillow. And waits. After a moment, she changes to a different position. And waits. She looks at her watch. Then she takes her watch off and puts it on the night table. She gets up and fixes her hair in the mirror. Returns to the bed. Lies down seductively. Waits. Picks up the watch, looks at it. Gets up, puts lotion on her arms and legs. Goes back to the bed and waits.

Dissolve to:

Later, she is still waiting. She looks bored, lying on her stomach reading a BOOK.

Dissolve to:

She sits filing her nails.

Now we hear THE FRONT DOOR of the APARTMENT open and close. We hear a man's voice call to her from inside the apartment.

MEL (calls off screen)

Nancy?

NANCY (calls back)

I'm in the bedroom.

She positions herself deliciously on the bed. MEL COMES IN, he looks HARRIED. He wears a sports coat, a tie, a white shirt, GLASSES.

MEL

You're not going to believe what happened.

He proceeds to face the bureau and take his tie off.

MEL

Why are you dressed like that?

NANCY

Did you forget about our date?

MEL

Oh, my God, I'm sorry.

NANCY

We said we were going to start making time for this, but if you're not ready --

MEL

I'm ready. I'm here. Is he down?

NANCY

Yes.

MEL

Should I check on him?

NANCY

No.

MEL

Is he on his side?

NANCY

Yes.

MEL

He has to be on his side, not his stomach.

NANCY

Will you trust me? He's fine.

He sits on the bed and rubs her shoulders.

MEL

I'm sorry I'm late.

NANCY

Where were you? I couldn't find you after work.

MEL

I had a meeting.

NANCY

A work meeting?

MEL

Not a work meeting.

NANCY

Then what kind of meeting was it?

MEL

You look very sexy.

NANCY

I feel fat.

MEL

Give yourself a break, you're getting there.

NANCY

What does that mean? I'm getting there.

MEL

Nothing. It means you look great.

HE NUZZLES HER NECK.

NANCY

Why don't you take your shoes off, big fella?

He takes one shoe off. They kiss. The kissing grows passionate. She runs her hands over his shoulders and starts to go down on him. He DOES NOT LOOK COMFORTABLE at all as she pulls his pants off and does this.

He coils away from her in order to GO DOWN ON HER. In turn, she pulls away to go down on him, and he pulls away to go down on her. Finally, SHE STOPS AND SITS UP.

NANCY

What are we doing?

MEL

I thought you liked this.

NANCY

But I was going down on you first.

MEL

Are we going to fight over who's going down on who?

NANCY

Who's going down on whom.

MEL

Who is the object.

NANCY

Whom is the object, which means you're getting acted upon.

MEL

I can't just relax and sit back like that. It makes me uncomfortable.

NANCY

Uncomfortable how?

SHE STARTS TICKLING MEL.

MEL

Don't do that.

NANCY

How does it make you uncomfortable?

MEL

Stop it.

He is squirming away from her across the bed.

The tickling stops and SHE STARTS KISSING HIM DEEPLY and it is very arousing. She's opened him up and relaxed him.

THE BABY STARTS CRYING FAINTLY DOWN THE HALL. They continue to kiss for a moment, then they both look anxiously over their shoulders. He stands up. He starts to put his pants on.

MEL

I'll get him.

NANCY

Why do you have to put your pants on to get Ethan?

He takes his pants off.

MEL

His name is not Ethan.

NANCY

I thought you agreed to Ethan.

MEL

Let's not discuss this now, OK?

NANCY

You're right, I'm sorry.

HE RUSHES OUT IN HIS BOXERS.

INT. HALLWAY

Mel rushes down the hall, into the BATHROOM.

INT. BATHROOM

He fishes in the HAMPER and pulls out a pair of dirty jeans and puts them on.

CUT TO

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY

Mel walks INTO THE NURSERY.

He EMERGES KISSING AND COMFORTING THE CRYING BABY and CONTINUES TO THE LIVING ROOM.

MEL

Shhh, it's OK, it's OK.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

A very attractive professional woman wearing a suit and flats sits on the edge of the couch waiting. This is TINA KALB.

Mel rushes in carrying the crying baby. She looks at his one shoe, his disheveled hair, half-unbuttoned shirt.

TINA

I feel like I'm keeping you from something.

MEL

No, no, this is a priority.

TINA

Is it a bad time for your wife?

MEL

It's fine, we just need another few minutes. Can I get you something to drink?

TINA

I'd love a glass of water.

Mel rushes into the KITCHEN.

INT. KITCHEN

He gets a glass of water.

CUT TO

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mel rushes down the hall with the baby and the glass of water, almost goes into the bedroom, STOPS SHORT, goes back to the LIVING ROOM, and gives TINA THE GLASS OF WATER.

TINA

Thanks.

CUT TO

INT. HALLWAY

Mel rushes down the hall with the baby, stops, backs up, goes into the BATHROOM and takes the JEANS OFF.

CUT TO

INT. BEDROOM

Mel comes in with the baby and sits on the bed.
He is starting to look FAIRLY FRAZZLED.

NANCY

Oh, look at him scanning the room.

MEL

He's making sure it didn't disappear while he was asleep.

He tries to hand her the baby.

NANCY

No, this is good, he'll keep your hands occupied.

MEL

What are you talking about?

She pulls him reluctantly toward her with one hand, and kisses him passionately. She kisses his neck, then starts to GO DOWN ON HIM while he holds the baby. MEL SITS HOLDING THE BABY AT ARM'S LENGTH. The baby is looking straight at him.

MEL

Honey.

NANCY

Shhhh.

MEL

His little eyes are looking at me.

NANCY

Hang in there.

MEL

My real mother lives in San Diego.

Pause. She sits up and looks confused.

NANCY

What?

MEL

That was my meeting. I went to the adoption agency and they found my real mother.

NANCY

You just walked in and they found your mother?

MEL

It was the second meeting, actually. My mother had been on record with them since 1987 as wanting to meet me, but they couldn't say anything until I came forward.

NANCY

This is a big thing. Why didn't you tell me?

MEL

I'm telling you now. You said I should do something for myself, didn't you?

NANCY

I meant like tai chi or oral sex.

MEL

Aren't you happy for me?

NANCY

Of course I'm happy for you. I'm just a little surprised by your timing.

MEL

I've had this burning desire to know, for some reason.

NANCY

Since when?

MEL

It hit me about a month ago.

Pause.

NANCY

Maybe this will calm you down so we can pick a name.

MEL (gets up)

Exactly. Why don't you put something on and come out and meet Tina?

NANCY

Who?

MEL

She's arranging the whole thing, and they're gonna pay for it, too.

NANCY

She's here in our apartment?

He kisses Nancy on top of her head.

MEL

I love you, honey. This is so exciting.

He leaves the room. Nancy is left on the bed looking dumbfounded.

CUT TO

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nancy walks in barefoot, wearing her kimono. She sees Mel standing with TINA, who now holds the baby.

TINA

Hi, I'm Tina Kalb --

Nancy and Tina shake hands.

NANCY

Hi.

TINA

I'm sorry to barge in on you like this, but Mel said he didn't want to waste any time.

MEL

Nancy understands how important this is.

TINA

Good, that's very important. The baby's gorgeous, by the way. He looks exactly like Mel.

NANCY

Actually, a lot of people say he looks like me.

TINA

What do I know? I'm just another 35 year-old woman desperate for a baby of her own.

NANCY

Doesn't your husband want children?

Nancy takes the baby from Tina's arms.

TINA

I'm in the middle of a divorce, actually.
I just can't seem to part with the ring.

SHE PULLS IT OFF HER FINGER and puts it into her purse.

NANCY

Oh, I'm sorry.

TINA

It was one of those dead marriages where you
have to start making dates to try to have sex.

MEL AND NANCY LOOK AT TINA UNCOMFORTABLY.

MEL

I'm sure you'll get married again.

TINA

At this point it might be easier to just find
an intelligent man to impregnate me.

She bursts out laughing, joined by Mel.

NANCY

Excuse me, but I don't understand who
you are.

MEL

Didn't I tell you she works at the
agency?

NANCY

No.

TINA

Mel wants to go to San Diego next week, which
means we have a number of things to discuss.

NANCY

You want to go to San Diego next week?

TINA PULLS SOME DOCUMENTS FROM HER BRIEFCASE, which is a mess of
bulging papers.

TINA (hands papers to Nancy)

Take a look at these waivers and get them back
to me.

NANCY

Waivers for what?

MEL

They want to do a study of my case which means they'll pay for a lot of my expenses, isn't that great?

TINA

Your participation is sort of central to the whole project.

NANCY (peruses documents)

What kind of a project?

TINA

There's such a dearth of in-depth documentation on the psychic impact these searches have on the immediate family of the person conducting the search, for instance you, the spouse, as well as Mel's adoptive parents.

NANCY

Are you a psychologist?

TINA

Not quite, I'm still finishing my doctorate.

MEL

She used to be a dancer.

TINA

(looks at her watch)
I need to call the office.

NANCY

The phone's in the kitchen.

TINA

That's all right, I've got one right here.

TINA PULLS OUT A PORTABLE PHONE AS SHE STEPS INTO THE ADJOINING DINING ROOM. MEL ABSENTLY STARES AT TINA as she stands in the next room with the phone. Then Mel turns back and sees NANCY staring at him in a slightly incriminating way.

MEL (innocently)

What?

CUT TO

INT. MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY - DAY

Nancy and a colleague, another woman about 30 named JILL are carrying a MODEL OF A STONE-AGE MAN wearing a loincloth, through the DIMLY LIT, GRAND HALLS of the museum, past various dioramas and VISITORS to the museum.

They carry the stone-age man sideways, Nancy holding the head, her colleague holding the legs. They both wear WHITE LAB COATS over their dresses as they WALK.

JILL

Did he kiss your breasts before the baby?

NANCY

Yes.

JILL

Was he a breast sucker or a breast kisser?

NANCY

Will you keep your voice down?

JILL

As a sucker, he might feel like they belong to the baby now, see what I'm saying?

NANCY

Did you droop?

JILL

You better believe I drooped, and it took three years before Joe started giving some love back to the mammary area.

NANCY

That seems so unfair.

THEY DISAPPEAR INTO A SIDE DOOR, and reappear INSIDE A DIORAMA OF A STONE-AGE FAMILY around a cooking pit with a cave in the background. There is a WOMAN with HAIRY BREASTS, and a child. Nancy and her colleague STAND THE STONE-AGE MAN up in the diorama as Nancy looks at the STONE AGE WOMAN'S HAIRY BREASTS.

NANCY

He won't let me go down on him anymore.

JILL

Lucky you.

NANCY (laughs)

I used to like it, but now he's too controlling.

NANCY

Control the penis, control the intimacy.

NANCY

He says no way.

JILL

What do you expect him to say?
He's controlling the penis.

NANCY

Maybe I should forget about sex for now.

JILL

He sounds so tense. Try the warm water wrap.

NANCY

What's that?

JILL

You put warm water in your mouth.
It's very relaxing.

NANCY

To him or to me?

JILL

To him. It's a little messy for you.

They continue to adjust him and dust the stone age man as they talk. NANCY FLIPS UP THE FLAP OF THE STONE-AGE MAN'S LOINCLOTH, revealing his PENIS and TESTES.

NANCY

Nobody ever talks about a man's testicles
drooping, do they?

JILL

Absolutely not.

NANCY

'How unattractive Stan's testicles have
become.'

JILL

'Time for a little plastic surgery down there.'

SUDDENLY MEL KNOCKS ON THE GLASS OF THE CASE THEY ARE IN. He holds
TWO LARGE DEAD BEETLES. He wears a WHITE LAB COAT.

MEL

Do you remember these?

MEL WALKS AROUND THE CASE; JOINS NANCY INSIDE WITH HER COLLEAGUE.

NANCY

Oh, honey. What made you dig these out?

MEL

I was feeling nostalgic about the old days.

NANCY

That's so romantic.

JILL

Congratulations on finding your mother.

MEL

Thanks.

NANCY

I really hope you can resolve it, because it sounds like you've got a few things to move off the dime.

MEL

Like the baby's name.

JILL

And the whole intimacy/sex thing.

MEL

What is she talking about?

NANCY

It is so sweet you found these beetles.

CUT TO

INT. ST. REGIS HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Mel sits at a banquette waiting, sipping tea. He looks at his watch.

Tina comes sweeping into the room, wearing another smart suit and carrying a wet umbrella.

MEL

Hi.

Mel stands to greet her. She sits down, taking her jacket off.

TINA

I'm sorry I'm late, but I had this excruciating meeting with my attorney. If you ever get divorced, use the courts, believe me, don't go the arbitration route.

MEL

This is a nice place you picked.

TINA

Do you like it?

MEL

Very much.

TINA

I come here when I'm sad and I need
to feel part of the world again. So
did you make the date to tell
your parents?

MEL

Actually, I need to talk to you about that.

TINA

Why, are you having second thoughts?

An OLD WAITER hovers over the table.

WAITER

Another herbal tea, sir?

TINA

Herbal tea? It's after five o'clock, isn't it?

She smiles and looks at her watch.

TINA

I'll have a vodka martini up with a
twist.

MEL

I think I'll have a martini, also.

TINA

Good.

THE WAITER NODS AND STARTS TO LEAVE.

MEL

No, I better stick with the tea.

She looks disappointed. THE WAITER leaves.

TINA

Your wife just came back from maternity leave
and you really need to save the vacation time
so you can be together, right?

MEL

No, that's not it --

TINA

Whatever it is, it's fine with me.

(Lights a cigarette, exhales)

I just thought you had a sense of urgency when you first came in, and now we've got the funding, which wasn't easy to get by the way, I mean, every Tom, Dick and Harry is looking for his parents these days, and you said you feel like you don't have an anchor, that was your word --

THE WAITER PUTS THE DRINKS DOWN.

MEL

I said I wanted the tea.

WAITER

I'm sorry, I thought you said the martini.

MEL

Forget it.

WAITER

I can bring you the tea.

MEL

It's OK, forget it.

Tina looks at Mel while she sips her martini thoughtfully.

MEL

I'm not having second thoughts about the trip, I just don't want to tell my adoptive parents.

TINA

Oh. (Smiles) That's perfectly natural. I'm sorry I overreacted, I'm just so high strung these days. Why don't you want to tell them?

MEL

They're very emotional people, and they're not going to like it.

TINA

Of course they're not, but that's why you have to do it. I mean, if you want to redefine your family --

SHE RIFLES THROUGH HER BRIEFCASE FOR DOCUMENTS. It is a disorganized mess.

MEL

How did you get into this field, by the way?

TINA

I don't know, to resolve my own issues with commitment and happiness and all that shit, why does anyone become a shrink? (Pulls out papers and hands them to him) See if these materials don't help. They were written by others in precisely your situation.

MEL PUTS ON HIS READING GLASSES and GLANCES DOWN AT THE MATERIALS.

TINA

Those glasses are great, where'd you get them?

MEL

Optic Zone, down in the Village. Nancy thinks they make me look too cold.

TINA

Not at all, they make you look kind of fatherly.

MEL

Thank you.

TINA

Do you like being a father?

MEL

It's pretty indescribable.

TINA

I hear the sex gets better and better.

MEL

What?

TINA

I'm sorry, that's none of my business,

MEL

That's all right. Where did you hear it?

TINA

My friend Jackie said she had twice as many orgasms during the pregnancy and then after the birth, too. Have you found that to be the case?

MEL

Oh, definitely.

TINA

Good. Good for you.

CUT TO

INT. MEL & NANCY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

MR. PHILLIPS is an attractive, sixty year old man who sits on the sofa facing a tray of cheese and crackers on the coffee table.

MRS. PHILLIPS is a trim, attractive sixty year old woman who STANDS next to the table. MEL IS WEARING HIS GLASSES.

MEL

I'd like you to meet Tina Kalb, who's --

MR. PHILLIPS

This cheese is disgusting, get it away from me.

MRS. PHILLIPS

What's wrong with this cheese?

She dips a cracker into some cheese and eats it. Nancy sits with the baby on her lap while Mel stands.

MR. PHILLIPS

It smells like vomit.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Stop being such a baby.

MR. PHILLIPS

I don't like cheese, so I'm a baby?

TINA (with camcorder)

Do you mind if I turn this on?

MEL

Can you wait a few minutes?

TINA

Sure.

NANCY TAKES MEL'S GLASSES OFF HIS FACE.

NANCY

Why are you wearing these?

MRS. PHILLIPS

Nancy, did you get the support bra yet?

NANCY

Not yet.

MRS. PHILLIPS

What are you waiting for?

NANCY

Stop making such a big deal out of it.

MRS. PHILLIPS SUDDENLY YANKS HER BLOUSE UP OVER HER BRA. She has a good figure for her age.

MR. PHILLIPS

For God's sake.

NANCY

Very nice, Pearl.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Damn right they're very nice, especially when you consider my age.

MEL

Could you stop this? I want to introduce you to someone --

MRS. PHILLIPS

I never even had a baby, see, but I had to fight to keep them from dropping. You need the help of a good bra, and believe me, if you want to keep your husband's attention, you better get one, pronto. (SHE DROPS HER SHIRT AND PICKS UP SOME CHEESE)

MR. PHILLIPS

I hope you're satisfied.

MRS. PHILLIPS

I'm not doing this for my sake.

NANCY

If my breasts drop, they drop, there's nothing I can do about it.

MEL

That's right. Good for you, Nancy.

MR. PHILLIPS
Their marriage isn't built on
superficialities, Pearl.

NANCY PICKS A COOKIE UP FROM A PLATE on the table.

MEL (undertone)
You've had five of those, honey.

She LOOKS HIM IN THE EYE AND POPS IT INTO HER MOUTH. MRS. PHILLIPS
studies Tina's body.

MRS. PHILLIPS
Your friend's very long waisted, isn't she?

MEL
OK, that's it. We're not going to
talk about this anymore.

MRS. PHILLIPS
It's a free country. Why can't I talk?

MR. PHILLIPS (shouts)
You can't leave well enough alone, can you,
Pearl?

MRS. PHILLIPS
Why don't you leave me alone?

Mrs. Phillips picks up a PIECE OF CHEESE and holds it up to Mr.
Philips face.

MR. PHILLIPS
Get that the hell away from me before I knock
it away.

MRS. PHILLIPS (hurt)
Oh, you're gonna hit me in front of all
these people?

MEL (shouts)
Will you stop acting like this?

MRS. PHILLIPS
Don't yell around the baby.

NANCY
He wouldn't have to yell if you'd
listen to him for two seconds.

MR. PHILLIPS
What's gotten into my sweet daughter-
in-law all of a sudden?

MRS. PHILLIPS
Hormones, no mystery there.

Mel runs his hands over his face, trying to calm himself.
MRS. PHILLIPS takes the baby from Nancy's arms.

MR. PHILLIPS
Does this baby have a name yet?

NANCY
Don't blame me. There are plenty of names I like.

TINA STARTS TAPING WITH THE CAMCORDER.

MEL
It's a question of my real background.

MR. PHILLIPS
That's ridiculous. You're Mel Phillips, that's who you are.

MRS. PHILLIPS
I thought you agreed on Ethan.

MEL
No, Ethan's too lame.

NANCY
He thinks everything's too weak or too strong.

TINA
This process will go a long way toward clarifying that identity issue.

MRS. PHILLIPS
What process? Who is this new friend with the camera, already?

MEL
I've been trying to introduce her, Jesus.

TINA FOCUSES THE CAMCORDER ON MRS. PHILLIPS, who stares into the lens.

MRS. PHILLIPS
Oh, my God. You're getting a divorce. She's a counselor. No. A lawyer.

MEL
Will you shut up?

MR. PHILLIPS

Don't talk to your mother like that.

MEL

We're not getting a divorce.

MR. PHILLIPS

Maybe you should, if you can't name your baby.

MRS. PHILLIPS

That is a terrible, sick thing to say, Ed.

MR. PHILLIPS

You said it first.

MEL

Tina works at the adoption agency.

THEY LOOK AT MEL.

MR. PHILLIPS

What adoption agency?

MEL

The private adoption agency where you got me when I was a little baby.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Oh, my God.

She sits down, stunned.

TINA

Damn it, the camera just jammed.
A brand new camera.

SHE BANGS THE CAMERA with her hand.

TINA

That was such an important moment.

MEL

Just put it away for now.

TINA

You're right, I'm sorry.

MRS. PHILLIPS (lights up)

I have to have a cigarette if we're going to talk about this.

NANCY

You can't smoke around the baby.

MRS. PHILLIPS (drags deeply on cig)
Show a little compassion.

TINA (tinkering with camera)
This might be a good time to make an
exception.

NANCY
Please put it out, Pearl.

MRS. PHILLIPS
I'd like to know what happened to the
Constitution in this country. [She DRAGS,
EXHALES SMOKE, and puts the CIGARETTE OUT]
Why does he need to do this roots thing?
Aren't we good enough parents?

TINA
You did the best you could. Psychic
scars can't be helped.

MR. PHILLIPS
Psychic scars? What is she talking about?

MRS. PHILLIPS STARTS TO CRY QUIETLY with her face in her hands.
MR. PHILLIPS PATS HER ON THE BACK GENTLY to comfort her. THEY ALL
WATCH.

MRS. PHILLIPS (quietly)
He's saying we failed completely.

MEL (quietly)
That's way too extreme.

MRS. PHILLIPS (crying)
Just maybe forty percent --

MEL (quietly)
You can't quantify it like that, but it's
probably closer to sixty percent.

MRS. PHILLIPS
Sixty percent!

MR. PHILLIPS
Why is everyone so serious all of a sudden?
I thought we were going to talk about buying
you some new carpeting. Is this the room?

MR. PHILLIPS

Your life is so rich, so full, you've got a wife, a child, a respectable, if not as lucrative as medicine, job in science, so why are you doing this now?

MEL

I have to do it. It's my right.

TINA

No matter where we are in our lives, particularly if we're adopted, we can't help feeling there's something we need to find out there that's going to make us whole, happy, and free.

MR. PHILLIPS

Since you put it like that, I'd like to go with you.

MRS. PHILLIPS

This woman strikes me as very dangerous.

TINA

It's understandable you'd find me threatening.

MEL

We're leaving for San Diego in the morning and I have every intention of --

MRS. PHILLIPS (wiping her face)

What about your father's sixtieth birthday?

MEL

Can I finish my sentence? I have every intention of returning for Dad's birthday.

MR. PHILLIPS

You're aware there's a big car theft problem in San Diego.

MEL

No, I didn't know that.

TINA

I haven't heard anything about that.

MR. PHILLIPS

They bump you and when you stop they mutilate you and take your car.

MRS. PHILLIPS
It happened to Art Sackheim.

NANCY
They killed Art Sackhiem?

MR. PHILLIPS
Don't be ridiculous. They bumped him and took his car. Who said anything about killing?

MRS. PHILLIPS (wiping her eyes)
Anyway, enjoy yourself. I understand they have a lovely zoo in San Diego.

CUT TO

EXT. WEST 83RD STREET MANHATTAN - DAY

Mel and Nancy walk out of their pre-war apartment building. Mel carries the suitcases; Nancy carries the baby and the car seat. They approach the Town Car that is waiting with a DRIVER and an open trunk, and TINA JUMPS OUT OF THE CAR wearing a miniskirt and flats, with the CAMCORDER in her hand.

MEL is wearing his glasses again. NANCY LOOKS TINA UP AND DOWN.

TINA
All set?

MEL
I think so.

They get into the car.

CUT TO

INT. RENTAL CAR - SAN DIEGO - DAY

Mel drives along the freeway in a WHITE RENTAL CAR, PAST SUNNY PALM TREES AND BRIGHT GREEN LAWNS with automatic sprinklers. Tina sits in the passenger seat. Nancy sits in back with the baby in a baby car seat.

The car passes a sign reading: JOHN WAYNE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT as it drives along the open highway on the outskirts of San Diego.

NANCY (squinting)
It certainly is sunny out here, isn't it?

TINA
Are you nervous?

MEL
No, I feel exhilarated.

SUDDENLY THERE IS A BLACK VAN TAILGATING MEL, HONKING LOUDLY AND INCESSANTLY.

MEL

Oh, my God, it's happening.

NANCY

What's happening?

MEL

The bump and rob.

NANCY

Don't panic.

THE VAN PULLS ALONGSIDE MEL and a BLACK GUY HONKS THE HORN and leans out the window.

BLACK GUY (shouts)

Pull over.

Mel FRANTICALLY TRIES TO CLOSE HIS WINDOW, but can't find the button.

MEL

How do you close these goddamn windows?

BLACK GUY (shouts)

Yo. Yo.

MEL (shouts)

Get away from me.

He THROWS A JACKET into Mel's window.

BLACK GUY (shouts)

You left your jacket in the parking lot, man.

MEL (shouts)

Thank you very much.

CUT TO

EXT. VALERIE'S HOUSE - SAN DIEGO - DAY

It is a sunny, quiet, upper middle class street of good sized ranch houses in San Diego. Mel wears his glasses and walks from the rental car parked on the street toward a particular ranch house with a Cadillac in the driveway. Nancy walks alongside him carrying the baby, and Tina follows, taping with the camcorder. They walk up the slate path to the door and stand there. Mel looks nervous. NANCY REACHES OVER AND TAKES HIS GLASSES OFF. They stare at the front door NERVOUSLY.

NANCY

Should I ring the bell?

MEL

Yes. I mean no, wait.

It's too late. Nancy has rung the bell.

MEL

I told you to wait.

NANCY

You said yes first.

MEL

You didn't give me a chance to change my mind.

THE DOOR OPENS AND A SIX FOOT TWO WOMAN APPEARS. This is VALERIE, Mel's biological mother. She has frosted hair, is about 50, and somewhat pretty. She wears bright orange prints and San Diego colors.

VALERIE

What a pretty wife you have, and I see you brought your nanny.

NANCY

I'm not the nanny, I'm the wife.

VALERIE

Oh, excuse me.

TINA

Tina Kalb from the Maidstone Agency.

She shakes Valerie's hand. Valerie and Mel look at each other. He NERVOUSLY SHAKES VALERIE'S HAND.

VALERIE

Valerie Swaney.

MEL

Mel Phillips.

They look at each other awkwardly. SUDDENLY THEY EMBRACE EACH OTHER. Because she is so tall, MEL IS HUGGING HER AROUND HER WAIST. He and Nancy exchange looks while his cheek is buried in Valerie's waist.

CUT TO

INT. VALERIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

It is a sunny, traditional San Diego kitchen. There is a small portrait of REAGAN on the wall.

Valerie sits at the table dabbing her eyes. Mel also looks a little teary. Nancy holds the baby and Tina holds the camera on her lap. They DO NOT SPEAK FOR A MOMENT.

VALERIE

Your daddy was short.

MEL

That would explain it.

She reaches out and touches Mel's forehead.

VALERIE

But we have the same forehead, don't we?

Mel studies her forehead and NODS.

MEL

This is amazing. I never had this with anyone before. The physical traits.

VALERIE

I'm a bad person for what I did to you.

MEL

Don't say that.

VALERIE

It's true.

SHE PUTS HER HANDS OVER HER FACE AND STARTS CRYING AGAIN.
Mel reaches out and HOLDS HER WRIST, he looks tearful.

NANCY and TINA WATCH, BLEARY-EYED.

MEL

Listen to me, Tina says that many mothers who gave their children up for adoption in the sixties were independent young women acting against a conservative world.

VALERIE

You're saying I was a slut.

MEL

Maybe I didn't phrase that properly.

VALERIE (crying)

I was tall and I developed early. If that's a crime, go ahead and sue me, but I am not from trashy people.

MEL

No one's suggesting that.

VALERIE

Your daddy was poor. He worked in my father's liquor warehouse in Baton Rouge --

MEL

Nobody ever told me I was conceived in Baton Rouge.

VALERIE

In the liquor warehouse, on a crate of Johnny Walker. Oh, my parents hated Lars.

MEL

Lars? Lars what?

VALERIE

Lars Waara.

MEL

What kind of name is Waara?

VALERIE

Finnish.

MEL (incredulous)

I'm Finnish?

VALERIE

Finnish-American. And half Scottish-American.

MEL

I'm Scottish and Finnish? God, what is that like? I don't know how to do that.

TINA

Would you have any idea where Lars Waara is now?

VALERIE

I could make a few calls, but I lost track of him when they sent me to my cousin's in Virginia to have the baby.

MEL

I thought I was born in New York.

TINA

Is that what the records say?

MEL

It's what my parents say.

VALERIE

No, sir, we have a proud family history in Richmond, and that's where you were born.

MEL

Do you hear that, Nancy? I'm from a Southern background.

VALERIE PULLS OUT A WOODEN BOX and opens it, revealing a BEAUTIFUL SILVER PENDANT.

VALERIE

This belonged to my great-great-grandmamma, who was married to the Confederate general, Beauregard Clifford.

She lifts THE PENDANT carefully out of the box and puts it around Nancy's neck.

NANCY

It's gorgeous.

VALERIE

He was an expert boxer and marksman.

MEL

What an athletic family.

VALERIE

I was on two championship basketball teams myself.

MEL

Let's name the baby Beauregard.

VALERIE

Oh, I'm so touched. Wait'll I tell my mother.

NANCY

Wait a second. Beauregard?

MEL (takes the baby)

Sure, Beau Phillips, that sounds great, doesn't it?

TINA

Damn, this camera is jammed again,
and that was such a terrific moment.

They look at her. Tina FUSSES WITH CAMERA.

MEL

Let me take a look.

HE TAKES THE CAMERA FROM TINA AND EXAMINES IT:

NANCY

Why don't you just forget about the camera?

MEL (examining camera)

There's not enough light to see anything in
here.

VALERIE

You could try the living room for more light.

NANCY

I can't believe you're going to interrupt this
for the camera.

MEL

Nancy, this is my family, and I'll do
what I feel is best. (Leaves with Tina)
Give us two minutes.

VALERIE

He's a very decisive man, isn't he?

CUT TO

INT. VALERIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A LARGE, YELLOW AND ORANGE living room. Mel and Tina stand by a BIG
WINDOW while he holds the camera steady as she examines it.

MEL

You come from a very physical family,
too, don't you?

TINA

My brother's were big jocks. Is that
wheel moving?

MEL

I can't see anything.

TINA

Why aren't you wearing your terrific glasses?

HE PUTS HIS GLASSES ON. THEY STAND CLOSE TOGETHER TO EXAMINE THE CAMERA.

TINA
See the little wheel?

MEL
Yeah.

TINA
That's what's stuck.

MEL
You need something soft like the corner of a handkerchief to get around that gear and push the wheel.

TINA
Exactly.

MEL
But I don't have a handkerchief.

TINA
Here.

SHE LIFTS UP THE HEM OF HER LITTLE COTTON MINISKIRT AND STARTS EMPLOYING AN EDGE OF IT TO PUSH SOMETHING IN THE CAMERA.

MEL is STARING AT HER NOW COMPLETELY EXPOSED LEGS.

TINA
Can you tell if it's moving? Mel?

He is staring at her legs.

MEL
What?

TINA
Can you tell if the wheel is moving?

He looks at the camera.

MEL
It's moving. How long did you say you were a dancer?

TINA
Don't remind me, I haven't been to the gym in months.

MEL
You don't need to go to the gym.

TINA

You're being very generous, but believe me, when I was a dancer, my calves didn't look like this. (turns her calf)

MEL

They look pretty strong to me.

TINA

I used to beat my brothers at Indian wrestling all the time.

CUT TO

INT. VALERIE'S KITCHEN - DAY
Nancy watches Valerie sing.

VALERIE (sings softly)

I'm Beauregard from Dixie,
Hoo-ray, hoo-ray!

NANCY

Technically, he's from New York.

VALERIE

Come on, Nancy, join in. (sings)
My name is Little Beauregard
and I come from the Land
of Dixie.

Nancy joins in wanly.

VALERIE & NANCY

Look away, look away --

CUT TO

INT. VALERIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mel and Tina stand with the outside of one foot pressed together, hands locked in a handshake, trying to push each other off balance. They are Indian foot wrestling.

MEL

Is this something the Indians really did?

TINA

Feel it in your legs?

MEL

It's more about upper body strength
than the legs, isn't it?

TINA

No, it's all in the legs.

MEL

How?

TINA

You'll see when you lose your balance.

SHE JERKS HER ARM BACK. HE LOSES HIS BALANCE AND GOES FLYING PAST TINA AND KNOCKS OVER A GLASS BOOK CASE COVERED WITH DELICATE GLASS ANIMALS, smashing it all to the floor. He looks GUILTY as NANCY walks in with VALERIE.

NANCY

What happened?

VALERIE

Oh, my Lord.

HE GETS UP SLOWLY AND SURVEYS THE MESS. Tina stands there with her hand over her mouth in shock.

MEL

I am so sorry.

NANCY

I don't know what's gotten into you.

VALERIE KNEELS ON THE FLOOR AND PICKS UP THE REMNANTS OF HER GLASS MENAGERIE with a sad look on her face.

VALERIE

Your father got me collecting these animals in the early sixties. Chinese astrology was one of the things that brought us together.

SHE PICKS UP A STUB OF GLASS.

VALERIE

What happened to the head of my rooster?

MEL

Is this it?

VALERIE

No. That's the dog's pillow.

He CHUCKS IT TO THE SIDE.

VALERIE

Don't throw it.

HE GETS ONTO HIS HANDS AND KNEES TO RETRIEVE IT.

MEL

I want to pay for all of this.

VALERIE

Absolutely not, it's out of the question.

MEL

Why?

VALERIE

All children break things and all children are forgiven but you've never had that opportunity with me. So let's take this as a gift from God. Look--

SHE SUDDENLY GRABS A GLASS RABBIT THAT IS NOT BROKEN.

VALERIE

It's another gift from God.
The Rabbit's still in one piece.

MEL

What do you mean?

VALERIE

Both you and your daddy are Year of the Rabbit.

MEL

I always thought I was the Year of the Dragon.
At least on all those place mats in
Chinese restaurants.

VALERIE

No, no. Lars is 1939 and you're 1963, and those are both Rabbit years, trust me, I been doing this a long time.

MEL

Actually, I was born in '65.

VALERIE

Don't you think I know what year
my own son was born?

TINA

Of course you do, Valerie. I'm sure
Mel was given the wrong information by
the agency.

MEL

You mean I'm two years older than I thought I was?

TINA

I can clear this up with one phone call to the office.

SHE PULLS HER CELLULAR PHONE FROM A BAG AND DIALS A NUMBER. AT THAT MOMENT, TWO TALL, 6'3" BLOND TWINS, WOMEN, 22 YEARS OLD, walk in -- AS TINA CONTINUES TO TALK ON THE PHONE IN THE BACKGROUND. They are JANE and SANDRA.

JANE

What happened to your glass animals?

THE GIRLS STARE AT THE MESS ON THE FLOOR; they are holding a stack of new T-shirts.

VALERIE

These are the twins from my third marriage, Jane and Sandra. Say hello to your half brother, Mel.

SANDRA

Oh, man.

THEY START TO GIGGLE as they look at Mel.

VALERIE

What's so funny?

SANDRA

He looks like Uncle Freddie.

VALERIE (looks at Mel)

Yes, he does. Now why didn't I see that?

MEL

I'm flattered. What's Uncle Freddie like?

JANE

Really sweet natured, but he's a, what do you call it?

VALERIE

Frteurist.

MEL

Frteurist. What's that?

SANDRA

You rub up against people in crowded places.

NANCY

Mel used to do that.

VALERIE

Oh, dear, maybe it's genetic.

MEL

She's kidding.

SANDRA

If you knew Uncle Freddie you wouldn't joke about frateurism.

JANE

Can he come down to the beach?

VALERIE

He doesn't have time for that, Jane.

SANDRA

We're in the volleyball finals.

MEL

Wow. That's very impressive.

JANE

You can wear one of our shirts.

SANDRA GIVES MEL a T-SHIRT.

MEL

Thanks.

TINA (hangs up phone)

I don't believe this, but there's been a terrible, terrible mistake.

THEY ALL LOOK AT HER.

TINA

Valerie's not your mother, Mel.

THEY ALL LOOK AT HER.

MEL

Of course she's my mother. We've got the same forehead.

JANE

And he looks like Uncle Freddie.

MEL

Yeah, and I look like Uncle Freddie.

TINA

Please don't make this any harder on yourself than it already is. Our computer files were in transition and it's a definite mistake. Valerie's son is in Orlando, Florida and Mel's father is named [she consults her pad] Fritz Boudreau. He lives in Gundall, Michigan. I feel like a complete idiot.

NANCY

How could you do this to him?

MEL

That's not fair, Nancy. It was a mistake.

TINA

That's all right, I expect hostility.

NANCY

We flew all the way out here. We have this big emotional reunion --

TINA

Go on, get it out. We'll all feel better.

VALERIE

I expect you to pay for this damage.

MEL

You said it was a gift from God.

VALERIE

That was when you were my son.

MEL

Don't you have insurance?

VALERIE

You think I want to raise my premiums like that? This collection is valued at over seven thousand.

MEL

Seven thousand dollars for a bunch of glass animals?

VALERIE

I'd like my pendant back.

NANCY

Excuse me?

VALERIE

My great-great grandmother's pendant, please.

SHE HOLDS HER HAND OUT. NANCY takes the pendant off and gives it to VALERIE, who LEAVES THE ROOM. NANCY PAUSES, THEN TAKES THE BABY FROM MEL AND LEAVES THE ROOM. TINA EXITS THE OPPOSITE WAY TO GO TO THE BATHROOM, looking DISTRAUGHT. MEL IS LEFT ALONE WITH THE TWINS.

SANDRA

Can we have our shirt back?

SHE TAKES THE T-SHIRT from Mel.

JANE

We'd let you keep it, but we don't have very many of them.

MEL

I understand.

SANDRA

Sorry.

They stand for an awkward moment, and then THE TWINS LEAVE. MEL STANDS ALONE IN THE LIVING ROOM.

CUT TO

EXT. VALERIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Mel, Nancy, and Tina walk to the car that is parked on the street and STAND LOOKING DISORIENTED until Tina breaks the ice.

TINA

Once we get over the disappointment and shock, I think we can look at this as a good dry run.

MEL

Yeah, I think it loosened me up for the real thing.

TINA

We'll get the first flight to Michigan in the morning.

Nancy looks deadpan as they get into the car.

CUT TO

EXT. MOTEL - SAN DIEGO

CUT TO

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Nancy sits on the bed in her nightgown NURSING THE BABY.
Mel comes in DRYING his face with a towel.

NANCY (smiling)

The more I think about what happened,
the funnier it seems to me. I mean,
she had me singing 'Dixie.'

MEL (smiles)

It's a good thing I'm not related to
any frateurists, you know?

NANCY (laughing)

My God, and those twins and the glass
animals, Jesus.

He sits down, laughing.

NANCY (sits down laughing)

You know this is our first time together in a
motel since we got married.

MEL

Is that right?

She gets up and puts the sleeping baby into a basinette next to the
bed.

NANCY

It's romantic, don't you think?

MEL

I wasn't exactly thinking about it like that.

She looks at him.

MEL

Come here.

He puts an arm around her and holds her to him. She starts to kiss
him. It grows more passionate. They caress each other.

NANCY (whispers)

Close your eyes for a special surprise.

MEL

You want me to close my eyes?

NANCY

Yes.

He closes his eyes. She POURS HOT WATER from a small TEAPOT into a glass on the bedstand. She FILLS HER MOUTH WITH THE WATER while he waits with his eyes closed, and she disappears between his legs, her CHEEKS FULL OF WATER.

MEL (opens his eyes)
What are you doing?

NANCY
Mm hmm mum mum.

Pause. He looks at her.

MEL
You look like a chipmunk.

She SITS UP AND SPITS THE WATER BACK INTO THE GLASS.

NANCY
I told you to keep your eyes closed.

MEL
Is that hot water? You could scald me.

NANCY
It's not that hot. It was in my mouth, wasn't it?

NANCY GIVES UP and LIES BACK IN THE BED.

NANCY
Are we ever going to make love again?

MEL
We're just rusty because of the baby.

NANCY
This started before the baby.

They sit THINKING.

MEL
Maybe we need a little novelty to stir things up.

NANCY
I don't think sex in marriage is based on novelty. We're not feeling close for some reason.

MEL
I'm preoccupied with this whole search, that's all. Don't panic about it, honey, come on.

He puts an arm around her.

NANCY

How did you knock over those glass shelves, anyway?

MEL

We were working on the camera and we backed into it.

NANCY

It seems strange that you would just happen to back into it.

MEL

OK, we were Indian wrestling.

NANCY (sits up)

Indian wrestling? What's that?

MEL

It's this stupid thing kids do.

NANCY (stands up)

What position were you in?

MEL

It's no big deal, we were standing up.

NANCY

Why did you do it?

MEL

I don't know, we were talking about my athletic family, or Valerie's athletic family, which I thought was my athletic family, and then Tina's athletic family --

NANCY (paces)

You're attracted to her, aren't you?

MEL

What?

NANCY

It's OK. She's an attractive woman.

MEL

Of course she's attractive, but I'm married to you.

NANCY

Married to me or in love with me?

MEL

Come on, Nancy, don't do this.

NANCY (leaving frame)

She may be attractive, but let me tell you, she's got a screw loose somewhere.

MEL

She's a little eccentric, that's all.

CUT TO

CU: FREIGHT TRAIN OR SEMI PASSING BY, to reveal --

EXT. CAR - INDUSTRIAL MICHIGAN - DAY

Another white rental car. Tina drives. Mel sits in the passenger seat. Nancy sits in back with the baby.

Outside it is an INDUSTRIAL WASTELAND of oil storage tanks, railroad tracks, and high tension wires. The sky is overcast and gray. The rental car pulls up to a SHOTGUN SHACK next to the railroad tracks. There is a BIG SEMI TRUCK parked next to the little house.

They all get out of the car as a short FREIGHT TRAIN rattles by the house and passes. Tina pulls out the camcorder and trains it on Mel.

TINA (taping)

Well, this looks muy macho, doesn't it?

NANCY

It seems a little creepy to me.

THE DOOR OF THE LITTLE HOUSE OPENS BEHIND THEM.

TINA

Look, someone's coming out.

Mel and Nancy turn to see TWO MEN EMERGING from the shotgun shack. One is average height, the other is short, about five-six.

They look rather gruff as they come down the cracked cement path to the BIG SEMI RIG. The short one wears a leather vest with a chain on it; the tall one wears an old denim jacket and carries a gym bag. Mel RUNS ACROSS THE SNOWY/MUDDY FRONT YARD TOWARD the two men.

MEL
Excuse me --

The TWO MEN STOP BY THE CAB OF THE SEMI, and look at Mel as he walks up. Tina and Nancy watch from a distance. Nancy holds the baby.

MEL
Hi.

The men eye Mel suspiciously.

MEL
Is one of you Fritz Boudreau?

The SHORT ONE SHOVES MEL HARD, knocking him backwards.

SHORT GUY
Did I invite you onto my property?

MEL
Take it easy.

TINA COMES UP WITH THE CAMCORDER, followed by Nancy.

NANCY
Don't go over there, Tina.

Nancy watches as TINA APPROACHES MEL AND THE TWO MEN.
THE SHORT ONE GRABS THE CAMCORDER from Tina's hands and SMASHES IT TO THE GROUND AND STOMPS ON IT.

TINA
OK, we'll go with audio.

TINA PULLS A SMALL TAPE RECORDER FROM HER BAG.

TINA (into tape recorder)
We're here with two very macho men,
one of whom may or may not be Mel's--

MITCH GRABS THE TAPE RECORDER AND SMASHES IT TO THE GROUND, ALSO.

NANCY
That's enough, let's get out of here.

TINA PULLS OUT AN EVEN SMALLER MINI TAPE RECORDER and speaks into it as she backs up.

TINA
This is my last piece of recording
equipment --

MEL

Isn't he expecting us?

TINA

He didn't exactly register to meet you.

MEL

Then why did we come here?

TINA

I felt so bad about San Diego, I bent the rules a little.

MEL

A little? You didn't even call him.

TINA

That's not true. I tried to call, but his phone doesn't work.

NANCY

This obviously isn't a good time to meet your father.

SHORT GUY

Whose father?

MEL

We just want to know if one of you is Fritz Boudreau, because they said he's my father.

THE SHORT MAN walks slowly up to Mel.

FRITZ

You little shit.

He SUDDENLY EMBRACES MEL IN A HEAD LOCK.

FRITZ

Look at this little turd, Mitch. This turd is my son.

MITCH

You're hurting his neck, Fritz.

FRITZ

I spread a lot of baby batter in my day, but this is the first son I ever met.
[Lets go of Mel, who rubs his neck]
You picked a helluva time to drop by, turd face.

FRITZ STARTS SLAPPING MEL'S FACE PLAYFULLY.

MEL (blocking his face from punches)
She said your phone doesn't work.

FRITZ
Now I don't need no son to give me a guilt trip
about a phone. 'Oh, daddy, I feel unloved. I
think I need Prozac.'

MITCH
We got to get going, Fritz.

FRITZ
Yeah, we gotta get our wheels balanced
for a big trip tomorrow, sorry.

MEL
You have to go right now?

FRITZ
Why don't you come along with me now so
we can talk?

MEL
In the truck?

FRITZ
Yeah. Everybody come.

TINA
Fantastic.

NANCY
Maybe it's better if we meet another day.

MEL
No, I don't want to put this off.

TINA (to Nancy)
You can meet us later, if you want.
It's up to you.

Nancy stares at Tina.

CUT TO

INT. FRITZ' SEMI CAB - DAY
The truck rolls through the industrial area. Fritz drives. Mitch
sits in the passenger seat. Mel sits in the middle. Tina, Nancy and
the baby sit in the back. They all must SHOUT TO BE HEARD OVER THE
ENGINE.

FRITZ
You never been in a rig before, have you?

MEL (shouts over engine)
No. This is great.

TINA
I wish I had my camcorder.

MITCH
Sorry about that.

FRITZ
A lot of people look down on drivers like
we're low class.

MEL
Not me. I always wanted to learn how
to drive a big truck.

NANCY
You did?

MEL
I may not have realized it until now,
but, I think it's always fascinated me.

FRITZ
You want a lesson?

MEL
Sure.

MITCH
That's gonna slow us down.

FRITZ
No boy of mine is gonna slow us down, Mitch.

NANCY
Let's not do this while the baby's in the
truck.

FRITZ
Don't you trust me?

NANCY
Of course I trust you, but Mel's never
done this before.

MITCH
She's not gonna let him drive, so forget about
it.

FRITZ

Are you saying my son's a bitch boy?
You ain't no bitch boy, are you, Mel?

MEL

No, I don't believe I am a bitch boy.

NANCY

Don't let him bait you into doing something
stupid, Mel.

TINA

Mel needs your support, Nancy.

MEL

Yeah, I need support, honey.

FRITZ (raises his hand)

I support you, Mel.

MITCH (raises hand)

Me, too.

NANCY

You're acting like an asshole.

FRITZ & MITCH

Oooohhh.

CUT TO

EXT. RURAL POST OFFICE - DAY

The truck pulls into the small parking lot around a tiny clapboard
post office. Nancy gets out of the truck and stands by the little
post office as she holds the baby.

CUT TO

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Mel sits in the driver's seat. Fritz coaches him from the
passenger's seat. Tina and Mitch sit in back.

FRITZ

This here's your clutch --

MEL

And this is the brake --

FRITZ

No, that's clutch number two.

Mel looks confusedly at all the pedals.

FRITZ
Jeez, look at those ears you got.

MEL
I have big ears.

Mitch TOUCHES Mel's ear; Mel brushes his hand off.

FRITZ
Just like Old Needledick.

MEL
Who's Old Needledick?

FRITZ
This scientist prick who stole
your mother from me.

MITCH
We're rolling backwards, people.

FRITZ
When your mother and me were together,
I was riding with the Angels out of
Oakland, Cal.

MEL
Hell's Angels?

FRITZ
Yeah, and we got invited to these fancy parties
because rich people wanted to hang around with
the Angels and all the bands and what not --

CUT TO

EXT. RURAL POST OFFICE - DAY

Nancy holds the baby and watches as the BACK OF THE SEMI TRAILER
TOUCHES THE CORNER OF THE CLAPBOARD POST OFFICE.

NANCY
Hey. You're going to hit the building.

The TRUCK CONTINUES AND STARTS TO CRUSH INTO THE SIDE OF THE
BUILDING.

NANCY
Hey.

CUT TO

INT. TRUCK - DAY

FRITZ

So anyway, it was at one of these parties your mother meets this guy Richard Schlichting -- You ain't into science by any chance, are you?

MEL

I'm an entymologist, actually.

MITCH

Sounds like a scientist to me.

FRITZ

I hate to say this, but I think you're Needledick's boy.

TINA

But you brought him into the agency.

FRITZ

Because his mother was indisposed.

MEL

Indisposed how?

FRITZ

You'd have to ask her that.

TINA

But we don't know where she is.

TINA

Isn't it possible she was pregnant when she left you?

FRITZ

Not with those ears.

MITCH

Oh, Jesus, we're hitting that building.

FRITZ

Hit the brake.

MEL

Which one's the break?

FRITZ

Just like your old man: so smart, but so dumb.

MEL

It might help if you told me what to do.

FRITZ

People like your father think they're so superior --

MEL

Would you get off of that, I do not think I'm superior --

FRITZ

Oh, yes, you do.

CUT TO

EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

The semi has dented about a foot into the building, and STOPPED.

NANCY

OK, good. Now just pull forward.

The SEMI LUNGES FURTHER INTO THE POST OFFICE, crushing it even more. NANCY WALKS AWAY, shaking her head and muttering to herself.

CUT TO

LATER --

The semi sits lodged in the little old wooden post office. Fritz and Mitch are being led away in handcuffs by two COPS, while TINA, also in handcuffs, RUNS AFTER FRITZ.

TINA (running after Fritz)

You wouldn't happen to know where we could find Old Needledick, would you?

COP

Step away, ma'am.

TINA

Any information you have about Mel's parents is greatly appreciated --

FRITZ (being led away)

I think they ended up in Antelope Wells.

TINA

Where's that? (turns to cops)
Do you know where Antelope Wells is?

Another cop walks by and she follows him.

TINA

Excuse me, do you know where Antelope Wells is?

CUT TO

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

It is a spare room with a table and chairs and a oneway mirror on one wall. TINA paces and looks agitated as she SMOKES A CIGARETTE. NANCY paces with the baby. MEL SITS looking miserable.

NANCY

'I don't need to be criticized. I need support right now. If he wants to drive the truck, let him drive the truck.'

MEL

I think you've made your point.

The DOOR OPENS and TWO FEDERAL AGENTS walk in wearing grey suits, white shirts, and dark ties. They are both trim and athletic-looking. One is about 40, white, with blue eyes. This is PAUL. The other is about 28, dark. This is TONY.

PAUL

Agent Paul Hammond, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms.
This is Agent Tony Jones.

TONY, the younger agent, NODS.

PAUL

Let's see here, you thought this man Fritz Boudreau was your father, but in fact, he is not your father?

NANCY

Oh, my God, Tony?

HE LOOKS AT HER WITH STUNNED RECOGNITION.

NANCY

Tony Jones?

TONY (removes sunglasses)

Nancy Curwin?

NANCY

This is unbelievable. We both went to New Trier High School.

TONY

You look fantastic.

NANCY

No, I'm exhausted and I need a shower.
What are you doing in this police job?

TONY

My cousin got it for me. I need
a health plan while I'm writing
my first book, what are you
doing now?

NANCY

Curating at the Museum of Natural
History.

TONY

Wow.

PAUL

Excuse me, but we've got a problem
to take care of.

TONY

I'm sorry, Paul. Go ahead.

Paul walks up to Mel and hands him his license.

PAUL

It's a federal offense to destroy
a United States post office.

MEL

It's not like it was a premeditated
act of terrorism.

PAUL

I'll be the judge of that. Now, the ostensible
purpose of this truck ride was what exactly?

TONY

The baby's beautiful; he looks a lot like
you.

NANCY

Thank you.

TONY

Do you mind if I hold him?

NANCY

Not at all.

PAUL

Tony.

TONY (takes the baby)

Just for a minute.

PAUL

Give the baby back.

TONY

Feel his little grip, Paul,
it's really strong.

PAUL

Jesus Christ.

PAUL THROWS DOWN HIS NOTEBOOK ON THE TABLE, knocking a glass to the floor. Everyone looks UNCOMFORTABLE.

TONY

You're under way too much stress.

PAUL

The man drove a semi into a federal building.

TONY

He's Nancy Curwin's husband, it was an accident.

MEL

It's Nancy Phillips now.

TONY

How long have you been married?

PAUL

Hey. There are procedures that have to be followed, Tony.

TONY

He's got a valid license, doesn't he?

PAUL

Not to drive a truck.

TONY

It was the trucker's fault for letting him drive in the first place.

PAUL

Could I talk to you privately, please?

HE OPENS THE DOOR. Tony walks out, followed by Paul, who closes the door. Mel, Nancy and Tina LISTEN uncomfortably as Paul BERATES TONY outside the room.

PAUL (off screen)

I am in charge of this investigation.

TONY (off screen)

You don't have to suspend his license.

PAUL (off screen)

You've got to start taking this job more seriously.

The DOOR OPENS. Paul and Tony come back in.

PAUL

It looks like this Boudreau fellow's going to take the heat for letting you drive, but if you get behind the wheel of another truck, you'll lose your license for sure.

NANCY

Is that it? Are we free to go?

PAUL

Yes, you're free to go.

TONY

Do you have a place to stay tonight?

TINA

We'll probably go to a motel.

PAUL

Don't do that. There are so many wonderful B and B's right here on Lake Michigan.

MEL

I hate B and B's.

PAUL

Why do you hate B and B's?

MEL

First of all, there's no privacy --

PAUL

No privacy?

MEL

You have to share a bathroom, you have to make chit-chat with the boring old lady --

PAUL

That's what makes it fun.

MEL

There's always some old cat walking around, you have to pretend you like the cat.

PAUL

Motels rooms smell like carpet cleaner.

TINA

Whatever we do, I have to eat something because I'm starving.

TONY

Why don't you let us take you out to dinner?

PAUL

What are you, apologizing for the arrest?

TONY

No, I want to catch up with Nancy. We can take them to Minetti's.

PAUL

Oh, Minetti's. That's pretty special.

MEL

That's very nice of you, but we'll be fine on our own.

PAUL

Come on, Tony, we don't want to intrude.

NANCY

Don't be silly. We're getting sick of each other's company.

Mel looks at her.

CUT TO

INT. MINETTI'S RESTAURANT - MICHIGAN - NIGHT

They are done eating. MEL IS NOT AT THE TABLE. TONY and NANCY are playing with the BABY, which is bouncing on TONY's LAP.

PAUL

Antelope Wells is in the southeastern corner of New Mexico.

NANCY

Have you been there?

PAUL

I've been near there. You've got White Sands National Monument in the area, and there's a fantastic hot springs not many people know about.

NANCY

I almost wish you could come and show me around while Mel meets his family.

TONY

You've got the personal days, Paul, you should do it.

PAUL

No, I can't leave work right now.

MEL WALKS UP AND SITS DOWN AT THE TABLE.

MEL

Unbelievable line at the bathroom.

PAUL

It's always that way here.

TONY (bouncing the baby)

Look at that smile.

NANCY (laughing)

He loves you, Tony. You're wonderful with babies.

TONY

I want one of these so badly.
Do you think you could help
me with an adoption, Tina?

TINA

That depends on the specifics of
your situation.

TONY

Like what?

TINA

Number one: are you married?

TONY

Yes.

TINA

Does your spouse work?

TONY

Yes.

TINA

Is she willing to adopt?

TONY

That's where the snag is.

TINA

Then you've got a real problem.

TONY

What are my chances as a single parent?

PAUL STANDS UP SUDDENLY. He looks VERY UPSET.

PAUL

Excuse me.

MEL leans forward so he can get by.

TONY

Why can't you stay and discuss this?

PAUL

Because I happen to believe in privacy, that's why.

TONY

We have nothing to be ashamed of.

PAUL

I don't believe in sharing my personal life with everyone I meet, OK?

TONY

This isn't just anyone, she works at an adoption agency, and I thought she could be helpful.

PAUL WALKS OFF. THEY all stare at TONY, somewhat stunned, as they realize that Tony and Paul are a COUPLE.

TONY

I keep telling him that a baby will reduce stress by taking his mind off work, but he just doesn't listen.

MEL, TINA, and NANCY stare at TONY as he BOUNCES THE BABY on his knee. He turns to MEL.

TONY

So where did you folks come down on the big circumcision controversy? There's a movement afoot to keep the foreskin these days, but, personally, I think a boy's penis should look just like his father's.

They all look at him.

CUT TO

INT. LIVING ROOM - B AND B - MICHIGAN - NIGHT

It is a dark, Victorian living room with one lamp on, as MEL, Nancy and the others listen POLITELY to an OLD WOMAN IN GLASSES.

OLD WOMAN

Of course that was back in 1957, when there were no other buildings along this beach. My late husband devised his own anti-erosion system with simple two-by-fours positioned in a zig-zag system that we later patented, thanks to the advice of a dear friend who was in a law firm with Gerald Ford. My brother has the same birthday as President Ford, who's a very sweet man. We met him twice.

A BIG, OLD CAT HISSES at them as it lumbers by.

CUT TO

INT. MICHIGAN B & B BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mel CHANGES THE BABY'S DIAPER on the bed while NANCY unpacks with a bathing cap on her head, preparing for a shower. She wears her kimono.

MEL (changing diaper)

Why couldn't we go to a motel? Because at a motel, you don't get the bonus of someone related to Gerald Ford's birthday --

NANCY
Birthday, oh, my God. We missed your father's
birthday.

They stand and look at each other.

CUT TO

INT. B & B KITCHEN - NIGHT

MEL holds the phone to his ear and looks around the kitchen
guiltily.

MRS. PHILLIPS (off screen)
Hello?

MEL (whispering)
It's me, Mom.

CUT TO

INT. MR. & MRS. PHILLIPS DINING ROOM - NIGHT

They sit at a TABLE SET FOR THREE MORE, including a BABY PLACE
SETTING. They have obviously eaten alone.

MRS. PHILLIPS
How kind of you to find time to call
in the middle of all that psychic healing.

MEL
I'm sorry we didn't make it back for Dad's
birthday.

MRS. PHILLIPS
That's all right. We can try it again when
he turns 65, provided he lives that long
and you're not too busy.

MEL (whispers)
I said I was sorry.

MRS. PHILLIPS
Why are you whispering?

MEL (whispering)
I'm not supposed to be using this phone.

MRS. PHILLIPS
Are you all right?

MEL (anxiously)
There was a big mix up in San Diego, and
then the truck flattened a post office in
Michigan --

MRS. PHILLIPS

What truck?

MR. PHILLIPS

What happened with a truck?

MEL

It's fine, we have the right information now and we're going to New Mexico.

MRS. PHILLIPS

New Mexico? I thought you were in San Diego.

MR. PHILLIPS

Tell him about the water.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Will you shush? He's in some kind of trouble. Did your car get bumped in San Diego?

MEL

There was a minor incident, oh, no, I have to go --

He looks PANICKED as the OLD WOMAN walks into the kitchen, carrying her cat. THE OLD WOMAN walks up to Mel.

OLD WOMAN

I hope this is an emergency.

MEL

Yes, it's an emergency.

OLD WOMAN

Because the kitchen is verboten at night.

MRS. PHILLIPS

What's the emergency?

OLD WOMAN

Do you need an ambulance? Is it the baby?

MRS. PHILLIPS

Oh, God, what's wrong with the baby?

MEL

The baby's fine.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Don't try to protect me from this, Mel.
Do you need help?

OLD WOMAN

Do you see that sign? You have to use the
pay phone at the gas station for social calls
after eight p.m.

MEL

Give me thirty seconds.

OLD WOMAN

If I give in to you, what will the
other guests say?

MRS. PHILLIPS

Is that tyrant your mother?

MEL (into phone)

I have to go, Mom, but we're going to be with
the Schlichtings--

MRS. PHILLIPS

The Shitkings?

MEL

The Schlichtings, my parents.

MR. PHILLIPS

What kind of name is Shitking?

OLD WOMAN (shouts, red faced)

Verboten means verboten!

MEL (into phone)

I think it might be German, but we'll be in
Antelope Wells and then --

THE OLD WOMAN PUSHES THE BUTTON DOWN, HANGING UP THE PHONE.

OLD WOMAN

Leave the kitchen immediately.

MEL

I used my calling card.

OLD WOMAN (shouts)

That is not the point!

SHE HOLDS THE HISSING CAT UP TO MEL'S FACE.

CUT TO

INT. PHILLIPS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. PHILLIPS LOOKS VERY WORRIED.

MR. PHILLIPS

What happened?

MRS. PHILLIPS

He's in trouble but he's too proud to ask for help, as usual.

MR. PHILLIPS

I knew something bad was going to happen.

MRS. PHILLIPS (on phone)

It always does.

She picks up the phone and starts dialing urgently.

CUT TO

INT. BEDROOM - BED AND BREAKFAST - NIGHT

It is a frilly Victorian bedroom, with old oriental carpeting and antique furniture. The BABY sleeps in a basinette.

Nancy sits on the bed in a nightie, putting lotion on her legs and arms. She is fresh from the shower. Wears a BATHING CAP and a TOWEL.

THE DOOR OPENS and MEL WALKS IN, looking PISSED, and SLAMS THE DOOR.

NANCY

Did you call your parents?

He starts to take his shoes and pants off.

MEL

I almost got mauled by the merry innkeeper.

NANCY

The kitchen's off limits after eight.

MEL

What are you, her spy? You're the one who told me to call.

NANCY

I thought you'd use Tina's phone.

MEL
Her phone doesn't work here.

NANCY
You're feeling frustrated.

He sits heavily on the bed.

MEL
Yes, I'm feeling frustrated.

NANCY
I told you your expectations were too high
for all of this.

MEL
Maybe it's time to pack it up and go home.

NANCY
Don't start that. You always get pessmimistic
when you're close to finishing something.

MEL
I do?

NANCY
You did it about the apartment, about the
wedding, about the pregnancy.

MEL
You're right.

NANCY
Stick to your plan for once, OK?

He kisses her on the cheek, picks up his TOILETRY BAG and leaves.

CUT TO

INT. B & B HALLWAY - NIGHT

It is the DIMLY LIT UPSTAIRS FLOOR of an OLD VICTORIAN HOUSE, with
quaint old carpeting.

MEL comes down the hall and walks up to THE CLOSED BATHROOM DOOR
just as there is a FLUSHING inside, and the DOOR OPENS.

TINA EMERGES, WALKS RIGHT INTO MEL. She wears panties and a
CAMISOLE. HER FACE IS RED, and she has been CRYING.

MEL
What's wrong?

TINA

This divorce hits me in waves, you know what I mean? The loneliness and the loss sneak up on me late at night. It's horrible.

MEL

I'm sure it's very painful.

TINA

You share your life with someone, but you feel trapped so you get out and then it's so horrible you wonder if you should've stayed.

She BLOWS HER NOSE in a tissue.

TINA

You have every right to be disappointed in me. I've been distracted from my job and I owe you an apology.

MEL

Let's put it behind us. I'm sure everything will be fine tomorrow.

TINA

You're such an optimist. Where does that come from?

MEL

I've always said it's a mistake to let pessimism take over.

TINA

That's the complete opposite of my ex-husband. He always got gloomy just when we were consummating something. Anyway, goodnight.

She KISSES HIM GENTLY ON THE CHEEK, brushing her body against his. THEY SMILE AT EACH OTHER.

MEL

Good night.

TINA

Good night.

They KISS AGAIN LIGHTLY ON THE LIPS, then SUDDENLY KISS DEEPLY AND EMBRACE EACH OTHER, RUNNING THEIR HANDS UP AND DOWN EACH OTHER'S BODIES HUNGRY.

JUST AS SUDDENLY, THEY BREAK APART, GLAZED WITH SEX AND EMBARRASSMENT. TINA LOOKS VERY TROUBLED. She turns, embarrassed, and WALKS quickly down the hall. MEL stands and watches her disappear into her room. THEN HE TURNS and goes back to HIS ROOM, skipping the bathroom altogether.

CUT TO

INT. B & B BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mel comes back in and closes the door. There is a PUP TENT in his boxers.

NANCY

Where did that pup tent come from?

She looks at the PUP TENT. He gets onto the bed next to her. She looks at him.

MEL

I think I'm ready to be close again.

She watches him with dismay as he comes over and BEGINS RAVENOUSLY KISSING AND CARESSING HER. He presses her down on the bed. SHE LAUGHS. SHE LOOKS AT HIM AS HE IS PULLING UP HER NIGHTGOWN, and his eyes are closed.

NANCY (laughing)

Honey, wait.

HE DOESN'T STOP.

NANCY

MEL.

He finally stops.

MEL (out of breath)

What?

NANCY

I don't know what's going on, but I feel like you're not really here.

MEL

That's ridiculous, I'm here.

NANCY

Then why do you look so guilty?

MEL

Do I look guilty?

NANCY

Yes, your forehead wrinkles like that when you feel guilty.

MEL

Why can't we just have sex?

NANCY

You mean like just fuck?

MEL

Yeah.

NANCY

Because sportfucking is for strangers.
We can have closeness. Warmth. Tenderness.

MEL

Are we talking about sex or tea curtains?

NANCY

I'm tea curtains if I don't like you to
drive over me like a truck?

MEL

What happened to wild abandonment and
pounding?

HE SLAPS HIS HAND THREE TIMES ON THE BED.

NANCY

You want pounding? [SHE SLAPS HER HAND ON THE
BED SEVERAL TIMES] Like make my ears bleed
pounding?

THE BABY STARTS CRYING.

MEL

Great. Now you woke him up.

HE PICKS THE BABY OUT OF THE BASINETTE.

MEL

Maybe it's not natural for two people to
stay together their entire lives, I mean
fifty years with the same person, how do people
do it?

NANCY (deeply hurt)

Am I that boring to you?

MEL

No, but a little variety might keep
things from getting so claustrophobic.

NANCY

Now you want an open marriage? Is that
what you're saying?

MEL

No, I don't know what I want, I'm just talking.
Don't you ever have these thoughts?

NANCY

Your parents aren't good enough, and now I'm
not good enough because Tina's some fucking
skinny dancer.

MEL (comforting baby)

That's not what it's about.

NANCY

It takes some women a year to get back to their
normal weight after having a baby.

MEL

It didn't take Jill a year.

NANCY (shouts)

Then go marry Jill.

THERE IS A SHARP KNOCKING ON THE DOOR.

OLD WOMAN (shouts off screen)

You're not good B and B people.

Nancy walks away from Mel angrily, and out of frame.

CUT TO

INT. MICHIGAN AIRPORT GATE - DAY

MEL AND TINA are waiting to hand their tickets to a FLIGHT
ATTENDANT as they board the plane. TINA WEARS SUNGLASSES AND LOOKS
HUNGOVER. She takes out a cigarette, looks upset as she puts it
into her mouth. MEL takes her lighter from her and lights it for
her.

TINA

Listen, we have to talk.

MEL

I'm feeling just as confused as you are.

TINA

I'm not sure I need an affair with a married
man right now.

MEL

I thought you were sending me signals.

TINA

I'm in the middle of a divorce, I'm going to school at night. I need to be taken seriously as a woman, I want to have children.

MEL

I take you very seriously.

TINA (raises her voice)

I don't want you to use me as your marital crisis concubine so you can feel sexy again with your wife.

PEOPLE TURN AND STARE. Mel looks embarrassed.

MEL

Do you think you could keep your voice down?

People continue to stare. SHE BURSTS INTO TEARS. Mel looks up NERVOUSLY at PEOPLE watching them.

TINA (crying, speaks loudly)

I don't want to wreck your marriage, you know? (sob) I know how painful that is.

He LEANS OVER AND WHISPERS TO HER.

MEL

It's not your fault, the marriage is obviously vulnerable at this time.

TINA (crying, speaks loudly)

Every marriage is vulnerable, otherwise being married wouldn't mean anything, would it? Why are men such emotional cowards?

HE HANDS HER A SMALL TISSUE PACK from his jacket pocket and she BLOWS HER NOSE.

SUDDENLY NANCY WALKS UP BEHIND MEL WITH THE BABY. Tina looks at Nancy and briskly hands her ticket to the flight attendant and boards the plane, leaving Mel and Nancy alone.

NANCY

What's the matter with her?

MEL

She's upset about about the way things are going.

NANCY

That makes two of us.

MEL

Look, I probably owe you an apology for last night.

NANCY

Probably?

MEL

I think we need to discuss it --

NANCY

That doesn't sound like an apology.

SUDDENLY PAUL AND TONY COME RUNNING UP with TICKETS IN THEIR HANDS. They are dressed casually in jeans and colorful sportscoats.

TONY (smiling)

Hello, again, strangers.

PAUL (smiling)

I sorry I stormed off like that last night. I suffer from hypertension, as you probably can tell, and sometimes it makes me very antisocial.

MEL

Fine. Is that why you came down here?

TONY

No, the whole thing was a blessing, actually, because it finally made Paul realize how much he needs some R & R, and I've never seen New Mexico.

PAUL

Sometimes I need to get konked on the head, what can I say? I owe you guys one.

MEL

What?

TONY

We're going South with you, like it or not.

PAUL (smiling)

Nothing like the cruel acceptance of a casual invitation, is there?

MEL

I don't recall any invitation.

NANCY

I think you were in the bathroom.

TONY

Oops. Did we jump the gun here?

PAUL

Hey, it's only a blessing for us if it's not a problem for you --

NANCY

No, it's fine, we'll be fine.

MEL

It's fine?

PAUL

We're just going to do some sightseeing.

TONY

I'll see if I can get an empty row for the baby.

NANCY

Terrific.

PAUL and TONY BOARD THE PLANE.

NANCY

I'm sorry. I didn't expect this to happen.

MEL

You just had a little hostility to work out.

NANCY

This isn't hostile. I barely mentioned the idea to them --

MEL

Fine. Whatever.

NANCY

Don't get into a victim role here.

Nancy leaves Mel alone at the gate, looking agitated.

CUT TO

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Tony and Nancy sit in an EMPTY ROW OF SEATS as she NURSES THE BABY, exposing TOO MUCH OF HER BREASTS as Tony watches.

TONY
Your body doesn't seem to have changed
very much since high school.

NANCY
Oh, come on, I'm about twenty pounds heavier.

TONY
But your figure looks the same.

NANCY
That's very sweet of you.

TONY
Can I risk embarrassing you?

NANCY
You already have.

TONY
It's what the guys used to say.

NANCY
What did they say?

TONY
You had the best breasts at New Trier.

NANCY
Get out of here.

TONY
And I don't think time's changed that.

She makes a HALF-HEARTED effort to cover them with her blouse as he stares.

TONY
How's the irritation from nursing?

NANCY
Pretty bad, actually.

TONY
That's because you're not holding him
at the right angle.

NANCY

I'm not?

TONY

No, my old girlfriend is a midwife and she showed me that he shouldn't be sideways, pulling down on the nipple, but --

HE CUPS ONE HAND ON HER BREAST AND ANOTHER ON THE BABY'S HEAD AND PUSHES THEM TOGETHER.

TONY

--he should be facing directly into the breast like this.

He continues to handle the breast and the baby. Paul walks up with TWO GLASSES OF WATER.

PAUL

Hi.

TONY

We were going to ask if you wouldn't mind finding another empty seat so we could have this row for the baby to stretch out.

PAUL

Oh.

TONY (takes the waters)

It would really help us out here.

PAUL

Sure, OK.

Paul looks a bit TROUBLED as he walks off.

NANCY (smiles)

Thanks a million.

CUT TO

MEL and TINA sit side by side, looking tense. Tina flips magazine pages. Mel stares ahead unhappily. PAUL COMES UP and sits IRRITABLY in the EMPTY SEAT next to Tina.

PAUL

Is there something I should know about this trip that I haven't been clued into yet?

Mel and Tina look at him.

PAUL

That's wonderful, that's just great.
I can't believe how naive I am.

CUT TO

EXT. CAR RENTAL LOT - ALBUQUERQUE AIRPORT - DAY

MOUNTAINS and the OPEN SKY are in the background of the RENTAL PARKING LOT.

MEL and TINA WALK down the line of rental cars and STOP AT A WHITE TAURUS RENTAL IN A LINE OF WHITE TAURUS RENTALS.

TONY COMES WALKING UP BRISKLY followed by Paul and NANCY.

NANCY

Does anybody actually own a white Taurus, or are they all rentals?

TONY

Are you kidding? This is the most reliable mid-size in America, according to Consumer Reports.

PAUL

I'm feeling very depressed and I'd like to talk about what's happening, please.

TONY

What are you depressed about?

PAUL

I feel like there's an agenda here, it's not what I had in mind.

NANCY

What agenda?

PAUL

Do I have to spell it out? I'm obviously the fifth wheel here, what do you think that feels like?

TONY

We're riding in two cars until we get to the B and B, Paul, that's not an agenda.

MEL

Let's just hit the road, OK?

NANCY

Do you mind if Paul rides with you?

MEL

Why can't he go with you?

PAUL

Do you see what you're doing to me?

TONY

Ride with us, I don't care.

PAUL

That's very generous, but I think I'll ride with illicit couple number two.

CUT TO

EXT. DESERT - SUNSET

ONE WHITE TAURUS ZIPS past the camera, and after a beat the second zips past and disappears down the EMPTY DESERT HIGHWAY. It is the middle of nowhere and they are the only cars on the road.

CUT TO

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

TINA DRIVES, MEL sits in the passenger seat READING A ROADMAP.

PAUL SITS IN THE BACK SEAT, looking unhappy.

PAUL

He does this to me every eight months.
I should be used to it by now.

TINA

What exactly does he do?

PAUL

He gets antsy, wanders off with someone else.

TINA

I think that's common among certain kinds of married men.

PAUL

I'm the rock and he's the flake, so that's life, I guess.

TINA

That's what my husband used to say when he was trying to feel superior to me.

PAUL

Tony's flights of terror from his own life are not about my superiority --

TINA

It's not terror, it's vitality.

PAUL

I see, is it vitality that's led Mel to leave his wife for you?

MEL (to Paul)

Would you mind riding in the other car?

CUT TO

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The TWO WHITE TAURUSES PULL OVER TO THE SIDE of the desert highway and stop. PAUL GETS OUT OF MEL'S CAR. Tony gets out of the back seat of Nancy's car, and gets into the front. PAUL gets into the back seat. MEL'S CAR TAKES OFF FIRST.

CUT TO

INT. NANCY'S CAR - DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

Nancy drives. Tony sits in the passenger seat HOLDING A ROADMAP. Paul sits in back with the baby holding a bottle in the baby's mouth.

NANCY

What happened?

Tony turns around to look at Paul.

TONY

Paul was probably lecturing them.

PAUL

I was asking questions, not lecturing.

TONY

Oh, my God, is that your gun?

PAUL (covers his gun)

You never know when we're going to get beeped for an emergency.

TONY

You are such a hopeless workaholic.

PAUL

If you're afraid to stay committed to our marriage now, what's going to happen when we have a baby?

TONY

I'm not answering a question like that.
[TONY TURNS BACK TO NANCY]
We were having a conversation, weren't we?

NANCY

We were talking about tenderness.

TONY

You said he's become rough sexually --

NANCY

And impatient.

TONY

What a pity. There's so much to be found in slow tenderness.

PAUL

Like you're never a selfish lover, right?

NANCY

I don't mean to be rude, but I think I'd prefer it if you rode in the other car.

CUT TO

EXT. SIDE OF THE DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

Nancy sits in her car while TINA pulls up next to her as Mel leans out the passenger window to talk to Nancy.

PAUL GETS OUT AND GETS INTO MEL'S CAR.

MEL

We need privacy over here, Nancy.

NANCY

Well, so do we, and I've already got the baby.

TONY

Let's get out of here, come on.

NANCY

I'm trying to.

SHE TRIES TO START THE CAR SEVERAL TIMES WHILE THE OTHERS WATCH.

TONY
I don't believe this.

CUT TO

THE HOOD IS OPEN AND THEY ARE ALL LOOKING AT THE ENGINE.

TINA
What happened to America's most reliable
mid-size?

CUT TO

MEL and NANCY STRUGGLE TO STUFF ALL THE LUGGAGE INTO HIS TRUNK.

CUT TO

EXT. HIGHWAY - SUNSET

The white taurus whips by with the trunk open. A small suitcase falls out and is left behind on the highway. THE CAR STOPS AND BACKS UP FOR THE SUITCASE.

CUT TO

INT. MEL'S CAR - DAY

PAUL
We were talking about Tony as the gay paragon
of sexual tenderness in the other car. What
were you talking about in this car?

Mel looks at Tony in the REAR VIEW MIRROR, annoyed.

TINA
I thought there was lots of rough sex
among gays.

TONY
That's a dumb stereotype.

PAUL
It's certainly not true in committed
relationships, at least in my experience.

NANCY
Even then, you must worry so much about the
safety factor.

PAUL
This may be news to you, but not every gay man
is into anal sex. That's where a lot of HIV
risk lies.

TONY

For example, I'm very anal.

[THEY ALL LOOK AT HIM]

I mean in the sense that I'm compulsively careful and clean about what touches my body and I'm not into penetration at all --

PAUL

To a fault, and that includes oral and anal.

MEL

Do we have to talk about this?

NANCY

What are you, homophobic?

PAUL

She's testing the risk factor of sex with Tony.

TONY

Don't patronize her, Paul. She has no need to know that I've tested negative three times, most recently seven months back, and I'm probably safer than any hetero lover she might possibly end up with.

CUT TO

THE CHARRED REMAINS OF THE B & B SIT IN THE DESERT. It obviously burned to the ground at least a year ago. The sign post still reads "RANCHO de ARROYO"

Tony stands next to a cactus in the desert LEAFING THROUGH his TRAVEL GUIDE.

TONY (leafing through book)

We definitely should've sprung for the updated edition.

TINA

Did it ever occur to you to call first?

PAUL

Without spontaneity, the world of B and B's is fairly meaningless.

TINA

I hope you have a tent, because that's the only way you can be spontaneous in the middle of the desert at this hour.

NANCY

Maybe Mel's parents can suggest a place to stay.

MEL

Great, I'll just show up with about fifty people. 'Hi, I haven't seen you in thirty years, meet my posse, and by the way, my wife invited these gay guys to travel with us and we're all here without a place to stay.'

TONY

What does 'gay guy' have to do with anything?

MEL

I didn't mean anything insulting by that.

TONY

Then why did you say it, 'neurotic guy?'

TINA

Do you want to go to court to file an anti-defamation suit or do you want to get to the Schlichtings before midnight?

CUT TO

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The WHITE TAURUS ZIPS past a lone restaurant/bar called Taco Bite.

CUT TO

INT. MEL'S CAR - NIGHT

Mel drives, Tina reads the map.

MEL

OK, we passed the Taco Bite, how much farther is it?

TINA

Another two miles, it's the only house on the left.

NANCY

Are they expecting us, or is this another surprise visit?

TINA

No, I spoke to them, Nancy, I told you that.

PAUL

This is really the middle of nowhere,
isn't it?

CUT TO

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

A LONE HOUSE IS LIT UP IN THE DESERT in the distance.

CUT TO

INT. CAR - NIGHT

POV OF DIRT ROAD.

TINA

This is a long driveway.

THEY COME TO A FORK.

MEL (o.s.)

Right or left at this fork?

TINA

Left.

CUT TO

EXT. RICHARD & MARY SCHLICHTING'S FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

The white Taurus pulls into the DIRT DRIVE of a SINGLE, 1920s, CLAPBOARD FARMHOUSE in the MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. It is surrounded by some fruit trees, and there is an OLD BARN IN THE REAR, and a few little sheds.

Mel and the others get out of their cars and survey the setting. NANCY CARRIES THE BABY as they walk up the steps of the old fashioned FRONT PORCH.

MEL

Can't you wait in the car?

TONY

I'd like to use the bathroom.

THE DOOR SUDDENLY OPENS.

A TALL, HANDSOME, BLOND ALL-AMERICAN DAD, about 50. He wears a black T-shirt shirt, khakis, and cowboy boots. This is RICHARD SCHLICHTING. He smiles warmly as he is joined by a smaller, All-American MOM, wearing a fifties-style dress, her brown hair at her shoulders. THEY LOOK LIKE the PERFECT PARENTS.

MARY

It's so late, we were getting worried.

RICHARD

I hope my directions were all right.

MEL

The directions were perfect, except we missed the church you mentioned.

MARY

People always miss that, we shouldn't give it as a landmark anymore.

TINA REACHES ACROSS MEL AND NANCY TO SHAKE RICHARD'S HAND.

TINA

I'm Tina Kalb from the adoption agency. We spoke on the phone.

RICHARD

That's right.

MARY

We were so shocked to get your call yesterday. We haven't been able to think about anything else since.

RICHARD

I can't believe you saw Fritz Boudreau. Now which one of you is Mel?

MEL

That's me.

Mary extends her hand and shakes Mel's hand warmly.

MARY

Mary Schlichting.

RICHARD

Welcome to our home, Mel.

He also shakes Mel's hand vigorously.

MEL (beaming)

Thank you.

RICHARD

This must be your wife.

MEL

Yes, this is Nancy.

RICHARD

Welcome to our family, Nancy.

TINA

These are our friends, Tony and Paul. They were planning to stay at Rancho Arroyo.

MARY

Oh, dear, poor Rancho Arroyo.

RICHARD

I heard the fire started in the coals near the redwood hot tub.

NANCY

Can you recommend a motel?

RICHARD

We won't hear of it.

MEL

We would definitely hear of it.

RICHARD

No, no, let's get the luggage.

HE STEPS ONTO THE FRONT STEPS.

MEL

I don't want to meet you with all these people Nancy brought.

NANCY

All these people I brought here? What about Miss Indian Wrestling? She's not a problem, but my friends are a problem.

MEL

She's officially part of the trip --

NANCY

Oh, the official other woman.

MEL (to Schlichtings)

I'm sorry, we're having a little friction with all the travelling.

NANCY

It's a lot more than friction at this point.

MEL

Would you stop?

MARY (steps off porch)

Everyone will calm down after you have something to eat. Let's get the bags.

MARY STEPS OFF THE PORCH AND TAKES RICHARD by the arm as they head toward Mel's WHITE TAURUS, FOLLOWED BY the others.

NANCY

A motel is fine with me.

RICHARD

Don't be silly, there's not a decent motel within a hundred miles of here.

MARY (walking to car)

Your baby's beautiful -- boy or girl?

NANCY

Boy.

MARY

What's the name?

RICHARD TAKES LUGGAGE FROM THE TRUNK with the help of TONY and MARY.

NANCY

Beauregard, last I heard.

MARY

Beauregard, that's an unusual name.

MEL

It's not Beauregard.

THEY HEAD BACK TO THE PORCH AND INTO THE HOUSE.

INT. SCHLICHTING'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

NANCY

Why don't you ask them what to name the baby, and while you're at it, ask them who you should be, since you can't seem to make up your mind about that, either.

MARY (trying to be upbeat)

Well -- are you hungry?

NANCY

I don't want to crowd the table for Mel.
I can eat later.

MARY

Are you sure?

NANCY

Absolutely. I'd like to lie down for a little bit, and I need to put the baby down, anyway.

MARY

We put the old basinette in the room at the end of the hall upstairs.

RICHARD

That's right, at the end of the hall.

MARY

Nuestra casa es tu casa.

Nancy heads upstairs with the baby.

TONY

I think I'll lie down, too.

PAUL

I bet you will.

TONY FOLLOWS NANCY UP THE STAIRS WITH THE LUGGAGE. Mel looks at the Schlichtings LIVING ROOM.

It is HOMEY, with stone fireplace, old stuffed chairs and sofas, Native American and Buddhist artifacts. An OLD CLOCK is TICKING. The others stand with their luggage on the floor, watching Mel.

MEL

Who did this?

He approaches a LARGE SCULPTURE OF A WIRY RUNNING MAN.

RICHARD

That's my work. I have a blacksmith shop in the barn where I do all my sculpture and Mary throws her pots.

MEL

You make your living in the arts.

RICHARD

We try. Sometimes you have to supplement with something else.

MEL

This environment is so much more creative than the one I grew up in.

MARY

That's so sweet of you to say that.

RICHARD

Listen, Lonnie bagged the quails himself this morning, so let's not let his specialty get cold.

MARY

You're right, we can see the house later.

MEL

Who's Lonnie?

Mary and Richard now speak in a CONFIDENTIAL TONE.

MARY

Lonnie's our other son.

MEL

I have a brother?

RICHARD (calls out)

Lonnie, could you come out here please?

MARY (whispers)

He's twenty years old and he wants to be a sculptor like his father.

RICHARD (whispers)

He's feeling very ambivalent about meeting you.

MARY (whispers)

A little threatened because this all happened so fast. Try to be patient with him.

RICHARD (whispers)

You give a kid everything and he still grows up insecure.

A DOOR FROM THE KITCHEN OPENS and LONNIE WALKS IN: a twenty year-old who looks EXACTLY LIKE MEL, but with very long hair, ripped jeans, a cooking APRON, and a STUD in his right nostril. Mel and Lonnie look at each other, STUNNED AT THE RESEMBLANCE.

MARY

Lonnie, this is your brother, Mel.

MEL

A pleasure to meet you.

He offers Lonnie his hand, but LONNIE DOES NOT SHAKE IT. They stand for an AWKWARD MOMENT.

MARY (nervously)

Why don't we sit down and see
what Lonnie's whipped up for us?

CUT TO

INT. SCHLICHTING KITCHEN - NIGHT

It is a large, fifties-style kitchen. Lonnie ANGRILY slams a drawer shut, throws a spoon into the sink and picks up one PLATE WITH A small QUAIL and greenbeans on it.

LONNIE (mutters to himself)

Ooh, the Special Son is here. Little
Cinderella better cook something special
for him.

CUT TO

INT. SCHLICHTING'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mel, Tina, Paul, and Richard stand around the table.

MARY BREEZES INTO THE ROOM, followed by Lonnie, who carries a single plate of quail in one hand.

MARY

Now, Mel, you sit here next to me.

MEL

OK.

Mel stands behind the chair at the side of the table, as LONNIE DECISIVELY PUTS THE SINGLE PLATE OF QUAIL at that place setting, and GOES BACK TO THE KITCHEN. Mel starts to sit down.

MARY

On second thought, I want you to sit at the
head of the table.

MEL

All right.

Mel gets up and changes seats.

RICHARD

Try not to make this too confusing,
honey.

MARY

Paul, you sit there next to me.

PAUL TAKES MEL'S ORIGINAL SEAT.

MARY

Tina, you sit there, and Richard,
you're over there.

They all sit down. LONNIE COMES BACK IN CARRYING TWO MORE PLATES of dinner, and LOOKS DECIDEDLY PERPLEXED at MEL's old seat, where Paul is now seated. He puts the new plates down in front of Mel and Tina.

CUT TO

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

A warm, old room filled with pine furniture. The suitcases are on the KING-SIZED BED. Nancy moves around the room anxiously. Tony watches her.

TONY

Are you all right?

NANCY

I just need to calm down.

TONY

If you need to talk about it --

She PUTS THE BABY DOWN IN THE BASINETTE.

NANCY

I don't feel like talking about it,
thank you.

SHE OPENS THE DOOR TO THE ADJOINING BATHROOM, turns the light on and starts to wash her face at the sink. Tony can see her through the doorway. Tony removes his jacket, while Nancy starts washing her face.

TONY

Do you mind if I take a shower?

NANCY

No, I don't care.

CUT TO

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

People have FINISHED their meals: Mel, Tina, Paul, and Richard, Mary, and Lonnie. MARY HOLDS THE BABY.

MEL

I understand you're a scientist, Richard.

RICHARD

That's right. I was a chemist for Johnson & Johnson in the Bay Area before we came out here.

MARY

Isn't that wonderful. Lonnie never had an interest in science for some reason.

LONNIE

What's that supposed to mean?

MARY

Nothing, you just never had an interest.

MEL

Who knows? I might have had an interest in sculpture if you'd never given me up for adoption.

RICHARD

It's hard to say what might have happened.

UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE.

MEL

Why did you give me away?

TINA TURNS ON HER MINITAPE RECORDER.

RICHARD

I'd prefer it if you didn't use that.

TINA (turns it off)

Fine, I won't use it.

MARY

What difference does it make? It's all a matter of public record, isn't it?

MEL

Fritz said he brought me to the agency in New York because you were indisposed.

RICHARD

He got that right.

MARY

Where should we start?

RICHARD

We were living in San Francisco at the time.

MARY

Richard was working at Johnson & Johnson.

RICHARD

You have to understand it was the mid-sixties.

MARY

We were all hanging out with a very progressive group of artists and there was one band at the center of it.

MEL

Which band was it?

LONNIE

Jerry Garcia, blah, blah, blah.
I'm so sick of this fucking story.

HE GETS UP WITH HIS PLATE and disappears into the kitchen.
PAUL PUTS HIS HEAD DOWN ON THE TABLE.

MARY

Are you feeling all right, Paul?

PAUL

A little nauseous, actually.

TINA

It's been a stressful day.

MARY

Can I get you some aspirin?

PAUL

I'll be all right. Don't let me interrupt you.

MEL

What happened with Jerry Garcia?

MARY

The long and the short of it is we were sent to prison immediately after your birth.

RICHARD

Acid shouldn't be a felony in the first place.

MARY

No, it really shouldn't.

RICHARD

It's nonaddictive.

MARY

It doesn't cause violent crime --

RICHARD

Many professional psychologists sing its praises as a mind-expanding substance.

MEL

You made LSD, is that what you're saying?

MARY

Top drawer stuff.

RICHARD

Believe me, there's been a lot of garbage out there since then.

MARY

Loaded with speed and other additives.

RICHARD

You want instant zen, but instead you get a headache and the jitters. That's not right.

MARY

It's so irresponsible to the consumer.

MEL

Did you take acid during my pregnancy?

MARY (laughs)

I guess we were lucky you only had one head when you came out.

RICHARD

A third eye would've been nice.
That's a sign of enlightenment.

THEY LAUGH with GREAT AMUSEMENT AT THIS.

MEL

That's pretty irresponsible, don't you think?

MARY

Responsibility is a subjective
concept.

MEL

You went to jail for selling drugs,
and gave me to Fritz to be put up for
adoption.

MARY

We were a little alienated from our
families, and he was driving cross
country with his mother. We knew you'd
be in good hands.

MEL

With Fritz Boudreau and his mother?

RICHARD

Identity is really just a mental construct,
Mel, I wouldn't get too attached to it.
You could've been raised by us, or
anybody. What difference does it make?

MARY

A name, a language, these are just
clusters of meanings we randomly
assign to our various illusions.

RICHARD

Have you ever read anything about
Tibetan Buddhism?

MEL

No, I haven't read any goddamn Tibetan
Buddhism.

PAUL STARTS MOANING AUDIBLY. His head is still on the table.

TINA

Are you sure you're OK, Paul?

HE SITS UP, looking very shaky, and puts his hands out in front of him, HUMMING.

PAUL

Is this a musical table?

RICHARD (shouts)

Lonnie, get in here right now,
goddamn it.

LONNIE COMES BACK INTO THE DINING ROOM.

LONNIE

What?

RICHARD

What did you do to his quail?

LONNIE (innocently)

Nothing. Why?

RICHARD

Don't give me that phony innocence.
What did you do?

Lonnie looks like he's going to cry.

LONNIE

I meant to put it in Mel's dinner, but
you moved him.

Richard throws his napkin down and STANDS UP.

RICHARD

Of all the selfish, stupid things to do.
As if your mother didn't have enough to deal
with tonight.

LONNIE

I thought you'd like him better because he's
more like you.

MARY

We would never do that, Lonnie, never.
We love you very much.

RICHARD

This insecurity drives me crazy,
I don't know where he gets it from. (turns to
Lonnie) Apologize to Mel and Paul right now.

Lonnie looks at Mel.

RICHARD

Lonnie.

LONNIE

I'm sorry.

RICHARD

You're sorry for what?

LONNIE

I'm sorry I put window pane in your quail. And I'm sorry Paul ate it.

MEL

Window pane? What's that?

MARY

You've got blotter, microdot, sugar cube, and window pane, which looks sort of like glaze.

RICHARD

He'll come down in about ten hours.

MEL

Ten hours?

MARY

It's primo pane, super-clarity grade.

PAUL

There's a great feeling of unity in this room.

RICHARD

See, Mel, that's the encumbrance of identity melting away.

MEL LUNGES AT RICHARD angrily, but is restrained by TINA.

MARY

What's this anger? Such useless anger.

RICHARD

Count your blessings. You were raised by decent people, weren't you?

CUT TO

INT. NANCY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nancy BRUSHES HER TEETH in the mirror as TONY COMES IN WEARING NOTHING BUT A TOWEL. She checks him out in the mirror. He has golden skin and a muscular upper body.

She begins frantically putting her toiletries back into her toiletry bag. A GLASS FALLS TO THE FLOOR AND BREAKS. She is growing more nervous.

TONY

What are you doing?

NANCY (nervously)

Nothing. What did I do?

She is practically hyperventilating as she bends to grab the AJAX and a SPONGE.

TONY

Will you relax? You don't need to do that.

HE TAKES THE AJAX FROM HER HAND. She immediately backs into the wall and KNOCKS A PICTURE FRAME TO THE FLOOR. TONY STARES AT HER CALMLY, wearing nothing but a towel around his waist.

NANCY

There are three Italian prints I have at home that I keep meaning to frame, but should I do it myself or take it to the frame store? I can't seem to make up my mind.

TONY

I usually take them to the framer.

He is calmly staring at her.

TONY

Do you want to take a shower?

NANCY

No, you go first.

TONY

I mean together.

SHE HAS A BURST OF NERVOUS LAUGHTER.

TONY

Your husband's been taking you for granted, don't you think?

The laughter fades and she stares at his TORSO. She STARTS CRYING.

TONY

I didn't mean to upset you.

NANCY (crying)
No, you're right. Let me get my shower cap.

SHE GOES TO HER SUITCASE ON THE BED and rummages through it.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

TONY (follows her)
I only want you to do this if you feel good about it.

NANCY (crying)
I'm going to feel good about it. (She stops crying) I just need to find my shower cap.

TONY
You don't need a shower cap.

She FINDS IT AND PUTS IT ON HER HEAD. Then she starts to get undressed, TALKING NERVOUSLY as she does.

NANCY
I can't go to bed with wet hair. My pillow gets soaked and then it gets cold and I flip it over and my hands get cold under the pillow.

TONY
It sounds very complicated.

He nods as she pulls her blouse off and rifles through a suitcase. She wears a shower cap, her bra, and her pants.

NANCY
I could swear I packed my shower gel.

She rushes across the room to another suitcase and starts rifling.

TONY
Why can't you just use soap?

NANCY
Soap dries your skin out. Not that I'm one of those women, you know, who obsess about old-looking skin after pregnancy, it's just I happen to be obsessing about it right now.

TONY
Forget the shower. Why risk drying your skin out?

HE EMBRACES HER FROM BEHIND. She turns around and touches his chest.

TONY

That feels nice.

NANCY

Let me check one more bag.

He looks frustrated as she breaks away again.

CUT TO

INT. SCHLICHTING'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

It is a large, old fashioned western kitchen with a big old stove. MEL LEANS AGAINST THE SINK, looking very DEPRESSED while people rush around him.

PAUL SITS IN A CHAIR IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM, writhing slightly as Mary applies a WET TOWEL TO PAUL'S FACE AND HEAD. Richard loosens Paul's collar and wraps another wet towel around his neck.

LONNIE

Why don't we just put on some good music and let him enjoy it?

TINA

You think that's funny? This is the the kind of guy who could snap and spend the rest of his life stalking bad sitcom actors.

Mary pours TEA into a mug.

MARY

OK, here's the velarian root.

Paul tries to drink it himself but isn't doing a very good job. Mary holds his hands steady.

PAUL

Where's Tony? I want to see Tony.

TINA

Tony's upstairs.

PAUL

I need to see Tony.

MEL

I'll go get him.

CUT TO

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - NIGHT

Mel walks down the hall, gazing into empty rooms, until he comes to the closed door at the end of the hall.

He is about to KNOCK, when he freezes and listens to the sounds emanating from inside: THE BED SCREECHING ON THE FLOOR in a distinct RHYTHM.

He looks CRUSHED as he stands outside the door and wanders back down the hall, turns into a ROOM to the side, and SITS ON THE BED, DAZED.

CUT TO

INT. NANCY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nancy and Tony are PULLING APART TWO TWIN BEDS, LINKED ON ONE OLD METAL FRAME to make a KING SIZED BED. They push in a rhythm that squeaks the bed along the floor, and they are grunting as they push. She wears only her BRA and her PANTS and her shower cap. He wears only his towel.

NANCY (pushing bed)
I feel a lot better about this.

TONY (pushing bed)
You keep changing your mind.

She stands up and stretches her back.

TONY
I appreciate your separating the beds, but
I don't know if I should sleep in here if
you've made up your mind.

NANCY
That's really up to you. I don't mind
torturing Mel with the thought that
we slept together.

CUT TO

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mary and Richard restrain Paul in the chair while Tina applies a towel to his head.

PAUL (shouts)
Where in God's name is Tony?

MARY
Somebody go see what's keeping him.

TINA LEAVES.

PAUL
This is felonious and I want to take action.

RICHARD
What's he blabbering about?

PAUL
I want to make an arrest.

MARY
He's tripping his brains out.
He doesn't know who he is.

RICHARD
Neither do we.

MARY
Don't be paranoid, Richard.

PAUL (stands awkwardly)
I know exactly who I am. I'm Paul
Hammond, Bureau of Tobacco, and
Tobacco, of Tobacco.

He fishes for his badge and FINALLY PRODUCES IT and pulls his GUN.
Richard and Mary are INCREDULOUS.

MARY
Oh, my God.

RICHARD
Paranoid, huh?

PAUL
Just stay where you are and don't move.

MARY
I can't believe they'd use an adoption agency
to set us up.

RICHARD
I told you it was weird when they called,
but no, you just had to meet your son all
of a sudden.

LONNIE
I definitely said not to do it.

RICHARD (sharply)
You just dosed a federal agent. I
hope you're proud of yourself.

LONNIE suddenly LUNGES AT PAUL, knocking him into a WALL OF POTS
AND PANS, which fall to the floor with a great CLATTERING before a
LARGE CAST IRON PAN lands on PAUL'S HEAD, then ANOTHER.
He stands for a moment, DAZED, then COLLAPSES TO THE FLOOR.

MARY
Why did you do that, Lonnie?

RICHARD
SHHHH.

They WAIT.

RICHARD
Nobody upstairs heard it.

Mary crouches down and puts her head to Paul's chest.

MARY
He's still breathing. Should we take
him to a doctor?

RICHARD
No, let's take him with us as a
hostage.

MARY
A hostage? What the hell are you talking about?

RICHARD
I'm not going back to jail, Mary.

MARY
This has to be a mistake.
Mel wouldn't do this to us.

RICHARD
He wouldn't? He's not even our son.

MARY
No, he's definitely our son, I can tell.

RICHARD
If we're lucky we can make it to Alan's in San
Miguel de Allende by tomorrow.

MARY
You want to walk away from a home that took
us twenty years to put together?

RICHARD

Help me get him outside. Clean out the lab,
Lonnie.

RICHARD BENDS and PICKS UP PAUL BY THE SHOULDERS. MARY picks UP HIS
FEET. THEY CARRY PAUL OUT THE BACK DOOR.

CUT TO

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - NIGHT

TINA stands in the doorway of a side bedroom looking at MEL SITTING
ON A BED, his head in his hands.

TINA

What happened to Tony?

MEL

Tony's having sex with my wife.

TINA

How do you know?

MEL

It sounds like the bed's grinding a
a four-inch groove into the floor.

SHE SITS NEXT TO MEL on the BED.

TINA

I'm sorry this is all hitting you at
the same time, but it'll pass and you can start
over.

They stare at each other a moment. Then START KISSING passionately,
running THEIR HANDS OVER EACH OTHER'S BODIES.

MEL (kissing)

I think this is a mistake.

TINA

You're right, the sex can wait. You need time.

MEL

I want my wife back.

TINA (kisses his neck)

An understandable reaction to her infidelity.

MEL

No, it's more than that. I could've kissed you
and felt like this was inevitable, but instead
I feel like I blew it.

She SLAPS him across the face. They stare at each other.

TINA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do that.

MEL (rubs his cheek)

That's all right, you're feeling rejected.

TINA (composing herself)

Why should I feel rejected? You're not an appropriate partner for me.

They sit there MEDITATING ON THIS.

CUT TO

EXT. SCHLICHTING'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Richard and Mary stagger out the back door carrying Paul. Mary stops and looks out to the far-off road.

RICHARD (whispers)

What are you looking at?

MARY (whispers)

Nobody's out there.

RICHARD looks out toward the silent road.

RICHARD

How do you know?

MARY

We don't need to take him with us, he'll just be a problem.

RICHARD

What should we do with him?

MARY

We'll put him behind the shed.

THEY STAGGER toward the shed, drop Paul, and run across the yard to the house and go INSIDE THE BACK DOOR.

CUT TO

EXT. SCHLICHTING'S FRONT YARD - NIGHT

A WHITE TAURUS RENTAL comes down the driveway and pulls up on THE OTHER SIDE of the house. The car doors open and MR. & MRS. PHILLIPS get out. She is wearing her SUNGLASSES, as always, and smoking a cigarette. He is stretching his back.

MR. PHILLIPS
My sciatica is killing me.

MRS. PHILLIPS
We'd have been here an hour ago
if you'd listened to me.

MR. PHILLIPS
It took two hours to find out there's no
place to get a good sandwich around here.

MRS. PHILLIPS
You can't keep making U turns in the
middle of the highway, Eddie, even if
you see what looks like a sandwich place.

They WALK around front and UP THE STEPS TO THE FRONT PORCH

MR. PHILLIPS
How do we know this is even the house?
There's no name out there.

MRS. PHILLIPS
The guy said it was the only house after
the church.

MR. PHILLIPS
I never saw the church.

She stops and slaps her hand against her HIP IN DISGUST.

MRS. PHILLIPS
You said you saw the church.

CUT TO

LONNIE puts a KEY into a door off the kitchen, opens it, revealing
a CHEMICAL LABORATORY with beakers and flasks and other equipment.

He CLOSES THE DOOR BEHIND HIM, opens a drawer and it is full of
huge sheets of BLOTTER ACID divided into postage stamp sized
squares bearing the GRATEFUL DEAD SKULL.

He starts RIFLING REAMS OF THE BLOTTER INTO A BIG GARBAGE BAG.

CUT TO

EXT. BACK OF HOUSE - NIGHT

Richard comes outside and walks over to HIS OLD PICK UP TRUCK. He
stops and looks at the TRUCK SUSPICIOUSLY, bends down and looks
underneath.

LONNIE comes running from the house with the BIG GARBAGE BAG.

RICHARD
Is that the blotter?

LONNIE (out of breath)
Yeah.

RICHARD
I doubt this can make it to Mexico.

Richard walks up to Mel's white Taurus, which is sitting there with the TRUNK OPEN. He looks inside the car.

LONNIE THROWS the bag of ACID into the OPEN TRUNK OF MEL'S WHITE TAURUS and closes it quietly. He and his father RUN BACK TO the house and disappear inside the back door.

CUT TO

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Mr. and Mrs. Phillips stand on the front porch deliberating.

MR. PHILLIPS
It was your crazy idea to come out here in the first place, so I think we should knock.

MRS. PHILLIPS
Not at this hour.

MR. PHILLIPS
You said it was an emergency, that's why we came.

MRS. PHILLIPS
You were right, we shouldn't have come.

MR. PHILLIPS
Why couldn't you see that before we left New York?

MRS. PHILLIPS
Even if this is the right house, I'm embarrassed to be here. Mel doesn't want us, his parents will think we're losers. Let's go.

She steps off the porch to the RIGHT.

MR. PHILLIPS

I'm still hungry. I want to go back to that taco place.

MRS. PHILLIPS

You realize tacos have cheese in them, Ed.

MR. PHILLIPS

Not all tacos have cheese.

MR. PHILLIPS

I could've sworn we parked on the other side.

MRS. PHILLIPS

The heartbreak of early Alzheimers is a sad thing to behold.

MR. PHILLIPS

Do you remember this truck?

MRS. PHILLIPS

It's our car, the keys are in it.

They get into MEL'S WHITE TAURUS, and LEAVE.

CUT TO

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mel and Tina still sit side by side.

MEL

Maybe I should see what's happening with Paul downstairs.

TINA

Go ahead, I'll be down in a second.

MEL GETS UP AND LEAVES.

CUT TO

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mary tearfully takes a few mementos from the walls and puts them into a stuffed suitcase she carries.

RICHARD

That's it, we have to go.

He takes the bag from her, when MEL WALKS IN, and LOOKS SHOCKED.

MEL

What's going on?

They FREEZE and look at Mel guiltily.

RICHARD

Mary's just collecting some mementos she'd like to give you. She's getting a little emotional about it. We've got some others in the barn we're going to get.

He starts to escort Mary out the back door, but she stops and puts a hand on Mel's shoulder.

MARY

I just want to say that whatever happens, you've got a very nice family of your own.

RICHARD

We don't add much, believe me.

Mel looks bewildered as they THEY LEAVE HIM ALONE IN THE KITCHEN.

CUT TO

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Richard and Mary run from the back of the house carrying SUITCASES. They STOP IN THEIR TRACKS.

RICHARD

Where's the car?

They look around. Lonnie calls to them from THE OTHER SIDE of the house..

LONNIE

It's over here. What's the matter with you?

They run around the back of the house to the OTHER SIDE.

RICHARD

Why did you move it?

Richard throws the suitcases in the trunk.

LONNIE

I thought you moved it.

MARY

What difference does it make?
Let's get out of here.

THEY GET IN & PULL OUT.

CUT TO

INT. PHILLIPS' TAURUS - NIGHT

They drive for a moment, then pass a TACO BITE restaurant at high speed.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Slow down, that's the place.

MR. PHILLIPS

Why didn't you tell me you saw it?

MRS. PHILLIPS

I did tell you, but you were driving too fast.

He starts to make a U-TURN on the two-lane highway.

MRS. PHILLIPS

You can't make U-turns like this, Eddie.

MR. PHILLIPS

Relax, it's the middle of nowhere.

The white Taurus makes a U-turn, SWERVES off the side of the road, and KNOCKS OVER THE BIG "TACO BITE" SANDWICH BOARD in front of the little restaurant; it then swings back into the road AS THE SCHLICHTING'S ONCOMING WHITE TAURUS HONKS AND SWERVES. They hit the brakes, but the two cars collide.

CUT TO

INT. PHILLIPS' WHITE TAURUS - NIGHT

MRS. PHILLIPS

What did I just say?

MR. PHILLIPS

He was in my blind spot.

MRS. PHILLIPS

You could fit the State of Wisconsin in your blind spot.

CUT TO

INT. SCHLICHTING'S TAURUS - NIGHT

MARY

These goddamned asshole tourists.

RICHARD

Don't start anything. I'll handle this.

Richard opens the door of his car and gets out.

CUT TO

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Richard and Mr. Phillips survey the damage to their cars.

MR. PHILLIPS

I'm really sorry.

RICHARD

You can't make blind U turns like that.

They survey the damage.

RICHARD

That's not too bad.

MR. PHILLIPS

No, I think it's mostly cosmetic.

RICHARD

We're in a real hurry, so how about if we settle this right here?

MR. PHILLIPS

We shouldn't leave the scene of the accident until the police come.

MARY (leans out window)

Tell him he's lucky because we're giving him a break.

RICHARD (takes out cash)

Will you let me handle this? (Turns to Mr. Phillips) I'll give you a thousand dollars, does that seem fair?

MARY

He's the one who made the U-turn.

RICHARD

You're the one who was making the U-turn.

MRS. PHILLIPS (out window)

But we don't want to be irresponsible about it.

MR. PHILLIPS

We don't want to be irresponsible about it.

RICHARD

We don't have to be neurotic about it, either. There's no need to drag the insurance companies in.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Tell him we have to wait for the police.

MR. PHILLIPS

Be reasonable, we have to wait for the police.

RICHARD

We're gonna go.

He gets back into his car.

MRS. PHILLIPS (out window)

Tell him he shouldn't leave, Ed.

MR. PHILLIPS

I told him. He thinks I'm being neurotic.

The Schlichtings pull out with their DENTED TAURUS.

MRS. PHILLIPS (reads registration)

Eddie, this car is registered to Mel.

MR. PHILLIPS

What?

MRS. PHILLIPS

See if our luggage is in the trunk.

She POPS the trunk open from inside the car while Mr. Phillips goes around and FINDS THE BIG BAG OF ACID.

MR. PHILLIPS

What the hell is this?

A BLUE FLASHING POLICE LIGHT falls on him as a SHERIFF'S CAR PULLS UP.

CUT TO

INT. SCHLICHTINGS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mel sits at the table like he has a headache, when NANCY WALKS in wearing her kimono. She stops and looks at Mel.

They look at each other for a moment.

NANCY

I just came down for something to eat.
Where is everybody?

MEL

They said they're getting mementos, but it felt very strange.

THE TELEPHONE STARTS TO RING.

MEL

I hope I haven't pushed you too far away.

NANCY

I'm flexible, probably too flexible, but you don't know what you want and I can't put up with that anymore.

MEL

I've been an idiot, and I don't want to lose you.

NANCY

Are you sure about that? Because you like to change your mind.

MEL

I'm sure about it.

NANCY

How do you know? Did the Shitkings tell you?

MEL

No, that whole thing has been a disaster. Look, I can feel it in my heart, but saying that doesn't mean anything, I want to show you over time, unless you're happier with your new bedfellow.

NANCY

What are you talking about?

MEL

What am I talking about? I'm talking about the screeching bed symphony in C minor.

NANCY

That was strictly recreational. This phone is driving me crazy.

SHE goes to answer the phone, but he stops her.

MEL

How could you, of all people, have recreational sex like that?

NANCY

You wanted to try an open marriage.

MEL

There are times when I have the emotional maturity of an eighteen year old. You're not supposed to take those ideas seriously.

NANCY

I didn't.

MEL

You didn't sleep with him?

NANCY

We were moving the beds apart, that's what you heard.

MEL

Moving the beds, are you kidding me?

NANCY

No, that's all that happened.

MEL

Thank God.

He starts kissing her FACE.

NANCY. (picks up phone)

Hello? Yes. . . what? How is that possible?
(listens) OK, OK, we'll be there. (Hangs up)
Your parents are in jail for possession of
illegal narcotics.

CUT TO

INT. LOCAL JAIL - DAY

MRS. PHILLIPS sits on a bench against the wall in a CELL, wearing her sunglasses. She stares straight ahead as she sits between two TOUGH-LOOKING WOMEN IN THEIR THIRTIES, one with lots of tattoos. They are reaching across Mrs. Phillips, wrestling over something.

MRS. PHILLIPS (shouts)

All right, that's enough!

THEY LOOK AT HER SILENTLY as she holds her hand out.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Give it to me.

CHERRY PUTS SOMETHING in MRS. PHILLIPS' HAND.

MRS. PHILLIPS
I'm in charge of the gum now.

SUZY
Who the fuck does she think she is, Cherry?

MRS. PHILLIPS
Your name is Cherry?

CHERRY
So what?

Mrs. Phillips makes a face of mild disapproval to herself..

CUT TO

INT. JAIL CELL TWO - DAY

MR. PHILLIPS SITS ON A BENCH NEXT TO A MACHO CHICANO of uncertain sexuality with a crew cut who is staring at him.

Mr. Phillips looks at him then looks away.

MR. PHILLIPS
Would you stop staring at me, please?

The guy continues to stare.

CUT TO

INT. SCHLICHTINGS UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Mel waits outside Nancy's door, holding the baby.

MEL
Let's go, I want to get down to this jail house.

Nancy comes out, DRESSED, and as they walk down the hall, the side DOOR OPENS and TINA EMERGES, half-dressed, buttoning her blouse. Tony lies nude under a sheet on the bed behind her.

TINA
I'm sorry, I don't know what I was thinking, but I'm not ready to be a single mother.

TONY
You're not going to get pregnant.

TINA
Let's thank God for that.

TONY

Would you be willing to do this
regularly to carry a baby for us?

She looks at him and THINKS.

TINA

No.

TONY

Think about it.

TINA

It's a bad idea for me now, OK?

Mel and Nancy look on as Tina disappears into a bathroom down the hall and Tony looks back at them.

CUT TO

EXT. DESERT - MORNING

PAUL runs across the desert in his underwear, smeared with mud.
Enjoying himself.

CUT TO

INT. JAIL - DAY

A YOUNG DEPUTY OPENS THE CELL DOOR.

DEPUTY

You have visitors, Mrs. Phillips.

SHE GETS UP AND WALKS OUT.

MRS. PHILLIPS

I'd like a private cell, please.

CUT TO

INT. SMALL VISITORS ROOM WITH A TABLE - DAY

MEL and NANCY watch as his parents are escorted in, YELLING at the DEPUTY. Mel holds the baby.

MRS. PHILLIPS (shouts)

Did you ever hear of habeas corpus?
We have been treated brutally by you
people from the word go.

MR. PHILLIPS (shouts)

Is it too much to ask for a lousy
tuna fish sandwich? Have you no
decency?

They stop when they see MEL, who SMILES BROADLY AT THEM.

MEL

It's so good to see you.

MR. PHILLIPS

Here comes the sarcasm.

MRS. PHILLIPS

What kind of trouble are you in?

MEL

Me? You're the one who's in jail.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Don't start in on how we embarrassed you by coming out here and getting arrested.

NANCY

What are you doing here?

MR. PHILLIPS

The whole thing was her idea.

MRS. PHILLIPS

He knocked over the taco sign making a U-turn. You know how impossible he is.

MR. PHILLIPS

She was worried about you, so she made me get on a plane.

MEL (to the deputy)

I don't know what happened, but there's no way my parents had anything to do with any drug more potent than Extra Strength Tylenol.

NANCY

He's right. The Phillips make me feel guilty for jay walking.

MEL

If anything, it's the Schlichtings who would be involved in this.

DEPUTY

I always thought you pronounced that Shly-ting.

MEL

Are you listening to me?

DEPUTY

Possession is nine-tenths of the law
in this state.

Mel looks frustrated and pulls out his driver's license.

MEL (pulls out wallet)

Look, the car is registered in my name.
Anything you found in it belongs to me.

MRS. PHILLIPS

What the hell are you doing?

MEL

Let them go, and take me.

MR. PHILLIPS

Think of your resume, Mel.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Look at this, he wants us back all
of a sudden.

THE DOOR OPENS AND THE SHERIFF APPEARS with a very frazzled-looking PAUL, who wears no shirt under his jacket and has mud smeared all over his body and face. His hair is a mess. TONY holds him by the arm.

DEPUTY

Who the hell is he?

SHERIFF

He's a cop, and he just told us the whole
story on the Shly-tings.

DEPUTY

Shleekting is how you say it.

SHERIFF

Really? I always thought it was Shlyting.

DEPUTY

That's what this guy says.

SHERIFF

Anyway, I think we got the
wrong people here.

PAUL

I have to say that I wasn't very happy last night, but this turned into one of the most relaxing experiences of my life. It evolved, you know? It's still evolving. Does anybody have any aspirin around here?

CUT TO

EXT. JAILHOUSE - TINY DESERT TOWN - DAY

A SUNNY, BRIGHT, EMPTY STREET in the tiniest of towns. Mel and Nancy walk away from the jail, ARM IN ARM. Mel carries the baby in his other arm. TINA WALKS BY with TONY and PAUL, who are walking together, with Tina in front and off to the side.

TINA

I'm backed up for a few weeks, so you're going to have to wait.

TONY

You better get to it before Paul changes his mind.

TINA

I can either hook you up with some lesbians who want to conceive, or we can just try a private adoption through some people I know in Colorado, but that's the most I can do.

THE PHILLIPS FOLLOW BEHIND THEM, speaking in confidential tones.

MRS. PHILLIPS (mutters)

I think these two are homosexuals.

MR. PHILLIPS (mutters)

And they want to adopt a kid? That's so sick.

MRS. PHILLIPS (lighting a cig)

Can you imagine the neurosis that poor child would be exposed to?

CUT TO

INT. MEL & NANCY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mel, Nancy, Mr. and Mrs. Phillips are gathered around the coffee table, some standing, some sitting, eating various hors d'oeuvres. Mel holds the baby.

MEL

Mom, you guys agreed to mind Ethan tomorrow, right?

MR. PHILLIPS
Did we agree to that?

MRS. PHILLIPS
Yes, we did, so don't back out now,
granpa.

NANCY
Don't give him any ice cream this
time, Ed, he's just a baby.

EDDIE
He loves it.

NANCY
We don't want to load him up with sugar.

MRS. PHILLIPS
How about frozen yogurt?

THE DOORBELL RINGS.

MEL
OK, they're here, so behave yourself.

MRS. PHILLIPS
I'm not going to say anything, so
don't worry about me.

MEL greets TINA, PAUL, and TONY as they come in. Tony is holding a
NEWBORN BABY.

NANCY
Hey, how are you? (She kisses Tony and Paul on
the cheek)

TONY
It's great to be back in New York.

NANCY
She's so tiny, my God.

She takes the baby and wanders to a corner with Tony.

MEL
It's amazing you were able to get them
a baby so soon.

TINA

We all lucked out.

MEL

Are you going to follow Paul and Tony's case?

TINA

There's such a dearth of information on the all around ramifications of same-sex adoptions. I should get at least another five chapters. provided Paul lets me join him when he comes out to his family next week.

Paul shakes the PHILLIPS' hands.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Are you the mother or the father?

MR. PHILLIPS

She's kidding, that's a joke.

MRS. PHILLIPS

It is not. I want to know how this works.

PAUL

Let's just say I'm staying home for now.

MR. PHILLIPS

Good for you.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Did you gain weight?

PAUL

You realize I wasn't actually pregnant.

MRS. PHILLIPS

But you look heavier to me.
You better keep working out.

PAUL

If I have time. It's so incredibly busy with a baby.

MRS. PHILLIPS

I understand your friend has a roving eye, so don't get too fat.

MEL

Could you avoid insulting someone
for maybe five minutes, please?

MRS. PHILLIPS

I'm just telling him to watch out. My friend
Norma likes to say the ass is always leaner on
the other side of the fence.

CUT TO

CREDITS START TO FLASH OVER BLACK

CUT TO

INT. MEL & NANCY 'S BEDROOM - DAY

A GENTLE, SNAPPY, AHMAD JAMAL PIANO PIECE PLAYS AS --

CLOSE UP -- Mel and Nancy's faces as they kiss and make love on the
bed.

CUT TO

MORE CREDITS FLASH OVER BLACK

CUT TO

INT. MR. & MRS. PHILLIPS BEDROOM - DAY
Music continues.

Mr. and Mrs. Phillips are on the bed MAKING OUT. He wears nothing.
She wears a black bra and slip. They are somewhat excited as their
hands are carressing each other below the waist.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Gentle, you're doing it too hard.

MR. PHILLIPS

Ow. What was that for?

MRS. PHILLIPS

That's what it feels like to me.

MR. PHILLIPS

You used to like this.

MRS. PHILLIPS

When? In 1955?

THEY RESUME KISSING. She starts to go down on him. HE LOOKS
ANXIOUS.

MR. PHILLIPS

Wait a second.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Relax.

MR. PHILLIPS

You're rushing me.

MRS. PHILLIPS

You never let me do this.

THE BABY STARTS CRYING off screen. MRS. PHILLIPS gets up off the bed and picks the baby out of a basinette and hands him to Mr. Phillips as he sits on the bed.

MR. PHILLIPS

This kid's going to kill the whole thing for me.

MRS. PHILLIPS

Be quiet and relax.

CREDITS FLASH OVER BLACK

END