I ♡ HUCKABEE'S

by

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1 OMITTED 1

1A EXT. ROUTE 4 - DAY 1A

ALBERT MARKOVSKI, 21, SWEATY, HARRIED, wearing a dark suit, pin striped shirt, rides his bicycle through a TRAFFIC JAM. He looks troubled. A car almost hits him, screeches to a stop.

2 EXT. SUBURBAN OFFICE BUILDING - DAY 2

He jumps off the bicycle in a hurry, locks it in front of a modern office building, tries to enter the building, which has construction in the front. FRUSTRATED he runs from one blocked entry way to another, finally finding his way in.

3 INT. LOBBY OF OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS 3

He rushes into the lobby, glances at a business card in his hand, scans the building directory of dentists, accountants, JAFFE & JAFFE SUITE 909. Sweating profusely he darts into an elevator.

4 INT. NINTH FLOOR HALL - CONTINUOUS 4

Albert walks fast down the corridor, past office doors, around corner after corner in a labyrinthine series of hallways. Albert looks frustrated and distraught. He finally comes to 909, and enters. MUSIC AND CREDITS END.

5 INT. RECEPTION AREA - ORDINARY INFINITY - CONTINUOUS 5

He bursts into the reception area and up to the receptionist, BOBBY, a man of 30, with long hair, in a three piece suit.

ALBERT
Markovski, 1:00, sorry I'm late.

BOBBY (SMILING)
Have a seat, we'll be right with you.

Albert stands next to a WOMAN WITH A NINE YEAR OLD BOY, TWO MEN holding hands. ALBERT DOES A DOUBLE TAKE ON AN AFRICAN MAN. Albert looks freaked. Time passes. * *

VIVIAN (OS) *
Why don't you sit down. Talk to me. * *

6 INT. VIVIAN'S OFFICE - DAY 6

A spare modern office with a large orange and blue color field painting.

6 6

Albert paces across from VIVIAN JAFFE, an attractive, dark-haired, European-looking woman, 55, dressed in a St. Laurent suit with her feet up on her desk, her hands clasped behind her head. She watches Albert as he PACES, distraught, leans his head to the wall, upset.

VIVIAN
Why don't you just tell me what your situation is?

ALBERT
I don't even understand what you do.

VIVIAN (SIGHS)
We'll investigate and solve your case.

ALBERT
How?

VIVIAN
If you sign a contract, we'll follow you.

ALBERT
You'll spy.

VIVIAN
Yeah.

ALBERT
On me.

VIVIAN
Yeah.

ALBERT *
When I'm going to the bathroom? *

VIVIAN *
Yeah. *

ALBERT *
Why? *

VIVIAN *
No thing can ever be too small. You * know how the police can find the * tiniest piece of DNA and build a * case, we might see the way you * floss, or masturbate and it could * be the key to your entire reality. * [example] *

6

ALBERT
So I'm hiring you to spy on me.

VIVIAN
That's right, so we can figure out your case and resolve your crisis. In addition, my associate will approach your case from a different angle.

ALBERT
What angle?

VIVIAN
Regarding your perception of reality. He'll talk to you about that.

He stares at her.

VIVIAN
Who sent you here?

ALBERT
Nobody. I found one of your cards.

VIVIAN
Where?

ALBERT
It was at a fancy restaurant I'd never been to.

7 OMITTED 7

7A OMITTED 7A

7B FLASHBACK - INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - DAY 7B

MAITRE D
Which party, Sir?

ALBERT
Mr. Stand.

MAITRE D
Yes, he's already here, do you have a jacket, sir?

ALBERT
Actually, I don't.

The maître D helps Albert put on the loaner jacket.

7B 7B

BRAD'S VOICE (OS)
A perfect fit.

Albert shakes hands with Brad, who is OS next to camera.

ALBERT (SHAKING BRAD'S HAND)
Good to meet you.

BRAD'S VOICE (OS)
After all those phone calls.

As Albert follows Brad (OS) into the restaurant, he takes his hand out of the jacket's pocket, holding a BUSINESS CARD. CLOSE UP on card as he reads it: "JAFFE & JAFFE, ORDINARY INFINITY, CRISIS INVESTIGATION & RESOLUTION."

7C BACK TO VIVIAN'S OFFICE 7C

ALBERT
The weird thing is I always wear a jacket.

VIVIAN (WRITING)
But not that day.

ALBERT
No.

VIVIAN
Kind of a coincidence.

ALBERT
My case is a coincidence.

VIVIAN
With the restaurant and the jacket?

ALBERT
No, no, no. I didn't even think I needed help then. It was a different coincidence after that that shook me up, I know it's meaningful.

VIVIAN (SITS)
Meaningful how?

ALBERT
That's what I want you to find out.

VIVIAN
Let's hear it.

7C 7C

ALBERT
Here's the coincidence, it's got three parts.

Vivian listens.

ALBERT
The first time, I was at Schottinger's Photo Archive, it was my first time there. I wanted an early Bob Dylan photo, just cuz I like him --

7D MOS FLASHBACK: ALBERT WATCHES THE AFRICAN MAN FLIP THROUGH PHOTOS AT SCHOTTINGERS. THEY SPEAK TO EACH OTHER AS PROPRIETOR BIK SCHOTTINGER SITS IN THE BACKGROUND. 7D

ALBERT (V.O.)
--and this tall African man, about 18 years old, is there buying photos of Bill Cosby, he's one of those autograph guys who gets glossies of famous people then gets the autograph --

7E BACK TO 7E

ALBERT (PACING)
I never met one of them, kind of crazy, and I don't think anything of it. But a few days later, he turns out to be the doorman in my friend's building. Which freaked me out.

7F MOS FLASHBACK: THE AFRICAN MAN IS DRESSED IN A DOORMAN'S UNIFORM AT A RESIDENTIAL BUILDING. ALBERT STARES AT HIM. END FLASHBACK. 7F

8 8

VIVIAN (WRITING)
Who's the friend?

ALBERT
Jay Wendorff, but it's his girlfriend's apartment.

VIVIAN (WRITING)
What's her name?

ALBERT
Kelly Coulter. So that's two parts, first at Schottinger's, then the doorman- Now, third time, I see him in a car at the mall. *

7F 7F

VIVIAN
What were you doing there?

ALBERT
Working.

8A PAN TO NEW SQUARE OF DIRT THE SIZE OF A TREE SPOT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TRAFFIC LANE, PAN BACK TO AL AND HIS TREE AS AN MINI-VAN SCREECHES TO A STOP IN FRONT OF THE TREE, TRIGGERING A CHAIN REACTION OF OTHER CARS SCREECHING AND REAR-ENDING. 8A

ALBERT
OH MY GOD!

SECURITY GUARD
You don't plant no tree in no traffic lane.

Albert stares at the AFRICAN MAN in the rear of the mini-van who stares back at Albert. Another Security Guard grabs Albert and pulls him away.

8 BACK TO VIVIAN'S OFFICE 8

They sit in silence for a moment. She swivels in her chair to a row of large notebooks hand labeled : DEATH, CONFUSIONS, CONFLICTS, WARS, MOTHERS, FATHERS, COINCIDENCES, LOVE, GALAXIES. She pulls COINCIDENCES.

VIVIAN
They're not always meaningful.

ALBERT
Mine is meaningful.

VIVIAN
About your life.

ALBERT
Plus I think the whole thing you know, the universe. *

VIVIAN (SIGHS)
Mr. Markovski, we see a lot of people in here who claim they want to know the ultimate truth about reality, they want to peer under the surface at the big everything, but that can be a painful, vulnerable process full of surprises. It can dismantle the world as you know it. For this reason, many people prefer to stay on the surface of things. * *
(MORE)

8 8

VIVIAN (SIGHS) (cont'd)
Maybe you should go home, let sleeping dogs lie, take it easy, what do you say?

ALBERT
Don't give me the brush off. Please.

VIVIAN (SCRUTINIZING HIM)
Have you ever transcended space and time?

ALBERT
Yes... No... I don't know what you're talking about.

VIVIAN
I take it you don't make much money, Mr. Markovski?

ALBERT
Ahhh, no.

VIVIAN (WRITING)
Mmmm. We have a sliding scale, some of our clients pay thirty dollars a week, and we have wealthy clients who pay several thousand a week.

ALBERT
I can't believe you even exist. How long have you been doing this?

VIVIAN
17 years, 342 cases.

ALBERT
I have to ask you to steer clear of my office because my job situation's a little shaky.

VIVIAN
You want us to stay away from your job?

ALBERT
I'm very excited to work with you, I know there is something I need to find out, it's big, it's scary, I wanna find out, but one thing I gotta ask is to stay away from work. People will think I'm unstable, it could hurt me.

8 (2) 8

VIVIAN (STARES AT HIM)
We'll try to be careful, but I can't make any promises. Shall we begin? *

ALBERT
Thank you, I mean it. I really need your help here.

VIVIAN
Come on - meet my colleague.

She stands, opens the door the to next office, Al follows.

9 INT. BERNARD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 9

BERNARD JAFFE, 60, intellectual, disheveled, but elegant in a 1980 St. Laurent suit sits at his desk working.

VIVIAN
Bernard, this is Mr. Markovski, he's gonna have to be pro bono. *

Bernard stands, shakes Albert's hand, wheels out a table with a BODY SIZED BLACK GORTEX COCOON ON IT.

VIVIAN
Hold on, he hasn't signed a contract.

BERNARD
Let me do this. Then we'll get to the contract --

VIVIAN
No, it's too much too soon --

BERNARD
It's always too much too soon, that's the nature of the beast --

VIVIAN
Approach, patience, finesse --

BERNARD
Will you stop?

VIVIAN
We need to begin with his specifics.

BERNARD
But we need to go past logic.

VIVIAN
OK. Are we still going for Korean Barbecue?

9 9

BERNARD (LOOKS AT HIS WATCH)
Yes we are.

She smooches him quickly, it turns into a longer kiss, some caressing while Albert watches. Then Vivian withdraws. *

Albert and Bernard are alone. BERNARD PULLS OUT A LARGE BEIGE BLANKET, OPENS IT.

BERNARD
Let's get started.

ALBERT
Is this part of the investigation?

BERNARD (HOLDS BLANKET OPEN)
Yes. Let's say that this represents all the matter and energy in the universe, OK?

ALBERT
OK.

BERNARD
All the particles, everything.

ALBERT
What's outside the blanket?

BERNARD
Don't worry about it. More blankets, OK?

ALBERT
OK.

BERNARD
Just say this is everything. And here --

HE HOLDS HIS HAND UNDER THE BLANKET, MAKING A LITTLE PUPPET.

BERNARD
This is me, see? I'm sixty something years old, I'm wearing a suit, blah blah. And over here, this is you, you're, I don't know, twenty-one, dark hair, etcetera --

He makes another hand puppet from under the blanket.

BERNARD (MAKING MANY BLANKET PUPPETS)
And over here, this is Vivian. And here, this is Paris, and this is a war, and this is a museum, and this is a disease, and this is an orgasm, and this is a hamburger -- get it?

ALBERT
Everything's the same thing, even if it's different.

BERNARD
Exactly! But our every day mind forgets this! We think everything is separate, limited, which is TRUE...but not the whole truth.

ALBERT
OK.

BERNARD
Good. So, we need to learn how to see the blanket truth ALL the time, right in the everyday stuff, and that's what this is for.

He dramatically, loudly, UNZIPS the GORTEX COCOON for Albert.

ALBERT
Why?

BERNARD
Why what?

ALBERT
Why do we need to learn how to see the unity-blanket thing all the time?

BERNARD
Well. You wouldn't want to miss out on the big picture, would you?

ALBERT
No.

BERNARD
Also, it helps.

ALBERT
How?

11 11

The head of DARLENE, a plain secretary, joins Brad's head.

DARLENE'S HEAD
We will destroy you.

The head of the African refugee appears, with a Cosby glossy.

MR. NIMIERI'S HEAD (WITH ACCENT) *
I got Bill Cosby!

A 70s bathing suit still of Jessica Lange, with a CRUEL EXPRESSION on her face, crudely animated.

CRUEL JESSICA LANGE STILL
No. No. No. No. No. No.

She MORPHS into DAWN CAMPBELL, a young Barbie blond, removing her clothes.

DAWN
Stop looking at me, what's wrong with you? Stop looking at me...

ANGELA FRANCO, 60, City Councilwoman, appears.

ANGELA'S HEAD
BEAT IT, you little pussy.

12 BERNARD UNZIPS THE SUIT, ALBERT SITS UP, FLUSTERED. 12

ALBERT (SHAKING, SWEATING)
Whoa. You said it would relax me.

BERNARD (PATTING ALBERT ON THE BACK)
Eventually. Practice at home.

ALBERT
I don't have one of these.

BERNARD
Try it wherever you are. Use an eye mask, or just close your eyes.

13 INT. ALBERT'S BATHROOM - THE NEXT DAY 13

Albert brushes his teeth, unaware that Vivian peers through the window from the fire escape, writing notes in a small pad.

14 INT. ALBERT'S SMALL LIVING ROOM/DINING ROOM - A BIT LATER 14

Albert sits eating a bowl of cereal and for the first time NOTICES VIVIAN spying from the fire escape.

14 14

ALBERT (THROUGH THE WINDOW GLASS)
What should I be doing?

VIVIAN (THROUGH THE WINDOW GLASS)
Whatever you normally do.

Albert resumes eating, a bit self-consciously. He glances up at VIVIAN who nods and motions for Albert to continue.

15 EXT. ALBERT'S BUILDING - SUBURB - DAY 15

Albert exits his small apartment building with his bike. VIVIAN follows on her bike making occasional efforts to hide.

16 EXT. ROUTE 4 - DAY 16

Albert rides his bike along Route 4, a lone pedestrian next to rushing cars. Vivian follows twenty feet behind.

17 EXT. LARGE MALL - DAY 17

Albert rides up to the parking lot, with Vivian riding twenty feet behind. He stops. He removes some papers from his * jacket. Shoppers pass him: CONSTRUCTION WORKERS STOP AND * LISTEN. Their hard hats say Dexicorp.

ALBERT (READS)
This is by Robinson Jeffers in 1954: "The extraordinary patience of things! This beautiful place defaced with a crop of suburban houses - How beautiful when we first beheld it, Unbroken field of poppy and lupin."

He shuffles his papers.

ALBERT
This is one of my own. (reads) "Burger King sat on top of the sky today. A fugitive rock tried to speak, but the asphalt like a traumatized child said nothing and the rock died."

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1
Why don't you want the new mall?

ALBERT
Seems like we have a bunch of malls already.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 1
What's wrong with construction?

17 17

ALBERT
Ever been in a quiet meadow at dusk?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 2
Ever been out of work, you little prick?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 3
He's a good kid, Tony, he wants us to work but rebuilding schools or hospitals or poor areas instead of always knocking down trees.

ALBERT
Yeah, exactly. If you think the air quality is bad now, wait until the people in China and India get hot water and cars in ten years.

Construction worker 2 throw his sandwich at Albert.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 3
Come on, that's not right.

They walk off.

18 EXT. ROUTE 4 - LATER 18

Albert walks his bike along the heavily trafficked road, tailed by Vivian as cars zip past.

19 EXT. OPEN SPACES COALITION OFFICES, STRIP MALL - LATER 19

Albert goes into his office, a small storefront in a strip mall, Vivian watches. ACROSS THE STREET, A MYSTERIOUS ELEGANT BLOND FRENCH WOMAN, 55, CATERINE VAUBAN, stands watching.

20 INT. COALITION OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 20

It's a neat campaign office: two simple desks, a table covered with petitions; a large poster of Henry David Thoreau; a photograph of a forest and marsh. Vivian watches Albert through the glass store front as he listens to a MESSAGE MACHINE.

MAN ON MESSAGE MACHINE
"I'm gonna throw a brick through your window, communist." Beep.

OLD WOMAN ON MESSAGE MACHINE
"I wanted to thank you for what you did with the oak tree in Miller's Square.

(MORE)

20 20

OLD WOMAN ON MESSAGE MACHINE (cont'd)
I played on that tree when I was a little girl. I thought we had a chance but they chopped it--" Beep.

VIVIAN COMES INSIDE THE OFFICE, PULLS A SURVEILLANCE BUG FROM HER LARGE CHANEL BAG, PLACES IT ON THE TELEPHONE, another on the wall, and another on the ceiling. Albert inspects one of the surveillance mics. Vivian exits.

Albert opens a stack of fliers: "THE POETRY OF OPEN SPACES Route 9 Strip Mall, Parking Lot A, Tuesday."

21 EXT. OPEN SPACES COALITION OFFICE, STRIP MALL - DAY 21

Vivian sits on a bench and pulls out headphones from her purse, pulling up an antenna. She listens to Albert inside as TWO COLLEGE GUYS, HARRISON and TIM, WALK IN and talk to him.

ALBERT (OS)
Where is everyone? Where did everybody go?

HARRISON (OS)
Brad moved the meeting.

22 INT. ALBERT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 22

ALBERT
He can't do that.

HARRISON
He did it.

TIM
We can't fight each other, man.

The door opens and COUNCILWOMAN ANGELA FRANCO, 60, comes in.

ANGELA FRANCO
I want your fliers out of that parking lot.

ALBERT
It's a free country. Poems work.

ANGELA FRANCO
You're pissing people off.

ALBERT
My poems were supposed to go out with the Shania mailing.

ANGELA FRANCO
Brad Stand is a businessman --

22 22

ALBERT
Oh, please.

ANGELA FRANCO
He knows how to be reasonable, you're not running this Coalition anymore.

ALBERT
I'm still in the charter. I wrote it.

ANGELA FRANCO
Not for long.

She leaves.

HARRISON
How can they get you out of the charter?

TIM
Let's follow her.

HARRISON
We'll knock the meeting on its ass.

Albert covertly speaks into one of the surveillance bugs.

ALBERT (SOTTO VOCE)
This is my work situation.

Vivian, wearing surveillance headphones, stares at Albert through the glass storefront. The frosh guys look puzzled.

HARRISON
Who's that?

Albert goes outside.

23 EXT. ALBERT'S STRIP MALL STOREFRONT OFFICE - DAY 23

Albert walks up to Vivian.

VIVIAN
So you're fighting suburban sprawl, and this guy Brad Stand and you had some kind of a falling out --

SUDDENLY A WHITE CITROEN PULLS UP AND BERNARD JUMPS OUT WITH * A CELL PHONE IN HIS HAND.

23 23

BERNARD (HANDS VIVIAN THE CELL PHONE)
Mr. Corn is having a crisis, you better talk to him.

VIVIAN TAKES THE CELL PHONE.

VIVIAN (FRUSTRATED, TAKES THE CALL)
Tommy? What is it?

She steps to the side and talks on the phone. CATERINE VAUBAN WATCHES FROM ACROSS THE STREET.

ALBERT (TO BERNARD)
She was asking me about my work situation.

BERNARD
No, thanks, I want to get into what's happening right now.

ALBERT
What do you mean? I'm telling you.

BERNARD
I'm talking about the blanket.

ALBERT
Could you guys get out of here, this looks really weird. * *

23pt. Bernard and Albert stare at each other for a few moments. ALBERT, BERNARD, and the shapes around them VIBRATE INTO SMALL SQUARES COMPOSING THEM, A CITY BUS arrives, a squeal OF BRAKES. The spell is broken. ALBERT LOOKS slightly freaked out. 23pt.

VIVIAN
Whoa what are you doing? I need facts to piece together a theory.

BERNARD (VULNERABLE)
Oh, no time for infinity. Gotta piece together a theory.

ALBERT
I have to go back to work.

BERNARD
No.

VIVIAN
Go check on Mr. Corn. His wife is leaving him.

23 (2) 23

ALBERT
What are we doing?

BERNARD
Albert, the universe is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference is nowhere.

ALBERT
How can the center be --

He freezes mid-sentence when HE SEES VIVIAN RUN ACROSS THE PARKING LOT, DIVE THROUGH THE WINDOW OF A PARKED RED BUICK. Angela Franco walks by eating an ice cream cone and gets into the red Buick. SHE DRIVES OFF, WITH VIVIAN HIDDEN IN THE BACK SEAT. Albert watches the car drive off, freaked out.

ALBERT (STUNNED)
She's hiding in Mrs. Franco's car.

BERNARD (CHECKS WATCH)
Don't forget to use the method. I gotta check in on Mr. Corn.

24 INT. ANGELA FRANCO'S RED BUICK - DAY 24

ANGELA FRANCO (LICKING HER ICE CREAM)
Um num num mm um num numm.

Vivian lays on the floor of the back seat, listening.

25 EXT. TOMMY CORN'S WORKING CLASS RANCH HOUSE - DAY 25

FOUR FIREMEN wearing suspenders, rubber pants, boots, t-shirts move furniture out of TOMMY CORN'S house, into a U-HAUL truck, as TOMMY'S WIFE, Molly, MOVES OUT with their 6 year old CAITLIN. TOMMY CORN, a fireman, 31, wears pajamas and fireman boots, chasing them. *

TOMMY CORN (PULLS HER BAG AWAY)
Don't, baby, come on, don't do this-

MOLLY (PULLS BAG BACK) *
You don't need anyone.

TOMMY CORN
That's not true, I need you.

MOLLY *
If nothing matters, how can I matter?

TOMMY CORN
Let's figure it out --

25 25

MOLLY
LET GO OF ME.

BERNARD (WALKS UP)
Can we talk for a second here.

MOLLY
Not you again.

She goes back to loading her car.

BERNARD (TO TOMMY)
Calm down, tell me what happened.

TOMMY CORN
She won't stay and share this with me and it's important, I see it so clearly. A) by using petroleum, you're a murderer three times --

BERNARD
We've been over this.

TOMMY CORN
1) killing the ozone and all the creatures that hurts; 2) killing the Arabs in oil producing dictatorships where everyone is poor; 3) killing the --

MOLLY (LOADING CAR)
WILL YOU STOP WITH THAT CRAP?

TOMMY CORN
But then if this world is temporary, and identity is an illusion, then everything is meaningless, and it doesn't matter if we use petroleum, and that's got me very confused. And B) --

BERNARD
It matters, it matters, look --

Bernard unfolds a map of the cosmos.

BERNARD (HOLDING COSMOS MAP)
Here's the universe, Tom, we're over here in this galaxy of --

TOMMY CORN
What universe?

25 (2) 25

BERNARD
This. The universe. Come on.

TOMMY CORN
There's dust and gas out there, us over here, and good or bad luck. That's chaos. That's my B).

BERNARD
This doesn't sound like you.

Tommy pulls a book from his pocket: "IF NOT NOW" by Caterine Vauban. A PHOTO SHOWS THE MYSTERIOUS BLOND WHO TAILED ALBERT.

TOMMY CORN (OPENING BOOK)
Vauban talks about space --

BERNARD (FREAKED OUT, TAKES IT)
WHERE DID YOU GET THIS BOOK?

TOMMY CORN
You sent it to me.

BERNARD (EXTREMELY UPSET)
We would NEVER send you this book.

TOMMY CORN
You didn't send this to me?

BERNARD
No. Caterine Vauban is full of shit. What is she doing here? She never leaves France, this is insane. *

TOMMY CORN
It's a pretty good book. She says that nothing's connected, so you can do whatever you want, drive a car, burn up gas -- which would explain the way things actually are, where people do destructive things like it doesn't matter. * *

BERNARD (PISSED)
EVERYTHING'S CONNECTED.

TOMMY CORN
There isn't an atom in our bodies that wasn't forged in the furnace of the sun. (READS) "Less than 5 percent of the cosmos--

25 (3) 25

BERNARD (SEES MOLLY PASS)
Molly, you can't leave Tommy in the middle of his dismantling. He'll never make it to the other side.

MOLLY
I'm dying to stick around for his dismantling.

TOMMY CORN
You don't want to ask these questions?

MOLLY
I want to live my life.

TOMMY CORN
But what is that life? What are we part of? Who are we? Do you know where these come from? [grabs sneakers she's carrying]

MOLLY
The store.

TOMMY CORN (READING LABEL)
Indonesia. Little girls like you [to his daughter] work in dark factories where they go blind for a dollar sixty a day, can you imagine that, Caitlin?

CAITLIN
I don't want the children to work in factories --

MOLLY
Daddy's crazy, honey, don't listen-

TOMMY CORN
Daddy's not crazy, the world is crazy and it's important to-

Molly starts smacking him about the head and shoulders. A fireman pulls Molly off Tommy, who goes back to Bernard.

TOMMY CORN (READING)
"Less than five percent of the cosmos is composed of the same elements that compose human life."

FIREMAN
What does that matter?

25 (4) 25

TOMMY CORN
You should be asking these questions, Skip.

FIREMAN 2
Tommy's very sensitive so his therapist is here to hold his hand.

BERNARD
I am not a therapist, sir.

TOMMY CORN
I'm sorry, Frank, if Bernard is making you uncomfortable.

FIREMAN 2
I'm not uncomfortable, but you seem so sensitive it's like some kinda therapy party-

Tommy punches him in the jaw; the fireman goes down, lies motionless while his friend tries to revive him. Without missing a beat, Tommy turns back to Bernard with the book.

TOMMY CORN
We gotta sit down and talk because this book is making a lot of sense to me.

BERNARD NODS, WALKS BACK TO THE CITROEN MUTTERING TO HIMSELF.

BERNARD (MUTTERS TO HIMSELF)
What is Caterine Vauban doing in the United States?

TOMMY CORN (YELLING AFTER BERNARD)
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

Bernard gets in his car, muttering to himself.

26 EXT. HUCKABEE'S CORPORATE CENTER - DAY 26

Angela Franco walks through the large parking lot of a glass and chrome corporate headquarters. Vivian follows 30 paces behind as Angela enters. Caterine watches from a distance.

27 INT. HUCKABEE'S CORPORATE CENTER - DAY 27

EXPLOSIVE LAUGHTER from TEN PEOPLE in a small conference room with a sales meeting underway. BRAD STAND, 31, is a tanned, super handsome, cock-of-the-walk, star sales director for the Target-like retail chain, Huckabee's.

27 27

JUST OUTSIDE THE DOOR, Vivian STANDS EAVESDROPPING. Inside, DARLENE, the secretary from the start, hands Brad a sandwich.

BRAD (TO SECRETARY)
Thanks, honey, I haven't forgotten the mayonnaise flood, oh no, mayonnaise from Darlene again!

Everyone laughs.

DARLENE (LAUGHING)
Stop it!

BRAD
She brings me like a gallon of mayonnaise last week and then she says I asked for it --

DARLENE (GIGGLING)
You did! You did ask for it!

BRAD
Darlene, please, that is such a lie. (laughter) I got those Shania pictures for your niece --

DARLENE
That is so sweet you remembered, you have no idea what this is going to mean to my niece. You know it's these small things that matter and people don't think are important, but they are the most important.

BRAD
You are welcome Darlene - aaaand cut.

Brad hands out autographed glossies of Shania Twain.

SUZIE
Would you mind, Brad, if my brother-in-law came to the pre-store meeting with Shania?

BRAD
Yes, wait. Depends, Suzie, I'll check with the publicist. Sorry.

SUZIE
Thanks, honey.

Darlene and the other women look at Brad dreamily as he eats.

27 (2) 27

DAVY
About five years ago, I was stuck with Whitney Houston on a layover in Minneapolis, this was just after "The Body Guard" came out --

BRAD (EATING)
That was ten years ago, not five, he's in a time capsule --

Giggles all around.

DAVY
Seriously, this is good --

BRAD
I got a story for you, it's only four months old. I went to Chicago, you're not going to believe this, with Shania, and we were opening up the mega store down by the loop --

JOSH
We gotta finish this meeting --

BRAD
Somebody give Josh a valium.

Laughter. Vivian's hand places a bug just inside the door.

BRAD (LOOKS AT HIS WATCH)
Yikes, I do have a meeting three minutes ago. OK, cut to the chase: Shania's there to promote her apparel, right? It's four o'clock and she's starving, so I order a ton of tuna fish sandwiches, that's all she was eating, tuna, NO MAYO, Darlene -- Shania hates mayo. And she cannot eat chicken salad - no joke. We once gave it to her and she threw up in the limo. So we give her the tuna sandwiches but she doesn't believe there's no mayo in the tuna, swears she tastes it, so I tell her I'm allergic to mayo, which is a lie, and to prove it I eat two of the sandwiches in front of her; so now she eats one and a half, before she realizes... [he hesitates for an irrepressible chuckle] it's chicken salad, and she actually likes it. True story, you can ask her.

27 (3) 27

Explosive laughter.

BRAD
THIS is what I've been saying about how we get stuck in our heads. People think they know what they like, but sometime you gotta tell them what they like. That's what we're doing here.

OUTSIDE THE SLIGHTLY OPEN DOOR, Vivian wears headphones as she records it all.

BRAD
Josh, here's the sales plan: I've got the Disney tie-in locked up exclusive we take a huge position--

MARTY
Like 500,000 Dundalee cups?

BRAD
A million.

Marty whistles.

JOSH
We still have a warehouse full of Jar Jar Binks dolls.

BRAD (SUDDENLY VERY IRRITATED)
You CAN'T bring that up every time I pitch an idea, man, like that dick in the ad department. That kills the momentum and the vision. [SOFTENS] You're gonna see what I'm talking about, Josh, give me a chance here. Who's got the quarterly projections?

DARLENE (GOES THROUGH PAPERS)
They should be here. Hold on.

MARTY
You got the environmental thing next, Bradly, is that it?

BRAD
It's goin' great, Marty, Huckabee's is gonna seem like the Sierra Club after this, I mean we're gonna save this marsh for real. It's a good thing.

27 (4) 27

MARTY
[CLAPPING] That's the best way to get PR for the company, when it's REAL. That way you don't have to lie. The board's gonna love you, dude.

DARLENE
I'll be right back with the quarterlies.

28 EXT. BRAD'S CONFERENCE ROOM -HUCKABEE'S - CONTINUOUS 28

Darlene finds Vivian eavesdropping with headphones.

DARLENE (IRATE)
Can I help you?

VIVIAN (WEARING HEADPHONES)
I'm here for the Coalition meeting with Brad Stand.

DARLENE (IRATE)
You have no reason to be here, dearie, I'm surprised they let you in, come with me.

She leads Vivian down the hall, past life-sized cardboard cut outs of Shania Twain promoting Huckabee's, lots of offices. CATERINE VAUBAN FOLLOWS THEM from a distance. They pass A RECORDING STUDIO where COMMERCIALS are being recorded by DAWN CAMPBELL, 23, THE SMOKY VOICED ALL-AMERICAN BLOND WHO TAUNTED ALBERT IN HIS MIND. SHE MOVES AND DANCES AS SHE TALKS.

29 INT. HUCKABEE'S RECORDING BOOTH - CONTINUOUS 29

DAWN (DANCING A LITTLE)
"Tops and mops, it's 50 percent off all women's shirts and hair products, this week only, at Huckabee's, the Everything Store." One more time, Daryl. "At Huckabee's, the Everything Store."

Vivian pauses to watch through the glass. Dawn looks slightly haggard. * *

DAWN *
Last one, please, God. Here we go. "Bees and trees, Huckabee's cares about our environment.
(MORE)

29 29

DAWN (cont'd)
Five percent of all DVD sales go to The Open Spaces Coalition, this week only at Huckabee's, the Everything Store." Again, Daryl.

DARLENE
This doesn't concern you, dearie.

30 DARLENE LEADS VIVIAN DOWN THE HALL AND INTO ANOTHER GLASS CONFERENCE ROOM WITH EIGHT COALITION PEOPLE IN IT: COUNCILWOMAN ANGELA FRANCO; THE TWO GUY FROSHES HARRISON AND TIM, ARMS FOLDED DEFIANTLY; JERRY (RUGGED); TWO GIRL FROSHES; MARY JANE HUTCHINSON, AN ELDERLY WOMAN IN RIDING ATTIRE. 30

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
I pride myself on my reserve, but when that lumberjack started his chain saw, I spat on the ground right where my horse cantered.

HARRISON
Shoulda spitted in the pig's face.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
Spat in the pig's face, Harrison.

ANGELA FRANCO
Let's watch our language around potentials.

They all look at Vivian.

ANGELA FRANCO
First meeting?

VIVIAN
Yes. Can you get me up to speed?

ANGELA FRANCO
Mary Jane, you tell it.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
My great grandfather owned the marsh and the woods, which is why they're named for our family.

VIVIAN
The Hutchinson Marsh and Woods.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
We deeded the land to the municipality in '72 for public use in perpetuity.

30 30

VIVIAN
Why?

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
We enjoyed riding there, wanted to share it. But the town is monkeying with subclauses and Dexicorp wants a mall and houses at the marsh.

HARRISON
We're fighting it.

FROSH GIRL
We have to save this marsh.

ANGELA FRANCO
We have a Shania benefit for our legal fund, and we're hoping to get an open city council meeting.

VIVIAN (TO MARY JANE)
How did you get involved in the Open Spaces Coalition?

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
Strange little Jewish fellow, Markovitz, Markstein, I can never remember the Jewish names so very well, he was leading the way. Then came the brouhaha with Bradly, I don't like conflict so very well.

JERRY
It's Albert's vision.

VIVIAN
Tell me about Brad Stand.

HARRISON
Albert let him in, which was a mistake.

ANGELA FRANCO
Nonsense. Brad has helped us enormously.

HARRISON
By making it all about Shania and he dropped Albert's poems from the mailings.

TIM
And the benefit.

30 (2) 30

FROSH GIRL
That's not how it happened.

ANGELA FRANCO
Those poems are pissing people off.

HARRISON
They're our inspiration.

The door opens, Brad Stand enters with a huge mounted photo of a wetland with Shania Twain superimposed on top of it and some Shania Twain T-shirts.

BRAD
Sorry I'm late, guys, got the photo of our wetland right here. See, an image is always better. You gotta reach people quick. They have no time for poems. They don't even understand poems. They have to think about it too much.

ANGELA FRANCO
Fantastic, Brad.

BRAD
Shania tees, extra small for your grandson, Mary Jane.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
Bradly, you shouldn't have.

Everyone takes a 'SHANIA FOR OPEN SPACES' T-shirt.

FROSH GIRLS
YESS.

ANGELA FRANCO
Fantastic, Bradly.

BRAD
Here's the schedule for the benefit, guys, this is really happening, we had the vision and here's the reality. First, everyone will sit down after cocktails, then we open with the video about the marsh, then Angela, you give your speech, then Marty will speak for Huckabee's. [HE LOOKS AT VIVIAN] Hi. Have we met?

ANGELA FRANCO
I'm sorry, what is your name?

VIVIAN
Vivian Jaffe.

30 (3) 30

ANGELA FRANCO
She's a potential from ...

VIVIAN
Albert Markovski.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
Oops.

ANGELA FRANCO
Oh, no.

BRAD
That's not gonna work, I'm sorry. How are you connected?

VIVIAN
Through an investigation.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
Oh, my.

BRAD
See, I worry about that guy. What kind of investigation?

VIVIAN
Existential. I'd like to ask some questions, if you don't mind.

BRAD
Actually, we do, because we need to meet and we're late. I'm not trying to give you a hard time. Your work sounds very interesting. Have you got a card?

She hands Brad her card. Brad reads the BUSINESS CARD: "VIVIAN JAFFE, EXISTENTIAL DETECTIVE, CRISIS INVESTIGATION/RESOLUTION."

31 INT. BLACKNESS IN ALBERT'S MIND - SOUND OF SLOW BREATHING 31

31pt. Albert appears in a bathing suit, floating in his bathtub, eyes covered in a black mask. The bathroom melts away, revealing a suburb outside, which melts away, leaving a large hall filled with people. A large banner is hung above Albert, which reads "OPEN SPACES BENEFIT". PEOPLE IN TUXEDOS AND GOWNS WATCH RAPTLY AS ALBERT BEGINS TO SPEAK. 31pt.

ALBERT
A sad blackbird saw me, a message clenched in his beak, caw, caw.' I went to a book store and there he was AGAIN. What's going on here? Do you speak blackbird? I don't. Yet.

31 31

The audience bursts into wild APPLAUSE, including CRUDELY ANIMATED JESSICA LANGE and CRUDELY ANIMATED DAWN, Coalition members. Albert's body disintegrates, melting like sand. Now, Albert fades in, fades out. Ocean sounds.

BRAD STAND'S HEAD APPEARS, THEN Secretary Darlene, angry Shania Twain, then angry Jessica Lange and Dawn.

DAWN (DANCES IN A BIKINI)
50% off all love except for Albert who's not allowed in the store. There's warmth and touching and eyes and eye contact but not for you.

BRAD (GARY COOPERISH)
I like everybody, but I kinda hate that kid, I'm sorry to say. (vicious aside) LITTLE DWARF.

Mini-Albert appears, MACHETE in hand, assaults Brad's head, only chopping it into multiple smaller heads.

BRAD'S MULTIPLE HEADS
Relax, you friggin' idiot.

32 INT. ALBERT'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 32

Albert writhes uncomfortably in the tub, having a bad trip.

ALBERT
Ahhhhhh.

Through the half-open window, CATERINE, the mysterious French woman, appears on the fire escape, PICKS UP A FLOWER POT, SHATTERS IT next to his tub. Albert explodes from the bath, pulls up his eye mask, looks at the broken pot, the open window, no one is there.

From inside Albert's bedroom VIVIAN peers through the bathroom door, PUZZLED by the broken flower pot on the floor.

33 EXT. SUBURBAN STRIP MALL - DAY 33

Bernard and Vivian walk.

VIVIAN
Something went down with this Brad Stand character. Albert's hanging onto his job by his fingernails.

BERNARD
I thought he brought Brad Stand into the Coalition.

33 33

VIVIAN
He did, but Stand couldn't get rid of me fast enough when I met him.

BERNARD
Oh, he came into the office. I forgot to tell you.

VIVIAN (SHOCKED)
WHEN?

BERNARD
Two or three days ago.

VIVIAN
He hired us?

BERNARD
He hasn't signed his contract yet, but I had him write a poem and I started preliminary surveillance.

VIVIAN
Why don't you tell me these things?

BERNARD
I thought we were trying not to talk about work at home.

VIVIAN
How about at work, Bernard?

BERNARD
You won't let me do my thing, so I'll do yours.

VIVIAN
You do your thing plenty.

BERNARD
There's never time for infinity according to you.

VIVIAN
All right, point taken. Jeez.

They ENTER SCHOTTINGERS COLLECTIBLES.

34 INT. SCHOTTINGERS COLLECTIBLES - DAY 34

Vivian and Bernard stroll around the small dingy shop filled with bins of collector's glossies and other photos. A poster for the Open Spaces Benefit hangs on the wall. BIK SCHOTTINGER, 50, reads behind the glass counter.

34 34

Vivian walks to a Magritte file, pulls up some photos of Rene Magritte, takes them to the counter while Bernard browses.

BIK SCHOTTINGER
That's $8.75.

VIVIAN
Ever seen this guy?

She holds up a PHOTO OF ALBERT SLEEPING IN BED.

BIK SCHOTTINGER
I don't know.

VIVIAN
Keep the change on that 20.

BIK SCHOTTINGER
Oh, yeah, this kid comes in like two times a week, but he's not an autograph guy. He just likes the pictures.

VIVIAN
Of early Bob Dylan.

BIK SCHOTTINGER
His real love is early Jessica Lange. That's what he spends his time looking at.

VIVIAN
Is that right?

Bernard walks over to the JESSICA LANGE SECTION, pulls up a few '70s cheesecake shots.

VIVIAN
Did he ever say why?

BIK SCHOTTINGER
No, but he seems like a lot of guys who come in here.

BERNARD (OS)
Vivian.

VIVIAN
Hold on, Bernard. Like what?

BIK SCHOTTINGER
Lonely, dreaming.

34 (2,

VIVIAN
Did he talk about any of her films in particular?

BIK SCHOTTINGER
It's not about that.

VIVIAN
What's it about?

BIK SCHOTTINGER
The big sexy actresses are intimidating, right? Bigger than life, but when they're older, they're a little bit, they seem more vulnerable and accessable, so a guy can feel like he's got a shot, and a photo won't talk back, see, the love affair's in his head. That's the appeal in my opinion.

BERNARD
VIVIAN.

VIVIAN (IMPATIENT, TURNING AROUND)
WHAT?

BERNARD RAISES HIS EYEBROWS AS HE HOLDS UP A GLOSSY PORTRAIT OF ALBERT. Vivian raises her eyebrows at this surprising turn of evidence. She walks over, pulls up A HANDWRITTEN FILE LABEL THAT SAYS "ALBERT MARKOVSKI, POET OF THE OPEN SPACES" with one of his poems attached to the front.

VIVIAN
You have an Albert Markovski section?

BIK SCHOTTINGER
I don't know. I guess so.

VIVIAN
You didn't put it there?

BIK SCHOTTINGER
No. [MUTTERS] I can't control every bin, I tell people to respect the categories.

Bernard and Vivian exchange a meaningful look. BERNARD'S CELL PHONE RINGS. HE ANSWERS IT.

BERNARD (ON CELL PHONE)
What's up, Bobby?

34 (3) 34

He listens, nods, hangs up.

BERNARD
Brad Stand has signed his contract. *

VIVIAN
We're starting to get some breaks.

BERNARD (LOOKS AT HIS WATCH)
He'll be home from work now.

They hustle to the door with the Albert and Jessica Lange glossies in hand. Vivian throws some cash on the counter.

35 INT. CITROEN SEDAN 35

Bernard drives as he hands Vivian a file marked "Brad Stand".

BERNARD
Here's what I've got so far.

She flips through the file: an invitation to the Open Spaces Benefit; a PHOTO OF BRAD STAND AND DAWN CAMPBELL LIKE MOVIE STARS at the ribbon cutting of a new Huckabees.

VIVIAN
So Brad lives with the Face of Huckabee's, eh? *

BERNARD
Apparently so. King and Queen of the Prom. * *

36 EXT. BRAD'S BIG SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY 36

A large green yard with landscaped shrubs. Vivian peers out from behind a bush. The sprinkler cuts across her body; she sneaks across the lawn to another bush, runs across to the driveway and in her Chanel suit leans into a garbage can. Bernard follows clandestinely behind with listening equipment, wearing a set of headphones. He crouches behind Brad's BMW SUV, near the garbage cans Vivian rifles.

VIVIAN (PULLING OUT GARBAGE)
Look, he's planting garbage for us.

She tosses a stained copy of "Crime and Punishment" onto the driveway next to a soiled Gitanes cigarette box and Kafka's "Metamorphosis." Bernard shakes his head sadly then --

BERNARD (WEARING HEADPHONES)
Listen to this, she found his poem.

He hands her a second set of headphones; they listen.

36 36

BRAD (OS)
I've asked you to leave my papers alone, Dawn. Don't touch them.

DAWN (READS, OS)
The "Unrelenting demand to perform at work and at home, great chasm of her neediness"?

37 INT. BRAD'S HOME KITCHEN - DAY 37

BRAD
That's totally out of context.

DAWN
You said you were lucky to be with me, you couldn't ask for more.

BRAD
You're overreacting, I'm not unhappy with you, Dawn.

DAWN (READS)
What about this? "Putting on a show, can't say no, inside I'm drowning, sighing and frowning." That doesn't sound very happy to me, does that sound happy to you?

BRAD
I only wrote 'frowning' because it rhymes with 'drowning.'

DAWN
Then why did you need 'drowning'?

BRAD
To rhyme with 'frowning.'

DAWN
OK. Wait. The first word comes from what you want to say, the second word has to rhyme --

BRAD
No, you have to find pairs of words, Dawn, or it's not a poem. You don't know what you're saying.

DAWN
'Drowning and frowning' is that a random pair? Why do you even have to rhyme? There are plenty of non-rhyming parts here.

37 37

BRAD
I told you, when I went in they had me write a poem. You have no idea the pressure when they ask you to write a poem about your life, Dawn, oh, honey --

DAWN (CRYING)
We've got so much going for us, how can you not be happy? What is this, you went to these people, they had you write a poem and they follow you AND WHY DO THEY HAVE TO CREEP AROUND OUR YARD AND GO THROUGH THE GARBAGE?

She points out the window at Vivian and Bernard at the garbage cans; they look at Dawn, WALK TOWARD THE KITCHEN.

BRAD
Oh, no.

VIVIAN AND BERNARD OPEN THE DOOR AND COME IN.

DAWN
What is he doing? Stop that.

Bernard rifles through drawers.

VIVIAN
Brad signed a rather comprehensive contract for unfettered access to your home --

DAWN
It's my home, too, and I didn't sign anything.

VIVIAN
You'll have to work that out with Brad. The mortgage is in his name and you're not married.

DAWN (CHAGRINED)
Ugh.

She starts crying again.

BERNARD
Are these from this year?

He holds BEACH PHOTOS of Brad and Dawn, who snatches them.

BRAD
Last year. We went to St. Barts.

BERNARD
How about this year?

BRAD
We didn't go on a trip this year.

BERNARD
How come?

BRAD
A lotta work. Too busy.

BERNARD
Too busy for a vacation?

DAWN (CRYING)
Why are you involved with this? You don't believe in therapy.

BRAD
I don't see this as therapy. I'm pro-active, these people are action-oriented. It's like the company retreat at Hiltonhead when we did the trust thing, the paragliding. Everything lined up nice. It seemed like they were helping Albert, they could help me, help the Open Spaces.

DAWN
What are you talking about?

VIVIAN
He did say in his application that he felt exhausted from having to charm everyone constantly, but he doesn't see an alternative, because-

She flips through the pages of a little note pad:

BERNARD (READS OVER VIVIAN'S SHOULDER)
Quote, "you need to get people to like you to be successful and get things done in this world," unquote.

DAWN (TRYING TO BE CHEERY)
Duh. Brad likes to be charming, it comes naturally.
(MORE)

37 (3) 37

DAWN (TRYING TO BE CHEERY) (cont'd)
Except in the morning when he's Mr. Grumpus. (giggles)

BRAD (CHUCKLING TO DETECTIVES)
Hey, I only put those things in the garbage for you as a joke.

DAWN (LAUGHING/STILL CRYING)
That's so funny, see? That's crazy. He's a prankster That's Brad! He likes to make people laugh! Seriously, seriously, that's what you're picking up on. *

VIVIAN
Mmm. That's almost worse, isn't it?

BERNARD (WRITING)
Back-door way to charm. Joking as disguised request for approval. Joke, love me, joke, love me. *

VIVIAN
Ms. Campbell, how have you felt about being pretty?

DAWN
Oh, please I was never the pretty girl, yes that's changed at Huckabee's, but I still don't think of myself as being THAT pretty, I just hafta keep up with this gorgeous hottie. *

She rubs Brads arms and shoulders.

VIVIAN
Have you possibly confused admiration for your and Brad's looks with true self-respect?

DAWN
If other people think we're hot, that's a form of self-respect or just respect whatever it's respect.

BERNARD
Is it?

VIVIAN
Is it possible your life looks better than it feels?

37 (4) 37

DAWN
Hey, I know how this looks. Brad and I have a great life, right? He could be promoted to corporate, I've been on-camera since '99, we look good, we're in shape, blah blah blah, if people envy us is that our fault? I mean look at us, what are we gonna do, not be what we are?

VIVIAN
Is the object of life getting others to envy you?

BERNARD
Whoever gets the most envy wins?

DAWN (HUGGING BRAD)
We're not shallow like that, I know people like that, it's gross, they have to look the best and get the nicest car and always be on like that, it's very shallow. We're not about that, we like to read, go to weird movies, do crazy stuff, joke around.

BERNARD
How's the sex?

BRAD
Come on, guys, that's private.

DAWN
That's gross.

VIVIAN (LOOKING AT NOTES)
Preliminary surveillance indicates it's been infrequent and short, 8 to 9 minutes typically.

DAWN
Surveillance! You've watched us?

VIVIAN
No, just listened.

BRAD
That is out of line. We have never had a problem in that department.

VIVIAN
Well, 8 to 9 minutes.

37 (5) 37

DAWN
It's quantity not quality.

BRAD
She means quality not quantity.

DAWN (LAUGHING NERVOUSLY)
I know, I was only joking.

BERNARD
Were you?

BRAD
We're not gonna discuss this now.

DAWN (LAUGHING NERVOUSLY)
We're private about our seven minutes of heaven!

BRAD
It's longer than that, Dawn.

DAWN (LAUGHING NERVOUSLY)
Eight minutes of heaven! It's not quality, it's quantity!

BRAD
Dawn.

DAWN
Damn, I mean quantity not quality.

BRAD
Quality.

DAWN
OK. But why did you write this poem and how come we can't we discuss these things ourselves? Where is this relationship going?

BRAD
What's so great about marriage and kids? Isn't there an overpopulation problem?

VIVIAN
Whoa.

BERNARD
That came out of left field.

37 (6) 37

BRAD
Why is having kids the ultimate performance for successful people?

DAWN
It doesn't have to be a performance, I mean, we don't have to have kids, it could be just us, you know, jet-skiing, whatever, we can think about kids or not --

BRAD
This isn't what I hired you for.

DAWN
What did you hire them for?

BERNARD (READS)
"Pervasive unbearable need to perform and be the best."

BRAD
Stop asking the question, Dawn.

VIVIAN
Needing to be perfect would prevent intimacy, wouldn't it?

BERNARD
One is bound to fail one's partner in any relationship, it's human.

VIVIAN
But unbearable if one needs constant approval to be the best.

Dawn looks at Brad, who looks down at the floor.

BRAD
Well. I have a meeting to go to.

38 THEY ALL LOOK AT HIM, NOT BUDGING. DOORBELL RINGS. TWO BALD EXECUTIVES IN SUITS HOLDING ROLLED UP ARCHITECTURAL PLANS STAND AT KITCHEN DOOR. 38

BRAD (OPENING DOOR)
What are you doing here?

DEXICORP EXECUTIVE
You said we could come by --

BRAD
No, no, no, this is a bad time --

38 38

HE GOES OUTSIDE WITH THEM. The detectives watch through the window as a Dexicorp executive UNROLLS ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS for Brad, who looks back at the detectives and rolls up the plans, patting the guys on their backs and sending them off.

DAWN (NERVOUS)
Would you like some tea?

VIVIAN
Thanks. What's Dexicorp?

DAWN (SITS AND POURS SUN TEA)
They're partners with Huckabee's in building malls, but Brad's making them go environmental or something. If I'm gonna do this process with you, where would we start?

BERNARD (SITS)
I'm just curious, have you ever transcended space and time? *

DAWN
Space and time? I don't really um... I'm not sure.

The only sound is Bernard's teaspoon stirring his tea as he and Vivian stare intensely at Dawn, who looks vulnerable.

39 INT. BERNARD'S OFFICE - DAY 39

ALBERT (FURIOUS, PANICKED)
I EXPLICITLY ASKED YOU TO STAY AWAY FROM MY WORK SITUATION. This isn't a joke, it's my life.

VIVIAN
If we're gonna solve your coincidence we have to put it into context. The conflict with Brad Stand seems very important.

ALBERT (ANGRY)
So now you show up at Huckabee's Corporate and say you're my existential detective? I'm lucky if I last another day.

VIVIAN
We'll solve the case sooner if you're straight with us.

39 39

ALBERT
I'm being straight with you. Brad smeared me and took the Coalition in another direction.

VIVIAN
At Bik Schottingers' photo archive, where you met Mr. Nimieri --

ALBERT
Who's that?

VIVIAN
The African guy.

ALBERT
Finally, my coincidence, thank you. What else did you find out?

HE REACHES FOR THE FAT "MARKOVSKI" FOLDER IN VIVIAN'S HAND. SHE PULLS IT AWAY.

VIVIAN (PULLING HIS FOLDER AWAY)
It wasn't your first time at Schottingers, was it?

ALBERT
I wanna know about my coincidence.

VIVIAN
It wasn't your first time, was it?

ALBERT (DEFENSIVE)
Did I say it was my first time?

VIVIAN
You did. You agree it wasn't?

ALBERT
Sure. What's the big deal?

VIVIAN
You said it was your first time, when it was more like a regular thing for you. And you weren't finding a Bob Dylan still. You were planting photos of yourself in the archive. Why would you do that?

ALBERT SHIFTS UNCOMFORTABLY.

VIVIAN
To be noticed? Maybe urgently?

ALBERT
Maybe.

VIVIAN
How did that affect things with Brad at the Coalition?

ALBERT (DEFENSIVE)
I wanted my poems to go out with the fund-raiser mailing, Brad didn't. It was all about Shania and Derek Jeter.

BERNARD
So you planted them at Schottinger's.

Albert nods, guilty.

BERNARD
Brad didn't respect you.

ALBERT
No, he doesn't.

BERNARD
Yet you brought him into the Open Spaces Coalition. Why? *

ALBERT *
To get a corporate sponsor and take the cause to another level, why else would I do it? *

BERNARD
Like we said, to be noticed.

ALBERT
This is absurd. Show me the folder.

BERNARD
At the photo archive, you spent a lot of time looking at old Jessica Lange bathing suit stills.

ALBERT
Only because Lange comes right before Markovski, L-M, when I went to put my photos in there she is, L-M, see?

BERNARD
Albert, baby. Come on.

39 (3) 39

ALBERT
Is it a crime to look at Lange?

VIVIAN
Have you ever been in love?

ALBERT
What kind of question is that?

VIVIAN
Do you even believe in love? *

BERNARD
Or do you only have fantasy * relationships because anything else * would be too painful? *

ALBERT (FLUSTERED)
What's the status of my strange coincidence? That's why I'm here.

BERNARD
Tell you what, leave the investigation to us.

BERNARD ROLLS THE COCOON TABLE OVER.

VIVIAN
Excuse me, Bernard, I am making some progress here.

BERNARD
So am I, darling, so am I.

HE KISSES VIVIAN AND SHE LEAVES.

ALBERT (LOOKING AT COCOON)
Don't make me do this, it's all hating faces I have to chop up with machetes.

BERNARD
And then they multiply. We're going to address that right now. You can't retreat. I'm in your corner.

He pats Albert on the back.

40 INT. ALBERT'S MIND 40

The only sound is Albert's breathing: Albert's body disintegrates to an empty space of grey/blue/gold, with Albert fading in and out.

40 40

BRAD'S HEAD
Weed-dick.

DARLENE'S HEAD
We will destroy you, dearie.

JESSICA LANGE MORPHS INTO DAWN CAMPBELL AGAIN.

DAWN
No. No. Uh-uh, no looking.

ALBERT
Ahhhh.

BERNARD
Picture a tree in a field, OK?

ALBERT
What?

BERNARD
A tree, in a field.

A TREE APPEARS IN AN ABSTRACT LAVENDER BACKGROUND.

BERNARD
Now put someone you respect up in the tree.

Albert appears with Brad sitting above him in a tree.

BRAD (IN TREE)
Dickweed.

ALBERT
Still Brad Stand.

BERNARD
Let him be there. Add someone else.

ALBERT
Like who?

BERNARD
Someone who understands things, who can help you.

ALBERT (OS)
Who do you use?

41 BERNARD POINTS TO A FRAMED PHOTO OF MAGRITTE ON THE WALL. 41

BERNARD
I use Magritte, the Belgian surrealist. *

ALBERT *
I got someone.

BERNARD
Who is it?

43 CUT TO INT. ALBERT'S MIND - 43

ALBERT
Mrs. Schirmir.

MRS. SCHIRMIR, a fat high school English teacher in her late 50s, in glasses, sits near Brad in the tree.

BERNARD (OS)
Who's that?

ALBERT
High School English teacher. She helped me.

Brad pushes Mrs. Schirmer out of the tree.

ALBERT
Oops, there she goes.

BERNARD (OS)
What happened?

ALBERT
Brad knocked her out of the tree.

BERNARD (OS)
Mrs. Schirmer has a vacuum cleaner that sucks up fear.

ALBERT
Is it an upright vacuum with a bag, or the kind on the floor?

BERNARD (OS)
Up to you.

A HOOVER VACUUM APPEARS IN MRS. SCHIRMER'S HANDS. DARK STREAMS ARE SUCKED OUT OF ALBERT INTO MRS. SCHIRMER'S vacuum.

43 43

BERNARD
Now she sends you rays of security and complete acceptance. You don't have to do anything. You feel totally loved and safe, it's a done deal. *

Gold orange rays from Mrs. Schirmer envelop Albert in a glow, TIL BRAD CHOPS HER HEAD OFF WITH A MACHETE.

ALBERT
He chopped her head off.

BERNARD (OS)
She's back in the tree. She's indestructable.

Mrs. Schirmer reappears; Brad takes her vacuum and sucks her into it, simultaneously releasing the dark energy. Albert frantically swings a machete, chopping up Brad in a rage.

ALBERT (CHOPPING UP BRAD)
RAHHHHHH.

BERNARD
Hold on --

44 INT. BERNARD'S OFFICE 44

Bernard unzips the gortex suit. Albert is out breath.

BERNARD
You're doing well. Don't give up. Didn't she vacuum a lot?

ALBERT
But then he vacuumed her, and then I chopped him up. Man.

BERNARD
Albert, I'm going to let you in on a couple of secrets: First, your mind is always focussed on something, so it may as well be something helpful like Mrs. Schirmir and her vacuum. Second, There is no you and me.

ALBERT
So there's just... nothing.

44 44

BERNARD
Third, there's no such thing as nothing. There's the blanket. Remember?

ALBERT
I thought I got the blanket, but now I'm not sure.

BERNARD
I wish I could explain it to you more, but it's impossible, except to say you already won. It's over, and you won.

Albert looks lost. Bernard CLAPS LOUD in front of Al's face.

BERNARD
The house is on fire. The house is on fire. You won. Wake up.

Albert looks at Bernard blankly.

BERNARD (PUTS A HAND ON AL'S SHOULDER)
Maybe we should go back to just dismantling your identity for now.

The door opens, Vivian enters shaking a cocktail shaker. BERNARD GIVES VIVIAN A PECK AS HE LEAVES.

VIVIAN (WITH COCKTAIL SHAKER)
Mancala hour! Every Monday and Thursday. The best ideas come when the mind stops spinning. It's also what Sad Day is for.

ALBERT
I don't wanna go to Sad Day.

BERNARD
Fuck Sad Day.

Bernard grabs the shaker and leaves.

VIVIAN
It's not actually up and running yet, so don't worry about it.

Vivian leads Albert back through her office and --

45 INT. VIVIAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 45

ALBERT FREEZES IN HIS TRACKS: BRAD STAND SITS IN A CHAIR FACING BERNARD, READING A POEM INTO THE VIDEO CAMERA.

45 45

BRAD (READS)
'Huckabee's, cornucopia of stuff we all want, but what happened to the gazelles, were they squashed under the CD department?' How ya doin', Albert?

ALBERT
WHAT?

VIVIAN
I met Brad when I was investigating you. He called with his own existential conundrum.

BRAD
I'm really glad I found out about these people.

ALBERT (AGITATED)
That's bullshit, he doesn't care about things like that. Where's Mr. Nimieri? I want to see Mr. Nimieri. *

BRAD
Dude, what are you talking about?

ALBERT (AGITATED)
And why is he writing poetry? There are no goddamn gazelles in North America, Brad, AND buildings squashing nature, that's MY imagery, not yours. You don't even write poems.

BERNARD
Everyone's in-take procedure is different, Albert. I asked Brad to write a poem.

ALBERT
I already won, we're the same, Brad, it's all the blanket so -- (in a method trance) I can use Mrs. Schirmer.

He SUDDENLY stares in a trance at the floor: OCEAN SOUNDS.

BERNARD
There you go, give it a shot.

Vivian, Bernard, Brad watch as Albert closes his eyes.

45 (2) 45

ALBERT (EYES CLOSED, CALMER)
How are things at the Coalition, Brad?

BRAD (WARM)
Great. Much smoother.

ALBERT (EYES CLOSED)
I'm hoping to come back, that we'll work things out.

BRAD
Regrettably I don't think that's gonna happen, my friend.

ALBERT (EYES CLOSED)
I'm still in the charter, I built the Coalition from scratch.

BRAD
Well, I don't mean to cramp you here.

ALBERT (OPENS EYES, ANGRY)
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOU MEAN TO DO.

BRAD
What?

ALBERT (MIMICS)
"What?" Look what he's doing, he's conquering you just like he conquered the Coalition and took it away from me. He's here to unnerve me so I'll blow it when Orrin comes to town and get kicked out of the charter. Then he can do what he wants with the Coalition.

BRAD
Albert, please.

BERNARD AND VIVIAN WATCH CAREFULLY. It is tense.

VIVIAN
Who's Orrin?

ALBERT
The Open Spaces National Director. He's coming to review our charter.

BRAD
I hope this isn't about Dawn. He has a crush on my girlfriend.

45 (3) 45

ALBERT
That's crazy.

BRAD
Then why do you stare at her?

ALBERT
I'm going home.

VIVIAN
Stay for Mancala Hour, Albert.

ALBERT
Yeah, I'm gonna have a fucking ball at Mancala Hour.

VIVIAN
Maybe he should meet his Other.

BERNARD (SUDDENLY UNCOMFORTABLE)
What, Tommy? No, that's a bad idea right now.

VIVIAN
YES. A dicey move, inspired. Give them both a connection.

BERNARD
He's in a bad direction, it could spread to Albert.

VIVIAN
You said Tommy was gonna be fine, what did you leave out?

BERNARD (PECKS HER AND LEAVES)
Nothing. OK, give him his Other.

VIVIAN
The connection will come back to us, Bernard, it all comes around like you say. Take the long view. *

VIVIAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ALBERT
What's the Other?

VIVIAN
Shhhh.

Vivian leads Albert into ANOTHER OFFICE.

46 INT. ANOTHER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 46

MRS. ECHEVARRIA, 80 year old toothless Andalusian widow in black with a scarf on her head, sits impassively with her TRANSLATOR, a man of about 50 in glasses, tie, sweater. Albert points to Mrs. Echevarria. TOMMY CORN is there.

MRS. ECHEVARRIA (SINGS)
En los anos treinta, viviamos sin agua, no habia comida, ni aceitunas, ni alma de vida. Ay, ni conejo en el horno! Combinabamos saltamontes y haciamos pan.

TRANSLATOR
In the 30s, there was drought. There was no crop, no olives, no soul of life. Oh, no rabbit in the oven! We mashed the locusts and made bread. *

TOMMY CORN
I don't get it. Are you going to talk about petroleum or not?

TRANSLATOR
No lo comprendo. Vas ha hablar del petroleo o no? * *

TRANSLATOR
You have received your answer.

TOMMY CORN
Because the petroleum situation wasn't created by nature like the drought, or the olives or any of that, it was created by people who act like nothing's happening when it's causing lots of problems.

VIVIAN
Only one question, Tommy. Uno.

TOMMY CORN
OK, here's the question --

VIVIAN
I think you already had your question and your answer.

TOMMY CORN
Okay forget petroleum. Why is it that people only ask themselves deep questions when something really bad happens, and then they forget all about it later, and how come people are self-destructive, and third, I refuse to use petroleum, and there's no way I can stop it's use in my lifetime, is there?

46

VIVIAN
That's three questions.

TOMMY CORN
I paid my money, and I want answers.

VIVIAN
Mrs. Echevarria visits us once a year, Albert. She's sort of a little treat for our clients. Her time's limited. She needs to leave soon to see a client in Sun Valley.

Mrs. Echevarria chews her gums.

VIVIAN
Tommy we wanted you to meet Albert.

TOMMY CORN
I thought you said next week.

VIVIAN
Turns out he can use the connection sooner than later. Tommy's been working with us since last September. He'll be your Other.

Tommy shakes Albert's hand.

ALBERT
Is this like a, what is it exactly?

TOMMY CORN
A buddy system, I think.

VIVIAN
When we dismantle, it can get pretty rough so it helps to have a friend going through the same.

Albert and Tommy stare at each other almost tenderly.

VIVIAN
The face of the Other is a thing we look at, but it's not an object, it's not a thing, it's far more vast, in a person, with emotions, and that's what makes the connection so powerful yet its unpredictable emotionality transcends its thingness. The Other is not a thing. It is far more vast.

46 (2) 46

TOMMY CORN
You drive a car?

ALBERT
A bike. Sometimes I take the bus.

TOMMY CORN
Good. That's good. I like it. I can see why they put us together.

VIVIAN
Yes, wonderful, now please join us for Mancala Hour.

47 INT. RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS 47

An old Latin jazz album plays. Bernard takes Vivian into his arms for a dance among others dancing. Albert and Tommy sit and play mancala, a board game with moveable stones.

TOMMY CORN
What's happening with your case?

ALBERT
I wish I knew. They won't let me see my coincidence file.

TOMMY CORN
You want them to solve a coincidence? That's why you came here?

ALBERT
Yeah.

He stares at DAWN, in tight pants and blouse, dancing with Bobby across the room. She sees Albert staring, and looks away, uncomfortable.

TOMMY CORN
Who's the girl?

ALBERT
The Voice of Huckabee's.

TOMMY CORN
'Tops and mops.' *

ALBERT
Right.

TOMMY CORN
I doubt your coincidence is meaningful.

47 47

ALBERT
Why?

TOMMY CORN
I have a book by a French thinker named Caterine Vauban --

BERNARD (DANCING BY)
That book is deeply flawed, Tommy.

Bernard and Vivian dance off to the other side of the room.

TOMMY CORN
She says the same thing they say here about dismantling your day to day reality to see the big picture.

ALBERT
Then what's the difference?

TOMMY CORN
Here they say everything's connected in the blanket. But Vauban says nothing's connected. It's random and cruel, so it doesn't matter what you do.

BERNARD (DANCING BY)
That's nihilism, Tommy.

Vivian looks at Albert as she dances by.

TOMMY CORN
They find it a little threatening. But it's very convincing. My ex won't let me see my daughter and she's brainwashing her to not think or feel. What kind of reality is that?

ALBERT
Not theirs.

TOMMY CORN
I think you should just look at your file if you want to.

ALBERT
How am I gonna do that?

TOMMY CORN
I'll distract them, you slip in for the file. Here comes your boy, act natural.

47 (2) 47

BRAD (WALKS UP)
Are you playing Mancala?

ALBERT
I didn't know you were interested in existential questions, Brad.

BRAD
Why? Cuz I'm a dumb sales executive instead of a sensitive artist like you?

ALBERT
I never heard you talk about it, that's all.

BRAD
Why do you think I joined the Open Spaces Coalition?

ALBERT
I thought you cared about the issue, but you obviously had another agenda.

BRAD
I read Phil Jackson's "Sacred Hoops" when Huckabee's got the gallies, and I didn't read it for work, I read it because I have plenty of questions.

ALBERT
Aren't they mostly sports questions in that book?

BRAD (ANGRY, TRYING TO BE NICE)
No. Come on, man. Phil Jackson's a thinker. He's a smart guy.

ALBERT
That was an honest question.

TOMMY CORN
It felt a little hostile, but I feel the same thing from him.

BRAD
Who the hell are you?

TOMMY CORN
Who the hell are you?

47 (3) 47

ALBERT
He's my other.

Tense stand off. TOMMY JUMPS UP, SCATTERING THE MANCALA PIECES ALL OVER THE FLOOR, BRAD STEPS BACK, TOMMY TAKES DAWN'S HAND TO DANCE.

BRAD (PUTS A HAND ON TOM'S ARM)
Don't be an idiot.

TOMMY pushes Brad, who knocks over the cocktail table with great clatter. The twelve other clients look on, aghast.

BOY (LAUGHING COMPULSIVELY)
That's so funny he pushed him!

TURKISH MAN
Eet ees not funny.

BOY'S MOTHER
He laughs when he's scared.

BERNARD (HELPING BRAD)
Are you all right?

48 INT. VIVIAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 48

Albert rifles through Vivian's files, FINDS HIS, OPENS IT. Sees a PHOTO OF THE AFRICAN MAN in a doorman uniform, captioned "STEVEN Nimieri, SUDANESE REFUGEE, DOORMAN; LIVES AT 155 TRACY ST" Albert frantically writes this down. THE DOOR OPENS, BOBBY THE RECEPTIONIST WALKS IN. *

BOBBY
What are you doing?

ALBERT
I just uh had to get this --

He walks past him and out.

49 INT. RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS 49

Albert walks back in to find Bernard standing between Tommy and Brad, a hand on each of their chests.

BERNARD
In infinity, it's a loop where you've had every relationship possible: brothers, mother and son, husband and wife, predator and prey, best friends, casual acquaintances, gay lovers, enemies, allies-

49 49

BOBBY
SECURITY BREACH! HE BROKE INTO HIS FILE.

VIVIAN
What did you do, Albert?

ALBERT
It's my investigation, isn't it?

BERNARD
YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO? You haven't even gotten through dismantling your identity or your fear.

TOMMY CORN
Albert's gotta do what he's gotta do. (to Dawn) Sorry.

Albert and Tommy walk out.

50 EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - DAY 50

Albert and Tommy ride their bikes.

51 EXT. TRACY ST.- DAY 51

Albert and Tommy see MR. NIMIERI THE DOORMAN from afar. He * wears his DOORMAN'S UNIFORM watching teen age boys play basketball in the driveway of his suburban ranch house. Caterine Vauban sits in a BLACK LINCOLN, watching.

MR. NIMIERI *
Hello, it is you, my goodness.

ALBERT
Yes, it is me. Albert. This is my friend, Tommy.

MR. NIMIERI *
Steven Nimieri. *

They shake hands.

MR. NIMIERI *
Is this yet a fourth coincidence?

ALBERT
No, I came here on purpose. I've been wondering about our coincidences, what they mean.

51 51

TOMMY CORN
Maybe we could spend some time with you to try to understand it.

MR. NIMIERI *
Perhaps you can be my guests for dinner.

TOMMY CORN
That would be great.

MR. NIMIERI *
I must ask my mom, wait here.

52 INT. MR. NIMIERI'S S HOME - DINING TABLE - NIGHT 52

MR. AND MRS. HOOTEN and their teen children CRICKET and BRET, plus Mr. Nimieri, Albert, and Tommy hold hands at dinner. *

CRICKET
--for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever, amen.

Cut to everyone eating. Tommy glances at Albert.

ALBERT
How did you end up working as a doorman, Steven?

MR. NIMIERI *
It is part of our immigration agreement. We must work.

MRS. HOOTEN
The building supervisor who hired Steven is a member of our congregation.

BRET
He was so skinny when he moved in.

CRICKET (MURMURS CRYPTICALLY)
Skeleton Man from Africaaaa.

Bret and Cricket giggle uncontrollably, Bret spits milk.

MRS. HOOTEN
What did we say about that?

MR. HOOTEN
I don't want to hear it again, or there will be no internet tonight.

52

BRET
He didn't know what a can opener was. He opened cans with a big knife, like at the refugee camp.

MR. HOOTEN
Patience, Bret.

CRICKET
And there aren't lions roaming around here, but there were in Sudan and the orphan boys got chased, and a big alligator bit his friend's head off. He saw it.

BRET
Crocodile.

CRICKET
He wanted to know where all the meat comes from since he doesn't see any cows around here.

MR. HOOTEN
That's enough, guys, Steven doesn't like to talk about that stuff.

Tommy looks at Steven empathically.

MRS. HOOTEN
What brought you to the philosophical club, Albert?

ALBERT
You mean the existential detectives?

MR. HOOTEN
Sounds like a support group.

CRICKET
Why can't he use the church?

MRS. HOOTEN
Sometimes people have additional questions to explore.

CRICKET
Like what?

52 (2) 52

ALBERT
Well, for instance, if the forms of this world die, which is more real, the me that dies or the me that's infinite? Can I trust my habitual mind or should I try to look underneath those things?

MR. HOOTEN (CHUCKLES)
Sounds like we got a philosopher.

CRICKET
We don't have to ask those questions, do we, Mom?

MRS. HOOTEN
No, honey.

MR. HOOTEN
Ya know what happened to the cat, Albert.

ALBERT (TAKEN ABACK)
How do you know about my cat?

MR. HOOTEN (WINKS)
The cat got killed by curiosity.

BRET
Do you have a job?

MRS. HOOTEN
Yes, Albert, tell us what you do.

ALBERT
I'm director of the Open Spaces Coalition. We fight suburban sprawl.

CRICKET
What's suburban sprawl?

MR. HOOTEN
Ask Steven if they could use a little suburban sprawl in Sudan.

MR. NIMIERI *
Excuse me, Dad?

MR. HOOTEN
Industry, houses, jobs, restaurants, food, medicine --

52 (3) 52

ALBERT
You can still preserve a lot of --

MR. HOOTEN
I beg your pardon, Albert, I wasn't finished.

ALBERT
Oh. I'm sorry, go ahead.

MR. HOOTEN
Clothes, videos, toys, cheeseburgers, cars, computer games, a functioning economy.

Mr. Hooten resumes eating, Bret lifts his eyebrows at Albert.

ALBERT
You can have a functioning economy and preserve a lot of open spaces, with a little planning.

MRS. HOOTEN
Socialism, a complete disaster.

ALBERT (GROWING HEATED)
Then I guess Theodore Roosevelt was a socialist, and William Butler Yeats, and Elizabeth Bishop and Robinson Jeffers and Henry David Thoreau and the National Geographic Society --

CRICKET (WHISPERS)
Skeleton man from Africaaaa.

MR. HOOTEN
You're talking about socialism.

ALBERT (GETTING MORE HEATED)
I'm talking about not covering every square inch of populated America with strip malls and houses til people can't even remember what happens when you stand alone in a meadow at dusk. *

BRET
What happens in the meadow at dusk? *

MR. HOOTEN (MAD)
I happen to work for an electrical engineering firm, son, and we do a great deal of commercial and residential contracts, so if development stops, so does my pay check, and then Steven couldn't be here as our guest, could he? Your ideas are hurting Steven, Albert.

ALBERT (HEATED)
I am not hurting Steven. That's an outrageous accusation.

MR. HOOTEN (VERY MAD)
Don't use that tone in my house.

ALBERT
I think you started that tone, sir, and it's entirely possible for your engineering firm to have all kinds of contracts and still --

Albert suddenly stares at the table and the floor, OCEAN SOUNDS. He closes his eyes as everyone looks.

CRICKET
Why's he closing his eyes?

MRS. HOOTEN
Cricket.

MR. HOOTEN
Do you have a job, Tom?

TOMMY CORN
I'm a fireman.

MRS. HOOTEN
You're a hero, God bless you.

TOMMY CORN
I'm no hero. We'd all be heros if we'd quit using petroleum.

MR. HOOTEN
Excuse me?

TOMMY CORN
You say you're Christians living by Jesus' principles, but are you?

BRET
Of course we are.

52 (5) 52

CRICKET
Jesus is never mad at us if we live with him in our hearts.

TOMMY CORN
Well, I hate to break it to you, but he is, he most definitely is.

MRS. HOOTEN
Steven, you've brought blasphemous socialists into our house.

MR. NIMIERI *
I'm sorry, Dad, I did not know.

MR. HOOTEN
Steve-O. I'm disappointed.

Steven looks down, ashamed.

MRS. HOOTEN
Go upstairs while I get dessert.

BRET AND CRICKET
YESSS.

The kids jump out of their chairs and go. Albert follows them upstairs. Tommy remains at the table.

53 INT. NIMIERI'S ROOM - NIGHT 53

Bret plays on a computer while Mr. Nimieri and Albert sit on * the twin bed. The Backstreet Boys play; unframed glossies of Jim Carrey, Bill Cosby are tacked to the wall.

BRET (PLAYING COMPUTER)
It's not your fault, Albert, my mom says Steve's traumatized. That's why he looks sad a lot.

ALBERT
But I don't understand why you think autographs are important.

MR. NIMIERI *
It is a pastime of this family which they have taught to me and which I can now carry on.

BRET (PLAYING COMPUTER GAME)
YESSS, 260, I reached Omega Level.

MR. NIMIERI (SADLY) *
I cannot achieve Omega level.

53 53

Albert GOES BACK DOWNSTAIRS.

54 INT. HOOTEN'S DINING ROOM 54

MR. HOOTEN
GOD GAVE US OIL! HE GAVE IT TO US!

TOMMY CORN
HE GAVE YOU A BRAIN, TOO.

MR. HOOTEN (TO ALBERT)
I want you sons of bitches out now.

Tommy and Albert head to the door.

TOMMY CORN
If Hitler were alive, he'd tell us NOT to think about oil.

MRS. HOOTEN (CRYING)
YOU'RE THE HITLER. I GAVE A SUDANESE REFUGEE A HOME.

TOMMY CORN
How did Sudan happen? Could it be related to dictatorships we support for some stupid reason?

MR. HOOTEN
YOU SHUT UP, YOU GET OUT.

55 EXT. NIMIERI'S SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT 55

The door slams on Albert and Tommy, who stop on the sidewalk and look at each other like "holy shit."

Vivian climbs out of the bushes, removing her headphones. Bernard, in headphones, emerges from other shrubs.

VIVIAN
You hesitated over the mention of a cat. What does that mean?

ALBERT
Nothing. Just like my coincidence.

VIVIAN
The cat seemed to hit a nerve.

ALBERT
Yeah, I once had a cat, you caught me. You're amazing.

55 55

BERNARD
The method helped. I saw it, Albert.

TOMMY CORN
It's a tranquilizer so we don't get pissed about the painful, ugly truth.

BERNARD
No, it penetrates the unified infinity of everything.

ALBERT (UNLOCKING HIS BIKE)
We're not in infinity, we're in the suburbs.

Albert and Tommy TAKE OFF ON THEIR BIKES.

56 EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - CONTINUOUS 56

The CITROEN, with Vivian driving, catches up to the bikes.

BERNARD
Infinity's everywhere, that's what makes it infinity.

TOMMY CORN (RIDING BIKE)
Mr. Nimieri's an orphan who was chased by soldiers and crocodiles, where does your love glow fit in? *

BERNARD (LEANING OUT CAR WINDOW)
It's connected, Albert and Mr. Nimieri share a great deal, we just don't know if- OH MY GOD! *

A BLACK CONTINENTAL PULLS UP ON THE OTHER SIDE OF ALBERT AND TOMMY AS THEY RIDE. CATERINE STARES AS SHE DRIVES. ALBERT STARES AT CATERINE FOR A MOMENT, THEN ALBERT AND TOMMY TURN A CORNER ON THEIR BIKES, LOSING BOTH THE CITROEN AND THE CONTINENTAL. CATERINE IS LEFT STARING GHOSTLY AT BERNARD AND VIVIAN, WHO INHALES SHARPLY WITH FEAR.

VIVIAN (TERRIFIED)
What is she doing here? [mocking] Ooh, we have spooky stares, too.

They mock Caterine's spooky stare, she speeds off. Vivian pulls the Citroen over and stops, upset.

VIVIAN (VERY UPSET)
This is much worse that we thought.

56 56

BERNARD
Yeah. A lot worse.

Bernard rubs his hands over his distraught face.

VIVIAN
What if they're talking to her?

BERNARD
We know Tommy has her book.

VIVIAN
You never told me that.

BERNARD
I thought I told you.

VIVIAN
No. Is there anything else you're not telling me?

BERNARD [PAUSE]
No, we should focus on Brad and Dawn. That's where this case is going to crack. * * *

57 EXT. BRAD'S HOUSE - ANOTHER MORNING 57

Brad walks out of his kitchen door into the driveway and tosses ROLLED UP ARCHITECTURAL PLANS into his BMW SUV, he turns to see DAWN WALK OUT. SHE HAS UGLIFIED HERSELF, NO MAKE UP, BED HEAD, SUPER BAGGY OVERALLS AND WORKBOOTS. Brad stares at her, upset.

DAWN [EATING MINI OREOS]
What?

BRAD (HOLDING ARCHITECTURAL PLANS)
You can't keep going to work like that.

UGLIFIED DAWN
This is me.

BRAD
That is not you.

UGLIFIED DAWN
Me and Daryl made some 30 second spots Marty's gonna love.

BRAD
MARTY WILL HATE THEM, DAWN.

57 57

UGLIFIED DAWN
You can't deal with my infinite nature, can you?

BRAD
That is SO not true, wait, what does that mean? *

UGLIFIED DAWN (PATRONIZING)
We have talked about your intimacy problem, what's the core of it? Intimacy is combo of infinites.

BRAD
I'm gonna have an intimacy problem if you look like this all the time.

UGLIFIED DAWN
It's only been a week.

BRAD
One day is too much. People are freaking out at the office, Dawn.

UGLIFIED DAWN
You could get free, Brad, but you think you have to be Superman in control and that means YOU are the source, instead of PART of the infinite, that makes it too hard for us.

BRAD
STOP TALKING TO ME LIKE THAT.

UGLIFIED DAWN
You hired the detectives.

BRAD
You don't have to listen to every stupid thing they say.

UGLIFIED DAWN
How am I supposed to know which parts to listen to?

BRAD (MAD)
BECAUSE I'M TELLING YOU.

UGLIFIED DAWN
It's confusing.

Brad gets into his BMW SUV, disgusted. DAWN PUTS ON AN AMISH STYLE BONNET.

57 (2) 57

BRAD (IN HIS CAR)
Take that off.

UGLIFIED DAWN
Can I have my car keys, please?

BRAD
NO. Stay home til you dress normal.
Don't come to the office.

Brad ACCIDENTALLY DROPS SOME PAPERS AS HE GETS INTO HIS BMW SUV and drives off, leaving Dawn standing there.

PAN TO: BERNARD AND VIVIAN SPY FROM NEARBY BUSHES.

BERNARD
What's she gonna do? She's doing the method, that's good.

VIVIAN
Shhh.

BACK TO: DAWN puts on an EYE MASK AND lies down in the middle of the lawn. BERNARD AND VIVIAN CREEP AROUND HER TO GET TO THE PAPERS BRAD DROPPED. BERNARD PAUSES OVER BLINDFOLDED DAWN TO WATCH HER DOING THE METHOD.

58 INT. DAWN'S MIND - CONTINUOUS 58

DOLLY PARTON is Dawn's guide in the tree, emanating a golden glow of love. She strums a guitar gently and sings 'Coat of Many Colors.' Dawn, in a bikini, gets DOLLY PARTON's glow til the bikini transforms into a country dress as Dawn dances with a faceless man.

59 BERNARD LOOKS UP FROM DAWN DOING THE METHOD TO SEE VIVIAN WAVE HIM OVER AS SHE PICKS UP BRAD'S DROPPED PAPERS. HE CREEPS OVER TO HER AND THEY HUDDLE BEHIND A BUSH TO READ THE DROPPED MEMO TOGETHER. 59

BERNARD
What is it?

VIVIAN (READING)
A memo. The big meeting's going down to kick Albert out of the charter.

60 OMITTED 60

61 INT. HUCKABEE'S CORPORATE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 61

Albert stands addressing the Coalition Members as ORRIN SPENCE, 40, Director of The National Open Spaces Coalition, listens. Tommy Corn is there. Construction Worker #3 is there. The Frosh Girls, Leonard, Jerry Larson wear their Shania Open Spaces T-shirts.

ANGELA FRANCO
Where's Brad? Why are you here?

DARLENE
Brad is in charge now.

TIM
Albert has the floor.

ANGELA FRANCO
For what? It's counterproductive.

HARRISON
It's totally productive, his strategy got us where we are.

ANGELA FRANCO
What about the motion for Brad to represent us in a deal with Dexicorp?

ALBERT
Do you think Dexicorp cares about saving a meadow?

FROSH GIRL
You have to work with people and comprompise to get results.

DARLENE
Brad is helping you so much, Brad is saving the whole thing!

HARRISON
Order! Order!

ORRIN SPENCE
The National Office recognizes the charter. We want to give the director a chance to even the keel today.

ALBERT
Thank you, Orrin. We all want to save the Hutchinson Marsh and Woods. We've had lots of internal politics that broke up our momentum.

DARLENE
Brad is not here.

61 61

ALBERT (PAUSES)
So the big benefit's happening really soon. I know Brad's running it with Shania and all that, BUT... we're overlooking our core issues, and to get us back on track, I have a new poem I'd like to read.

ANGELA FRANCO
Point of order. I want to discuss this strategy of poems.

HARRISON
Albert has the floor.

ALBERT (READS HIS POEM)
"An open meadow, an open marsh, a crane flying in a cloudless sky --

Brad bursts in with a life-size cut-out of DEREK JETER and a "SHANIA ON BOARD" sign. The two Dexicorp guys follow him.

BRAD (CHEERFUL)
What's happening guys?

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
Is that for my grandson?

BRAD
Indeed it is, Mary Jane.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
You are a dear, dear man, Bradly.

ALBERT
Hold on, please.

Brad hands the Jeter cut out across Albert toward Mary Jane.

BRAD
You got it, sweetheart?

Albert tries to help and accidentally rips off Jeter's arm.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON (cont'd)
Oh, no.

BRAD
Good job.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
Can it be taped?

61 (2) 61

BRAD
I can try to order a new one.

ALBERT
If I could finish reading this, we'll review the strategy, OK? "The cranes flying above in a cloudless sky, and not a McDonald's in sight--

BRAD
Heads up, Jerry. Donna, comin' atcha, you, too, Angela.

Brad tosses 'Dundalee' movie tie-in cups across the room.

COLLEGE GIRL
Thanks, honey.

BRAD
You got it, baby.

62 INT. HALLWAY OF HUCKABEE'S CORPORATE - CONTINUOUS 62

Bernard and Vivian monitor the meeting with headphones.

63 INT. HUCKABEE'S CORPORATE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 63

ALBERT
Point of order, I'd like to read this poem.

BRAD
Relax, we're not doing the poems.

ALBERT
Don't give me the 'relax' thing.

TOMMY CORN
Let him read the poem.

ANGELA FRANCO (POINTS AT TOMMY)
That man is not a member of the Coalition.

ALBERT
He's a local fireman, we want him on our side. Besides, who are those guys? (He points to the Dexicorp guys) They're not members.

BRAD
They're working on the Benefit. Don't be so negative.

ANGELA FRANCO
I move to empower Brad Stand to act on behalf of the Coalition --

63

ALBERT
POINT OF ORDER.

BRAD (TO ALBERT)
Use the method. Conflict is an illusion.

ALBERT
Shut up.

TOMMY CORN
Yeah, shut up.

BRAD
Whoa.

Brad puts his hands up, like a victim backing up.

ALBERT
Yeah, 'Whoa, where did I get that from? I must be a crazy jackass.'

BRAD
He's great with people. (to Tommy) And this guy's got a problem with violence.

ALBERT
Phoney piece of shit.

ORRIN SPENCE
This is not how a director behaves, Albert.

ALBERT
Do you honestly think Brad Stand is going to save the Marsh?

ORRIN SPENCE
You recruited him and he's worked hard to bring celebrities to our cause.

TOMMY CORN
Sure, waste time fighting each other. We've got a deadly petroleum situation, not to mention cystic fibrosis, civil war in Africa, a handgun problem, toxic fish --

BRAD
Orrin, this is exactly the unfocused, idealistic approach of Albert Markovski that's killing us.
(MORE)

63 (2) 63

BRAD (cont'd)
Our mission has nothing to do with this nut's petroleum fixation--

TOMMY EXPLODES FROM HIS SEAT AND DECKS BRAD WITH ONE PUNCH.

HARRISON
RIGHT ON.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
My Lord in heaven.

She and Darlene, Angela, every woman there, rush to Brad.

ORRIN SPENCE (TO ALBERT)
You are OUT of the charter, man.

ANGELA FRANCO (HELPING BRAD)
I move to vote.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
Second.

ORRIN SPENCE
All in favor of Brad assuming powers to negotiate on behalf of the Open Spaces say aye.

EVERYONE (BUT FROSH, ALBERT, TOM)
AYE.

HARRISON
NAY.

ORRIN SPENCE
The motion passes.

BRAD
Thank you, Orrin. Thank you everyone! A new beginning!

APPLAUSE. Tommy and the Frosh give the finger as they exit; but Albert just walks out. A FLASHBULB goes off nearby.

64 INT. HALLWAY OF HUCKABEE'S CORPORATE - CONTINUOUS 64

Albert leans his forehead against the wall; Tommy watches empathically.

HARRISON
CONSPIRACY, CONSPIRACY.

TIM
It's a total conspiracy.

TOMMY CORN
I seriously think you should come over to the other side.
(MORE)

64 64

TOMMY CORN (cont'd)
Accept chaos, look what happened to you from trying to do a good thing.

VIVIAN (CALLS FROM OS)
ALBERT.

Albert looks up and sees Vivian and Bernard approaching down the hallway. He bolts. Tommy and the Froshes run with him.

TIM (RUNNING)
Why are we running? Who are those people?

BERNARD (SHOUTS TO ALBERT)
THIS IS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO DISMANTLE, DON'T BLOW IT.

HARRISON (RUNNING)
Dismantle what?

Albert turns, walks backwards as the detectives walk toward him, out of breath.

BERNARD (WALKING TOWARD ALBERT)
Look how angry and hurt you feel, look how REAL you feel, this ego, this self, dismantle it. They can't erase you because you're infinitely part of everything. Let the sadness go --

Albert closes his eyes: Blackness. BRAD'S HEAD POPS UP.

BRAD
RELAX. DON'T BE SO NEGATIVE.

ALBERT (OPENS HIS EYES)
It's all Brad today.

BERNARD
Fine. Throughout infinity, your energy recycles into every possible relation to everyone else's energy, even Brad's: you've been predator and prey with him, friends, enemies, brothers, sisters, child, parent.

Albert takes this in, closes his eyes.

65 INT. ALBERT'S MIND -- 65

BRAD HAS A WOMAN'S LONG HAIR AND BREASTS AND HOLDS BABY ALBERT, WITH ALBERT'S ADULT FACE, TO NURSE HIM.

65 65

MOTHER/BRAD IN AL'S MIND
You are so selfish, why don't you listen to me?

CUT BACK TO:

66 ALBERT TURNS AND RUNS FROM BERNARD, THROUGH HUCKABEE'S CORPORATE, TO AN ELEVATOR, WHERE HE FRANTICALLY HITS THE BUTTON THEN BOLTS INTO THE STAIRWELL. 66

67 INT. LOBBY OF HUCKABEE'S CORPORATE - CONTINUOUS 67

Albert runs across the huge, stark glass and white marble lobby. He grabs his bike from a security desk.

SECURITY GUARD
HEY, sign out!

ALBERT (RUNNING OUT)
IT'S MY BIKE.

68 EXT. HUCKABEE'S CORPORATE - CONTINUOUS 68

Albert bolts out of the building, followed by the detectives, then the Frosh. Through the glass, Tommy signs for his bike and runs out.

Albert runs down Route 4 with his bike, chased by the detectives and Tommy with his bike.

69 EXT. ROUTE 4 - CONTINUOUS 69

Bernard and Vivian stop running, sweaty, out of breath.

70 EXT. ROUTE 9 - DAY 70

Albert rides his bike, sweaty, agitated. When he stops at a RED LIGHT, CATERINE'S BLACK TOWN CAR pulls up alongside. Caterine Vauban looks at Albert through her closed window.

CATERINE VAUBAN (THROUGH CAR WINDOW)
I can show you what your coincidence means.

He looks at her. THE TRUNK POPS OPEN. He puts his bike in the trunk, and gets in the car. She pulls out.

71 THEY RIDE IN SILENCE. ALBERT WIPES HIS BROW. 71

ALBERT
You're the writer Tommy's into, * aren't you? *

CATERINE VAUBAN
Are you unhappy with their work?

ALBERT
I think I'm ready to cross over to your side.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Tell me about your case. *

ALBERT
You seem be following it pretty closely, why don't you tell me?

CATERINE VAUBAN
You were miserable, obsessed with your strange coincidence... *

ALBERT
Yeah then what?

They drive past strip malls along Route 4.

CATERINE VAUBAN
You thought it would unlock some meaningful secret about existence.

ALBERT
But their work has been all about Brad Stand.

CATERINE VAUBAN
They betrayed you, as he did.

ALBERT
Yes.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Betrayal embodies the universal truth you seek. *

ALBERT
What truth? *

CATERINE VAUBAN
Cruelty, manipulation.
Meaninglessness.

He looks at her. She turns a corner. The car stops. DOOR OPENS AND TOMMY SLIDES INTO THE FRONT SEAT, SHOVING ALBERT CLOSER TO CATERINE.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Did they follow you?

71 (2) 71

TOMMY CORN
I lost them on Route 4. I'm glad you came, Albert. This is the place to be. When you know the universe sucks, you've got nothing to lose. That gives you (in French) *force*.

ALBERT
Force. What's that?

TOMMY CORN
It's French for strength.

Albert picks up Caterine's book from the dashboard.

ALBERT
Is there a method here?

TOMMY CORN
You deconstruct your mind into the blackness, and accept it for what it is: nothing. No glowing guides, no infinite mothers or crap like that.

ALBERT
I thought the guides had potential.

CATERINE VAUBAN (DRIVING)
Does it comfort you to think that we have all been related at some time in a caring way?

ALBERT
Yeah, it does.

She stops at a red light and stares at Albert; there is a sexual charge.

CATERINE VAUBAN
How about this, Alber? I ass raped you in prison thousands of times through infinity, I excreted on your rotting corpse for millions of years, I tortured you with neglect and self-involvement in the infinite holocaust of misery that is the unexplained circus of shit we call 'our universe.'

TOMMY CORN
It's cute how we call it 'OUR' universe. 'Welcome to OUR universe.'

71 (3) 71

CATERINE VAUBAN (GIGGLING)
Anthrocentric like a small child. 'Mommy, did you find my universe?'

TOMMY CORN
Yes and I feel so much better, it's like a soft teddy bear.

CATERINE VAUBAN
I'm glad you feel comforted.

They start laughing uncontrollably as the light changes and she resumes driving, it's a little crazy, freaking Albert out. THEN Caterine looks suddenly serious. They drive in a strange, somber silence until THE CAR STOPS IN FRONT OF A HIGH RISE. She has a minor hissy fit trying to get the seat belt off.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Don't be fooled, Alber...

Albert watches as she GETS OUT and adjusts her stocking provocatively.

CATERINE VAUBAN
An act of caring is not as important as an act of truth.

HE WATCHES HER WALK INTO THE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING. HE LOOKS A BIT PANICKED.

ALBERT
Wait! What are you doing? Don't go in there.

ALBERT JUMPS OUT AND RUNS INTO THE BUILDING AFTER HER.

72 INT. LOBBY OF HIGH RISE BUILDING - DAY 72

Albert sees Caterine run across the lobby of this residential building, HAND A NOTE TO MR. Nimieri, THE DOORMAN AND DISAPPEAR INTO THE ELEVATOR. *

ALBERT
(to Mr. Nimieri) What did she give you? *

HE PULLS AT THE NOTE in Nimieri's hand, Nimieri PULLS IT BACK. *

MR. NIMIERI (BACKS AWAY) *
Stay away from me.

Albert lets go and runs into another elevator.

73 INT. 43RD FLOOR OF HIGH RISE - DAY 73

Albert rings the bell to apartment 43H. His mother, an intense Italian-American, 60, opens the door.

MRS. SILVER
Well, this is a rare occasion. *

ALBERT (TO HIS MOTHER)
Where is Caterine. *

ALBERT LOOKS PAST HIS MOTHER, SEES CATERINE ZIP BY.

MRS. SILVER
Who's Caterine?

ALBERT
Someone who's spying on me.

MRS. SILVER
I don't think that's funny.

MR. SILVER
What's happening?

ALBERT'S FATHER, a balding man of 62 wearing a bright madras shirt, walks into the foyer.

MRS. SILVER
He's making some joke on me.

MR. SILVER
Are you making fun of your mother? *

ALBERT *
No. *

Albert walks into the quasi Eames-style modern living room. *

MRS. SILVER *
How's your poetry job? *

ALBERT *
I got fired from that. *

MRS. SILVER (SARCASTIC) *
You can't even hold the poetry job. *

MR. SILVER *
Brenda, what the hell did you do?

MRS. SILVER
I didn't touch it.

73 73

MR. SILVER
Bullshit, I had this programmed to my favorite stations on a timer --

MRS. SILVER
Can I please have time with my son?

MR. SILVER (FIDDLES WITH STEREO)
Goddamn it.

MRS. SILVER
I wanna show him an article on a marketing internship.

MR. SILVER (TURNING IT ON)
Have you seen this system, Albert? State of the art. (sings along with radio) 'Ohh-oh-oh, Get in the action, feel the attraction, color my hair, do what I dare, ohh-oh-oh --'.

SUDDENLY CATERINE APPEARS AND TURNS THE STEREO OFF.

CATERINE
It will be easier to talk now.

MRS. SILVER
Where did she come from?

ALBERT
I told you I wasn't making a joke.

CATERINE VAUBAN
I would like to discuss some curious findings.

MR. SILVER
Who is this lady?

SHE HOLDS UP A WEATHERED CHILD'S NOTEBOOK.

CATERINE VAUBAN (cont'd)
I have found here in your apartment a rather troubling piece of evidence. Do you recognize the handwriting Mr. Markovski, pardon me, Mr. Silver?

MR. SILVER
No.

MRS. SILVER
That's Albert's, when he was young.

73 (2) 73

CATERINE VAUBAN
Could you please read the date for me?

MRS. SILVER
November 17, 1989. Albert was 9.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Do you mind reading this out loud?

MRS. SILVER
Why?

CATERINE
Please.

MRS. SILVER (READS FROM JOURNAL)
"I came home from school Mom was in the kitchen with a strange lady. Mom told me to go back to my room I thought I was in trouble. She closed my door and said Purree was hit by a car and killed and then she took me back to the lady in the kitchen and asked me to spell words to show how I was a good speller. I said I had to go to the bathroom I climbed out the window.

Caterine listens intently.

MRS. SILVER (READS FROM JOURNAL)
I went down the block I see Barney playing punch ball. He said I look sad. I told him what happened to my cat. He said that's sad then I cried but I tried not to some kids laughed Barney said he cried when Rocky died the kids stopped laughing." His cat died, it was sad. What's the point?

CATERINE VAUBAN
Nothing strikes you as odd?

MR. SILVER
These things happen.

CATERINE VAUBAN
C'est vrai, the universe is cruel--
But tell me this, Mrs. Silver: The lady you gave the coffee to--

73 (3) 73

MRS. SILVER
Helen's sister. I can't remember her name. I only met her once.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Was there some painful thing about this stranger that required your immediate attention?

MRS. SILVER
No. Helen wasn't home so I offered her sister a cup of coffee.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Do you agree that Purree meant a great deal to Albert?

MR. SILVER
You can't make a federal case out of the cat.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Answer the question please.

Mr. Silver nervously pours himself a glass of juice.

MR. SILVER
I wouldn't know much about the cat, I travelled a lot for work.

ALBERT *
This is embarrassing me, I think it's unnecessary.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Precisely the point.

They all look confused, including Albert.

CATERINE VAUBAN (cont'd)
You were embarrassed for feeling sad about the death of your cat. It's painful enough to feel sad, but on top of it, to feel embarrassed for feeling, that is * the killer. And then to be asked to * perform with his spelling ability. * C'est ca vraimont pire que tout. *

MRS. SILVER
How is that my fault? I didn't tell him to be embarrassed.

73 (4) 73

CATERINE VAUBAN
But you did. It was more important to have a cup of coffee with a perfect stranger than to talk to Albert about what, for a small boy, is a large tragedy. He climbed out the window, a criminal in his own house. Why?

MRS. SILVER
I don't know. Why?

CATERINE VAUBAN
I think you do.

MRS. SILVER (UPSET)
No, I don't, stop it.

CATERINE VAUBAN
You do.

MR. SILVER
That's enough, you should go!

CATERINE VAUBAN (ANGRY)
I will not go. Alber has a place here, a place you have denied.

MRS. SILVER
This is my house, I can tell --

CATERINE VAUBAN
YES, YOUR HOUSE. WHERE LOVE IS A LIE.

MRS. SILVER
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? WE GAVE OUR LIFE TO THIS SELFISH, SELFISH BASTARD I NEARLY DIED GIVING BIRTH TO HIM.

CATERINE VAUBAN
SO HE COULD BE AN ORNAMENT TO YOU NOT A PERSON! (to Mr. Silver) AND YOU SIT THERE LIKE YOU ARE THE GOOD ONE BUT YOUR SILENCE IS LOUDER THAN ANY OF HER SCREAMING.

MRS. SILVER
YOU CUNT HOW MANY KIDS DO YOU HAVE?

CATERINE VAUBAN
Listen, listen, listen. This is your mother.

73 (5) 73

Doorbell rings. Mr. Nimieri walks in. *

MR. NIMIERI [HOLDING NOTE] *
You asked me to come up here?

MRS. SILVER
What does the doorman have to do with this?

CATERINE VAUBAN
He was orphaned by civil war, you were orphaned by indifference this is one part of your puzzle. Do you see?

ALBERT (SADLY)
Yes.

Mr. Nimieri leaves. *

MRS. SILVER
I'm done, get out of here.

ALBERT (QUIETLY, TO MRS. SILVER)
Fuck you -

CATERINE VAUBAN (QUIETLY)
For your exploitation -

MR. SILVER
Albert, that's enough.

ALBERT (TO MR. SILVER, QUIETLY)
Fuck you -

CATERINE VAUBAN
For not caring -

They leave quietly.

Albert and Caterine walk out the door.

74 DISSOLVE TO INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS 74

Albert and Caterine hold hands, they are both crying. She holds him. ALBERT AND CATERINE VIBRATE INTO BEING COMPOSED OF SMALL SQUARES THAT MERGE THEM TOGETHER SLIGHTLY.

74A INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS 74A

The doors open, and Tommy stands in the LOBBY. Caterine takes out a COLLAPSIBLE POLAROID, OPENS IT, TAKES A PHOTO OF TEARFUL ALBERT, holding the camera at her chest.

74A 74A

Tommy nods his head in understanding as they walk past him, holding hands, and he follows them out --

75 OMITTED 75

76 INT. HUCKABEE'S STUDIO - DAY 76

Dawn walks onto the COLORFUL COMMERCIAL SET holding her script wearing her baggy grey overalls, work boots, no make up, an Amish bonnet. She sits on set holding her script, ready to tape, when DARYL, the engineer, comes into the control room. THEY SPEAK THROUGH INTERCOMS.

UGLIFIED DAWN (WARM)
Hey, Daryl, how are ya?

DARYL
Great, honey. Let's make a commercial.

HEATHER, a pretty younger blond in a sexy dress, enters.

DARYL
This is Heather, Dawn.

UGLIFIED DAWN [WARM]
Hi, Heather. Welcome to our family.

HEATHER (GIGGLING)
It's so weird to meet my voice. I love your work by the way.

UGLIFIED DAWN (CONFUSED)
Thanks. This script only has my lines, and I don't see another character here, so...

DARYL
Let's lay one down, shall we? And Dawn, if you could take three big steps to your right, please, honey.

UGLIFIED DAWN (TAKES 3 STEPS SIDEWAYS)
One, two, three!

She's off the set.

UGLIFIED DAWN
And you'll pan over to me, right?

Daryl rolls tape, signals her.

UGLIFIED DAWN (DANCING)
"Bees and trees, we're saving the green!

(MORE)

76 76

UGLIFIED DAWN (DANCING) (cont'd)
Coming soon from Huckabee's, the Enviro-Friendly Everything Store. Huckabee's in cooperation with the local chapter of-"

HEATHER LIP-SYNCHS AND DANCES TO DAWN'S WORDS.

UGLIFIED DAWN
What's going on, Daryl?

DARYL
She's lip-synching, honey.

UGLIFIED DAWN
I can see that. Why is she lip-synching to my voice, and why am I off camera?

DARYL
Corporate's not biting on your new look, hon.

UGLIFIED DAWN
What about my idea that people like Huckabee's because I'm being real. Roll those now, let me see them.

77 DARYL HITS A BUTTON A TAPE PLAYS DAWN'S "STRAIGHT NOT PRETTY" 77
COMMERCIAL CLIP: DAWN STANDS IN FRONT OF A WHITE BACKGROUND. SHE WEARS A BONNET AND A "BETTER IN THE BAHAMAS" T-SHIRT.

UGLIFIED DAWN (IN BONNET)
This IS the BEST buy you'll find, these ARE the best tops around, no fakery, no lies. NO LIES. REAL.

78 BACK TO: 78

DARYL
They're not biting, Dawn. But they love the voice, you're the trademark voice of Huckabee's.

He gives her a thumbs up.

HEATHER (LAUGHING NERVOUSLY)
She's the voice, I'm the face.

DARYL (CHUCKLES)
More than a face, sweetheart.

HEATHER (WIGGLES HER HIPS)
All this and brains, too.

DAWN RIPS OFF HER HEADPHONES AND THROWS THEM.

78 78

UGLIFIED DAWN (SCREAMS)
SON OF A BITCH, Daryl, they want me back in a bikini, Dolly Parton says I don't need that. I'm pretty, too, it's a choice, but it's not everything. It's not everything. [whisper] Wake up pretty girl, the joke's on you. You're very talented, Heather [she mocks Heather's lip-synching].

She angrily storms out of the studio.

79 INT. HUCKABEE'S CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY 79

Brad and the TWO BALD EXECUTIVES FROM Dexicorp review a seating plan for the OPEN SPACES BENEFIT.

DEXICORP EXECUTIVE (TEXAS TWANG)
When Garth headlined our Dallas benefit, we seated the $10,000 VIP donors in front, and right behind was a plebe section--

Dawn storms through in her bonnet and overalls. Brad and the executives look concerned.

80 INT. HUCKABEE'S OPEN OFFICE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS 80

Dawn storms through as HUCKABEE'S PEOPLE work and bustle about. A LARGE TV plays a tape loop of Heather lip-synching to Dawn's voice.

HEATHER WITH DAWN'S VOICE (VIDEO LOOP)
...Welcome to the Huckabee's Open Spaces Gala Event. Huckabee's pledges to help save our environment. One world. One Store. Huckabee's, the Everything Store... Welcome to the Huckabee's Open...

Dawn passes by the TV and walks up to Marty.

UGLIFIED DAWN
Why don't you like my spots?

MARTY
Honey, this look is hurting you and it's hurting Huckabee's.

UGLIFIED DAWN
This is myself.

80 80

MARTY
Then you won't speak at the benefit as yourself. That is not Huckabee's.

UGLIFIED DAWN
I am Huckabee's.

MARTY
Not in that bonnet.

UGLIFIED DAWN
It's in my eyes, Marty. It's like that story of the cave.

MARTY
What in God's name is happening to you? You've been given so much by Huckabee's.

UGLIFIED DAWN (PISSED)
FUCKabee's.

She storms out. Brad comes in, flustered.

MARTY
Bradly, there are board members here. Do something.

81 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 81

Brad bursts into the hall and Dawn is nowhere to be seen. He opens doors to Empty Offices on the hall, til he finds Dawn lying down on a desk with an eye mask covering her eyes.

82 INT. EMPTY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 82

BRAD (AGITATED)
That's it. Knock it off.

UGLIFIED DAWN
How come you can do it but I can't? You think I'm dumber than you, you think I'm a piece of meat. * *

BRAD
I DON'T DO THIS STUPID METHOD.

UGLIFIED DAWN
Why not?

82

82

BRAD
I got corporate. Don't wreck what took three years for us to build together, Dawn.

UGLIFIED DAWN
What are you talking about?

BRAD
I went to the detectives so I could freak Albert out a little bit, I admit that, but I also, for real, wanted to save the Marsh, and I also wanted to help Huckabee's and get promoted for US, and you know it's a win win win for everyone. Albert number one had problems he needed help he was never gonna save the Marsh his way, you don't go through the back door, tie yourself to a tree with a poem wearing a bonnet like that, you go through the front door with a tie and you OWN the tree. Dexicorp isn't some evil company, that's black and white kids' thinking. The point is, I was able to spin the green PR Huckabee's needs and I got promoted, baby.

UGLIFIED DAWN
Who cares? If our love is gone, THERE'S NO HEART IN HUCKABEE'S, I HEART HUCKABEE'S, JUST TOASTERS AND TOPS IN AN EMPTY SHELL!

BRAD (PANICKED)
Shhhh.

DOOR OPENS, DARLENE PEEKS IN.

BRAD
We're fine [the peeker leaves]. DAWN, our love is here, I'm talking about our future.

UGLIFIED DAWN
Is that true?

BRAD
Yes. Why do you think we climbed this mountain?

82 (2) 82

UGLIFIED DAWN (CONFUSED)
Why didn't you tell me you went to the detectives for work, not for real?

BRAD
I was doing it for real.

UGLIFIED DAWN
No, you keep telling me not to listen to them. You paid $7,000 to mess with Albert.

BRAD
It was a great investment, Dawn, look: Albert's out, and now I'm Corporate VP for Public Affairs. We're talking half a million in salary plus stock. Condo in Bermuda to ride our jet skis WHENEVER WE WANT, honey, WHENEVER WE WANT.

UGLIFIED DAWN (GIGGLES)
That is gonna be so awesome [starts crying] but you lied to me [giggles and cries] You got corporate. This is weird. We can ride our jet skis.

She pulls her bonnet off, cries, tries to smile.

UGLIFIED DAWN (PAINED, CRYING)
Oh, I'm confused.

BRAD (PUTTING ARM AROUND HER)
It's gonna be great, I promise. Now I've got to break the news to the detectives in my office, you go home and rest, OK, Honey?

Dawn laughs and cries in Brad's arms, closes her eyes:

83 INT. DAWN'S MIND - CONTINUOUS 83

Dawn in her bonnet and overalls rides a jet ski with Brad. Then overalls change into a bikini, then back to overalls.

84 INT. HIGHRISE LOBBY - DAY 84

Bernard and Vivian scan the directory of tenants til they come to the name: KELLY COULTER, 37B.

OLDER WHITE DOORMAN
Can I help you?

84 84

VIVIAN
Is Mr. Nimieri working today? *

OLDER WHITE DOORMAN
No, he's off today.

VIVIAN (BIG SMILE)
OK, THANKS!

Bernard smiles broadly and waves as they walk to the elevators, leaving the doorman hanging.

85 INT. 37TH FLOOR HALL - DAY 85

Bernard and Vivian walk up, ring the bell to apartment 37B. The door opens and a YOUNG MULATTO WOMAN APPEARS.

VIVIAN (BIG SMILE)
Hi, we're looking for Kelly Coulter.

KELLY COULTER
That's me.

VIVIAN
We're friends of Albert Markovski?

Kelly shakes her head in unknowing.

BERNARD
You don't know him?

She shakes her head.

VIVIAN
How about Jay Wendorff, isn't he your boyfriend?

KELLY COULTER
Never heard of him.

86 INT. LOBBY - 86

Bernard and Vivian study the tenant directory again.

OLDER WHITE DOORMAN
Can I help ya find someone?

VIVIAN
You know the guy who's about this tall, longish dark hair, 22, wears suits, had the coincidence with Mr. Nimieri? *

86 86

OLDER WHITE DOORMAN (THINKING)
Mmmmmm, I don't, well, he comes like once a year maybe to see the Silvers.

VIVIAN
And who are the Silvers?

OLDER WHITE DOORMAN
His parents.

VIVIAN
But his name is Markovski.

OLDER WHITE DOORMAN
I think the kid changed it back to the ancestor's original name. Back to the roots. You with that French lady? *

BERNARD
What? *

87 OMITTED 87

88 OMITTED 88

89 OMITTED 89

90 OMITTED 90

91 MONTAGE AS MUSIC CONTINUES: 91

91A Albert walks with Caterine and Tommy in a hideous overdeveloped area, playing Wagner on a small boom box, Albert has stopped shaving. 91A

91B Wagner continues to play as Albert and Caterine and Tommy laugh maniacally as they sit in a massive traffic jam, Albert and Caterine in her black car, windows open, Tommy on his bike next to the car. 91B

91C Albert, Caterine, Tommy watch fat families gorge at McDonalds; 91C

91D Albert, and Caterine look at a newly paved black square of asphalt in the Huckabee's lot where Albert planted a tree, Tommy is now off to the side, forlorned as Albert and Caterine walk off together; 91D

91E Albert and Caterine walk by the open spaces office, trailed by Tommy, who feels left out; 91E

91 91

91F Tommy holds a hose on a burning house, but looks uninterested, and the hose drifts away from the house til it's pointed at the lawn and another fireman takes it away from him; 91F

91G Tommy sits alone in the dark watching 'WILD ON 'E'. 91G

92 EXT. HUTCHINSON MARSH - MUSIC ENDS 92

Albert and Caterine jog through the woods holding hands. HE DROPS TO HIS KNEES THEN HIS BELLY, CARESSING ROOTS AND EARTH. SHE HOLDS HIS HAND IN HER CHANEL SUIT. HE RUBS HER LEGS WITH LEAVES, SHOVES HANDFULS UNDER HER DRESS. *

She tilts her head back and chokes out sounds of pleasure.

CATERINE VAUBAN (EYES CLOSED)
Aaahhhhgggg ca gaghhhhhkk aaagh.

He pulls her to the ground, where he rubs dirt and leaves on her face, her breasts. They kiss, stare at each other. Slowly, she dunks his face repeatedly in a mud puddle.

ALBERT (SLOWLY DUNKED IN PUDDLE)
Augh... Augh... Augh.

He kisses her passionately, then pushes her face into the mud puddle and holds it there, somewhat sadistically. She pulls up, cracks him across the face. They kiss passionately.

CUT TO:

93 THEY FUCK ON A ROCK 93

CUT TO:

94 SHE EMBRACES ALBERT. THE WOODS BEGIN TO VIBRATE INTO SMALL SQUARES, ENVELOPING THEM IN A GOLDEN GLOW. 94

CUT TO:

95 THEY RUN OUT OF THE WOODS, SMEARED WITH MUD AND LEAVES, AND RUN DOWN ROUTE 4 NEXT TO A TRAFFIC JAM. 95

CATERINE VAUBAN *
Come with me. I want to show you *
something. *

96 EXT. BERNARD AND VIVIAN'S HOUSE - DAY 96

Albert and Caterine, still smeared with mud and leaves, walk down a residential street.

ALBERT
I like how I feel with you.

CATERINE VAUBAN
How do you feel?

ALBERT
Like myself.

CATERINE VAUBAN
I know what it is to be the odd one out, as you do.

ALBERT
When?

CATERINE VAUBAN
All my life, beginning when I was young when I mother left me with my aunt, forever, and in graduate school, with Vivian and Bernard.

ALBERT
What happened?

CATERINE VAUBAN
We had a perfect family, really. Our own philosophy. Which they violated when they left me.

ALBERT
Because love is a lie.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Correct. You are starting to catch on.

ALBERT
Then what is this between us?

CATERINE VAUBAN
We are living without illusions. Do not mistake it for love.

They approach a modest but modern looking house. They prowl around the house, peer into a window and see a colorful living room with large Miro paintings and orange chairs.

Bernard and Vivian lie on sofas, depressed.

CATERINE VAUBAN (WHISPERS)
What do you see?

96 (2) 96

ALBERT (WHISPERS)
They look sad.

CATERINE VAUBAN
They forgot something in Paris, what is it? [taunting, she knows the answer] What could it be?

She chuckles wickedly as they spy on the detectives.

97 INT. BERNARD AND VIVIAN'S LIVING ROOM 97

VIVIAN
That bitch, she beat us. Do you understand what that means? Her work beat ours.

Bernard nods as he sits and listens. He falls off his chair to the floor, passed out.

VIVIAN (REVIVING HIM)
Bernard? What is it honey?

BERNARD (TEARFUL)
She's my guide.

VIVIAN
Who's your guide?

Bernard just looks at her.

VIVIAN
No... I'm gonna throw up. It's never been Magritte?

BERNARD (TEARFUL)
I was lying, I didn't want to hurt you.

VIVIAN (REALLY HURT)
Are you still in love with her?

BERNARD
No, I'm not in love with her at all.

VIVIAN
Then what does this mean?

BERNARD
I don't know. I'm sorry, I'm embarrassed.

97 97

VIVIAN
Why the fuck is she your guide?

BERNARD
I don't know, Vivian. If I could change it I would.

VIVIAN
Why did we even take this stupid pro bono case?

BERNARD
There has to be a reason this is happening.

VIVIAN (LOOKS AT HER WATCH, STANDS)
We're supposed to meet Brad at eleven.

BERNARD
Yeah.

98 EXT. BERNARD AND VIVIAN'S HOUSE 98

ALBERT
You're Bernard's guide? How come?

CATERINE
Indeed, how come?

Bernard and Vivian exit the house and get into their Citroen.

ALBERT
Let's follow them.

CATERINE
No.

CATERINE VAUBAN
I saw what I expected to see. Now I must choose my moment.

ALBERT
For what?

CATERINE VAUBAN
They have tried to shut me out for over twenty years. They have ridiculed my work in academic journals, but they cannot deny my truth now.

They watch from the bushes as the Citroen drives off. He tries to fix her hair.

98 98

CATERINE VAUBAN *
DON'T. *

She starts walking off toward the street.

99 INT. ALBERT'S MIND 99

In blackness. JESSICA LANGE/DAWN CRYING, CRUDELY ANIMATED TRANSFORMS INTO CATERINE VAUBAN CRUDELY ANIMATED. This turns into Caterine sitting in the tree in abstract space. Albert appears standing near the tree.

CATERINE VAUBAN (IN TREE)
The woods are hopeless, don't waste * your time, they will be destroyed. * So will the marsh. It is the losing * game mankind has played for a more * than a century. Sadness is what you * are, do not deny it. The universe is a lonely place, a painful place. This is what we can share, between * us, period. *

Tears roll down Albert's cheeks. Harrison, the frosh, appears beneath the tree, tearful as well. Angela Franco joins him, crying as she eats an ice cream cone, and Mary Jane Hutchinson crying as she sits in riding attire on her horse, which is also crying, as she holds the ripped Derek Jeter cut out.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON (CRYING)
Can it be taped?

BRAD'S HEAD APPEARS, smiling derisively, condescendingly. Albert HACKS A CHUNK OF IT OFF. A BUCKETFUL OF WATER FROM NOWHERE SPLASHES IN ALBERT'S FACE.

100 INT. CATERINE'S RAMADA INN ROOM - CONTINUOUS 100

Caterine, wet from the shower with a towel around her, stands with AN EMPTY GLASS OF WATER SHE HAS JUST THROWN IN ALBERT'S FACE AS HE LIES ON THE BED.

CATERINE VAUBAN
What are you are doing? *

He looks at her guiltily, wipes his face.

CATERINE VAUBAN
You told me you were done with this stupid practice. *

ALBERT *
Then why can't I do it? *

CATERINE VAUBAN
Because it is a fantasy. Do you want to live a fake life?

ALBERT
You don't need to feel threatened. I can mix some of your thing with theirs.

CATERINE VAUBAN
NO YOU CAN'T.

ALBERT
Why not?

CATERINE VAUBAN
BECAUSE THEY ARE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT, AND THEIRS IS A LIE --

RAMADA MAID (WALKING IN)
House-eh-keeping --

CATERINE VAUBAN (SHRIEKS)
NEVER ENTER IN WITHOUT KNOCKING.

ALBERT
Take it easy.

RAMADA MAID (RETREATING)
I come back nine neklop OK?

ALBERT
Just for the record, I was under YOUR tree, but I still chopped Brad's head up.

CATERINE
FOR THE LAST TIME, FORGET THEIR TREE FANTASY. AND AS FOR BRAD, YOU MUST DO TO HIM FOR REAL WHAT HE--

Another KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

CATERINE VAUBAN
ARE YOU DEAF, STUPID?

CATERINE RIPS THE DOOR OPEN. TOMMY STANDS THERE, WOUNDED-LOOKING. SHE CLOSES THE DOOR ON HIM. WALKS BACK TO A BUREAU, OPENS IT, TAKES OUT HER COLLAPSIBLE POLAROID, GOES BACK TO THE DOOR, OPENS IT, TAKES A PHOTO OF FORLORNED TOMMY, walks back inside in her towel and sits on the bed.

TOMMY CORN
She's my teacher, too, Albert.

100 (2) 100

ALBERT
She's still your teacher.

TOMMY CORN
Come on, it's all different now. I thought we were a Platonic trio. No sick sex dance. You said that was bullshit.

CATERINE VAUBAN (PUTTING ON LOTION)
Alber is different, learn from this, Tommy.

TOMMY CORN
Is that why you're doing it? To teach me?

ALBERT
Yeah, is that why you're doing this? To teach him?

CATERINE VAUBAN
There are unique moments when two people share the deep sorrow of existence.

ALBERT
All right, that's what I wanted to hear, damn, I'm sorry, Tom.

He drapes himself across her back as she sits.

TOMMY CORN
I wanted you to share *la force* I found here, Albert. But now you're in love.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Do not defile it with cliche. It is unnameable.

100pt. She embraces Albert. The room vibrates into small squares, 100pt. ISOLATING Tommy in the middle of it.

TOMMY CORN
I reject 'unnameable.' It leaves me out.

He PUNCHES OVER A LAMP and leaves. CATERINE PUTS THE POLAROID OF SAD TOMMY INTO A LARGE, THICK PURPLE ALBUM NEXT TO THE POLAROID SHE TOOK OF SAD ALBERT IN THE ELEVATOR, AND THE ONE FROM THE OPEN SPACES MEETING WHEN HE WAS OUSTED.

100 (3) 100

ALBERT (LOOKING AT ALBUM)
What is this?

CATERINE
An archive of Universal Truth...

Albert flips through the thick album of neatly kept photos of SAD, ANGUISHED PEOPLE starting in the late 1970s, then photos of YOUNGER VIVIAN AND BERNARD, CRYING, LEADING UP TO THE PRESENT, WITH TOMMY CRYING AND MR. Nimieri, SAD. Albert touches Nimieri's photograph. Caterine puts a hand on his hand.

ALBERT
Tell me more about my coincidence?

CATERINE VAUBAN
Not yet. First, you must do to Brad what he did to you. Then you will be free. And you do it for real, not in some fantasy.

101 INT. BRAD'S OFFICE - DAY 101

Brad grins smugly as he sits opposite Bernard, who faces the desk, while Vivian sits on the window sill.

BERNARD
Let's start with the method --

BRAD (SIMULTANEOUSLY MIMICS)
Let's start with the method --

BERNARD
We'd like to discuss --

BRAD (SIMULTANEOUSLY MIMICS)
We'd like to discuss --

BERNARD
What are you doing?

BRAD (SIMULTANEOUSLY MIMICS)
What are you doing?

Bernard and Vivian look at him mildly irritated.

BRAD (CHUCKLING)
I'm joking around, guys. But seriously, I want to quit this process with you. Nothing personal, I'm just over it.

They look at him. He continues to smile warmly.

BERNARD
You can't quit until the case is closed.

BRAD
I can fire you.

101

101

BERNARD AND VIVIAN

No, you can't.

101 101

Bernard produces the telephone-book thick contract and plops it on the desk, putting on his reading glasses.

BERNARD (READS)
Paragraph 201: "Neither client nor detective may terminate case prior to resolution as defined by paragraph 314, subclause D," which states --

BRAD
I'll just go to a lawyer or maybe even the FBI, how about that?

VIVIAN
Go ahead.

BRAD
I'll do it, I'm not kidding.

VIVIAN
This is how it works, Brad --

She crosses the room confidently.

VIVIAN
You go to the police, you tell them you went to the existential detectives. They ask why, you say for some personal problems, or because you wanted to work the politics at your corporation by rattling Albert Markovksi --

BRAD
I never told you that --

BERNARD
Give us a little credit.

VIVIAN
So the police talk to Huckabee's. The board hears rising star Brad Stand has weird existential issues, or fakes them --

BERNARD
Which is odd.

VIVIAN
And your girlfriend, the voice of Huckabee's, has been dressing like an Amish bag lady --

101 (2) 101

BRAD
OK, I get it.

BERNARD
Suddenly your star isn't rising so much anymore. It's sinking.

BRAD
I said OK, Bernie, relax.

VIVIAN
Passive aggressive.

BRAD
Shut up.

BERNARD
Aggressive.

VIVIAN
Does Dawn want to quit?

BRAD
Dawn's into this for real, it's the stupidest thing I've seen in my life, congratulations.

BERNARD
Shall we get back to your case?

BRAD
What choice do I have?

BERNARD
Our staff did a little field work in Cleveland.

BRAD
Oh, no.

BERNARD
Yeah.

He has a FAMILY PHOTO of BRAD'S PERFECT LOOKING PARENTS.

VIVIAN
Mommy and Daddy look awesome, but this guy...

Brad folds his arms defensively and looks pissed as Bernard slaps a photo down of BRAD'S VERY FAT BROTHER, STEVE.

BERNARD (A 'YOU LOSE' HONK)
Bwa bwaa. He doesn't look so good.

101 (3) 101

BRAD STARTS CRYING, THEN STOPS. HE WAS FAKING.

BRAD (PUSHING HIS BROTHER'S PHOTO)
You gotta be kidding me, he weighs 250 and talks about geckos all the time, do you get off on that?

VIVIAN
I thought he was a sweet, sensitive young man.

BRAD
You talked to my brother?

BERNARD
On the phone, yes.

BRAD
If he's so sensitive, why doesn't he lose about 70 pounds and stop talking about geckos? Maybe he'd get laid one of these decades.

VIVIAN (REFERS TO NOTES)
Your brother feels like you're ashamed of him.

BRAD
He's a sad guy, what can I do?

BERNARD
Are you sympathetic to him?

BRAD
Are you kidding? I gave him a car. I'm a great older brother.

VIVIAN
He wishes you'd listen to him more.

BRAD
About what? Geckos? Maybe he should listen to me more.

VIVIAN (REFERS TO NOTES)
You like to tell several stories over and over again.

BRAD
That's not true. I'm not boring.

BERNARD
Like the mayonnaise story.

VIVIAN (REFERS TO NOTES)
Which you told on May 3, then again May 18, substituting "she thought there was no mayo" for "she thought there was no mayonnaise," then on June 5 you substituted "bunch of tuna sandwiches" for "ton of tuna sandwiches", on June 30 you --

BRAD
I like to have fun, make people laugh, what's wrong with that? Should I let people be depressed?

VIVIAN (WRITES DOWN)
'Be depressed.'

BERNARD
That's why you tell your stories? To have fun?

BRAD
Yes, why else would I?

Vivian HITS A BUTTON ON A TAPE PLAYER, A TAPE PLAYS.

TAPE OF BRAD
"Shania was eating only tuna fish sandwiches at the time, true story. So I order a ton of tuna sandwiches, for some crazy reason that's all she ate back then, tuna, NO MAYO, Darlene --

Brad can't help laughing as he hears his own story.

TAPE OF BRAD
So one day she didn't believe there was no mayo, so I tell her I'm allergic to mayo and to prove it --

Laughter on the tape. IT REPEATS ON A LOOP.

BRAD
You've made your point, though I'm not sure what it is, exactly.

TAPE OF BRAD
And it's four o'clock and she's starving so I order a ton of tuna-

LAUGHTER on the tape.

101 (5) 101

BRAD (ANNOYED)
I've had enough.

BRAD GOES TO THE DOOR, BUT THE DOOR IS LOCKED. BOBBY, THE DETECTIVES' RECEPTIONIST, STANDS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LOCKED DOOR, HIS ARMS FOLDED.

TAPE OF BRAD
And it's four o'clock and she's starving, so I order a ton of tuna fish sandwiches, NO MAYO, Darlene --

Bernard and Vivian put on industrial ear guards. Vivian takes out her Borges book. Bernard just sits looking at his desk.

BRAD (SHOUTS)
I CAN RIDE THIS OUT, BASTARDS. I HAVE OTHER STORIES, THE FISHING TRIP WHEN I TRICKED DEREK JETER -

VIVIAN TURNS THE TAPE LOUDER. Brad sits with his arms folded on his chest, pissed. They turn the tape off. Pause.

VIVIAN
Why do you think you tell the mayo story so much?

BRAD
I don't know. Why?

BERNARD
It's propaganda.

BRAD
For mayonnaise?

BERNARD
For you.

VIVIAN
Specifically, that you are impressive for being close to Shania, yet strong enough to pull something on her.

BERNARD
You're a "funny guy, a good guy." It must be exhausting to constantly put that out.

VIVIAN
And you keep everyone laughing so you won't "be depressed."

101 (6) 101

BRAD (REVEALING)
What's so great about depression?

BERNARD
Nothing, unless it holds the key to something you compulsively avoid so it will never be examined or felt, hence your behavior becomes repetitive, like the story.

VIVIAN (REPEATS)
Like the story.

BERNARD (REPEATS)
Like the story.

VIVIAN (REPEATS) *
Like the story. *

BERNARD (REPEATS) *
Like the story. *

BRAD
Shut up.

They look at him.

VIVIAN
Are you really being yourself? What would happen if you didn't tell your stories? What's underneath?

BRAD
How am I not myself?

BERNARD & VIVIAN (MIMICS)
How am I not myself?

Brad stares at the detectives silently. Bobby opens the door; Brad leaves. The detectives watch him go impassively.

102 INT. OUTSIDE EXECUTIVE MEN'S ROOM - DAY 102

The camera is behind Brad as he walks down the hall. SEVERAL SECRETARIES pass him, each glancing longingly, including one male secretary, THEN DARLENE PASSES.

DARLENE (PASSING WITH FOLDERS)
Pretty cool, Brad. Tell me what it's like in there.

Cut to a close up of a gold men's room key that reads "CORPORATE MEN'S". Brad uses it to open a door that reads "EXECUTIVE MEN'S ROOM".

103 INT. HUCKABEE'S CORPORATE CENTER - EXECUTIVE MEN'S ROOM - DAY 103

Brad walks into the bathroom. He chews his lips in anxiety, looks at himself in the mirror, washes his face, looks at his hands, THEY ARE SHAKING. He tries to screw up some courage.

BRAD (TRYING TO BE STRONG)
BAAAAHHH. Grrahhh.

But he looks vulnerable again, deep pain in his eyes. The door opens, Brad HIDES IN A STALL. Marty walks in, whistling.

MARTY
How do you like the corporate men's room, Bradly?

BRAD (OS)
Friggin' awesome, Marty.

MARTY
Let's go, dude, it's showtime.

BRAD (OS)
Right on.

The door to his stall swings open and Brad SWAGGERS OUT.

BRAD
The lousy bastards, let's go.

104 INT. HUCKABEE'S CORPORATE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 104

Brad sits at a table with 12 OLDER, ELITE CORPORATE EXECUTIVES, plus the two bald Dexicorp executives.

CORPORATE GUY 1
Legal says it's a problem.

CORPORATE GUY 2
I disagree. We give 'em the Salmon Stripper, say it's a Bass Basher, they can't read English anyway.

Brad looks out the window, anxious.

CORPORATE GUY 1
How about the Tuna Tornado?

CORPORATE GUY 2
There you go. Legal can cover that.

CORPORATE GUY 3
Hey, I saw Shania in our studio getting ready for tonight.

104 104

CORPORATE GUY 2
That benefit is sweet. I already saw an article that makes us sound like save the baby seals and the flowers and shit.

CORPORATE GUY 1
You actually gonna save this Marsh?

DEXICORP EXECUTIVE
We worked it out.

BRAD
I'll make the announcement tonight at the benefit.

MARTY (CHUCKLING)
Brad's got a fantastic Shania story about tuna fish.

All eyes turn to Brad.

BRAD
Me and Shania were opening the megastore down by the loop in Chicago --

Brad stops, struggles inside himself. They look at him.

BRAD (STRUGGLING)
The opening of our megastore down by the loop in Chicago --

Brad STOPS, squeezes his lips shut.

BRAD (STRUGGLING)
Ahh, AH --

He shakes as he tries to pour himself some water, spills it.

BRAD
Flood comin' your way, break out the Salmon Stripper!

He giggles. The others smile politely.

BRAD (STRESSED)
Maybe another story, you'll like this one, I was with Derek Jeter on a fishing boat in St. Pete, AHHHHHH.

104 (2) 104

He hugs his arms, rocks in his chair slightly, closes his eyes for a few moments, then opens them and sits, grinning at everyone, his arms folded, he twitches once, nervously.

MARTY
Are you all right, Bradly?

BRAD (SLOWLY)
We don't need a story.

MARTY
Sure we do, come on.

BRAD
I went to Chicago with Shania... (he seems to gag) and... we were opening up the mega store.... (gag, he looks extremely nauseated) down by the loop, she wanted a tuna sandwich, no mayo... agh.

He sips some water. Clears his throat. The others look completely weirded out.

CORPORATE GUY 1
Is this guy gonna put a bonnet on?

MARTY
Let's you and me have a word outside, Old Boy.

105 INT. HUCKABEE'S PLUSH CORPORATE LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS 105

Brad emerges with Marty. They stand for a tense moment, hands in pockets, jingling change.

BRAD
I don't wanna tell stories so much.

MARTY
That's your trademark, dude, I told these guys you're very entertaining. Now I look stupid.

BRAD
I want to try it another way. You gotta gimme this one, Marty.

MARTY
Dawn did this to you, didn't she?

BRAD
No, that's not it.

105 105

MARTY
Then what is it?

BRAD
I'm being real with you, Marty, that's the greatest trust I can give anyone. I'm giving it to you.

MARTY
You're acting like Berman.

BRAD
So what?

MARTY
You wanna have a breakdown, dude?

Brad puts a hand on Marty's shoulder. Marty looks down in shame. Brad embraces Marty, who looks uncomfortable.

BRAD (HUGGING MARTY)
Come on, dude, gimme a break. (CALLS OUT) Bernard, Vivian, come out. Meet Marty. They're always hiding.

CORPORATE GUYS 1 AND 2 EMERGE AND SEE THE ODD HUG.

CORPORATE GUY 1
What the hell's going on?

MARTY
It's Berman all over again.

BRAD
I'm still the machine. Give me some room, guys, come on.

DAVY (RUSHING UP WITH MESSAGE) *
Dawn just called and said there's a fire at your house.

MARTY
Holy Christ, Bradly.

Corporate Guys 1 and 2 look at Brad woefully.

BRAD
Did she say how bad the damage is?

MARTY (WEIRDED OUT)
You know what, buddy? You've got a lot on your plate. Our sympathies are with you.
(MORE)

105 (2) 105

MARTY (WEIRDED OUT) (cont'd)
You get home, deal with this, then let's talk about a leave of absence of some kind.

BRAD (SHRUGS, RELAXED)
OK, no biggie.

He suddenly punches the wall hard.

BRAD (PUNCHING WALL)
FFFFFUHHH!

MARTY
Take him downstairs, Dave. *

BRAD
I'll see you at the Benefit tonight.

MARTY
You know what? Let's hold that thought. I don't know that you're in any condition to speak publicly right now.

BRAD
I put this whole thing together, Marty. Shania's expecting me.

MARTY
Shania will understand you're dealing with a personal tragedy involving a fire and your plate is very full.

BRAD
My plate's not very full. I swear.

MARTY
Your plate is very full. Do me a favor and make sure Dawn doesn't show up in the bonnet, OK? Take him downstairs, Davy. * *

106 INT. BRAD'S SUBURBAN HOUSE - BACK DEN - DAY 106

Dawn stands in the slightly smoky room, wearing her bonnet, on the phone. *

UGLIFIED DAWN (ON PHONE)
I just came home and I smell smoke, * but I don't see any actual fire. *
(MORE)

106 106

UGLIFIED DAWN (ON PHONE) (cont'd) *

I don't see any actual fire, but it's for sure smokier than when you burn a frozen pizza or something, I think it's probably big enough for the fire trucks. I'm gonna sit down now, because I don't feel like going outside... That's a personal thing, because I thought infinity was really important but now I don't know anymore, just send the trucks, bye.

She sits down on the floor. In the smoky room.

107 INT. FIREHOUSE - DAY 107

Tommy sits unshaven alone on a couch in the dark watching "They Shoot Horses Don't They." THE ALARM SOUNDS. Tommy gets up, joins the other firemen jumping into their gear, but Tommy gets on his bike to ride. He is pulled toward the truck by another fireman. He knocks the guy off, and gets on his bike and rides as the fire truck pulls out behind him.

108 EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY 108

Tommy rides his bike fast. Turns a corner. Rides more.

109 EXT. BRAD'S SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY 109

Tommy turns into the driveway. The house is smoking slightly. A couple of neighbors stand near the yard, watching. Tommy waits in the driveway, looks at his watch, parks his bike.

110 EXT. ROUTE 4 - CONTINUOUS 110

THE FIRE TRUCK IS STUCK IN A MASSIVE TRAFFIC JAM, HONKING. 10 cars away, BRAD'S SUV is stuck in traffic.

111 EXT. BRAD'S HOUSE - DAY 111

TOMMY walks INTO THE HOUSE.

112 INT. BRAD'S HOUSE - DAY 112

Tommy wanders through the slightly smoky rooms. In the way back, he gets to UGLIFIED DAWN, WHO IS UNCONSCIOUS ON THE FLOOR. HE SHAKES HER.

UGLIFIED DAWN (OUT OF IT, COUGHING)

Brad, baby, love me like this, you brought me to the detectives, love me for who I am. You turned me onto truth, don't take it away --

SHE KISSES TOMMY PASSIONATELY.

UGLIFIED DAWN (SUDDENLY REALIZES)
HEY, you're not Brad.

TOMMY CORN
Sorry.

UGLIFIED DAWN (COUGHS)
I opened up so we can grow together, then he doesn't want me to do it.

TOMMY CORN
Nobody wants the truth.

UGLIFIED DAWN (SITS UP)
That's why I wanted to die. But now I can't decide.

TOMMY CORN
Why not die and get the relief of nothingness--

She passes out. He shakes her til she comes to.

TOMMY CORN
Why not die, and get the relief of nothingness--

She passes out again. He shakes her til she comes to.

UGLIFIED DAWN
But what if there's no nothingness? Then you don't find the relief when you die, you find it now.

TOMMY CORN
How can we do that when there's so much insane suffering and destruction?

UGLIFIED DAWN (OUT OF IT)
Because you care and that matters so much, you care, you care, you care.

TOMMY CORN
I lost everything cuz I care.

SHE KISSES HIM.

UGLIFIED DAWN
There's no nothing, Brad! Hallelujah!
(MORE)

112 (2) 112

UGLIFIED DAWN (cont'd)
All there is is everything, there can be no nothing, cuz everything only exists cuz of everything else.

TOMMY CORN
And everything else exists because of everything, but it's still so painful --

UGLIFIED DAWN
Pain is part of everything. You care about the cars and the water and you accept the pain and that means something. It isn't nothing. And it keeps going when you die. IT'S YOU, YOU'RE NOT BRAD, IT'S YOU AND ME AND WE UNDERSTAND.

TOMMY CORN
It's me, it's you, we understand.

UGLIFIED DAWN
Yes, we understand.

TOMMY CORN
I like you.

UGLIFIED DAWN
I like you. What's your name?

SHE PASSES OUT. He shakes her til she comes to once more, then kisses her, then she passes out again. THEN HE PASSES OUT. They lie there together til Tommy's firemen BURST in. They pick up Tommy and Dawn and carry them out.

113 EXT. BRAD'S SUBURBAN HOUSE 113

The firemen carry Tommy and Dawn to an ambulance.

114 EXT. BRAD'S HOUSE, HIDDEN IN THE BUSHES 114

Caterine and Albert lie on their backs in some bushes, a GASOLINE CAN NEAR THEM.

CATERINE VAUBAN (LYING ON HER BACK)
Creation destruction creation destruction creation destruction creation destruction creation --

ALBERT (LYING ON HIS BACK)
You said no one would get hurt...
It was just supposed to be the jet skis, not the house.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Stop whining. A little smoke won't kill them, and you have exorcised the Brad.

115 INT. AMBULANCE 115

Dawn and Tommy sit side by side AWAKE, oxygen masks covering their mouths, playing a strange patty cake, clapping each other's hands then holding hands.

DAWN (MUFFLED THRU O2 MASK)
DROP US OFF AT THE OMNI. We have to go to the benefit.

TOMMY CORN
We're not afraid.

DAWN
We're not afraid.

MEDIC
You can't do that. You have to sign a release.

116 INT. ALBERT'S MIND 116

In blackness Caterine backs away from the camera, holding the GASOLINE CAN. Albert appears as she walks away, revealing Albert's tree, which is ON FIRE.

BRAD DROPS OUT OF THE BURNING TREE, smoldering with smoke.

Brad stands up, walks toward Albert, looking extremely frazzled and upset.

117 EXT. BRAD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 117

Albert opens his eyes and sees Brad, in reality, getting out of his BMW SUV, almost exactly as he looked in Albert's mind, frazzled and upset. THE DETECTIVES' CITROEN PULLS UP BEHIND BRAD'S BMW.

FROM ALBERT'S POV: Brad sees one remaining fire truck as he walks across his now torn up lawn to the CHARRED REMAINS OF HIS TWO JET SKIS. He falls to his knees, CRYING.

BRAD (KNEELING, CRYING)
Why? Why? Why? I'm lost in the wilderness. I'm lost.

He slowly claws at the lawn in agony. Vivian and Bernard stand watching him cry.

VIVIAN
We can help you, Brad.

He looks up, imploring, tearful, vulnerable, a lost child.

117 117

BRAD (LOOKS UP, TEARFUL)
I... need to go to the Benefit now. There's so much to do...I hope it's [starts weeping again].

BERNARD
Stay here with us.

BRAD (CRYING, LOST)
OK... OK...Don't tell anybody I cried and, I don't care, tell everybody, no, please don't tell anybody, let me just be with you. No, that looks bad. Who cares? I'll go with you--

CATERINE STANDS IN THE BUSHES AND TAKES BRAD'S POLAROID.

BRAD
YOU GIVE ME THAT PICTURE RIGHT NOW! NOBODY SEES THAT!

CATERINE DROPS THE POLAROID ONTO ALBERT'S CHEST AS HE LIES HIDDEN IN BUSHES AT HER FEET. HE HOLDS IT AND STARES AT IT.

BRAD
Screw all you bastards.

Brad tucks his shirt in, fixes his hair, walks to his BMW SUV. Bernard and Vivian glare at Caterine, shaking their heads as Caterine glares back. Bernard and Vivian walk quickly to their Citroen.

118 EXT. BRAD'S HOUSE, HIDDEN IN THE BUSHES - CONTINUOUS 118

ALBERT
I don't feel so good about the fire.

CATERINE
Pussy.

ALBERT
It feels good to get Brad back, but is that all there is? The satisfaction of cruelty?

CATERINE
Yes. And sadness. And sometimes cruelty is fun. *

ALBERT
But I feel compassion for him, too. *

118

CATERINE
Compassion is condescending.

ALBERT
Let me get this straight. You care about not being condescending. That sounds like compassion to me, so you're thing doesn't add up, you're chasing your own tail. You tell me I shouldn't care about Tommy being the odd one out, even if it hurts him. But all you want to do is get Bernard and Vivian back for making you the odd one out twenty years ago.

CATERINE
Tommy is strong.

ALBERT
So were you, supposedly.

CATERINE
You do not know what you are talking about.

ALBERT
I know the three of you were at graduate school in Paris in 1981. I know you feel betrayed by them, even though you tell Tommy not to feel betrayed by us.

CATERINE
So what? Life is full of contradictions. It does not mean my philosophy is unsound.

ALBERT
Yes it does because it's not a philosophy. It's just an excuse to vent your anger and be cruel.

CATERINE (TRYING TO EXPLAIN)
No, it is about sadness, ugh, maybe Bernard and Vivian are better suited to your fuzzy thinking.

Caterine walks off to her car, which is covered in dead bushes for camouflage, which she pulls off. She gets in her car and drives away. Albert pulls his bike out of some curbside shrubs.

119 EXT. ROUTE 4 119

The Citroen is stuck in ANOTHER TRAFFIC JAM. Many cars back, Caterine sits in the same traffic jam, AGAIN PLAYING WAGNER LOUD. Further ahead, Brad's BMW is in the same traffic jam.

120 INT. BRAD'S BMW SUV - DAY 120

Brad dials on a mounted cel phone.

BRAD (ON HANDS FREE CELL)
Sam? It's me.

SAM (OS)
Brad. Wow.

BRAD
How are the geckos?

SAM (OS)
You don't like to talk about that.

BRAD
Still have those leopard geckos?

SAM (OS, LAUGHING & SNORTING)
I haven't had leopards since I was 12, that's such a starter gecko.

BRAD
What are you into now?

SAM (OS)
I got some Rhacodactylus ciliatus. Males develop extremely large hemipenile bulges. It's been totally wild. If you're bored, just tell me, we can change topics.

BRAD
OK... Did Dad tell you I got promoted?

SAM (OS)
Uh, yeah, he did.

BRAD
Corporate V.P. huge benefit package, they put me on paid leave, which sucks, we'll work it out, I'm gonna land an endorsement with The Rock. We got jet skis but there was a fire, ahhh tell me more about you, I made it all about me again.

120 120

SAM (OS)
I gotta go.

BRAD
Wait... Damnit.

He sits a moment, parks on the shoulder, gets out and starts jogging along Route 4 past the traffic jam.

121 EXT. OMNI EXECUTIVE SUITES HOTEL - DAY 121

Albert pulls up on his bike, gives it to the Valet as Brad jogs up and heads inside, not seeing Albert, who turns to see Brad going into the lobby and follows at a distance.

122 INT. OMNI EXECUTIVE SUITES HOTEL - CONTINUOUS 122

Brad walks into the lobby and looks at a DIRECTORY on a stand that reads "LOMAN BAR MITZVAH - 8th FLOOR BALLROOM; RITE-AID SALES ROUNDTABLE - 5th FLOOR HALL; HUCKABEE'S OPEN SPACES BENEFIT 10th FLOOR BALLRM". Brad gets into an elevator. Albert runs into another elevator.

123 INT. OMNI ELEVATOR 123

Albert stands in an elevator with A COUPLE OF MEN IN SUITS AND A COUPLE OF WOMEN IN GOWNS. The elevator stops to let these various banquet goers out; elevator then goes up to 10.

124 INT. OUTSIDE THE 10TH FLOOR BALLROOM 124

ALBERT GETS OFF THE ELEVATOR: band is heard from the nearby ballroom. PEOPLE IN TUXES AND GOWNS rush past towards the bathrooms. Albert walks past A GIANT TV SCREEN playing a tape loop of HEATHER DANCING AND LIP-SYNCHING TO DAWN'S VOICE:

HEATHER WITH DAWN'S VOICE (VIDEO LOOP)
...Welcome to the Huckabee's Open Spaces Gala Event. Huckabee's pledges to help save our environment. One world. One Store. Huckabee's, the Everything Store... Welcome to the Huckabee's Open...

Albert sees Brad by the entrance of the ballroom. He quickly hides behind a ficus and spies Brad as he stands at a WELCOME TABLE manned by DARLENE, wearing a corsage, as she pleads to Davy and a SECURITY GUARD to LET BRAD IN. *

DARLENE
(Crying to Security Guard)
It's not right. Bradly is the reason this event even EXISTS.

124 124

DAVY
Mr. Stand is on paid leave. He's not on the list.

DARLENE
Why are you calling him Mr. Stand? This is Brad, people.

BRAD
I just want to talk to Shania, guys. Come on. You gotta let me in.

DAVY
SSSSSHHHH.

DAVY CLOSES THE DOORS TO THE BENEFIT FROM INSIDE. IT IS SUDDENLY REALLY QUIET WITH THE DOORS CLOSED.

BRAD
Go on in, Darlene.

DARLENE
NO. Not without you.

BRAD (FRUSTRATED, PISSED)
Go on, sweetheart I'll be OK,

Darlene looks sadly at Brad as she leaves him behind. DISTANT MUFFLED APPLAUSE FROM INSIDE IS ALL THAT'S HEARD.

ALBERT watches Brad from behind the nearby ficus tree. SHANIA TWAIN, in a cowboy hat, rushes by; Brad runs after her, grabs her shoulder.

BRAD
SHANIA!

WHEN THE WOMAN TURNS AROUND, IT IS HEATHER, THE LIP-SYNCHER, WHO LOOKS AT BRAD BLANKLY AND WALKS ON, TIL MR. Nimieri RUNS UP TO HER WITH A COUPLE OF AUTOGRAPH HOUNDS. Heather signs DAWN'S GLOSSY FOR MR. Nimieri AND THE OTHERS.

MR. NIMIERI (EXCITED)
FANTASTIC.

AUTOGRAPH HOUND
That's a rarity for sure.

ALBERT stares at Mr. Nimieri, yet again. Brad looks crestfallen as he holds one of the glossies and stares at it. Mr. Nimieri takes it from his hand. Brad looks from the GLOSSY OF DAWN TO THE REAL DAWN, STANDING THERE HOLDING HANDS WITH TOMMY, wearing her bonnet; they are both sooty.

BRAD
What is this, Dawn?

UGLIFIED DAWN
Do you love me?

BRAD
I think so.

UGLIFIED DAWN
With my bonnet?

BRAD (STRUGGLING)
Aahhhhh--

UGLIFIED DAWN (CRYING)
It's over, Brad. I had a fire and almost died and he came he almost died because he cares about the same things and that shows there's no nothing? Even when you die? And he likes my bonnet. We kissed in the fire when I thought he was you, but then I knew it was him? That's when he liked the bonnet? And we see the truth that you weren't interested in? And we care and I love that. I love that I love.

BRAD
Great timing. Kick me when I'm down.

UGLIFIED DAWN
You didn't even ask if I'm OK from the fire.

BRAD
I have a lot on my plate right now. They're not letting me into the benefit, Dawn. I built this, it's my --

UGLIFIED DAWN
Just stop.

BRAD
OK, baby, we don't belong together, we want different things anyway, I don't want kids and there's nothing wrong with that.

Pause. Everyone stands looking at Brad. Dawn looks at a large TV screen of Heather speaking with her voice. She laughs.

124 (3)

UGLIFIED DAWN (

The past seems so funny and poignant and distant.

*
*
*

124 (4) 124

Tommy puts an arm around her shoulders. *

SECURITY GUARD
We got VIPs here and I need you all to leave the premises.

Brad walks to the elevators with Tommy and Dawn and pushes the button. Albert joins them. Awkward silence til the elevator arrives. Albert and Brad get in, Tommy and Dawn do not, but Tom gives Albert a little salute as doors close.

125 INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS 125

TWO WOMEN CELLISTS IN GOWNS RIDE DOWN WITH BRAD AND ALBERT.

BRAD
Did they let you into the benefit?

ALBERT
I didn't even try.

They ride in silence.

ALBERT
I've thought of chopping your head off with a machete many times.

BRAD
I've thought about hacking you up with an axe or smashing your face in with a baseball bat.

The elevator stops, CELLISTS HURRY OFF, DROPPING A CELLO; A COUPLE IN A GOWN AND TUX stand outside the open doors.

GUY IN TUX
Are you going up?

ALBERT
We're going down.

GUY IN TUX
I think you're going up.

BRAD (HOLDING THE DOORS)
Right you are, Sir, come on in --

He gallantly holds the doors for the COUPLE, lets the doors close, BUT SOMEONE JAMS AN ARM THROUGH AND THE DOORS OPEN: MARY JANE, ANGELA, HARRISON STAND THERE.

125 125

BRAD
Jump on in Mary Jane --

SHE SLAPS HIM HARD ACROSS THE FACE.

ANGELA FRANCO
BRADLY, HOW COULD YOU DO SUCH A THING!

BRAD
Wait a second, it's a win for us.

MARY JANE HUTCHINSON
A DEXICORP MALL IN GRANDFATHER'S WOODS IS HARDLY A WIN. THEY'RE ALREADY SURVEYING FOR CONSTRUCTION.

BRAD
But I saved the Marsh. *

HARRISON
By giving them the woods!

THE ELEVATOR ALARM SOUNDS AS BRAD HOLDS THE DOOR OPEN.

GUY IN TUX
ARE WE GOING UP OR WHAT?

ANGELA FRANCO
YOU MADE HUCKABEE'S LOOK GOOD, THAT'S ALL YOU DID.

HARRISON (TO ALBERT)
HOW CAN YOU BE SO CALM? DID YOU HEAR WHAT BRAD DID?

Albert remains mysteriously calm. The alarm keeps ringing.

BRAD
SIT DOWN WITH ME AND SHANIA AND YOU'LL SEE THIS IS A WIN FOR US--

ANGELA FRANCO
SHANIA DOESN'T GIVE A SHIT!

GUY IN TUX
LET'S GO!

Brad lets the doors close on Angela. Alarm off. Elevator up.

ALBERT
You sold out the woods, huh?

125 (2) 125

BRAD
The mall's going to be very eco-friendly, we saved almost half the trees, YES I sold out the woods I DON'T KNOW I thought it was good, we saved half of it.

Pause.

ALBERT
I torched your jet skis.

BRAD
My house?

ALBERT
Your jet skis. It spread to the house, sorry.

They stare at each other while the Tux Guy and Gown Woman look freaked out. ELEVATOR STOPS, the couple gets off. THREE LADIES IN GOWNS get on.

LADY IN GOWN
Going down?

Albert and Brad nod. Elevator DOWN.

ALBERT
You sold out the woods, I wasn't being paranoid.

PAUSE. ALBERT PULLS OUT THE POLAROID OF SAD BRAD.

BRAD
Give me that.

Albert holds it away, Brad starts angrily slamming Albert repeatedly into the wall of the elevator; Albert then slams Brad repeatedly into the other wall banging into the gown ladies. Albert and Brad fall to the floor and slap each other's faces. They stop, out of breath and weepy. Stand up.

ELEVATOR STOPS, DOOR OPENS, ANGELA HOLDS IT OPEN.

ANGELA FRANCO (QUIETLY)
I owe you an apology, Albert, we should've stayed with you.

ALBERT
No, I owe you an apology because I wrecked everything. I brought Brad in and got all obsessed.

125 (3) 125

BRAD
Please. I was in charge much more than you were.

HARRISON
See, he admits he blew it.

BRAD
I'm just saying, Albert can't take all the credit because, I don't know what I'm saying, forget it.

HARRISON
Then shut up, traitor.

ALARM STARTS AGAIN as Angela holds the door open.

BRAD
HOW ABOUT YOU SHUT UP FOR A MINUTE?

Albert turns the alarm off. Gown Ladies look freaked.

BRAD (TO ANGELA AND ALBERT)
Look, guys, I'm sorry. I tried to do the right thing.

Angela et al look angry as elevator doors close and leave them behind on the 12th Floor as the elevator continues down.

Brad looks at Albert.

ALBERT
I never heard you say you were sorry.

Elevator keeps going down, then STOPS, doors open. SHANIA TWAIN STANDS THERE.

BRAD
Shania.

SHANIA [PISSED]
Do you realize when they destroy the woods, the average temperature of the Marsh will rise five degrees and the entire food chain will be degraded, starting with the frogs?

ELEVATOR DOORS CLOSE. Elevator continues down. Gown Ladies stare at Brad.

BRAD
What happened to you?

125 (4) 125

ALBERT
I fell in love with the detectives' enemy, she's French, and I learned a lot of things from her. What happened to you?

BRAD
They played my Shania story til I couldn't tell any story without feeling nauseous.

ALBERT
Not even the Pete Sampras fishing story or the Derek Jeter golf story?

BRAD
Nope.

ALBERT
That's a big deal, Brad.

BRAD (LOOKS AT POLAROID)
It's so weird not to do what I always do, like I'm losing my mind.

ALBERT
Shaky.

BRAD
Like jumping off a cliff.

ALBERT
But a good cliff.

The Gown women are scared.

126 INT. LOBBY OF HOTEL - CONTINUOUS 126

Elevator OPENS, GOWN WOMEN RUN OUT followed by Albert and Brad holding hands.

127 EXT. HOTEL - CONTINUOUS 127

People turn to look as this odd couple passes and runs off to Route 4. THE DETECTIVES PULL UP IN THEIR CITROEN, AND CATERINE PULLS UP BEHIND IN HER WHITE SEDAN. VIVIAN AND BERNARD (HAVING NOT SEEN ALBERT AND BRAD PASS) JUMP OUT OF THEIR CAR AND RUN INTO THE HOTEL.

128 INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS 128

THE DETECTIVES STOP TO FACE MR. NIMIERI, TOMMY, AND DAWN, HOLDING HANDS.

128

128

MR. NIMIERI (FLEEING WITH PALS) *
I cannot speak to you.

128 (2) 128

He flees with his pals.

BERNARD (TO TOMMY & DAWN)
Where's Albert?

TOMMY CORN
Albert and Brad left.

Bernard and Vivian awkwardly pass Caterine as they return to the valet and Caterine approaches Tommy and Dawn.

CATERINE
Where is Alber?

TOMMY CORN
Alber left.

CATERINE
Hsssssss.

She walks off.

DAWN
This is exciting.

TOMMY CORN
Change is exciting.

DAWN
Scary exciting.

They kiss.

128A EXT. OMNI EXECUTIVE SUITES HOTEL VALET - CONTINUOUS 128A

Bernard and Vivian give their ticket to the VALET as Caterine walks up to do the same. A long trail of cars leads up to the valet station.

CATERINE VAUBAN
My car will be easier.

VIVIAN
No, we were here first.

CATERINE VAUBAN
My car arrived second, it should be closer.

VALET GUY
Are you the Citroen?

CATERINE VAUBAN
No, I am the Lincoln, I do not drive the sentimental Citroen.

VIVIAN
You don't know the first thing about sentiment.

CATERINE VAUBAN
My truth is proven by Alber's case.

VALET GUY
So am I getting the Citroen or just the Lincoln?

BERNARD
Yes, get the Citroen, come on.

VALET GUY
But no Lincoln.

BERNARD
Could you get both cars please?

VALET GUY
Sorry, you guys just got a little confusing for a second --

VIVIAN
OK. Get the cars. Thank you.

CATERINE
Why the hurry? Are you afraid of the truth?

BERNARD
You don't know the truth.

CATERINE VAUBAN
But I do.

Awkward pause. Bernard and Vivian look away nervously.

CATERINE
Alber's parents were like two celebrities whose attention he could never get. This led to fantasies of Jessica Lange and Dawn-

VIVIAN (FACES CATERINE)
And wanting to become a celebrity himself with his poems and glossies-

CATERINE VAUBAN
-Which explains meeting Mr. Nimieri at the photo archive, as well as the second part, meeting Nimieri again at his parents' building. *

BERNARD
Then there's the third part of the coincidence, in Huckabee's parking lot. *

VIVIAN
Which is about Brad, whom Albert recruited to make himself and the Open Spaces more famous. *

CATERINE VAUBAN
Alber even wished he could be the Brad, in spite of himself, because his parents would prefer that. *

128A (3) 128A

VIVIAN
All of which proves OUR philosophy of connection --

CATERINE VAUBAN
Pffff. It proves the opposite.

BERNARD
We have a perfect litmus test right here, this is the proof.

He refers to TOMMY AND DAWN who stand close by holding hands and watching.

BERNARD
Look at these two, something happened to them, I know it when I see it --

VIVIAN
And they're our clients.

CATERINE
Pfff. Tommy is my student.

TOMMY CORN
In what? Rejection and suffering?

CATERINE
Yes, that is right.

VALET GUY (RUNNING UP)
The Citroen is dead.

BERNARD
What?

VALET GUY
Won't start.

CATERINE
Did you hear that? THE CITROEN IS DEAD.

ANOTHER VALET PULLS UP HER LINCOLN.

CATERINE
Get in. We will settle this once and for all.

Tommy and Dawn get into the back of the Lincoln.

BERNARD
I can start the Citroen.

128A (4) 128A

VALET GUY
It's dead, sir.

Caterine holds the front door open for the detectives.

CATERINE
They dragged this piece of junk from Paris as if it held something and it's OVER now.

BERNARD
Where are we going?

CATERINE
To the truth.

Bernard and Vivian get into the front seat, Vivian in the middle, Caterine in the driver seat.

128AA EXT. HUTCHINSON WOODS - DAY 128AA

Albert and Brad run into the woods together as Bobby watches from a discrete distance. They roll in the dirt, wresting.

They swing on tree branches. The rub dirt on themselves. They hold hands and chant. They fall to the ground, exhausted.

128B OMITTED 128B

128C OMITTED

128C

BERNARD (CONTRITE, SMALL)
Because you were too cold and angry.

CATERINE VAUBAN
I COULD NOT HELP IT. I was raised that way by my aunt. YET YOU still loved me Vivian. We became magnificent lovers. She is strong.

TOMMY CORN
Vivian was your lover?

DAWN
This is so fantastic.

CATERINE
We were lovers building our own philosophy.

VIVIAN
But you talked and talked about your emotions, your sadness, your fears, I mean ENOUGH already.

CATERINE VAUBAN (EXPLODES)
HOW CAN YOU STILL SAY THAT?

Caterine grabs Vivian by her lapels. Bernard WINCES with vulnerable contrition.

VIVIAN (LAME, CONTRITE)
We've been meaning to schedule a sad day --

CATERINE VAUBAN
BUT YOU NEVER SEEM TO HAVE THE TIME, DO YOU? And THAT is why Albert and Tommy found me, as a plant finds the rain.

TOMMY CORN
Yes. She's got you, guys.

DAWN
Yeah, yeah, yeah, that sounds right. I couldn't avoid the sadness and you guys never talked about that. I was on my own.

BERNARD (LAMELY)
Infinity heals that --

DAWN
Noooo, only if you allow sadness as part of it.

TOMMY CORN
Yeah, which I got from Caterine.

DAWN
And he gave it to me.

CATERINE
Thank you.

Bernard and Vivian look chastened.

CATERINE
Until anyone faces their pain, they will continue to create situations that repeat it. Which is why Alber made himself an exile in his own organization by recruiting the Brad.

VIVIAN (CRYING)
And that's why you're Bernard's guide.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Yes.

TOMMY CORN
That's heavy.

DAWN
Why couldn't you just be sad?

BERNARD (CHOKING BACK TEARS)
I don't know.

VIVIAN (CRYING)
We couldn't bear it. We were afraid.

BERNARD (CRYING)
We blew it.

CATERINE
Mouchoir des etoiles.

Bernard starts to cry harder.

CATERINE
Radieuse pomme de terre.

Vivian starts to cry harder.

CATERINE
I am victorious.

DAWN
Hold on there, sister, you're only half victorious.

TOMMY CORN
First I rejected your philosophy of chaos by going to even more extreme nothingness nothingness --

CATERINE
Bravo.

TOMMY CORN
But since Dawn's fire, I re-reject your philosophy from a place of connection, and it's not here [touches his head] it's here, and here, and here, and here --

DAWN
And here (touches heart) and here (touches ass).

TOMMY CORN
God I love you and I don't even have to touch your ass.

DAWN
So you're both half right, but only when combined.

128B (6) 128B

CATERINE VAUBAN
Oui.

BERNARD AND VIVIAN
Oui.

They stand a moment. Bobby appears at the periphery of the frame. The detectives turn, look at him, follow him toward woods in the distance. They walk single file toward the woods. We see their faces, their feet, a wide shot.

128C EXT. HUTCHINSON WOODS - DAY 128C

In single file, Bernard, Vivian, Caterine, Tommy, Dawn and Bobby walk through the woods. Bernard stops as he spots something in the bushes. Vivian and Caterine step in close.

Albert lies on the ground, looking up at them contently.

ALBERT
OUI.

Brad pops up from behind a bush further down the path.

BRAD
OUI.

Albert joins the line as they walk towards Brad, Brad joins them as they walk further through the woods. Orange X's can be seen on some trees. Albert takes Caterine's hand, they stop and go to the ground, lie on their sides looking at each other. [SHOOT BOTH EVERYONE IN LINE STILL WALKING, AND THE RESPECTIVE COUPLES ON THE GROUND AFTER THE LINE HAS MOVED ON]

[ALT: AL AND CATERINE DO NOT GET TOGETHER, CAT SITS WITH DETS, AL SITS WITH TOMMY AND DAWN]

Tommy and Dawn sit and look at the forest.

Bernard and Vivian walk further and stop at the base of a tree. They sit and look out at the forest.

Brad drops down, sits by himself, til Bobby sits near him.

[ALT: Albert takes a pen from his pocket and starts writing words on Caterine's arm]

Forest sounds fade out, we hear only everyone's breathing AS SOME GEOMETRIC SHAPES TRICKLE OFF OF THEM INTO THE AIR AND CO-MINGLE.

PAN TO MRS. ECHEVARRIA sitting alone, to the side, on a simple straightbacked chair, and she SINGS, for a while.

129 OMITTED 129

130 OMITTED 130

131 OMITTED 131

132 OMITTED 132

133 OMITTED 133

134 OMITTED 134

135 OMITTED 135

FADE TO BLACK. *

FADE IN: *

EXT. ROUTE 4 - DAY *

Like the opening, Albert rides his bicycle through a TRAFFIC JAM. He has on a new yellow suit and looks unharried. A car almost hits him, he continues. * * *

EXT. SUBURBAN OFFICE BUILDING - DAY *

He jumps off his bike, locks it in front of the Detectives' office building and walks to the building buttoning his jacket and politely sidestepping the window washer. * * *

INT. LOBBY OF OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS *

He walks into the lobby & enters an elevator. *

INT. BERNARD'S OFFICE - DAY *

A meeting in progress between Bernard, Vivian, and Caterine. *

BERNARD *
We like 90 percent of it. *

CATERINE VAUBAN *
We do all of it or nothing. *

BERNARD *
Why be like that? *

VIVIAN *
Let's vote. All in favor of revised method number seven say 'aye' -- * *

CATERINE VAUBAN *
Let us clarify number seven first. *

BERNARD
Clients go into the cocoon here, we lock them in, take them to the country--

CATERINE VAUBAN
Put them in the trunk first.

BERNARD
Put them in the trunk, drive them to the country, leave them in a meadow or something, but NOT overnight --

VIVIAN
All in favor?

Bernard and Vivian RAISE THEIR HANDS in favor.

CATERINE VAUBAN
All right. But you're making a mistake. What about my idea to stare at clients without using any words for five minutes at a time --

BERNARD
I LOVE that.

VIVIAN
I don't know, it seems mean and contrived --

CATERINE VAUBAN
Bullshit.

BERNARD
OK, that's tabled for now.

VIVIAN (WRITING)
What about randomly cutting clients' hair and clothing with scissors --

CATERINE, BERNARD
We have to keep that.

BERNARD (WRITING)
Good, that's unanimous.

Albert enters the office with Bobby.

ALBERT
I've got a coalition meeting in a little bit.

BERNARD
Let's get started.

Albert sits at a table (Bernard's large desk); Caterine, Vivian and Bernard also sit around the table, as if at a legal proceeding. Off to the side, Bobby sits typing on a stenographer's machine, while Bernard READS A CASE SUMMATION.

BERNARD (READS)
Paragraph three, Albert's parents were like two celebrities whose attention he could never get. This led him to fantasies of unattainable Jessica Lange and Dawn Campbell.

CATERINE
And wanting to become a celebrity himself with his poems and glossies-

BERNARD
Yeah, that too. Paragraph four --

CATERINE
Put it in.

BERNARD
Bobby could you make that addition to the record, please?

BOBBY (TYPES & READS)
And wanting to become a celebrity himself with his poems and glossies.

BERNARD (READS)
Which explains meeting Mr. Nimieri at the photo archive, as well as the second part, meeting Nimieri again at his parents' building.

Caterine nods.

BERNARD (READS) (CONT'D)
The third part of the coincidence, in Huckabee's parking lot.

CATERINE VAUBAN
Alber wished he could be the Brad, in spite of himself, because his parents would prefer that.

BERNARD
Note it, Bobby.

(3)

VIVIAN
Also let the record show Brad Stand's case is on hiatus til he's back from fantasy baseball camp.

Bobby nods as he types.

BERNARD (TO ALBERT & CATERINE)
Do you want to read the summation?

They shake their heads, content, but Albert flips thru the document as Vivian takes it.

ALBERT (FLIPS THROUGH PAGES)
What are all the blank pages?

BERNARD
Yeah, what are all the blank pages?

VIVIAN
Unknowing.

BERNARD
OK, but I think the case shows infinite connection, like Tommy and Dawn in the fire or Albert from his parents to Brad.

CATERINE VAUBAN
By going sad or unhappy or confused or unclear.

BERNARD (FLIPS THROUGH PAGES)
This much unknowing?

CATERINE
(in french w/ subtitles) The same sadness you could not handle from me 20 years ago when you ditched me.

BERNARD
How's that?

CATERINE
Add, Bobby, that Sad Day is up and running with the restored third partner, Caterine Vauban--

Bobby types as they pass around the file and sign it. We hear doors open OS, the same Latin music for mancala hour as before, the voices of people enjoying themselves.

(4)

VIVIAN
Mancala hour everyone.

Vivian puts down a tray of pisco sours. She, Bernard, Bobby leave as Bobby pulls the stenography paper across the table.

Caterine takes Albert's hand and they leave the room empty, with the summation on the desk, next to the strewn stenography paper. Camera pushes in to a BLANK PAGE from the summation, and the page vibrates into small squares and dissolves to another blank page.

THE END