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THE ACCIDENTAL TOURIST

Screenplay

by

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Based on the novel

by

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THE KASDAN COMPANY  
in association with  
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FADE IN:

THE MAIN TITLE BEGINS.

1 INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

1

CLOSE ON A SIMPLE OVERNIGHT BAG. It rests on a mussed bed in a hotel room. An unseen Packer is refilling it for the trip home. A few shirts, socks, underwear..

MACON'S V.O.

The Business Traveler should bring only what fits in a carry-on bag. Checking your luggage is asking for trouble.

The Packer carefully adds a clear plastic bag containing a variety of travel-size packets of detergent, shoe polish, antacid, shampoo, etc.

MACON'S V.O.

Add several travel-size packets of detergent so you won't fall into the hands of unfamiliar laundries. There are very few necessities in this world which do not come in travel-size packets.

The Packer lays in a shaving kit. And on top of it a small format guidebook, well-thumbed and annotated, with a cover illustration of an armchair with wings. Above the drawing it reads THE ACCIDENTAL TOURIST and below IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES.

SOMETHING WIPES THE FRAME and we see that the Packer has laid a gray suit on the bed next to the overnight bag. Now, he reaches in and picks up the trousers.

MACON'S V.O.

One suit is plenty...if you take along travel-size packets of spot remover. The suit should be medium gray. Gray not only hides the dirt, but is handy for sudden funerals.

The Packer takes us back to the overnight bag as he lays in a thick novel entitled MISS MACINTOSH, MY DARLING.

MACON'S V.O.

Always bring a book as protection against strangers.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

## MACON'S V.O. (CONT'D)

Magazines don't last and newspapers from elsewhere will remind you you don't belong. But don't take more than one book. It is a common mistake to overestimate one's potential free time and consequently overpack. In travel, as in most of life, less is invariably more.

Now the Packer pauses. He holds this last item a long time in his hands. It is a small, framed snapshot of a smiling young Boy.

## MACON'S V.O.

And most importantly, never take along anything on your journey so valuable or dear...that its loss would devastate you.

For the first time, we are CLOSE ON the face of the Packer. His name is MACON LEARY. As he looks at the photograph in his hands, his countenance is masked with grief. And in his eyes, much pain. But no tears.

SMASH CUT TO:

2 EXT. L-1011 - DAY

2

A BEAUTIFUL CLOUDSCAPE -- white, billowing, extravagant. But no blue sky. Because, as a HORRIFIC ROAR suddenly rushes at us, we see an L-1011 burst into sight BELOW US at five hundred miles an hour and immediately disappear, and we realize that we are LOOKING DOWN. And as the ROAR FADES into the much more familiar DRONE of a jetliner's cabin --

THE MAIN TITLE ENDS.

3 INT. L-1011 - DAY

3

Macon is in the aisle seat of a three-across arrangement. In the middle seat is an enormously fat fellow, MR. LOOMIS. He is so big that Macon is very nearly in the aisle, with his knees jutting out to one side. No matter how intently Macon pretends to be reading MISS MACINTOSH, MY DARLING, Mr. Loomis continues to look his way. Finally the fat man offers his hand.

(CONTINUED)

MR. LOOMIS

I'm sorry I'm so fat. Name's  
Lucas Loomis.

MACON

Macon Leary.

MR. LOOMIS

One of these seats is not really  
enough for me. And the stupid  
thing is, I travel for a living.  
I demonstrate software to computer  
stores. What do you do, Mr. Leary?

MACON

I write travel guidebooks.

MR. LOOMIS

Is that so? What kind?

MACON

Oh, guides for businessmen.  
People just like you, I guess.

Mr. Loomis turns his entire body to look at him, like  
someone encased in a parka. He is suddenly excited.

MR. LOOMIS

Accidental Tourist.

MACON

Why, yes.

MR. LOOMIS

Really? Am I right? Well, what  
do you know. Look at this. Gray  
suit. Just what you recommend.  
Appropriate for all occasions.

He points to the bag at his feet.

MR. LOOMIS

See my luggage? Carry-on. Change  
of underwear, clean shirt, packet  
of detergent powder.

MACON

Well, good.

MR. LOOMIS

You're my hero! You've improved  
my trips a hundred percent.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MR. LOOMIS (CONT'D)

All those other books waste my time telling me how to see as much of these cities as possible. Yours are the only ones that tell me what I really want -- how to see as little. I tell my wife, "Going with the Accidental Tourist is like going in a cocoon."

\*

\*

MACON

Well, this is very nice to hear.

MR. LOOMIS

Times I've flown clear to Oregon and hardly knew I'd left Baltimore.

MACON

Excellent.

Mr. Loomis notices the book on Macon's lap.

MR. LOOMIS

I see you've got your book there for protection.

Macon shrugs, embarrassed.

MR. LOOMIS

(jovial)

Didn't work with me though, did it?

(laughs, tickled)

Say, I'll bet this happens to you all the time. Running into your fans, people knowing your work.

MACON

(thinks about it)

No...Actually, this is the first time.

Rain. Traffic at the curb. Cops move waiting cars along.

Macon comes out with his overnight bag and spots a Toyota up the curb. He puts his bag in the back seat as the Driver scoots over to the passenger side in front.

5 INT. MACON'S CAR - NIGHT

5 \*

Macon gets in the driver's seat and leans over to kiss his wife SARAH. She is a beautiful woman, but the events of the last year have had an effect on her and she does not look beautiful right now.

MACON

Hello, Sarah.

SARAH

Hello, Macon.

MACON

(adjusting the mirror)

I appreciate this.

SARAH

The rain is terrible.

MACON

(turns to pull out)

I don't mind a little rain.

6 INT./EXT. MACON'S CAR - NIGHT

6 \*

They leave the airport and head for Baltimore. Sarah leans her head against her window, tense. Enormous raindrops spatter the windshield. The wipers work: TICK-SWOOSH, TICK-SWOOSH.

SARAH

I don't know how you can see to drive.

MACON

Maybe you should put on your glasses.

SARAH

Putting on my glasses would help you to see?

MACON

Not me, you. You're focused on the windshield instead of the road.

7 INT./EXT. MACON'S CAR - UNDERPASS/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

7 \*

The car shoots through an underpass. The rain stops completely for a moment. QUIET. Sarah reacts, then the HAMMERING on the roof starts again.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

We could stop and wait this out.

MACON

Sarah, if I felt we were in the slightest danger I'd have pulled over long ago.

SARAH

You're not a comfort, Macon.

MACON

(looks at her)

Honey, I'm trying to be.

SARAH

You just go on your same old way like before. Your little routines and rituals, day after day.

MACON

You're not the only one, Sarah. I don't know why you feel it's your loss alone.

SARAH

Well, I just do, sometimes.

A wide lake in the center of the highway crashes against the underside of the car. Macon pumps his brakes.

SARAH

Do you suppose that person has any idea? I want to go see him in prison, Macon. I want to say, "Look at me. Look. Look at what you did. You didn't just kill the people you shot. What you did goes on and on forever. You didn't just kill my son, you killed me, you killed my husband. Do you understand what you did?" Then when I'm sure that he does understand, that he feels just terrible... I'm going to open my purse and pull out a gun and shoot him between the eyes.

MACON

Oh, well, sweetheart --

SARAH

Lord, I don't think I've ever seen a gun. Isn't it odd?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

7

CONTINUED: (2)

7

SARAH (CONT'D)

Ethan's seen one; Ethan had an  
experience you and I have no  
notion of.

MACON

Sarah, it's bad for you to talk  
like this.

SARAH

Oh? How am I supposed to talk?

Macon massages his forehead.

MACON

Sarah, I just feel we can't afford  
to have these thoughts.

SARAH

Just shut the door, Macon. Just  
pretend it never happened. Go  
rearrange your tools, why don't  
you, line up your wrenches from  
biggest to smallest instead of  
smallest to biggest -- that's  
always fun.

Macon chews the inside of his cheek. Sarah slumps in her  
seat.

SARAH

Macon, I want a divorce.

MACON

What?

The car swerves.

(CONTINUED)



7 CONTINUED: (3)

7

MACON

What? What did you say?

SARAH

I just can't live with you anymore.

MACON

(after a beat)

Honey. Listen. It's been a hard year. We've had a hard time. People who lose a child often feel this way. Everybody says it's a terrible strain on a marriage.

SARAH

I'd like to find a place of my own as soon as we get back.

Macon looks at her, too long. Then, finally, back at the road. They drive in silence, until --

MACON

Place of your own. Well. All right. If that's what you really want.

SARAH

You can keep the house. You never did like moving.

8 INT./EXT. MACON'S CAR - GAS STATION - NIGHT

8

\*

This makes her finally break down. She turns away. Macon switches his right blinker on. He pulls into a gas station, parks beneath the overhang, and cuts off the engine. The only sound is the DRUMMING of rain on the overhang far above them.

INT. MACON'S HOUSE (SERIES OF SHOTS) - DAY/NIGHT

9 INT. BATHROOM - MACON'S HOUSE (MONTAGE)

9

Macon is living alone for the first time. He comes into the bathroom, takes off his pajama top and puts it in the hamper. He begins to shave.

10 INT. KITCHEN - MACON'S HOUSE (MONTAGE)

10

In the kitchen, Macon, neatly dressed; fixes himself eggs and reads the paper. EDWARD, his Welsh Corgi dog, eats from a dog food bowl.

11 INT. OFFICE - MACON'S HOUSE (MONTAGE) 11

In his office, Macon sits down resolutely at his typewriter. He puts some paper in and begins to look through his notes -- very self-possessed, very disciplined. He types --

MACON'S V.O.

In the southeast they say that if you want to go to Heaven, you have to change planes in Atlanta. The airport there must have ten miles of corridors...

12 INT. MACON'S OFFICE - DAY 12

ANOTHER DAY. Macon is talking on the phone at his desk. He wears a different outfit, a bit less neat. Something is beginning to deteriorate here.

MACON

She didn't leave me, Rose. We decided to separate, that's all. The last thing I need is my sister saying, "Oh, poor Macon, how could Sarah do this to you."

ROSE (ON PHONE)

Why would I say that? Everybody knows the Leary men are difficult to live with.

MACON

Oh.

We begin to INTERCUT:

12A INT. KITCHEN - ROSE'S HOUSE - DAY 12A \*

ROSE LEARY, Macon's sister, is in the kitchen of her house. As she talks to Macon she continues to tinker with the motor of some disassembled appliance which is spread in pieces across the table. \*

ROSE \*

Where is she?

MACON

She's got an apartment downtown.

ROSE \*

Has she been in touch since she left?

(CONTINUED)

12A

CONTINUED:

12A \*

MACON

She's come by once or twice. Once, actually. For things she needed.

ROSE

What kind of things?

MACON

Well, a double boiler. Things like that.

ROSE

She was checking to see how you're doing. Did you talk at all?

MACON

No. I just handed her the double boiler.

ROSE

Oh, Macon. You might have asked her in.

MACON

I was scared she'd say no.

ROSE

(after silence)

Well. Anyhow.

MACON

But I'm getting along!

ROSE

Yes, of course you are.

INT. MACON'S HOUSE (SERIES OF SHOTS) - DAY/NIGHT

- 13 In the living room, Macon peers at "Nightwatch" with an unreasonable intensity. He is wearing a gray sweatsuit. His dog Edward snuggles beside him. 13
- 14 In his bedroom, Macon turns off his morning alarm and rolls over. He squints in the light at a coffee maker and a popcorn popper, both on timers, both doing their thing right next to his bed. He slides out of bed toward the bathroom. He is wearing the same gray sweatsuit. It looks worse. Edward lifts his head from among the covers. 14
- 15 In the basement, Macon, still in his sweatsuit, opens the laundry chute and a squared-off column of dirty laundry drops down into his basket. He stoops to lift it and pauses for a second, careful with his back. 15

16

In the kitchen, at dusk, Macon stands staring into the refrigerator trying to decide on dinner. Finally he closes the refrigerator door and opens the freezer. He takes out a container of ice cream. He stands at the back door, staring out at the yard, eating his dinner from the carton. 16

17 INT. MACON'S OFFICE - DAY

17

Macon, in his gamy gray sweatsuit, slight stubble on his chin, again sits in front of his typewriter with the phone to his ear. The sheet in the typewriter has only one sentence fragment on it: "The traveler should be forewarned..."

SARAH (ON PHONE)

I thought I'd drop over and pick it up Saturday morning, if that's convenient.

MACON

I leave for England tomorrow afternoon.

We begin to INTERCUT:

18 INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - DAY

18

CLOSE ON Sarah in a high-backed chair. We can't see her apartment except as it is reflected in her expression as she looks around during the conversation.

MACON

Maybe I could bring the rug over.

SARAH

I'll just let myself in on Saturday.

MACON

That way, I could see your apartment. I've never been inside, you know.

SARAH

It's a disaster. Nothing's been done.

Macon is silent, waiting.

SARAH

I should have agreed to teach summer school. Something. I open my eyes in the morning and think, "Why bother getting up?"

MACON

Me too.

SARAH

Why bother eating? Why bother breathing?

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

MACON

Me too, sweetheart.

There is a long silence.

MACON

So I guess you'll come by while  
I'm gone.

SARAH

If that's all right.

19 INT./EXT. MACON'S CAR - MEOW-BOW HOSPITAL AND STREET - 19  
DAY

Macon, wearing his medium-gray traveling suit, drives along peering at all the signs on the businesses. Edward is perched happily next to him, looking out the passenger window. Macon sees a sign across the street: MEOW-BOW ANIMAL HOSPITAL.

Macon brakes suddenly and Edward lurches onto the floor.

MACON

(to dog)

Sorry.

He makes a left turn into the parking lot.

20 INT. MEOW-BOW ANIMAL HOSPITAL - DAY

20

Macon drags Edward into the waiting room. The dog is WHIMPERING, his claws scrabbling on the linoleum, rump shaking. He doesn't like this. Behind the counter stands a thin Young Woman in a ruffled peasant blouse. She has aggressively frizzy hair that burgeons to her shoulders like an Arab headdress. Her name is MURIEL PRITCHETT.

MURIEL

Hi, there.

MACON

Do you board dogs?

MURIEL

Sure.

MACON

I'd like to board Edward, here.

She leans over the counter to look at Edward.

(CONTINUED)

MURIEL

Do you have a reservation?

MACON

A reservation? No.

MURIEL

Most people reserve.

MACON

Couldn't you make an exception?

She thinks it over, frowning down at Edward.

MACON

Please. I've just come from the place we've used in the past and suddenly they tell me they can't take him anymore, that he bit someone last time.

\*

MURIEL

Edward? Do you bite? How could you do such a thing?

MACON

I'm about to catch a plane. I'm leaving for a week, and I don't have a soul to look after him. I'm desperate, I tell you.

\*  
\*  
\*

She glances up at him sharply, surprised.

MURIEL

Can't you leave him home with your wife?

MACON

No.

MURIEL

Oh. You're not married?

MACON

Well, I am, but she's...living elsewhere. They don't allow pets.

MURIEL

Oh.

Muriel comes out from behind the counter. She is wearing very short red shorts. Edward begins to calm down.

(CONTINUED)

20

CONTINUED: (2)

20

MURIEL

I'm a divorcy myself. I know what  
you're going through.

Edward folds his ears back inviting a pat. She bends  
and strokes his head.

MACON

So will you keep him?

MURIEL

Oh, I guess. If you're desperate.  
(hands him a form)  
Fill this out. Your name and  
address and when you'll be back.  
Don't forget to put when you'll  
be back.

Macon nods, uncapping his fountain pen.

MURIEL

I'll most likely see you again  
when you come to pick him up. I  
mean if you put the time of day  
to expect you. My name's Muriel.  
(looks up at him writing)  
Muriel Pritchett.

21 INT. LONDON UNDERGROUND - DAY

21

Macon rides an impossibly steep escalator into the bowels  
of the city.

MACON'S V.O.

I recommend the Underground for  
everyone except those afraid of  
heights, and even for them if they  
will avoid the following stations...

\*

22 INT. LONDON HOTEL ROOM - DAY

22

Macon, just arrived, regards the modest room neutrally  
-- except for the horrible, standard-issue bedspread,  
which seems to cause him particular distress. He quickly  
strips it from the bed, folds it and stuffs it in the  
closet. He turns back to the room. That's better.

EXT./INT. LONDON STREETS AND RESTAURANTS (SERIES OF  
SHOTS)



23 EXT. "THE YANKEE DELIGHT" COFFEE SHOP - DAY 23 \*

Macon enters a coffee shop called "The Yankee Delight", all red, white and blue decor.

24 INT. "MY AMERICAN COUSIN" RESTAURANT - DAY 24

Macon is making notes in a previous edition of The Accidental Tourist in England when his scrambled eggs and coffee is served. He looks the plate over carefully and makes another note in his book before putting it aside and beginning to eat. We can see that the earlier edition will soon be filled with his markings: names scratched out, others added, notes across the margins. The WAITER hovers.

WAITER

And to drink?

MACON

Just coffee, please.  
Decaffeinated.

WAITER

We have no decaffeinated.

MACON

(reacts)

Oh, you don't? Well, never mind.

The Waiter nods and retreats. Macon quickly makes a disappointed note in his guidebook.

25 Macon leaves the "American Pancake House" and walks down 25  
the block to the "American Steak House" and goes in. He  
makes notes.

26 INT. PADDINGTON STATION - DAY 26

Macon buys a hot dog from a Vendor advertising "Genuine American Hot Dogs" as London commuters stream by. Macon, book and pen in hand, manages a bite of the mustard-covered dog. He's not pleased.

27 OMITTED 27

INT. LONDON HOTELS (SERIES OF SHOTS)

28 Macon flushes the toilet in a cramped bathroom in an 28  
old hotel. A Nervous Manager tries to see what Macon  
writes in his guidebook.

29 Another hotel manager, a Short Dapper Fellow, waits with 29  
Macon for an elevator. And waits. The Short Dapper  
Fellow becomes increasingly frenetic as the elevator  
fails to arrive. Macon watches sympathetically.

30 In the lobby of yet another place, Macon stands with a dignified Lady Manager who looks like Margaret Thatcher. Macon gazes at a covey of robed Arabs being served tea across the room. A Bellhop pushes a cartload of new, boxed Sony equipment to the elevator. 30

MACON

Has the hotel, ah, changed ownership?

The Lady Manager lowers her eyes, distraught.

31 INT. MEOW-BOW ANIMAL HOSPITAL - DUSK

31 \*

Macon stands alone at the counter and rings the service bell. A GIRL with a ponytail pokes her head through a door.

MACON

I'm here for my dog.

GIRL

Your last name?

MACON

Leary.

GIRL

Oh. Just a minute.

The Girl disappears, and a moment later Muriel comes out. She wears a V-necked black dress splashed with big pink flowers and preposterously high-heeled sandals.

MURIEL

Well, hi there! How was your trip?

MACON

Oh, it was...where's Edward? Is he all right?

MURIEL

Sure, he's all right. We just got on like a house afire. Seems he took a shine to me, I couldn't say why.

MACON

Wonderful. So could I have him back, please?

MURIEL

Caroline will bring him.

Muriel waits, facing him and wearing a perky smile.

(CONTINUED)

31

CONTINUED:

31

Her long nails are dark red and she wears a blackish lipstick.

MACON

Um. Maybe I could pay.

MURIEL

Oh, yes. That'll be forty-two dollars.

Macon gives her a credit card. The length of her nails makes working the embossing machine difficult. She turns the bill in his direction.

MURIEL

Signature and phone.

(watches him sign)

Is that your home phone, or your business?

MACON

It's both. Why? What difference does it make?

MURIEL

I was just wondering. I don't know if I mentioned before that it so happens I train dogs.

MACON

Is that right?

MURIEL

My speciality is dogs that bite.

MACON

Specialty. Webster prefers "specialty."

\*

She gives him a blank look.

MACON

That must be a dangerous job.

MURIEL

Oh, not for me! I can handle anything.

\*

\*

Edward bursts through the door, followed by the Girl with the ponytail.

(CONTINUED)

31

CONTINUED: (2)

31

The dog YELPS and flings himself about so joyfully that Macon can't really pet him.

MURIEL

Biters, barkers, dogs that haven't been treated right... even split personality.

\*  
\*

MACON

Split personality?

\*

MURIEL

Where your dog is, like, nice to you but kills all others... Not that Edward would bite me, of course. He just fell in love with me, like I think I was telling you.

\*  
\*

MACON

I'm glad to hear it.

MURIEL

But I could train him in no time not to bite other people. You think it over and call me. Muriel, remember? Muriel Pritchett. Let me give you my card.

She hands him a card.

MACON

Well, I'll bear that in mind. Thank you very much.

MURIEL

Or just call for no reason! Call and talk.

MACON

Talk?

MURIEL

Sure! Talk about Edward, his problems, talk about...anything! Pick up the phone and just talk. Don't you ever get the urge to do that?

MACON

Not really.

31A EXT. MACON'S HOUSE - DUSK 31A \*

Macon moves slowly up the front walk of his home, as if in dread. Edward runs wildly ahead onto the porch, very happy. \*

31B INT. ENTRY HALL, MACON'S HOUSE - DUSK 31B \*

Macon unlocks the door and opens it. Edward rushes in and disappears, his SCRABBLING claws ECHOING from the hardwood floors. Macon stands just inside the door of the empty house, alone in the late afternoon gloom. \*

32 INT. MACON'S BEDROOM - MORNING 32

Coffee steams in the coffee maker and popcorn cools in the popcorn maker, but Macon is still sleeping -- but restlessly, without peace. The phone by the bed RINGS loudly and Macon grabs it instantly, half-asleep.

MACON

Yeah?

ETHAN'S VOICE (ON PHONE)

Dad?

MACON

Ethan? Where are you?

ETHAN'S VOICE (ON PHONE)

I'm at camp, Dad. You never came to get me.

MACON

But we thought you were dead.

Again we hear a loud phone RING.

ETHAN'S VOICE (ON PHONE)

Why would you think that?

33 INT. MACON'S BEDROOM - MORNING 33

Macon wakes up for real now. It is a much slower process. The phone RINGS twice more before he gets it. On the line is JULIAN HEDGE, Macon's boss. To see him, we begin to INTERCUT with: \*

34 INT. JULIAN'S OFFICE (BUSINESSMAN'S PRESS) - MORNING 34

Julian sits with his feet up on his cluttered desk. He's younger than Macon -- also louder, cheerier, more sprightly.

(CONTINUED)

34

CONTINUED: (A1)

34

He has a yachtsman's tan and taste in clothes; in fact, he's idly twisting some kind of navigational tool on his finger.

MACON

Yes.

JULIAN

Macon! Welcome back! How was the trip?

MACON

It was okay.

JULIAN

This is Julian.

(CONTINUED)

MACON

I know.

JULIAN

Just when do you figure to bring me a manuscript?

MACON

I don't know.

JULIAN

I guess I woke you.

MACON

Yes.

JULIAN

"The Accidental Tourist in bed."

He makes it sound like the title of something.

JULIAN

So anyway, can I expect it by the end of the month?

MACON

No... I don't know. \*

Macon notices, to his surprise, that there are tears on his cheeks. He wipes them.

JULIAN

Hey. Pal. Are you okay?

MACON

I'm fine! Just fine! I'll have the manuscript in by the fifteenth. Possibly earlier. Yes, very possibly earlier. \*

Macon hangs up.

Macon's work materials are arranged about his typewriter. Macon comes in in his gray sweatsuit and stands behind his chair looking at the typewriter. He doesn't look so good. He walks out.

Macon is watching television, blankly. Edward lies on the sofa beside him. The phone RINGS.

(CONTINUED)

36

CONTINUED:

36

Macon looks at it suspiciously -- he doesn't want any more surprises. Finally, he picks it up.

MACON

Leary.

MURIEL (ON PHONE)

Macon? It's Muriel.

MACON

Muriel.

MURIEL (ON PHONE)

Muriel Pritchett.

We begin to INTERCUT:

\*

36A

INT. LIVING ROOM, MURIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

36A

\*

Muriel sits on the couch in the living room of her cramped row house. She holds the receiver with her chin and shoulder so her hands are free to try on a variety of press-on fingernails.

\*

\*

\*

\*

MACON

(still doesn't  
remember)

Ah, yes.

MURIEL

From the vet's? Who got on so good with your dog?

\*

MACON

Right!

MURIEL

I was just wondering how Edward was.

\*

Macon glances over at Edward.

MACON

He looks all right to me.

\*

MURIEL

No problems?

\*

\*

MACON

Well... he's developed this new symptom. He gets angry if I leave the house. He starts barking and showing his teeth.

\*

\*

(CONTINUED)



36A

CONTINUED:

36A \*

MURIEL

He ought to be trained.

\*

MACON

Oh, you know, he's four and a half and I suppose --

MURIEL

That's not too old! Tell you what, maybe I could just come around and discuss it.

\*

MACON

Well, I really don't think --

MURIEL

Or you could come to my place. I'd fix you supper.

\*

(silence)

Macon? What do you say?

Macon looks at the phone, confused.

MACON

I think for now I'll just try to manage on my own.

MURIEL

Well, I can understand that. Believe me. I've been through that stage. So what I'll do is, I'll wait for you to get in touch.

\*

MACON

Yes. That would be good. Goodbye.

Macon is replacing the phone on its hook as he HEARS:

MURIEL

I don't want to be pushy!

\*

37

INT. MACON'S KITCHEN, TOP OF BASEMENT STAIRS - DAY

37

Edward stands WHIMPERING and shaking at the open door to the basement, peering down into the gloom.

38

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

38

Macon is intently strapping the laundry basket we saw earlier to a colorful skateboard -- Ethan's. Despite some glimmer of satisfaction at his creation, Macon looks worse than ever. Things are going downhill.

(CONTINUED)

38

CONTINUED: (A1)

38

Macon glances up at Edward at the top of the stairs, irritated.

MACON

If you want to come down, come.  
Otherwise go away. But stop that  
pitiful whimpering. This basement  
is not haunted.

Macon stands to admire his work, pushing it across the floor toward the laundry chute with his foot.

MACON

That ought to do nicely.

(CONTINUED)

Macon positions the rolling laundry basket under the chute, opens the hatch and watches the squared-off stack of laundry drop neatly into the basket. Macon pushes the basket across the basement to the washing machine and puts the laundry inside. He starts the machine; it SHAKES violently and GRUMBLES into operation. He takes a load from the dryer, drops it in the basket and gives it a kick across the floor. It rolls to a stop at the bottom of the stairs.

Macon stands where he was, as if transfixed, lost in space. After a long moment, he snaps out of it.

MACON

(to himself)

Buck up.

He walks over to the stairs and is about to pick up the dry clothes when his attention is drawn to the WHIMPERING Edward, who, despite his terror, has made his way hesitantly down two steps. Macon is a bit cheered by this and puts out his arms encouragingly.

MACON

That's the stuff, Edward. Come on.  
Nothing to be afraid of here.

Edward quakes down two more steps, WHINING, then loses his resolve. Macon moves up a step toward him, arms open.

MACON

Don't give up, Edward. We can  
make it. Come on. We're both  
going to make Ethan proud.

\*

At that instant the washing machine goes out of balance and begins to ROCK WILDLY, emitting a horrendous SCREECHING NOISE.

Edward's eyes widen. He leaps from his spot into Macon's chest and arms. Macon, looking at the washing machine, takes the clawed legs in his diaphragm and steps back into empty space. One foot lands in the laundry basket, which immediately rolls out from under him. Macon goes down hard.

Edward scampers up to the top of the stairs, YELPING wildly, and stands looking back down at --

Macon, in agony, sprawled on the floor, his leg stuck out behind him at an impossible angle. His eyelids flicker as he looks up the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: (2)

38

MACON'S POV of Edward at the top of what seems now an endless staircase. The little dog begins to FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

39 INT. DINING ROOM (ROSE'S HOUSE) - NIGHT

39

We're looking at a large framed portrait on the wall. It is the Leary siblings as children: Macon in the center, his older brothers PORTER and CHARLES on either side, and, perched in the foreground, his sister ROSE. A LITTLE MOVE OF THE CAMERA reveals them now, thirty years older, eating dinner.

All four are intently preparing their baked potatoes. They have scooped out the insides and filled the skins with butter. The floury insides are mashed and seasoned separately.

Macon's leg is in a cast to his hip.

MACON

I don't think anyone else has any idea where I am.

PORTER

What do you mean?

MACON

I mean that I've come to stay over here with you for a while.

CHARLES

Does it matter?

Macon considers.

ROSE

Do you think you should tell Sarah?

MACON

(no)

It's nice to be so unconnected. I wish things could stay that way a while.

CHARLES

Why can't they?

MACON

Oh, well, you know, someone will call here, Sarah or someone --

(CONTINUED)

ROSE

Maybe we could just not answer  
the phone.

MACON

What, let it go on ringing?

PORTER

Why not?

MACON

Not answer it any time?

ROSE

Most who call me are neighbors.  
They'll pop over in person if  
they don't get an answer.

CHARLES

I won't miss it.

Macon looks at Porter, who shakes his head, "no problem."

The four siblings sit at an ancient card table playing a  
card game of their own invention called Vaccination.  
Macon is the only one not totally concentrated on the  
cards. His gaze moves from brother to sister to brother  
with the same interest they lavish on their cards.  
Something about this makes him a little uneasy.

The telephone in the living room RINGS. Nobody seems  
to notice. Rose lays a king on Porter's queen.

PORTER

Stinker.

ROSE

Hypodermic.

Rose lays a king on the ace. Charles reacts, WHISTLING  
-- excited for him, which is not much. Macon smiles.

PORTER

You're a real stinker, Rose.

MACON

(pulls a card from  
his hand)

Disinfectant.

41 INT. SUN PORCH - DAY

41

Macon's typewriter and work materials are set up here now.

MACON'S V.O.

Generally food in England is not as jarring as in other foreign countries. Nice cooked vegetables, things in white sauce... I don't know why some travelers complain about English food.

He hears yelling from the front of the house.

JULIAN O.S.

Help! Help! Call off your dog.

Macon props himself on his crutches and makes his way to the window, in the front parlor. \*

42 INT./EXT. PARLOR - FRONT YARD - DAY

42 \*

MACON'S POV: Edward has someone treed in the giant magnolia to the right of the walk; he's BARKING and popping off the ground.

JULIAN

(somewhere in  
branches)

Call him off, dammit!

MACON

Edward! Stop that!

43 EXT. FRONT YARD AND PORCH - DAY

43

Macon struggles down the porch steps and hops over to the magnolia. He manages to lean over and grab the leash Edward is trailing. He peers up into the tree.

MACON

Who is that?

JULIAN

This is your employer, Macon.

MACON

Julian?

Julian lowers himself from the magnolia. He has a line of dirt across the front of his light slacks.

(CONTINUED)

43

CONTINUED:

43

JULIAN

I really hate a man with an obnoxious dog. I don't hate just the dog, I hate the man who owns him.

MACON

Well, I'm sorry about this. I thought he was off on a walk with Porter.

JULIAN

What happened to your leg?

MACON

I broke it.

JULIAN

Well, I see that, but how?

MACON

It's kind of hard to explain.

Julian supports Macon as they climb the steps.

JULIAN

Do you know how late you're running with this guidebook?

44

INT. PARLOR - DAY

44

Macon leads Julian into the parlor. Julian looks around with interest.

\*  
\*

JULIAN

This is quite a place.

\*  
\*

MACON

It was my grandparents' house. I grew up here.

\*  
\*  
\*

JULIAN

Where's Sarah?

MACON

Who?

JULIAN

Your wife, Macon.

MACON

Oh. Um, she and I are...

(CONTINUED)

44

CONTINUED:

44

Macon crosses to the couch and makes a great business of settling himself and arranging his crutches at his side.

MACON

She's got this apartment downtown.

JULIAN

You've split.

Macon nods.

JULIAN

Jesus, Macon, what went wrong?

MACON

Nothing. It turns out these things can happen for no particular reason.

Edward suddenly flies into the hall BARKING furiously. The front door swings open, hitting the radiator. \*

ROSE O.S.

Hush, now.

Rose crosses the hall and looks into the parlor. Julian gets to his feet. Charles comes in behind Rose.

MACON

Julian Hedge, this is my sister, Rose. And this is my brother, Charles. \*

Neither Rose nor Charles can shake hands; they are hugging brown paper bags full of groceries. They greet Julian.

JULIAN

Macon Leary with a sister! And a brother, too. Who'd have guessed it? That Macon Leary had a family just never entered my mind, somehow.

MACON

(irritated)

I'm right here, Julian.

Rose gives Julian a polite, puzzled smile.

JULIAN

Yes, I do see a family resemblance.

(CONTINUED)



ROSE

You're Macon's publisher. I'm the one who mailed you Macon's chapters.

JULIAN

Oh, yes.

ROSE

I'm supposed to send you some more, but first I have to buy nine-by-twelve envelopes. All we've got left is ten-by-thirteen. It's terrible when things don't fit precisely. They get all out of alignment.

JULIAN

Ah.

Julian looks at Rose for a very long moment, fascinated.

MACON

We wouldn't want to keep you, Rose.

ROSE

Oh! No.

She smiles at Julian, hoists her groceries higher, and leaves the room. Charles slogs after her.

JULIAN

The Macon Leary Nine-by-Twelve Envelope Crisis.

MACON

Oh, Julian, drop it.

JULIAN

Really, I had no idea, Macon. I mean, if you'd let me know what was going on in your life... Look. If you want another, I don't know, another month --

Macon gets up and hobbles off toward the sun porch.

MACON

Oh, nonsense, what's a missing wife or two, right? Here, let me get what I've typed and you can check it.

(CONTINUED)

44

CONTINUED: (3)

44

The front door BANGS open again and Edward begins barking at Porter, who marches through toward the kitchen without a glance into the parlor.

PORTER

(to Edward)

Monster. Do you know how long I've been looking for you?

Julian is looking after him with a bemused smile when Macon drops the manuscript gently in his lap. Macon sits back down on the sofa as Julian begins to read. The telephone begins to RING over and over; no one answers.

Julian looks at Macon and raises his eyebrows. But since no one else seems to hear the RINGING, Julian goes back to his reading.

MOVING IN on Macon as he watches Julian and remembers --

45

INT. OLD BAY RESTAURANT (FLASHBACK) - DAY

45

Macon and Julian, having just met, sit at a small table in the conservative seafood restaurant.

JULIAN

Here's my plan. I own this little company called the Businessman's Press. Well, little: I say little. Actually we sell coast to coast. And now I want to put out a guidebook for commercial travelers. We'd call it something catchy, I don't know: Reluctant Tourist... And you're the fellow to write it.

MACON

Me?

JULIAN

I knew the minute I read your hot dog essay in the Baltimore Sun.

\*

MACON

That was a one time thing. I work in the family business. I'm not really a writer.

JULIAN

I think you are.

MACON

But I hate to travel.

(CONTINUED)

JULIAN

I thought so. So do businessmen.  
I mean, these folks would rather  
be home in their living rooms.  
So you'll be helping them pretend  
that's where they are.

Julian pulls a square of paper from his breast pocket  
and flattens it on the table.

JULIAN

What do you think?

It is an engraving of the winged armchair we know as  
Macon's logo.

JULIAN

Your logo. Get it?

MACON

Um...

JULIAN

While armchair travelers dream of  
going places, traveling armchairs  
dream of staying put! I thought  
we'd use this on the cover.

MACON

Ah! But would I actually have to  
travel myself?

JULIAN

Well, yes.

MACON

(disappointed)

Oh.

JULIAN

But just briefly. I don't want  
too much information. I'm not  
looking for anything encyclopedic.  
I'm looking for the opposite of  
encyclopedic.

MACON

Oh.

(pause)

What is the opposite?

46 INT. PARLOR (BACK TO PRESENT) - DAY

46 \*

Macon watches as Julian restacks the manuscript pages.

JULIAN

After this I want to start on New York and the northeast again.

\*  
\*

MACON

So soon?

JULIAN

It's been three years, Macon.

Julian stands up, and, with some difficulty, Macon does too.

47 INT./EXT. FRONT HALL - DOORWAY - DAY

47

When they reach the front door, Edward blocks it, BARKING.

MACON

Edward, stop it.

Macon gives one crutch to Julian and bends to grasp Edward's leash. Edward turns and SNARLS at Macon.

JULIAN

Whoa!

Edward SNAPS at his leash with an audible CLICK. Then he SNAPS at Macon's hand. Macon steps back and drops the leash. The other crutch CLATTERS to the floor.

JULIAN

Macon? Did he get you?

Macon looks down at his hand. There are four red puncture marks in the fleshy party. Julian gives him his crutches, keeping one eye on Edward.

JULIAN

I wouldn't have a dog like that.  
I'd shoot him.

MACON

He's never done that.

JULIAN

I'd call the S.P.C.A. Or the what's-it, dogcatcher. Tell them you want him done away with.

MACON

Just go, Julian.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

Julian opens the door and slides through it sideways, glancing back at Edward.

JULIAN

That is not a well dog.

48 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

48

Rose stands on a stepstool in front of a towering glass-fronted cupboard, accepting the groceries that Charles and Porter hand up to her.

ROSE

Now I need the n's, anything starting with n.

PORTER

How about these noodles? N for noodles? P for pasta?

ROSE

E for elbow macaroni. You might have passed those up earlier, Porter.

Macon comes hobbling in. Edward follows shyly.

MACON

Rose? It seems Edward's given me a little sort of nip.

The siblings stop work to examine his hand.

ROSE

Oh, Macon!

CHARLES

How did it happen?

MACON

It was an accident, that's all. But I think I need an antiseptic.

CHARLES

You need a tetanus shot, too.

PORTER

You need to get rid of that dog.

They look at Edward. He grins up at them nervously.

MACON

He didn't mean any harm.

(CONTINUED)

48

CONTINUED:

48

PORTER

Takes off your hand at the elbow  
and he means no harm? You should  
get rid of him, I tell you.

MACON

See, I can't.

PORTER

Why not?

MACON

Well, see...

They wait. Macon looks down at the dog a long moment,  
remembering--

INT./EXT. MACON'S HOUSE - SERIES OF SHOTS (FLASHBACK)

49 In the living room, we're CLOSE ON a jumping Edward. As 49  
he retreats, we see the laughing face of Ethan, the dog's  
wrestling adversary. The dog comes back for another go.

50 In the kitchen, Sarah's legs WIPE PAST Ethan sitting 50  
on the floor gently brushing a becalmed Edward.

51 In the backyard, TRACKING WITH a soccer ball as it rolls 51  
across the lawn. Edward catches up to it, crazed, and  
shoulders into the hedge, GROWLING ferociously. Across  
the yard, Ethan watches delighted, head thrown back, his  
laughter high and clear, but seeming now to grow EVER MORE  
DISTANT. He turns TO LOOK AT CAMERA, at what must be --

52 INT. KITCHEN, ROSE'S HOUSE (BACK TO PRESENT) 52

-- Macon. His siblings watch him with some pain. Now  
they avert their eyes tactfully, kindly.

MACON

I just can't get rid of him.

Rose pulls a first-aid kit from the cupboard.

ROSE

Maybe we could send him to  
obedience school.

53

INT./EXT. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

53

Edward is sitting on the floor. His rump wiggles from his desire to stand up. He is looking up expectantly at--

Muriel Pritchett, who stands above him as Macon, on crutches, watches. Muriel makes a CLUCKING sound with her tongue and holds out her hand.

MURIEL

Now you kind of cluck your tongue. They get to know a cluck means praise. And when I hold my hand out -- see? That means he has to stay.

Edward stays, but a YELP erupts from him every few seconds. Finally, Muriel snaps her fingers over Edward's head. Edward jumps up, BARKING.

MURIEL

(to dog)

That was very good.

Muriel reaches into her purse and pulls out a long blue leash attached to a choke chain. She slips the choke chain over Edward's head.

\*  
\*

MURIEL

He's supposed to wear this every minute till he's trained. That way you can yank him back whenever he does something wrong.

\*

She takes a step back and points to Edward's rump. Edward stands fast.

MURIEL

Poke him down.

Macon props a crutch against the radiator and bends stiffly to jab Edward with one finger. Edward sits. Macon CLUCKS. Then he straightens and backs away, holding out his palm. But instead of staying, Edward rises and follows him. Muriel HISSES between her teeth. Edward shrinks down again.

MURIEL

He doesn't take you seriously.

(CONTINUED)

MACON

Well, I know that.

MURIEL

A couple of years ago I saw this ad in the paper. Make extra money in your off hours. Place was a dog-training firm that went around to people's houses. Doggie, Do, it was called. Don't you just hate that name? But anyhow, I answered the ad. I told them that to be honest, I didn't like animals but Mr. Quarles, the owner, he told me that was just as well. He told me it was people who got all mushy about them that had the most trouble.

MACON

Well, that makes sense.

MURIEL

Who's the lady?

MACON

Lady?

MURIEL

The lady I just saw walking through the dining room.

MACON

That's Rose.

MURIEL

Is she your ex-wife? Or what.

MACON

She's my sister.

MURIEL

Oh, your sister!

MACON

This house belongs to her.

MURIEL

I don't live with anybody either.

Macon blinks, trying to follow her thought.

MURIEL

You can release him now.

(CONTINUED)



MACON

Pardon?

MURIEL

Release your dog.

Macon snaps his fingers and Edward jumps up, YAPPING.

MURIEL

How about you? What do you do for a living?

MACON

I write travel guides.

MURIEL

Travel guides! Lucky. I love to travel!

MACON

Oh, travel. It's just red tape, mostly. Ticket lines, customs lines... Should Edward be barking that way?

Muriel gives Edward a slit-eyed look and he QUIETS.

MURIEL

If I could go anywhere I'd go to Paris. It sounds so romantic.

MACON

Paris is terrible. Everybody's impolite.

MURIEL

Take me with you next time! I could show you the good parts. \*

MACON

(flustered)

Well, I have a very limited expense account. I never even took my wife, or, um, my...wife. \*

MURIEL

I was only teasing.  
(looks at him)  
You think I meant it?

MACON

Oh, no.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED: (3)

53

She grows suddenly brisk.

MURIEL

That will be fourteen forty,  
including the leash and the choke  
chain. You have to practice what  
he's learned, and no one else can  
practice for you.

Macon counts out some bills and all his change.

MURIEL

You can pay me the other four  
cents tomorrow.

Muriel motions for Edward to sit and hands the leash to  
Macon.

MURIEL

Release him when I'm gone.

Macon holds out his palm and stares hard into Edward's  
eyes, begging him to stay. Edward stays, but he MOANS  
when he sees Muriel go out the front door. When Macon  
snaps his fingers, Edward jumps up and attacks the front  
door.

54 INT. SUN PORCH - NIGHT

54

The siblings are playing Vaccination. Charles lays down  
a good card. Rose and Porter, independently, begin to  
make the dog-training CLUCKING sound of approval. Macon  
looks up. Over in the corner, Edward raises his head.

55 EXT. SIDEWALK ON ROSE'S BLOCK - DAY

55

A damp, drippy morning. Muriel and Macon are in rain-  
coats. Muriel is teaching Edward to "heel." Macon  
struggles along on his crutches.

MURIEL

When I was in high school I made  
nothing but A's. You're surprised  
at that, aren't you? You think  
I'm kind of like, not an intellect.  
I know what you're thinking!  
You're surprised.

MACON

No, I'm not.

(CONTINUED)

55

CONTINUED:

55

She glances down at Edward. Abruptly, she slaps her hip; her black vinyl raincoat makes a BUCKLING SOUND.

MURIEL

That's the "heel" command.

She starts walking. Edward follows uncertainly.

MURIEL

He's supposed to match his pace to anything. Slow, fast, anything I do.

She speeds up and Edward scurries after her. Edward crosses in front of her and Muriel walks right into him, kicking him. When he dawdles, she yanks his leash. Soon Edward is keeping close to Muriel's left side.

MURIEL

I think he's got the hang of it. Now you.

Macon attempts to slap his hip without losing his crutches. Then he sets off. Edward keeps pulling ahead.

MURIEL

Yank that leash! He knows what he's supposed to do. Don't forget to cluck. Every little minute, you have to praise him.

MACON

This is a bit more difficult with crutches.

MURIEL

Hah! I once taught a man who had no legs and only one arm.

Macon looks at her sharply, doubtful.

MURIEL

And he had a Great Dane.

MACON

Really?

MURIEL

You're not in such bad shape.

They reach the front of Rose's house.

56

EXT. ROSE'S HOUSE - DAY

56

MURIEL

I have to get going.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

56

CONTINUED:

56

MURIEL (CONT'D)

That will be five dollars, please,  
and the four cents you owe me from  
yesterday.

He gives her the money and she stuffs it in her raincoat  
pocket.

MURIEL

Next time, I'll stay longer and  
talk. That's a promise.

Muriel trills her fingers at him, and clicks off toward  
a car parked down the street -- an aged, gray, boat-like  
sedan. She slides in and slams the door -- there is a  
sound like falling beer cans. The engine TWANGS and  
RATTLES before it takes hold. Macon watches her go.

MACON'S V.O.

(same guidebook tone)

It is an unfortunate fact that  
even the most conscientious  
traveler cannot be prepared for  
every encounter. At such times,  
one must remain calm and rely  
upon one's innate common sense.

57

EXT. BUSINESSMAN'S PRESS - DAY

57

Macon, on crutches, leans down to speak to Rose once more  
before she drives away.

MACON

Are you absolutely clear about  
this?

ROSE

(looking around the  
area)

Yes. I know exactly where we are.  
(holds up note paper)  
Besides, I have the address right  
here! I'll be back in one half  
hour.

MACON

You're sure?

ROSE

Macon, please. I'm just going  
around the corner. Now, goodbye.

She pulls away. Macon watches with concern, then turns  
to face the old brick mansion which houses the Business-  
man's Press. He has a thick manila envelope in hand.

LATER. Julian finishes glancing without much interest through the material Macon has brought him. His desk is out in the center of the large, tiled entry hall -- he can't stand to be alone -- and his secretary is off in a back room. Sailing charts and instruments are everywhere. Julian puts down the papers and regards Macon with amusement.

JULIAN

"The Accidental Tourist on  
Crutches."

Macon gets to his feet.

MACON

I guess I'll be going. My  
sister's picking me up as soon as  
she gets done with her errand.

JULIAN

Rose? She's coming here? I'd  
like to see her.

Macon looks at him suspiciously.

JULIAN

Macon, do me a favor. Couldn't  
you just once invite me to a  
family dinner?

MACON

We're really not much for  
socializing.

JULIAN

It wouldn't have to be fancy.  
Just whatever you eat normally.  
What do you eat normally? Or  
I'll bring the meal myself. You  
could lock the dog up. And I'll  
come spend the evening.

MACON

We'll see.

JULIAN

(getting up)

When my father said that, it  
always meant "no". Why don't I  
step outside and wait with you  
for Rose.

MACON

I'd really rather you didn't.

Julian sinks back in his chair, disappointed.

Macon watches as Muriel stands over Edward, who dances happily around her. Muriel has a gauzy bouffant scarf over her hair. She points at Edward's rump. The dog sits and Muriel picks up his leash.

MACON

How's your little boy?

Muriel looks over at Macon.

MURIEL

What?

MACON

Wasn't he sick?

MURIEL

Who told you that?

MACON

Someone at the vet's, when I phoned. They said your little boy was sick.

She goes on looking at him.

MACON

What was it? The flu? It's that time of year, I guess.

MURIEL

How come you phoned?

MACON

I wanted to know why Edward wouldn't lie down.

She turns her gaze toward Edward.

MACON

I tap my foot but he never obeys me. Something's wrong.

MURIEL

I told you he'd be stubborn about it.

MACON

Yes, but I've been practicing two days now and he's not --

MURIEL

What do you expect? You think I'm magical or something? Why blame me?

(CONTINUED)

MACON

Oh, I'm not blaming --

MURIEL

You most certainly are. You tell me something's wrong, you call me on the phone --

MACON

I just wanted to --

MURIEL

You think it's weird I didn't mention Alexander, don't you? You think I'm some kind of unnatural mother.

MACON

What? No, wait a minute --

MURIEL

You're not going to give me another thought, are you, now you know I've got a kid. You're like, "Oh, forget it, no point getting involved in that."

As Muriel's voice grows shriller, the hair on Edward's neck begins to stand up. The dog's lip begins to curl and he starts a low GROWL.

MURIEL

You wonder why I didn't tell you about Alexander right off. Well, isn't it obvious? Don't you see what happens when I do?

Muriel looks down at the dog and stops speaking. She taps her foot twice, but Edward rises from his sitting position, a distinct hump between his shoulders.

MURIEL

Down.

With a BELLOW, Edward springs at her face, every tooth bare and gleaming. Muriel instantly raises the leash. She jerks it upward with both fists and lifts Edward completely off the floor. He stops barking and starts making GARGLING SOUNDS.

MACON

He's choking. Stop it. It's enough. You're choking him!

(CONTINUED)

Still, she lets him hang. Now Edward's eyes roll back in their sockets. Macon grabs at Muriel's shoulder. Muriel lowers Edward to the floor. He lands in a boneless heap. Macon crouches at his side.

MACON

Edward? Edward? Oh God, he's dead!

Edward raises his head and feebly licks his lips.

MURIEL

See that? When they lick their lips it's a sign they're giving in. Doggie, Do taught me that.

Macon stands up, shaking.

MACON

Don't you ever, ever do that again.

MURIEL

Huh?

MACON

In fact, don't even bother coming again.

There is a startled silence.

MURIEL

(tightening scarf)

Well, fine. If that's the way you feel, just fine and dandy.

She steps neatly around Edward and opens the front door.

MURIEL

You want a dog you can't handle? Fine with me.

MACON

I'd rather a barking dog than a damaged, timid dog.

MURIEL

You want a dog that bites all your friends? You want an evil, nasty dog? That kills the whole world?

\*  
\*

She slips out the screen door and closes it behind her. Then she looks through the screen directly into Macon's eyes.

(CONTINUED)



59 CONTINUED: (3)

59

MURIEL

Why, yes, I guess you do.

From the hall floor, Edward gives a MOAN.

60 INT./EXT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

60

CAMERA IS LOCKED from the previous scene as daylight fades and the porchlight comes on and suddenly Julian, yet another outsider, is at the Leary's screen door and Rose is admitting him. Edward BARKS from behind some nearby door.

JULIAN

(a little shy)

Hello, Rose.

ROSE

(pleased)

Hello, Julian. Come in.

JULIAN

I've brought some materials for Macon.

Just then Macon appears, with Charles close behind.

JULIAN

I hope I'm not interfering with supper.

ROSE

No, no.

MACON

(eyes him  
suspiciously)

We've finished.

JULIAN

(disappointed;  
looks at watch)Really? What time do you eat,  
anyhow?

ROSE

But we haven't had our coffee.  
Wouldn't you like some coffee?

JULIAN

I'd love some.

MACON

It seems a little silly if you  
haven't eaten.

61 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

61

Rose leads the group into the living room.

JULIAN

For me, home-brewed coffee is a real treat. All the people in my apartment building eat out, and there's nothing in any of the kitchens but a couple cans of peanuts and some diet soda.

ROSE

What kind of place is that?

JULIAN

It's the Calvert Arms -- a singles building. Everybody's single.

ROSE

Oh! What an interesting idea.

JULIAN

(gloomily)

Well, not really. Sometimes I wish for the old-fashioned way of doing things, with children and old people like normal buildings have.

ROSE

Well, of course you do. I'm going to get you some nice hot coffee.

Rose leaves and Julian watches her out of the room. Macon watches him watch. They sit down.

JULIAN

Where is Porter?

CHARLES

We're not too sure. He went to a hardware store and we think he got lost.

JULIAN

Good grief, when did this happen?

CHARLES

A little while before supper.

JULIAN

Supper. Oh, you mean today.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

MACON

He's just running an errand on Howard Street. Not lost in any permanent sense.

JULIAN

He got lost on Howard Street?

CHARLES

It's a problem with this family. Directions.

JULIAN

Really?

MACON

(irritated)  
Charles.

CHARLES

What?

Macon gets up.

MACON

Never mind. I'll go help Rose.

62 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

62

Rose is setting coffee mugs on a silver tray. Edward makes a racket behind the pantry door.

ROSE

Julian seems very nice.

MACON

He's only here because he hopes we'll do something eccentric. I just pray none of us says anything unconventional around him.

ROSE

(she picks up the tray)

What would we say? We're the most conventional people I know.

63 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

63

Macon and Rose return. Julian jumps up and makes to help Rose.

(CONTINUED)

JULIAN

What do you do for a living,  
Charles?

CHARLES

I make bottle caps.

JULIAN

Bottle caps! Is that a fact!

CHARLES

Oh, well, it's not half as  
exciting as it sounds, really.

JULIAN

And Rose? Do you work?

ROSE

Yes, I do. I work at home. I  
keep house for the boys. Also  
I take care of a lot of the older  
neighbors. They need me to repair  
their plumbing and such.

JULIAN

You repair their plumbing?

The telephone RINGS. The Learys stiffen and exchange  
looks.

ROSE

What do you think? It could be  
Porter.

MACON

Mm...

CHARLES

But he knows we wouldn't answer.

ROSE

Yes, he'd surely call a neighbor  
instead.

CHARLES

On the other hand...

JULIAN

Do you always give this much  
thought to your phone calls?

That does it. Macon picks up the receiver.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: (2)

63

MACON

Leary.

SARAH (ON PHONE)

Macon?

Macon shoots a glance at the others and turns his back to them.

MACON

Hello, Sarah.

SARAH (ON PHONE)

Well, finally. I've been trying to get in touch with you at home.

MACON

Is something wrong?

SARAH (ON PHONE)

(after moment)

I called because I thought we should talk. I was hoping we could meet for supper some night.

MACON

Oh. Well. Yes, we could do that.

64 INT. OLD BAY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

64

The hostess seats Macon at a corner table.

HOSTESS

(indicating crutches)

I'll take those for you, darlin'.

MACON

Oh, they'll be fine here.

HOSTESS

I need to check them up front, sweetheart. It's a rule.

MACON

You have a rule about crutches?

HOSTESS

They might trip the other customers, honeybunch.

Sarah appears beside the table. Macon half stands. She comes around the table and presses her cheek to his briefly, rather than kissing him.

(CONTINUED)

64

CONTINUED:

64

SARAH

Hello, Macon. What happened to  
your leg?

MACON

Hello, Sarah. I had a kind of...  
fall.

65

INT. OLD BAY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

65

LATER. They have their food. Sarah barely touches hers.

MACON

Sarah, it's been awful living  
apart.

She looks at him.

MACON

Hasn't it?

SARAH

I asked you here for a reason,  
Macon. We need to spell out the  
details of our separation.

MACON

I think you ought to come home.

SARAH

It's not possible.

MACON

Listen. Don't say no before you  
hear me out. Have you ever  
considered we might have another  
baby?

Sarah is taken aback. Macon has shocked himself, too.

MACON

Why not? We're not too old.

SARAH

Oh, Macon.

MACON

I realize we can't replace Ethan,  
but --

SARAH

No.

Her tone is definitive.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

I'm sorry. But it would never work.

MACON

All right, forget that. It was crazy, right? Crazy notion. All I'm saying is...I think we ought to start over.

SARAH

I am starting over. I'm doing everything I can to start over, but that doesn't mean I want to live the same life twice.

(leans toward him)

Macon, we really didn't have much left, don't you see. Look who you turned to when you broke your leg: your family! You're closer to them than you ever were to me.

MACON

That's not true. Or rather, maybe it's true in the sense we're blood relations.

SARAH

Yes, blood. Playing that ridiculous card game no one else can fathom. Cruising hardware stores like other people cruise boutiques.

MACON

As other people cruise boutiques.

Macon immediately regrets it.

SARAH

Picking apart people's English. Have to have their precious baked potatoes every night. The best house in the world might come on the market, but you can't buy it because you've ordered these address labels for the old house, one thousand five hundred gummed labels, and you have to use them up before you move.

MACON

That wasn't me, it was Charles.

(CONTINUED)

65

CONTINUED: (2)

65

SARAH

Yes, but it could have been you.  
And his wife divorced him for it.  
I think when your mother abandoned  
you all in that house with your  
grandparents --

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

MACON

She didn't "abandon" us. We chose  
to live with them rather than  
travel around with --

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

SARAH

Exactly! You chose your grandparents  
over your mother because they had  
everything under control in their  
world. Nothing wild, nothing...  
unpredictable like your mother.  
And look, Macon, there you all are  
again, back living in that same  
old house, all together, with no  
one from the outside to ruffle  
the feathers.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Macon lays down his fork.

MACON

Sarah, it's what happened to  
Ethan that ruined us.

Sarah sets an elbow on the table and covers her eyes.

MACON

But it doesn't have to. Why, some  
people, a thing like this brings  
them closer together. How come  
we're letting it tear us apart?

Sarah looks up. Her eyes are deep with tears, but they  
haven't spilled over.

SARAH

Macon, ever since Ethan died I've  
had to admit that people are  
basically bad. Evil, Macon. So  
evil they would take a twelve-year-  
old boy and shoot him through the  
skull for no reason. I've given  
up watching the news on TV.  
There's so much wickedness.

Tears are running down her face now.

(CONTINUED)



65

CONTINUED: (3)

65

SARAH

There are times when I haven't been sure I could -- Macon, I haven't been sure I could live in this kind of a world anymore.

MACON

It's true what you say about human beings. I'm not trying to argue. But tell me this, Sarah. Why would that cause you to leave me?

She crumples up her napkin and dabs at her face.

SARAH

Because I knew you wouldn't try to argue. You've believed all along they were evil.

MACON

Well, so --

SARAH

This whole last year I felt myself withdrawing from people. Just like you do, Macon -- just as you do, sorry. I felt I was turning into a Leary.

MACON

There are worse disasters than that, I guess.

SARAH

I can't afford it. I live in this apartment you'd hate, all clutter. I've made a whole bunch of new friends, and you wouldn't like them much either, I guess. I'm studying sculpture again. I always did want to be a sculptor, only teaching seemed more sensible. That's how you would think: sensible. You're so quick to be sensible, Macon, that you've given up on just about everything.

\*  
\*

MACON

What have I given up on?

SARAH

Everything that might touch you or upset you or disrupt you.

(CONTINUED)

65

CONTINUED: (4)

65

MACON

I'm sitting here with you, Sarah.  
You don't see me giving up on you.

She chooses not to hear this.

SARAH

When Ethan died, you emptied his closet and his bureau as if you couldn't be rid of him soon enough. You kept offering people his junk in the basement, stilts and sleds and skateboards, and you couldn't understand why they didn't accept them. Macon, I know you loved him but I can't help thinking you didn't love him as much as I did, you're not so torn apart by his going.

Macon reacts to that with an infinitesimal flinch. Sarah sees it, but drives on --

SARAH

I know you mourned him but there's something so... what-do-you-call, so... muffled about the way you experience things. It's like you're trying to slip through life unchanged.

MACON

Sarah, I'm not muffled. I... endure. I'm trying to endure, I'm holding steady.

SARAH

If you really think that, then you're fooling yourself. You're encased. You're like something in a capsule. Macon, I'm sorry, but it's not by chance you write those silly books telling people how to take trips without a jolt. So they can go to the most wonderful, exotic places and never be touched by them, never feel they've left home! That traveling armchair isn't just your logo -- it's you.

MACON

No, it's not. It's not.

(CONTINUED)

65

CONTINUED: (5)

65

After a long moment of anguish, torn by what she's said, Sarah pulls her coat on, making a sloppy job of it. One corner of her collar is tucked inside.

SARAH

So anyway. This is what I wanted to tell you: I'm having John Albright send you a letter.

MACON

Who's John Albright?

SARAH

He's an attorney.

(she looks at  
him a moment)

I'm sorry if this hurts, Macon.  
I'm sorry --

\*  
\*

She changes her mind about whatever she was going to say. She stands up and walks out. Macon watches her go, then, very carefully, begins to eat.

66

INT. OLD BAY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

66

LATER. The Waitress carries a set of crutches to the waiting Macon. He gets up on them and begins to make his way across the busy dining room. He has to walk nearly doubled, his chin sunk low on his chest and his elbows jutting. His posture perfectly matches his mood. But some of the other Diners are staring; some SNICKER. He passes two churchy OLD LADIES and one of them tugs at his sleeve.

OLD LADY

Sir? Sir?

He comes to a stop.

OLD LADY

I suspect they may have given you my crutches.

He looks down at the crutches. They are diminutive -- hardly more than child-sized. He stands hanging his head, waiting for someone to help him.

67

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

67

EXTREME CLOSE-UP of the blade of a tiny, purring electric saw as it cuts through the cast on Macon's leg, throwing off bits of plaster and gauze.

(CONTINUED)

67

CONTINUED:

67

As Macon watches the doctor work we begin to HEAR the slightly disturbing MUSIC which will play into the following sequence. Macon's leg emerges dead-white and wrinkled. Macon looks at it as he would a stranger, and as we MOVE IN on his face, we HEAR, competing with the MUSIC, the sound of a HOWLING WIND, which grows stronger as we go to --

68

EXT. WORLD TRADE CENTER (NEW YORK CITY) - DUSK

68

\*

A taxi pulls up to the curb and Macon gets out, treating his leg gingerly. It is here that the HOWLING WIND blows across the huge plaza. We have not seen the buildings yet, but as Macon limps across the space, he looks up. And up and up. And for the first time we do too, in --

(CONTINUED)

- 68 CONTINUED: 68
- MACON'S POV of the impossible towers disappearing into the night sky. As the HOWLING WIND peaks, the MUSIC comes forward and continues into --
- 68A INT. ELEVATOR (WORLD TRADE CENTER) - NIGHT 68A \*
- Macon rides up, with many other smartly-dressed tourists, in the huge, ornate elevator. Macon works his jaw to equalize the pressure in his ears. \*
- 69 INT. DINING ROOM - SKYLINE RESTAURANT - NIGHT 69 \*
- A hostess leads Macon across the spacious, candlelit darkness that is the dining room. Great black windows encircle the room from floor to ceiling, but Macon is taken to a table without a view. \*
- Macon's WAITER hands him a menu.
- MACON  
Dry sherry, please.
- As soon as the Waiter leaves, Macon folds his menu in two and sits on it. The Waiter returns with the sherry.
- MACON  
Could I have a menu, please?
- WAITER  
Menu? Didn't I give you one?
- MACON  
There could have been an oversight.
- 70 INT. BY THE WINDOWS - SKYLINE RESTAURANT - NIGHT 70 \*
- MOMENTS LATER, Macon walks up to one of the windows with the small sherry glass in his hand. He seems fine as he looks down upon the city lights, tiny, below. And then something begins to happen in his face and the MUSIC grows and he squints out into the darkness.
- 71 WHAT MACON SEES. At first just the darkness, with the lights of New Jersey at the bottom of his field of vision. Then, just barely emerging from the gloom, an image of -- 71
- 72 Sarah, reading a book in a chair. She looks up at Macon. Then fades, and is replaced by -- 72
- 73 Rose, Charles and Porter playing cards. Rose puts down a card and looks directly up at Macon. 73

74     In the restaurant, Macon's free hand flattens against     74  
the window, as though to touch Rose. The glass of sherry  
shakes in his other hand. Macon peers even more intently  
into the darkness and sees --

75     Ethan, turned slightly away, laughing. Now he turns     75  
with a smile to look at Macon, who --

76     INT. BY THE WINDOWS - SKYLINE RESTAURANT - NIGHT     76     \*

Drops the glass of sherry on the floor of the restaurant.  
There is a FLURRY OF VOICES around him. Macon turns quick-  
ly from the window, his expression anguished, and runs  
lopsidedly and limping across the room. The MUSIC grows.

77     INT. CORRIDOR - SKYLINE RESTAURANT - NIGHT     77     \*

In the corridor to the elevators, Macon staggers to a  
halt, panicked. He can't make the long trip to the ele-  
vator. He turns to his right, hurries past some phones  
and pushes into the Men's Room.

78     INT. RESTAURANT MEN'S ROOM     78

Macon stumbles into a stall and stands there, steadying  
himself against the wall. He presses his fingers against  
his temples fiercely.

79     INT. PHONE AREA OUTSIDE MEN'S ROOM     79

Macon cracks open the Men's Room door and looks out. No  
one around. Macon goes to a phone, listens for a tone  
and begins punching numbers.

MACON

(strangled whisper)

Please answer...just this once,  
pick up the phone...

80     INT. KITCHEN, ROSE'S HOUSE - NIGHT     80

CLOSE ON the old black wall phone RINGING. There is  
terrible BARKING, CLAWING and GROWLING going on just  
below frame. The phone rings twice before a man's hand  
shoots in from out of frame, desperately grabs the  
receiver and pulls it off-camera.

81     INT. PANTRY, ROSE'S HOUSE - NIGHT     81

Charles has snatched the phone from the kitchen wall and  
brought it inside here to the safety of the pantry.

(CONTINUED)

81

CONTINUED:

81

He clenches the knob of the door, which is being attacked from outside by Edward. Charles is close to hysterical.

CHARLES

Yes! Leary here!

MACON

Charles?

CHARLES

Macon!

WE BEGIN TO INTERCUT Macon and Charles.

82

INT. PHONE AREA OUTSIDE MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

82

MACON

Charles, I'm up on top of this building and a sort of...silly thing has happened. Listen: you've got to get me out of here.

CHARLES

You out! What are you talking about? You've got to get me out!

MACON

Pardon?

CHARLES

I'm shut in the pantry. Your dog has me cornered.

MACON

Oh. Well, I'm sorry, but... Charles, it's like some kind of illness or attack or something. I don't think I can manage the elevator and --

CHARLES

Macon, do you hear that barking? That's Edward. Edward has me treed, I tell you, and you have to come home this instant.

MACON

But I'm in New York! I'm up on top of this building and I can't get down!

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

Every time I open the door he comes roaring over and I slam the door and he attacks it, he must have clawed halfway through it by now.

Macon makes himself take a deep breath.

MACON

Charles, could I speak to Rose?

CHARLES

She's out. Julian came to take her to dinner and --

MACON

Julian?

CHARLES

Isn't that his name?

MACON

Julian my boss?

CHARLES

Yes, and Edward went into one of his fits. So Rose said "Quick, shut him in the pantry." So I grabbed his leash and he turned on me and nearly took my hand off. So I shut myself in the pantry instead and Rose must have left by then and Porter's out...

Macon places his hand over his heart for a moment; the beating seems wrong.

CHARLES

If you don't get me out of this I'm going to call for the police to come shoot him.

MACON

No! Don't do that!

CHARLES

I can't just sit here waiting for him to break through.

(CONTINUED)



MACON

He won't break through. You could open the door and walk right past him. Believe me, Charles. Please: I'm up on top of this building and --

CHARLES

Maybe you don't know that I'm prone to claustrophobia.

(pause)

Macon, I'm sorry, but you knew that dog would have to be done away with sooner or later.

MACON

Don't do it!

A Man going into the restroom glances in Macon's direction.

MACON

(lowering his voice)

He was Ethan's.

CHARLES

Does that mean he's allowed to tear my throat out?

MACON

Charles...let's think this through. I'm going to get you out of there. So don't do anything hasty. Are you listening, Charles?

Macon hangs up and takes his wallet from his pocket. He sifts despairingly through the numbers in his wallet. Then he sees the name: Muriel Pritchett. The card is handwritten, even hand-cut, crookedly snipped from a larger piece of paper. He punches the numbers.

MURIEL (ON PHONE)

Hel-lo.

MACON

Muriel? It's Macon Leary.

Muriel has a magazine on her lap. She sits on a ratty sofa.

(CONTINUED)

MURIEL

Oh! How are you doing?

WE BEGIN TO INTERCUT Macon and Muriel.

MACON

I'm fine. Or, rather... See, the trouble is, Edward's got my brother cornered in the pantry, overreacting -- Charles I mean -- he always overreacts. And here I am on top of this building in New York and I'm having this kind of, um... disturbance, you know? I was looking down at the city --

MURIEL

Edward's in your pantry -- ?

MACON

Edward's outside the pantry, barking. My brother says he's going to call the police and tell them to come shoot Edward.

MURIEL

Well, what a dumb fool idea.

MACON

Yes! So I thought if you could go over and get the key from the mailbox --

MURIEL

I'll go right away.

MACON

Oh, wonderful.

MURIEL

So good-bye for now, Macon.

MACON

Wait! But also -- See, I'm up on top of this building. Something has scared the hell out of me.

MURIEL

Oh, Lord, I'd be scared too after I went and saw Towering Inferno.

MACON

No, no, it's nothing like that, fire or heights --

(CONTINUED)

MURIEL

Did you see Towering Inferno?  
Boy, after that you couldn't get  
me past jumping level in any  
building. I think people who go  
up in skyscrapers are just plain  
brave. I mean if you think about  
it, Macon, you have to be brave  
to be standing where you are right  
now.

This stops Macon cold for several beats.

MACON

Oh, well, not so brave as all that.

MURIEL

No, I'm serious.

MACON

You're making too much out of it.  
It's nothing, really.

MURIEL

You just say that because you don't  
realize what you went through  
before you stepped into the  
elevator. See, underneath you  
said, "Okay, I'll trust it." Why,  
you ought to be walking around  
that building so amazed and proud  
of yourself!

Macon gives a small, dry laugh and grips the receiver  
more tightly.

MURIEL

Now, here's what I'm going to do.  
I'm going to go get Edward and  
take him to the Meow-Bow. Then  
when you get back from your trip,  
we need to talk about his training.  
I mean, things just can't go on  
this way, Macon.

MACON

No, they can't. You're right.  
They can't.

MURIEL

I mean this is ridiculous.

MACON

You're absolutely right.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED: (3)

83

MURIEL

See you, then. 'Bye.

MACON

Wait -- Muriel!

But she is gone. Macon hangs up. He turns and sees a TEEN COUPLE coming down the corridor from the elevator. The girl's dress is clumsy and touching, her chin hidden by a monstrous orchid. Halfway down the corridor, the couple stops to gaze around at the wondrous surroundings, and at each other.

BOY

Hoo!

He grabs both the girl's hands and kisses them, then leads her past Macon into the restaurant. Macon watches for a moment -- soothed -- and then follows them inside.

84 INT. ENTRANCE HALL/LIVING ROOM, ROSE'S HOUSE - DAY

84

Macon watches Muriel as she stands over Edward, who lays squirming on the hall rug.

MURIEL

I'll be honest, my baby was not exactly planned for. If you want to know the truth, the baby was the reason we got married.

(checks Macon's  
reaction, then  
indicates the dog)

Now I'm going to turn my back, and you watch how he does.

Muriel wanders into the living room. She lifts a vase from a table and examines its underside. She sits on the couch and raises one foot in front of her, turning it admiringly this way and that. Her stocking bags at the ankle; she pulls it up.

MURIEL

Pretty soon he'll lie like that for three hours straight.

MACON

Three hours? Isn't that sort of cruel?

MURIEL

I thought you promised not to talk like that.

(CONTINUED)

MACON

Right. Sorry.

Muriel comes back into the entrance hall and directly up to Macon in a way that makes him back away involuntarily. He just misses stepping on Edward.

MURIEL

My son's name is Alexander. Did I tell you that? Something went wrong while I was carrying him and they had to do a Caesarean and take him out early and I can't ever have any more children. Alexander was so teeny he didn't even look like a human, and he had to stay in an incubator forever, just about, and nearly died. Norman -- that's my ex-husband -- he said, "When's it going to look like other babies?" Norman always called Alexander "it."

Edward WHIMPERS. He is just barely lying down -- his haunches braced, his claws digging into the carpet.

MURIEL

Maybe you and Alexander should get together some time.

MACON

Oh, I, ah....

MURIEL

He doesn't have enough men in his life. Maybe the three of us could go to a movie. Do you ever go to movies?

MACON

I really don't care for movies. They make everything seem so close up.

Macon comes in in his bathrobe with Edward tagging along behind. He turns on the light above the stove and squints at the oven dial.

(CONTINUED)

MACON

One hundred forty degrees...  
Certain death. What is she  
thinking?

Charles walks in, wearing large, floppy pajamas. He too  
peers at the oven dial. He sighs and opens the oven  
door. Both brothers look inside.

WHAT THEY SEE: A huge turkey, cooking at very slow heat,  
looks a little like Macon's leg when it came out of the  
cast.

CHARLES

Two quarts of stuffing. I heard  
her say so. Two quarts of teeming,  
swarming bacteria.

MACON

(serious)

Is this the Thanksgiving we all  
die?

Macon comes in. Rose is cheerily serving Charles  
pancakes.

MACON

Rose, what exactly is it you're  
doing to this turkey?

ROSE

I told you: slow heat. Jam,  
Charles, or syrup? See, I read  
an article about slow-cooked beef  
and I thought, well, if it works  
with beef it must work with turkey,  
too. But at the end I'm going to  
raise the temperature.

CHARLES

You'd have to raise it mighty  
high.

MACON

You'd have to expose it to a  
nuclear flash.

ROSE

Well, you're both just plain wrong.  
Who's the cook here anyhow?

Thanksgiving dinner. The table is laden with attractive side dishes. In addition to the Leary brothers, there are two guests -- Julian and MRS. BARRETT, one of their elderly neighbors. They look expectantly toward the kitchen door.

Rose enters holding the turkey high on a platter as if in triumph. Odd since the bird looks bad, its breast caved in, its skin dry and dull.

MRS. BARRETT

Ah!

JULIAN

I just wish my neighbors could see this.

MACON

There may be a little problem here.

Rose sets the turkey down and glares at him.

MACON

Of course, the rest of the meal is excellent. Why, we could fill up on the vegetables alone! In fact I think I'll do that. But the turkey...

CHARLES

It's pure poison.

JULIAN

Come again?

MACON

We think it may have been cooked at a slightly inadequate temperature.

ROSE

It was not! It's perfectly good.

MACON

Mrs. Barrett, maybe you'd rather just stick to the side dishes.

Mrs. Barrett now looks more closely at the turkey.

MRS. BARRETT

Why, perhaps I will. I don't have much of an appetite anyhow.

(CONTINUED)

ROSE

Oh, Macon, how could you do this?  
My lovely turkey! All that work!

JULIAN

I think it looks delicious.

PORTER

Yes, but you don't know about the  
other times.

JULIAN

Other times?

Rose sits down, tears glazing her eyes.

ROSE

You don't fool me for an instant.  
I know why you're doing this.  
You want to make me look bad in  
front of Julian.

PORTER

Julian?

Julian is distressed. He takes a handkerchief from his  
pocket but then just holds it.

ROSE

You want to drive him off! You  
three wasted your chances and now  
you want me to waste mine, but I  
won't do it. I can see what's  
what! Love is what it's all about.  
And you want to make me miss it!

MACON

Well, goodness.

ROSE

You just don't want me to stop  
cooking for you and taking care  
of this house. You don't want  
Julian to fall in love with me.

MACON

Do what?

Rose scrapes her chair back and runs from the room.  
Julian sits there with his mouth open. Macon looks at  
him.

MACON

Don't you dare laugh.

(CONTINUED)



87 CONTINUED: (2)

87

JULIAN

Do you think I ought to go after her?

MACON

No.

JULIAN

But she seems so --

MACON

She's fine! She's perfectly fine. Now, who wants a baked potato?

There is a MURMUR around the table; everyone looks unhappy.

MRS. BARRETT

That poor, dear girl. I feel just awful.

MACON

Julian? Potato?

JULIAN

I'll take the turkey.

Macon is stopped for a moment. He looks at Julian in a new way. And he likes him.

88 EXT. SIDEWALK, ROSE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

88

Muriel and Macon are walking with Edward, training him not to chase cyclists.

MURIEL

Norman couldn't understand why I was all the time at the hospital visiting Alexander. He was in for months. You should have seen our medical bills. Finally I took a job at the hospital. I got a kind of, like a maid's job, emptying trash cans, wet-mopping floors...

A biker appears at the end of the street, a Girl with a Baskin-Robbins uniform bunching below her jacket. Edward perks his ears up.

(CONTINUED)

MURIEL

Now, act like we expect no trouble.  
Just go along, go along, don't  
even look in Edward's direction.

The Girl skims by them. Edward sniffs the breeze but marches on.

MACON

Edward, that was wonderful!

Muriel just CLUCKS.

MURIEL

They finally did let Alexander come home. Cried like a kitten would cry. And Norman would get this kind of stubborn look whenever I had to do something, go warm a bottle or something. I'd be hanging over the crib watching Alexander fight for air, and Norman would call, "Muriel? Commercial's just about over!"

Macon watches her.

MURIEL

And then one day Norman's mother came over to help him pack his clothes and he left me.

She slows and then comes to a stop. Edward, with a martyred sigh, sits down at her heel.

MURIEL

All that time Alexander was in the hospital seemed so awful, but now when I look back, I almost miss it. I mean there was something cozy about it. I think about those nurses gossiping at the nurses' station and those rows of little babies sleeping. It was winter and sometimes I'd stand at a window and look out and I'd feel happy to be warm and safe. I'd look down at the emergency room entrance and watch the ambulances coming in. You ever wonder what a Martian might think if he happened to land near an emergency room?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

## MURIEL (CONT'D)

He'd see an ambulance whizzing in and everybody running out to meet it, tearing the doors open, grabbing up the stretcher, scurrying along with it. "Why," he'd say, "what a helpful planet, what kind and helpful creatures." He'd never guess we're not always that way, that we had to, oh, put aside our natural selves to do it. "What a helpful race of beings," a Martian would say. Don't you think so?

She looks up at Macon. Macon experiences a sudden twist in his chest. He bends and kisses her, surprising them both. Her fist with the leash in it is caught between them like a stone. Macon draws back.

## MACON

Well...

She goes on looking at him.

## MACON

Sorry.

They turn and walk back toward Rose's in silence.

Rose is knitting Julian a sweater. Macon, a book in his lap, watches her needles flashing.

## MACON

Actually, have you ever noticed that Julian wears crew necks?

## ROSE

That doesn't mean he wouldn't wear a V-neck if he had one.

## MACON

You know, he's younger. I don't know if you realize that.

## ROSE

Two years.

## MACON

But he's got a younger, I don't know, style of living. Singles apartments and so on.

(CONTINUED)

89

CONTINUED:

89

ROSE

He's tired of all that. Don't try to spoil this, Macon.

MACON

Sweetheart, I only want to protect you. It's wrong, you know, what you said at Thanksgiving. Love is not what it's all about. There are all kinds of other issues.

ROSE

He ate my turkey and did not get sick. Two big helpings.

Macon looks pained. He has no answer to that.

90

INT. MURIEL'S CAR - DAY

90

Muriel is driving her long gray boat of a car. Macon sits beside her. Edward is in back, his ears horizontal with joy as he sticks his head out the window.

MURIEL

I got this car for only two hundred dollars. That's because it needed work. But I took it to Dominick, this boy down the street from where I live. I said, "Dominick, here's the deal. You fix my car up, I let you have the use of it three nights a week and all day Sunday." Wasn't that a good idea?

\*  
\*

MACON

Very inventive.

91

INT./EXT. GROCERY STORE - SIDEWALK - DAY

91

Macon approaches the big window in front as though sneaking up on someone. He stops and looks.

MACON'S POV. Edward is sitting obediently out on the sidewalk. Now Macon's gaze shifts down the sidewalk two car lengths. Muriel is leaning against the fender of her car making faces into a brown plastic compact. She barely glances in Edward's direction.

CLOSE ON Macon as he stares at Muriel.

92 EXT. GROCERY STORE - SIDEWALK - DAY

92

Macon comes out of the grocery store and goes over to pat and CLUCK over Edward.

MURIEL

Give him lots of praise!

Muriel leads them next door to a drugstore and motions for Edward to "stay."

MURIEL

This time we'll both go in.

MACON

Is it safe?

MURIEL

We'll have to try it sooner or later.

93 INT. DRUGSTORE - DAY

93

Macon and Muriel stroll back to the cosmetics counter. Macon keeps looking toward the front. Muriel stops to try on a lipstick.

MURIEL

Too pink. What are you doing for dinner tomorrow night?

MACON

For dinner?

MURIEL

Come and eat at my house. Come on. We'll have fun.

MACON

Um...

MURIEL

Just for dinner, you and me and Alexander. Say six o'clock. Number Sixteen Singleton Street. Know where that is?

MACON

Oh, well, I don't believe I'm free then.

Muriel looks at him a moment, smoothing lipstick with her lips.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

MURIEL

Think it over a while.

94 INT. DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

94

The RECEPTIONIST is a gray-haired woman. Muriel sits reading a magazine. Macon raises one of the slats of the venetian blinds to check on Edward sitting on the sidewalk outside.

MACON

How old did you say Alexander was?

MURIEL

He's seven. Have you thought?

MACON

Hmm?

MURIEL

Have you given any thought to coming to dinner?

MACON

Oh. Well, I could come. If it's only for dinner.

MURIEL

What else would it be for?

She smiles up at him and tosses her hair back.

RECEPTIONIST

Here he is.

ALEXANDER comes out. He is a small, white, sickly boy with a shaved-looking skull. His eyes are magnified behind large spectacles whose clear frames have a pinkish cast. He wears a carefully coordinated shirt-and-slacks set such as only a mother would choose.

MURIEL

Sweetie, this is Macon. Can you say hi?

Macon holds out his hand. After a moment, Alexander shakes it weakly.

MACON

You're pretty young to be at the doctor's without your mother.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

MURIEL

He's used to it because he's had to go so often. He's got these allergies.

MACON

I see.

Muriel takes care of the bill at the counter, with cash.

MURIEL

He's allergic to shellfish, milk, eggs, and most vegetables. Also, dust, pollen and paint, and we think maybe he's allergic to air. Whenever he's outside a long time he gets these bumps on any uncovered parts of his body.

95 INT. MURIEL'S CAR - DAY

95

Alexander rides next to Muriel. Macon sits in back with Edward.

MURIEL

Alexander is subject to asthma, exzema, and nosebleeds. If a bee ever stings him and he hasn't had his shots he could be dead in half an hour.

Alexander turns his head slowly and gazes at Macon.

96 INT. DINING ROOM, ROSE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

96

Macon sits alone with a box of good stationery and pen in hand. He has rejected several attempts. Now he tries again --

MACON'S V.O.

Dear Muriel --

He lifts the pen. Finally, he begins to write again.

MACON'S V.O.

I am very sorry, but I won't be able to have dinner with you after all.

Again he lifts the pen, anguished. After a long moment, he seems inspired and writes --

(CONTINUED)

96

CONTINUED:

96

MACON'S V.O.

Something has come up.

His face falls -- that's not as inspired as he thought it was. Still, he presses on --

MACON'S V.O.

Regretfully, Macon.

He lays down the pen.

97

EXT. MURIEL'S NEIGHBORHOOD (SERIES OF SHOTS) - NIGHT

97

Macon is driving through the labyrinth of littered, cracked, dark streets in the south of the city. He turns onto Singleton Street and finds a block of row houses. The bricks of Number 16 have been painted a rubbery maroon. An orange bugproof bulb glows dimly above the front stoop.

98

INT./EXT. MURIEL'S PORCH - DOORWAY - NIGHT

98

Macon gets out of the car and climbs the steps. He opens the screen door. It CLATTERS in a cheap way and the hinges SHRIEK. Macon winces. He takes the letter from his pocket and bends down.

MURIEL O.S.

(from inside house)

I've got a double-barreled shotgun  
and I'm aiming it exactly where  
your head is.

Macon straightens sharply. Her voice sounds level and dangerous.

MACON

It's Macon.

MURIEL O.S.

Macon?

The latch clicks and the inner door opens several inches. Macon can see a sliver of Muriel in a dark-colored robe.

MURIEL

Macon! What are you doing here?

Macon looks defeated. He gives her the letter. She takes it and opens it, using both hands. No shotgun. She reads it and looks up at him.

(CONTINUED)



MACON

Last year, I lost... I experienced  
a...loss, yes, I lost my...

Muriel looks patiently into his face.

MACON

I lost my son. He was just...he  
went to a hamburger joint and  
then...someone came, a holdup  
man, and shot him. I can't go to  
dinner with people! I can't talk  
to their little boys! You have  
to stop asking me. I don't mean  
to hurt your feelings but I'm  
just not up to this, do you hear?

Muriel's head moves, just barely, almost a nod.

Muriel takes one of his wrists very gently and draws him  
into the house. She puts her arms around him and hugs  
him. His head is next to hers, above her shoulder so  
that he is not looking into her face.

MACON

Every day I tell myself it's time  
to be getting over this. I know  
that people expect it of me. But  
if anything, I'm getting worse.  
The first year was like a bad dream  
-- I was clear to his bedroom door  
in the morning before I remembered  
he wasn't there to be wakened.  
But this second year is real. I've  
stopped going to his door. I've  
sometimes let a whole day pass by  
without thinking about him. I  
believe that Sarah thinks I could  
have prevented what happened,  
somehow -- she's so used to my  
arranging her life. Now I'm far  
from everyone. I don't have any  
friends anymore and everyone looks  
trivial and foolish and not  
related to me.

Macon seems depleted. It has taken all his energy to  
say this.

100 INT. STAIRWAY/HALL - NIGHT 100

After a moment of silence, Muriel draws Macon across the living room, up the stairway and across the hall into a bedroom.

101 INT. MURIEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 101

The small bedroom has an iron bedstead and a varnished orange bureau.

MACON

No, wait. This is not what I want.

MURIEL

Just sleep. Lie down and sleep.

We begin a SERIES OF SHOTS which DISSOLVE gently into each other with a wooziness that matches Macon's exhaustion: Muriel removes his duffel coat and hangs it on a hook in a closet curtained with a length of flowered sheeting. She kneels and unties his shoes. He steps out of them obediently. She unbuttons his shirt as he stands with his hands at his sides. She hangs his trousers over a chair back. He drops onto the bed in his underwear and she covers him with a thin, withered quilt.

CLOSE ON Macon as he lies in bed and HEARS: Muriel moving about the small house, shutting off lights, running water, murmuring something in the bedroom across the hall. When he hears her come back into the room and close the door, he is just able to look at her over the quilt:

Muriel stands in front of the bureau with its old mirror. She CLINKS her earrings into a dish. Her robe is old, shattered silk, the color of sherry. She switches off the lamp. Then she comes over to the bed, lifts the quilt and slides under it.

MACON

I just want to sleep.

He puts his arm around her and feels the warmth of her body beneath the cool silk.

MACON

Will you take this off?

MURIEL

(shaking her head)  
I'm bashful.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

101

But immediately afterward, as if to deny that, she puts her mouth on his mouth and winds herself around him.

DISSOLVE TO:

102 INT. MURIEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

102

MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. Macon awakes to the sound of Alexander briefly COUGHING in the other room. Then it is quiet again. Macon turns and finds Muriel. She sighs in her sleep and lifts his hand and places it upon her stomach. The robe has fallen open; he feels smooth skin, and then a corrugated ridge of flesh jutting across her abdomen. The Caesarean. Macon's face is peaceful.

103 INT. JULIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

103

Macon, again seated in front of Julian's desk, watches as Julian distractedly puts aside a sheaf of fresh manuscript.

JULIAN

Good...excellent. Like to show you something, Macon.

He hands Macon a tiny blue velvet box.

JULIAN

Your sister's Christmas present.

Macon raises the lid. Inside is a diamond ring.

MACON

What is it?

JULIAN

What is it? It's an engagement ring, Macon.

MACON

Engagement?

JULIAN

I want to marry her.

MACON

You want to marry Rose?

(CONTINUED)

JULIAN

I'm going to ask her at Christmas, when I give her the ring. I want to do this properly. Old-fashioned. Do you think she'll have me?

MACON

Well, I really couldn't say.

JULIAN

She's got to. I am thirty-six years old, Macon, but I tell you, I feel like a schoolboy about that woman. You may laugh at this, but I love the surprise of her. And I'm surprised by myself when I'm with her. I'm not exactly the person I thought I was!

Macon looks up sharply at Julian. Some vividly responsive chord has been struck.

JULIAN

I'm afraid I'm gushing. Want to know something? I've never even slept with her.

MACON

Well, I don't care to hear about that.

JULIAN

I want us to have a real wedding night. I want to do everything right. God, Macon, isn't it amazing how two separate lives can link up together? I mean two differentnesses?

This thought, so nakedly expressed, seems to jolt Macon. He becomes even more disconcerted.

JULIAN

What do you think of the ring?

MACON

What?

JULIAN

The ring.

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED: (2)

103

MACON

(looking down at  
ring)

It's okay.

(a beat, looks up)

It's very nice, Julian.

He closes the box gently and hands it back.

104 EXT. MURIEL'S HOUSE - DUSK

104

Macon gets out of his car with a pizza box in hand. Muriel's block has a vigorous street life, lots of people hanging out, listening to music, talking. Macon, getting a little familiar with the area now, nods at a couple of the regulars: DEBBIE and DORRIE, the next-door neighbor's twin daughters, who are perched on their front stoop -- flashy sixteen-year-olds in jeans as tight as sausage casings.

TWINS

Hey there, Macon.

MACON

How are you, girls.

TWINS

You going to see Muriel?

MACON

I thought I might.

He climbs Muriel's steps and knocks on the door. Debbie and Dorrie continue to watch him. He flashes them a broad smile. Alexander opens the door.

MACON

Pizza man! Extra-large  
combination, no anchovies.

ALEXANDER

I'm allergic to pizza.

MACON

What part of it?

ALEXANDER

Huh?

105 INT. LIVING ROOM, MURIEL'S HOUSE

105

Macon comes inside.

(CONTINUED)

105

CONTINUED:

105

MACON

What part are you allergic to?  
The pepperoni? Sausage?  
Mushrooms? We could take those  
off.

ALEXANDER

All of it.

MACON

You can't be allergic to all of  
it.

ALEXANDER

Well, I am.

106

INT. KITCHEN, MURIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

106

Macon comes into the kitchen. Muriel stands with her  
back to him talking on the phone with her mother.

MURIEL

(into phone)

You didn't even ask what happened  
with his eye doctor, and here I  
was so worried about it. I swear  
sometimes you'd think Alexander  
wasn't your grandson!

Macon presents himself in front of her, holding out the  
pizza, with a good bit more snap and exuberance than  
we've seen in him before.

MACON

Ta-da!

MURIEL

Ma. I'm going now! Macon's  
here!

Maybe this explains Macon's new dash: no one could want  
a more enthusiastic welcome.

INT. MURIEL'S HOUSE (MACON-SETTLES-IN MONTAGE) -  
DAY/NIGHT

IN A SERIES OF SHOTS:

107

Macon sets up his typewriter and work materials on the  
kitchen table. He is alone here.

107

108

Macon eats breakfast with Muriel and Alexander. Muriel  
turns from the toaster to quickly drop Alexander's meal  
on his plate -- two hot frosted Pop-Tarts.

108

\*  
\*  
\*

- 109 Macon waits on the staircase to the second floor as Muriel checks a sleeping Alexander in his bed. She comes to the door and motions for Macon to come take a look. He stands with her a moment looking at her son, then they move off toward her room. 109
- 110 Macon vacuuming the living room rug. He turns off the vacuum and as the ROAR dies he hears SINGING from the kitchen. He moves to where he can see the kitchen sink. Muriel, wearing enormous rubber gloves, is belting out a country tune as she washes the dishes. Macon watches, smiles. 110 \*
- 111 Macon serves breakfast to Muriel and Alexander. The carefully arranged plates contain eggs, bacon, toast and sliced oranges. Alexander is wide-eyed. 111
- 112 At the front door, Macon, Alexander, and Muriel -- looking skeptical -- stare at something outside. Macon holds open the screen door and Edward comes running into the house. Alexander drops down ecstatically to pet the dog. 112

ALEXANDER

(to Muriel)

I can take it! It's cats I'm allergic to, not dogs.

- 113 In the living room, at night, Alexander watches TV and Edward snoozes on the couch beside him. Alexander hugs him and buries his face in Edward's ruff. 113

- 114 INT. KITCHEN, MURIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT 114

Macon is crouched beneath the sink, turning off a valve. He is trying to teach Alexander how to fix a faucet. Alexander sits C-shaped in his chair, chin on one hand, eyes expressionless. Muriel watches uncertainly.

MACON

Now, you see I shut the valve off.  
What did I do that for?

Macon stands and starts unscrewing the faucet.

MURIEL

I'm not so sure about this. He's not very strong.

MACON

Why did I shut off the valve, Alexander?

ALEXANDER

Why.

(CONTINUED)

114

CONTINUED: (A1)

114

MACON  
You tell me.

ALEXANDER  
You tell me.

(CONTINUED)



MACON

No, you.

ALEXANDER

So the water won't whoosh all over.

MACON

Right. Now, first you unscrew the top screw. Let's see you do it.

ALEXANDER

Me?

Macon nods and offers him the screwdriver.

ALEXANDER

I don't want to.

MURIEL

Let him just watch.

MACON

If he just watches he won't know how to fix the one in the bathtub, and I'm going to ask him to manage that without me.

Alexander takes the screwdriver. He concentrates, his glasses slipping down on his nose. He is biting his tongue now and PANTING slightly. He gets a screw turning.

MACON

Wonderful.

Muriel's silence is strained and anxious. The screw has loosened enough so that Alexander can twist it by hand. He even removes the faucet without being told.

MACON

Ah! I believe you may have natural talents.

Muriel relaxes.

MACON

Look at this. See that gunk? That's old, rotted packing. So take it away. Right. Now, here's the new packing...

\*

(CONTINUED)

114

CONTINUED: (2)

114

As Alexander starts to pick at the faucet packing with his fingers, Macon's voice, still instructing, begins to FADE and we DISSOLVE TO:

LATER. Alexander is tightening the screw on the newly packed faucet.

ALEXANDER  
(one last turn)  
Now what?

MACON  
Is the screw tight?

ALEXANDER  
(checks, nods)  
Now what.

MACON  
Now we turn the water back on and see what kind of job you've done.

Macon crouches beneath the sink and shows him where the valve is. Alexander reaches past him and twists it, GRUNTING. Then he rises and turns on the faucet.

MACON  
Look at that! You've solved the problem.

Alexander fights to hold a grin back.

MACON  
Now when you're grown, you can fix the faucets for your wife. "Step back, dearie," you can say. "Just let me see to this."

ALEXANDER  
Tssh!

MACON  
"Let a real man take care of this."

ALEXANDER  
Tssh! Tssh!

CUT TO:

114A INT. MOVIE THEATRE

114A \*

Macon, Muriel, and Alexander are seeing a movie. They are sitting up close. Macon is in the middle. Muriel reaches across him to take popcorn from Alexander's bucket. As she comes back across, Macon folds her more tightly under his arm and they kiss.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

115

EXT. MACON'S HOUSE - DOORSTEP - DAY

115

Porter and Macon stamp their snowy shoes on the doorstep  
and then come inside.

116 INT. LIVING ROOM, MACON'S HOUSE - DAY

116

The living room is filled with a cool, steady, DRIPPING sound. Behind them, through the front door, we see the aftermath of a snowstorm.

PORTER

Oh, my God.

\*

All over the room it is raining. A pipe has broken up-stairs. Chunks of plaster have fallen on the furniture, turning it white and splotchy. The rug, when Macon steps on it, SQUELCHES beneath his feet.

PORTER

Oh, this is terrible, just terrible. Terrible. Terrible.

\*

MACON

(going up the stairs)

Just let me find my boots and we can leave.

PORTER

Leave?

\*

Porter goes into the living room and begins wringing out cushions. Macon comes back downstairs with his boots in hand.

\*

MACON

Never mind those. They'll just get wet again.

PORTER

Will your insurance cover this?

\*

MACON

I suppose so.

PORTER

I must say you're remarkably calm.

\*

MACON

Nobody lives here anyhow. Come along, Porter.

\*

117 INT. PORTER'S CAR - DAY

117

They drive through deserted, snowbound streets.

PORTER

I think it's time we had a talk.

\*

(CONTINUED)

117

CONTINUED:

117

MACON

About what?

PORTER

I'd like to know what you think you're up to with this Muriel person.

MACON

Is that what you call her? "This Muriel person"?

PORTER

She reminds me of -- I'm not sure why -- she reminds me of Alicia.

Macon looks sharply at Porter.

MACON

What?

PORTER

When I see Muriel it makes me think of our mother. I don't know what it is. The messiness of it all...

MACON

(angry)

You don't even know Muriel.

(pointing)

You should have turned there, Porter. Make a right up here.

PORTER

You're not yourself these days, and this Muriel person's just a symptom. Everybody says so.

MACON

Who is "everybody," anyway?

PORTER

We're just worried for you, Macon.

MACON

Could we switch to some other topic.

PORTER

I had to tell you what I thought.

MACON

Well, fine. You've told me.

(CONTINUED)

117

CONTINUED: (2)

117

They drive in silence for a few moments.

PORTER

Can you tell me one unique thing about her? I mean one really special quality, Macon, not something sloppy like "She appreciates me".

MACON

(looking out at the snow)

She looks out hospital windows and imagines how the Martians would see us.

PORTER

What?

MACON

(turning to Porter)

I'm not such a bargain myself, in case you haven't noticed. Somebody ought to warn her away from me, when you get right down to it.

PORTER

That's not true. That's not true at all. As a matter of fact, I imagine her people are congratulating her on her catch.

MACON

Her catch!

PORTER

Someone to support her. She'd be lucky to find anyone. She lives in that slummy house, she's got that little boy who appears to have hookworm or something --

MACON

Porter, just shut the hell up.

118

INT./EXT. PORTER'S CAR - MIDDLE OF STREET - DAY

118

Porter takes a wrong turn, realizes it and stops the car in the middle of the street. He looks around the streets, confused.

(CONTINUED)

118

CONTINUED: (A1)

118

PORTER

Let's see now, where do I...

Macon watches him, silent.

PORTER

Am I heading in the right  
direction? Or not. Somehow I  
don't seem to...

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

MACON

Lots of luck.

Macon opens the door and hops out.

PORTER

Macon?

Macon waves and ducks down an alley.

119 EXT. MURIEL'S HOUSE - DAY

119

No snow now. Macon parks in front of Muriel's house and takes his overnight bag from his car. DOMINICK SADDLER, a handsome, muscular, nineteen-year-old greaser, is working under the hood of Muriel's car. On either side of him stand the twins, Dorrie and Debbie, talking away a mile a minute.

TWINS

So she says to us we're grounded. We march upstairs and slam our bedroom door, like, just a little slam to let her know what we think of her -- and up she comes with a screwdriver and takes our door off its hinges!

Macon peers down into the engine.

MACON

Hi, girls. Car acting up again, Dominick?

TWINS

Hey there, Macon.

Dominick wipes his forehead with the back of his hand.

DOMINICK

Damn thing keeps stalling out.

MACON

How'd Muriel get to work?

DOMINICK

Had to take the bus.

120 EXT. SIDEWALK, MURIEL'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

120

Macon, dressed as he was on his arrival home, is walking Edward, who now stops at a tree.

(CONTINUED)



They move on, rounding a corner. Macon looks up ahead with interest.

WHAT HE SEES. Alexander is running along the sidewalk up ahead in pursuit of a small covey of CHILDREN who, like him, are on their way home from school. Alexander is moving as fast as his clumsy backpack will allow.

ALEXANDER

(calling to the others)

Hey, wait for me!

The Children turn and call back at him, in a high, mocking CHANT --

CHILDREN

Nyah-Nyah-Nyah-NYAH-Nyah-!

Despite this, Alexander picks up his pace, stumbling over his shoes. At this moment, three more OLDER CHILDREN come onto the sidewalk between Macon and Alexander. They begin JEERING at Alexander, too. He wheels and looks at them forlornly. He looks very small.

Macon drops Edward's leash. The dog's ears have perked at the sound of Alexander's voice.

MACON

(to Edward)

Go!

Edward takes off toward Alexander. The three Older Children scatter as he flies through them, BARKING. He draws up short in front of Alexander. Alexander kneels to hug his neck. Macon walks up as the other Children disappear.

MACON

Are you all right?

Alexander nods and gets to his feet.

MACON

What was that all about?

ALEXANDER

Nothing.

As they start walking again, we are CLOSE ON Macon's hand as Alexander slips his own little hand into Macon's.

(CONTINUED)

120 CONTINUED: (2)

120

MACON'S V.O.

(guidebook tone)

Even the most disciplined professional traveler may sometimes stumble across that unexpected item he feels he simply must take home. That's fine as long as one is willing to accept the inconvenience and awkwardness that comes with each additional piece of baggage.

121 INT. WESTERN WEAR STORE - DAY

121

Macon steers Alexander around the boys' department in the old store, which has wooden floorboards and is jammed with merchandise. Alexander holds an armload of jeans.

ALEXANDER

What I'd really like is T-shirts.

MACON

T-shirts. Ah.

ALEXANDER

The kind with a sort of stretched-out neck.

They have come to a table of T-shirts. Macon picks out a couple for Alexander, who nods as Macon piles them on his stack.

ALEXANDER

I don't want to look now.

MACON

Tell you what. Everything we buy, we'll wash about twenty times before you wear it.

ALEXANDER

But nothing prewashed.

MACON

No, no.

ALEXANDER

Only nerds wear prewashed.

MACON

Right.

Alexander starts off to try everything on.

(CONTINUED)

MACON

Shall I come with you?

ALEXANDER

I can do it myself.

MACON

All right.

Alexander disappears into one of the changing stalls. In the space below the door, Macon watches Alexander's feet.

LAURA CANFIELD O.S.

Macon?

He turns and finds LAURA CANFIELD, a thirtyish mother.

MACON

Yes.

LAURA CANFIELD

Laura Canfield. Scott's mother, remember?

MACON

Of course.

Macon now sees SCOTT, who had been in Ethan's class at school -- an unexpectedly tall, gawky boy lurking at his mother's elbow with an armload of athletic socks.

MACON

Why, Scott. Nice to see you.

SCOTT

(uncomfortable)

Hi...Yeah, me too.

LAURA CANFIELD

It's nice to see you. Are you doing your spring shopping?

MACON

Oh, well, ah --

He looks toward the stall. Alexander's new jeans are puddled around his ankles.

MACON

I'm helping the son of a friend.

LAURA CANFIELD

We've just been buying out the sock department.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED: (2)

121

LAURA CANFIELD (CONT'D)

Seems every other week I find Scott's run through his socks again. You know how they are at this age --

She stops herself. She looks horrified.

LAURA CANFIELD

Or rather...

MACON

Yes, certainly! Amazing, isn't it?

Alexander steps forth. He wears an oversized T-shirt and baggy jeans. His hair has grown a bit lately, and he just looks a lot better than when seen at the doctor's office.

ALEXANDER

I look great!

122 INT. MACON'S CAR - DAY

122

Macon, Muriel and Alexander are on their way to Rose and Julian's wedding. Muriel seems to be the most anxious.

MURIEL

(to Alexander)

It's Macon's sister Rose that's getting married. You understand that?

Alexander nods. He is wearing a new pair of jeans and some shiny cowboy boots. Macon glances over at Muriel: she looks pretty. They ride in silence for several long moments. Finally, Muriel turns to face Alexander in the back seat.

MURIEL

Now don't be nervous, honey.

He looks at her; it hadn't occurred to him.

123 INT./EXT. PORCH/FRONT DOOR, ROSE'S HOUSE - DAY

123

Macon, Muriel and Alexander have just reached the front door when it is opened by an extravagant lady in her sixties with tomato red hair -- Macon's mother, ALICIA. It takes Macon a second to place her. She wears a white caftan trimmed with vibrant bands of satin, and when she reaches up to hug him a whole culvert of metal bangles clatter and slide down her left arm.

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

123

ALICIA

Macon dear! And who may this be?

MACON

Oh, um, I'd like you to meet Muriel Pritchett. And Alexander, her son.

ALICIA

Really?

MACON

This is my...um...mother...Alicia  
-- um --

ALICIA

-- Bondero.

MACON

(doesn't sound  
familiar)

...Bondero.

ALICIA

Come now, Macon. I don't change husbands that often.

MURIEL

Pleased to meet you.

124 INT. ROSE'S HOUSE - DAY

124

Alicia leads them toward the back of the house, linking her arm through Muriel's.

ALICIA

Muriel, have you known Macon long?

MURIEL

Oh, kind of.

ALICIA

He's very stuffy. All my children are. They get it from the Leary side. Their grandparents raised them, practically, and turned them all into little Learys.

MURIEL

I think he's nice.

(CONTINUED)

124 CONTINUED:

124

ALICIA

Oh, nice, yes. All very well and good.

Muriel slips free of Alicia's arm and turns back.

MURIEL

Alexander? Coming?

125 EXT. BACKYARD, ROSE'S HOUSE - DAY

125

The backyard is full of pastels -- Rose's elderly Neighbor Ladies in pale dresses, daffodils set everywhere in buckets. Julian, in black, comes up and puts a gold ring in Macon's palm.

JULIAN

I guess you'll know what to do with this.

ALICIA

I can't believe I'm finally getting a son-in-law. All I've ever had is daughter-in-laws.

MACON

(automatically)  
Daughters.

ALICIA

No, daughter-in-laws.

MACON

Daughters-in-law, Mother.

ALICIA

And didn't manage to keep them long, either.

Julian gives the two of them a bemused look and moves off.

Macon turns and is startled by the sudden nearness of Sarah. It takes him a while into the conversation to recover -- she just looks so beautiful to him. In fact, he doesn't really recover.

SARAH

It turned out to be a beautiful day.

(CONTINUED)

MACON

Yes! Yes...I worried when it rained last night.

SARAH

How have you been, Macon?

MACON

I've been all right.

SARAH

Are you pleased about the wedding?

MACON

Well...I am if Rose is, I guess. Though I can't help feeling... well, Julian. You know.

SARAH

Yes, I know. But there's more to him than you think. He might be a very good choice.

MACON

How have you been?

SARAH

I've been fine.

MACON

Well. Good.

SARAH

I know that you're living with someone.

MACON

Ah! Yes, actually I...yes. I am.

Sarah looks past him at Muriel and Alexander across the lawn talking to Julian.

SARAH

Rose told me when she invited me.

MACON

How about you?

SARAH

Me?

(CONTINUED)

125

CONTINUED: (2)

125

MACON

Are you living with anyone?

SARAH

Not really.

Rose, in a white dress, comes over and touches their arms.

ROSE

We're ready now. Sarah's my matron of honor, did I happen to mention that?

MACON

No, you didn't.

Sarah looks intently at Macon then follows Rose to a spot beneath a tulip tree, where Julian and the minister are waiting. Macon watches Sarah walk, then turns and sees Muriel and Alexander approaching. Muriel has been watching him.

\*  
\*

Macon smiles at Alexander and begins to move with the assembled crowd toward the tree, and the CAMERA IS MOVING too. Everything seems to be moving just A LITTLE SLOWER THAN NORMAL.

As the crowd STOPS, forming a circle around the wedding couple, and Muriel and Alexander STOP, Macon and the CAMERA KEEP MOVING into the heart of the ritual, leaving Muriel behind. He doesn't look back as he moves to stand beside the minister.

Instead, Macon looks only at Sarah, standing across from him, next to Rose. And Sarah looks back gravely into his face.

126

INT. MURIEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

126

Macon and Muriel are lying in bed.

MURIEL

I never told you this, but a while before I met you I was dating somebody else.

MACON

Who was that?

(CONTINUED)



MURIEL

He was a customer at the Rapid-Eze Copy Center where I worked. He brought me his divorce papers to copy and we started having this conversation and ended up going out together. His divorce was awful. He said he didn't think he could ever trust a woman again. He didn't like going to sleep when a woman was in the same room. But bit by bit I changed all that. He relaxed. We started talking about getting married. Then he met an airline stewardess and eloped with her within the week.

MACON

I see.

MURIEL

It was like I had, you know, cured him, just so he could elope with another woman.

There is a moment of silence. Macon shifts, putting his arm around Muriel.

MURIEL

You wouldn't do anything like that, would you, Macon?

MACON

Who me?

MURIEL

Would you elope with someone else? Would you see someone else behind my back?

MACON

Of course not.

MURIEL

Would you leave me and go home to your wife?

MACON

What are you talking about?

MURIEL

Would you?

She cocks her head and considers him. Her eyes are alert and bright and knowing, like the eyes of some small animal.

127 INT. LIVING ROOM, MURIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

127

Dominick Saddler is sitting on the couch with Alexander. The muscular teen dwarfs the little boy, who listens in fascination.

DOMINICK

Now this here is your paste wax.  
 (holding up a can)  
 You never want to polish a car  
 with anything but paste wax. And  
 here we have a diaper.

Macon comes downstairs and collects his jacket from a closet. He and Muriel are going out and Dominick is babysitting. Macon listens too.

DOMINICK

Diapers make real good rags because  
 they don't shed hardly no lint. I  
 generally buy a dozen at a time  
 from Sears and Roebuck. And chamois  
 skins -- well, you know chamois  
 skins.

Muriel comes downstairs in a flurry, collecting her purse and jacket and keys. She glances at the pair on the sofa, but what finally captures her attention is the look on Macon's face as he watches the other two finish the story --

DOMINICK

So what you do is, you get yourself  
 these here supplies and a case of  
 good beer and a girl, and you  
 head on out to Loch Raven. Then  
 you park in the sun and you take  
 off your shirt and you and the girl  
 start to polishing. Ain't no  
 sweeter way that I know of to use  
 up a spring afternoon.

Macon, smiling, turns to find Muriel watching him, with an intensity that makes him flinch.

128 INT. LIVING ROOM, MURIEL'S HOUSE - DAY

128

Muriel is reading People magazine. Macon comes downstairs and sits opposite her.

MACON

I don't think Alexander's getting  
 a proper education.

(CONTINUED)

MURIEL

(continues to turn  
pages)

Oh, he's okay.

MACON

I asked him to figure what change they'd give back when we bought the milk today, and he didn't have the faintest idea. He didn't even know he'd have to subtract.

MURIEL

Well, he's only in second grade.

MACON

I think he ought to switch to a private school.

MURIEL

Private schools cost money.

MACON

So? I'll pay.

Muriel looks at him.

MURIEL

What are you saying?

MACON

Pardon?

MURIEL

What are you saying, Macon? Are you saying you're committed?

MACON

That's not really the point...

MURIEL

Alexander's got ten more years of school ahead of him. Are you saying you'll be around for all ten years? I can't just put him in a school and take him out again with every passing whim of yours.

Macon is silent.

(CONTINUED)

MURIEL

Just tell me this much. Do you picture us getting married sometime? I mean when your divorce comes through?

MACON

Muriel...marriage is...I don't know...

MURIEL

You don't, do you? You don't know what you want. One minute you like me and the next you don't. One minute you're ashamed to be seen with me and the next you think I'm the best thing that ever happened to you.

He stares at her. He hadn't guessed that she read him so clearly.

MURIEL

You think you can just drift along like this, day by day, no plans. Maybe tomorrow you'll be here, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll just go on back to Sarah.

He looks up at her sharply.

MURIEL

Oh yes! I saw you at Rose's wedding. Don't think I didn't see how you and Sarah looked at each other.

MACON

All I'm saying is --

MURIEL

(even more intense)  
All I'm saying is take care what you promise my son. Don't go making him promises you don't intend to keep.

MACON

But I just want him to learn to subtract!

LATER the same day.

(CONTINUED)

129

CONTINUED:

129

Macon, Muriel and Alexander are finishing a silent dinner. Alexander, miserable, can't get away fast enough; he wolfs down the last of his BLT and hurries away. Muriel gets up and sullenly begins filling the sink with soapy water. Macon regards her back for a while, then moves toward her.

MACON

Shall I dry?

Muriel turns toward him.

MURIEL

Just tell me this, Macon, and be honest -- why can't we get married in the fall? \*

MACON

What?

MURIEL

You'll be separated a year then, Macon. \*

MACON

Muriel, please, I'm not ready for this! I don't think I ever will be.

She reacts to this last. He sees it and tries to cover.

MACON

I don't think marriage ought to be as common as it is. I really believe it ought to be the exception to the rule. Oh, perfect couples could marry, maybe...but who's a perfect couple?

MURIEL

You and Sarah, I suppose.

MACON

(weakly)

No, no...

MURIEL

(suddenly shouting)

You're so selfish! You're so self-centered! You've got all these fancy reasons for never doing a single thing I want!

(CONTINUED)

129 CONTINUED: (2) 129

Without warning, Muriel flings a wet sponge in his face.

MURIEL

Just get out!

130 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 130

Macon comes into the living room where Alexander, having heard everything, is watching TV with Edward. Alexander moves over on the couch to give him space. Alexander tenses at each CLATTER in the kitchen. After a while the CLATTERS die down. Macon and Alexander look at each other.

131 INT. MURIEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 131

Macon lies awake in bed next to Muriel, who now wakes from fitful sleep. Half-asleep, she looks at Macon. She snuggles next to him and he enfolds her.

MURIEL

I have to be able to tell you  
what I want, Macon. I have to.

MACON

You can.

MURIEL

--But without being afraid you'll  
go away. I can't be afraid all  
the time.

MACON

It's all right. I'm not going  
away.

MURIEL

You are. You're all packed.

MACON

I'm going to Canada tomorrow,  
remember? It's just my work.

MURIEL

(drifting)

Don't leave me, Macon.

MACON

(soothing)

Go to sleep, Muriel. Sleep.

132 INT. HOTEL ROOM, WINNIPEG - NIGHT

132 \*

Macon is sitting in a hotel room in Winnipeg, Manitoba reading the book of local attractions found in all hotel rooms. Macon is actually making notes. The phone RINGS.

MACON

Yes?

SARAH (ON PHONE)

Macon.

MACON

Sarah?

SARAH (ON PHONE)

Have I caught you at a bad time?

MACON

No... is anything wrong?

133 INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - DAY

133

Sarah sits on her bed hugging her knees and the telephone. We begin to INTERCUT her and Macon.

SARAH

No. It's just...it's...well, my lease runs out at the end of the month and I can't find a new apartment.

MACON

Yes.

SARAH

Yes, well I was wondering... would it be all right with you if I moved back into our house. Just as a place to stay. Just for a little while.

MACON

But the house is a mess. Something happened to it over the winter, pipes burst or something --

SARAH

I know. Your brothers told me. I went over there when they wouldn't answer their phone. And Rose said she'd been over to the house herself and --

(CONTINUED)

133

CONTINUED:

133

MACON

Rose?

SARAH

Yes, Rose is back at your brothers'.

MACON

Really?

SARAH

She's living there for a while.

MACON

She's what?

SARAH

She didn't think Porter and Charles were eating right.

MACON

So is Julian living alone now, or what?

SARAH

Yes, but she brings him casseroles. What do you think, Macon?

MACON

About what?

SARAH

About my using the house.

Macon looks at the framed photo of Ethan which is set up on the table next to him.

\*  
\*

MACON

(after long moment)

Oh...yes, fine. Of course.

SARAH

Incidentally, the papers came through from the lawyer. For the divorce.

MACON

Ah.

SARAH

It was kind of a shock.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



133

CONTINUED: (2)

133

SARAH (CONT'D)

When I saw them in black and white  
... they didn't take into account  
the feelings of the thing. I guess  
I wasn't expecting that.

Macon has a sense of some danger approaching, something  
he can't quite handle. His tone changes. His voice  
sounds unreal even to him --

MACON

Ah! Yes! Certainly! That seems  
a natural reaction. So anyway,  
good luck with the house, Sarah.  
Goodbye.

He drops the phone, like it's hot.

134

INT. HOTEL ROOM, EDMONTON - DAY

134

Macon is standing in an Edmonton hotel room on a weekday  
afternoon, phone to his ear.

SARAH (ON PHONE)

I went over there this morning.  
Were you eating popcorn in the  
bedroom?

MACON

I guess I must have been.

Macon looks out the window. We begin to INTERCUT:

\*

134A

INT. LIVING ROOM, SARAH'S APARTMENT - DAY

134A \*

Sarah has been sculpting and there are smudges of the  
white clay on her forehead, hands and shirt.

\*

\*

SARAH

So, how's the weather there?

MACON

Kind of gray.

SARAH

Here it's sunny. Sunny and humid.

MACON

Here, the air's so dry that rain  
disappears before it hits the  
ground.

(CONTINUED)

134A CONTINUED:

134A \*

SARAH

Really? Then how can you tell  
it's raining?

MACON

You can see it above the plains.  
It looks like stripes that just  
fade away about halfway down from  
the sky.

SARAH

I wish I were there to watch it  
with you.

Macon swallows. He closes his eyes.

135 INT. HOTEL ROOM, VANCOUVER - DAY

135 \*

Macon is on a phone in the bathroom. Half his face is  
covered with shaving cream, half has been shaved.

SARAH

Well, I've moved back into the  
house. Mostly I just stay  
upstairs. You wouldn't believe  
how lonely it is.

Macon would believe it. He touches a dollop of shaving  
cream on his chin. We begin to INTERCUT:

\*

135A INT. BEDROOM, MACON'S HOUSE - DAY

135A \*

We're CLOSE ON Sarah as she listens to the silence from  
the receiver.

\*

\*

SARAH

Macon? Do you... what's her name?  
The person you live with?

MACON

Muriel.

SARAH

Do you plan on staying with Muriel  
forever?

MACON

I really couldn't say.

136

INT./EXT. MACON'S CAR, MURIEL'S BLOCK - NIGHT

136

CLOSE ON Macon as he eases his car to a stop at the curb. He leaves the car running but turns off the lights. He stares off across the deserted street, in some pain.

WHAT MACON SEES. He is looking at Muriel's house and the surrounding block. A door opens on the porch beyond Muriel's and Debbie, one of the twins, quietly sneaks out of her house and hurries away in the shadows. Macon's attention returns to Muriel's house. The living room window is lit.

After another long moment, Macon puts the car in gear, turns on the lights and pulls away.

137

INT./EXT. MACON'S CAR, BALTIMORE STREETS - NIGHT

137

Macon moves through the night toward his old, familiar neighborhood, as though drawn by some force outside the car.

138 EXT. MACON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

138

Macon pulls up in front of his own house. He turns off the engine and sits looking at the house. Only the bedroom light upstairs is softly glowing. Evidently, Macon has come home from his journey.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

139 EXT. ROSE'S HOUSE, FRONT YARD - DAY

139

A bright morning. Sarah watches Rose prune a hedge. Nearby, Macon kneels next to a large sack of fertilizer copying the name and information into a little note pad. He listens closely to the conversation.

SARAH

Rose, why haven't you moved back with Julian? What's keeping you?

ROSE

Oh, Sarah, you wouldn't believe what a state I found the boys in when I came back here. They were living in their pajamas so as not to have too much laundry. They were eating gorp for their suppers.

SARAH

I'm not even going to ask what gorp is.

ROSE

It's a mixture of wheat germ and nuts and dried --

SARAH

But what about your apartment, Rose? What about Julian?

Macon stops writing in his pad.

ROSE

Oh, you know, I kept losing that apartment every time I turned around. I'd head one block east to the grocery store and then turn west to get back again and I'd always be wrong, always. The apartment building would have worked over to the north somehow, I don't know how.

\*

Sarah looks intently into Rose's face. Rose averts her eyes and continues to prune.

140 INT. OLD BAY RESTAURANT - DAY

140

Macon and Sarah are having lunch at the Old Bay Restaurant. The place looks friendlier this time than last. Their table is near the windows.

SARAH

You know what I missed most when we were separated? The little things. The Saturday errands. Even things that used to bother me, like the way you'd take forever in the hardware store.

He folds her hand into a fist and covers it with his own.

SARAH

Macon, I think that after a certain age people just don't have a choice. You're who I'm with. It's too late for me to change. I've used up too much of my life now.

Macon's glance flicks away and we CUT TO:

141 INT. BEDROOM, MURIEL'S HOUSE (FLASHBACK) - DAY

141

Muriel watches as he packs.

MURIEL

Macon? Are you really doing this? Do you mean to tell me you can just use a person up and then move on? You think I'm some kind of ... bottle of something you don't have any further need for? Is that how you see me, Macon?

Macon looks at her, but nothing he can say is going to make it better. His glance flicks away and we CUT BACK TO:

142 INT. OLD BAY RESTAURANT (BACK TO PRESENT) - DAY

142

MACON

(very gently)

After a certain age, it seems to me you can only choose what to lose.

SARAH

What?

(CONTINUED)

142 CONTINUED:

142

MACON

I mean there's going to be something you have to give up, whichever way you cut it.

Sarah peers at him closely. She opens her fist in his hand and grasps him.

143 INT. OFFICE, MACON'S HOUSE - DAY

143

EXTREME CLOSE-UP of typewriter keys pounding out the first sentence of a new paragraph in Macon's manuscript. It reads:

"Don't be lulled into a false sense of security by"

The keys stop suddenly.

Macon sits at his desk. He has forgotten what he was going to write. He watches a bee working at the blossoms outside his window. He picks up the telephone and dials.

MACON

Muriel?

MURIEL (ON PHONE)

(flatly)

What.

MACON

This is Macon.

MURIEL (ON PHONE)

Yes, I know.

MACON

(pausing)

Um, it's bee season, Muriel.

144 INT. KITCHEN, MURIEL'S HOUSE - DAY

144

Muriel is alone here. She's been making chocolate pudding from a box. She looks bad -- haggard and distraught. We begin to INTERCUT Muriel and Macon.

MURIEL

So?

MACON

I know how summer creeps up, and I was wondering if you'd thought about Alexander's shots.

(CONTINUED)

MURIEL

Don't you believe I can manage that much for myself?

MACON

Oh. Well.

MURIEL

Don't you think I know the simplest dumbest thing?

MACON

Well, I wasn't sure, you see, if you'd --

MURIEL

A fine one you are. Ditch that child without a word of farewell and then call me up on the telephone to see if I'm raising him right!

MACON

I just wanted to --

MURIEL

Criticize! That's what you wanted to do! Tell me 'Oodles of Noodles' is not a balanced meal and then go off and desert him and then have the nerve to call me up and tell me I'm not a good mother!

MACON

No, wait, Muriel --

MURIEL

Dominick is dead.

MACON

What?

MURIEL

Not that you would care. He died.

MACON

Dominick Saddler?

MURIEL

It was his night to take my car and he went to a party in Cockeysville and coming home he crashed into a guardrail.

(CONTINUED)

144 CONTINUED: (2)

144

MACON

Oh, no.

MURIEL

The girl he had with him didn't  
get so much as a scratch.

MACON

But Dominick...

Macon does not believe it yet.

MURIEL

Dominick died instantly.

MACON

Oh, my God. \*

Macon's eyes close and as they do we CUT TO:

145 INT. MURIEL'S LIVING ROOM (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

145

Dominick sits on the couch with Alexander, holding aloft  
a can of paste wax and telling him his story. But what  
we HEAR is:

MURIEL'S V.O.

Want to hear something awful? My  
car will be just fine. Straighten  
the front end and it'll run good  
as ever.

146 INT. OFFICE - MACON'S HOUSE - DAY

146

BACK TO PRESENT:

Macon rests his head in his hand and watches the bee  
flitting about.

MURIEL

I have to go now and sit with Mrs.  
Saddler in the funeral home.

MACON

Is there something I can do?

MURIEL

(spitefully)

No.

MACON

I could stay with Alexander, maybe.

(CONTINUED)



146 CONTINUED:

146

MURIEL

Alexander's got people of his own  
to stay with him.

At Macon's, the doorbell RINGS, and Edward starts BARKING.

MURIEL

Sounds like you have company.

MACON

Never mind that.

MURIEL

I'll let you get back to your life.

MACON

It doesn't matter...

Muriel hangs up. Macon slowly lowers the receiver. As  
it CLICKS down, we CUT TO:

147 INT. POLICE STATION/HALLWAYS (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

147

Macon and Sarah sit on molded plastic chairs in a  
fluorescent-lit hallway. Two plainclothes Police  
Officers stand talking down to them. Macon stands to go  
with them. (Edward's BARKING from the PRESENT TIME scene  
continues throughout.) Sarah touches Macon's arm before  
he moves away --

SARAH

Can you do this?

MACON

Yes.

148 INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

148

Macon follows the Police Officers down a series of halls  
and into the morgue. They lead him to a small body bag  
on a gurney and open it.

\*  
\*

MACON

Yes. That is my son.

Edward's BARKING gets louder and more excited and we CUT  
BACK TO:

149 INT. OFFICE, MACON'S HOUSE (BACK TO PRESENT) - DAY

149

Macon suddenly hears Edward's BARKING. He gets up and  
leaves the room.

150 INT. FRONT DOOR, MACON'S HOUSE - DAY

150

Macon opens the front door. Julian is standing outside with a file folder in hand. Macon opens the door and lets him in.

JULIAN

Thought I'd bring you the material for Paris.

Macon nods.

151 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

151

Julian sits down on the couch which is so new it is still covered in cellophane. He puts the folder aside. Each shift of his body makes the cellophane CRACKLE.

MACON

(indicates sofa bed)

Just arrived this morning.

Julian nods but doesn't seem to have heard.

JULIAN

Do you think Rose is not coming back?

MACON

(carefully)

She's worried about the boys. They're eating glop or something.

JULIAN

Those are not boys, Macon. They're men in their forties. I'm afraid she's left me.

MACON

Oh, now, you can't be sure of that.

JULIAN

And not even for any reason! Our marriage was working out fine. But she's worn herself a groove or something in that house of hers, and she can't help swerving back into it.

(he looks at Macon)

At least, I can't think of any other explanation.

MACON

Well, it sounds about right.

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED:

151

They sit silently for a few moments.

MACON

Why don't you give her a job,  
Julian?

JULIAN

Job?

MACON

Why don't you show her that office  
of yours. That filing system you  
never get sorted, the secretary  
chewing her gum and forgetting  
whose appointment is when. Don't  
you think Rose could take all that  
in hand?

JULIAN

Well, sure, but --

MACON

Call her up and tell her your  
business is going to pieces. Ask  
if she could just come in and get  
things organized, get things under  
control. Put it that way. Use  
those words. Get things under  
control, tell her. Then sit back  
and wait.

(pause)

But of course, what do I know?

Julian looks at him intently, his mind racing.

JULIAN

No, you're right.

MACON

Now let's see your folder.

JULIAN

(hands it over,  
distracted)

You're absolutely right.

Macon opens it and reads the topmost letter.

MACON

Look at this! Why do you bother  
me with this? "I just wanted to  
appraise you folks of a wonderful  
little hotel in..."

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED: (2)

151

MACON (CONT'D)

A man who says he wants to "appraise" us, do you really suppose he'd know a good hotel when he saw one?

JULIAN

Macon.

MACON

The whole damn language has been slaughtered.

JULIAN

Macon, I just want to say this -- I care about that sister of yours more than anything else in the world. It's not just Rose, it's the whole way she lives, that house and those turkey dinners and those evening card games. And I care about you, too, Macon. You're my best friend! At least, I hope so.

MACON

Oh, why, ah --

Julian gets up and takes Macon's hand, shaking it more vigorously than Macon is prepared for. He claps Macon on the shoulder and strides out.

152 INT. HALLWAY, MACON'S HOUSE - DAY

152

LATER. Sarah walks ahead of Macon to the entrance of the living room.

SARAH

How's the fabric look?

MACON

It's okay. It's good.

153 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

153

Sarah stands squinting at the new sofa bed. Macon stands behind her.

SARAH

What do you think?

MACON

Seems fine to me.

(CONTINUED)

153 CONTINUED:

153

SARAH

Honestly, Macon. I don't know what's come over you. You used to be downright finicky.

MACON

It's fine, Sarah. It looks very nice.

Sarah strips off the cellophane and stands back, arms full of CRACKLING light.

SARAH

We ought to see how it opens out.

Macon pulls at the canvas strap that turns the couch into a bed and opens it.

SARAH

Maybe we should put on the sheets, now that we've got it open.

Sarah disappears and then returns with a stack of linens from the front hall. With Macon positioned at the other side of the couch, she floats a sheet above the mattress and then bustles up and down, tucking it in. Macon stops helping and watches her move about.

MACON

Let's give the bed a trial run.

SARAH

(looks up, not understanding)

Trial run?

But she allows him to take the sheet away and slip her sweat shirt over her head. Languid, lazy and slow, they drop to the new mattress.

154 INT. BEDROOM, MACON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

154

Macon comes out of the bathroom. Sarah, in her slip, is standing in front of the bureau, screwing on little gold earrings. They are dressing to go out. Macon chooses a shirt.

SARAH

Macon.

MACON

Hmm.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

You never asked me if I slept with anyone while we were separated.

Macon pauses, halfway into one sleeve.

SARAH

Don't you want to know?

MACON

No.

Macon puts on the shirt and begins buttoning the cuffs.

SARAH

I would think you'd wonder.

MACON

Well, I don't.

Sarah watches Macon in her mirror for a few beats.

SARAH

Macon, the trouble with you is --

MACON

(flaring, surprising them both)

Sarah, don't even start! By God, if that doesn't sum up everything that's wrong with being married. "Macon, the trouble with you is --" and "I know you better than you know yourself, Macon --"

SARAH

(continuing steadily)

The trouble with you is, you think people should stay in their own sealed packages. You don't believe in opening up.

MACON

Okay, let's say that that's true. Let's say for now that you do know what the trouble with me is, that nothing I might feel could surprise you. And that the reason I don't want to hear about this specific thing is that I can't open up. If we agree on all that, can we drop it?

(CONTINUED)

154 CONTINUED: (2)

154

Macon takes a tie from the rack in his closet. Sarah watches him for several long beats, then goes back to her makeup.

SARAH

For your information, I didn't sleep with anyone the whole entire time.

Macon pretends that he hasn't heard her.

155 INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

155

The plane to Paris is crowded as Macon finds his seat. Macon glances up the aisle, where more passengers are arriving. A Japanese Man, a Nun, a Young Girl in braids. A Woman with a little red vanity kit, her hair a dark tent.

Muriel.

She walks toward him, watching her feet. When she is next to him she raises her eyes and it's clear that she's known all along he was there.

MURIEL

I'm going to France.

MACON

But you can't!

The French Couple next to him look at him curiously.

MURIEL

I'm going to walk along the Seine.

Muriel notices the people stacking up behind her and moves on.

156 INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

156

The movie is showing in the darkened cabin. Macon makes his way down the aisle, his shaving kit in hand. The lavatories are occupied, so Macon waits. He turns to find Muriel.

MACON

Muriel, what in --

MURIEL

You don't own this plane! And you don't own Paris, either.

(CONTINUED)

156

CONTINUED:

156

Macon presses his left temple.

MACON

I don't understand any of this.  
How could you afford the fare?

MURIEL

I borrowed.

MACON

But the point is, why, Muriel?  
Why are you doing this?

MURIEL

(lifts her chin)  
Because I felt like it.

MACON

You felt like spending five days  
alone in a Paris hotel? That's  
what it will be, Muriel.

MURIEL

(quietly)  
You need to have me around.

MACON

What!

MURIEL

You were falling to pieces before  
you had me.

A man comes out of one of the lavatories. Macon steps  
inside and locks the door quickly behind him.

156A INT. LAVATORY

156A \*

Macon turns on the water, the truth of Muriel's last  
words banging against his forehead.

\*

\*

157 EXT. DE GAULLE AIRPORT - DAY

157

Macon, alone, comes out of the terminal, glances once  
behind him like a spy on the run, and hurries off toward  
a cab.

158 INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL - DAY

158

A small room in a modest hotel. Macon is just finishing  
settling in, but in a distracted way.



159

EXT. POV OF NARROW STREET

159

Twice he goes to the window and cranes to see down into  
the narrow street.

160 INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL - DAY

160

There is a KNOCK on the door and, surprisingly, Macon looks relieved. He rushes to the door and opens it. Muriel breezes in, goes over to the window.

MURIEL

Your room is bigger than mine is.  
I have a better view, though.  
Just think, we're really in Paris!  
The bus driver said it might rain  
but I told him I didn't care.  
Rain or shine, it's Paris.

MACON

How did you know what bus to take?

MURIEL

I brought along your guidebook.

She pats her pocket.

MURIEL

Want to go for breakfast?

MACON

No, I don't. I can't. You'd  
better leave, Muriel.

MURIEL

Oh. Okay.

She leaves. Macon goes over to the phone on the bureau and picks up the receiver. It is dead.

161 INT. LOBBY, PARIS HOTEL - DAY

161

The lobby telephone is housed in an ancient wooden booth.

SARAH (ON PHONE)

Hello?

MACON

Sarah?

162 INT. BEDROOM, MACON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

162

Sarah is in bed. The call woke her up. We begin to  
INTERCUT Macon and Sarah.

SARAH

Macon? Macon, where are you?  
What's the matter?

(CONTINUED)

MACON

Nothing's the matter. I just felt like talking to you.

SARAH

What? What time is it?

MACON

I know it's early and I'm sorry I woke you but I wanted to hear your voice.

SARAH

There's some kind of static on the line.

MACON

How's the weather there?

SARAH

How's who?

MACON

The weather! Is it sunny?

SARAH

I don't know. I don't think it's even light yet.

MACON

Will you be gardening today?

SARAH

What?

MACON

Gardening!

SARAH

Well, I hadn't thought. It depends on whether it's sunny, I guess.

MACON

I wish I were there. I could help you.

SARAH

You hate to garden! Macon, are you all right?

MACON

Yes, I'm fine.

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED: (2)

162

SARAH

How was the flight over?

MACON

(moment of panic)

Oh, the flight, well, goodness!  
I guess I was so busy reading I  
didn't really notice.

SARAH

Maybe you've got jet lag.

We CUT IN CLOSE on Macon here. There's something in his  
eyes. He seems not so much jet-lagged as, well, at sea.

MACON

Yes, maybe I do.

163 EXT. PARIS STREET - DAY

163

He walks blindly down the sidewalk, scribbling in the  
margins of his guidebook.

MACON'S V.O.

It's puzzling how the French are  
so tender in preparing their food  
but so rough in serving it.

164 INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL - NIGHT

164

Macon comes into the room -- footsore, leg muscles aching  
-- and collapses on his bed. There is a KNOCK at the door.  
He GROANS and rises to open the door. Muriel stands there  
with her arms full of clothes.

MURIEL

Look. See what-all I bought.

She marches in and dumps clothes on the bed.

MACON

Muriel, have you lost your senses?  
What must all this have cost?

MURIEL

Nothing! Or next to nothing.  
I found a place that's like the  
granddaddy of all garage sales.  
If you say something's too  
expensive, they'll bring the  
price down till it's cheap enough.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MURIEL (CONT'D)

I saw this leather coat I would have killed for but the man wanted ninety francs. \*

MACON

Ninety francs is fifteen dollars or so. \*

MURIEL

Oh, really? I thought francs and dollars were about the same.

MACON

No.

MURIEL

Well, then these things were super bargains. Now let me take these back to my room so we can go eat.

MACON

(beat)

No, I can't.

MURIEL

What harm would it do to eat supper with me, Macon? I'm someone from home you've run into in Paris! Can't we have a bite together?

165 INT./EXT. BURGER KING, PARIS - NIGHT

165

Macon and Muriel sit at a table at the Burger King on the Champs-Elysees.

MACON

Careful, these aren't the Whoppers you're used to. You'll want to scrape the extra pickle and onion off.

She ignores him, takes a bite and makes a satisfied face.

MACON

Who's looking after Alexander?

MURIEL

Oh, different people.

MACON

What different people? I hope you haven't just parked him, Muriel.

(CONTINUED)

165

CONTINUED:

165

MURIEL

Relax. He's fine. Claire has him in the daytime and then Bernice comes in and cooks supper and any time Claire has a date with the General the twins will keep him or if...

The CAMERA IS OUT AT the street now looking back at them as Muriel continues. And Macon listens, with a kind of wonder.

166

INT. ELEVATOR/HALL, PARIS HOTEL - NIGHT

166

Macon and Muriel must stand close together in the tiny elevator.

MURIEL

Can I come to your room a while?  
My TV set only gets snow.

MACON

We'd better say good night.

MURIEL

Can't I just come in and keep you company?

MACON

No, Muriel.

MURIEL

We wouldn't have to do anything.

The elevator stops at his floor. He steps out, but turns and holds the door. \*

MACON

Don't you understand my position?  
I've been married to her forever.  
I can't change now.

MURIEL

Why is that?

All Muriel's makeup has worn off and she looks young and sad.

MACON

Good night.

He lets the elevator door close.

167 INT./EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

167

Macon can be seen through the window writing in his notebook.

MACON'S V.O.

Don't fall for prix fixe. It's like a mother saying "Eat, eat" -- all those courses forced on you...

168 EXT. PARIS STREET - NEAR HOTEL - DAY

168

Afternoon. Macon walks wearily back to his own hotel. He sees Muriel up ahead, arms full of parcels. Before he even thinks, he calls out --

MACON

Muriel!

She turns with a big smile and waits for him to catch up. He accepts several of her parcels. They head off together toward the hotel.

MURIEL

Macon, could we eat someplace nice today?

\*  
\*  
\*

169 INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

169

Macon and Muriel sit at a table near the windows that front a lovely restaurant.

\*  
\*

MURIEL

(studying menu)

If I ask them what something is in English, do you think they'll be able to tell me?

MACON

Oh, you don't have to bother doing that. Just order Salade Nicoise.

MURIEL

Order what?

MACON

I thought you said you'd read my guide. Salade Nicoise. It's the one safe dish. I've been all through France eating nothing but, day in and day out.

MURIEL

That sounds kind of monotonous.

(CONTINUED)

169 CONTINUED:

169

MACON

No, it's not. Some places put green beans in it, some don't.

MURIEL

I think I'll just ask the waiter.

She lays her menu aside.

MURIEL

Do you suppose they call them French windows in France?

MACON

(confused)

What? Oh, I really don't have the slightest idea.

170 INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

170

LATER. A pleasant Waiter and Muriel agree on a dinner for her. The Waiter leaves.

MURIEL

There. Wasn't he nice?

MACON

That was a rare exception.

She bats at the hem of her skirt.

MURIEL

Durn fringe! I keep thinking something's crawling up my leg. Where you going tomorrow, Macon?

MACON

Out of Paris altogether. Tomorrow I start on the other cities.

MURIEL

You're leaving me here alone?

MACON

This is high-speed travel, Muriel. Not fun. I'm waking up at crack of dawn.

MURIEL

Take me anyway.

MACON

I can't.

(CONTINUED)



MURIEL

I haven't been sleeping so good.  
I get bad dreams. Last night I  
dreamed about Dominick. I dreamed  
he was mad at me.

MACON

Mad?

MURIEL

He wouldn't talk to me. Wouldn't  
look at me. Turned out he was mad  
because I wouldn't let him use the  
car anymore. I said, "Dommie,  
you're dead. You can't use the  
car."

MACON

Well, don't worry about it. It  
was just a travel dream.

MURIEL

I'm scared it means he's mad for  
real. Off wherever he's at.

MACON

He's not. He wouldn't be mad.  
He's happy as a lark.

MURIEL

You really think so?

MACON

Sure! He's up there in some kind  
of motor heaven, polishing a car  
all his own. And it's always  
spring and the sun is always  
shining and there's always some  
blonde in a halter top to help  
him with the buffing.

MURIEL

You really think that might be true?

MACON

Yes, I do.

Muriel looks at him lovingly. Really comforted. She  
reaches over and puts her hand on his. He seems about  
to move it, but then doesn't.

MURIEL

Macon, will you do this for me,  
will you just think about it  
tonight and decide in the morning?

(CONTINUED)

170 CONTINUED: (2)

170

MACON

What?

MURIEL

Whether I can go with you tomorrow.  
I won't be any bother, I promise.  
Just think about it tonight, okay?

After a long moment, he agrees.

171 INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL - MORNING

171

It is still dark out as Macon wakes and turns off his alarm. He lies there waking up, then remembers the bus-iness of the day. He seems to be mulling the Muriel issue with some odd good humor.

He decides he will let her go with him. And he cannot suppress a smile as he sits up and reaches for the phone. He remembers the phone is out of order, but checks it at his ear for a moment anyway. He rises and pulls at the cord and leans over the bureau to peer down at where it is jacked to the wall. He puts the phone down and moves the heavy bureau a few inches away from the wall. He reacts to a twinge in his back, but shakes it off and stoops down toward the jack.

There is a barely-audible little CRACK. And Macon freezes in his stooped position. His back has gone out, but he doesn't want to believe it. And if he doesn't move he won't be sure. After several moments of delay, he slowly straightens.

The pain zings into him. He is barely able to make his way back to the bed and lower himself inch by inch onto it.

172 INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL - MORNING

172

LATER. Macon is asleep in exactly the same position. There is a KNOCK at the door. Macon opens his eyes.

MURIEL O.S.

Macon?...Macon, you in there?

CLOSE ON Macon's eyes, as he makes a decision. A more rational decision. Informed by the sobering clarity of his current pain. He says nothing and listens and Muriel walks away. He closes his eyes again.

173 INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL - DAY

173

LATER. The door to the room opens with the JINGLE of keys and a sweet, pale CHAMBERMAID pokes her head in. She sees Macon and begins to withdraw --

CHAMBERMAID

Pardon, monsieur.

MACON

(raises his hand)

No, wait!

174 INT. LOBBY PHONE BOOTH, PARIS HOTEL - DAY

174

The Chambermaid and a Bellhop stand a discreet distance outside whispering together, having helped a hobbled, robed Macon into the booth. He is hunched grotesquely over the phone. We begin to INTERCUT Macon and --

175 INT. JULIAN'S OFFICE (BALTIMORE) - DAY

175

Rose is on the phone at Julian's desk, which has been straightened up and cleared to an extreme degree.

ROSE

Businessman's Press.

MACON

Um. This is Macon Leary. To whom am I --

ROSE

Oh, Macon.

MACON

Rose?

ROSE

Yes, it's me.

MACON

What are you doing there?

ROSE

I work here now. I'm putting things in order. You wouldn't believe the state this place is in.

MACON

Rose, my back has gone out on me.

(CONTINUED)

175 CONTINUED:

175

ROSE

Oh, no, of all times! Are you still in Paris?

MACON

Yes, but I was just about to start my day trips and there are all these plans I have to change and no telephone in my room. So I was wondering:..

ROSE

I'll take care of everything. Don't you bother with a thing. Have you seen a doctor?

MACON

Doctors don't help. Just bed rest.

ROSE

Well, rest then, Macon.

176 INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL - NIGHT/DAY

176

Macon is hunched in an armchair drinking wine which he pours from a small, mini-bar sized bottle. He is about to pour the last bit into his glass when there is a KNOCK.

MURIEL (O.S.)

Macon?...Macon?

Macon freezes, silent.

MURIEL (O.S.)

Darn it! Why did he go without me?

(moving away in  
the hall)

Macon, you don't know what's good for you...

He strains to listen, but she is gone.

177 INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL

177

LATER. Macon is back in bed with his head propped just enough to watch the TV which is playing softly. Again there is a KNOCK. Macon does nothing. Then a key turns in the door and in walks Sarah, in a beige suit.

(CONTINUED)

177 CONTINUED:

177

MACON

Sarah?

SARAH

Hello, Macon!

She smiles and comes over to kiss him. The Bellhop comes in after her with two pieces of matched luggage. She goes over to tip and dismiss him in a breeze of brisk efficiency.

SARAH

Now, everything's taken care of. I'm going to make your day trips for you. We've rescheduled the other cities and I start on them tomorrow.

MACON

But how did you get here so soon?

SARAH

Rose is just a wizard. She's revamped that entire office. Here's a pill from Dr. Levitt.

She pours some bottled water into a glass.

MACON

You know I don't take pills.

SARAH

This time you do. You're going to sleep as much as you can, so your back has a chance to heal. Swallow.

Macon swallows the pill.

178 INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL

178

LATER. Macon wakes up to find Sarah standing over him with a glass of water.

SARAH

How do you feel?

MACON

Okay.

SARAH

Here's your next pill.

(CONTINUED)

MACON

Those things are deadly. They  
knock me out.

She sits down on the edge of the mattress, careful not  
to jar him.

SARAH

Macon.

MACON

Hmm.

SARAH

I saw that woman friend of yours.

Macon tenses. His back seizes up.

SARAH

She saw me, too. She seemed very  
surprised.

MACON

Sarah, this is not the way it  
looks.

SARAH

(evenly)

What is it then, Macon? I'd like  
to hear.

MACON

She came over on her own. I didn't  
even know till just before the  
plane took off, I swear it! She  
followed me. I told her I didn't  
want her along. I told her it  
was no use.

SARAH

You didn't know till just before  
the plane took off?

MACON

I swear it.  
(he looks at her)  
Do you believe me?

SARAH

Yes, I believe you.

Macon holds her gaze for a moment, but then his eyelids  
slowly fall.

179

INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL - NIGHT

179

LATER. Sarah bustles into the room with a bag of groceries. Macon is awake, having propped himself against a pillow.

SARAH

I thought I'd make you supper myself. Fresh fruit and things.

MACON

That's very nice of you, Sarah.

Sarah begins unwrapping cheeses.

SARAH

I was thinking, after I've finished the trips, if your back is better, maybe we could do a little sightseeing on our own.

MACON

Fine.

SARAH

Have a second honeymoon, sort of.

He watches her set the cheeses on a flattened paper bag.

SARAH

We'll change your plane ticket for a later date. You're reserved to leave tomorrow morning. No chance you could manage that. Did I tell you about Julian?

MACON

No, what?

SARAH

He's moved in with Rose and your brothers.

MACON

He's what?

179A INT. SUN PORCH, ROSE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

179A \*

Rose, Porter and Charles sit playing Vaccination. The fourth seat, Macon's place, is now held down by -- Julian. \*

SARAH (VO) \*

He lives there. He's started playing Vaccination every night after supper. \*

(CONTINUED)

179A CONTINUED:

179A \*

MACON (VO)

Well, I'll be damned.

\*  
\*

179B INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL - NIGHT

179B \*

Sarah passes Macon a glass.

\*

SARAH

Apple cider. A toast to our second  
honeymoon.

\*

MACON

Our second honeymoon.

SARAH

Eighteen more years together.

\*

MACON

Eighteen.

\*

SARAH

Or would you say seventeen?

\*

MACON

No, it's eighteen, all right.

\*

SARAH

I mean because we skipped this  
past year.

MACON

Oh. No, it would still be eighteen.

\*

SARAH

You think so?

MACON

I consider this last year just  
another stage in our marriage.  
Don't worry, it's eighteen.

\*

Sarah clinks her glass against his. She begins to cut a  
peach into sections and passes him one of the sections.

SARAH

Macon. Just tell me this. Was  
the little boy the attraction?

MACON

Hmm?

SARAH

Was the fact that she had a child  
what attracted you to that woman?

(CONTINUED)



179B

CONTINUED:

179B \*

MACON

Sarah, I swear to you, I had no idea she was planning to follow me over here.

SARAH

Yes, I realize that, but I was wondering about the child question.

MACON

What child question?

SARAH

I was remembering the time you said we should have another baby.

MACON

Oh, well, that was just... I don't know what that was.

He hands her back the peach; he isn't hungry anymore.

SARAH

I was thinking maybe you were right.

MACON

What?

(understands)

No, Sarah. Lord, that was a terrible idea.

SARAH

Oh, I know it's scary. I admit I'd be scared to have another.

MACON

Exactly. We're too old.

SARAH

No, I'm talking about the, you know, world we'd be bringing him into. So much evil and danger. I admit it, I'd be frantic any time we let him out on the street.

MACON

Yes, there's that.

They are silent for a few moments. Macon is thinking.

MACON

Though really it's kind of... heartening, isn't it? How most human beings do try.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

179B CONTINUED: (2)

179B \*

MACON (CONT'D)

How they try to be as responsible  
and kind as they can manage.

SARAH

Are you saying, yes, we can have  
a baby?

MACON

Well, no. It seems to me we're  
past the time for that, Sarah.

SARAH

So, her little boy wasn't the  
reason.

He looks at her sharply, his tone a little harsh.

MACON

What are we talking about here,  
Sarah?

SARAH

(voice rising)

Can't you just answer me? I want  
to understand.

MACON

Look, it's over with. Can't we  
close the lid on it? I don't  
cross-examine you, do I?

SARAH

But I don't have someone following  
me to Paris!

MACON

And what if you did? Would I  
blame you if someone just climbed  
on a plane without your knowing?

SARAH

Before it left the ground.

MACON

Pardon? What? Sarah!

SARAH

Before it left the ground, you saw  
her. You could have walked up to  
her and said, "No. Get off. Go  
this minute. I want nothing more  
to do with you and I never want  
to see you again."

(CONTINUED)

179B CONTINUED: (3)

179B \*

MACON

You think I own the airline, Sarah?

SARAH

You could have stopped her if you'd really wanted. You could have taken steps.

They fall silent. Sarah rises and begins clearing away their supper. Macon watches her move around the room. It's hard to tell if the pain in his eyes is coming from his back or something less physical.

Sarah opens a pill bottle, shakes a white pill into her palm and brings it to Macon. Her eyes barely meet his as she hands him the sleeping pill and turns away. Macon closes his fist around the pill and lets it rest on the blanket.

Sarah goes into the bathroom. She is upset. When she catches sight of herself in the mirror, she is startled and a little embarrassed. She sees Macon's reflection in the mirror watching her and, almost reflexively, pushes the bathroom door halfway closed to obliterate his view.

Macon slowly lowers himself down into the bed, and suddenly the CAMERA is CLOSE ON him in exactly the same angle as when he first lay exhausted in Muriel's bed at the start of their affair. And like then, Macon lies in bed and HEARS: Sarah running water in the bathroom, moving about the room as she gets undressed and hangs her clothes, the TINKLING of the chain as she slips it on the door, the SWITCHING OFF of the lights. The bed moves and Macon's back stabs pain as Sarah slips in beside him, but he makes no sound. He listens to Sarah's breathing as it softens almost immediately.

180 INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL - NIGHT

180

EXTREME CLOSE-UP on Macon's hand as it slowly opens and he lets the white pill fall among the bedclothes.  
DISSOLVE TO:

Macon's face. He turns to look beside him. DISSOLVE TO:

Sarah's face, in profile, from Macon's POV. She is sleeping. DISSOLVE TO:

THE REVERSE SHOT -- Sarah sleeping in the foreground, Macon looking at her. A long time.

181 INT. BATHROOM, PARIS HOTEL - DAWN

181

Macon, hunched and pained, comes into the bathroom. He slowly-- every move is slow -- begins to shave.

182

INT. MACON'S ROOM, PARIS HOTEL - MORNING

182

Macon, dressed now, is slowly packing his things into his bag. He takes the framed photo of Ethan from the bureau and slips it into the outer pocket of the bag. Each movement is laborious. The last item is his heavy book, Miss MacIntosh, My Darling.

\*  
\*

He puts it into his bag, newly impressed with its weight. He thinks about it, then takes it out of the bag and sets it aside on the bureau. He will leave it.

SARAH

Macon?

He turns to look at her in bed.

MACON

Sarah. I'm glad you're awake.

SARAH

What are you doing?

MACON

I'm packing to leave.

She sits up. Her face is creased down one side.

SARAH

But what about your back? And I've got all those appointments! We were going to take a second honeymoon.

MACON

Sweetheart.

Macon makes his way over to her and lowers himself cautiously till he is sitting on the bed. He picks up her hand -- it stays lifeless while she watches his face.

SARAH

You're going back to that woman.

MACON

Yes, I am.

SARAH

Why, Macon?

MACON

I just decided, Sarah. I thought about it most of last night. It wasn't easy. It's not the easy way out, believe me.

She stares at him, with no expression.

(CONTINUED)

182

CONTINUED:

182

MACON

Well, I don't want to miss the plane.

He inches to a standing position and hobbles into the bathroom for his shaving kit.

SARAH

You know what this is? It's all due to that pill! You said yourself it knocks you out. Now it's messed up your thinking.

MACON

I didn't take the pill.

There is a silence.

SARAH

Macon? Are you just trying to get even with me for the time I left you?

Macon returns with the shaving kit.

MACON

No, sweetheart.

SARAH

I suppose you realize what your life is going to be like.

She climbs out of bed and comes over to stand next to him in her nightgown, hugging her bare arms.

SARAH

(without heat)

You'll be one of those mismatched couples no one invites to parties. No one will know what to make of you. People will wonder whenever they meet you, "My God, what does he see in her? Why choose someone so inappropriate?" And her friends will be asking the same thing about you.

\*

MACON

You're probably right.

He zips his overnight bag.

(CONTINUED)

182 CONTINUED: (2)

182

MACON

I'm sorry, Sarah. I didn't want to decide this. It's silly to even think we know what's going to happen. Maybe this is just another stage in our marriage. And not the last.

Macon puts his arm around her painfully, and, after a pause, she lets her head rest against his shoulder.

SARAH

(very calm)

I thought this might happen.

\*  
\*  
\*

183 EXT. PARIS HOTEL - DAY

183

Macon manages the front door by backing through it, stiffly.

184 EXT. PARIS STREET - DAY

184

No taxis in sight. He sets off for the next block. Carrying his bag is torture. He tries it in his left hand, then his right. He steps over to a building with a low stone curb running around its base. He sets the bag on the curb, takes out Ethan's picture, leaves the bag, and hurries on. Up ahead he sees a taxi with a boy just stepping out of it. Raising either arm is impossible. He is forced to run in an absurd, scuttling fashion while shouting bits of French.

\*

MACON

Attendez! Attendez, monsieur!

The taxi is already moving off and the Boy is just slipping his wallet back into his jeans when he sees Macon and calls out something and the taxi brakes. Macon makes his way up to the cab, panting.

MACON

(to the Boy)

Merci beaucoup.

The Boy, who has a sweet, pure face and shaggy yellow hair, opens the taxi door for him and gently assists him in.

185 INT./EXT. TAXI - MOVING - DAY

185

The Boy shuts the door and then, to Macon's surprise, lifts a hand in a formal goodbye. The taxi moves off.

(CONTINUED)

185 CONTINUED:

185

The Taxi Driver looks at him.

MACON  
Charles De Gaulle Airport.

The Driver makes a U-turn, heading back in the direction Macon has just come from. They pass the Boy once again, walking along the sidewalk.

Macon leans forward to peer intently at him, blinking to clear his view.

MACON MOVING POV of the French Boy as the taxi passes. His face is not so very different than Ethan's would have been, these two years later...if Ethan had lived.

Macon sits back, but he does not look sad. In fact, there is some kind of peace in the memory and the forward movement of the Boy and the taxi.

The taxi approaches Macon's hotel. A Man is just emerging with a small anxious dog on his arm.

And there on the curb stands Muriel, surrounded by suitcases and string-handled shopping bags and cardboard cartons overflowing with red velvet. She is frantically waving down taxis -- first one ahead, then Macon's own.

MACON  
Arretez!

186 EXT. PARIS HOTEL - DAY

186

The taxi lurches to a halt. Muriel looks surprised by its sudden stop. She smiles for a moment at the Driver and her eyes sweep over Macon -- not registering him -- as she turns to begin collecting her bags.

Macon watches, suspended in the moment, with a kind of joy.

Suddenly, Muriel's mind registers what she has glimpsed in the shadowy back seat. She straightens and turns, very slowly it seems to Macon. And now a much larger smile lights her face. Her gaze locks directly onto his -- and where they meet, there is a blinding, white burst of light.

THE END