

SCENES FROM A MALL

by

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FADE IN:

ESTABLISHING SHOT - A HOUSE IN LAUREL CANYON - EARLY MORNING

Of the pleasant Country English sort. Right now the poinsettia are in bloom, so it must be December in California. We hear the voices of impatient teenagers--"C'mon, dude...Let's bail!", etc.

A VAN

for "Sandy's Sea & Ski" is idling in the driveway. About a dozen KIDS ranging from ten to fifteen years of age are squeezed inside with a full complement of parkas and back packs. They're shuffling about and making room for two more--a girl of eleven (JENNIFER) and a boy of fourteen (SAM)--who wait by the sliding door.

Their father, NICK FIFER, a handsome, outdoorsy-looking guy in his early forties, dressed in a jogging outfit, is standing on the bumper helping the COUNSELOR--a college student--slide their skis onto the roof rack.

He takes a pair of poles from his son who is giving him a petulant, early teen stare.

NICK  
(positioning them on  
the rack)

I don't care whose father gave who his Gold Card, fifty bucks is plenty of spending money for three days.

His son rolls his eyes.

NICK  
Okay forty bucks. Every roll of the eyes is ten bucks less. Thirty...twenty...

A couple of kids start booing sympathetically from within.

NICK  
(grins)  
Allies of the teen age class.  
(shouting into the  
van)

You surf brats oughta be grateful. This is an important lesson in how to deal with the coming Depression.

Some wise guy yells "You didn't live through the Depression!" as Nick jumps down and gives his daughter a big hug.

NICK

Have a great time, sweetie  
 (to his son)  
 It's okay if she wants to ski the  
 Cornice. Just don't tell her  
 mother.

DEBORAH (O. S.)

No, don't tell me.

They turn to see

THEIR MOTHER

DEBORAH --fortyish, sexy and energetic with a short, chic  
 hairdo--also wearing a jogging suit and sipping her morning  
 coffee from a spill proof mug.

She hugs both her kids affectionately and they slip away  
 quickly, jumping onto the bus, anxious to get going.

DEBORAH

See you Thursday...Don't forget  
 your thermal socks!

The van door slides shut without a response.

DEBORAH

(calls out)  
 Hello? Planet Earth?

The van pulls out rapidly, leaving them standing there.

DEBORAH

Kind of makes you feel irrelevant,  
 doesn't it?

NICK

We've done our duty to  
 civilization. We've procreated,  
 now we can die.

They start back to the house.

NICK

(frowns)  
 Do you think I should have given  
 them more money?

DEBORAH

They have to have a sense of the  
 real world.

NICK  
 Why do I feel guilty about it?  
 (before she can  
 respond)  
 I know, I know. I want everybody  
 to like me. I never want to be  
 the bad guy.

DEBORAH  
 You don't mind being the bad guy  
 in business.

NICK  
 I'm a killer in business.  
 Sometimes you're a killer in  
 marriage.

DEBORAH  
 But a nice killer.

NICK  
 The sweetest killer I ever met.

They enter the house.

INT. DINING ROOM

A country antique table, Breuer chairs, modern art. A  
 Christmas tree off in the living room. Deborah counts to  
 herself while pointing to the chairs. Nick leans over the  
 table, trying to stick a recalcitrant candle in a Hanukah  
 menorah.

DEBORAH  
 (arranging seating)  
 Cindy...Daniel...Nora...Marty...  
 If Marty starts in with the  
 Kennedy assassination again.

NICK  
 Where're you putting Sheila?

DEBORAH  
 Next to Marty.... We better put  
 Phillip at the end or he'll hog  
 the whole conversation.

NICK  
 The only way Phillip won't hog the  
 conversation is not to invite him.

DEBORAH  
 (nods)  
 Arthur called to say he couldn't  
 make it.

NICK

He's gone to that Save-the-Bats Convention in Houston. Someone told him bats are our last hope to preserve the ozone layer.

DEBORAH

Probably Phillip.

NICK

(futzng with the candle)

Your ancestors sure have complicated rituals.

(looks at her)

Oh...uh... Happy Anniversary.

DEBORAH

You too.

The candle breaks.

NICK

Shit.

(dropping it in an ash tray)

Want to make love?

DEBORAH

(going into the kitchen)

Do we have time? It's gonna be a zoo at the mall.

NICK

(checks his watch)

If we're quick....Anyway, it'd be bad luck. We always do it on our anniversary.

DEBORAH (O. S.)

(yawning)

Uhuh.

INT. THEIR BEDROOM

Typical upper middle class. Walk-in closets, multi-line phone books, magazines, entertainment center, family photos--their son as Nathan Detroit in the school play, their daughter doing gymnastics, trips to Italy, Egypt, Nick with sports figures, wedding pictures, grandparents, siblings, etc. The News is on the television.

Nick and Deborah are on opposite sides of the bed, methodically undressing themselves and placing their clothes in neat piles on the headboard.

NICK

(as she unzips her jogging pants)  
Ah, ripping Velcro--the sound of the eighties...or is this the nineties? Which decade is this?

DEBORAH

Maybe I shouldn't put Nora next to Daniel?

(as she undresses)

Am I getting fat?

NICK

Nah... Maybe a little...No, you look great.

DEBORAH

I'm going to a spa. Seven hundred and fifty calories a day.

NICK

Where's that? In Auschwitz.

DEBORAH

No, Pritikin. That's worse..

They both stand there. They're still in their underpants.

DEBORAH

I thought we were in a hurry.

They climb into bed. They both take off their undies, placing them also neatly on the headboard, and begin their foreplay, kissing and touching each other in a manner they must have been doing for years--routine married sex, unimpassioned but efficient. Reports of the hostages come on the news.

NICK

(eyes half on the television)  
Umm, you taste good.

DEBORAH

Darling, you're going to have to make a choice between the hostages and me.

He clicks it off. They start kissing again when the phone rings.

NICK  
Your line.

DEBORAH  
(grabs the phone)  
Hello... Yes, this is Dr.  
Feingold-Fifer...

He continues to stroke her under the covers.

DEBORAH  
Hello, Elizabeth. No, you haven't  
called at a bad time.

He reaches for her crotch.

DEBORAH  
You know you can call me at any  
time...

(brushing his hand  
away)

I see, well, we discussed that,  
didn't we? There's a natural  
mourning period in a situation  
like this...

(sits up to get away  
from Nick)

Yes, I know he acted  
inappropriately. But you can't  
control how another person acts.  
You can only control how you  
act...

(gives Nick a look)  
That's right. Yes. That's a good  
idea. Call your friend and see if  
you can visit her. But don't  
hesitate if you need me. My  
service can reach me anywhere...  
You're doing fine... You're  
welcome, Elizabeth.

(hangs up)  
Her excuse for a husband walked  
out three months ago and she's  
finally starting to feel it.

NICK  
Holiday season. They should pay  
you double.

DEBORAH  
(sexy)  
Where were we?

They resume making love when the phone rings again--this time with a different tone.

DEBORAH

Your turn.

NICK

(grabs phone)

Hello....

(mustering his  
enthusiasm)

Oh, good morning, Mrs. Chung. How are you?... Yes, it is today.... Twice what McEnroe got--for court shoes and rackets. Not to mention personalized wrist bands. Your son is going to be the richest thirteen-year old tennis player in the world...Yes, I'll keep in touch with you every step of the way...No, No. Don't worry. I'm on a beeper. Talk to you soon, Mrs Chung.

(hangs up)

I think Mrs. Chung is Jewish.

They slide down under the covers again.

NICK

Now where were we?

She takes his hand and places it on her crotch.

INT. SHOWER - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The two are showering together.

NICK

(as she soaps him)

Did Cindy get a hold of you yesterday?

DEBORAH

She called my office.

NICK

Looking for a recommendation, huh?

DEBORAH

I suggested Branfman. He's good with couples.

NICK

It's a second marriage for both of them. I hope they can make it.

She nods sympathetically, turns him around and starts soaping the other side.

NICK  
(enjoying it)  
Um, that's good...You know, sometimes I really can't believe it... We're the only ones of our group still married...to the same spouse I mean.

DEBORAH  
Except for Isaac and Nora.

NICK  
But they've been living in separate cities for nine years.

DEBORAH  
We are pretty amazing.

NICK  
Sixteen years. A modern record.

DEBORAH  
Seventeen.

NICK  
Right. Seventeen... Counting when we lived together...  
(heartfelt)  
Congratulations.

DEBORAH  
Thanks. You too.

They look at each other, kiss almost bashfully.

NICK  
(takes the soap)  
Turn around.  
(starts to soap her)  
What do you think our secret is?

DEBORAH  
Professionally?

NICK  
Whatever.

DEBORAH  
 (hesitates)  
 Commitment...although I'm the  
 first one to admit it's still a  
 mystery to me.

NICK  
 I'll tell you what I think. I  
 think it's the corniest stuff in  
 the world...Our life together, the  
 kids, memories, all of that.

DEBORAH  
 (slightly  
 embarrassed, but  
 pleased)  
 Really?

NICK  
 Listen, when I was just out there  
 loading Sam's skis... I mean I  
 know he's already a man and  
 everything, or almost... but I  
 wanted to hug him and hold him  
 forever...

(touches her hair)  
 And hold you. And Jennifer... It's  
 the most precious part of my life.  
 Is that too corny?

DEBORAH  
 (almost blushing)  
 No, more, more, more....

The phone rings with yet another tone.

DEBORAH  
 The family line.

NICK  
 Let it ring.

DEBORAH  
 It could be about tonight.

Nick nods. He steps out of the shower, grabs a towel and goes  
 into

THE BEDROOM

where he picks up the phone.

DEBORAH

turns off the shower, wraps a towel around her, toweling herself off as she follows him into

THE BEDROOM

NICK

(cups phone, to Deborah)

Sheila. Wishing us a Happy Anniversary.

(into phone)

Seven-thirtyish...Sushi...Japanese beer would be great...Light. Kirin Light...By the way, we're putting you next to Marty.

(laughs)

Yeah, wear ear plugs. See you later, darling ... Love you too.

He hangs up.

DEBORAH

(goes for her jogging clothes)

I love Sheila. If only she were a little less anxious.

NICK

(going for his clothes)

I like her the way she is.

DEBORAH

(teasing)

I think you like her because she's thin.

NICK

I like her because she has big tits.

DEBORAH

Bastard.

NICK

She's your best friend.

DEBORAH

(putting on her  
clothes)

More your friend these days.  
You've been much closer to her,  
since we went to China together.  
Remember how the two of you took  
that long hike up the Great Wall?  
You didn't come back for four  
hours.

NICK

You had the flu.

DEBORAH

So did she.

(continuing to dress)  
And after she split up with  
Claude, it's hard to keep her out  
of the house.

NICK

Claude was a moron.  
(stops dressing,  
looks at her)  
What's this supposed to mean?  
(no response)  
You don't really think I have a  
thing for Sheila, do you?

DEBORAH

Not at all...maybe just a little.

NICK

Well some attraction for family  
friends is natural. That doesn't  
mean you act on it.  
(pointedly)  
Didn't somebody I know write that?

DEBORAH

(laughs)  
Actually, I was thinking how nice  
it would be to spend our  
anniversary alone for once.

NICK

(pulls on his pants)  
Too bad we didn't think of it  
earlier.  
(looks at her)  
But we will be alone until  
dinner...if you can call the mall  
alone.

NICK (cont.)

(thinks)

And I guess you could in the modern sense--the lonely crowd, the anonymous man in a sea of humanity, Kafka in Calif...I wonder what happened to the hostages.

He stops, seeing her observing him with an amused smirk.

DEBORAH

Don't forget your beeper.

He picks up her beeper from the headboard, hands it to her. Then clips his to his waist.

EXT. GARAGE DOOR - DAY

It opens revealing twin Saabs. One of them pulls out.

INT. SAAB

Nick drives while dialing his car phone. Deborah goes over a shopping list.

DEBORAH

Spain pictures...table flowers...Laura Ashley...Dry cleaning...Our presents...We better save the sushi for last.

CAR PHONE

Mako Sporting Goods International.

NICK

(into phone)

Court shoe promotions, please.

(to Deborah)

Do you think this is the ultimate sell-out...having a car phone?

DEBORAH

Not the ultimate, but it's close.

CAR PHONE

Court shoe promotions.

NICK

Jack Williams, please.

(half to himself)

Yeah, the old gang would have a field day with this one. But they probably all have car phones themselves.

NICK (cont.)

(to Deborah)

You should really have one for your car. Then your patients could bug you twenty-four hours a day..

(glances at her)

Maybe I should've gotten you one for your present.

DEBORAH

What did you get me?

CAR PHONE

Williams here.

NICK

Hey, Jack. This is Nick. I was wondering where we stood this morning.

EXT. LACIENEGA BOULEVARD -DAY

The Saab heads toward the Beverly Center.

JACK (O. S.)

Same place we stood yesterday, Nick-o. \$250,000 is a lot of front money just to put a thirteen-year old in tennis sneakers.

NICK (O. S.)

I wonder if Reebok feels that way.

INT. SAAB

JACK (O. S.)

Don't Reebok me. You don't want your kid in that shit. We're making a quality shoe here!

NICK

Jack, I know and you know all the shoes are made in the same factory in Taiwan. Only the labels are different. And Danny Chung's name on your label's gonna sell a lot of sneakers.

NICK (cont.)  
 (glances over at an  
 amused Deborah)  
 Look, this is my anniversary. I'm  
 going shopping with my wife. I'll  
 call you at exactly twelve o'clock  
 L. A. time. If you don't have an  
 answer for me by then, I'm moving  
 on. And this is not negotiating,  
 big guy, this is fact. Yes or no.  
 Ciao.

(hangs up)  
 Have an answer. Please, please,  
 have an answer. I hope, I hope, I  
 hope.

He takes out a shiny new pack of gum and pops a stick in his  
 mouth.

NICK  
 (to Deborah's puzzled  
 look)  
 Stress-Age Gum. New from the  
 Japanese. Turns pink--you're  
 fine. Turns green--intensive care  
 unit.

(checks his out)  
 So far so good.

EXT. BEVERLY CENTER

Decorated for Christmas. The Saab pulls into the entrance to  
 the interior parking. It's already loaded with cars.

INT. SAAB

--  
 At the parking gate. Nick takes the ticket.

COMPUTER VOICE  
 Levels two and three are already  
 filled. Thank you.

NICK  
 (to the computer)  
 Always a pleasure.

They head through.

NICK  
 You were right. It is a zoo.

EXT. PARKING LEVEL

Deborah and Nick squeeze into what seems like the last parking  
 space on level four. Get out.

NICK  
 (checks parking area)  
 4T Red...

They start for the elevator with the hordes of shoppers.

NICK  
 4T Red...4T Red...Plant it in your  
 brain and never forget it.  
 Remember what happened to us at  
 the Springsteen Concert. We had to  
 call a cab to find our car...Look  
 at this.

He gestures to the

ELEVATOR

which is already jammed to the gills.

DEBORAH  
 How's your stress gum?

NICK  
 (checks it)  
 Turning green already...Was that  
 4T Red?

DEBORAH  
 Yes, yes..

They wedge their way in.

THE CENTER OF THE MALL

All decked out for the holidays. Giant Christmas tree. Giant  
 menorah. Santa Claus. A brass choir playing "Winter  
 Wonderland."

A PUSHY MIME

is imitating people as they walk along. He comes up behind a  
 PREGNANT WOMAN pretending he's wheeling a stroller, then a  
 couple of trendy-looking JAPANESE TOURISTS, miming them taking  
 pictures.

The mime spins about and starts photographing Nick and Deborah  
 as they emerge from

A PHOTO DEVELOPMENT STORE

Nick is opening a package of photos. The mime, acting like a  
 family member, elbows his way between them and takes one of the  
 pictures for himself.

NICK  
(taking it back)  
I have a confession.  
(mouthing the words  
to him)  
I hate mimes.

The mime looks very sad and starts off.

DEBORAH  
That was mean.

NICK  
Alright. Alright.

He heads over to the mime and hands him a five-dollar bill.

NICK  
(mouthing the words)  
I love mimes.

The mime does a cartwheel.

NICK  
(back to Deborah)  
They're as bad as Hare' Krishnas.

DEBORAH  
Worse.  
(points to picture)  
Toledo. There's Jennifer.

Nick looks at the photo--a picture of their daughter riding a burro over-looking the Spanish city.

DEBORAH  
We never get any good pictures of  
her. She always hides her face.  
She's so beautiful.

NICK  
(knows the litany)  
She thinks she's ugly.

DEBORAH  
(shuffling through  
others)  
Madrid, Salamanca...These aren't  
bad. I think this was our best  
trip.

NICK  
Sexually it was.

DEBORAH  
Sex is always better on vacation.

NICK  
Come with me.  
(takes her arm)  
You're going to love your present.

DEBORAH  
Wait. Wait. We're passing yours  
right now.

She steers him toward a sporting goods store.

NICK  
What is it?

DEBORAH  
(opens door)  
I'm trying to head off a mid-life  
crisis.  
(they enter)

EXT. SPORTING GOODS STORE WINDOW - A MINUTE LATER

Inside we see a SALESMAN present Nick with a huge windsurfboard with an orange sail. He's grinning ear-to-ear, kisses Deborah.

FURTHER DOWN THE MALL - A SHORT WHILE LATER

A group of TEENAGE PUNKS are playing "We Three Kings" on the recorder when Nick and Deborah pass by. Nick is carrying the windsurfboard on his head.

DEBORAH  
(amused)  
I can't believe you didn't want  
them to deliver it.

NICK  
And wait a whole week? I want to  
be windsurfing Malibu tomorrow  
morning...Thanks, baby.  
(nods)  
Hey, that's you.

He leads her towards "SHAY SHIC"-- an opulent antique store filled with priceless objets.

DEBORAH  
(frowns)  
This place is for Saudi princes.

NICK  
 (presses buzzer)  
 How many sixteenth anniversaries  
 do you have in a lifetime? One...  
 (thinks)  
 Well, maybe two.

The OWNER buzzes them in.

INT. SHAY SHIC

Nick has the Windsurfboard leaning against the door. The Owner emerges with a 24 X 36 family photo portrait (Nick, Deborah, Sam and Jennifer) in a gorgeous antique gilt-edged frame. Deborah stares at it, obviously impressed.

NICK  
 Eighteenth Century French  
 Baroque...from the coach house of  
 the Count D'Orsay.

DEBORAH  
 Nick, this is crazy. What'd this  
 cost? I'd never get anything like  
 this for myself.

NICK  
 That's why I got it for you.  
 (puts his arms around  
 her)  
 Just promise me...you'll never  
 tell me we don't have any decent  
 family pictures again.

DEBORAH  
 I promise. Really I promise...  
 (kisses him on the  
 lips)  
 Love you.

EXT. MALL ESCALATOR - LATER

They ride up. Deborah is carrying the framed portrait (wrapped), plus a package from Laura Ashley and some dry cleaning. Nick still has the wind surfboard on his head, balancing that with his left hand while holding a flower arrangement with his right.

NICK  
 You're right. Maybe we did go a  
 little overboard... I'll give mine  
 back.

DEBORAH  
 Over my dead body.

NICK

(starting up the next flight)

I mean what does a grown man need with a with a twelve-foot windsurfboard.

(sees something, stops)

Hey, look at that. You're still there.

He starts off in the opposite direction toward some shops. Deborah follows him over to a

WALDENBOOKS

where two generous piles of "I DO! I DO! I DO!...RECOMMITTING YOURSELF TO MARRIAGE IN THE AGE OF DIVORCE" by Deborah Feingold-Fifer Ph. D. are stacked near the check-out counter. Beside them is a giant poster with the cover of the book and a glamorous author snap of Deborah.

DEBORAH

(slightly taken aback)

Why does this make me uncomfortable?

They walk over to where several CUSTOMERS are watching a

CLOSED-CIRCUIT TELEVISION

It shows another shopping mall where a middle-aged MAN is standing with a trade show-type WOMAN INTERVIEWER.

INTERVIEWER

And how did you like Dr. Feingold-Fifer's book--"I Do! I Do! I Do!?"

MAN

Like it? It saved my life! I just recommitted to my wife for our third marriage... Actually it was our second, but it really was our third, depending on how you look at it... In any case, my wife and I completely agree with Dr. Feingold-Fifer-- Since marriage began when life expectancy wasn't even thirty years, a modern marriage has to be several marriages.

MAN (cont.)

To survive, you have to make a clean break with the past every six or seven years and remarry each other.

INTERVIEWER

And have you followed any of the specific suggestions in the book?

MAN

Absolutely. We're making lists of everything we've always wanted to say to each other and exchanging them...Honesty. Honesty between couples. That's the main thing.

INTERVIEWER

(holds book into camera)

"I Do! I Do! I Do!...Recommitting Yourself to Marriage in the Age of Divorce" by Deborah Feingold-Fifer Ph. D., \$21.95 from Baltham Books. Now playing at a bookstore near you.

DEBORAH

looks mortified.

DEBORAH

Pretty tacky, huh?

NICK

(shrugs)

Sells books.

(looks at her, frowns)

Hey--be proud of what you've written. I am. I love your book. It's brilliant.

He picks a copy off the pile, leafs through it as several customers stop and stare. A well-dressed, middle-aged WOMAN seems particularly interested.

NICK

(to the woman)

Have you read it?

(sincerely)

This is really a wonderful book.

She shakes her head.

NICK  
 (proudly)  
 Listen to this. A passage at  
 random.

DEBORAH  
 Nick, please.

NICK  
 (reading)  
 "Chapter Six--The Joy of  
 Fidelity."  
 (smiles)  
 That's a good one.  
 (reads)  
 "Too many people accept that  
 passion must disappear from a long  
 marriage, but committment itself  
 can used to generate passion."...  
 That's interesting.  
 (indicates the  
 mortified Deborah)  
 This is Dr. Feingold-Fifer. She  
 wrote the book. I'll tell you  
 right now, if your marriage is on  
 the rocks, this book can save you.  
 (to the clerk)  
 I'll take one.  
 (to the woman)  
 What about you?

The woman smiles and turns away.

EXT. ESCALATOR - A FEW MINUTES

They're riding up to the top floor (restaurants and movie  
 theaters), still laden with the same crap. Nick is carrying  
 his copy of "I Do! I Do! I Do!"

DEBORAH  
 That was hostile.

NICK  
 What do you mean? You're a  
 celebrity.

DEBORAH  
 I'm not a celebrity. But whatever  
 I am public exposure makes me  
 uncomfortable. My heart started to  
 beat.

NICK  
 It's not my fault you've written a  
 success.

DEBORAH  
Nick, you know my feelings about  
cheap publicity.

NICK  
Hey, it's a reality. The  
competition is fierce.

DEBORAH  
You didn't have to buy another  
book.

NICK  
It's for Cindy and Daniel--when  
they come to the party tonight.  
With their marriage, they could  
use it.

They arrive on the top floor and start walking in the direction  
of Kappa Sushi.

DEBORAH  
I still think it was hostile.

NICK  
Okay, okay. It was hostile. I've  
been feeling weird lately. I  
guess I'm a hostile person in  
general. Or destructive.

DEBORAH  
There's a difference between a  
hostile act and a hostile person.

NICK  
Believe me I'm a hostile person.

DEBORAH  
Keep it up and I'll believe you.

He glances over at Deborah as if something's on his mind.

NICK  
Deborah?

DEBORAH  
What?

NICK  
Never mind.

INT. KAPPA SUSHI--MOMENTS LATER

The Sushi Chef is putting the finishing touches on their  
elaborate spread. Nick still looks disturbed.

DEBORAH  
California Roll...Jumbo clam.  
Isn't that yellowtail gorgeous?  
And look at that quail egg on sea  
urchin.

NICK  
Pure cholesterol.

DEBORAH  
You don't have to eat it.  
(looks at him  
sympathetically)  
Ah, still down in the dumps.  
You're not hostile or destructive.  
You're my sweetheart. Here...a  
little tuna roll. Your favorite.  
(gives him some  
sushi)  
No one'll miss it.

Nick eats. The chef completes the order, folding down an  
elaborate take-out box.

DEBORAH  
You've outdone yourself, Jiro.  
Better than last year. A painting.  
A flower arrangement.

NICK  
Yeah, a three hundred and seventy  
dollar flower arrangement.

CHEF  
(bowing)  
Arrigato. Arrigato gozaimasu.

Nick hands the chef his credit card.

EXT. MALL

Nick and Deborah emerge from the sushi bar. His hands laden,  
Nick has the sushi balanced on the windsurfboard.

DEBORAH  
(studies him)  
You look pale.

NICK  
No, I'm fine. I think...I'd,  
uh... like to talk to you about  
something.

DEBORAH  
 (playing Japanese)  
 Of course, Nicky-san. Anything  
 for Nicky-san on most honorable  
 anniversary.  
 (starts tickling him)  
 Is important, Nicky-san?

NICK  
 (trying to avoid  
 spilling the sushi)  
 Yes, it's important... I mean  
 no...I mean maybe...yes.

DEBORAH  
 (seriously)  
 Now what was it you wanted to tell  
 me?

NICK  
 Let's get a frozen yogurt first.

DEBORAH  
 (playfully)  
 Avoiding, Nicky-san?

She starts tickling him again.

NICK  
 Hey...hey...

Eluding the tickles, he turns away from her, sliding the sushi  
 onto a table by the Fountain of Yogurt. Then he leans the board  
 against the railing before turning back to her.

NICK  
 (a beat, then)  
 I had an affair.

She looks at him. The din of the mall seems almost to go  
 silent.

DEBORAH  
 (a long beat, then  
 coolly)  
 I see. When?

NICK  
 Recently. It's over.

DEBORAH  
 Uhuh.

NICK  
 I'm really sorry.

DEBORAH

Oh.

NICK

Maybe that's why I was hostile before...I thought I owed it to you, to both of us, to tell you... and I know this sounds corny...maybe worse than corny...cheap and awful and everything... but maybe you could find a way to forgive me and we could...start over on our anniversary...

(gestures to book)

...remarry...somehow.

Deborah nods. Down below, a high school choir begins to sing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

DEBORAH

(checks watch)

It's twelve o'clock.

NICK

(taken aback)

What?

DEBORAH

Don't you have a phone call to make?

NICK

(baffled)

Now?

DEBORAH

You told that Williams man you'd call.

NICK

The hell with him.

DEBORAH

Nicholas, it's your business. Danny Chung's mother expects an answer. Whatever we have to say to each other can wait ten minutes.

Nick looks from her, toward the phones and back again.

NICK

You sure?

DEBORAH

Go.

NICK

Deborah, I don't have to make this call.

DEBORAH

I said go.

He walks off, then stops and looks back.

WHAT HE SEES

Deborah calmly sitting down at the table.

NICK

doesn't know what to make of this. He turns and heads into the corridor to a

BANK OF PAY PHONES

He stops at one, takes out a little phone book and dials.

NICK

Credit card 555-1782-0328.

Agitated, Nick takes out another stick of Stress-Age Gum and sticks it in his mouth.

NICK

Court shoe promotions.

Lines of shoppers stream by.

NICK

Jack Williams, please.

Nick sighs impatiently and starts tapping the phone when his attention is caught by

THE MIME

--at the next phone--mimicking his every move.

NICK

(fed up)

Oh, shit.

The mime imitates this too. Nick looks as if he's about to do something to him when the phone answers.

NICK  
 (into phone)  
 He's not?..You sure?..Well, tell  
 him Nick Fifer called. Tell  
 him...I'm...  
 (half-heartedly)  
 ...going to Reebok.

Nick hangs up, considers making another call, but doesn't have the stomach for it. He starts off.

NICK  
 (to the mime)  
 Fuck off.  
 (checks his gum,  
 frowns)  
 Dark brown?

A GROUP OF CHINESE ACROBATS

are riding around the Mall floor on unicycles in front of a delighted crowd.

DEBORAH

is seated at their table staring down at them when Nick, looking tense, walks up and sits down. We hear a roar of laughter and applause.

DEBORAH  
 They're from Shanghai.  
 (turns to him)  
 How'd it go?

NICK  
 He wouldn't answer my call.

DEBORAH  
 You'll have to go to Reebok.

He nods.

DEBORAH  
 Tell me about your affair.

NICK  
 What do you want to know?

DEBORAH  
 When was it over?

NICK  
 (hesitates)  
 Yesterday.

DEBORAH  
Should I ask when?

NICK  
Late yesterday. Around four-  
thirty.

DEBORAH  
How long did it last?

NICK  
Do you really want to know all  
this?

DEBORAH  
Yes.

NICK  
Six....no, seven months.

DEBORAH  
Then it was serious.

NICK  
Well...

DEBORAH  
If it went on for seven months, it  
was serious... When did you meet  
her? When did you find the time?

NICK  
(uncomfortable)  
After work. When I...was supposed  
to be at the health club.

DEBORAH  
When I was taking your daughter to  
her clarinet lessons...No wonder  
you've been working out so much...  
Is this your first affair or have  
there been others? You might as  
well tell me now that we're  
talking.

NICK  
(looks around)  
We better go some place.

DEBORAH  
This is fine. Nobody's listening  
to us...

NICK  
I don't...

She looks at him.

NICK  
Two. Many years ago.  
(quickly)  
But they were nothing. One night  
stands.

DEBORAH  
Who were they?

NICK  
You really want to know?  
(she waits)  
One was a head hunter I met at the  
Mile-High Club in O'Hare Airport  
and--

DEBORAH  
Head hunter?

NICK  
You know--executive head hunter.  
They get people jobs. The other  
was a legal secretary in Atlanta.

DEBORAH  
That's it? Two?

NICK  
Yes, two. One-nighters.  
(thinks)  
No, three. Three if you include  
the hooker in Dallas when I went  
to sign up the Cowboys... But I  
really didn't have a choice. I  
mean that was business. She was a  
gift I couldn't refuse.

DEBORAH  
What did she have that I didn't  
have?

NICK  
The hooker?

DEBORAH  
The yesterday one.

NICK  
Oh... Nothing. It wasn't about  
that.

DEBORAH  
Then what was it about? Did she  
do tricks in bed, things that I  
didn't do?

NICK  
No.

(thinks)  
Well, some. I mean it was pretty  
wild at the beginning. At the  
beginning it's always--

DEBORAH  
Oh, you have lots of experience at  
beginnings?

NICK  
You know what I mean. It was wild  
for us, remember? Come on,  
Deborah. You used to grab me  
under the table in restaurants.  
We made it in an elevator.

DEBORAH  
Is that what you did with her?

NICK  
At first.. But then that wore off  
and..

DEBORAH  
And what?

NICK  
And nothing. Nothing. It was  
like regular...sex.

DEBORAH  
You mean like ours was this  
morning...fake...perfunctory... Do  
you love her? Do you want to marry  
her?

NICK  
I told you. It's over.

DEBORAH  
Did you love her? Did you want to  
marry her?

NICK  
No, I couldn't. I mean... I didn't  
want to...Well...

DEBORAH  
Yes or no?

NICK  
No.

DEBORAH  
You never told her you loved her?

NICK  
I might have...but I didn't.

DEBORAH  
Then you lied to her too.

NICK  
Not exactly lied.

DEBORAH  
Then you did love her.

NICK  
I liked her. I loved the sex.

DEBORAH  
You mean you love me, but you only  
like the sex.

NICK  
I love our sex, but sometimes it  
is routine. But isn't that normal  
in a sixteen-year marriage?...Hey,  
what's the difference, it's over  
with.

DEBORAH  
Then why are you telling me now?

NICK  
(frustrated)  
Deborah!

DEBORAH  
You're guilty and you want me to  
exonerate you.

NICK  
(picks up her book  
and flips to a page)  
"You cannot carry a large lie  
through a marriage because a large  
lie, like an untreated cancer,  
will continue to grow until you or  
the relationship dies."

NICK (continues)

(looks at her)

You don't believe what you've written?

She gets up and walks over to the rail, staring down at the Chinese acrobats. Nick stands and comes up near her.

DEBORAH

(at length)

It's Sheila, isn't it?

NICK

(laughs)

No, no, no. I told you.

(goes and touches her)

I wouldn't do that.

(gestures dismissively)

It was someone you don't know. A girl in her twenties.

DEBORAH

A younger woman.

NICK

Her age was an accident....She's very bright. Creative. A painter.

DEBORAH

A painter. How interesting.

NICK

Yes. She paints those sports paintings. You know--like Leroy Neiman. The ones you hate. Actually, I didn't like them much either. They--

DEBORAH

How'd you meet her?

NICK

(shrugs)

She was married to this second baseman I represent and they were going through a divorce and he was traded to the Chicago Cubs and she was vulnerable ...

(nods)

...I guess I was too.

DEBORAH

What's her name?

NICK  
 You really want to know her name?  
 What possible import...

(frowns)  
 What do you want to know her name  
 for? Anyway, it's one of those  
 dumb confusing names that could be  
 a man or a woman. You know-- bi-  
 sexual. Like Mickey or Sidney.  
 or... You're not going to look her  
 up or something?

DEBORAH  
 She knew my name, didn't she?  
 Well, what's hers?

NICK  
 Ed.

DEBORAH  
 Ed?

NICK  
 Ed...Ed... Short for Edwina. .

DEBORAH  
 Edwina ?  
 (laughs)  
 Oh, Nick. What a lost boy you are.  
 (smiles at him)  
 I'll bet you feel better now.

NICK  
 I really do. I've been wanting to  
 let you know for weeks.

DEBORAH  
 But you couldn't....until  
 yesterday at four-thirty.

NICK  
 Right.  
 (smiles, relieved)  
 Oh, God, you're incredible. I  
 knew you'd be able to work through  
 this. I'm so lucky to be with you.  
 I can't think of another woman  
 who'd be mature enough to handle  
 this. I love you, Deborah.  
 (takes her hand)  
 We can start over now. Remarry.  
 (kisses it)

She kicks him straight in the balls. He crumples to the floor  
 groaning in agony and clutching his groin.

## THE MIME

--who has been watching everything--does a brilliant imitation of him rolling on the floor clutching his groin.

DEBORAH

(stares at Nick)

You are the most callow, short-sighted, selfish, self-involved, prick who has ever lived!

She picks up the family portrait and smashes it over the rail, shattering the glass.

DEBORAH

I hope you fry in hell, shithead!

She knocks over the surfboard, upending the sushi and the flowers, and storms off.

NICK

(moaning)

Where're you going?

DEBORAH

(stops, contemptuously)

First I'm going to let everyone know the party's off. Then I'm going to find a lawyer.

NICK

I'm a lawyer.

She rips up the Spain pictures and scatters them over the balcony before disappearing into the crowd.

NICK

--still unable to stand up--crawls across the floor to where the sushi is spilled. He starts to pick up the pieces, dropping them in a garbage receptacle.

THE MIME

is already picking up other ones, pretending to eat them.

A CORRIDOR

A determined Deborah is on a pay phone. We can hear a tinny recording of Christmas music in the background as she waits impatiently for the message to play through.

## ANSWERING MACHINE (O. S.)

This is Cindy Lipman in the holiday spirit offering you the original sound-track recording of Gene Autry singing "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." Leave your message at the beep.

(BEEP)

## DEBORAH

(efficient)

Cindy, I can't explain now, but the party's off for tonight and my marriage is also off. Let everybody know, okay? Good-bye.

She hangs up and strides off.

## CLOSE - DEBORAH

She marches purposefully through the shoppers past some MORRIS DANCERS, a SANTA CLAUS, a CREPE SELLER--a woman on a mission as she heads for the elevator.

## INT. FOURTH PARKING FLOOR

She emerges from the elevator and heads directly for the Saab. She disengages the alarm and gets in.

## INT. SAAB

She backs up and pulls into the

## EXIT LANE

immediately running into a large traffic jam of cars waiting to get out.

## CLOSE - DEBORAH

She just sits there. A look of incredible pain comes over her. Then, from deep inside her, she begins to sob. Tears start rolling down her face. She tries to hold them back, but they come more and more. She drops her head onto the steering wheel sobbing uncontrollably.

The car behind her HONKS. She moves forward slowly.

## INT. PHONE AREA

Nick limps in, looking for Deborah. She's gone. He hurries off into

## INT. MALL CORRIDOR

Past a chocolate store and a men's shop. Past the Banana Republic, Williams Sonoma, Mrs. Fields. Going faster and faster he turns onto

## INT. ESCALATOR

Breaking into a run, as he passes the other SHOPPERS heading down onto the

## OUTSIDE ESCALATOR

--in the tube---where he skitters down the stairs, practically sliding down the bannister.

NICK  
(calls out)  
Deborah!...Wait!

He knocks into an OLD LADY, catching her just before she falls and dashes onto the

## INT. FOURTH FLOOR PARKING

He hurries to the spot.

NICK  
4T Red..4T Red...

It's empty.

NICK  
Shit.

He sees the

## LINE OF STALLED CARS

He starts down them, looking for the Saab, when he runs into

## THE MIME

working the line, doing Santa Claus invitations. He blocks Nick's path, bumping him with an imaginary stomach and pretending to shake his hand. Nick tries to get around him, but the mime won't let him pass, shifting over and bumping him again.

NICK  
Why don't you work for a living,  
cretin?!

There is a loud HONKING. Nick looks over to see

THE SAAB

in line fifty feet away. The car in front has moved ahead but the Saab has not budged. The car behind HONKS again.

NICK

pushes past the obstinate Mime and races up to

THE SAAB

Deborah is still weeping, staring down at her lap.

NICK

Deborah.

The car behind HONKS a third time.

NICK

(to the driver,  
uncontrollable rage)

Use your eyes, you blind creep.  
Can't you see nobody's moving?  
Honk one more time and I'll kill  
you! I've killed before and I'll  
do it again!

(to Deborah)

Let me drive.

She shakes her head.

NICK

You're in no condition. Come on.

She shakes her head again. Nick gives up and goes around the other side.

INT. SAAB

NICK

(getting in)  
Well at least pull over. Unless  
you want to have an accident.

She turns the wheel.

EXT. SAAB

pulling into a HANDICAPPED PARKING slot.

INT. SAAB

DEBORAH

(tearfully)

Go away.

NICK  
We have to talk.

DEBORAH  
There's no point.

NICK  
Of course there's a point. We  
can't--

DEBORAH  
Adultery's never about the third  
party. It's about the original  
couple.

(turns to him)  
It's about us. You were sending me  
a message.

NICK  
What message? She was attractive.  
She was there. I was weak.

DEBORAH  
I can't believe you actually did  
it. I can't believe you threw  
away everything we had for...

She chokes up. He passes her a handkerchief.

DEBORAH  
(sniffing)  
It is jealousy, isn't it?

NICK  
Of what?

DEBORAH  
My success. My book.

NICK  
I'm not jealous of your book. I  
told you. I'm proud of--

DEBORAH  
You started out as a public  
defender.

NICK  
What's that have to do with it?

DEBORAH  
I'm sure somewhere...  
unconsciously.

NICK  
Unconsciously?... Oh, hey, now I'm  
a failed idealist, is that it?

She nods, shrugs.

NICK  
Bitter, ex-activist turned self-  
hating sports hustler who finds a  
chickiepoo to feel better about  
himself?

DEBORAH  
I couldn't have said it better.

NICK  
Deborah, that was the past. I like  
what I do. Negotiating contracts  
for the Chargers and the Oakland  
A's is fun. And I don't mind the  
money either. And when I want to  
get my liberal rocks off I can  
send a check to Amnesty or the  
ACLU.

DEBORAH  
Yes, but deep down...

NICK  
(flares)  
Deep down. Deep down. Will you  
stop being a shrink for once?  
Sometimes things are just what  
they seem!

She gives him a look.

NICK  
Okay, Okay. I'm human. Once in a  
while I get a pang of jealousy  
when people pay more attention to  
you at a party.  
(shakes head)  
But nowhere near enough to have  
caused this.

DEBORAH  
(sighs)  
Then it's over.

NICK  
Why?

DEBORAH  
It's what you want.

NICK  
What I want?!

DEBORAH  
It's classical. You had an affair to sabotage the relationship because you couldn't confront me directly.

NICK  
What? I was the one who was trying to be honest, to tell the truth and start over!

DEBORAH  
You were the one who was out getting laid!

NICK  
What's the big deal? It's in your book--adultery's a commonplace. It happens at least once in over seventy-five percent of married couples.

DEBORAH  
I thought we were in the other twenty-five percent.  
(flatly)  
It's over.

She gets out of the car.

NICK  
(getting out too)  
Hey, where're you going?

EXT. SAAB

Deborah heads down the ramp toward the street.

DEBORAH  
To get a cab.

NICK  
(following her)  
That's ridiculous. I'll drive you.

DEBORAH  
No, you won't.

NICK

(following her)  
 Look, I'm sorry. That was a dumb  
 thing to say. Really dumb...  
 insensitive... Statistics are  
 bullshit. It's your adultery no  
 matter how many couples--

DEBORAH

It's over. Why're you kidding  
 yourself?

NICK

Deborah. Please. I don't want it  
 to be over.

DEBORAH

(stops, looks at him)  
 What do you want, Nicholas?  
 Another sixteen years of lying to  
 each other? The mature thing is  
 to get out now while we're both  
 still young enough to start over.

She continues down the ramp past the line of cars.

NICK

(calls out)  
 I'll never do it again. I  
 promise!  
 (no response)  
 Okay, okay. Have it your way.  
 (changes his mind)  
 Hey, wait a minute.  
 (runs to catch up)  
 We can't give up that easily.  
 (matching steps)  
 What about the children?

DEBORAH

(walking faster)  
 The children? That's a good one.  
 Were you thinking of them when you  
 were off shacking up with Ed.

NICK

Ed who?

DEBORAH

Ed! Your Ed!!

NICK  
(struggling to keep  
up)  
That's not true. I--

DEBORAH  
Oh. You were planning on adopting  
them together. How nice. Were you  
discussing Jennifer's learning  
disability?

NICK  
Give me a break!

DEBORAH  
Give you a break? You didn't give  
me a break. You wrecked our  
marriage for some bogus conception  
of honesty!

NICK  
It was your conception! It's in  
your book.'

DEBORAH  
I wasn't writing about our  
marriage.

They come out on

SAN VICENTE BOULEVARD

Deborah starts signalling for a taxi.

NICK  
Will you quit this? You know you  
can't hail cabs in Los Angeles!

DEBORAH  
I'll get one at the hotel.

She heads up the block.

NICK  
(following)  
Stop. You're not going to end our  
marriage for one lousy--

DEBORAH  
Four. It was four by your count.  
Who knows how many it really was?

NICK  
Deborah, I swear to you. That's  
all there was. And those first  
three were just--

DEBORAH  
(stops, looks at him)  
How could I ever trust you again?

NICK  
(at a loss)  
I...

DEBORAH  
You can't even give me a reason.  
How do you expect me to...  
(stops, frowns)  
Where's your present?

NICK  
What?

DEBORAH  
Your windsurfboard. Someone's  
going to take it. And I ordered it  
three months ago...had them stitch  
your name on the fucking sail, for  
crissakes.... It'll be gone for  
sure!

She starts back for the mall.

DEBORAH  
(as Nick hurries  
after her)  
Not to mention the rest of the...

INT. FOUNTAIN OF YOGURT

They march up to the tables. The board is still leaning  
against the chairs where it was knocked. The packages,  
including the broken frame, are on the chair.

DEBORAH  
(relieved)  
Safe. Thank God.

NICK  
(picks the board up)  
I guess I'll have them deliver it  
after all.

DEBORAH  
I thought you wanted to take it to  
Malibu? You'll never get it for  
the weekend. This is Christmas.

NICK  
I'll live without it.

DEBORAH  
Maybe we could get Nora's handyman  
to....

She stops herself, realizing she's inadvertently slipped back  
to normal behavior. A deeply pained expression comes over her  
and she starts to sob all over again.

NICK  
(reaches out to  
comfort her)  
Deborah...

DEBORAH  
(pushes him away)  
Don't touch me.  
(makes a fist)  
I'll kill you. I swear!  
(lashing out)  
You're so mean. You--

She buries her face in her hands and resumes sobbing.

DEBORAH  
Oh, God. Why did you do this to  
me? You've ruined my life.  
You've... Oh, my God...

NICK  
(trying to console her)  
I'm sorry... I didn't intend to--

A BEEPER goes off.

NICK  
Whose is that?

DEBORAH  
(through tears)  
Mine.  
(starts for phone)

NICK  
Deborah. You don't have to--

DEBORAH  
 Leave me alone.  
 (turns on him)  
ALONE! Get it?

She hurries off, leaving Nick standing there. He sees the Mime who is eating frozen yogurt.

INT. PHONE BANK

Deborah is on the phone, trying to hold back her tears.

DEBORAH  
 I'm sorry your friends weren't home, Elizabeth... No, I don't think more Valium is the solution. ... That's good. An excellent idea. Go to the museum for the Russian futurist show....No, there's nothing wrong with me. My nose is stuffed up. That's all...Of course you can call me. You're doing fine, Elizabeth. You'll be fine. Just stay away from the Valium. Good-bye.

She sighs painfully, hangs up and dials another number.

INT. MALL

Deborah emerges from the corridor, walking purposefully, when Nick locks step with her.

NICK  
 I'll drive you home.

DEBORAH  
 I'm not going home. I'm going to Marty Lefkowitz's office.

NICK  
 Marty? You'll see him tonight.

DEBORAH  
 No I won't. The party's off, remember? What do you think? I was going to act out some humiliating charade in front of our friends?

NICK  
 I don't want you to--

DEBORAH  
(heads for escalator)  
Besides I need a lawyer.

NICK  
Already?

DEBORAH  
When do you expect me to do it?

NICK  
I thought maybe you'd want to  
think things over.

DEBORAH  
You won't accept reality, will  
you?

NICK  
Well, if you're sure Marty's the  
right choice?

They come to the top of the escalator. Tons of shoppers stream  
up and down.

DEBORAH  
(turns to him)  
Look, whom I choose for a lawyer  
is my business.

NICK  
Marty's very good but he'll charge  
you an arm and a leg. And his  
ethics are a little suspect. He's  
been sanctioned by the Bar  
Association three times!

DEBORAH  
Got a better recommendation?

NICK  
Yeah. I'll do it.

DEBORAH  
You'll do it?

NICK  
Why not?

DEBORAH  
It's just possible you'd lack  
objectivity.

She starts onto the escalator. Nick heads after her when his path is blocked by a WOMAN in a Swiss costume offering free samples of imported chocolate.

NICK  
(grabs two)  
Thanks.

He dodges past her and catches up with Deborah on

THE ESCALATOR

He offers a chocolate. She turns away.

NICK  
Hey, it's Toblerone. You love Toblerone.

DEBORAH  
(grimly)  
For some reason I don't have much of an appetite.

Nick shrugs, eats it himself as they come to the bottom of the escalator. She gets off quickly.

NEXT ESCALATOR

Nick comes right along side.

NICK  
For one thing, California's a community property state. Whatever we've got we have to split down the middle to begin with. Secondly, I want the best for the children so I'm not going to screw you on child support. And third, it's going to save us a minimum of thirty thousand in legal fees.  
(as they get off)  
And that's if we don't go to court.

DEBORAH  
(continuing on)  
I can't believe I'm hearing this.

NICK  
Try me. You have nothing to lose.

DEBORAH  
But my shirt, my livelihood, my house and my children.

NICK

(stops her)  
Look, we work it out together.  
Then you think it over and if you  
think I'm being unfair, tear it  
all up and hire...

(gestures)

...Marty Lefkowitz or Marvin  
Mitchelson, for all I care.

DEBORAH

(studies him)

You're just doing this as an  
excuse to stay in contact. I've  
seen it a hundred times with my  
patients.

NICK

I'm doing this to save us money.  
(looks at her)  
When do you want to start?

DEBORAH

You really want to do this?

NICK

Yes.

DEBORAH

(thinks)

Alright... Right now.

NICK

Now?

DEBORAH

I don't want to live with this  
hanging over my head. As far as  
I'm concerned, if I don't ever see  
you again at the end of today,  
it'll be perfectly fine with me.  
...And if you've got some trick up  
your sleeve, I'd rather know now.

EXT. "NUVO NAVAJO"

A pseudo-Santa Fe restaurant. Nick and Deborah sit at a table  
over-looking the mall while a waiter takes their orders.

NICK

Two margaritas straight up. One  
with salt...

(nods toward Deborah)

...one without.

DEBORAH  
I don't want it.

NICK  
(to the waiter)  
Bring it.

DEBORAH  
I won't drink it.

NICK  
I'll drink it.  
(to the waiter)  
Go ahead.

The waiter goes off.

DEBORAH  
Soft talk. Alcohol. You'll  
probably be buying me flowers  
next. It won't change my mind.

NICK  
I understand... How's your  
patient?

DEBORAH  
Which one?

NICK  
The one you've been talking to. I  
assume it's the same one.

DEBORAH  
Anxious.

NICK  
I'm sorry.

DEBORAH  
So am I. She has that Epstein-  
Barr syndrome. They all think  
they're suicidal, but they're fine  
when their blood sugar comes up.

NICK  
The Yuppie disease. Why don't we  
have it?

DEBORAH  
We probably do by now.

NICK  
(takes out a pen)  
Well..first we have to decide if  
we want a regular or a summary  
dissolution?

DEBORAH  
What's the difference?

NICK  
A summary dissolution's simpler,  
but it only really works if you've  
been married under five years.

DEBORAH  
That lets us out.

NICK  
Yes... Okay then, we should list  
our separate and community  
property...

He unfolds a napkin, starts to write on it.

NICK  
...including quasi-community  
property--i. e. goods acquired by  
the spouses in other states before  
residency in California...

DEBORAH  
Like the Early American break  
front.

NICK  
Mmmm, right...then bills and debts  
of the spouses, like your Neiman-  
Marcus account...

DEBORAH  
Are we bringing that into it  
already?

NICK  
It's a fact.

DEBORAH  
That's pretty sexist. What about  
that absurdly expensive projection  
TV you insisted on buying--the one  
nobody watched and then blew up  
two weeks after the warranty ran  
out?

NICK  
 Okay, okay, we'll hold off on the  
 petty details...

(writes)  
 ... pension and retirement  
 plans...family home and other real  
 estate...

The waiter arrives with the margaritas, puts them down. Nick reaches for his. Deborah drinks hers. Nick notices, but doesn't comment.

NICK  
 We have three choices on the  
 family home--sell it and divide  
 the profit, transfer it to one  
 spouse in exchange for equitable  
 interest or change the title to  
 tenants-in-common and agree to let  
 the custodial parent and children  
 live in the home until some time  
 or event... like Sam's  
 graduation....

(looks at her)  
 I assume that's what you'd want to  
 do, wait til they're out of  
 school.

DEBORAH  
 I think we should call the kids  
 now and tell them.

NICK  
 (shocked)  
 Now? Today? . They're on vacation  
 and everything.

DEBORAH  
 They have a right to know we're  
 getting divorced.

NICK  
 You think they'll be scarred for  
 life?

DEBORAH  
 Absolutely.

NICK  
 Is that your professional opinion?

DEBORAH

That's my opinion as their mother.  
Of course it's no worse than being  
the offspring of a rotten  
marriage.

NICK

Like ours.

DEBORAH

That gives them a negative  
impression of marriage in general  
that they tend to reproduce,  
consciously or unconsciously, in  
their later relationships.

NICK

Like child abuse.

DEBORAH

Exactly.... On the other hand, if  
there is a divorce, children  
almost never understand the  
problems of the parents and blame  
themselves. So they're damned  
either way.

NICK

What can we do about it?

DEBORAH

Suffer.

NICK

(gloomy)

I feel like the scumbag of all  
time.

DEBORAH

You are.

He drinks his margarita down. She finishes hers.

NICK

Another?

DEBORAH

Why not?

NICK

Waiter.

CLOSE--SEVERAL NAPKINS- LATER

Filled with notes. PAN UP to NICK who is checking off the list while finishing their third margaritas. They're both looking a little stoned.

NICK  
The wicker chest.

DEBORAH  
From my mother.

NICK  
The folding chairs.

DEBORAH  
I better keep them. They go with the formica table.

NICK  
The pole lamps.

DEBORAH  
You can take them.

NICK  
I don't know where I'll put them... The rattan headboard?

DEBORAH  
Once you're gone I think I'll move it to the guest room.

NICK  
(pained)  
Uhuh.... The Free Angela Davis Posters?

DEBORAH  
I don't want them.

NICK  
Neither do I.  
(trying to stay calm)  
The rolltop desk?

DEBORAH  
It was your birthday present.

NICK  
Was it?

DEBORAH  
We bought it in that antique shop in Oxford, remember?

NICK  
Right. When we missed the train to  
London and had to stay in that  
weird bed & breakfast place...

DEBORAH  
(smiles)  
...with the leaky toilets and the  
five hundred cats...

NICK  
(pleased she's  
smiling)  
...And we stayed up all night  
playing gin because we ran out of  
coins for the heater.  
(thinks)  
God, we were only--how old?--  
twenty-three.

DEBORAH  
Four.

NICK  
How'd we have the balls to spend  
all that money on a desk?  
(shakes head, looks  
at list, then)  
Who's going to keep the Persian  
rug?

DEBORAH  
The one in the den or the one in  
foyer?

NICK  
The one that was in the dining  
room when I was in law school...  
Remember how Artie Sims spilled  
spaghetti bolognese all over  
the...  
(chokes up)  
You sure you want to do this?  
Maybe we should wait?

DEBORAH  
Nick, this was your idea.

NICK  
Yes, but...

DEBORAH  
If you can't handle it, I'll get  
another lawyer.

NICK

(over-wrought)

No, no. I can do it. Please...  
The rug...it just...

DEBORAH

It's not a good idea. We're  
kidding ourselves.

NICK

(trying to be firm)

I said--I can do it!

DEBORAH

(stands, a little  
tipsy)

It's not fair to either of us.  
I'll get a cab.

(starts off)

It's better we not talk to each  
other for awhile.

NICK

(stands, dazed)

For awhile?

DEBORAH

Nick, it's over. There's no trust  
The whole thing is over. What I  
advise you to do is go out and  
find an apartment.

( leaves some money  
on the table)

It's going to be difficult for  
now, but perhaps we can be friends  
later.

She walks off. Nick follows her through a crowd of shoppers,  
devastated.

NICK

(tears welling up)

Friends...Oh, God...Friends...  
Deborah, you're my wife. What'm I  
gonna do? My whole life...I'm  
lost without you. Please. Don't.  
Deborah...

He dissolves in tears. She stops and looks at him. People step  
around them, embarrassed at what they are seeing.

DEBORAH  
 Nick, You'll be okay. Really.  
 Your future depends on yourself,  
 not on me.

NICK  
 Is that what you tell your  
 patients?

DEBORAH  
 People adjust. At first they  
 think they'll die or something.  
 But a few years later they're  
 perfectly alright. I've seen it a  
 thousand times.

The Mime--standing nearby--nods his approval to the other by-standers who are watching. Nick begins to hyperventilate.

NICK  
 (wailing)  
 Oh, God, no!

Sobbing, he clutches the railing, barely able to support himself.

NICK  
 Men aren't supposed to do this,  
 are they?

DEBORAH  
 Men can do whatever they want.

NICK  
 Well, I want to jump over the  
 railing.  
 (clutching himself,  
 weeping)  
 Oh, my life...Oh, no, Deborah. I  
 love you so much. I can't live  
 without you.

DEBORAH  
 Of course you can.

NICK  
 It's not the same... I... I feel  
 like I'm having a nervous  
 breakdown of some...

He leans over the rail, tears gushing. Several people watch, fascinated.

DEBORAH  
 (takes him by the  
 arm)  
 Breath deeply. You'll be okay.

NICK  
 I'm ashamed. I'm ashamed.

DEBORAH  
 (to the crowd)  
 Don't you have something better to  
 do than watch somebody in pain?  
 This isn't the Geraldo Rivera  
 Show.

The Mime agrees and ushers everybody off. Nick continues to  
 hyperventilate. Deborah leads him to the

EXT. MALL MULTI-PLEX THEATER TICKET WINDOW

Jammed with holiday moviegoers. Deborah is near the front of  
 the line with Nick who is barely keeping it together.

DEBORAH  
 Two tickets for anything.

TICKET SELLER  
 All we've got is "Salaam Bombay."  
 In its ninety-sixth week.

NICK  
 (still crying)  
 We've already seen it.

INT. SMALL THEATRE

Nick and Deborah are making their way to their seats. The  
 whole theatre's empty except for a RAGHEAD COUPLE in the front  
 In the background we hear the sounds of Hindi dialogue and  
 sitar music.

SCREEN

An emotional and colorful scene from "Salaam Bombay."

ON NICK AND DEBORAH

NICK  
 When I see the lives of these poor  
 people in India, I feel like shit  
 worrying about my petty problems.

DEBORAH  
Your problems are not petty.  
Besides, I can assure you there  
are plenty of men in India doing  
the same thing you did.

NICK  
It really holds up a second time.

DEBORAH  
It's a powerful picture.

They sit there a moment, when tears well up in Nick's eyes  
again.

NICK  
I don't know why I did it,  
Deborah. I'm so sorry.

DEBORAH  
You do know why you did it. Your  
needs weren't being met. It's  
possible I was giving too much  
attention to my patients and...

NICK  
No, no. It's my fault. I don't  
know how you'll ever forgive me.

DEBORAH  
You have to forgive yourself.

NICK  
(miserable)  
I can't.

DEBORAH  
It's a problem of self-esteem. You  
come on strong to the world, but  
you hate yourself. And what better  
way to deal with your hatred than  
to transfer it to your marriage  
partner.

NICK  
My wife.

DEBORAH  
Only your wife became your mother.  
It's classical.  
(straightens his  
jacket)  
Look what happened with your  
mother...

NICK

(loud)  
Right. She never really wanted me.

The Ragheads go SHUSH.

DEBORAH

(whispers)

At least not when you were an infant. You saw how she was with Sam when he was little. She never wanted to hold him. No wonder you spend your life looking for love and reassurance.

NICK

But I had it with you. The one person who cared about me. And I destroyed it.

DEBORAH

That's because you don't trust it. You have something good and you think it'll go away. So you sabotage it before it does. You're more secure being lonely and unloved.

(strokes his arm  
sympathetically)

NICK

It's what I'm used to with my mother.

DEBORAH

Right. Now you're getting real insight.

NICK

Oh, my God, what a way to be. Oh, my... God!

He starts to sob again.

THE RAGHEADS

turn and SHUSH emphatically.

ON NICK AND DEBORAH

NICK

I ruined our life together.

DEBORAH  
It's not all ruined. It can get better. But you have to work at it. It's going to take a lot of work, Nick.

(mopping his tears)  
You're a good man, Nick. You really are. Everyone makes mistakes.

NICK  
But I betrayed us. What a waste.

DEBORAH  
(smooths his hair)  
Only once.

NICK  
Four times.

DEBORAH  
Once that counted. In a sixteen year marriage...How many can say that? Some of my patients do it on their honeymoon.

NICK  
(chokes)  
I'll work at it...but I can't do it alone.

Tears come to her eyes too. She kisses him sweetly.

DEBORAH  
I love you. Don't you understand that?

NICK  
I love you too.

DEBORAH  
I know.

They're both crying.

NICK  
I'll do whatever I have to to make it better... I promise... You'll help me, won't you?

DEBORAH  
Of course, I will. You sweet thing.

NICK  
You're so wonderful.

DEBORAH  
(caresses him)  
My love...

NICK  
Oh, baby, I'm crazy for you...I  
want you.

DEBORAH  
I want you.

He kisses her. First on the cheeks, then on the neck. Slowly, tentatively, she responds, kissing him lightly on the forehead at first, then on the lips, then, suddenly, passionately pushing her tongue deep into his mouth.

Their breath becomes heavier. Caressing her body all over, Nick begins to slide down between the seats onto the floor in front of her.

NICK  
(rubbing his cheek  
against her legs)  
I'll never, ever do... anything...

Unable to stop himself, he pulls her pants down and starts to lick the inside of her thighs.

NICK  
Never...ever...ever...

He buries his head in her crouch. Deborah moans. Nick moans. He is eating her right there in the theatre.

NICK  
I adore you... I worship you...

DEBORAH  
Oh, yes... Oh, yes...

Out of control, Deborah slides down on the floor with him. Clutching each other passionately they roll back and forth between the seats. Soon they are tearing each other's clothes off.

DEBORAH  
Oh, Nick... My Nick...

NICK  
Deborah. My Deborah... My...  
darling... wife.

They are making love furiously on the floor of the theatre.

THE RAGHEADS

lose their temper, SHUSHING mightily.

ON SCREEN

The Elephant God parades through the streets of Bombay in a wild Hindu ritual. Sitar music swells.

EXT. MULTIFLEX - LATER

Nick and Deborah emerge from the theatre with the crowd, looking relaxed, but flushed and embarrassed.

NICK

That was amazing.

DEBORAH

Unbelievable.

NICK

(puts his arm around  
her)

You're incredible. Really you are.

DEBORAH

Better than...?

NICK

No comparison.

(kisses her)

I can't believe how exciting it was.

DEBORAH

I forgot where I was.

NICK

I didn't care if anybody saw us.

DEBORAH

I completely lost control. That's what we've been missing.

NICK

Want to see another movie?

DEBORAH

(smiles)

Nothing beats a reconciliation on the floor of a Cineplex.

The sound of CHRISTMAS CHIMES.

NICK  
 (checks watch,  
 alarmed)  
 Ohmigod--the dinner.

He steers her toward KAPPA SUSHI.

CLOSE SHOT - ANOTHER ORNATE TRAY OF TAKE-OUT SUSHI  
 Japanese hands deftly arranging the raw fish.

DEBORAH (O. S.)  
 Too bad he ran out of quail eggs.

NICK (O. S.)  
 That salmon skin and mushroom  
 special roll will make a great  
 substitute.

PAN UP to Deborah and Nick who are watching Jiro, the Sushi  
 chef, put the finishing touches on their second batch.

NICK  
 We just wanted to make extra sure  
 we had enough, Jiro. Kind of  
 embarrassing to run out on your  
 anniversary, you know.

DEBORAH  
 You don't have to make excuses,  
 Nick.

(to Jiro)  
 We had a fight and ruined the  
 first batch.

NICK  
 She's right. It was a helluva  
 waste of good sushi.

CHEF  
 (keeps bowing)  
 Arrigato. Arrigato gozaimsu

He hands the large box to Nick who passes him his credit card.

NICK  
 Our anniversary dinner is now up  
 to seven hundred and forty-three  
 dollars.

DEBORAH  
 We're worth it.

EXT. KAPPA SUSHI

They emerge carrying the box.

DEBORAH  
I better call.

NICK  
(indicates yogurt  
tables)  
I'll wait for you.

Deborah goes off to the phone. Nick goes and sits down at one of the

TABLES

places the sushi in front of him and stretches, truly relaxed for the first time all day. Meanwhile

DEBORAH

is on pay phone.

DEBORAH  
(after the BEEP)  
Hello, Cindy. Deborah. Cancel my previous message. I know this sounds a little schizzy, but I'll explain later. Just let everybody know the party's still on. I'm crazy about Nick. Sorry for the inconvenience. Bye.

She hangs up and walks out onto the

MALL BALCONY

She stops when she sees

NICK

seated at the table, stretched out with his hands folded behind his head.

DEBORAH

studies him. Her mood has done an abrupt change. She looks preoccupied, almost troubled.

NICK

watches as a few dozen balloons sail up to the top of the mall accompanied by a burst of MEXICAN MUSIC.

DEBORAH

resumes walking toward him, but, still disturbed, stops again. She takes a breath, then continues on and sits at the

TABLE

opposite him.

NICK

Norteña music. From Chihuahua.

He gestures down at the MEXICAN MUSICIANS (accordion, violin, trumpet, etc.) playing with a DANCE GROUP below.

NICK

That's where they have that train ride through the canyon, remember? Maybe we should go there for our next trip. The kids would love it.

DEBORAH

(disturbed)

I don't know. That sounds good but...

NICK

What's the matter? You always said you wanted to go more places with them before they got too old and...

DEBORAH

I know, but...

(looks at him)

I'm having an affair.

Nick stares at her. Without saying anything, he reaches for the sushi, opens it and begins to eat.

DEBORAH

His name is Dr. Hans Clava. He's a well-known expert in family systems therapy--a refugee from Brno, Czechoslovakia who's lived in the West since he defected in Sixty-eight.

(gestures)

You probably saw his quote on the back of my book...Anyway, I met him at that UC Retreat for mental health practitioners in Arrowhead last spring. He was the guest lecturer. He's sixty-one years old and brilliant. We went to dinner together a few times and...You know that fixation I always had on my father. I guess I never worked it out...

She looks at Nick who is continuing to eat all the sushi, one-by-one, staring at her without comment.

DEBORAH

So we met again during the year, every week or two, sometimes not for a month. I tried to end it three or four times, but I couldn't. I felt like I used him and it wasn't fair. There were his feelings too, after all. And maybe I got something out of it. It wasn't only sexual, although the sex was good. In fact, I'm not going to lie to you, sometimes the sex was great. He was insatiable... But it was more about my growing up, finally feeling like an independent human being, working out my relationship with my father. Something like that. In any case, I didn't know what to do. I became confused. I drifted back to Hans. Sometimes I wanted to tell you, but you didn't seem to be there...It's not an accident we were both doing this at the same time, Nick. How could it be?...But it started to become so painful. So much shame. So much guilt. The children. You. I've been a mess. Finally I know what I have to do, what I must do. I will end it immediately. Today. Right now.

DEBORAH (CONT.)

(heartfelt)

I love you.

Nick finishes a last piece of sushi, folds the box, stands and drops all the remaining sushi over the rail, wiping his hands and watching it sail to the floor of the mall.

NICK

(back to Deborah)

Call Marty Lefkowitz. You'll need a lawyer. I'm using Herb Brenner.

(starts off)

I'll send someone for my clothes.

He walks off into the mall.

CLOSE - DEBORAH

She begins to tremble.

ON NICK

He continues walking purposefully toward the escalator when a strong feeling overtakes him and he turns into a

MEN'S ROOM

heads directly into a stall, shutting the door behind him. Within seconds we hear the sound of him THROWING UP.

ON DEBORAH

into the pay phone.

DEBORAH

It's me again, Cindy. I'm sorry...

It's over. There's no hope.

Disregard my previous message.

Just call everybody and cancel.

(hangs up)

EXT. ESCALATOR

Nick rides down looking calm and purposeful again. He crosses into

THE FOURTH FLOOR PARKING AREA

Continues quickly past the 4T area, noting it to himself, and along the line of cars waiting to leave to the spot where they parked... The Saab's gone! Nick stares down at the

## HANDICAPPED SIGN

in the empty slot. In a rage...

NICK

begins to bang on the hood of a nearby Jeep.

NICK

Motherfucking, double-crossing,  
cocksucking, sniveling, bullshit,  
motor vehicle tow bastards!

Furious, he slams his fist into a pillar, nearly breaking his knuckles. He starts to dance around, shaking his hand to get rid of the pain. In the midst of this, he sees

THE MIME

imitating him and dancing around like a cripple.

NICK

Shut the fuck up!

ON A MALL BALCONY

Deborah stands surveying the scene, her expression blank, desolated. She looks over at

SOME HAPPY CHILDREN

emerging from a toy store carrying a huge stuffed giraffe.

DEBORAH

tries to smile. She can't. She begins to tremble again, feeling dizzy. She holds onto the railing. She looks as if her feet are about to go out from under her.

AT THE INFORMATION BOOTH

--in the center of the mall-- a WOMAN WELCOMING OFFICIAL wearing a "Spend Your Holidays at the Beverly Center" reindeer sweater smiles vacuously at Nick who is about to go through the ceiling. Santa Claus stands nearby, observing benignly.

NICK  
 Alright. Alright. I'll try to be calm. I understand I was parked in a handicapped zone without a permit but I should have a permit. I'm crippled. Can't you see? I'm mentally crippled. I know this is the biggest shopping day of the year, but I still need to know where my car was towed... And don't tell me the computer's down. And don't tell me you're working on it. And don't tell me to come back in an hour. I don't want to hear it.

(picks up a phone and hands it to her)

Just call whoever is in charge of these things and tell them a crippled man wants to know where his car is!.

She continues to smile pleasantly.

NICK

NOW!

The woman jumps and starts dialing.

NICK

(to Santa)

This has been one helluva holiday season. How about you?

Nick glances back at the woman. The line is busy.

NICK

(totally exasperated, to Santa)

Could you tell me where I could get an aspirin. Please.

SANTA

(points)

Ho, ho, ho.

EXT. A LARGE MALL PHARMACY

Nick enters.

INT. PHARMACY

NICK  
 (to COUNTERMAN)  
 I need some aspirin, Galusil  
 and...

The Counterman nods toward

"THE STRESS MANAGEMENT CENTER"

--a couple of aisles over. Nick heads toward it when he hears a GASP followed by FOOTSTEPS racing down the aisle coupled with the sounds of CONFUSION. Concerned voices shout "Give her room!" "Stand back!" "Some salts!" "Call an ambulance!" etc.

Puzzled, Nick turns the corner to see

DEBORAH

passed out in the aisle. A group of PEOPLE surround her.

NICK'S EMOTIONS

instantly go from surprise to irritation to worry.

NICK  
 (coming forward)  
 Step aside. Please. I'm her  
 husband...  
 (bends over her)  
 Deborah, are you okay? Deborah?

Her eyes open. She nods.

NICK  
 What happened? You faint?

DEBORAH  
 Tachycardia.

NICK  
 Stress. What do you expect after  
 what happened?  
 (to the onlookers)  
 You can go now. It's okay. I am  
 the husband.

DEBORAH  
 Not any more. He's left me.

Hardly anybody moves.

NICK  
(to the onlookers)  
We're still legally married.  
Really. Go. I'll handle it.

Some of the people start to move.

DEBORAH  
Blacked out...  
(sits up)  
...must be the blood sugar.  
(to the others)  
It's okay... I'll be alright.  
(waves them off)  
I'll be alright. Thank you.

The others back off reluctantly. Nick helps her up. She's still a bit dizzy.

DEBORAH  
I'm fine. Really. I don't need  
your help.

NICK  
Alright, if you say so, but...

DEBORAH  
You can go. There's nothing to  
hold you here now.

NICK  
(annoyed)  
I'll do what I want to. Alright?

DEBORAH  
Fine. Whatever. I'm not your  
responsibility any more.

NICK  
And I'm not yours.

DEBORAH  
(honestly)  
That's a relief.

NICK  
In more ways than one.

DEBORAH  
A hundred ways.

NICK  
(as they head for the  
clerk)  
Sixteen years worth.

DEBORAH  
Seventeen.

NICK  
Right. Seventeen...  
At least I don't have to listen to  
you correct me any more.

DEBORAH  
Who said you had to listen?

NICK  
(to the clerk)  
A large Advil.

DEBORAH  
I want one too.

NICK  
We could split it.

DEBORAH  
I don't want to split it.

NICK  
What do you mean you don't want to  
split it? How many Advils do you  
think we need? There're two  
hundred and fifty in a jar.

DEBORAH  
It's not a jar. It's a bottle.  
(to the clerk)  
Two Advils!

NICK  
How could we stay married for so  
long?

DEBORAH  
A mutual death wish.  
She laughs at her own joke.

DEBORAH  
It has been interminable.

NICK  
Relentless.

DEBORAH  
Thank God we're getting a divorce!

NICK  
I'll drink to that.

EXT. A CORRIDOR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Deborah is at a water fountain, swallowing an Advil with water. Finished she walks over toward where Nick is leaning against the wall. They seem curiously calm, relaxed.

NICK  
So. Now that we're over, how do you feel?

DEBORAH  
(thinks)  
Not bad.

NICK  
Me too.

They start walking together.

NICK  
For the first time in a long while I'm beginning to relax.

DEBORAH  
I feel weightless...in a way...almost like dancing.

NICK  
Really?  
(looks at her)  
You never liked dancing.

DEBORAH  
People change.

NICK  
And you were always so lousy at it, if you don't mind my saying so.

DEBORAH  
No, I don't mind at all. I appreciate the feedback. Anything else? What else bothered you about me?

NICK  
(laughs)  
Oh, no, a lot. You don't want to know.

DEBORAH

Sure I do.  
(shrugs)  
It doesn't bother me now.

NICK

Well, your self-indulgent fear of flying for one thing. Do you think it was fun listening to your hysterics every time we got on a plane? Two martinis and a Valium just to get on board. And that awful habit you have of endlessly checking your hair follicles for grey roots. It's repellent. Not to mention borrowing my sports jackets and leaving gooey Kleenexes in the pockets.

DEBORAH

How about the way you pick your toes and your nose at the same time? That's truly obnoxious.

NICK

(unfazed)  
Mmm...

DEBORAH

And the way you chew paper when you're nervous. And how you...  
(makes a face,  
hesitates)

NICK

Go ahead.  
(stops, sticks out  
his chin)  
Take your best shot. It'll help me...With the next person.

DEBORAH

(stops, looks at him)  
Well...The way you make those horrible sounds when you're shaving.

NICK

Arm farts?  
(starts doing one by  
way of illustration)

DEBORAH

That's was your idea of humour.  
 (exhales, starts  
 walking again)  
 Imagine living with that all your  
 life. Half the time I wanted to  
 throw up.

NICK

I guess it was a little...

DEBORAH

...disgusting. And the way you  
 slaver on the pillow when you  
 sleep, drooling all over the fresh  
 sheets.

NICK

Don't like that, do you?

DEBORAH

Would you? Rolling over onto a  
 cold wet spot in the middle of the  
 night? And the ear picking, God I  
 hated that, walking around with a  
 Q-tip until it looked like a  
 yellow glob of snot on the end of  
 a used lollipop.

They stop again, lean against the rail near where Santa Claus  
 is listening to some children.

NICK

(frowns)  
 Wasn't there anything... good...  
 about me?

DEBORAH

(shrugs)  
 Oh, you had your moments.

NICK

Did I?

DEBORAH

Sure.

NICK

(waits)  
 Well...?

DEBORAH

What?

NICK  
What were they? It would help  
me...

DEBORAH  
...with the next person.  
(Nick nods)  
Well...you've got a decent sense  
of humor. You care about people.  
And you're not a bad lay..

NICK  
(brightens)  
Thank you.

DEBORAH  
And when you're not being hostile  
and judgmental, you're a good  
father.

NICK  
When I think about it.

DEBORAH  
No, no. You're a good father. You  
really are.  
(smiles)  
When you think about it.

NICK  
(looks at her)  
You've had your moments too...

DEBORAH  
(relieved)  
Oh, really....When?

NICK  
Well...I know it sounds stupid but  
I love the way you sing old  
Grateful Dead songs on car  
trips...It's kind of sweet...  
You've been wonderful...  
sometimes...really... Like after  
my father died and my mother was  
so difficult. You were very  
understanding.

DEBORAH  
It was nothing.

NICK

No it was something. I'll never forget that.

(shrugs)

Everyone needs to be taken care of, once in a while. And you're a very good mother. You really love those children.

They're silent again. For a moment it seems as if something might be rekindling.

DEBORAH

(after a beat)

So tell me...if you had it to do all over again...what would you do differently?

NICK

Truthfully?

DEBORAH

Of course. Truthfully. We're talking now. We're being truthful. There's no point in lying.

NICK

No.

DEBORAH

Well?

NICK

Well, truthfully, I wouldn't get married until I was thirty-five or forty. Twenty-four is much too young. Ridiculously young. No one should do that. I would travel, go to Machu Pichu and Bali, have plenty of experiences, different women, affairs, amours, then I'd get married.

DEBORAH

To me?

NICK

Well I don't know if we would've met...Or if we did, it probably would've been a brief fling and that's it...I'm sure you feel the same way, don't you? We were too young.

(gestures)

I mean...in your professional experience... early marriages don't last, do they?

DEBORAH

Statistically no.

NICK

It's a miracle we got this far. Now that we've seen the light, we'll both have a chance to enjoy ourselves before it's too late.

DEBORAH

I never wanted to go to Machu Pichu. I'll tell you that.

NICK

Well, you're afraid of heights.

A BEEPER goes off. They stop, look at each other, realize it's Nick.

NICK

Oh, excuse me. Be right back.

He heads off.

THE NORTEÑA BAND -- A FEW MINUTES LATER

It's playing Mexican Christmas songs. Local TEEN AGE CHICANO KIDS are dancing to it, doing some ad hoc combination of old regional dances and rock and roll. PAN OVER to

DEBORAH

who has been standing there watching them. Her expression which has been sad and blank, is beginning to brighten. She sways to the music when someone taps her on the shoulder. It's Nick.

NICK

(excited)

You're not going to believe this--  
Williams just popped for the whole  
thing. Two hundred and fifty big  
ones. We've got a deal! Michael  
Chung's going to tennis brat  
heaven.

(thinks)

Nothing like getting a divorce to  
help you win a negotiation.

(shakes head, amazed)

This calls for a celebration.

DEBORAH

Maybe you should call your girl  
friend...What's her name? Ed--

NICK

(sharply)

Deborah, that's over.

DEBORAH

Poor Nick. You don't have anyone  
to celebrate with.

NICK

(shrugs)

I could do it myself.

DEBORAH

Yes, you could.

NICK

Get a little champagne. Do the  
usual.

DEBORAH

Sounds good.

NICK

(convincing himself)

Single people have to... you  
know... make their own...

DEBORAH

Mmm...

They fall silent, listen to music.

NICK

(at length)

Nice stuff, huh?

Deborah nods. They fall silent again.

DEBORAH

(finally)

Well...

(shrugs)

Seeing you're alone for now... Maybe I'll help you celebrate... I'm hungry anyway. We could, um, get some Thai food.

NICK

No, no. Not Thai food. Not for a celebration... How about the Maison du Caviar, if it's open?

DEBORAH

Why not?

NICK

(pleased)

A bottle of Perrier Jouet... a little Beluga.

DEBORAH

(frowns)

I can't wear this then.

(tugs her jogging suit)

NICK

What do you mean? This is a mall. You can wear anything.

DEBORAH

I don't want to wear anything. If we're going to celebrate, I want to be elegant.

(thinks)

I need a new dress anyway for my new life.

(smiles)

I want to make a statement.

NICK

(takes her arm)

I'll buy it for you.

DEBORAH

(pulls away)

You will not.

(starts walking by herself)

I'd prefer to make my own decisions from now on.

NICK  
 (goes with her)  
 Fine. Whatever you want.

DEBORAH  
 No alimony. No special stipends.  
 Just plain vanilla child support.  
 A lot of it.

He follows her into

"ICE"

--a chic, high tech women's boutique -- trendy, upscale and Iranian owned. The smallest price tag runs to four hundred bucks.

Nick thumbs through the LA Weekly while the other shoppers-- mostly Japanese and European tourists--go about their business...when he catches a view of

DEBORAH

in the fitting mirror. She is wearing a shimmery short designer cocktail dress that clings to her like the proverbial glove. She looks fantastic.

Nick walks over to her.

NICK  
 (impressed)  
 Well...well...radically sexy.

The Saleslady nods and smiles, gesturing toward Deborah.

DEBORAH  
 (twirls around)  
 Dah-dah!  
 (frowns)  
 There's no way I can afford this  
 but uh...  
 (indicates the  
 Saleslady)  
 ...Fatima says it's absolutely me.

NICK  
 I'll say. It's gorgeous... You  
 always had great taste.

He looks down at his jogging suit, frowns.

NICK  
 (starts off)  
 Don't go away.

DEBORAH  
Where'm I gonna go?

NICK  
I don't know. You're a single  
woman now.  
(ducks out)

INT. MALL CORRIDOR - LATER

A dense crowd of shoppers reveals Deborah--now in her new designer dress-- and Nick--now in a trendy, Italian casual suit out of Interview Magazine-- walking along. Nick's also sporting a new pair of trendy shades.

DEBORAH  
(checking him out)  
Not bad... Armani?

NICK  
(nods)  
It was on sale at Collections.

DEBORAH  
You always looked good in Italian  
clothes. They're séxier.

NICK  
I'll make a note of it...  
(glances at her)  
Do most women like them--or is it  
just you?

DEBORAH  
Depends on the woman, obviously.

NICK  
What about that one?

He nods to an elegantly dressed WOMAN in her twenties carrying a shopping bag.

DEBORAH  
Fancy her, do you?

NICK  
(lifts shades)  
More or less.

DEBORAH  
(teasing him)  
Want me to set you up?

NICK

I can handle it, thank you...  
Anyway, she looks a little dumb.

DEBORAH

Just because she's blonde,  
attractive and young?

NICK

No, it's just instinct.

DEBORAH

Well, you're going to have to make  
up your mind. There's a world of  
choices out there...especially for  
you mid-life guys. You know--the  
demographics are all in your  
favor.

They turn up the escalator.

DEBORAH

How about that one?

She points to a gorgeous BLACK WOMAN in tight jeans coming down  
the escalator toward them.

DEBORAH

You always went for them.

(Nick shrugs)

Don't tell me you're getting  
racist all of a sudden. In your  
business?

NICK

No. She could be...  
(as the black woman  
passes)  
...interesting.

DEBORAH

Now's your chance...She might want  
to celebrate your signing. Want  
me to get lost?

NICK

I'm thinking about it.

DEBORAH

Okay, okay... Just be sure to  
practice....

NICK

Safe sex?

They get off the escalator.

NICK

You too.

DEBORAH

(turning onto the  
next one)

Of course I will. You think I'm  
going to go around endangering my  
life for some...

(notices a trendy  
dude)

...younger guy?

NICK

(checks him out as he  
goes by)

Talk about brainless.

DEBORAH

How would you know?...And who said  
anything about brains anyway?

NICK

Oh, you've got that with Otto or  
Dieter or whatever his name is.

DEBORAH

(as they get off  
again)

Hans.

NICK

(nods toward the  
young man)

Then let's go back and meet him.

He takes her arm to lead her back down again.

DEBORAH

(sharp)

Nick.

NICK

You look great. What's the  
hesitation? Older women are in.

DEBORAH

Asshole!

NICK

Well, how are you going to meet  
people?

DEBORAH

What about you? Planning on making the rounds of single's bars?

NICK

I hadn't thought about it.

DEBORAH

Buying a sports car and hitting the Nautilus machines? What a cliché! Maybe one of those video dating services would work...?

NICK

Or how about a personals ad? Would you write it for me? I mean who knows me better than you.

DEBORAH

Hey, no problem. "Another marriage bites the dust. Straight single man experiencing extreme mid-life crisis seeks second chance. No smokers or druggies, please. Must be willing to excuse arm farts and unbearable snoring"

NICK

(laughs)  
The whole thing sounds pretty dismal.

They start walking toward the Maison du Caviar.

DEBORAH

Quel drag.

NICK

Pits.

DEBORAH

(nods, shrugs)  
We'll probably end up with people we know.

NICK

That's a laugh, isn't it? Who would you go for?

They enter the

INT. MAISON DU CAVIAR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

As posh as it gets. Platinum balls on the Christmas tree. A COCKTAIL PIANIST--Michael Feinstein-type--plays "Let's Do It" as the cork flies off

A BOTTLE OF PERRIER JOUET

The tuxedo-clad bartender leans over to fill the glasses of Deborah and Nick who are seated with a few other people at the elegant bar; the tables behind them are already filled.

DEBORAH  
(raising her glass)  
To Michael Chung.

NICK  
(raising his)  
And Mrs. Chung.

They clink.

DEBORAH & NICK  
The Chungs!

Deborah starts to drink.

NICK  
(restrains her)  
No, no. Wait a minute. Wait.  
(raises glass again)  
New life! May it be all you  
desire.

DEBORAH  
" (raises hers)  
May you have a thousand  
adventures.

NICK  
May you meet the man of your  
dreams.

DEBORAH  
May you find eternal love.

NICK  
(clinks)  
And you.

DEBORAH  
(clinks)  
And you.

They drink. The pianist sequesters into "Easy to Love". Several couples get up to dance.

DEBORAH

Come on.  
(takes him by the  
hand)  
Old times sake.

She leads Nick out onto the floor and they start to dance.

DEBORAH

(singing)  
"You'd be so easy to love  
So easy to idolize all others  
above..."

NICK

(singing)  
"So worth the yearning for...  
So swell to keep every home fire  
burning for..."

They twirl gracefully across the floor.

DEBORAH AND NICK

"We'd be so grand at the game...  
So care free together that it does  
seem a shame."

NICK

(smiles, dances)  
You never answered my question.

DEBORAH

"That you can't see your failure  
with me cause..."

NICK

Which one of our friends you'd end  
up with?

DEBORAH

"..you'd be oh so easy to love."  
(hums, thinks)  
I like Daniel. But he doesn't  
turn me on.

NICK

Phillip?

DEBORAH  
 (continuing to dance)  
 He's very funny . But can you  
 imagine going to bed with him?  
 (makes face)

NICK  
 He's kind of cuddly.

DEBORAH  
 He's got to lose fifty pounds....  
 What about you? Which one would be  
your Ms. Right?  
 (decides)  
 Nora. She'd be perfect. Just your  
 type.

NICK  
 At least let me make my own  
 decisions.  
 (stops dancing)  
 As a matter of fact, I find Nora  
 one of the least interesting women  
 in our group.

DEBORAH  
 How about Cindy?

NICK  
 Cindy? Cindy and Sheila are your  
 best friends. It'd be like  
 incest!

He walks over the bar. Deborah follows.

NICK  
 Maybe single's bars are the  
 answer.

DEBORAH  
 At least they're anonymous.

NICK  
 (bitter)  
 Right.

DEBORAH  
 Blind dates are always a  
 possibility.

NICK  
 Sure. Telling your life story to  
 a stranger three nights a week.

DEBORAH  
Sounds tedious.

NICK  
Depressing.

DEBORAH  
Unbearable.  
(raises her glass)  
So. To the future.

NICK  
(mordant)  
Yes.... The future.

DEBORAH  
(drinks)  
Many hopes and many dreams.

NICK  
(stares at her)  
Yes.

Deborah looks at him perplexed as he continues to stare at her  
He doesn't say anything for awhile.

DEBORAH  
(suspicious)  
Are you thinking what I'm  
thinking?

NICK  
Probably.

DEBORAH  
Tell me.

NICK  
(quietly)  
I'm stuck with you. You betrayed  
me and I'm stuck with you .

DEBORAH  
(drips sarcasm)  
I betrayed you? That's  
interesting.

NICK  
Sure did.

DEBORAH  
 (angering)  
 Who betrayed me? What is this--the  
 double standard revisited? I seem  
 to remember you telling me about a  
 seven-month affair with a girl  
 named Ed.

NICK  
 (raises voice)  
 At least I had the guts to call my  
 affair off!

DEBORAH  
 (raises her voice)  
 I was going to call mine off!

NICK  
 The hell you were!

The people in the restaurant turn around, staring at them.

DEBORAH  
 Will you keep your voice down?

NICK  
 Don't tell me what to do. If I  
 hadn't had the courage to--

DEBORAH  
 (stands)  
 I don't have to listen to this!

NICK  
 (stands)  
 So don't!

DEBORAH  
 I won't!

She strides out of the restaurant. He starts after her, stops,  
 remembering to pay. He reaches for his credit card, then,  
 realizing that will take too long, switches to cash.

NICK  
 (slaps a hundred on  
 the bar)  
 Keep the change!

The bartender points to the bill. It's not enough.

NICK  
 (slaps another  
 hundred down)  
 Fuck it. Take it all!

He runs out.

EXT. MALL

Deborah is crossing near where the Mime is entertaining a crowd when Nick catches up with her.

NICK

If you think you're going to leave without my telling you what I think, you're crazy!

DEBORAH

(keeps moving)  
I have no interest in hearing anything you have to say!

NICK

(grabs her, wild-eyed)  
Listen, you rotten bitch, I don't need--

DEBORAH

(pushes him off)  
Keep your wife-battering hands off me!

They catch the attention of the crowd and the Mime, who stops his act.

NICK

Oh, planning on making a citizen's arrest? Is that it?

DEBORAH

I might!

NICK

I bet you would.

The mime begins to imitate them as they argue.

DEBORAH

You know--you're the lowest, two-timing scumbag who ever lived!

NICK

Who are you? Mother Theresa?

DEBORAH

I can't stand you.

NICK  
Get out of my sight!

DEBORAH  
Why don't you leave?

NICK  
Don't worry. I will!

DEBORAH  
(makes a fist)  
Then go!

NICK  
(makes one back)  
Why did I ever meet you?

DEBORAH  
Why did I have children with you?  
She starts circling him as if in a boxing ring.

NICK  
(circling back)  
What a wasted life!

DEBORAH  
Seventeen dismal years!

NICK  
(shoves her)  
Phony shrink!

DEBORAH  
(shoves back)  
Shyster lawyer!

NICK  
Leave me alone!

DEBORAH  
You are alone!

They shove each other back and forth as the Mime imitates their every action.

NICK  
I despise you!

DEBORAH  
I detest you!

NICK  
I hate you!

DEBORAH  
I hate you more!

NICK  
(advances on her)  
I never want to see your ugly face  
or hear your whining voice as long  
as I live! And I hate that dress!

She grabs him by the throat. He grabs her by the throat. She rears her fist as if to slam him one. He pulls back his fist. They start to swing at each other, lashing out with the blind anger and fury of seventeen years when

THE MIME

--grinning idiotically and imitating a referee-- steps between them.

NICK  
(enraged)  
Who asked you, clown face?

He turns and slams the Mime right on the chin, decking him.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Gasps, shouts, etc. Immediate consternation as the crowd rushes around the fallen man.

THE MIME

clutches his head as if he's in indescribable agony.

NICK

rushes over to him, immediately upset.

NICK  
I'm sorry. I didn't mean that. I  
just went out of control.  
(trying to revive  
him)  
I love mimes, really. They're  
terrific. I used to watch Marcel  
Marceau on the Ed Sullivan show  
when I was a kid.

A COUPLE OF SECURITY POLICE

appear out of nowhere, taking Nick by the arms as if they're about to lead him off.

DEBORAH

(rushes forward)

It's alright, gentlemen... please.  
I'm a licensed psychotherapist.

(indicates Nick)

This man is an outpatient in my  
care... I took him here because  
he's afraid of crowds and I wanted  
him to get over the fear.  
Obviously I didn't succeed.

(extracts I. D.)

We must be extra careful. He's  
very sick...See.

(hands it to  
policeman)

This is an extremely sensitive  
situation.

While they examine Deborah's papers, Nick bends over the groggy  
Mime.

NICK

(hands him something)

I can only pray that a man with  
your talent will forgive me.

The Mime looks in his hand at a hundred dollar bill.  
Miraculously transformed, he jumps to his feet and dances off.

The blasé cops release Nick and wander off into the crowd. He  
looks relieved.

NICK

(to Deborah)

Thanks.

She shrugs.

A BEEPER goes off. Deborah looks down. It's hers. She shrugs  
again, starts to go, when another BEEPER goes off. It's  
Nick's.

NICK

My deal probably fell apart.

DEBORAH

(weary)

I hope it's not my patient.

They head for

A BANK OF PAY PHONES

Almost simultaneously, they both put their quarters in.

NICK  
 (into phone)  
 Code 3245.

DEBORAH  
 (into phone)  
 Code 4689.

NICK  
 (to Deborah)  
 It's the kids... in Mammoth  
 already. They say not to worry.  
 Nobody's hurt.

DEBORAH  
 That's good.  
 (hangs up, exhales)  
 Mine was from Hans.

NICK  
 (winces)  
 Oh.  
 (into phone)  
 Credit card 213-555-0437.  
 (checks card)  
 I want Mammoth Lakes, California,  
 714-555-4630. Person-to-person for  
 Sam Fifer.

DEBORAH  
 I'm gonna return the call.

NICK  
 Do what you want.

Deborah hesitates, then puts in another quarter, dials a  
 number.

NICK  
 (into phone)  
 It's his father calling.

DEBORAH  
 (flatly)  
 Hello, Hans. It's me....

NICK  
 (trying to hold  
 himself together)  
 Sam, how's it going? How's the  
 snow?...

DEBORAH  
 You've been worried about  
 me?...Yes, it is my anniversary.  
 Thank you.....

NICK  
 (choked)  
 There's none. What a shame...No  
 I'm okay...

DEBORAH  
 (tense)  
 Yes, it has been difficult...  
 Yes...

NICK  
 (as he looks at  
 Deborah)  
 Some of the kids are going to try  
 June Mountain tomorrow? Well,  
 that's sometimes a better bet...

DEBORAH  
 (as she looks at  
 Nick)  
 You would?...No, I don't think  
 that would be good. It wouldn't be  
 appropriate.

NICK  
 How much?...

DEBORAH  
 No, not now. Not tomorrow either.

NICK  
 Two hundred more for you and you  
 Jennifer? That's an expensive  
 weekend, Sam.

DEBORAH  
 (watching Nick,  
 pained)  
 No, no, Hans. You don't  
 understand me. I don't want to do  
 that... Absolutely not.

Nick turns and looks directly at her.

DEBORAH  
 Hans. you know that's a  
 manipulation. I can't ever see  
 you again. I don't want to. It  
 just doesn't work any more. It's  
 over. I'm sorry.

NICK  
 (emotional)  
 Boy, do I spoil you kids.  
 (tears in his eyes)  
 I'll wire the money tonight.

DEBORAH  
 Good-bye, Hans. Good luck.

She hangs up.

NICK  
 Bye, kid. Love you...Oh, your  
 mother sends her love.

He hangs up.

NICK  
 The kids send their love.

DEBORAH  
 I really wish they wouldn't go to  
 June Mountain. That's where Cindy  
 broke her leg.

NICK  
 Sam's a great skier and Jennifer's  
 already better than Cindy.

DEBORAH  
 Are you sending the money?

NICK  
 They wanted two hundred but I'm  
 only sending one-fifty.

DEBORAH  
 (looks at him)  
 I ended it.

NICK  
 I know.

The Woman Welcoming Official walks up to Nick, says something  
 to him.

NICK  
 (to Deborah)  
 Our car. They found it...  
 Still want a cab?

She nods.

NICK  
I'll walk you.

She shrugs.

They start walking. As they do so, the Mime tiptoes up and presents them each with a rose.

NICK  
Hey, thanks.

DEBORAH  
That's sweet.

Nick reaches for some money in his pocket but the Mime waves him off with a smile and tiptoes away.

Deborah and Nick continue walking. In the distance we hear the cocktail PIANO coming from the Maison du Caviar (Cole Porter's "You Do Something to Me.")

NICK  
Do you think things like this happened to our parents and their friends?

DEBORAH  
It happened then too. Believe me..

NICK  
Yeah, but we know too much. Between "People Magazine" and "Sixty Minutes," you can't help but get some wild ideas.

DEBORAH  
I don't think we should blame Mike Wallace and Barbara Walters for our affairs.

NICK  
Barbara Walters doesn't do "Sixty Minutes."

DEBORAH  
You know what I mean.

They laugh.

By now now they have reached the exterior of the Maison du Caviar. The music stops them and they look inside.

WINDOW SHOT - THE MAISON DU CAVIAR

A COUPLE is dancing. The COCKTAIL PIANIST can be heard singing the Cole Porter song clearly..

SINGER

"I was mighty blue, thought  
my life was through  
Til the heavens opened and I  
gazed at you.  
Something happens to me and the  
strangest feeling goes through  
me.."

NICK AND DEBORAH

look at each other and then, ever so tenderly, they kiss.

SINGER

"You do something to me.  
Something that simply mystifies  
me.  
Tell me, why should it be you had  
the power to hypnotize me?"

Holding hands, they start down the escalator. They're silent a moment, then they both speak at the same time. (The Cole Porter Music can still be heard in the background.)

NICK

Could we?

DEBORAH

We could...

NICK

Do you think?

DEBORAH

Yes.

NICK

Why not?

DEBORAH

It'll never be the same.

NICK

Never.

DEBORAH

Nothing's ever the same.

NICK

I know.

DEBORAH  
If it were the same it would be boring.

NICK  
That's true.

DEBORAH  
If we had been faithful...

NICK  
We would have been boring.

DEBORAH  
From now on, you know what?

NICK  
Let's be boring.

DEBORAH  
Do you think you can?

NICK  
Yes...What about you?

DEBORAH  
Yes.

NICK  
You call Cindy and I'll get the sushi.

DEBORAH  
I'll go with you.

NICK  
That'll make about eleven hundred bucks for the sushi alone.

DEBORAH  
This is going to be our most expensive anniversary.

The CAMERA starts to PULL BACK taking in more and more of the MALL as Nick and Deborah become smaller.

DEBORAH  
Where's your windsurboard?

NICK  
Yeah, where is it? Where'd you leave it?

DEBORAH

What do you mean where'd I leave it? Where'd you leave it? Don't tell me you lost it!

NICK

You're always accusing me of losing everything. You're responsible for that board. You bought it for me.

DEBORAH

Don't lose your temper!

NICK

When have I ever lost my temper?

DEBORAH

You smashed the poor mime in the jaw!

NICK

Screw him. He made a hundred bucks.

They laugh.

EXT MALL

By now the camera is outside the mall pulling far, far, back to survey the city itself. Deborah and Nick continue to argue, barely audibly, as the lyrics of Cole Porter's song take over.

SINGER

\*You do something to me.  
 Something that simply mystifies  
 me.  
 Tell me, why should it be you have  
 the power to hypnotize me?  
 Let me live underneath your spell,  
 do do--that voo doo--that you do--  
 so well.  
 For you do something to me  
 That nobody else could do.

FADE OUT