

FRESH HORSES

FADE IN ON:

EXT. AFFLUENT CINCINNATI SUBURB.

SEPT. DAY.

Lots of low, modern homes with expensive new cars in the driveways.

ANGLE - ELLEN'S HOUSE

A modern mansion like the others.. There's a tennis court on the side and a heated pool around back.

ANGLE - CIRCULAR DRIVEWAY

There's a beat-up red car in front of the house, something from the 60's. It sticks out like a sore thumb.

ANGLE - BACK OF HOUSE

ELLEN lies in the September sun. She's twenty-one, thin, and very pretty. Behind her sunglasses she's watching

JOHNNY LARKIN. He's mowing the grass with a hand mower, the old fashioned mechanical kind. He's twenty-two, dark, dreamy, well-built, and working hard. Very conscientious. Cutting the grass is an artistic experience.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ellen is mesmerized by him --- by the muscles in his arms, the sweat running down his back, the slow, strong push of the mower.

Delicate pieces of grass float through the air like soft green rain.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAME.

LATER.

Larkin is mowing down by the tennis court. Every blade of grass is important to him. Suddenly he stops. He senses something behind him. He turns around.

ANGLE - LARKIN AND ELLEN

She's standing there with her hands behind her back. They stare at each other a moment. She hands him a cold Pepsi.

CUT TO:

EXT. POOL

LATER.

Larkin and Ellen sitting on the side in bathing suits, kicking their feet in the water. A couple of towels are thrown around. The deck is wet.

Ellen makes sure her thigh touches his. He's a little nervous about it. She curls a piece of his wet hair around her finger.

ELLEN

I had this neat boyfriend. But we broke up. He cried.

LARKIN

He cried because he would not always remember you as well as he did that day. The things that you did together would blur, you know, they would blur on him and fade. You would always mean as much, but he wouldn't always feel as much because the natural way the mind has of letting go.

ELLEN

(impressed)

Gosh ...!

LARKIN

This natural letting go. It has to be. But it's sad.

ANGLE - FOUR MEN

They come out from the house. They're dressed in expensive suits. One of them is Ellen's FATHER. He just got home and he isn't happy.

Her father yells at them and kicks at one of the towels on the deck. He points the way out for Larkin. Larkin scrambles.

Ellen is embarrassed but she doesn't come to Larkin's aid.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE

SAME.

Larkin's car won't start. He gets out and slams the

door. He kicks the car. The mower is sticking out the back and the trunk is tied down.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAME.

MOMENTS LATER.

Father's Mercedes is parked beside the red car. Larkin has the battery cables hooked up. He starts his car. Father is standing there, boiling.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET.

LATER.

Larkin stops at a stop sign. He looks both ways. Now he's bumped from behind by a car. Larkin gets out of his car.

ANGLE - OTHER CAR

A blonde kid, TIPTON, gets out. He's Larkin's best friend and always has been. He's also twenty-two:

TIPTON

Say.

LARKIN

Say.

TIPTON

Larkin, I've discovered this place.

LARKIN

What place?

TIPTON

A house. We got to go there.

LARKIN

What kind of a house?

TIPTON

A woman's house. This woman lives there. And lots of people hang out. It's a perpetual house of party.

LARKIN
Not tonight.

TIPTON
Why not?

LARKIN
I've got a lot of work to do at home.

TIPTON
You work too hard, Johnny. Follow my lead. I don't work. I glide.

Larkin's car coughs and dies:

LARKIN
You got any battery cables?

CUT TO:

EXT. LARKIN HOUSE.

NIGHT.

A modest place. Middle class.

CUT TO:

INT. LARKIN'S BEDROOM.

SAME.

He's sitting at his desk/workbench with a small lamp burning. It's a young man's room, all right. The prominent feature is the shelf full of board games --- Monopoly, Clue, Sorry, Risk, Life, on and on; Scrabble, Parcheesi, stacks of them.

At the desk is a homemade game board and game pieces. Larkin rolls the dice and stares at the board.

He gets up and paces back and forth. He looks at the clock.

CUT TO:

INT. LARKIN KITCHEN.

SAME.

Larkin stops as he passes the doorway. Sitting at the kitchen table are his MOTHER, DAD, older BROTHER, and

SISTER-IN-LAW. The Sister-in-law, chubby and tired, has a BABY in her arms.

Larkin's brother has an unattractive rash on his arms and he's losing his hair. He scratches his rash.

ANGLE - LARKIN

Observing the scene. There's something very sad to him about it.

CUT TO:

EXT. LARKIN HOUSE.

SAME.

Larkin comes out, gets in his car and pulls away.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBIA.

LATER.

This is not the suburbia we saw in the afternoon. These are old houses, old money, solid homes built among the trees. There's a lake behind the houses. Larkin drives by a house, slowly, and parks down the street in front of a wooded lot. It's September but all the trees are still green.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE IN SUBURBIA.

SAME.

It's dark and the crickets are out and

ANGLE - ROOF

Larkin is crouched, walking carefully like a cat burglar. He gets to a side of the house, lowers himself down, swings into an open, second-story window.

CUT TO:

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM.

SAME.

ALICE, twenty-one, plain but pretty, is sound asleep. Larkin starts taking his clothes off which takes about three seconds. He climbs in beside her.

Alice wakes up, rolls over, and as she puts her arm around him, the moonlight picks up the diamond on her finger and it twinkles like a star.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS.

MORNING.

ANGLE - STUDENT GRILL

Larkin and Tipton come out. Larkin almost bumps into Ellen, who is on her way inside --- they look each other in the eye, start to speak but don't because:

TIPTON

Are you listening to me?

And Larkin looks at Tipton and Ellen disappears inside.

LARKIN

What?

TIPTON

So we're doing her a favor, guys like me and you. She's got this whole house she lives in with this daughter of hers and guys like me and you are good company.

LARKIN

Where's her husband?

TIPTON

Splitsville. He sends her a bundle every month.

Both with books, walking across the campus:

LARKIN

And what goes on over there?

TIPTON

I don't know, it's just a place to go.

A sloppy fat boy named FAIRGATE walks by, stuffing his face with a piece of pie --- it's all over and around his mouth:

FAIRGATE
Larkin, what do ya say?

LARKIN
Hello, Fairgate.

Fairgate keeps on going and:

TIPTON
(to Larkin)
Fairgate ... what a slob.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIDGE OVER I-75.

LATER.

It spans the Ohio River.

ANGLE - TIPTON'S CAR

Going over the bridge, leaving Cincinnati behind.

ANGLE - LARKIN'S CAR

Following Tipton over the bridge. The skyline recedes and the city turns into the Kentucky countryside.

CUT TO:

EXT. JEAN McBAIN'S HOUSE.

LATER.

It's color is odd and the style of the place doesn't fit the other houses nearby, of which there are two or three. And Jean's sprawling, two-story house almost seems to be at a "tilt," like the construction crew who built the place sixty years ago was stoned.

Across the street there is a pasture where horses graze.

Tipton pulls up, driving --- as usual --- like a wildman, and turns into the driveway. Larkin has followed him out here, but he parks his old red car out front. There are two or three other cars around. The boys get out:

TIPTON
Come on!

LARKIN
I'm coming.

At the steps to the house:

TIPTON
Just watch me, okay?

LARKIN
What are you going to do?

TIPTON
No, I mean watch how I act. Watch
how I make myself at home. That's
what you do here, that's how you
act.

They go up the steps. Tipton knocks on the door and
enters at the same time.

CUT TO:

INT. JEAN'S HOUSE.

SAME.

Nobody around. The place is neither neat nor in a
shambles. There's a woman's robe thrown over this chair,
a man's cigar still burning in an ashtray, a beer can
here and there, the morning paper on the floor.

LARKIN
(Sarcastically)
Yeah, you're right, this is
exciting.

Tipton flops in a big easy chair, puts his feet up:

TIPTON
You want a beer?

LARKIN
No.

TIPTON
Kitchen's that way, get me a beer,
will ya? Believe me, it's on the
house.

Larkin walks through a doorway and we follow him. There
are sounds of lovemaking upstairs.

ANGLE - KITCHEN

Larkin comes in and stops cold.

ANGLE - JEWEL

Sitting on a barstool at the counter. She has a dripping, little-bit-nasty sexuality that she can't do anything about. She's from the country, the hills, and it shows. She could be about nineteen or twenty. Larkin is sunk from the moment he sees her.

LARKIN

Uh ... excuse me.

Jewel is sitting with a large, dark glass of something. She shrugs and swirls her drink around:

LARKIN

I just came in to get ... is that the refrigerator?

JEWEL

You came in to get the refrigerator?

LARKIN

Huh? No, I'm with Tipton and he wanted me to, uh ... a beer, I think, is actually what he ...

ANOTHER ANGLE

Larkin is standing beside her. He's leveled by her and his throat has gone bone dry:

LARKIN

Can I have a sip of your Coke?

Jewel scoots the glass his way, he picks it up quickly, gulps it --- it's bourbon --- spits it out all over her as

JEAN MCBAIN comes in via the backstairs. She's forty, made up to try to look twenty, dressed in a gown and robe:

JEAN

Uh-huh, the parties start earlier and earlier in the day around here.

LARKIN

Look, I'm sorry, I ---

JEAN

No, no, I wouldn't have it any other way. If the party were to stop, I don't think I could stand the ... I don't know, the silence. I'm Jean McBaine. What's your name?

LARKIN

Johnny.

Jewel wipes herself off. She goes off onto a huge, screened in back porch as Jean pours herself a glass of tomato juice or bloody mary and:

JEAN

Can I make you a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich?

LARKIN

No, thanks.

JEAN

See ya.

And she goes out with her drink. Larkin steps out to the porch. Jewel has started to empty the ashtrays and pick up the room:

LARKIN

People come here and ... do what?

JEWEL

Hang out. That's all. Jean likes to have people around, especially young people. It makes her happy.

LARKIN

You live here?

JEWEL

No.

LARKIN

Oh. No, I don't either.

JEWEL

I know you don't.

Larkin feels awkward as hell but he must pursue her:

LARKIN
You in school?

JEWEL
No.

LARKIN
I thought maybe we were going to
college together and didn't even
know it, ya know?

JEWEL
Yeah. But no.

LARKIN
I just came out here with my friend
Tipton who heard about this place
at school.

JEWEL
I just run over from my house next
door because my stepfather come
home with that breath of his and
climbed into my bed and laid down
and put his arm around me.

LARKIN
Jesus ...

JEWEL
Yeah.

LARKIN
(Kidding her)
What the hell were you doing in
bed, almost eleven o'clock in the
morning?

JEWEL
I was tired, okay?

LARKIN
I already had two classes.

JEWEL
Good for you.

LARKIN
I'm sorry I spit in your face.

JEWEL

It didn't bother me.

The PHONE on the counter RINGS but is picked up somewhere else in the house.

A beer can pops and Tipton is standing there:

TIPTON

Thanks anyway.

LARKIN

Excuse me, huh?

TIPTON

What'd you do?

LARKIN

Just ... wait for me?

TIPTON

Aren't you going to introduce me?

LARKIN

No.

Tipton leaves. Jean comes into the kitchen with an overflowing ashtray:

JEAN

Honey? Phone.

Jewel picks up the phone. Jean smiles, empties the ashtray through the phone conversation:

JEWEL

Hello ...?

We HEAR the man's VOICE on the other end of the line. We can't make out the words. But the Voice is deep and slow. It seems to frighten Jewel, upset her. Jean washes out the ashtray in the sink.

JEWEL

I can't talk now.

(The Voice responds)

JEWEL

I can't talk now cause I'm busy!

She hangs up the phone. Jean leaves.

LARKIN

If your stepfather really gives you a hard time, why don't you tell your boyfriend? Maybe he could help you.

JEWEL

That wasn't my stepfather. And I don't have a boyfriend.

LARKIN

What are you doing tonight?

Jewel just shrugs:

JEWEL

I'll be here.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHYSICAL EDUCATION BUILDING. AFTERNOON.

Larkin comes running down the many steps into the fall air:

TIPTON

Larkin ...!

And Tipton shows up from another direction:

TIPTON

Say.

LARKIN

Say.

TIPTON

Maureen and I are going to be over at her place tonight. Why don't you and Alice show up?

LARKIN

What'd you think of that chick at Jean McBaine's house this aft. noon?

TIPTON

Trouble.

LARKIN

Why do you say that?

TIPTON

You asked me what I thought. Say, do you believe that quiz Lippincott laid on us today?

CUT TO:

INT. PHONE BOOTH IN A HAMBURGER JOINT. LATER.

Larkin's in the booth, waiting for somebody to answer:

LARKIN

Hello, Alice? Yeah, uh, look ...

DISSOLVE INTO:

INT. JEAN MCBAIN'S HOUSE.

NIGHT.

Party. Lots of college kids and older. Jean McBaine is with a forty-year-old, ugly man. His name is ROY. Music, booze, making out, marijuana.

ANGLE - KITCHEN

Tipton comes in, opens the frig and grabs one. Larkin and Jewel come in from outside, up and into the screened-in porch:

TIPTON

Larkin, where you been? We got to go.

LARKIN

I don't have to go anywhere.

TIPTON

Well I have to go to Maureen's.

LARKIN

All right, I don't.

TIPTON

Well walk me to my goddamn car.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT OF JEAN'S.

SAME.

TIPTON
Did she put out?

LARKIN
No.

TIPTON
What do you mean No? Did she
put out or not.

LARKIN
I didn't try anything, okay?

TIPTON
Who does she think she is?

LARKIN
She's as careful as everybody else
these days.

Larkin heads back for the house. Jewel is leaning in the doorway, cool and sexy.

TIPTON
You know the word I used this
afternoon? It begins with a
capitol T.

CUT TO:

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM.

DAY.

We're looking in her window, the window we saw Larkin climb into one night. Larkin is sitting on her bed, Alice is standing nearby.

We don't hear the words, but Larkin tells her it's over and we hear Alice's scream as she pulls at the ring on her finger and runs from the room.

CUT TO:

INT. DOWNSTAIRS AT ALICE'S.

SAME.

As Alice reaches the bottom of the stairs, her MOTHER has run to see what on earth has happened, but Alice blows right past her on her way outside. Then comes Larkin, also on the fly:

MOTHER

What have you done to my daughter!
What have you done ...!

CUT TO:

EXT. ALICE'S HOUSE.

SAME.

Alice is running toward the lake, still trying to get the ring off her finger. It's autumn now and the leaves on the ground and the trees are brown and yellow. Alice finally gets the ring off and at the river bank she hurls it into the water.

Larkin catches up to her in time to see the diamond catch the sunlight then splash and disappear forever. Alice turns on him and slaps his face about eight times, then runs back toward the house.

DISSOLVE INTO:

EXT. SNOW ON CAMPUS.

DAY.

Kids running to and from class against the winter wind and giant snowflakes.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM.

DAY.

The bell has rung and the class is leaving. DR. LIPPINCOTT, history professor, grabs Tipton's arm:

LIPPINCOTT

Mr. Tipton?

TIPTON

Dr. Lippincott, what'd I do?

LIPPINCOTT

Your friend --- Mr. Larkin. What happened to him?

TIPTON

He dropped out.

LIPPINCOTT

I know he dropped out, he hasn't
been here for weeks. What
happened?

TIPTON

Is this a test?

LIPPINCOTT

Tell him I miss his ideas.

Tipton starts for the door, turns again to Lippincott:

TIPTON

Sir? A chick.

On Lippincott's nod, we:

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT HANGOUT.

WINTER NIGHT.

Larkin and Tipton sit opposite each other in a booth.
Milkshakes and burgers.

Out the window, the city skyline is lit up in the
distance.

TIPTON

This is hard for me to bring up.

LARKIN

Go ahead.

TIPTON

It's difficult.

LARKIN

What is it, Tipton?

TIPTON

It's general.

LARKIN

Go on.

TIPTON

We both hang out at Jean's because
it's cool. But or I mean ... and
uh, I've heard talk over there.

TIPTON (Con't)

Talk that shuts up when you come in.

LARKIN

Talk about what?

TIPTON

Jewel.

That's all Larkin can eat. He stops mid-bite, scoots his plate away from him.

LARKIN

I don't want to hear it.

TIPTON

It's very general.

LARKIN

Forget about it.

Larkin may not know it like the rest of us do, but lust is blind.

ANGLE - WAITRESS

She comes over, stands writing the check:

WAITRESS

Finished?

Tipton puts a move on her:

TIPTON

Hey. If I didn't have a girl who was nuts about me, I could go for you.

WAITRESS

What? You're not nuts about her?

TIPTON

Well ...

WAITRESS

You're keeping your nuts to your *If, huh? Good idea.

She leaves with the tray. Larkin looks at Tipton and on Tipton's crushed expression we:

CUT TO:

EXT. ROLLER COASTER.

WINTER DAY.

An abandoned one in the snow. Larkin and Jewel sit cuddled under a blanket in one of the rusted-out cars under the wornout canopy where the ride used to start. Larkin gives Jewel a Christmas box, Jewel unwraps it, pulls out a winter scarf.

He puts it around her neck and pulls her close for a kiss that burns the screen, and then, after they take deep breaths, they look out over the dilapidated amusement park:

LARKIN

I think I've got a job. One or two nights a week.

JEWEL

Doing what?

LARKIN

I'll tell you when I get it. They're going to call me.

JEWEL

You could get a job anywhere you wanted.

LARKIN

The idea is to do something you enjoy.

Larkin gets out of the car. He slowly walks a section of track:

JEWEL

Be careful.

LARKIN

I wonder what it would be like to design carnival rides? Great scary rides for the amusement parks of the world. What kind of an engineer does that?

JEWEL

You better go back to school. Become an engineer and do it.

LARKIN

There's so much math involved. It bores me.

JEWEL

I'm good in math.

Larkin pulls out a wrinkled piece of paper and a pen.

ANGLE - PAPER

As he writes on it:

LARKIN

Take the function $y = 5x^2 - 23x + 49$
and find dy/dx by the increment
process.

ANGLE - JEWEL

She's lost:

JEWEL

Huh?

Larkin wads up the paper, beans her on the head with it.

JEWEL

I'm usually good in arithmetic, but
...

She's not too bright and he knows it. Doesn't matter.

LARKIN

How old are you?

JEWEL

Nineteen.

LARKIN

I didn't know, you never, I never asked you.

JEWEL

There's something I oughta tell ya though.

LARKIN

Okay.

This is very hard to say:

JEWEL
I never graduated from high school.

LARKIN
I suspected ... that.

JEWEL
You did?

LARKIN
Uh-huh.

JEWEL
We been all the time moving around,
place to place. Finally I just
quit gettin re-signed up and
everything. I almost finished, but
I didn't.

LARKIN
You will one of these days. No
rush.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK.

LATER.

Walking through the snow to his car.

JEWEL
I can't see you tonight.

LARKIN
Why not?

JEWEL
I got to go to Virginia with my
mother to see my grandmother.
She's sick.

Larkin laughs:

JEWEL
What's a matter?

LARKIN
That just sounds ... it sounds
peculiar.

JEWEL

Why?

LARKIN

Because, you know, everybody uses their grandmother as an excuse all the time.

JEWEL

I didn't know that.

LARKIN

I know guys, six or seven dead grandmothers, all over the country.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOWLING ALLEY.

NIGHT.

Cold winter night in the city.

CUT TO:

INT. TABLE AT BOWLING ALLEY.

SAME.

A table tucked away in a smokey corner. A SAILOR sits drinking a Pabst from a long-neck bottle, with his arm around Jewel. He is not a handsome man. You don't want to fool with him.

Now he sets his beer down, whispers in her ear. She is not too happy about it.

Bowling pins sound like thunder in the distance ...

CUT TO:

INT. BINGO PARLOR.

WINTER. NIGHT.

The local Women's Club sponsors the game every week in a large room they rent at the Civic Auditorium or Convention Center.

Lots of ELDERLY PEOPLE are sitting on stools, row after row of them. Almost everybody is smoking. The air is blue and gray. It's almost a casino atmosphere.

ANGLE - LARKIN

He sits in the front on a platform above the room. He has a microphone. The air machine next to him jumbles the ping pong balls, each with a Bingo number. A ball rolls down a plastic tube. He picks it up:

LARKIN

Under the 1, 16. 1-16, your starting number, please.

He places the ball in its proper slot, reaches for another ball.

EXT. MAINTENANCE STATION.

SPRING. DAY.

It used to be a train stop, a maintenance-in-way stop, but that was long ago and the tracks outside are no longer used.

Now, because it's close to where Jewel lives, it's a trysting place for Larkin and her.

As we move around the place we hear them breathing hard, out of sync.

CUT TO:

INT. MAINTENANCE STATION.

SAME

Their clothing is disheveled. Her pants are unbuttoned and not all the way up. They've just had sex, fast, without getting undressed.

LARKIN

I wanted to get you something, a present, today on the way out here.

Jewel is still getting her breath:

JEWEL

Why didn't you?

LARKIN

I didn't know what to get. I real don't know what you like even after six months.

JEWEL

You don't have to buy me nothin
ever. Just be around me. You want
to go over to Jean's house?

LARKIN

No. You spend too much time over
there.

JEWEL

Lots of times I'm over there cause
I'm waiting for you to come out to
see me.

LARKIN

But all those fellas who come out
to Jean's. They could be anybody,
her crowd.

JEWEL

Good, be real jealous, okay?

LARKIN

Who said anything about jealous?
Jealousy is base, baby, it's a base
emotion.

JEWEL

What do you mean?

LARKIN

It's contemptible, it's ba --- ...
I mean it's bad.

JEWEL

I'm the jealous type, myself.

LARKIN

Well it's base.

Jewel shrugs.

JEWEL

Okay, I won't spend as much time
over there.

LARKIN

I don't mean to sound ---

She can get a little testy when you least expect it:

JEWEL

I said Okay!

They've finished getting dressed. Larkin puts his wallet away, picks up his watch:

JEWEL

Hey. How come you don't never wear that thing?

LARKIN

Because I was so skinny when I was little, my wrist was so tiny, I couldn't wear a wristwatch. There was no band small enough. Or if there was, the watch would hang over both sides of my wrist. Please don't ever tell anybody I told you that.

JEWEL

I won't.

LARKIN

I never did get used to wearing one.

She starts putting the watch on his wrist:

JEWEL

Tell me more things like that. Tell me everything about you.

LARKIN

No.

JEWEL

I wish I could have rode your motorcycle across country with you last year and you could have told me everything.

LARKIN

Why didn't you?

JEWEL

Cause I didn't know you then, that's why. Did you really leave your motorcycle in a ditch in Kansas?

LARKIN

Yeah. It quit on me, so I kicked the hell out of it and left it in a ditch.

The watch is on his wrist. He holds his arm up, trying to get used to it:

JEWEL

Did you really pick peas in Illinois?

LARKIN

Sure did. Longest day of my life.

CUT TO:

INT. LARKIN'S BEDROOM. SPRING. NIGHT.

He's asleep. But we hear a tapping at his half-open bedroom window. Larkin wakes up, looks over to see Tipton:

LARKIN

What are you doing?

TIPTON

Say.

LARKIN

Say.

TIPTON

Meet me out front. I got to talk to you.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN AT LARKIN HOUSE. SAME.

As Larkin tiptoes past. But his DAD is at the kitchen table having a midnight snack, spots Larkin going by:

DAD

Where are you going this hour?

LARKIN

Tipton's here. I think he needs to talk to me.

DAD
Don't wake up your mother.

LARKIN
No.

DAD
And don't wake up any neighbors.

LARKIN
I won't.

DAD
In fact don't do anything that
might cause something.

LARKIN
I'm just going to see what Tipton
wants.

DAD
My back's killing me.

LARKIN
You can't sleep, Dad?

DAD
Do you realize Alice Price's daddy
is the leading orthopedic M.D. in
this area?

LARKIN
Yes.

DAD
I had an appointment until you
destroyed his daughter. I had to
call up there, tail between my
legs, and cancel.

CUT TO:

EXT. LARKIN HOUSE.

SAME.

Larkin comes out, down to Tipton who is at his car:

LARKIN
What the hell's going on?

TIPTON

Can we go have like a vanilla
milkshake?

LARKIN

Why?

TIPTON

Why? Because I just bought a pint
of rum.

CUT TO:

INT. TIPTON'S CAR.

LATER.

Driving along:

TIPTON

Larkin, I've met this guy, Sproles
and it's ... his brother's an
undercover police officer who
finagles to get himself hired to
kill a guy. He goes to see this
wife, see, who wants him to blast
her old man for her. And he goes
into her living room or somewhere.
And she gives him half up front
with the other half to come after.
But Sproles' brother, who is really
this undercover police officer, he
says, are you sure you want me to
kill your husband? I guess that's
what they do. Because then when he
actually doesn't do it, he's got a
better case against her.

LARKIN

You got to tell me what you're
talking about, I'm lost here.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT HANGOUT.

LATER.

Same one as last winter. Same Waitress appears at their
booth --- it's been a long night:

TIPTON

Two some-kinda milkshakes.

The Waitress starts to walk away, Tipton starts to go back to his story, then leans out the booth and calls:

TIPTON

And an order of fries!

Then, to Larkin again:

TIPTON

So the wife's arrested and tossed in the cooler. But there's this fella who comes down and does her bail for her and takes her home with him. That night they sleep in the same bed. They make, you know, he fucks her. Next morning she cooks him breakfast. And you know who this man is? Her husband. The same son-of-a-bitch she wanted him shot.

LARKIN

Where did you hear all that?

TIPTON

Jean's. This guy Sproles blows in with stories to tell.

LARKIN

I don't think I believe it.

TIPTON

But certain people, I mean, treachery, lies and so on. But still they insist on carrying on with her. But I have something to tell you about Jewel and you better believe it.

LARKIN

No, I will not talk about Jewel with you.

TIPTON

Larkin, lookit ... if Jewel is so touchy a thing, you've got to think about that.

LARKIN

Everytime you say anything about Jewel you make it clear you lust for her.

TIPTON

Hey.

LARKIN

Hey.

TIPTON

No, just hey a minute. Jewel's married.

LARKIN

She's what?

TIPTON

She's married.

LARKIN

Jewel is married?

TIPTON

Yes.

LARKIN

She's a married woman?

TIPTON

Well ... that's the other thing.

LARKIN

What do you mean?

TIPTON

She's not a woman. I mean she's not nineteen. She's sixteen. She's a girl.

LARKIN

She's nineteen!

TIPTON

No. She's sixteen years old and she's married. I heard over Jean's, this guy Sproles.

The waitress appears with the shakes and fries.

TIPTON

Say, what time do you get off?

WAITRESS

As soon as all the pricks like you
get the hell out of here.

As the waitress walks off:

TIPTON

That hurt your tip a good fifty
cents!

He brings out the pint of rum, as advertised, and sneaks
a shot into each milkshake. Larkin takes a swig.

CUT TO:

INT. TIPTON'S CAR.

LATER.

Driving in silence. Larkin is stunned.

CUT TO:

EXT. LARKIN'S HOUSE.

SAME.

Tipton still behind the wheel of his car as Larkin starts
for the house. He stops:

LARKIN

If she's married, where's her
husband? Because I've seen her
morning, noon, and night now for
six months.

TIPTON

Every single night?

We remember, and so does Larkin, one night when she had
to go see her grandmother.

LARKIN

Almost.

TIPTON

He's in the Navy.

LARKIN

Oh, now he's in the Navy, is that
right?

Their voices are starting to rise:

TIPTON
You better wake up and start
believing somebody besides Jewel.

LARKIN
I'm crazy about her.

TIPTON
You're not crazy about her.

LARKIN
I am!

TIPTON
You think you are!

LARKIN
What's the fucking difference!

Lights come on all over the neighborhood. Larkin's old man opens the front door, stands there in his boxer shorts:

DAD
Get in the house!

Tipton runs to his car, peels out and is gone. Larkin on the front porch about to go inside:

DAD
Is that the watch Alice Price gave you? With Alice you refuse to wear it, now you put it on.

LARKIN
My new girlfriend, she put it on me.

And he disappears inside ...

CUT TO:

INT. JEAN MCBAIN'S BASEMENT.

MORNING.

It's been paneled, turned into a rec room. Jewel and LAUREL --- Jean's fifteen-year-old daughter --- are on the floor playing a child's card game as the door above opens, Larkin starts down the stairs.

When Jewel spots him, she smiles like crazy, starts to get up to go hug him, but quickly she senses something's wrong. So, defensively, she goes back to the game. Larkin stops at foot of stairs, leans against the banister.

Laurel reads the bad vibes, gets up and goes up the stairs as:

LAUREL

Morning, Johnny.

LARKIN

Hello, Laurel.

Laurel goes on upstairs. Then:

LARKIN

Something bugs me about you.

This girl's been through it all in her young life. She can brace for a fight in the blinking of an eye:

JEWEL

Yeah, what?

LARKIN

You didn't finish high school.

JEWEL

You didn't finish college.

LARKIN

I took this quarter off to have more time to spend with you. But I am working on finishing college. How come you're such good friends with Laurel?

Trying to keep her voice down, not wanting Jean or Laurel to hear the conversation:

JEWEL

She's Jean's daughter.

LARKIN

She's fifteen years old. Do you think I could be friends with somebody fifteen ... or sixteen?

Jewel throws a handful of cards across the room and starts up the stairs:

JEWEL

Let's don't talk about them in their own house.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK OF JEAN'S HOUSE.

MOMENTS LATER.

Jewel and Larkin, walking away from the back porch off toward the rolling countryside. In the distance, the horses graze.

A small house, Jewel's family's house, is off to the side.

JEWEL

Look, is something bugging you about me?

LARKIN

You bet it is.

JEWEL

Then we don't got to go on seeing each other.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAINTENANCE-IN-WAY STATION.

SAME.

As Jewel and Larkin arrive from over the hill. Larkin kicks the door open.

CUT TO:

INT. MAINTENANCE-IN-WAY STATION.

SAME.

LARKIN

I'm going to ask you a couple of questions.

JEWEL

First, I want to tell you something.

LARKIN

Okay, what?

It may be unintentional or it may be a sly plan she's been keeping in her back pocket, but Jewel always seems to manipulate him:

JEWEL

It's just that I ... I have to remember the day I was born.

LARKIN

What happened?

JEWEL

It was a very special day cause my daddy was beatin a woman up just as I was coming out of my mama's vagina.

Larkin just stares at her:

JEWEL

Just as I was being born.

LARKIN

He was beating up some woman other than your mother, right?

JEWEL

Of course! What are you, brain damaged?

LARKIN

No, are you?

JEWEL

No.

LARKIN

Look, I know being raised up and around that kind of a family, that affected you.

JEWEL

It doesn't matter.

Larkin clears his head. Then:

LARKIN

Let me see your driver's license.

JEWEL
I lost my driver's license.

LARKIN
Oh.

JEWEL
Somebody bumped into me, me drivin
Mama's car, so of course everybody
blamed me and Mama took my license
away.

LARKIN
Damn it, Jewel, how old are you?

JEWEL
Well I'm not sixteen years old if
that's what you've heard.

LARKIN
(Puzzled)
What ...?

JEWEL
What else do you want to know?

LARKIN
I want to know if you're married.

Jewel runs outside by the railroad tracks; Larkin
follows:

JEWEL
You don't think I'm smart enough to
be going out with, or no, just
smart enough for you, do ya? Cause
that crack you made about my high
school.

LARKIN
Jewel, those are not the two
questions I asked you, are they?

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM.

NIGHT.

A dingy room, say twelve bucks a night. Larkin and Jewel
in bed, both awake lying quietly, neon blinking through
the window:

JEWEL

I had to lie to you, Larkin, I had to. I was desperate. I was afraid you wouldn't have nothing to do with me if you knew I was married.

LARKIN

Where is he?

JEWEL

He's stationed up in Norfolk. If you never want to see me again, go ahead and don't.

She gets out of bed, starts dressing --- it's impossible to tell with Jewel if she's dressing in front of him to tantalize him or if it's done very innocently:

JEWEL

I never had sex with him.

LARKIN

Does he know that?

JEWEL

I was too scared. You know how scared I was even with you. How long it took for me. I'm still not any good at it.

LARKIN

Oh yes you are.

JEWEL

I could finally do it with you because I liked you so much. I could never do it with Green, I hate Green.

LARKIN

But the thing is, you married him.

JEWEL

That was just to get out of my house, away from that son-of-a, from that stepfather my mama married. Who married her just to get to me, the only reason. How did I know we would move in with his father, turn out to be the same way.

LARKIN

So you came back home to live with
your mother.

JEWEL

Very quick.

LARKIN

How'd Green take it?

JEWEL

He was so mad he could kill, I
swear it.

LARKIN

If you told your mother you wanted
out of this marriage, would she
help you?

JEWEL

Ha. She don't have the money to
help me; she don't have a penny.

Larkin's making a big decision. It's taken him all day
and Jewel's done everything she can to hold on to him ---
that, of course, means a day, and half the night, of sex:

LARKIN

Come on...

He pops out of bed, starts dressing.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAUREEN'S HOUSE.

LATER.

Larkin pulls up.

CUT TO:

INT. MAUREEN'S BEDROOM.

SAME.

Tipton and MAUREEN --- Tipton's girlfriend, quiet and shy
-- are rolling around on her bed, fully clothed, making
out like there's no tomorrow.

We are struck by how absolutely immaculate the room is,
clean as a pin does not describe it.

Tap on the door, Maureen and Tipton scramble, the door opens and Larkin steps in, closes the door behind him.

Maureen, clothes a wrinkled mess, disappears into her bathroom, closes the door firmly.

TIPTON
Christ, Larkin!

LARKIN
I got to talk to you.

Tipton is tucking his shirt in, pressing down his hair:

TIPTON
Talk.

LARKIN
You got a cousin's a lawyer, don't you? I need a lawyer.

TIPTON
For what?

LARKIN
Annulment.

TIPTON
Annulment! Are you nuts?

Maureen comes out of her bathroom, smoking a cigarette. She has clean sheets and pillowcases with her. She turns down the bed, starts changing it:

TIPTON
Maureen, you don't have to change the bedding.

MAUREEN
I have to change the bedding, thank you.

And she slips her cigarette into a silver ashtray beside the bed, an ashtray that's polished and, yes, clean.

LARKIN
You got to take me to him.

TIPTON
Will you sleep on it? In the morning if you still ---

LARKIN

Screw the morning. Tonight.

TIPTON

It's almost eleven o'clock!

LARKIN

Did you hear me or not?

CUT TO:

INT. LARKIN'S CAR.

MOMENTS LATER.

Larkin driving:

LARKIN

(Almost angry)

Maureen is the cleanest person I've ever seen. The Mayo Clinic's not that clean. And she is so immaculate. Herself. Her fingernails and ears and feet. Always. And her clothes are always clean and her shoes. She smokes a lot of cigarettes, doesn't she, but you never know it. I swear to God you can't in any way tell it. Not even while she's smoking! How does she do that? She has an ashtray beside her and she flicks her ashes in. But the next second you look at the ashtray, it's perfectly clean. She must be the most neurotic person on earth.

TIPTON

Don't say that.

LARKIN

It's simple psychology.

TIPTON

Because you know who you're complaining about, John?

LARKIN

Maureen.

TIPTON

No, you're not. That's not who
you're complaining about.

And he points up ahead:

TIPTON

Turn here ...

CUT TO:

INT. DEN AT LAWYER'S HOUSE.

LATER.

GARY the attorney, is Tipton's cousin. A snob for no
good reason. He sits behind his desk like a big shot:

GARY

Kid, do you even know what
"annulment" means?

LARKIN

(To Tipton)
I don't know, do I?

GARY

It means you make the marriage null
and void.

LARKIN

Yeah, I know that. That's what I
want to do. I have to do that.

GARY

Sure, kid, sure. So you have to
dig up something. Maybe something
he lied about before they were
married --- epilepsy in the family
he didn't tell her about, some
bullshit like that. Or maybe this
cat would simply agree to an
annulment, in which case everybody
just lies and we get some bozo
judge to toss the fuckin marriage
out the window.

LARKIN

Well ... they never have had sex.

GARY

Bingo!

Bullshit! TIPTON

It's true! LARKIN

What's this going to set him back,
Gary? TIPTON

Three, four hundred bucks... GARY

(Stunned)
Three, four hundred bucks? Jesus
Christ ... LARKIN

Hey ... the initial consultation's
free. GARY

Save yourself a heartache, Johnny,
drop the whole thing, take a hike
on this bitch. TIPTON

Shut up. LARKIN

CUT TO:

EXT. GARY'S PLACE.

LATER.

Walking to Larkin's car.

If you're serious about this, Gary
can help you, I'm sure --- he's
going to be a famous attorney
someday, I think. TIPTON

Nobody named Gary was ever famous
for anything. LARKIN

As they get into the car.

Drive me over to school. TIPTON

Tonight? LARKIN

CUT TO:

EXT. DORMITORY.

LATER.

Larkin is sitting on the hood of his car. Tipton comes out of the dorm with a small, wiry kid --- SPROLES --- beside him.

Tipton and Sproles come over to Larkin, we hear mumbling.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR OFF CAMPUS.

LATER.

The place is mostly empty. A lonesome stripper is dancing up behind the bar.

ANGLE - A BOOTH

Larkin sits across from Tipton and Sproles:

TIPTON

Sproles here knows this guy Green, see? And he knows his wife, Jewel. So ...

The COCKTAIL WAITRESS comes over:

TIPTON

A pitcher of beer and, uh, when do you dance?

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

When do you turn twenty-one?

She walks off:

TIPTON

Christ, has anybody ever known a woman to give a straight answer? They ask Betsy Ross to make a fuckin' flag she prob'ly said, "How many stars you want, a hundred?"

SPROLES

Larkin, right? Let's start with Green.

LARKIN

I know he's in Norfolk, in the Navy.

And now we quickly

INTERCUT TO:

INT. JAMMED BAR IN NORFOLK.

NIGHT.

A tough-looking SAILOR at the bar. He's the same one who was sitting with Jewel at the bowling alley back in the winter.

SPROLES (V.O.)

I'm going to start talking about the guy and the girl ... I'm going to use words here.

TIPTON (V.O.)

(To Larkin)

Did you hear that?

SPROLES (V.O.)

You may not like some of the words I use, you been dippin her.

TIPTON (V.O.)

But if you want to really get to the bottom of ---

LARKIN (V.O.)

Go ahead, Sproles, what have you got for me?

In the bar in Norfolk, Green pays up and walks outside, as:

SPROLES (V.O.)

Green is scum. He's the kind of scum, he's ten, twelve years old he tells his friends to steal money from their mothers' pocketbooks. Then when his mother's getting dressed, he charges his friends outside her window to watch.

Outside the Norfolk bar near the beach, Green lights a cigarette and walks into the night ...

RETURN TO:

INT. LARKIN, TIPTON, SPROLES.

Sitting in their booth with their pitcher of beer:

SPROLES

He's in the Navy now because he murdered at least two people that my brother knows of. Killed them.

TIPTON

Sproles' brother's an undercover cop, Larkin.

SPROLES

Investigations heat up, get close to him, he joins the Navy, gone.

LARKIN

There's no air in here ...

Larkin, sweating, bolts out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT OF THE BAR.

SAME.

Larkin has his car door open, leaning against it, almost like he's about to puke. Sproles and Tipton walk around the car --- Sproles acts like the cop he wishes he were:

TIPTON

Just listen to Sproles, will ya? He's a fifth year senior.

SPROLES

Now Jewel. Jewel is just a low-life. Without that body built like she is, nobody would even go near her. She's what? She's sixteen years old.

Larkin almost attacks Sproles, Tipton pulls him back:

LARKIN

No, that's not so!

SPROLES

I know all about you. How you met her over at Jean's. How Jewel kept putting you off, putting you off, putting you off till it is coming out your ears, then drags you downstairs and lets you pump her. Like she is a virgin.

LARKIN

I don't know how you or anybody else would know that.

Larkin is getting more and more confused:

SPROLES

How could I know? Ask yourself:

LARKIN

Jewel told you?

SPROLES

No, no, no. She wouldn't talk to, I mean, I wouldn't talk to her. Laurel, she told me. What I'm suggesting, the two of them were laughing at you behind your, you know.

LARKIN

Jewel wouldn't do that.

Sproles --- what a big deal he thinks he is:

SPROLES

Don't be a ssp. She sees a chance in you, that's all. You have breeding.

LARKIN

I don't have any breeding.

SPROLES

I know. But compared to her you do. Get rid of her. She'll strap you kid. Be smart.

By now Larkin is lying across his seat, hyperventilating:

TIPTON

You are being taken in by a married girl.

LARKIN

That marriage means nothing. She never even had sex with Green.

SPROLES

Do you actually think he would date her, marry her, and then go off to the United States Navy without having sex with her?

TIPTON

This is a girl who lies to you, Larkin.

LARKIN

Let me think! Let me get my thoughts straight.

DISSOLVE INTO:

INT. LARKIN'S BEDROOM.

DAY.

He's pacing back and forth. He stands in front of a mirror and silently rehearses some kind of little speech --- it's an appeal he's about to make to his mother.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN AT LARKIN'S.

LATER.

His Mom --- about 45, dark like Larkin --- is refinishing a piece of furniture in the middle of the kitchen floor as Larkin comes in. The stove is going full blast:

LARKIN

Mom, the fumes in here are going to kill us all. Why can't you do that outside?

MOM

I'm baking. I've got to get three pies to the church by noon.

LARKIN

You do so many things, even at one time you're doing all these things, I really admire that. It seems like, I get something in my, on my mind, and it's all I can do or think about.

MOM

Is that why you dropped out of school, you couldn't study three or four subjects in one quarter?

Larkin just absorbs that, he deserved it:

LARKIN

Mom, I have to talk to you about something. Look, we've known each other a long time, right?

She peels off her rubber gloves, turns down the stove, sits in a kitchen chair:

MOM

What is it, Johnny?

CUT TO:

EXT. MAUREEN'S HOUSE.

DAY.

An ostentatious Cadillac is in the driveway. It's one of those tacky, two-toned Sevilles with a vinyl roof and two tons of chrome.

Tipton pulls up, parks and gets out. The Caddy is obviously new to him. He looks it over, walks around it, evaluates it --- not too bad, he thinks.

CUT TO:

INT. MAINTENANCE STATION.

DAY.

Larkin is there, looking at his watch. He looks out the window. Now he goes to the door, opens it:

CUT TO:

EXT. SAME.

SAME.

Jewel is coming from over the hill. She hops the tracks and runs down to him, jumps in his arms:

LARKIN

Where have you been?

JEWEL

I had to go to the dentist. I broke off a piece of my tooth this morning and I couldn't keep my tongue out of the hole. I was about to split the tip of my tongue in half.

LARKIN

Let me see ...

He opens her mouth with his fingers and puts his fingers in her mouth trying to see and it's sexy and nasty and hot and:

LARKIN

Is it here?

JEWEL

No ...

LARKIN

Here ...?

JEWEL

No!

And she pulls his fingers out of her mouth, biting at them as she does and:

LARKIN

You've got money to go to the dentist?

JEWEL

I think some kind of insurance pays it.

He takes her inside:

CUT TO:

INT. SAME.

SAME.

JEWEL

What's this big surprise?

Larkin pulls an envelope out of his back pocket:

LARKIN

Here it is.

She grabs the envelope, opens it --- it's full of twenty dollar bills:

JEWEL

Where did you get it? Is it from your savings?

LARKIN

Savings? I mow lawns in the summer, Jewel. I'm calling a Bingo game once or twice a week. What savings? I had to ask my mother for it.

JEWEL

Did you tell her what it was for?

LARKIN

How could I? Of course not. Mom? Could you loan me three hundred dollars for my girlfriend's annulment?

JEWEL

So she gave you three hundred dollars just because you asked for it? She's wonderful!

LARKIN

I told her I couldn't tell her why I needed it. She didn't have it. She borrowed it from her sister. Scrape, scrape, scrape it up. That's all anybody in my family's ever done. Work for somebody else and scrape up what they throw you. I've got a different plan.

JEWEL

What?

Larkin gets an idea:

LARKIN

You want to take a ride with me?

JEWEL

You know I do.

CUT TO:

INT. LARKIN'S BEDROOM.

LATER.

Jewel is there with Larkin and she's fascinated. She looks around in awe. She runs her hands down the stacks of board games:

LARKIN

I'm going to make money doing something I like to do, Jewel.

JEWEL

What do you like to do?

LARKIN

My father, my older brother, they work everyday. Twelve o'clock a whistle blows, down to the plant cafeteria to eat. Thirty minutes, a whistle blows, you better be back where you belong. The job you do, you hate it. You might as well be in prison. Your hair's falling out on you. You got a rash on your body like the mange or something just from nerves. No, thanks, I'm not going to prison. And my mother, she watches her men pull these life sentences.

JEWEL

Will your parents be home? Can I finally meet them?

LARKIN

No.

JEWEL

You're ashamed of me.

LARKIN

I gave up Alice Price for you!
(Then)

LARKIN (Con't)

Besides, have I ever met your mother or your stepfather? No.

JEWEL

They're too odd to meet. He's just a mean man and she's too blind to see it.

Larkin goes to his desk/workbench, sits at it. This relationship with Jewel is taking its toll. He looks more and more tired lately, he's getting nervous, he's confused and anxious, more and more:

LARKIN

Did you ever play Monopoly or Clue or Sorry or The Uncle Wiggly Game?

JEWEL

Yeah.

LARKIN

Where do you think these games come from? From people like me. You create a game, you send it in. Who knows, maybe they'll buy it from you. I have sent a game in a box with instructions how to play it, the whole deal, to Parker Brothers in Salem, Massachusetts. As we speak, Jewel, they are considering this game.

She's so proud of him she's about to pop.

LARKIN

You think I'm dreaming?

JEWEL

No.

LARKIN

You think I'm having some great American nightmare? Maybe. But maybe not.

She grabs him, kisses him and:

CUT TO:

EXT. LARKIN'S HOUSE.

SAME.

His Dad pulls into the driveway, gets out.

CUT BACK TO:

His Dad pulls into the driveway, gets out.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LARKIN'S ROOM.

SAME.

Now they are standing there kissing each other madly and tearing each other's clothes off, as they are given to do, and the heat is almost too hot and

The door opens and Dad looks in:

DAD

What the hell's going on?

LARKIN

Jesus Christ ...!

And they're scrambling for their lives and their clothes and:

DAD

What is this, some whorehouse I'm working my ass off to support? No, no -- you don't bring this kind of trash into my house, do you understand me on that, Son! You dreamer ... dropout!

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS.

LATER.

Larkin walking toward a dorm. He's got a canvas bag-suitcase with him.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DORM.

SAME.

Larkin starts to knock on a door just as Tipton opens it. Larkin goes inside.

CUT TO:

INT. TIPTON'S ROOM.

SAME.

LARKIN

I may need your facilities from
time to time, okay?

TIPTON

Sure.

LARKIN

I moved out. But I can't afford to
rent a place.

TIPTON

It's yours. I'll be back.

LARKIN

Where you going?

MAUREEN

Maureen wants to see me. She can't
stand it when I'm out of her sight.

LARKIN

Stop by my house, see if I got any
mail.

CUT TO:

INT. SAME.

LATER.

Larkin has showered and changed. His hair is still wet.
He's making a place for himself in a corner of the room.

Tipton storms in with a blanket and pillow. He hurls
them against a wall:

TIPTON

She dumped me!

LARKIN

Who?

TIPTON

Maureen! She's got it for that
slob, Fairgate! Slob! Animal!
She wants to marry him! She wants
to have a baby with him! You know
how clean she is --- I said good
luck with diapers and everything
goes with some puking kid!

TIPTON (Con't)
Fairgate's got a Cadillac, that's
his whole appeal!

LARKIN
Fairgate's got a Cadillac?

TIPTON
Okay, it's beautiful, but that's
his whole appeal!

LARKIN
I'm sorry, Tipton.

TIPTON
Fuck it!

Things settle down. Larkin opens a can of fruit cocktail with the can opener on his pocketknife and eats some of it through this:

LARKIN
What's with the blanket and pillow?

TIPTON
Your mother. I think she likes
you.

LARKIN
Thanks. Was there any mail?

Tipton pulls an envelope out of his pocket:

TIPTON
Yes.

Larkin takes it:

LARKIN
This is from Parker Brothers.

TIPTON
I know it.

LARKIN
It's from the Parker Brothers Game
Company.

TIPTON
I know that. Open it up.

Dying to open it, but he doesn't:

LARKIN
I'll get to it.

CUT TO:

INT. JEAN MCBAIN'S HOUSE.

NIGHT.

Six or eight people; music, drinking, laughing, generally trashing the place.

Roy, Jean's sometimes-lover, has Jean's arm behind her back, twisting it a little, to the joy of several others.

Sproles is there, lurking in a corner, explaining something to Laurel.

ANGLE ON the back porch as Jewel runs up the steps, comes inside. We follow her through the kitchen, hallway, down the basement steps where we see

Larkin slumped in a chair with the letter from Parker Brothers in his hand:

JEWEL
I'm sorry I'm late again, but Mama took me to see the lawyer guy.

LARKIN
(Quietly)
Is he going to take care of it?

JEWEL
He says he is. I can't stay but a minute cause I told my mama if she'd help me with this lawyer and getting out of my marriage, I'd wash her hair tonight.

Larkin just glances at her:

JEWEL
I'm so nervous.

LARKIN
(Flatly)
Don't be nervous.

JEWEL
Ha. What's that?

Larkin dejectedly hands her the letter, she reads it as:

JEWEL

What does it mean?

LARKIN

What do you mean, what does it mean? Can't you read? It means I'm back at square one. Square fucking one.

She starts to console him the only way she knows how, but Larkin pushes her away:

LARKIN

Not now. I got to have something to drink.

JEWEL

I'll get it.

LARKIN

I can get it myself.

As Larkin starts up the stairs:

JEWEL

You don't have to take it out on me. That's all anybody ever does.

LARKIN

Hush.

We follow Larkin up and into the kitchen. He gets a beer out of the refrigerator. When he turns around, Roy, who was twisting Jean's arm before, is now sitting at the counter:

ROY

Hey, you don't need any money do ya?

And he pulls a giant roll of bills out of his pocket, peels off a few, puts them on the counter:

LARKIN

What are you talking about?

ROY

I'm talking about I'd give you about twenty bucks for a piece of

ROY (Con't)

that bitch of yours you got
downstairs.

Larkin is stunned. He stares at the man for a moment, then starts to walk away. Roy comes off the stool, grabs Larkin's arm:

ROY

Don't walk away from me, you little
piss ant. I'm saying everybody
else I know's had her for free,
hell, I'm offering to pay for it.

Larkin hits him hard in the head with the beer can, beer goes spraying all over the kitchen.

Roy grabs and twists Larkin's arm, Larkin yelps in pain. Roy walks Larkin out to the porch and:

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK OF JEAN'S HOUSE.

SAME.

As they come off the porch. Roy pushes Larkin off the porch steps and onto the ground.

VARIOUS ANGLES

Roy kicks Larkin in the stomach. Then he picks Larkin up.

But Larkin fights. He surprises Roy, slugs him and sends him reeling. He picks him up, throws him up against the house. He's fighting for Jewel's "honor" and giving everything he's got.

Roy is bigger and meaner and should be winning but he isn't.

But ROY'S BUDDY appears from nowhere and grabs Larkin from behind. Roy recovers and gives Larkin half a dozen good shots as the Buddy holds him.

As Larkin is sinking to the ground, a small crowd comes out the back door wondering what's going on and one of them is Jean Mc. ^{ine} who pushes the men aside, stoops down to help Larkin. She screams at Roy:

JEAN

Get out of here! You're through coming around here, do you hear me! Now get lost, Roy, I've had it with you. And take your coward friend with you. Leave! Both of you!

With a smirk, Roy and the Buddy go back inside the house, the others parting to let them leave.

ANGLE - JEAN

She's disgusted by the violence.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM AT JEAN'S.

LATER.

Larkin is lying on the bed while Jewel treats him with an ice pack. Larkin's lip is cut and swollen:

JEWEL

Larkin ...? What happened, anyway?

LARKIN

I don't know, I got on his nerves.

JEWEL

I can't stand to leave you, but I've got to go home.

LARKIN

Yeah, you go on, don't get into trouble with your folks.

She hugs him, it hurts and he winces.

LARKIN

See you tomorrow.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE ROOM.

SAME.

Sproles is standing there as Jewel leaves. They glance at each other but they don't speak.

CUT TO:

INT. JEAN'S BEDROOM.

SAME.

Jewel taps on the door and enters.

ANGLE - JEAN

She's sitting in dim light in the corner.

JEWEL

You look awful lonely sitting there.

JEAN

I do? I've been trying to avoid looking lonely all my life.

JEWEL

I know why they fought.

JEAN

Why?

JEWEL

I caused it. I'm sure I did.

JEAN

No you didn't. I did.

JEWEL

You?

JEAN

(Protecting Jewel)
I told Roy I wished he and I had the love and fire and excitement of youth that you and Johnny have.

JEWEL

You did? Or ... I mean, you do?

JEAN

I said I wish I could have had an experience like you're having with Johnny. Just one. To take with me the rest of my life.

JEWEL

You've had lots of experiences, Jean.

JEAN
And I wish I could forget every
one of them.

CUT TO:

INT. LARKIN'S ROOM AT JEAN'S.

LATER.

Larkin is sleeping in the middle of the night. His door squeaks open and he opens an eye.

Jean comes in quietly, over to his bed. Larkin doesn't know what's going on. He doesn't move.

Jean reaches down and replaces his melted icepack with a fresh one. She touches it to his lip.

LARKIN

Thanks, Jean.

Jean smiles and leaves...

DISSOLVE INTO:

EXT. JEAN'S.

MORNING.

Larkin comes out of the house, down to his car. In the pasture across the street, Sproles is feeding green apples to several horses. He mounts a horse and rides it over to Sproles.

SPROLES

I got this girlfriend out in California. So I wrote her a letter. It took ten days to get there.

LARKIN

So?

SPROLES

In 1860 you could send a letter from St. Jo Missouri to Sacramento California Pony Express. It took ten days.

Larkin doesn't know what Sproles is talking about.

SPROLES

Those riders were younger than us. Eighteen the average. Riding for their lives. Imagine if that was you -- the only thing on your mind is a fresh horse.

LARKIN

Sometimes you can only think about what you need.

SPROLES

That's right, Johnny. And what you need is a fresh animal.

LARKIN

(getting the message)
Everybody knows what's right for me. It's amazing.

SPROLES

(dismounts)
What time is it?

Larkin looks at his watch.

LARKIN

It's, uh ---

SPROLES

I've got to get to school.

Sproles starts walking toward Jean's house. His car's in the driveway:

LARKIN

What have you got?

SPROLES

General Health.

LARKIN

What are you doing taking General Health, Sproles?

SPROLES

Because I did not take it when I was a freshman when it was required, now I got to take it I'm a fifth year senior or I don't graduate.

LARKIN

Humiliating, huh?

Larkin takes a bite of the apple. Sproles stops, looks at Larkin:

SPROLES

The good thing is the girls. You're surrounded by these young, smart, healthy, frisky, freshman animals, they idolize you. You want to come with me, audit my health class?

Without much conviction:

LARKIN

No.

SPROLES

You feel like you're in a corral,
these wild ponies. Which is just
where you need to be.

LARKIN

What makes you think so?

SPROLES

Look at yourself.

Larkin feels the pain in his jaw, touches his swollen
cheek -- he's thinking that maybe Sproles is right. Maybe
Tipton, too, when he talked about this girl being trouble.

SPROLES

Your Pony Express days are not over.
Don't wake up someday strapped to a
mistake, kid.

CUT TO:

INT. TIPTON'S DORMROOM.

LATER.

Larkin comes in. Tipton is at his desk with books all
around him -- but he's playing Nerf Basketball.

Larkin is
around him

TIPTON

What happened to you -- did Jewel
cross her legs or what?

Larkin grabs him by the collar and is about to demolish him:

TIPTON

Wait! It's me! It's Tipton, baby,
the Tip-Top, relax!

Larkin releases him.

LARKIN

Sorry.

ANGLE - BATHROOM

Larkin comes in, Tipton follows. Larkin splashes water on
his face:

TIPTON
Larkin, I need your help.

LARKIN
What do you want?

TIPTON
I bumped into these three babes.
Did the man say Three? Yes he did.

LARKIN
What three babes?

TIPTON
That girl Christy I used to see
some a long time ago and these two
friends she's got called Ellen
something and Bobo something else.

The name Ellen has rung a bell:

LARKIN
Ellen who?

TIPTON
What the hell's the difference,
Ellen who?

LARKIN
And what about them?

TIPTON
Don't throw a fit, but we're
getting together with them.

LARKIN
You know I can't do that.

TIPTON
Why not?!

LARKIN
Because I'm going with Jewel,
that's why!

TIPTON
Jewel's married!

LARKIN
That's only temporary.

TIPTON
I don't believe how you let your
life be run by that little ---

LARKIN
Watch it.

TIPTON
Girl. That little girl. She must
be the best piece of ---

LARKIN
Shut up, Tipton. Just ... you
heard me.

Tipton tries to think of a new tack, then:

TIPTON
Shit ... let's get together with
these girls, Larkin, call it your
last fling before Jewel gets single
and you two get, or I don't know,
whatever you do.

LARKIN
(Giving in a little)
When?

TIPTON
Tonight. Don't make me say
"please" again, I hate this
begging, I detest it, I'm a proud
man, John.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE.

EVENING.

Tipton pulls into the circular driveway, Larkin
following. They park and get out:

LARKIN
I don't know why both of us have to
drive like a fucking parade.

TIPTON
Because if things develop any one
of several ways, some random
twosome might want to split with
the pack, does that make sense?

LARKIN
Where's her parents?

TIPTON
Some hemisphere somewhere, I don't know. If you had the kind of money it takes to buy a shack like this, would you hang around this town if you didn't have to?

On Larkin's puzzled look, we eye the house and:

TIPTON
Is this swank or what?

LARKIN
I was here once last fall.

TIPTON
Doing what?

LARKIN
The lawn. I got kicked out.

They step up, Tipton hits the doorbell:

TIPTON
What lie did you tell Jewel?

LARKIN
I told her I wasn't going to see her tonight.

TIPTON
Yeah, but what lie did you tell her?

LARKIN
I told her I was helping you out, your broken heart over Maureen.

TIPTON
Not bad.

Nobody's coming to the door, Larkin looks around the side of the house, sees a high set of lights shining in the distance:

LARKIN
Come on ...

They take a path down toward the tennis court.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENNIS COURT AT ELLEN'S.

SAME.

On the court are three young attractive women, college age, each with her hair in a ponytail: Ellen (the prettiest), CHIRSTY, and BOBO.

There's a ball-serving machine out there and white tennis balls all over the place. The girls are giggling and throwing a few balls at each other, but that stops quickly.

ANGLE - LARKIN AND TIPTON

on the path. Larkin stops. He looks at the house, then back at the tennis court. The girls don't see or hear them.

TIPTON

What's a matter?

LARKIN

When I was a boy we used to pile in the car, my family, and go driving around to the ritzy parts of town to see the new homes. Like these split-level, three-car garage, long, low, or Colonial houses. Where all these rich people bedded down after they did something like play ping-pong in their den. And maybe somebody had a teen-age son and he had a basketball court out back that was all paved and level and lit up at night. Like this. At first I was sort of thrilled by it. Then depressed. So before we drove home my dad would drive us around to the poorest part of town and show us the shacks and dumps where people lived. This was to bring us down to earth. Now we pull into our own driveway, we don't feel too bad. Not great. But better than if we only had those million dollar joints in our minds.

To Tipton, Larkin is a deep and superior thinker:

LARKIN

You know ... most of the girls I've dated have lived in great houses.

TIPTON

(Touch of sarcasm)

Yeah, like Jewel?

LARKIN

Maybe that's part of her appeal.

They continue down the path. They arrive at the court. The girls are in the middle of a conversation:

ELLEN

Because it seems so simple, you'd think anybody could do it. Sometimes when I think about this country and economics and just having a little bit of self go-get-em, I can't believe everybody over the age of, say thirty-two, is not very wealthy.

BOBO

In the first place, everybody doesn't want to be wealthy.

ELLEN

What is that supposed to mean?

BOBO

Some people don't think it's that important, Ellen.

ELLEN

Oh, okay, Bobo. But what's more practical to talk about, the standard or the rare exception? There are rare exceptions to everything, granted, but you can't develop your whole way of living on them. Fuck them.

CHRISTY

How did your daddy make about a million dollars and build you'all this great house you got?

ELLEN
Don't kid yourself, we earned every penny of it.

As the guys approach:

TIPTON
Say!

LARKIN
Say!

ELLEN/CHRISTY/BOBO
Hey!

They all take a moment to take each other in. It's a little awkward. Then:

ELLEN
Who beat you up?

LARKIN
Some asshole.

TIPTON
So ... let's do something.

CUT TO:

INT. INDOOR POOL AT ELLEN'S.

NIGHT.

The MUSIC is loud and the surf's up. Larkin has Ellen on his shoulders, Tipton has Christy on his shoulders, and the two girls battle each other, each trying to knock the other off.

Bobo's sitting on the side, kicking her feet, cheering both teams on. Everybody's screaming. Ellen pushes Christy off Tipton and Christy splashes under water. Bobo dives in and attacks, pulling Ellen off Larkin.

CUT TO:

INT. SAUNA.

LATER.

Larkin and Ellen. Wrapped in large towels and nothing else, maybe not that much. Steam everywhere. Very close together:

LARKIN

How does it feel to live like this?
All these facilities and
everything?

ELLEN

Excellent. Radical. When my daddy
first started out in business, we
were poor. There's no comparison.

LARKIN

Mark Twain would agree with you.

ELLEN

Huh?

They almost kiss but don't. Then:

ELLEN

You mowed our grass once last
September.

LARKIN

I didn't think you remembered me.

ELLEN

You didn't say anything.

LARKIN

I wasn't going to say anything if
you weren't. It's your house.

They're getting closer and closer together. She's the
aggressor:

ELLEN

I'm sorry my daddy came home with
those people from New York City and
caught us. I was embarrassed the
way he acted.

LARKIN

I was humiliated. But I get into a
lot of trouble with parents.

ELLEN

Why is that?

LARKIN

I don't know. I think they suspect
me.

ELLEN

Of what?

LARKIN

I don't seem to do what people want me to do. Parents have a sensitivity to that.

ELLEN

There are no sensitive parents around now.

Larkin pulls back a little:

LARKIN

Ellen ... I'm very much involved with someone else.

ELLEN

I don't give a shit.

CUT TO:

INT. LARKIN'S CAR.

LATER.

He's driving on a country road with Ellen beside him. She reaches over and plays with his wet hair.

ELLEN

This car is hip.

LARKIN

Thanks.

ELLEN

I can't imagine me out with some guy who drives a car from the 1960's, but somehow, with you, it's quite bitching.

Larkin nods. Then:

ELLEN

How was the sauna?

LARKIN

Good. Hot. Good.

But we get the feeling that sex is better with Jewel.

CUT TO:

EXT. LARKIN'S CAR.

SAME.

Tipton's car passes Larkin. He's blowing his horn like a moron and Christy and Bobo are leaning halfway out the windows like idiots.

CUT TO:-

EXT. MAINTENANCE STATION.

MOMENTS LATER.

Larkin and Ellen arrive and the others are already there. Ellen and Larkin hop out. Tipton heads for his car and:

TIPTON

We don't have enough crap.

LARKIN

What do you mean?

TIPTON

We got a couple of beers, that's not enough, we got to go get more crap.

LARKIN

All right, okay ...

He gets in Tipton's car.

TIPTON

(To the girls)
Be back in a millisecond.

BOBO

What are we supposed to do?

TIPTON

Get a feel for the place. Relax.

Larkin and Tipton pull out.

CUT TO:

INT. SAME.

LATER.

Lots of lanterns are burning and they light the place along with the moon. The girls look around as:

BOBO

I hate to be the pragmatist here, but what do we know about these two guys?

CHRISTY

I know about Tipton.

Then, to Ellen:

CHRISTY

You know when Bobo and I were renting that house last year? And I was dating Tipton a little bit then? A funny thing happened.

ELLEN/BOBO

What? What happened?

CHRISTY

(To Bobo)

Don't you remember? Tipton and I were out in the living room one night on the couch doing it and you were home, you were in the bedroom trying to sleep. But of course you couldn't sleep.

BOBO

Oh.

CHRISTY

Then after Tipton left, I came into the bedroom and I felt so good and you said, You're so lucky.

ELLEN

So?

CHRISTY

Well, I told Tipton that.

BOBO

Told him what? What I said?

CHRISTY

Yeah, that you said I was so lucky. And he said, She said you were

CHRISTY (Con't)

lucky? He, see, he couldn't get that. He couldn't understand it.

ELLEN

I don't get it either, understand what?

CHRISTY

Guys don't realize we consider ourselves lucky when we get laid.

ELLEN

They don't?

CHRISTY

Just like they consider themselves the same way. He thought less of me after that. I know he did because that's the last time I ever saw him until today.

BOBO

Well what are we even doing here? Why did we drag ourselves out here, Christy, I mean it?

CHRISTY

Oh, that was last year, good god.

ELLEN

I do not feel, I must admit, dragged. I just don't. But that's me.

CHRISTY

Sometimes I think that, with guys, sex dominates them.

ANGLE - JEWEL

She appears before them out of nowhere, scaring the hell out of all three of them and their screams prove it:

JEWEL

Who are you all?

ELLEN

Who are you?

JEWEL

Where's Larkin at?

ELLEN

They went somewhere, they'll be back.

Jewel goes to Ellen --- somehow Jewel knows this is the one who is most interested in Larkin --- maybe Jewel and Ellen both have red hair? They stare at each other like two cats who don't like each other at all.

JEWEL

(Finally)

Tell Larkin I got to go meet somebody.

ELLEN

Who?

JEWEL

No, don't even tell him anything. Does anybody got a cigarette?

Ellen does. She finds one, gives it to Jewel, as:

JEWEL

Mind if I flop a minute?

She sits, lights her cigarette and:

JEWEL

When I was a little baby about less than a year old? People in my family used to give me cigarettes to smoke.

CHRISTY

When you were how old?

JEWEL

A little baby. They used to hold lit cigarettes up to me, you know, ones they were smokin, and I'd just draw on em like they was a bottle of milk. I been smokin since I was less than a year old. I been addicted that long.

She enjoys a drag on the cigarette.

JEWEL

Shit, the things they can find to do to you. Or no, like, take there was this guy out walking?

ELLEN

Who?

JEWEL

No, just walking down a path near the river ...

CUT TO:

EXT. PATH NEAR RIVER.

DAY.

And we see the scene as Jewel describes it:

JEWEL (V.O.)

Up ahead of him is some little girl on a bicycle. But there's this gang of guys and they push her off her bicycle and kick it for her and bend her spokes all up and rip her seat apart with a pocketknife. And they make this sort of circle and toss her around inside it like she was a ball. And runnin around just tryin to pick up her bike, she slips in the red mud and falls into the river. But our guy is runnin to help her. And he gets there and jumps in the fucking water and grabs ahold of her. But she's all a-scared and fights him cause she's all panicky. And the boy can't swim too good and the little girl can't swim hardly at all so they're both drowning ...

(And the little girl and the boy trying to save her look remarkably like younger versions of Jewel and Larkin)

RETURN TO:

INT. MAINTENANCE STATION.

NIGHT.

BOBO

What about this gang on the bank?

JEWEL

Shit on that bunch, they're just
laughin ...

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER.

DAY.

We continue to see the scene as Jewel describes it:

JEWEL (V.O)

And the boy and the girl and the
river is rushin them along and the
boy can't hold on to the little
girl much longer. And he knows
they're both going down, so he
pushes her away. Pushes her away
from him. And he grabs onto a old
fell-down tree trunk in the water
cause of he has to save himself.
And the girl, she bangs into some
goddamn rocks.

RETURN TO:

INT. MAINTENANCE STATION.

NIGHT.

JEWEL

When they pull her out, she's dead.

CHRISTY

Did she drown?

JEWEL

No. Before she had a chance to
drown she died of internal head
bleeding. Crazy fucking things
happen to you.

ELLEN

They can, yes.

BOBO

Where did you hear all that?

JEWEL

Somebody told it. It sounds like
my own life. Yes, it is my own
life.

Jewel stamps out her cigarette on the floor:

JEWEL
Don't tell anybody I was smoking,
will ya not?

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY STORE.

SAME.

Larkin and Tipton each have two grocery bags full. They toss them in the back of the car. They get in and start to drive away when a pick-up pulls up in front of the store.

ANGLE - GREEN.

In his sailor suit. He gets out of the truck, starts for the market.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Tipton spots him first, slaps Larkin's shoulder, points to Green. Tipton slows down to a crawl. They're almost whispering:

TIPTON

That's him.

LARKIN

How do you know?

TIPTON

It's got to be him, doesn't it?

LARKIN

Why?

TIPTON

Well doesn't it?

LARKIN

Jewel didn't tell me he was due.
You think that's him?

TIPTON

What do you think?

LARKIN

I think she would have told me.

Larkin and Tipton sit quietly, the motor purring, watching the sailor. The sailor inexplicably stops at the market door before entering. He turns his head slightly back toward Larkin's car, but not completely, then he disappears inside the store.

Larkin and Tipton both swallow hard.

CUT TO:

INT. MAINTENANCE STATION.

LATER.

Jewel has gone. The girls are waiting, Bobo very anxiously:

BOBO

I think we should go.

CHRISTY

No!

ELLEN

I didn't know it at first, but this Larkin is the same one who mowed our lawn one time last fall.

CHRISTY

Huh? You didn't know it at first?

BOBO

What are you, dead?

ELLEN

See ... seven or eight months ago. I think I was asleep.

Outside, the guys pull up. The girls run out to meet them:

CUT TO:

EXT. MAINTENANCE STATION.

SAME.

LARKIN/TIPTON

Say.

ELLEN

Larkin, some rather odd girl came by to see you.

LARKIN
She say she'd come back?

ELLEN
Didn't say.

CUT TO:

INT. MAINTENANCE STATION.

SAME.

They come in with the supplies:

CHRISTY
(To Ellen)
But for a minute ... you think you
were asleep seven or eight months
ago?

ELLEN
Somebody can be asleep, like,
unconscious, until much older than
you'd think possible. You can do
things, people talk to you, you
talk to them, but you're ---

CHRISTY
Talking in your sleep.

ELLEN
You sound like you know what I'm
talking about.

CHRISTY
I do?

Larkin is looking outside, with caution. The supplies
are being unloaded, beer and soda being passed around:

BOBO
What are you looking for?

LARKIN
Me? You don't know him.

TIPTON
Quit worrying, Larkin, the son-of-
a-bitch doesn't care about you or
anybody else she might screw around
with.

CHRISTY

Who are you talking about?

LARKIN

Some guy who's married to this person I've been seeing.

BOBO

Married!?

CHRISTY

Are you serious with this married person?

Trying to save the night:

TIPTON

He's not serious. Come on, you don't get serious over a married woman --- you just have fun with her.

BOBO

And now the husband gets back in town and we're, what, called upon to mend somebody's broken heart?

LARKIN

No.

TIPTON

No! You got it all wrong.

But all this is pretty much in fun, whether Tipton knows it or not:

BOBO

What do you think the three of us are? A bunch of desperate old housewives who just want to escape out somewhere and get laid?

TIPTON

Who said anything about getting laid yet?

ANGLE - CHRISTY

Going through the supplies, taking more things out of the bags: cokes, beer, chips, hotdogs, doughnuts, apples, you name it; cherry bombs and --- tons of marshmallows.

CHRISTY

What an odd assortment of things
you two bought.

VARIOUS ANGLES

TIPTON

We just went through and picked up
what caught our eye.

BOBO

How come you bought so many
marshmallows?

Tipton, too, is puzzled:

TIPTON

I don't know.

Bobo has torn open a bag; she throws a marshmallow at
Tipton. He throws one back at her. She picks up a
handful of cherry bombs:

BOBO

There won't be any setting off of
cherry bombs, not while I'm here.

TIPTON

Ah ...

BOBO

What is this fascination people
have with things that go boom?
Destruction is all people can think
about.

TIPTON

They were on sale, Bobo, that's
all.

Ellen moves closer to Larkin:

ELLEN

If you don't mow grass anymore,
Johnny, and you don't go to school,
what do you do?

LARKIN

Mostly ... I try to create.

ELLEN

Oh.

Now Ellen picks up a marshmallow and playfully throws it at Larkin. And Larkin hits her with one:

LARKIN

No because ... I always thought, you grow up, you go to prison for life.

CHRISTY

Prison?

LARKIN

Like prison. If you're not doing what you like to do, it's like prison. I decided to do what I like.

Christy fires a marshmallow at whoever's close:

CHRISTY

(Firing away)

What if you're doing what you like, but you're not any good at it?

LARKIN

Kill yourself.

BOBO

Sure.

LARKIN

Kill yourself trying to get good at it.

BOBO

Are you saying you simply decided to be creative?

LARKIN

Well ...

BOBO

Nobody decides to be creative.

The marshmallows are flying all over the place:

BOBO

That's like a cherry bomb decides to go off. It doesn't decide

BOBO (Con't)

anything. The fuse is lit, it burns down, it explodes. It explodes because that's its composition.

ELLEN

Bobo, I'll tell you one of your problems ...

And Ellen is slaughtered with half a dozen shots to the head and body. As she retaliates:

ELLEN

You can't take things as they come. You're what gives girls a bad name because listen at you bitching.

BOBO

(Firing)

You little rich whore ...!

By now it's like a snowball fight in a blizzard. Combat. The artillery flies.

People are scooping marshmallows off the floor, pulling them by the handfuls out of bags --- there's something almost surreal about all this.

Larkin and Ellen overturn the table, use it as a shield. People are leaping all over the place, firing marshmallows like machine gun bullets, laughing, screaming, a great time.

The battle escalates. Now hotdogs are being thrown. And buns. And handfuls of potato chips.

Bottles are shaken, then opened, spraying Coke and beer all over the enemy --- that means everyone.

CHRISTY

So this is war, huh? So be it!

BOBO

You boys are too young to even know what war is, don't you even realize that? What are you ---

ELLEN/BOBO/CHRISTY

Asleep?

People
them by
alone

People
warrior
time

Everybody is firing like crazy. Now it's the greatest time in the world:

ELLEN

If I had to be in a war, I'd be in the Civil War.

BOBO

Yeah, because you could buy your way out of serving!

CHRISTY

You could?

LARKIN

In the North you could.

ELLEN

I didn't know that. Fuck the North.

CHRISTY

Fuck em both.

BOBO

Get bent.

CHRISTY

Up yours.

ELLEN

No, because it just seems to me to have been the most glamorous war ever. And gentlemanly.

LARKIN

Yeah, like Andersonville.

ELLEN

Where's that?

BOBO

Oh, crack a book, will ya?

CHRISTY

Johnny, and I'm not being sarcastic, you are very smart.

TIPTON

We need some heavy artillery!

BOBO

Don't you dare go for those cherry
bombs!

Tipton grabs Larkin's pillow from his "bed," hits Bobo
with it:

TIPTON

I was talking about pillows or
something!

Suddenly the door swings open and Jewel comes inside.
She closes the door and leans back, breathless, against
it. Before she knows what's hit her, she's pummelled
with marshmallows --- bam, bam, bam, bam ...!

Then everything stops:

LARKIN

Jewel ...?

JEWEL

Outside.

She runs out, Larkin follows her out:

ELLEN

It's some kind of a mess, isn't it?

TIPTON

Totally.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS.

SAME.

In the moonlight:

JEWEL

I been looking all over for you. I
need to borrow your car to go meet
Green.

LARKIN

You want to borrow my car to ---

JEWEL

Please ...!

LARKIN

You don't have your driver's license.

JEWEL

I got em back.

But she doesn't offer them.

LARKIN

Let me see.

She hands him her license, he holds it to the light:

LARKIN

How come your birthday year is smudged?

JEWEL

Are you going to help me or not!

She grabs her license:

JEWEL

I have to go meet him to talk about the annulment.

Larkin takes a moment, then pulls out his keys, slaps them into her hand. As she starts to walk away:

JEWEL

Thanks for going out on me with some other girl --- I really appreciate that.

Larkin yells at her as she disappears down the tracks, into the night:

LARKIN

I can't even have friends, can I?
You're married, but I can't even have friends!

CUT TO:

INT. MAINTENANCE STATION.

SAME.

Larkin comes back in. Nobody knows what to do. The girls and Tipton mess over the beer and cigarettes and doughnuts and other junk like tired scavengers.

Christy finishes a bite of hotdog. Maybe she tosses a leftover marshmallow at Larkin, but the fun has been shattered ...

CHRISTY
Tippy ...?

TIPTON
What?

CHRISTY
Do you remember the last night we were together?

TIPTON
No, I don't. It just, we lost contact. I'm not a serious guy, Christy.

CHRISTY
You didn't have anything to worry about. There wasn't a serious bone in my body, not towards you. Maureen was the serious one, wasn't she?

Very defensive:

TIPTON
Maureen? What do you know about Maureen? How do you know about that?

CHRISTY
Clean Maureen?

TIPTON
Leave Maureen alone!

ELLEN
Is the whole night ruined? What does everybody think?

TIPTON
Nothing has to be ruined.

Tipton grabs Larkin by the collar, pulls him outside:

CUT TO:

EXT. SAME.

SAME.

TIPTON

I ought to kick your ass!

And he does, planting a foot in the middle of Larkin's butt and sending him to the ground:

LARKIN

What the hell are you doing, Tipton!

TIPTON

Can't you control Jewel?

LARKIN

Yeah, I can control her.

TIPTON

No you can't. She runs you. She's at the controls. We've brought these highly attractive girls out here ---

ANGLE ON the window of the shack. All the girls are squeezed up against it, looking out:

TIPTON (CONTINUING)

--- and you reciprocate by letting Jewel act up right in the middle of everything. It's awful.

LARKIN

I didn't let her act up.

TIPTON

Well, she did, she always does! It's embarrassing.

The girls have come outside:

ELLEN

Let's not worry about it. Let's just dump this choo choo graveyard and go to a spot.

TIPTON

(Still to Larkin)

I bust my ass trying to straighten you out, I don't know why I bother.

LARKIN

Stop bothering.

TIPTON

No. I bother because when you get to be our age it gets harder and harder to find, to make friends.

BOBO

That's true.

TIPTON

So if you have one you like for some reason, I say you better fight to keep him. So I will, Larkin, but don't take me to the limit on this thing.

CHRISTY

I'll lead us all to a place. A super scary place.

Tipton is amazed by them:

TIPTON

You're just wonderful girls.

LARKIN

I can't go.

ELLEN/CHRISTY/BOBO

(Crushed)

Ohhhhh ...!

TIPTON

Larkin, this could be the limit I was talking about.

Ellen walks her sexiest walk up to Larkin:

ELLEN

Well ... I'm not going to take sides, but ---

And she throws herself into his arms and kisses him, rubs her fingers through his hair and her foot up his leg. The others stand in awe.

When it's over, Larkin is dazed. Yes, he liked it, but:

LARKIN
 (And it hurts to say this:)
 I can't go.

Now Tipton is totally pissed at Larkin:

TIPTON
 She knew, Johnny. She knew Green was coming home from Norfolk. She knew that. But she didn't even tell you. Did she tell you?

LARKIN
 No.

TIPTON
 Did she mention it to you to warn you or prepare you?

LARKIN
 I said No, Tipton!

TIPTON
 You have to find out by spotting him, having him pointed out to you. It's, it's, uh ... intolerable.

LARKIN
 The problem is, she's the only girl I ever met, when I think about her I go into heat.

TIPTON
 You're an asshole.

Tipton starts to leave, but then as an afterthought:

TIPTON
 And an idiot --- cats go into heat.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD.

LATER.

A strange stillness. A couple of horses who haven't been put to bed yet are grazing silently. Suddenly one of them raises its head. Then the other one. They become jittery and trot around in a circle kicking up dirt.

The silence is being broken by a rumbling sound. Louder. Louder still. And now we

ANGLE ON two giant white lights coming at us from the sky and as we focus we see that it's a huge airplane on its final approach and now we

ANGLE ON the ground where lined up just a few yards from the end of the runway are Tipton and the three girls. They are screaming with excitement, fear, and fun, but their screams are swallowed up by the jet engines as the plane seems to pass overhead and miss them by inches ---

the four of them roll around grabbing each other like crazy people.

CUT TO:

EXT. JEWEL'S HOUSE. LATER.

We look in through a side window. Jewel's STEPFATHER is giving Jewel's mother hell over something, could be anything. Now at the edge of the window outside we see

Larkin. He's looking in as we do. He just shakes his head: this is the kind of life Jewel knows.

CUT TO:

INT. JEAN'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER.

First the kitchen and nobody's around. Larkin comes in through the backporch. Now we follow him into the

Living room. He throws himself down on the sofa, pulls a curtain back and looks out the large picture window into the night --- no Jewel.

Suddenly there's a voice that startles Larkin:

LAUREL

What's up?

Larkin almost falls off the couch:

LARKIN

Jesus, Laurel, you scared me to death.

Now a guy named WINSTON comes into the room. He pinches Laurel's cheek and she grabs his crotch, all in fun. Winston glances at Larkin and goes out the front door.

Laurel starts for the kitchen:

LARKIN
You shouldn't do things like that.

LAUREL
Knock it off.

LARKIN
No, have you ever heard the term
lady or not?

LAUREL
Yeah, I have. In fact your lady
taught me that little trick, so
don't preach to me.

LARKIN
What? Jewel would never grab
somebody like that --- and
certainly not in front of somebody
else.

LAUREL
Oh, brother ...

CUT TO:

EXT. BLUE DEVIL DRIVE-IN.

LATER.

At the back of the roughneck drive-in restaurant sets
Larkin's car. We see it from the rear. All the windows
are fogged up.

Green's pick-up truck is next to it. A few spaces away,
another car or two.

The neon picture of the blue devil flashes on Larkin's
red car.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAINTENANCE STATION.

NEXT MORNING.

Crows around the busted tracks, having marshmallows for
breakfast.

Jewel pulls up in Larkin's car, parks and gets out.

CUT TO:

INT. MAINTENANCE STATION.

SAME.

Larkin huddled in a chair, a blanket wrapped around him. The door opens, Jewel comes in. She tosses the car keys on the table, Larkin wakes up.

Jewel looks terrible. She points to one of the leftover Cokes:

JEWEL

Can I have one of these?

Larkin just shakes his head, so Jewel slams the can down on the table:

JEWEL

Okay, I won't have one!

LARKIN

I'm not shaking my head you can't have a Coke. I'm shaking my head I don't believe you. Or me with you.

He picks up his keys, tosses the blanket into a corner, starts out:

JEWEL

Don't leave me ...!

He turns to her:

LARKIN

This whole six months I've known you has been me going slowly down into a hole. And hitting the bottom was finding out you were married, Jewel. But I even try to work that out. Then you break up a night I'm having, you take my car, and I sit here all night long! Bullshit! I had fun here last night for the first time in a long time.

JEWEL

(Sarcastically)

No, you never have fun with me.

LARKIN

Not like last night. Last night was fun. It was loose. There was ... happiness in it. That group that was here, we were all on the same planet.

JEWEL

What am I, on Mars?

LARKIN

Yes. You're on fucking Mars. Those kids were refreshing. Fucking wasn't the only thing I wanted to do with them.

JEWEL

That's all you want to do with me.

LARKIN

It's all we do! There's nothing else to do. We can't talk. Or when's the last time we were together somebody had an idea? Never.

Really letting him have it --- this girl has fought and scratched and fought and yelled and played tough all her life:

JEWEL

I don't hear you no brilliant conversation!

LARKIN

Go ahead, argue with me! Argue with me, great.

JEWEL

I can't talk good to you! You get me all nervous inside with butterflies.

LARKIN

Well, you shouldn't have left me alone all night, Jewel. I realized what a good time I had had before you showed up to spoil everything.

JEWEL

Yeah, everywhere I go.

LARKIN
Whose fault is that?

JEWEL
I hate those girls who were here.

LARKIN
Of course you do.

JEWEL
Life is handed to them. Me,
everything's always been against
me.

LARKIN
Who wants to listen to that? I
want to listen to somebody who
wants to help herself, not somebody
who all she can do is twist your
guts out.

JEWEL
You don't know what it was like for
me growing up. Men always tried to
do things to me. I couldn't ever
be a person with anybody.

LARKIN
Ah ...!

Jewel is clinging to him now as he tries to get into his
car:

JEWEL
You don't even care what happened
to me last night. You're as cruel
and awful as everybody else I ever
met!

LARKIN
I'm not going to listen to
something from you that may or may
not be true!

JEWEL
You think I wouldn't have got back
here quick if I could?

LARKIN
I don't know. That's the thing, I
do not know.

He pushes her to the ground, gets in his car, slams the door. As he pulls out:

JEWEL

Go on back to that college girl
then, go on back to her.

LARKIN

Maybe I will!

JEWEL

She's more your type. She's more
right for you --- why don't you
just go on back to her right now?

He can't. It might have been fun with Ellen, but Jewel has her hooks into him like you can't believe. And he can't believe it, either. Larkin takes a pause, then:

LARKIN

I'm not going back to her.

JEWEL

Won't you even give me a chance to
explain what happened?

He won't. He burns out down the country road.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD.

LATER.

Larkin speeding, his head pounding and his thoughts a total blur.

Suddenly, Green's pickup truck is on his tail. Larkin recognizes the truck from the country store the night before. The road is winding and dangerous. The truck is practically on Larkin's bumper.

The truck starts to pass Larkin on the right, forcing Larkin into the oncoming lane. A car is coming right at him.

Larkin's got no place to go except off the road to the left, over a ravine, bam, bump, landing in a ditch.

He gets out of the car, shaken but okay. Silence. The pickup truck is gone, so is the oncoming car. Larkin looks at his car --- totaled.

So he walks around it, kicking it, just like he must have done to his motorcycle once upon a time in Kansas.

CUT TO:

INT. LARKIN'S BEDROOM AT HIS PARENTS. LATER:

Larkin is lying face up on his bed, staring at the ceiling. Tipton knocks and enters. They don't say anything for a moment or two. Tipton looks out the window. Then:

Say. TIPTON

Say. LARKIN

LARKIN
How was last night, the four of
you?

TIPTON
Good, it was fun. Loud ... but
fun.

Larkin lies still on the bed. These words resound in his head:

JEWEL (V.O.)
Won't you even give me a chance to
explain what happened?

CUT TO:

EXT. JEAN'S HOUSE.

LATER.

Tipton's car pulls up. Larkin gets out the passenger side:

TIPTON
You sure you don't want me to wait
for you?

LARKIN

No, don't wait. I'll get a ride.

TIPTON

Good luck ... whatever.

Larkin walks up to the house and goes in as Tipton speeds away.

CUT TO:

INT. JEAN'S.

SAME.

He hears men laughing in the kitchen, he looks in. Jean is making sandwiches for the guys. They don't even notice him. He goes down the basement stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT.

SAME.

Jewel is strung out, on the floor with her back propped up against the couch. She's got a glass of bourbon and a cigarette. She spots Larkin and her eyes get about this big.

LARKIN

Jesus Christ ...!

Jewel takes a last draw on the cigarette before Larkin grabs it and puts it out. He takes the glass of bourbon and throws it across the room. It shatters. From upstairs:

JEAN (O.S.)

Honey, you all right down there?

JEWEL

Fine!

LARKIN

No, I didn't know you smoked.

JEWEL

So what?

LARKIN

I just didn't know, that's all.

JEWEL

There's a lot you don't know.

LARKIN

Okay, what happened? Why couldn't you come back last night?

JEWEL

It doesn't matter.

LARKIN

Tell me what happened, Jewel.

JEWEL

I drove out and met Green at the back of the Blue Devil Drive-In Restaurant.

LARKIN

See, that you would even go to a hangout like the Blue Devil! It's just a hangout for thugs.

JEWEL

That's where he told me to meet him! I had to if I wanted him to go along with the annulment.

Larkin gives her his hand:

LARKIN

Let's get out of this basement, I hate this house.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERBANK.

MOMENTS LATER.

LARKIN

Why didn't you tell me you were going to meet him there, I wouldn't have let you go or I would have gone with you.

JEWEL

You didn't ask me.

Then:

JEWEL

I parked in the back where he was
with some other guys ...

And as she tells her story, we:

CUT TO:

EXT. BLUE DEVIL PARKING LOT.

NIGHT.

Jewel pulls up in Larkin's car:

JEWEL (V.O.)

And he come over to my car.

RETURN TO:

EXT. RIVERBANK.

DAY.

LARKIN

To my car! And he came over. He
didn't come over, he came over,
it's already happened, Jewel.

JEWEL

Don't correct my English!

LARKIN

Did he ask you where you got the
car?

JEWEL

He knew it was somebody else's car.

LARKIN

Yeah, he sure did.

JEWEL

What?

LARKIN

Then what?

CUT TO:

EXT. BLUE DEVIL PARKING LOT.

NIGHT.

JEWEL (V.O.)

He wanted me to get in the backseat
with him. I said No and I tried to

JEWEL (V.O./CON'T)

start the car and leave but the car
wouldn't start --- it wouldn't
start up, I swear it..

LARKIN

Okay, I'll buy that, go on ...

JEWEL

So he made me get in the backseat
with him. He said just to talk. I
give him the papers this lawyer
give me for him to sign it. But he
wouldn't sign it. And by then a
bunch of these other guys had
started gathering around and some
of them got in with us.

(MOVING SHOT, slowly around the car. The windows are
completely fogged, we can't see in, so whatever goes on
in the car is as ominous as our imagination wants it to
be. And we never go inside the car. Instead we see some
men get in the frontseat, some in the back, all drinking
and laughing:)

JEWEL (V.O.)

One of them was Green's old man, he
was there. He's even more awful
than my stepfather ever was. I was
so a-scared I coulda died.

(DOLLY SHOT continues slowly around the car:)

JEWEL (V.O.)

They all started grabbing me and
touching me. Or tryin to, cause I
was strugglin. Then Green made
them stop and I thought he was
gonns protect me, but I shoulda
known better.

(The men pile out of the car, Green collects money:)

JEWEL

He told them he would show me off
for money from them.

(The men get back in the car, two at a time:)

JEWEL

So they started paying him. And one would hold me and he would pull up my shirt and bra and show me off to one or two of them. Then some would get out of the car and others would get in and the same thing. And the windows were all fogged up and I was getting dizzy and shaken and bruised and I couldn't even struggle anymore or think straight. Then I know people paid more money and Green pulled my pants down and my underwear down and every one of them was laughing and slappin each other around and crawling over each other to get a better view of me and drinkin beer and passin liquor around and Green with his whole fist full of money. I was in shock, I swear I was.

RETURN TO:

EXT. RIVERBANK.

DAY.

LARKIN

Are you telling me you were raped in the back of my car?

JEWEL

I don't know!

LARKIN

Of course you know!

JEWEL

I was in shock, I said! I said it was awful and I'm only clear about it as much as I've told you!

LARKIN

How long did this go on?

JEWEL

It seemed like a long time.

LARKIN

You were assaulted. We got to get the cops.

JEWEL

No! Just, no! I want to be done with it and forget about it. I went through it and it's over. I passed out, I must have passed out. I woke up this morning in the backseat with my clothes every-which-a-way. I straightened myself up and come right here.

LARKIN

Did you recognize any of the others besides Green and his old man?

JEWEL

One. That friend of Tipton's was one of them.

LARKIN

Who?

JEWEL

Sproles. That guy Sproles. He paid his money to see me. I swear it.

Larkin is blown away and it takes a few moments to recover. Then:

LARKIN

Is everybody going to have a different story, Jewel? Is everybody going to have a different tale to tell.

Jewel just shrugs:

LARKIN

Will you let me take you to the doctor?

JEWEL

No! Just shut up about it!

And she runs away through the weeds, into the woods. She's crying, but trying her best not to:

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE DORM.

LATER.

Larkin going in.

CUT TO:

INT. COLLEGE DORM.

SAME.

Larkin walks down the hall, stops at a door, knocks and enters at the same time.

This is Sproles' room. Sproles is there and terrified. No place to run to, no place to hide:

SPROLES

No, no, no, you don't understand. I was there, but I just happened to be there. I wasn't, I didn't, I had nothing to, I was a bystander!

LARKIN

This Green, you know where he lives?

SPROLES

Way out on Dagger Hill Road.

LARKIN

Come on, you're taking me.

SPROLES

Sorry, I got a class.

Larkin grabs him, throws him out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. SPROLES CAR.

MOMENTS LATER.

Out in the country, up in the hills.

LARKIN

All right ... go ahead.

SPROLES

Jewel parked in the back of the drive-in, see? And Green, he's back there with a bunch of guys, shooting craps in the back of his truck. He has a fist full of money. He comes over and gets in

SPROLES (Con't)

the car with Jewel and starts trying to fool around with her. Hell, she's his wife. But she hates him, so she fights him off. And as she's fighting and kicking, the other guys run over, try to look in the windows, some of them even get in to help her. She's in shock. She perceives she's being exhibited. The money Green has in his hand, she perceives it's payment to look at her. So she's fighting like a featherweight.

LARKIN

How did you just happen to be at the Blue Devil, Sproles?

SPROLES

I was there with my brother. He's an undercover cop, for Christ's sake. He went out back to see what was going on and sent the guys on their way. If Jewel were being gang-banged back there, Larkin, or mistreated by those hoods, he would have arrested the whole bunch. Now I'm telling you the truth. You can ask my brother.

Larkin just looks straight ahead.

SPROLES

Jewel wasn't lying to you, no, I don't think so --- she was spooked, she got panicky, she, what-do-ya-call-it, misinterpreted what was going on. So why are we going to see Green?

LARKIN

I've got to face him.

SPROLES

No you don't.

LARKIN

Anything else is bullshit.

CUT TO: 2

EXT. GREEN'S HOUSE.

LATER.

A small shack on a hill with nothing else around it. Sproles and Larkin pull up:

SPROLES

My brother's going to get the guy, eventually, Johnny, for all kinds of stuff. Why don't you just leave him to my brother?

Sproles refers to the house:

SPROLES

I don't have to go in there, do I? I mean, there's nothing I can, I mean, is there?

LARKIN

Take off, Sproles.

Larkin hops out. Sproles guns it and disappears.

CLOSE ON GREEN'S HOUSE

as Larkin comes up on the rickety porch and knocks. No cars around, no truck.

FOLLOW Larkin around the house. He tries to look in a window or two, but dark curtains are drawn across all of them.

At the back, Larkin knocks, then tries the door. It's locked. Curiosity gets the best of him. He pulls out his pocketknife, jimmies the door, opens it, goes in.

CUT TO:

INT. GREEN'S HOUSE.

SAME.

But not much light gets in, so it's dark and dingy. We look around as Larkin does and the place looks like a warehouse for an Army-Navy store. Tons of military clothes, boots, shoes, guns, grenades, ammo, K-rations, everything but tanks and PT boats. Green must have quite a business going with what he steals.

We FOLLOW Larkin through the small rooms --- every room is the same: packed to the ceiling.

BT TC

FOLLOWING LARKIN through the house:

In a bedroom on a stand beside the bed are several pictures of Jewel in various stages of undress. She isn't smiling.

And now Larkin hears a noise. It's the front door. Holy Shit.

Larkin hides behind an enormous stack of sailor dress-blues. Footsteps through the house. A figure walks by the door, through the narrow hallway. He doesn't see who it is.

Larkin sneaks to the door. All he wants is out. Silence.

Larkin tiptoes through to the kitchen, very quietly. It looks like he's going to make it. He opens the backdoor: Green is standing there:

GREEN

Son, you broke into my house.

LARKIN

You totaled my car, let's call it even.

Green blows out a deep breath:

GREEN

Always there's some little gnst in your face. You just got to catch him 'tween your hands and ---!

Green slaps his hands together. He pushes Larkin's chest, pushes him out of the way. Green comes inside with Larkin.

Larkin refers to the merchandise all around them:

LARKIN

Business good?

GREEN

Working myself to death.

As long as Larkin's been caught in here, he might as well make the best of it. He turns a kitchen chair around and sits in it:

LARKIN
She's through with you.

GREEN
Is that right?

LARKIN
Get out of her life. Give her a
chance, for God's Sake. The girl's
never even had a chance.

ANGLE - HALLWAY

Jewel is there. She was the one who came in before
Larkin. She leans up against the wall and listens.

ANGLE - LARKIN AND GREEN

There's a box of loose ammo on the kitchen counter.
Green picks up a handful and plays with it.

GREEN
You're gonna be the Prince, is that
it? You're gonna carry her off on
a big white horse?

LARKIN
No.

ANGLE - JEWEL

Still silent in the hallway. Scared. Listening.

ANGLE - LARKIN AND GREEN

LARKIN
I'm nobody's Prince. I got to make
some kind of a life for myself
first. I've got too much to learn.

GREEN
Why, son, she's expecting you to
give her everything. Haven't you
led her to believe you would?

LARKIN
That can't be.

ANGLE - JEWEL

In the hallway. She can't hold back the tears. If she had a thread of hope left for the relationship with Larkin, it's just been severed.

GREEN

I get it. You've had your fill of her --- lot of people have --- so you're bailing out.

LARKIN

I'm not bailing out, I'm just ---

GREEN

(Interrupting)

Yeah you are. You're bailing out. Wouldn't you sleep better at night knowing she had been released.

LARKIN

I'd sleep better knowing she never had to see your face again, yeah.

GREEN

But you're too good for her, is that it? I'm not good enough and you're too good.

LARKIN

Shut up.

Larkin stands up:

LARKIN

Stupid to think I might be able to talk to, or reason with, you.

Green pushes Larkin back into the chair:

GREEN

Sit down. I got to decide what to do with you.

ANGLE - JEWEL

She steps into the room. She has her hands behind her back:

JEWEL

Green ...?

ANOTHER ANGLE

GREEN

Hello, honey.

JEWEL

(To Larkin)

Get out of here. Go away.

LARKIN

I'm not leaving you here with him.
You're coming with me.

Jewel shows her hands. She has a grenade with the pin still in it.

JEWEL

Don't worry about me.

GREEN

Put that thing down, you crazy
bitch.

Larkin starts toward her:

JEWEL

Stay away from me!

He doesn't stop. She pulls the pin but holds down the safety lever. Now all three of them are scared:

GREEN

Hold that safety lever down! Hold
it tight!

Green backs away, but Larkin keeps coming:

LARKIN

Give it to me. Give it to me!

Tears running down her face, she hands it to him. Very carefully.

Larkin goes to the kitchen door, kicks it open, almost off its hinges. The screendoor opens with it:

CUT TO:

EXT. GREEN'S HOUSE.

SAME.

Larkin steps out with the grenade. He looks around. He swallows hard.

He blows out a deep breath and throws the grenade as far as he can into an open field.

He runs back to the screen door and opens it. The grenade explodes, loud but harmless.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN.

SAME.

Larkin comes back inside.

ANGLE - GREEN

His hands trembling, he pours himself a stiff shot of bourbon.

ANOTHER ANGLE

JEWEL

(To Larkin)

Don't ever see me again. I don't ever want to see you!

LARKIN

Jewel, ---

JEWEL

No! Now go away!

Then, to Green:

JEWEL

And you let him go! Don't you dare try to stop him!

She pulls a few papers out of her pocket and throws them at Green. She beats at his chest until he grabs her wrists. She's out of her mind with disappointment, fear, frustration, and the pain of a life that's been screwed up since the day she was born. She can't take any more:

JEWEL

Sign the papers! But if you don't sign them, that's okay, you're dead to me anyway! You're dead to me!

Larkin steps in and separates them. He picks Jewel up in his arms. She's clawing and scratching like crazy. He goes to the kitchen door and kicks it open again.

Green gulps his whiskey and pours another.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREEN'S HOUSE.

SAME.

Jewel, still in Larkin's arms and still hysterical:

JEWEL

Let me go! I've lost any chance
of having you, let me just leave!
You don't want me, I'm used, I'm
worn-out! I'm bad goods. Ya can't
trust me. I'll get your money back
to you somehow. I don't know how,
but if it takes ten years, I'll do
it.

He sets her down and tries to hold her tight, but she
breaks away and pushes him off:

JEWEL

(Quiet hysteria)

You think I'm a dope, but deep down
I've always been smart enough to
know this wouldn't last. Oh, I
wanted it to, sure, I wanted it to,
but I knew it wouldn't. You only
got one thing with me, just one
thing, just sex with me, that's
all.

LARKIN

Jewel, what you heard me say back
there was ---

JEWEL

(Interrupting)

True! It was the truth!

They're both frozen for a moment. We see her eyes and
then his eyes and both sets go deep as they stare at each
other with love and fear and pain and knowledge that this
could never in a million years work out.

ANGLE - UNMARKED POLICE CAR

It pulls up in front of the house. Another one comes
from the opposite direction.

LARKIN

Has anyone ever designed a roller coaster with a gap in the tracks ... and the cars fly through the air at some point only to land again on the tracks?

TIPTON

You mean, like a skier might fly into the ---

LARKIN

Yes.

TIPTON

Except a roller coaster.

LARKIN

Right.

TIPTON

I like it, Larkin. I like it very much.

Suddenly Tipton makes a U-turn in the middle of the road. He slings Larkin against his door so hard, Larkin almost falls out the car window.

EXT. TIPTON'S CAR.

DAY.

The car pulls into a shopping center parking spot:

LARKIN

What did you see? What happened?

TIPTON

I'll be back.

INT. BATHROOM FIXTURES STORE.

DAY.

Sinks, bathtubs, toilets on display. Tipton walks up behind a young woman customer:

TIPTON

Say.

Maureen turns around. She is very pregnant. Huge. Must be triplets. Tipton is intimidated by it immediately:

MAUREEN
Tipton!

TIPTON
Of course.

LONG SHOT of Maureen and Tipton talking. She's laughing, he's trying to smile.

CUT TO:

INT. TIPTON'S CAR.

DAY.

Larkin studies as he waits. Now Tipton opens his door, climbs in, starts the car as:

LARKIN
Who did you spot?

TIPTON
Nobody. Wrong girl.

CUT TO:

INT. MATH CLASS.

DAY.

The blackboard is loaded with problems and equations.

ANGLE - LARKIN

at his desk. He's talking to the INSTRUCTOR and the rest of the class, answering a conceptual question:

LARKIN
So ... too often we, as students, get suckered into thinking that information is, uh, or means ... smart. Somebody yaks all day about Roman counter-reformation art, doesn't make that person smart. Caravaggio used light with different intensities, so what, I'm smart now? No. An intelligent person puts ideas together, thinks a problem through to solutions or conclusions. That, in its purest form, is mathematics. You start with one-plus-one is two and eventually you understand the

LARKIN (Con't)
slope-tangent relationship to the
change of the curve direction.

ANGLE - INSTRUCTOR

He takes a slight pause. He's impressed with Larkin's
observation and eloquence:

INSTRUCTOR
Good, Mr. Larkin. Very good.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOPPING CENTER PARKING LOT. SEPT. EVENING.

LARKIN walks away from the Mall. He has a small package.
Near where his car is parked, a sprinkler system waters
the freshly cut grass that separates the parking lot from
the street.

As Larkin almost gets to his car he bumps into:

ANGLE - LAUREL

She's got several bags of purchases in her arms.

uh Johnny, this is... LARKIN
Hello, Laurel.

She's surprised and a little nervous:

LAUREL
Hi, Johnny. How are you?

LARKIN
Good. I'm good. How's, uh ...
how's your mother?

LAUREL
Fine. She sold the house, we moved
into an apartment.

LARKIN
The party's over?

LAUREL
After that fight, everything
changed.

Her arms are full. She shifts her shopping bags:

LARKIN

Can I help you with that?

LAUREL

No, it's fine, I have to ---

But at that moment, Jewel who had been following Laurel out of the shopping center, appears between two cars. She's carrying a couple of textbooks. And she's not alone. With her is

ANGLE - STEPHEN

A young man of eighteen, a high school student. He's not bad looking. He's wide-eyed and innocent, kind and sincere. He's holding Jewel's hand.

JEWEL

(To Larkin)

Hello.

LARKIN

Hi.

This is awkward and painful and embarrassing:

JEWEL

Uh ... Johnny, this is Stephen.

Stephen extends his hand, looks Larkin in the eye, and flashes a warm, open smile:

STEPHEN

It's a pleasure.

Larkin shakes his hand:

LARKIN

(Quietly)

Same here.

Laurel to the rescue:

LAUREL

Stephen, will you help me get these things to the car?

STEPHEN

Sure!

He takes the bags from Laurel. She takes his arm and starts escorting him to their car which is a few cars away. Stephen stops, turns back to Larkin:

STEPHEN

Nice meeting you!

Laurel and Stephen disappear between the cars. Larkin and Jewel don't know what to say. Finally:

LARKIN

It's September again, did you notice that?

JEWEL

Yes. Is this your car?

Larkin nods.

JEWEL

It's new.

LARKIN

Not exactly new. Just different.

JEWEL

What have you bought?

LARKIN

Software. Everybody designs on computers today, it's amazing.

JEWEL

Sure.

Pause. Then:

LARKIN

Stephen seems like a, you know, a good guy.

JEWEL

He is. He's awfully nice. He's in my English class.

LARKIN

That makes me ... I don't know, that makes me feel good. I was hoping you would go back to, uh ...

JEWEL

I did. I'm in Laurel's school.

Now it's almost too painful to bear. Then:

LARKIN

Jewel ... if there were some way
... or if we could have ---

But she puts her fingers up to his lips and shakes her head --- he doesn't have to explain, apologize, or give any excuses.

JEWEL

I have to go.

Larkin nods. She smiles, turns, walks away, turns through the cars and is gone. Larkin stands there, still, silent.

Jewel reappears. She hurries over to him, kisses his cheek. They squeeze each other's hand.

JEWEL

Thank you.

And Jewel is gone.

ANGLE - LARKIN'S CAR

The evening sun catches the spray from the sprinkler system and the waterdrops sparkle like diamonds. You can almost smell the freshly cut grass.

Larkin dodges the spray from the sprinkler. He tosses his package in the car, gets in, and drives away into the evening ...

THE END.

The New York Times

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1986

Stage: Larry Ketron's 'Fresh Horses'

By FRANK RICH

in "Fresh Horses," the new Larry Ketron comedy at the WPA, is the panting of sweaty young lovers having sex. Although it's not heard again that deaccelerating panting become the music — by turns boisterous, sweet and somber — that permeates Mr. Ketron's play. The tale of most college-age kids in rural Tennessee, "Fresh Horses" captures its youthful characters at that precise moment when their adolescent fantasies begin to fade into the morning-after realities of adulthood. Mr. Ketron's writing has so much heat — the boil of idiosyncratic language and observation as well as teen-age sexuality — that his people continue to horse around in our imagination well after his play's drama has been spent.

The Cast

FRESH HORSES, by Larry Ketron, directed by Dann Florek, setting by Paul Menet, costumes by Don Hepworth, sounds by Aural Flankton, production stage manager, WPA, Kyle Beach, artistic director, Wendy Gustard, managing director, 41319 West 124 Street.

Jewel Suzy Amis
Larkin Craig Sheffer
Tipton Mark Benninghofen
Spreen John Bowman
Christy Alice Haining
Ellen Haviland Morris
Babe Marissa Chibas

a lubricious high-school dropout of indeterminate age and marital status. She is both the victim and exploiter of what her boyfriend calls the "pervasive dumbness" that follows her around "like a dog."

The couple bicker at an abandoned railroad maintenance station, which is vividly designed by Edward T. Gianfrancesco, reeks of rural decay down to the crushed beer cans thrown on the neighboring, rusting tracks. Larkin has taken to living in his hermit's retreat while debating whether Jewel is his partner in his trashy imagined future or merely a dark temptress leading him into the dark pit of self-destruction. Jewel, too, must decide whether or not to glow up. Forever brooding about her lecherous stepfather and other goblins of her harsh childhood, she refuses to take responsibility for any of her behavior, not all of which can be conveniently blamed on the men of her troubled past.

While we wait for the resolution of the couple's future, there are plenty of screwball tales, digressions and secondary characters to keep "Fresh Horses" perking. Mr. Ketron has given his hero two memorably odd friends: the good-natured Tipton (Mark Benninghofen), who delivers a fond reminiscence of a date spent cleaning a fanatically hygienic girl's bedroom, and the self-important Sproles (John Bowman), a "fifth-

year senior" whose perspective on life was formed by childhood Sunday afternoons spent savoring both abjectly rich and poor neighborhoods with his middle-class family. In Act II, the boys are joined by a trio of equally eccentric party girls who revert to infantile marshmallow fights when they're not ruminating about sex and class.

Mr. Ketron's own preoccupation with his characters' social status can be found throughout; some of his play's anecdotes are recounted from conflicting points of view that reflect the speakers' differences of gender or economic circumstances. The playwright also probes the cultural deprivation of a provincial generation that, as one girl explains, refuses to listen to "anyone" or "anything," with the exception of rock songs. So sophisticated is Mr. Ketron's writing, if not his dramaturgy, that the lapses pointed among them, the forced introduction of the titular metaphor involving Pony existential excitement of young Pony Express horsemen.

Even the weaker passages are well served by another of the WPA's exceptionally fresh young casts. Among the good supporting players, the standout is Haviland Morris as a nouveau-riche deb whose naive description of her father's Horatio Alger business career proves a hilarious business career proves a hilarious Mark Twain-style debunking (but at least interesting) role of the socialist mythology. In the largest of his searching Larkin, Mr. Sheffer is appealing, but, through no fault of his own, little match for Miss Amis's Jewel in her mesmerizing New York debut: this actress creates a broken Southern baby doll who is alternately erotic and icy, pitiable and frightening.

The director is Dann Florek, long a sensitive Ketron collaborator. Among other felicitous touches, he opens Act II with a sensuous, moonlit tableau of the college girls letting down their hair — an image that, like Mr. Ketron's play, finds the frisky poetry in the last gasp of youth.

adapted last season), but the twang of the modern border states, where new money has eroded Dixie tradition and landscape alike.

The lovers of the opening scene haven't yet found their way to the region's promise of prosperity. Larkin (Craig Sheffer), 21, has temporarily left college to pursue not only romance but also a career as an inventor of toys and games. He believes that the "creative" projects will save him from his father's fate as a factory laborer. Jewel (Suzy Amis) is

Copyright © 1986 by the New York Times Co. Reprinted by Permission

Dick Berg Stonehenge Productions is proud to announce that it has acquired Motion Picture rights to

Fresh Horses