

THE BIG CHILL

by

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FIRST DRAFT

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The screen is black.

The soft sounds of WATER LAPPING, small SPLASHES. Now comes the VOICE OF A THREE YEAR-OLD BOY--talking, laughing, and, then, short bits of singing. A MAN'S VOICE chuckles in response, coaxes gently for more.

FADE IN:

INT. BATHROOM, HAROLD AND SARAH'S HOUSE (RICHMOND, VIRGINIA)
-NIGHT

The little BOY is being given a bath. He plays with tub toys and continues to sing as his father, HAROLD, soaps his silky skin. This child, oddly enough, seems to know the words to a Sixties rock song, "Joy to the World" by the group Three Dog Night. He needs only intermittent coaching from his father. They are both very happy.

In an adjacent bedroom, the telephone begins to ring. After a few rings, SARAH picks it up. Harold glances in at his wife, who he can see from his spot next to the tub. She is, like her husband, in her early 30's. Harold turns his attention back to his youngest child. The little one drops a boat with a big splash and sings about how his friend the bullfrog "always had some mighty fine wine". Harold uses a washcloth on his neck.

The muffled conversation in ~~the~~ other room comes to an end as the receiver clicks back into place. After several long moments, Sarah appears in the door of the bathroom and leans against the door jamb. Very quietly, she is crying.

Harold looks up at his wife.

FADE TO BLACK.

The MUSIC BEGINS, loud and strong. Like all the music which follows, it is high-energy, move-those-feet, Sixties rock 'n roll.

FADE UP AS THE MAIN TITLE BEGINS. We begin to INTERCUT:

ALEX GETTING DRESSED I. (All Extreme Close-ups.)

A suit pant leg, neatly pressed, pulled over a tanned calf.

INT. KITCHEN, KAREN'S HOUSE (BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN) - DAY

Full screen close-up of KAREN'S face. Immediately we begin widening to include her environment, a lavishly and recently remodeled kitchen, all dark-grained cabinets and gleaming tiles. Karen, very pretty in her tennis whites, sits at the butcher-block center island, a telephone next to the coffee cup she's staring into. Behind her, through a window, a large, neat

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suburban lawn turning brown in the Michigan fall, the surrounding trees bleakly denuded. A Maid, wearing her whites, passes through the kitchen.

ALEX GETTING DRESSED II: A crisply starched shirt gets buttoned up the chest by strong male fingers.

INT. BEDROOM, MICHAEL'S APARTMENT (NEW YORK CITY) - DAY

MICHAEL'S face. Immediately begin widening to take in the room and Annie, Michael's girlfriend, a black woman. She is filling Michael's well-worn overnight bag with his clothes from the closet. Michael's eyes dart frantically about his messy desk as he searches for something and keeps up a steady, hyped-up monologue we cannot hear. Annie folds a dark tie into the bag and comes up next to Michael. Very calmly, she extracts a new package of batteries from the debris of the desk and places them in Michael's hand. This stops him cold and calms him down, as she always does. He enfolds her in his arms, sadly. She soothes him.

ALEX GETTING DRESSED III: The shiny buckle of a dress belt is fastened over the buttons of the suit pants.

INT. MEG'S LAW OFFICE, SKYSCRAPER (ATLANTA, GEORGIA) - DAY

MEG'S face. Her eyes, too, flick over the papers which will soon come into view on her large, immaculate desk. But these eyes are different from Michael's. For one thing, their movements are steady, concisely controlled. Secondly, they are very red from a long and decent cry.

Meg sets some papers neatly into the open briefcase on her credenza, looks at them a beat, then lights up a cigarette and stands gazing over the briefcase at the Atlanta skyline. The office is large and carefully appointed; her view is a good one.

ALEX GETTING DRESSED IV: A shiny black oxford is tightly knotted on a black-stockinged foot. A man's finger rubs at a single scuff.

INT. FIRST CLASS SECTION, 747 - SAM'S SEAT - DAY

SAM'S face. He looks up, his handsome features in a mild alcoholic daze. The Stewardess, a stack of magazines in hand, is flirting with him aggressively. He smiles over a row of empty little vodka bottles. She teases a moment more, then reveals the cover of the top magazine with a flourish: it is US Magazine and on the cover is a smiling-shot of Sam. The man himself seems slightly jolted by his mirror image at this unsuspecting moment. But he recovers quickly and charmingly indicates to the Stewardess what he wants right now -- not her, not the magazine, but another little vodka bottle to empty.

ALEX GETTING DRESSED V: A woman's sleek fingers have made a neat knot in a conservative tie. Now they slide the knot lovingly, almost sensually, up to the collar.

INT. LIVING ROOM, THE SUMMER HOUSE (CAROLINA SHORE) - DAY

CHLOE'S face, seems very young. All the others have been in their early 30's, but Chloe is barely past twenty and there's no question about the difference it makes. This face, this young, smooth, striking face, is straining now, heavily beaded with sweat. Chloe is on the thick carpet of this luxurious room doing tortuous dancer stretches. Her long, wonderful, generous body is bent at an impossible angle. She is working hard.

The room is singular to say the least, done entirely and expensively in original Art Deco furnishings. Chloe's bright leotard jumps extravagantly from the overall muted color scheme.

This house belongs to Sarah and Harold.

ALEX GETTING DRESSED VI: A brush pulls his thick hair neatly away from a part. One more touch makes it perfect.

INT./EXT. NICK'S PORSCHE (ON THE ROAD) - DAY

No face this time. Rather, we have NICK'S hands on the steering wheel of his aging 911. Beyond the hands, we can see the scenery streaking by at a rate inconsistent with a lawful speed. That impression is reinforced by the MUSIC, which now seems to have been emanating all along from the tape deck of this car, blasting it forward through the countryside. Now his right hand disappears for a second and when it reappears we follow it to the ashtray, where it stubs out a massive joint and leaves the roach, then travels to the glove compartment. From the mess of that box it extracts a large bottle of pills and flips the cap off with a thumb. The hand shakes a dozen pills of various colors on the passenger seat. The fingers forage through pills, picking out only white ones. The hand disappears from view.

We're outside and behind the Porsche now, trying to keep up. But suddenly the car jumps into hyperspace, and is gone.

Taking the MUSIC with it.

ALEX GETTING DRESSED VII: It's very quiet now. Only the rustling of the shirt's broadcloth, as the sleek feminine fingers pull a cuff down out of the shadow of the suit's sleeve. The fingers turn the arm, which seems oddly slack, and insert a cuff-link into the holes of the cuff. Then, very deliberately, first on one hand, then the other, the fingers pull the cuffs down, to cover that which body make-up could not hide -- the straight, awful slits across the tender insides of the wrists.

THE MAIN TITLE ENDS.

A NEW TITLE APPEARS: THURSDAY

EXT. CHURCH (CAROLINA SHORE) - DAY

People are arriving for Alex's funeral. It's not a huge crowd but the small parking area is busy. Near the entry drive, next to the parked hearse and limos, stands Harold, directing traffic, as much from nervous energy as actual need. A cab pulls in. Sam gets out with a single bag and pays the driver. Harold comes over and embraces Sam. It is the first of many ambivalent reunions today; they're glad to see each other, but desperately unhappy about the cause.

SAM
Harold.

HAROLD
Sam.

They hold each other at arms length.

SAM
Christ.

Harold just nods. Harold picks up Sam's bag and carries it across the drive to his big Mercedes.

HAROLD
I'll put it in here. You can drive this to the cemetary.

Sam stops on the word "cemetary".

SAM
Christ. Were you here?

HAROLD
No, Alex was staying here at the summer house. Sarah and I were at the Richmond place with the kids.

A couple is coming past them out of the parking lot. The woman recognizes Sam from TV and whispers excitedly to her husband about that being "Sam Weber". Her husband doesn't know who that is, but he looks back anyway.

INT. VESTIBULE OF CHURCH - DAY

Meg stands alone in the crowd near the front door. Karen comes in with her husband, RICHARD, a trim forty year-old. Meg and Karen embrace.

MEG
Karen.

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KAREN

Meg.

RICHARD

I'm Richard. You must be Meg.

KAREN

Oh, I'm sorry. Meg, this is Richard.

MEG

Hi.

They shake hands.

RICHARD

I'm really happy to meet you. I mean, I'm sorry we have to ... Well, uh, Karen's told me so much about all of you ...

KAREN

Do you believe this?

Meg shakes her head sadly.

KAREN

Where is Sarah?

Meg looks around and points across the vestibule.

AT THE DOOR OF THE SIDE ROOM. Sarah is coming out of the side room, in which are sitting the open coffin and Alex's Parents. She greets some of the local people. Karen comes up with Richard in tow. Karen and Sarah embrace warmly. Sarah is totally composed. She offers Richard her hand.

SARAH

You must be Richard. I'm Sarah. I'm glad you could be here.

RICHARD

I'm very happy to be here -- I mean, I'm sad we're ...

Karen silences him with a withering glance.

SARAH

(to Karen)

They're going to close the coffin, if you want to see him.

KAREN

I don't want to see him, not like this.

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Sarah understands.

RICHARD
(a little too quickly)
I want to see him.

Sarah steps aside and Richard hurries in. Karen glances with embarrassment at Sarah.

SARAH
He seems nice.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Michael pulls up next to Harold in his rented car. Harold motions him toward the lot. Michael leans out the driver's window.

MICHAEL
Harold, it's me!

Harold looks again, quizzical.

MICHAEL
Michael!

HAROLD
Michael, god! I'm sorry.

MICHAEL
Am I late?

HAROLD
(negative)
They're going to close the coffin.

MICHAEL
I want to see him.

HAROLD
(opens the car door)
Go ahead. I'll take the car.

Michael jumps out and runs toward the church.

INT. VESTIBULE

Michael comes flying into the crowd. He see Karen, gives her a quick kiss and embrace.

MICHAEL
I'm sorry, baby.

She looks at him blankly as he hurries on, looking back at her.

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MICHAEL

It's Michael.

He's gone.

KAREN

(to herself)

Michael?

INT. SIDE ROOM

Richard flicks one last accessing glance into the coffin and moves off toward the vestibule, barely avoiding a collision with Michael. Sam stands somberly before the open coffin looking down at the unseen corpse. Michael slides to a stop using the coffin to brace himself. The sight of the corpse causes him to instinctively recoil. Sam and Michael look at each other and embrace.

MICHAEL

It's Michael.

SAM

I know.

They turn to the body.

MICHAEL

He looks so ... depressed.

SAM

Bad make-up.

MICHAEL

Alex ... what is this shit?

There is a sob from behind them. They turn to face Alex's parents. ALEX'S FATHER is stifling his tears.

SAM

(to Michael)

You remember Alex's parents, don't you?

MICHAEL

Mr. and Mrs. Marshall, I'm so sorry.
I don't know what to say ...

He hugs each of them.

MICHAEL

... He was one of the best ... and you were so good to me when I came home with Alex. Some of the best memories I have are of sitting

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

around your kitchen table eating that wonderful ... what was that? ... was that stew or what?

Alex's parents look at him blankly. Sam tries to edge Michael away.

MICHAEL

It's Michael!

INT. LADIES ROOM

Meg takes two Valium and two aspirin from a fancy pill case and tosses them back with some water. Karen comes out of a stall and begins washing and touching up her make-up as Meg lights a cigarette.

KAREN

I never know what to wear to these things. All my black stuff is sexy.

MEG

You're fine.

KAREN

You don't think this is too sexy?

Meg shakes her head. Karen unbuttons her top button and the whole nature of the dress alters radically.

KAREN

How about this?

MEG

That's sexy.

They giggle as Karen buttons up again.

MEG

Can you believe we're laughing it up at Alex's funeral?

KAREN

I can't think about it. Do you think Nick will come?

MEG

Who knows with Nick?

KAREN

How 'bout Sam?

MEG

He's here. Didn't you see him?

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Karen reacts big to this news. Her fingers flutter near her top button, but return to primping with new commitment. Her tone is casual.

KAREN

No, I didn't.

Sarah comes in.

SARAH

I knew you guys would be in here.

She immediately plucks the cigarette from Karen's hand and takes a deep drag.

SARAH

They're about to roll him in.

KAREN

(to Meg)

How does he look?

SARAH

He looks dead.

KAREN

I meant, Sam.

MEG

Don't you have a TV?

SARAH

Sam's not getting older, he's getting prettier.

Karen moves to the door. Just before she goes out, her back to them, she unbuttons her top button again.

MEG

Are you okay?

SARAH

(very cool)

I'm fine.

INT. SIDE ROOM

Alex's Parents watch as the lid of the coffin is gently closed.

INT. SANCTUARY

Chloe sits all alone in the front row on the left side of the sanctuary as the rows behind her fill up. She looks calm and

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beautiful in a second-hand print dress and boots. With dry, clear eyes, she watches Alex's coffin being wheeled onto the altar. Alex's Parents move in to the front row across the aisle. Alex's Mother casts one killing glance in Chloe's direction before her husband steps into her eyeline and gets her seated.

AT THE DOOR OF THE SANCTUARY. Harold points Karen and Richard toward seats on the far right side, next to the organ on which a Church Organist has just begun to play "Rock of Ages". An Usher hovers nearby. As Sam and Michael come in, Harold indicates to the Usher that these two are pallbearers. The Usher nods and starts to lead them toward the front rows on the left. Harold takes Michael's arm and walks with him.

HAROLD

I want you to sit with Chloe.

MICHAEL

Okay.

HAROLD

I've got to be up there, and it's a little touchy with Alex's folks.

MICHAEL

I understand.

Harold gives him a "I knew you would" squeeze.

MICHAEL

Who's Chloe?

Harold gestures discreetly in Chloe's direction.

HAROLD

It's Alex's girlfriend.

Michael peers into the pews.

Harold indicates Chloe in the front row, which they have almost reached. Michael is impressed, brightening at the sight of her. But when he speaks to Harold, he's all solicitous friend.

MICHAEL

I'll take care of her.

Michael moves off toward her as Harold climbs onto the altar and takes a seat next to the MINISTER who greets him comfortingly.

AT THE BACK OF THE SANCTUARY, Sarah waves off the Usher and starts down the aisle with Meg. Suddenly Meg stops at a rear aisle seat behind and away from the crowd. Sarah indicates seats near the front left side (where Sam has sat) but Meg

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declines, wishing a measure of solitude. Sarah goes down to the front and sits next to Alex's Parents, who treat her like a daughter.

MEG'S FACE. She takes in the scene sadly. Then focuses up ahead.

WHAT SHE SEES: For several beats she lingers on Alex's coffin, then, through a jumble of heads, she sees Michael leaning close to Chloe, murmuring his comfort. Chloe is impassive. Meg's gaze shifts back a row on the far left and settles on Sam. Sam is staring intently off across the sanctuary. Meg follows his look. He is staring at Karen.

AT KAREN. She fidgets with the paper memorial program and looks up, across the church. There is an instant of flustered panic as her eyes lock with Sam. She seems momentarily guilty about Richard, then nods at Sam and half-waves. Sam nods back and shifts his attentions to Richard, who he finds staring at him.

THE ORGAN MUSIC STOPS. The MINISTER, a balding, white-haired old gentleman moves slowly to the pulpit with feeble, hesitant steps. He speaks with a thick Carolina drawl.

MINISTER

Sometimes it is hard for us to believe
that the Good Lord has a plan ...

Meg shakes her head. This is going to be just what she feared. She murmurs to herself, ahead of the Minister --

MEG

(sotto voice)

... and this is one of those times.

MINISTER

... this is one of those times. I
didn't know Alex Marshall personally ...

MEG

(sotto voice)

... but that won't stop me from shooting
off my mouth about him.

MINISTER

... but after speaking with his loved
ones, I feel as though I did.

Chloe watches the Minister blankly. Michael can't help himself; he watches Chloe, eyes flicking over her relentlessly.

MINISTER

This was a man who drew great love
and loyalty to him. Love surrounds
and soothes this gathering ...

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This preacher is not enough to hold Sam's attention. He steals a glance over at Karen and Richard. Richard is patting Karen's thigh in a comforting manner.

MINISTER

Our town was Alex's adopted home. He was building a home nearby with his own hands. This is the place he was happiest...

RICHARD

(softly, to Karen)

He picked a funny way to show it.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The liveried Hearse and Limo Drivers are having a great old time listening to a National League playoff game on the radio in the hearse.

Now the approaching sound of rock 'n roll MUSIC and a ROARING ENGINE creeps in. One of the Drivers looks off in the direction of the noise. Nick's Porsche appears far in the distance, coming on very fast.

INT. SANCTUARY

Alex's Mother is finding this part of the Minister's speech especially painful. Sarah takes her hand.

MINISTER

... a brilliant physics student at the University of Michigan who, paradoxically, chose to turn his back on science and taste of life through a seemingly random series of occupations. Just one of many paradoxes in too brief a journey.

Michael's disdain for this clergyman is peaking. He leans close to Chloe and whispers --

MICHAEL

If he reads "To an Athlete Dying Young", I'm gonna slug him.

Chloe can't relate to that.

CHLOE

(quietly, matter-of-fact)

Alex wasn't an athlete.

Michael's clock is momentarily stopped. Before he can recover, an OLDER WOMAN seated behind him suddenly loses a WAILING SOB

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so loud that several people, including Michael, actually jump.

The Minister is unfazed by the sound. With his next utterance we notice that some tiny little change has happened to his tone. It comes in so quietly and subtly that the crowd is a little slow to notice it. Or recognize immediately what it is -- pure, jolting, white-hot anger.

MINISTER

I'm afraid I can find no easy comfort here today. When a man like Alex chooses to leave us, something is very wrong in the world ...

Another SOB from the Older Woman.

EXT. CHURCH

The Porsche skids to a stop at the curb behind the limos, the blasting MUSIC dies with the engine. Nick jumps out and hustles toward the church, knotting a tie as he goes. He's wearing an old corduroy jacket and blue jeans, his only outfit. The Drivers watch him disappear and eye his filthy car.

INT. SANCTUARY

Now Meg is really listening to the Minister; she's surprised and intrigued by what she's hearing.

MINISTER

... if young people--capable of so much good--can destroy themselves. Now, when the need for them in our troubled world has never been greater!...

Behind Meg, we see Nick enter the sanctuary. The Usher immediately intercepts him and the two men whisper together. Having identified Nick as another pallbearer, the Usher points him down to the left front (where Sam is seated). Nick heads that way, stopping only long enough to touch Meg on her shoulder. Meg looks up, smiles sadly and puts her hand momentarily on his.

From his seat on the altar, Harold watches Nick move to his seat. He's glad to see him.

MINISTER

(voice rising)

... To what do we attribute this ... this confusion, which seems to have settled on a generation like some ghastly, poisonous cloud?!

Karen sees Nick make his way to Sam. Something strong flicks

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through her eyes. Richard turns to look at the newcomer curiously.

RICHARD

(to Karen)

Is that Nick?

Karen "shh's" him with a finger to her lips.

Nick sits down next to Sam. They clasp hands warmly. Nick's whisper is barely audible.

NICK

(to Sam)

I wanted to see Alex.

SAM

(indicates the coffin)

That's him.

NICK

(nods)

He always got the best seats.

The Minister points to the coffin with a scary index finger.

MINISTER

This is not Alex! This is the empty
shell of his body. Alex is spirit now.

Again, from the Older Woman a giant SOB. Michael turns to grab an irritated look at the offending mourner. He sees Nick and nods to him.

NICK

(to Sam, indicating Minister)

Who is this dude?

SAM

Elmer Gantry.

The Minister leans over the pulpit now. His voice is softer now, but awesomely intense.

MINISTER

(indicating the coffin)

... But why are we left with this? ...
It makes me angry. And I don't know
what to do with my anger ... Are not
the satisfactions of being a good man
among our common men great enough to
sustain us any more? Where did Alex's
hope go?

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The Minister pauses. Sarah stares at him as if mesmerized. Meg doesn't know that tears are streaming down her cheeks.

MINISTER

Maybe that is the small resolution we can take from here today ... to try and regain that hope which must have eluded Alex.

(long pause, then softly)

Let us all try to have hope.

The Minister bows his head a moment then turns to Harold.

MINISTER

Harold.

Harold just stares at him a moment, then seems to remember and stands up. The Minister sits down as Harold approaches the pulpit, pulling an index card full of notes from his pocket. He stands there staring at the index card a little while. Finally he looks up. There are tears in his eyes. The notes are of no use to him now.

Nick and Sam and Michael all stare up at him and they are all stricken now by the sight of Harold's face. That, more than anything, has made this event real to them at last.

HAROLD

(with some difficulty)

I did know Alex. And I loved him ... I see here today all those people that Alex loved ... His family ... his friends ...

(he has to stop for a moment)

... Not all of us have been able to see each other much these last years. But neither time nor distance could break the bonds we feel ... Alex drew us together from the start and now ... he brings us together again.

Karen's body is quietly shaking as she cries. Richard puts an arm around her.

HAROLD

(after a long silence)

I don't know why this happened ... but I do know that there was always something about Alex that was ... too good ... for this world. I only hope that wherever he is now ... he ...

Harold breaks down completely now. He can't go on. The Minister comes forward and leads Harold gently back to his seat, then

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returns to the pulpit. He reads from a sheet of paper on the pulpit.

Sarah watches, pained but dry-eyed. She comforts Alex's Mother.

MINISTER

Burial will be at the Westglade Memorial Park. There will be a reception at the home of Harold and Sarah Cooper, 23 Bayside Road, immediately following. Now Karen Bowers, an old friend of Alex's, will play one of Alex's favorite songs.

There is another thunderous SOB from behind Michael.

Karen leaves her seat by Richard and replaces the Organist as the church becomes very quiet. She checks the organ pedals, sets herself and begins to play: it takes a few bars to recognize it on this instrument, but the song she is playing is a hard-driving, kick-out-the-jams, rock classic of the sixties. Some of the older Mourners exchange concerned looks, but Alex's friends cannot suppress small, pleased smiles of recognition and memory.

The Funeral Director has appeared at the altar and now begins to wrangle the Pallbearers into place. Alex's Father and Alex's Uncle take spots around the casket, but our attention is on Harold, Nick, Sam, and Michael, who now move up to take their places, exchanging somber glances over the remains of their friend.

The Funeral Director helps them slide the heavy casket onto the rolling cart and they move it down the center aisle. The assembled Mourners move out of the church behind it. Karen continues to play away in the emptying sanctuary.

EXT. CHURCH - FRONT DOORS - DAY

The organ music continues.

As the casket reaches the front doors, the Funeral Director stops the procession. From here, down the steps to the hearse, the coffin must be carried.

The Pallbearers all exchange "get ready" looks and then LIFT. In the instant that they lift, straining under the surprising weight of their dead loved one, the MUSIC shifts from organ into the original FULL INSTRUMENTATION of the rock song. This version continues to play throughout the following action:

AT THE HEARSE, the Pallbearers slide the casket into the back, each of their hands in turn coming off the handles, empty, as they let go.

AT THE CARS. The Mourners have spilled outside and are making their way to the cars.

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Nick embraces Sarah warmly. She moves off to the first limo, which she enters with Alex's Parents. Harold hugs Nick and follows Sarah.

Sam gives Karen a hug and is introduced to Richard. Nick steps up and gets the same treatment.

Michael has renewed his custody of Chloe. Sam points the way and the three of them walk over to Harold's Mercedes. Michael opens the back door decorously for Chloe, but she seems not to notice, going around instead to take the passenger seat. Michael gets in back alone. Sam drives.

Nick has Meg protectively under his arm as he leads her to his Porsche and opens the passenger door for her. She's feeling better already in her good friend's presence. She sits down, but immediately arches her rear off the seat and sweeps a handful of pills from the seat into her palm. Nick apologizes for the mess, takes and pockets the pills.

Richard, talking up a storm, wheels their rented car into the line of the cortege as Karen watches the crowd silently from the passenger seat.

A Motorcycle Cop in the lead, the procession snakes out of the church parking lot.

EXT. THE TRIP TO THE CEMETARY (VARIOUS SHOTS) - DAY

The funeral procession moves uninterrupted through the pretty, little resort community. Now in the off-season, this beach town is largely deserted. Only a few cars must wait at intersections for the passing cortege, which glides through a park, along beachfront, then around the small bay to the beat of the rock MUSIC.

We INTERCUT this progression with:

INT. MERCEDES

Michael is leaning forward between the two front seats as far as possible. Sam looks past him, over at Chloe.

SAM

Are you alright?

CHLOE

Yeah. I'm a little disappointed.
(indicates the limos ahead)
I wanted to ride up there.

Michael and Sam understand; they're sympathetic.

CHLOE

I've always wanted to ride in a limo.

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Michael and Sam exchange looks.

MICHAEL

I do half my work in limos.

CHLOE

Are you a chauffeur?

Sam laughs.

MICHAEL

No. I'm a journalist.

This, too, draws a laugh from Sam. Michael shoots him an irritated glance.

MICHAEL

I write for People Magazine.

Sam smiles. Michael sees it.

MICHAEL

(to Sam)

I can't believe you're still mad about that thing.

SAM

Michael, this isn't the time. Let's forget it.

MICHAEL

I will if you will. On this day most of all we should remember we're friends.

Sam nods. Michael nods.

CHLOE

(to Sam)

And you're an actor?

Sam affirms it. Now Michael can't stop himself -- he snorts a laugh. Sam shoots him a look.

INT. PORSCHE

Meg takes a deep toke from a large joint.

NICK

(warning)

That's pretty strong stuff.

MEG

I feel terrible ... I had a fight with Alex the last time we spoke. I yelled at him.

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NICK

That's probably why he killed himself.

She looks at him now.

MEG

Good ol' Nick.

He smiles, touches her. They drive in silence.

NICK

(finally)

What was the fight about?

She remembers, ruefully, through the marijuana haze.

MEG

I told him he was wasting his life.

INT. LIMOUSINE

Harold sits on the jump seat. Sarah holds the hand of Alex's Father. Alex's Mother stares out the window.

INT. RICHARD'S RENTED CAR

Karen stares silently ahead. Richard can't get over it --

RICHARD

... I mean nothing like you described. Not at all. Not one of them looks the way I thought they would. I can't believe these are the same people you've been talking about all these years. Really.

Karen stews. Richard laughs at a thought.

RICHARD

I'd love to hear the way you described me to them.

INT. HEARSE

The casket rocks gently.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

The MUSIC ends as the cortege makes its way into the cemetery.

EXT. CEMETARY ROAD

The Porsche pulls to its stopping place in the line. Meg has only a tiny roach left. Nick takes it from her fingers and stubs it in the ashtray. Before he's finished, Meg has opened the door

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CONTINUED:

and moved off across the cemetery. Nick hurries around the car and quickly catches up to Meg, taking hold of her. She's confused. Nick points out that she has started in the wrong direction. He turns her around and leads her toward Alex's gravesite.

Richard and Karen are parked far back in the line. He has her by the arm and is leading her toward the grave. Now he veers off course, however, to move closer to a GROUNDKEEPER who is listening to the National League Playoffs on a transistor radio as he works on some shrubbery.

RICHARD

What's the score?

That's it for Karen. She wrenches her arm free.

KAREN

The score is my friend is dead. The score is you're an idiot!

She stalks off. Richard is shocked. The Groundkeeper watches her go.

GROUNDKEEPER

Doesn't like baseball, huh?

EXT. GRAVESITE

Later. Alex's coffin, surrounded by flowers, rests on the strap and winch contraption above the dark grave. The Mourners are crowded in tightly around it.

There is the same huge SOB directly behind Michael. He winces. She seems to be following him.

Sarah watches dry-eyed. Around her, people cry quietly.

MINISTER

... Thou has anointed my head with oil
and my cup shall be full/Surely thy
loving kindness and mercy shall follow
me all the days of my life ...

Once more the huge SOB. Michael cracks. He whirls from his front row position to confront the Older Woman --

MICHAEL

(hissing whisper)

Would you please put a lid on it!

MINISTER

... and I will dwell in the House
of the Lord forever.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

The Older Woman's COMPANION, a stocky fellow steps under Michael's nose.

COMPANION

Hey, pal, you're out of line.

He applies three, vigorous finger taps to Michael's solar plexus. Michael falls backwards, tripping over the handle of the coffin winch and sprawling on his back at Harold's feet. The winch unlocks and the handle spins viciously. Alex's coffin CRASHES down into the dark hole, out of sight. Meg starts to laugh, then chokes it off and begins a serious cough.

There is a loud, collective GASP from the Mourners. Nick steps over to calm the Companion as Harold helps Michael up. There is a moment of shocked silence.

MINISTER

... Amen.

Everyone just stares at each other. Finally, the Minister steps forward and takes a shovel from the mound of dirt beside the hole. He peeks once down into the grave, then turns and hands the shovel to Alex's Father.

Alex's Father steps forward, spears a load of dirt onto the shovel and tosses it down onto the casket. The dirt makes a shockingly loud BANG as it hits the metal, almost like a drum. Sarah grimaces at the sound. Alex's Father hands the shovel to Harold and moves away.

One by one, all the men and a few of the women step forward to throw on a shovelful. Our attention, however, is on the faces of the friends as this happens. Nick, Sam, Michael, Sarah, Meg, Karen, Harold and Chloe.

The BANGING of the dirt on the metal casket seems to take on a beat of its own, and before we realize it, it has become a drum-beat, the opening beats in the rock SONG that carries us into --

EXT. THE SUMMER HOUSE - DAY

Sarah's and Harold's Summer House is a huge, beautifully maintained Victorian with wide, wrap-around verandahs. The street around the manicured lawn is crowded with the parked cars of the Mourners. Some of the reception guests have overflowed onto the porch despite the crisp fall weather.

INT. DINING ROOM

This is the same house we glimpsed during Chloe's exercise in the title sequence and the whole interior is done with the same affluent care as the Art Deco living room we saw then.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

The crowd is noisy, lively even. There is enormous relief to have the funeral behind them and the gathering could easily be mistaken for a happier occasion. Michael has loaded his plate from a bounteous buffet and stands with Nick, who eyes the food, but continues to merely drink.

MICHAEL

Amazing tradition. They throw a great party for you on the one day they know you can't come.

Michael is staring off into the adjoining den, where Chloe is surrounded by an admiring group of Male Locals in their thirties.

NICK

Who are all these people?

MICHAEL

I don't know. Maybe they're Alex's new friends.

The concept is foreign to Nick --

NICK

New friends?

INT. LIVING ROOM

Karen and Sam stand together, slightly uneasy.

SAM

You look great.

KAREN

You look better.

SAM

Well, of course, but ...

He laughs and she joins him.

SAM

How's your life?

KAREN

Great. How about you?

SAM

Not so great.

KAREN

Oh, we're telling the truth.

Sam smiles. They understand each other.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

SAM

You heard I got divorced?

She certainly did. A ten year old BOY FAN comes up next to Sam. He has a Memorial Program and pen in hand.

BOY FUN

(to Sam)

Are you J. T. Lancer?

SAM

(friendly)

That's the character I play. I'm Sam Weber.

BOY FAN

Well, can I have your autograph, whoever you are?

Sam puts a hand on the boy's shoulder.

SAM

This is a time for us to thinking about Alex.

BOY FAN

I'll give you a dollar.

SAM

You're on!

Karen laughs.

INT. DINING ROOM

Richard and Michael are standing dish to dish.

RICHARD

Karen and I are staying here tonight. We have a flight back to Detroit in the morning. Are you staying?

MICHAEL

No. I have to fly out to Dallas tonight. I'm interviewing a fourteen year old, blind baton twirler.

EXT. VERANDAH

Meg, very stoned, is wedged as securely as possible against a post on the railing. Sam has brought her a plate of food. He holds it for her.

MEG

I never should have smoked that joint.
(MORE)

MEG (CONT'D)

I can't do this stoned.

(she vaguely indicates the reception)

I'm not gonna remember any of the appropriate death stuff.

(she takes a bite)

That's why I never smoke anymore. Dope makes me stupid.

Nick has walked up on this.

NICK

You talking about me?

MEG

There's the guy that did this to me.

(she puts her arm around Nick)

I no longer know how to handle myself stoned.

NICK

You don't have to "handle yourself" with us.

Meg knows it's true. She takes Sam into the embrace.

MEG

Will you marry me? Both of you.

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INT. DINING ROOM

Sarah takes a tray of food from one of the Hired Help and starts arranging it on the buffet. Karen and Michael are with her. Karen surveys the crowd.

KAREN

You'd never get a crowd this big at my funeral.

MICHAEL

Ah, Karen ... I'll come. And I'll bring a date.

KAREN

(to Sarah)

I know this is hard for you, but it's all beautiful.

SARAH

Yeah, we put on a great funeral here.

MICHAEL

Maybe I'll have mine here too.

SARAH

(continues to work)

We give first preference to people who

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

kill themselves in one of the upstairs
bathrooms.

Even Michael is stopped by this. He and Karen look at Sarah.
She continues to arrange the food.

SARAH

That was a terrible thing to say. I
don't know why I said that.

Michael puts his arm around her.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Nick sits on an ottoman in front of the chair where Alex's
Mother has settled. She regards Nick coolly; there's something
a little unsettling in her tone.

ALEX'S MOTHER

Of course I remember you, Nick. You're
the one who introduced Alex to marijuana.

NICK

Well ... I'm not sure --

ALEX'S MOTHER

You really changed his life. He com-
pletely lost his motivation.

(there's ice in her smile)

So ... what are you doing these days?

NICK

Me? I'm Secretary-General of the U. N.

INT. HALLWAY

Michael has got Sam cornered in a private spot.

MICHAEL

... I don't know where they got that
student radical shit but it wasn't
from me. I didn't even know they
were doing a story on you. I don't
know why you don't believe me.

SAM

Let's drop it.

MICHAEL

Tell me you believe me.

SAM

I believe you. I always believe you.

MICHAEL

Good. Honest to god, Sam, I know it's
(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
crap. That's why I'm getting out.

SAM
Yeah? What are you going to do?

MICHAEL
I'm opening a club.

SAM
No shit.

MICHAEL
Yeah. Like Elaine's. But hipper, you know. Elaine's is dead.

SAM
You've got the money?

MICHAEL
Almost ... almost.

SAM
Well, let me know. I might be interested.

Sam walks away. Michael watches him go, his mind whirring like a calculator.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Meg and Sarah are together in the living room. Sarah is staring off into the den at Chloe with a look of distaste.

MEG
How long were they together?

SARAH
Four months.
(shakes her head)
I can't believe it. His funeral and she's stoned.

Meg gets a headache, instantly.

EXT. THE STREET AND LAWN

The Mourners are slowly leaving the party. Spaces begin to open at the curb as the day turns to dusk.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Harold comes in. He surveys the scene and spots Meg sitting alone on the sofa. Harold sits down close to her.

MEG
I miss him already, Harold.
(Harold knows)
Why didn't I see him more?

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

I saw him plenty.

They're silent together for a moment.

MEG

I don't have anyone in Atlanta I can talk to about this.

HAROLD

Then don't go back to Atlanta. Stay here for the weekend.

MEG

I'd love to, but I can't. I've got work to do. I don't have any clothes ...

Harold nods.

INT. OFFICE

Michael sits at the desk in the dark, quiet room that serves both Harold and Sarah as an office. Michael listens to the phone at his ear, until --

MICHAEL

Give me a break here, Jim. I'll fly out to Dallas on Monday. She's not gonna regain her eyesight over the weekend.

(he listens)

I'm telling you I think I've got something good right here.

(he listens, then begins to vamp)

I don't know ... It's about everything -- suicide, despair. Where did our hope go? Lost hope. That's it, lost hope.

(he listens)

You think everything's boring. You wouldn't say that if it was the Lost Hope Diet.

INT. DEN

The crowd is gone now, but Chloe is sitting in exactly the same spot. Karen sits with her. They're both drinking.

KAREN

So you and Alex were staying here?

CHLOE

Yeah. We have a room upstairs. We did ... I do.

(a beat)

I found him.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Karen winces.

KAREN
It must have been awful.

CHLOE
It was a real mess.

Karen comforts her.

KAREN
What are you going to do now?

CHLOE
Oh, we cleaned it up.

Karen tries to stay with her.

KAREN
So ... you're going to stay here?

CHLOE
Yeah. For a while. 'Till Sarah
kicks me out.

KAREN
I'm sure she'd never do that.

Chloe shrugs, takes a drink.

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EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF HOUSE/FRONT WALK

Harold and Sarah exchange long goodbyes with Alex's Parents and see them on their way. Harold takes Sarah's arm as they start up the walk. They notice their Elderly Neighbors out on their porch next door and wave to them. Sarah leans on Harold.

HAROLD
Michael's office called and he doesn't
have to be in Dallas until Monday. He
asked me if he could stay the weekend.

SARAH
Harold, you didn't ...

HAROLD
What could I say? He knows Sam is
staying ... and Richard and Karen
and Meg.

SARAH
Meg's not staying.

HAROLD
Well ... actually ...

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Sarah gets his drift. She's not happy about it, but she's not sure what she feels. She's tired.

SARAH

Where are we going to put everybody?

They start up the verandah stairs.

HAROLD

We'll make room.

Nick is leaning against the post at the top of the stairs, a glass in hand.

NICK

Hi, guys.

Harold and Sarah look up at him. They love him. They look at each other.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL, LINEN CLOSET

Sarah is pulling piles of sheets and pillow cases from an immaculately neat, heavily stocked linen closet. She loads them into Harold's arms.

SARAH

I don't think I have enough sheets.

HAROLD

What about those?

He indicates a higher shelf full of brightly designed children's sheets. Sarah grimaces.

SARAH

You think?

HAROLD

It'll be fine.

SARAH

(pulling the sheets down)

Yeah, we got a regular crash pad.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DUSK

Nick has pulled the Porsche next to the house and is lying under it with his lower body sticking out. He's messing with something under there. Richard stands above him admiring the car, despite its ragged condition.

RICHARD

... Yeah, advertising's all right. There's a lot of bullshit with clients and stuff, but it's all right. And
(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

it's a decent living -- not as much
as we spend, of course.

Richard laughs, painfully. Nick tries to chuckle from below.

RICHARD

Just kidding ... It's exactly as much
as we spend.

(almost another laugh)

What d'ya got there, oil leak or some-
thing? Can I give you a hand?

NICK

No ... I think I've got it.

He slides out from under the car and stands up. In one hand is
a wrench. In the other, a very neat, plastic-wrapped package,
about book size -- obviously a large, dealer-size quantity of
some illegal narcotic.

INT. DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM

Karen and Sarah are making up the twin beds in the cheerfully
decorated bedroom of Sarah's six year-old daughter.

KAREN

... I feel like I've never been alone
in my own home. Never. Either Richard
is there or the boys or the housekeeper.
Remember those lab rats that went nuts
when they were deprived of their privacy?

SARAH

They're living with you too?!
(Karen laughs)
Should we push these beds together?

KAREN

Why?

SARAH

(a look)
O-kay ... how 'bout further apart?

Meg walks in and immediately begins gleefully examining all the
toys and furnishings as if in a museum.

MEG

Hey, you got a great room!

SARAH

I had to put Meg in Carmelina's room.
(to Meg)
Are you going to be all right?

Meg is stymied by a robot-like toy on the dresser; she turns
knobs vainly.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

MEG

Are you kidding? I'm gonna give up law and come work for you. Besides I can't sleep in a room without a crucifix. What is this thing?

Karen walks over and, with experienced mother's hands, slaps a cartridge into the robot toy. It immediately begins to talk in robot accents. Meg jumps back in fear.

ROBOT

The third largest planet in the solar system is ... a) Venus, b) Mercury, c) Saturn.

A BEEP-BEEP-BEEPING tone begins the thinking time. Meg grimaces.

MEG

Oh, my god. I hate pop quizzes. Pluto. No. I give up. What?

Karen goes back to making the bed and to her interrupted conversation with Sarah.

KAREN

At least you're with adult patients all day.

SARAH

Yeah, they're a real blast.

KAREN

At least they can drive themselves around.

ROBOT

The third largest planet is ... Saturn.

Meg squeals from the closet. They turn to her. She's holding up a little dress.

MEG

(coos)

Look at this cute little dress!

KAREN

I should have had girls. I'd be a better mother.

INT. ATTIC

The attic is a large, clean, unfinished room up under the sloping, gabled roof. There are two twin beds up here, some furniture and lots of neatly-packed old things. Harold and Sam are making

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

up the beds.

HAROLD

... In January we open in Greensboro
and in April our second store in Norfolk.

SAM

How many is that?

HAROLD

Twenty-seven and twenty-eight.

SAM

(whistles)

You better watch out, some big monster
is gonna buy you.

HAROLD

We've had offers.

Sam works a moment, shakes his head.

SAM

Who would have thought we'd both
make so much bread? Two revolu-
tionaries.

HAROLD

Yeah.

(a beat)

Good thing it's not important to
us.

SAM

Right.

They laugh, get back to work.

SAM

Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke.

Harold laughs again.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL - CHLOE'S DOOR

Michael knocks on a bedroom door.

MICHAEL

Chloe? Are you there?

Chloe opens the door. She is wearing a tee shirt and bikini
panties and looks irresistible.

CHLOE

Yeah?

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

(regaining his breath)

Hi. I just wanted to make sure you were all right.

CHLOE

I'm fine.

Michael stands there, looking at her.

MICHAEL

Good.

CHLOE

Thanks, Michael.

She closes the door. He is slow to leave, transported by the sound of his name on her lips, a lifting of the spirits reflected in the first beats of the rock MUSIC that begins now and continues over --

THE UNPACKING MONTAGE:

INT. ATTIC

Sam opens his fashionably worn-out, very expensive leather bag and takes out: several identically faded, carefully-pressed work shirts and jeans; a beeper from a phone-mate, three TV scripts with "J. T. LANCER" slashed across them, a Nikon, a paperback, THE PORTABLE KAFKA, and a hairdryer.

INT. DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM

Karen opens the huge suitcase on her bed and begins unloading the top items: a huge make-up selection case; a diaphragm; a copy of US Magazine with Sam on the cover; a hairdryer and curling iron. Underneath all this is an enormous amount of clothes.

Richard makes an artful arrangement on his bedside table of two items: a bottle of Maalox and a traveling picture of their two sons, eight and ten years old.

INT. OFFICE

Michael sits on the sofa in the office to unpack and set up camp. He takes out: a mini-cassette tape recorder; a reporter's notebook; a harmonica; a hairdryer; some bright bikini undershorts. Some prophylactics fall out of the clothing. He stuffs them back in his bag.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Nick opens the trunk of the Porsche. He has no suitcase. His clothes and toiletries are a jumble in the trunk. He picks through it.

CONTINUED:

Harold comes out of the house in running gear -- extremely well-used -- says something to Nick and heads off into the gloom for a serious run.

INT. MAID'S ROOM

Meg stands at the dresser on top of which she has set her legal briefcase. She stares at the crucifix hanging on the wall above the dresser. Finally, she flips open the top of the briefcase, blocking out the sight of the crucifix. The MUSIC FADES.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - SHOWER

Hot water is beating down, steaming the room, but there doesn't appear to be anyone in the shower. Now we hear a HUMAN SOUND in the roar of the water. Now we see Sarah -- she is sitting on the floor of the shower. The water beats down on her, making it impossible to see her tears as she cries.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

LATER. Meg, Sam, Karen and Michael sit rather stiffly nursing drinks. Meg wears a borrowed robe and fluffy slippers. Wonderful, mellow Sixties MOTOWN MUSIC plays softly from the elaborate stereo system.

MEG

... here I was working with the Philadelphia public defenders and my clients were just the scum of the earth, really extreme repulsivos. I mean one of my guys got caught in the house, right, and he and his friends have beat up the husband and raped the wife and then tried to blow the whole place up. And I asked him what happened and he says, "I was in Montreal at the time." Really the worst.

MICHAEL

Who did you think your clients were going to be? Grumpy and Sneezzy?

SAM

No, Huey and Bobby.

MEG

I don't know. I just didn't think they'd all be so ... guilty.

Harold comes in, freshly showered and feeling good. He walks up behind the sofa Meg's on and does a neat Fosbury Flop to

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

land prone on the sofa beside her. Michael and Sam seem relieved by his behavior model in this fancy room. Michael immediately puts his feet up on the coffee table; Sam swivels to lie down on the sofa.

SAM

And then?

MEG

And then ... I left. I had a friend from law school who was with a firm in Atlanta doing real-estate law. I went to see them. And the offices seemed so clean. And the clients were raping only the land. And, of course, there was the money. El greedo strikes again.

She takes Harold's feet on her lap in a friendly way.

HAROLD

Sarah has a robe like that.

MEG

Not this weekend she doesn't.

HAROLD

I always want to jump her when she wears that thing.

MICHAEL

Harold, don't you have any other music? Like from this century.

HAROLD

There is no other music. Not in my house.

MICHAEL

There's been a lot of terrific music in the last ten years.

HAROLD

(totally uninterested)

Like what?

Sarah settles onto the arm of the sofa near Harold's head. She's in a robe and has a drink in hand and looks much healthier for having cried. Michael passes a smoking joint to Sam after Meg waves it off.

KAREN

How about you, Michael? Tell us about big time journalism.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Where I work we have only one editorial rule: you can't write anything longer than the average person can read during the average crap. I'm tired of having all my work read in the can.

HAROLD

People read Tolstoy in the can.

MICHAEL

Yeah, but they can't finish it.

Sarah surveys the lounging group.

SARAH

This is certainly a familiar scene.

They know what she means.

SAM

It's making me feel very guilty. I'm so happy to be here and I'm sick about the reason.

SARAH

(gets up)

I'm going to bed.

SAM

I'm sorry. We'll talk about something else.

SARAH

That's okay. I'm exhausted. Goodnight, everyone.

They say goodnight as she heads out with her drink.

HAROLD

I'll be up in a minute.

SAM

(to Harold)

I'm sorry.

HAROLD

Hey, we all feel that way.

SAM

I'd forgotten what this is like. In L.A. I don't know who to trust. I feel like everybody wants something from me. I know that sounds terrible, but it's true ...

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Karen watches him, rapt.

SAM

... I don't know what people think of me. Or why they like me, or even if they like me.

There is a rather long, pregnant pause.

HAROLD

You don't have that problem here. You know I don't like you.

MICHAEL

Me either.

MEG

Ditto.

Meg gets up and walks out. Sam laughs.

INT. ATTIC

Nick snorts a line of cocaine on the dresser top, straightens and pockets his paraphernalia. As he turns to leave, Meg comes up the stairs from the second floor and blocks his way.

NICK

I was just coming down.

MEG

Don't.

She takes his hand and leads him over to one of the beds.

NICK

What are we doing?

MEG

I didn't get a chance to talk to you before. You got me stoned too quick.

She sits him down. Then drops the robe off her body as she talks. Underneath she is wearing a long nightshirt, knee socks and the fluffy slippers; it's an unusual idea of sexy.

MEG

I'm okay now. I'm just drunk. And therefore brave.

She sits on his lap and puts her arms around him.

NICK

I've always been a cowardly drunk myself.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

MEG

All I want is a little warmth.

NICK

(holds her close)

Meg, sweetheart, did I ever tell you what happened to me in Vietnam?

INT. LIVING ROOM

It's Harold, Sam, Karen and Michael now.

HAROLD

... I bought the land three years ago. There's an old house there. Alex and Chloe were working on it. It's a pretty spot. I could take you out there tomorrow if you like.

He is silent for a moment.

HAROLD

That's what I don't get. One of the things I don't get. He was really involved in that. I went with him three weeks ago to buy a table saw. Why does he do a thing like that?

They are all quiet for several long beats.

MICHAEL

(haltingly)

That's a really strange image for me -- Alex building something. You remember when he made that waterbed frame in the Tappan St. house? Nailed it to the floor, and the nails were sticking out.

HAROLD

We almost lost the second floor.

SAM

We lost our damage deposit.

HAROLD

He learned all that stuff working construction.

Michael sticks a knuckle in his eyes to hide some sudden, private tears.

SAM

I should have known.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

KAREN
How could you know?

HAROLD
No one knew. I can't even believe it now.

SAM
I don't care. I should have known.

Suddenly, there are a woman's hysterical SCREAMS from upstairs. They jump up and run toward the steps.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL/BOTTOM OF ATTIC STEPS

Sarah is halfway up the attic steps as the group from the living room arrives. Meg stumbles down the steps toward them, struggling into the flannel robe, near hysterical.

MEG
There's a fucking bat up there! I think it touched my hair.

On hearing this, Harold relaxes a bit and heads down the hall toward a closet. Karen backs away. Sarah laughs.

KAREN
Yech. I hate them. They're like rats with wings.

MICHAEL
No, pigeons are rats with wings.

SARAH
They're harmless. They eat the mosquitoes.

MEG
(heading for her room)
I'm going to wash my hair and puke.

MICHAEL
(calling after her)
Puke first.

SAM
(to Sarah)
Stand aside.

He goes up.

MICHAEL
I'll cover your rear.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

He stays with Sarah. Harold returns with a broom in hand. He mounts the stairs humming the theme from "Raiders of the Lost Ark" --

HAROLD

Dah-duh-dah-dah-dum-de-dah.

INT. ATTIC

Nick is swatting at the fluttering black spot as it whips back and forth across the room. Sam watches from the relative protection of the stairwell. When he makes out Nick's weapon he panics -- it's his sweater.

SAM

Hey. That's cashmere!

Harold comes up past Sam, his broom at the ready. The bat disappears into the gloom at the far end of the attic and doesn't fly out. Sam comes up and takes the sweater from Nick, patting it as though it were a wounded animal. Nick and Sam advance slowly into the darkness.

HAROLD

They make a weird little sound, like this --

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He demonstrates the sound of a BAT CHITTER.

NICK

(dramatically)

It's quiet here. Too quiet.

SAM

(picks up hairdryer as weapon)

That's funny, my watch has stopped too.

Sam moves up next to them as they cautiously approach the spot. Harold leans close to Sam's ear and makes the BAT CHITTER very loud. Sam jumps.

SAM

Shit!

The bat flies out past them and begins its frightened circuit of the room again. All three guys are swiping at it. Harold goes over to a window and opens it wide.

HAROLD

Maybe it'll split.

As soon as the window is up two more bats fly in.

NICK

Okay! Now we got a fair fight.

INT. DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM

Karen slips into the room and the ruckus up in the attic is louder until she closes the door. She goes over to her bed and sits down. She stares at the sleeping bulk that is her husband, Richard.

EXT. SUMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

Very quiet. Middle of the night. There is the blue glow of television in the den window.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Nick is all alone in the den. He lies on a sofa with a liquor glass balanced on his chest. He stares past it at the TV screen where an old movie is playing. The volume is so low it's barely audible.

Sam comes into the room, wearing only jeans. He leans over the back of a chair, rubs his eyes, and watches the set a moment. He nods toward the TV.

SAM

What is that?

NICK

I'm not sure.

SAM

What's it about?

NICK

I don't know.

SAM

Who's that?

NICK

I think the one in the hat did something terrible.

SAM

Like what?

NICK

You're so analytical. Sometimes you just have to let art flow over you.

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SAM

I'm hungry. I had a really dirty dream.

NICK

Was it about Karen?

SAM

Why do you say that?

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

NICK
Why should anything have changed?

SAM
You're the one she always wanted.

NICK
In the old days I wasn't emotionally equipped to satisfy her. Now, as we know, the equipment doesn't work at all.

Sam winces, pained.

SAM
Why are we talking about this? Come into the kitchen with me.

Sam stands up as Nick slowly begins to rouse himself.

SAM
I think she found what she was looking for in Richard.

NICK
(after a beat)
Yup.

They look at each other. And then they laugh. They walk through the dining room toward the kitchen.

NICK
Be careful what you want, young lady --

SAM AND NICK
(together)
-- for you will surely get it.

INT. KITCHEN

Sam and Nick are laughing again as they push through the kitchen door. They stop suddenly. Sitting at the far end of the kitchen table is Richard. He has a beer, a sandwich and its makings neatly arranged before him.

RICHARD
Hi.

Sam and Nick exchange worried glances.

SAM
Hey, Richard, what are you doing up?
Why didn't you come in?

Sam goes to the refrigerator behind Richard.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

I didn't realize anybody else was up.

Sam shoots a relieved look to Nick.

RICHARD

I've been thinking about your friend,
Alex.

Nick nods, surprised.

NICK

Did you ever meet him?

RICHARD

No. Karen's told me some. I'm ima-
gining mostly.

Sam brings a beer and some leftover reception food to the table.

RICHARD

I can never make it through the night.
Insomnia. Karen doesn't even know it.

NICK

I might have something that could help
you sleep.

RICHARD

(gives him a look)

No thanks. I don't really mind it so
much. Sometimes I just sit downstairs
alone, with my boys and my wife up stairs
asleep, and it's so ... quiet. I hate
the fact that I can't sleep, but I don't
mind the time alone. It's real thinking
time. You don't get much of that at the
office. It gives me a chance to remember
what's important. Does that sound simple-
minded?

Nick shakes his head.

RICHARD

Sometimes I think the thing about kids
is they're instant priorities. You know
you have to protect them and provide for
them. Sometimes it means your life isn't
exactly what you want it to be. There's
some asshole at work you have to kow-tow
to and sometimes you find yourself doing
things you never thought you'd do. But
you try to minimize that stuff and be
the best person you can be.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

He takes a drink and studies their faces. He doesn't want to seem foolish.

RICHARD

But you set your priorities and that's the way life is. I wonder if your friend Alex knew that. One thing's for sure -- he couldn't live with it.

Nick stares at him. Sam too, his sandwich-making hands poised and frozen in surprise.

RICHARD

I know I shouldn't talk. You guys knew him. But the thing is, nobody said it was going to be fun. At least, nobody said it to me.

DISSOLVE TO pounding surf.

A TITLE APPEARS: FRIDAY

EXT. BEACHFRONT - MORNING

Close on two sets of jogging feet: one is Harold's perfectly broken-in running shoes, the other Nick's battered, ripped tennis shoes. The men are jogging very slowly along the beachfront in the cold, gray morning light. Harold is in his running gear, Nick in jeans and sweatshirt. Nick is struggling.

They begin to walk. Harold looks at Nick's feet with concern.

HAROLD

You can't run in those. I'll get you some shoes.

NICK

(barely able to talk)

Don't bother. You've been doing this for twenty years and I'm still taller than you.

HAROLD

Keep your head up, it's easier to breathe.

(Nick straightens)

I'm about to tell you something I'm not supposed to tell anyone.

NICK

Then maybe you shouldn't.

HAROLD

I already told Alex.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

NICK

And look what happened to him.

HAROLD

(ignores him)

In a few months a very large conglomerate is going to buy my very small company. And anyone who has our stock is going to triple their money.

NICK

(impressed)

Wow. So that's how Alex could afford to buy the land from you.

HAROLD

That's right. Maybe you should use it to get into another line of work.

NICK

You never learn do you?

HAROLD

(shakes his head)

By telling you this, I have just violated about sixteen regulations of the Securities Exchange Act. So please don't repeat it.

NICK

Repeat what?

Harold smiles. They walk on.

HAROLD

I loved Alex.

(he looks at Nick)

What happened between him and Sarah hurt, I can't deny it. But that was five years ago, and we all got over it. I think they felt as bad as I did. You know, they only slept together a few times, but, in a way, their love affair had been going on forever.

NICK

She didn't marry Alex.

Harold acknowledges the thought, nods at his friend.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF SUMMER HOUSE - MORNING

LATER. A little group is out at Richard and Karen's rented car as Richard throws a suitcase in the back seat. Karen watches as Richard shakes hands and says goodbye to Harold, Sarah and Sam,

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

then waves again to Meg, who is up on the porch in her robe. Richard turns to Karen and the others beat an uncomfortable retreat as Richard pecks her cheek and gets in the car -- alone. Karen watches him for a moment, then goes over and leans down to speak to him at the driver's window. Neither of them looks happy.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sarah is alone in here. She stands before the open door of the large refrigerator, staring at its contents. After a beat, she writes something new on the shopping list that is stuck to the freezer door. Again she returns to her frozen pose and stares some more. Michael comes in, bleary-eyed and newly awake. He moves up to Sarah and cautiously peeks around her into the refrigerator. He glances between her and the open refrigerator, mystified. Finally --

MICHAEL

That's the trouble with these things,
you have to watch them every minute.

She smiles. He takes the cream out of the refrigerator and goes over to the coffee maker. He begins opening cabinet doors in search of a cup.

MICHAEL

Did I miss Karen and Richard?

SARAH

Nope. Just Richard. Karen is staying
the weekend.

MICHAEL

(eyebrows raised)
But not Richard?

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SARAH

He went back to be with the kids.

MICHAEL

Hmmmm. Interesting. How did Richard
feel about that?

SARAH

Michael, if you're going to sleep
this late, you're gonna miss a few
minidramas.

MICHAEL

I just hope you'll wake me for any-
thing really ugly.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Nick is moving slowly along the book shelves, scanning titles on rows of video cassettes. Suddenly he finds himself face to face with something else entirely: there on the shelves is a complete, almost-new video camera and recording rig. His face lights up.

EXT. REAR VERANDAH - DAY

Karen and Sam come down the porch steps and head for Harold's Mercedes, which is parked beside a good-looking Jeep in the garage. Harold comes to the back door, sticks his head out and calls to them.

HAROLD

Sarah says to make three of the milks non-fat.

(they acknowledge)

You're sure you don't mind this?

SAM

(Spanish accent)

No preblem, meester.

Sam and Karen get into the Mercedes like smiling daters. Harold watches them, thoughtful.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nick has set up the video camera and equipment in the living room and we start CLOSE ON his image in the VIDEO MONITOR on the camera. He is sitting on the couch trying to interview himself. His voice and posture shift subtly between his "Interviewer" persona and his "Guest" persona. The effect is a touch schizophrenic. As he talks, we slowly move out from behind the video camera to see him directly on the couch. The "Guest" is evasive, not too enthusiastic about this.

NICK

(Interviewer)

... So you came back from Vietnam a "changed man".

(Guest)

Well, why don't you just tell everybody.

(Interviewer)

And then in 1972 you returned to the University of Michigan to enter the doctoral program in psychology. But you just couldn't seem to finish that dissertation.

(Guest)

I could have. I chose not to. I'm not hung up on this completion thing.

(Interviewer)

Then it was on to a series of jobs, all of which you quit.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

(Guest)

What are you getting at? I was evolving.
I'm still evolving.

(Interviewer)

But your real fame came as a radio
psychologist on KQID in San Francisco.

Chloe watches unseen from the shadows of the den.

NICK

(Guest)

I wouldn't call it "fame". I had a
small, deeply disturbed following.
Are we almost done here?

(Interviewer)

What are you doing now -- or I should
say, what have you evolved into now?

(Guest)

Oh ... I'm in sales.

(Interviewer)

What are you selling?

(Guest, mumbles)

I don't have to answer that.

(looks off camera, as if to lawyer)

Do I have to answer that?

Harold sticks his head in the living room.

HAROLD

Nick, we're leaving now. Have you seen
Chloe?

NICK

(as Interviewer, perturbed)

Harold, we're on the air here.

(as Guest)

Hey, sorry, I gotta go.

(as Interviewer)

Just answer that last question!

(as Guest, grabs his own shirt, roughly)

Listen, pal, I said I've got to go!

He pushes himself against the back of the sofa.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Sarah sits on the bed with the telephone cradled against her
ear; she is meticulously folding linen as she talks. Meg
comes in with some of Sarah's clothes which she has tried on.
Sarah does not notice her yet.

SARAH

(into phone)

... No, I did not say that, Molly.
I said, we'll see ... I don't have

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 to explain it to you, young lady ...
 (Sarah notices Meg)
 ... I want you to do it because I
 said so! Do you hear me? ...

Sarah exchanges a self-conscious look with Meg as she listens to Molly. She motions to Meg for a hit off Meg's cigarette. When she speaks again her tone is softer.

SARAH
 (into phone)
 ... All right, you can do that. Tell Carmelina I said it was okay. I love you, sweetheart. Daddy will call you later.

She hangs up. Meg holds up one of Sarah's dresses against her body, modeling.

SARAH
 Sometimes I can't believe what I hear myself saying.

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EXT. CAROLINA COUNTRYSIDE - ROAD (VARIOUS SHOTS) - DAY

The jeep zips through heavily-wooded, autumn-hued country to the beat of the sixties ROCK 'N ROLL playing on its tape deck.

INT. JEEP - DAY

Michael sits next to the driving Harold. Nick and Chloe are in back. Nick is entranced by the passing scenery.

HAROLD
 ... So what happened to your partner?

MICHAEL
 He wasn't my partner. He just had the original idea for the club. He's out of it now. We weren't conducive. We'd get together and hyper each other into a frenzy. Then his wife left him for a younger woman. He couldn't make love. Eventually he was hospitalized for being such a nerd.

HAROLD
 (trying to follow this)
 So he's out of it?

MICHAEL
 He's out. It's just me, looking for investors.

CHLOE
 Alex and I made love the night before he died. It was fantastic.

CONTINUED:

The others aren't sure what prompted this.

NICK
(finally)

He went out with a bang, not a whimper.

INT. KITCHEN (THE SUMMER HOUSE) - DAY

Sarah and Meg are in the early stages of preparing what will be an enormous meal centered around a stuffed turkey. Sarah's Cuisinart is doing heavy duty. Meg is messing with what appears to be dough for a pie, but her mind is soaring in another direction --

MEG

... If they're not married, they're gay. If they're not gay, they've got big problems. They've just broken up with the most wonderful woman in the world or they've just broken up with a bitch who looked just like me. They're in transition from a monogamous relationship and they need more "space". Or they're tired of "space", but they just can't commit. They want to commit, but they're afraid to get close. They want to get close, but you don't want to get near them.

SARAH

(laughs)

It can't be that bad.

MEG

I'm going easy. You don't know. I've been out there dating for twenty years. I've gotten so I can tell in fifteen seconds if there's a chance in the world.

SARAH

Well, at least you're giving them a fair shot.

MEG

That's easy for you to say, married to Harold, "The Perfect Man"...

Something flits across Sarah's face here, but Meg either misses it or chooses to ignore it.

MEG

You've never walked into a party with a blind date wearing bright green pants.
(looks up at Sarah)

(MORE)

MEG (CONT'D)

Sometimes, I think I don't even want a man anymore.

(a beat)

So here I sit on my ticking biological clock, and the only thing I've known in my whole life is that I want to have a child.

Sarah gives her a sudden look. They share a strong memory of a traumatic moment from their history. Meg responds to it --

MEG

Don't remind me. It probably was the right thing to do at the time, but ...

SARAH

So what do you do?

Meg is slow to answer. She rolls her dough.

MEG

I'm going to have a baby.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

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Karen and Sam each push a shopping cart, one completely full, the other filling. They are passing the freezer cases.

SAM

... I don't see her as much as I'd like. She was very young when Robin and I were divorced. Now she's got a new father. Sometimes I think it's just confusing to her when I'm around. I don't know.

Karen nods her understanding. They have reached the ice cream display. Sam looks down at the ice cream with her. They are tempted. They pantomime resistance.

SAM

I don't need it.

KAREN

God knows I don't.

They move a fraction of an inch away from the ice cream, but stop.

SAM

Maybe we should think of the others.

KAREN

We don't want to be selfish.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

SAM

(reaching deep)

I know Sarah and Meg would probably want this double chocolate chip.

KAREN

They have no self-control.

They laugh as they load up the cart and move on.

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SAM

I don't know. Maybe I just don't want to give her the time. Could I be that big an asshole?

INT. DILAPIDATED FARM HOUSE (ON HAROLD'S LAND) - DAY

Chloe stands in the center of the wrecked central room of the ancient farm house. There is a chaos of mess about: wood, tools, a sawhorse, discarded debris. Alex was refurbishing it with Chloe's help and it has the look of slow, small-scale renovation. On the floor in one corner is a mattress where they obviously took their breaks.

Nick stands at one of the large holes which were once windows, staring out. Now he turns, with a vigor and glee that we have not seen before, and strides to a similar hole on the other side of the house.

NICK

This is great! This is really great!

He stands at the other hole looking out. As Chloe moves up behind him, we go with her and get our first view of the land. Beyond the ragged meadow are thick, rolling woods, dark and lush. Michael and Harold are out there in the distance.

CHLOE

Alex loved that hill.

NICK

I can understand it. It's great!

CHLOE

(looking at him)

You remind me of Alex.

Nick does a big take and eyes her queerly.

NICK

I ain't him.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sarah sits staring at Meg, her expression slightly dazed. Meg

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

works busily away, cutting apples for her pie.

MEG

You're a doctor. Doctors know everything. So just be supportive for a minute and shut up.

(Sarah nods)

I've been taking my temperature and I know I'm ovulating right now. The ground is ready. I just need someone to plant the seed.

SARAH

Yeah, but who's going to be the lucky farmer?

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MEG

These are the best guys I know, my favorite men in the world. Unfortunately Nick, as I discover I'm the last to know, is no longer a candidate. Michael is a possibility but -- considering everything -- a fallback position.

SARAH

... So to speak.

MEG

That leaves Sam.

SARAH

Oh, Harold's not good enough for you?

MEG

I'd love it, but I wouldn't ask that of you. Harold's got enough kids.

SARAH

That's very considerate. Too bad Richard left.

Meg just smiles.

SARAH

Have you discussed this with Sam or are you planning a surprise party?

MEG

Why should he have a problem with it? There will be no obligations. I love him, as a friend. I assume he loves me. He'd do anything for me.

Sarah shakes her head as if to clear it.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

SARAH

Somehow I feel it isn't quite this simple. For one thing, you know, it doesn't always happen the first time.

MEG

That's not what they told us in high school.

EXT. MEADOW AND WOODS (ON HAROLD'S LAND) - DAY

Michael finishes taking a leak. Harold stands nearby, a stick in his hand.

MICHAEL

(exuberant)

That's what's great about the outdoors, it's one giant toilet.

HAROLD

Maybe you should put a spot like this in your club.

They walk on.

MICHAEL

This thing is going to be big, Harold. You should take it more seriously. You'd have your own table waiting at all times.

HAROLD

I'm considering the investment. I've always wanted my own table. Would I have a chair, too?

MICHAEL

Remember senior year we were all going to get together and buy that land near Saginaw. What happened with that?

HAROLD

None of us had any money.

MICHAEL

Oh, yeah.

(a beat)

That's when property was a crime.

INT. SUPERMARKET - CHECK OUT COUNTER - DAY

Sam and Karen are loading their haul onto the counter. Sam watches Karen with bemused, admiring fascination. She catches him.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

KAREN

What are you looking at?

SAM

I was just thinking, if we had gotten married, we'd be doing this.

KAREN

(playful)

No, if we'd gotten married, I'd be doing this alone.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Three freshly-baked apple pies cool on the counter. The huge and varied home-cooked meal sits simmering and roasting in a multitude of pots on stove top and ovens. No one to be seen. Harold and Nick come in newly returned from their outing. The succulent aromas hit them like a wave; they go into paroxysms of anticipation and begin an exaggerated comic tour of the pots, lifting and peeking under lids, "ooing and ahing", eyebrows lifting and noses twitching at each new discovery. Their appreciation vocalized in a mellifluous chorale of "mmms and humms". Harold has adopted a Groucho-like walk for his inventory. Nick goes out as Harold takes a potholder and lifts the lid of one last pot on the stove. Karen appears at the door and points a dragon lady finger at Harold.

KAREN

Get away from there, fella. That's my patented Motown Mogumbo.

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Harold backs away gesturing his innocence and begins to sing the first bars of Marvin Gaye's "I'll Be Doggone", which continues, softly over --

INT. DEN

TV SCREEN. A videotaped interview with Michael which Nick has recorded in the living room is playing on the big Sony in the den. Eventually we will see that the viewers include Nick, Michael, Chloe, and Sam. But now we see only Michael on tape.

MICHAEL (ON TAPE)

... So he called me "Sir". Big deal. What does that mean? What are the implications of that, after all? In the eyes of this young kid, couldn't have been what -- twenty, twenty-five -- I seemed ... old? Hey, I can accept that, I can live with it. I for one am glad I'm not young. Good riddance. No longer at the mercy of my hormones. No zits, no nocturnal emissions, no

(MORE)

MICHAEL (ON TAPE) (CONT'D)

more of those pesky, unexpected erections. And parents, right? Who needs them? Mine are dead. I never have to call them, no boring Sunday dinners. Even my friends are starting to die. That's cool. Eliminate the dead weight, pare it down to basics. That's how you know who your real friends are. They're the ones that are living ... Am I right, or am I right? Huh ... friend?

IN THE DEN, the Viewers are smiling. Except for Chloe, who doesn't see the humor.

MICHAEL (DEN)

I don't know. What do you think, Sam? Is it the lights or the make-up, or what?

SAM (IN DEN)

(shakes his head)

I don't know. You look, you know ... old.

INT. KITCHEN

The place is crowded, everybody fussing and fretting over various pots. Finished food is piling up on the counters, wine bottles are opened, gravy poured. Karen ladles Motown Mogumbo into various bowls. Harold is making notations on a small pad. Sam turns from a dramatically finished sauce to his newly drained pasta and hurls strands of it at the refrigerator, where there are previously-tested remnants. Sarah eyes this ancient test with bemused irritation.

SAM

(reacts to Sarah's look)

It's still the best way to determine if it's ready.

HAROLD

(to Meg, as she enters)

What's your shoe size?

MEG

Seven. I used to be a six and a half.

HAROLD

(he notes it)

Your feet grow as they get old.

MICHAEL

I wish everything did.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Sarah scans the room, satisfied with what she sees, and focuses on Sam who is once again touching up the sauce.

SARAH

Sam, how much longer? Everything is going to get cold.

MEG

(looking over Sam's shoulder)

Oh no. In twelve years, you haven't learned to make anything else?

SARAH

The meal is starting. Everybody grab something and get out of my kitchen.

Karen and Sarah, each with two bowls of Mogumbo, start the parade into the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM/DEN

As the crowd moves into the dining room, we hear the first bars of the brassy THEME TO SAM'S SHOW blasting from the adjacent den. Sam, cradling his creation, winces as he hears the tune.

NICK (O.S.)

Oh-oh. Here he is -- J. T. Lancer!
Take a look at that hunk of man, kids.

SAM

Turn that off!

He quickly deposits the pasta on the table and heads toward the offending TV. Too late. The group has shifted into the den to see the opening credits of his show. Harold gently restrains Sam, until it's too late.

SAM

Why are you doing this to me

We see the opening credits of "J. T. LANCER". Sam is a private eye in New Orleans, a fact clearly demonstrated in the title montage. There he is: leaping into a Ferrarri; leaping off a Basin Street balcony; leaping across the bar in a strip joint; and leaping into bed with a bevy of bayou babes. The sequence ends with a sly signature thumbs-up and wink from the tough shamus. This last draws ecstatic hoots. Meg faints into Sam's arms. Sarah thumbs-up and winks at Sam --

SARAH

Say, baby, let's eat.

They head into the dining room. Chloe rises from the sofa and turns off the TV.

CONTINUED.

CONTINUED:

SAM
(grumbling)
The pasta is ruined now.

MICHAEL
(to Sam)
Do you get money every time that comes on?

MEG
Yeah, but think how many times he has to jump off that porch ...

The group circles the big table and begins a mini-ballet of shifting positions and tentative chair-pulling. Both Karen and Meg angle toward the same seat next to Sam, have a gentle collision and wind up flanking him. Michael waits at the entrance to the dining room for Chloe and then trails her to the table. As the hesitation about where to sit extends a few seconds too long, Harold begins humming "Pop Goes The Weasel", the Musical Chairs Theme.

SARAH
Sit down!
They sit.

LATER. The meal has been severely dented. Much wine has been consumed. They're feeling the effects. Michael is whispering in an intimate manner to Chloe, who giggles. Nick and Harold both have noted this. They exchange looks.

MEG
(to Sam)
... What am I hearing? I don't want to hear that.

SAM
What d'ya mean?

MEG
Video games? You're telling me you relax with video games?

MICHAEL
Don't knock video games.

MEG
Jesus, I let you guys out of my sight for a little while and you develop a bunch of moronic interests.

HAROLD
Don't knock morons.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

SAM
(to Meg)
Would you prefer I got into heavy
drugs?

(a beat)
No offense, Nick.

Nick waves it off, no offense taken.

KAREN
Sarah?

Down at the end of the table, Sarah is crying. Karen, who's sitting next to her, now has a comforting hand on her. Sarah, embarrassed, wipes her eyes with her napkin. She immediately tries to regain her composure.

SARAH
He should be here.
(a weird laugh)
I feel like we should've had a
chair for Alex.

There is a moment of silence, pregnant. Then Sarah snuffles again, and smiles.

SARAH
Of course, we don't have enough food.
She smiles. They all want to comfort her; they reassure her with their looks. She starts to cry again.

SARAH
It's just so familiar, this ...
(she vaguely indicates the table
and group)
... and I love you all so much. I
know that sounds gross, doesn't it?

KAREN
No, it doesn't.

SARAH
(getting control again)
I feel like I was at my best when I was
with you people.

SAM
Everybody feels that way about that
time. When I lost touch with this
group, I lost my idea of what I
should be.

(a beat)
Maybe that's what happened to Alex.
At least we expected something of

(MORE)

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SAM (CONT'D)

each other. I think we needed that.

Again there is a long pause. Harold reaches out to touch Meg's nape affectionately.

HAROLD

Not me. Getting away from you people was the best thing that ever happened to me. How much sex, fun, and friendship can one man take? ... I had to get out in the world and get dirty.

Michael is not willing to let this moment escape just yet. His tone is sincere, subdued --

MICHAEL

I think Sam's right. There was something in me then that made me want to go to Bed-Stuy and teach those ghetto kids.

MEG

(nods at that)

And I was going to go help ...
(slight embarrassment)
... "the scum", as I so compassionately refer to them now.

HAROLD

(resisting the tide)

Some of them were scum.

MICHAEL

Some of us are scum.

HAROLD

So what's the thrust here? We were great then and we're shit now? I don't like where this is going.

Harold looks toward Nick for support. But Nick seems to be concentrating on his plate. He doesn't look up.

SARAH

No, we're not saying that. You know that, Harold. I'm sure we all think there's a lot of good left in us. I don't know, I just hate to think that it was all just -- fashion.

HAROLD

What?

SARAH

Our commitment.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

SAM

It wasn't. We accomplished things.

HAROLD

... all evidence to the contrary.

SARAH

(to Harold, irritated)

Now you're just taking a position.

MEG

Sometimes I think I put that time down,
pretend it wasn't real, just so I can
live with how I am now.

(to Harold)

Do you know what I mean?

HAROLD

Nick, help me with these bleeding
hearts.

NICK

(after a pause)

I know what Alex would say.

SARAH

What?

NICK

What's for dessert?

Chloe giggles. Sarah frowns, as does Meg who shakes her head.
Nick addresses Meg, in mock defense.

NICK

I'm not cynical about dessert.

INT. KITCHEN

Sarah, Meg and Sam come in with the cleared dessert dishes.
They are stopped cold by the sight of the cleaning-up job
ahead. In that moment, the first rhythmic bars of "Ain't
Too Proud To Beg" by The Temptations blast from the speakers
in the wall.

INT. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - THE CLEANING-UP MONTAGE
(VARIOUS SHOTS)

The group clears, cleans, washes and wraps to the beat of the
song. Some of them are lip-synching to the song, others deli-
vering dishes from room to sink with Motown-style choreography.
Harold engages Karen in an impromptu two-step near the disposal.
Meg loads the dishwasher like a Supreme. In the midst of this,
we find --

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Harold, Michael and Sam in the dining room. Michael is taking away the last empty coffee cups as Sam collects and shakes the napkins and Harold carefully folds the tablecloth around its crumbs.

SAM

(to Harold, mid-conversation)

... I think I've been slow to realize that people our own age, with histories just like ours -- having gone through all that same stuff -- can be dishonest, unprincipled, backstabbing ... sleazeballs.

MICHAEL

(arms loaded)

I could've told you that a long time ago.

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Michael goes out to the kitchen.

SAM

I think I was prejudiced in their favor. The outward similarities between us blinded me to what they really were. I've sometimes been sucked in in a real stupid way.

HAROLD

I think Alex felt that same thing very strongly.

SAM

Alex was always very forgiving.

HAROLD

Well, not so much lately. You didn't see him too much lately. He was pretty disgusted by what he was seeing around. He'd get angry.

SAM

I never saw that.

HAROLD

He was very forgiving of you.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The cleaning-up is complete and "Ain't Too Proud To Beg" has faded with the hub-bub. There's SLOW MUSIC and slow dancing here in the living room. Michael and Chloe are off in the corner -- she is demonstrating a step as he holds her close. Nick and Meg seem to be trying some kind of rock tango. Sam and Sarah sit together on a sofa, passing a joint with Harold and Karen who are sprawled nearby. Sam is massaging Sarah's

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

tense nape with one hand as they talk.

KAREN

... No, I know Richard will always be faithful to me.

HAROLD

That's nice. A little trust.

KAREN

(shakes her head "no")

Fear of herpes.

SAM

My agent took me out to lunch to celebrate my divorce. He told me he wanted to give me some tips on being single. He says, "Always wear a rubber on your first date". I said, "What are the other tips?" He says, "There are no other tips."

The others laugh.

KAREN

I forgot about rubbers.

They laugh again. Sarah reacts ecstatically to Sam's hand.

SARAH

That feels so good.

SAM

Oh, yeah? How's this?

He uses both hands on her shoulders. She moans in pleasure.

SAM

How 'bout this?

He picks up his pace here, shifting around in front of her in a mock effort to grope her breasts and thighs. She begins to giggle, scrunching up her body in defense.

SAM

How's this?

He drops to his knees in front of her and tries to pry her thighs apart. She takes the opportunity to place both feet on his chest and push him away, laughing.

LATER. The living room. Sam and Meg are nowhere to be seen. Harold and Nick sit side by side on the sofa. They're looking across the room at Michael, who is sitting very close to Chloe, murmuring to her.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

It's not right. Alex is still warm.
You can't blame Chloe, she's just a
kid.

NICK

Michael hasn't changed.

HAROLD

Have you ever met his girlfriend, Annie?
(Nick shakes his head "no")
She's incredible. A really terrific
woman. She's black, teaches the fourth
grade.

(a beat)

She's still in Bed-Stuy.

Harold and Nick exchange a look and an ironic smile. They
look back at Michael.

NICK

It's not right.

Sarah plops down next to Nick with exaggerated exhaustion and
puts her head on his shoulder.

SARAH

I can't keep my eyes open. I don't
want to go to bed but I think I'm
going to have to.

NICK

You really don't want to?

SARAH

(yawning "no")

But I've got to.

NICK

But you don't want to?

(a questioning look from Sarah)

Come with me.

He helps her up.

INT. MAID'S ROOM

Meg is sitting with her back against the headboard, hugging her
knees. Sam sits sideways on the bed before her. He is a man
in shock, trying to get his head around it. Finally --

SAM

What? You want me to do what?

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

MEG

Come on, Sam, don't make me say it again.

SAM

Meg, you're giving me a massive headache.

MEG

You're not gonna use that old excuse are you?

He sits there in silence a long moment.

MEG

You have good genes.

Reflexively, he looks down at his beautifully faded and pressed Levis. One of his hands moves involuntarily toward his fly, protectively.

INT. DEN

Michael is alone on the couch, cheerfully rolling a joint on the coffee table. Nick sits down beside him.

NICK

Where'd Chloe go?

Michael looks up, barely able to hide his maniacally pleased expression.

MICHAEL

She's coming right back.

Nick nods. He digs in his pocket and comes out with the small white disc of a Quaalude. He holds it in his palm and regards it reflectively.

NICK

(finally)

Nah. I'm not in the mood.

Nick starts to put it away, but Michael stops him.

MICHAEL

What is that, a lude?

NICK

(innocently)

You want it?

Michael does. Nick gives it to him.

MICHAEL

What do you think -- a half?

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CONTINUED.

CONTINUED:

NICK
(considers)
Full stomach ... I'd take a whole.

MICHAEL
Yes, I'm sure you would.
(picks up his glass)
What the hell. L'Chayim!

He downs the whole tablet.

INT. DINING ROOM

Sarah is energetically vacuuming the rug. She snuffles as she works. Harold and Karen come to the doorway and watch her.

HAROLD
What are you doing?

SARAH
Hmm?

HAROLD
I say, what are you doing?

SARAH
(it's obvious)
I saw some crumbs.

Harold and Karen exchange looks.

KAREN
(to Sarah)
Should I start on the windows?

INT. MAID'S ROOM

Now both Meg and Sam lean against the headboard. They are fully clothed and Sam has his arm around her. He speaks quietly, tenderly.

SAM
... When it's born, it's just the most amazing thing. Your whole life changes, forever. There's a little shift in your perceptions of the world and forever you're responsible for another living thing. It's wonderful. But it's a huge commitment, a commitment that has nothing to do with legal obligations or legal names ... I'm sorry. I would love to help you, but I can't.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Meg is quiet for a while.

MEG

You know, you're really something.
I love you.

SAM

(misunderstands)

Meg, I can't, really --

MEG

(stopping him)

No, no, I accept that. I just mean
I really love you. You're a nice
person.

SAM

(looks at her)

Yeah? Really?

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She nods. Hugs him tighter. He smiles.

SAM

So, you wanna fuck?
(she laughs)
Just kidding!

INT. DEN

Nick sits at one end of the sofa, Chloe close beside him. At the other end, beside her, Michael is sprawled, out cold, dead to the world. The glow of the TV lights their faces, and, in fact, Nick is sort of watching, but the sound is off. What we hear is soft, midnight ROCK 'N ROLL. Nick reaches across Chloe to extract a half-full wine glass from Michael's grip.

NICK

... Then, one day I was driving home
and they were running a tape of one
of my shows. And I heard myself
talking to someone who had called up,
someone in real pain. And I had
listened to them for forty-five
seconds, and I'm acting as though I
know them and understand and have some-
thing useful to say about their life.
And the worst part was, they believed
me.

(a beat)

I quit the next day.

They are silent for a few moments.

CHLOE

You helped me.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

It takes a moment for this to penetrate Nick's foggy mind. When it does, he grimaces, and looks at her.

CHLOE

I was fifteen. My family was living in Oakland. I used to listen to you every night. One night I called you up. I was real upset-- I thought there was something wrong with me. I thought I was some kind of pervert.

NICK

What'd I say?

CHLOE

You said it was okay.

(a beat)

As long as I did my homework and went to bed at a reasonable hour.

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Nick winces.

CHLOE

You were right. It was okay. And it helped.

Nick looks at her and accepts that.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Harold lies on his side of the bed, eyes closed. Sarah is sitting up in bed, legs in lotus position, facing him, her hands working incessantly at the silky border of their blanket, repeatedly gathering it into bunches in her palms. As she does this, the blanket is slowly pulled off of Harold. She is wide awake.

HAROLD

I don't want to discuss this now.

SARAH

Why, you have some more people you want to tell about the stock thing?

HAROLD

This is really a lovely side of you. Remind me to get some more cocaine in the morning.

SARAH

That is not it, Harold. If you go around telling everyone about this stock deal, it's going to blow up in your face. Who are you going to tell next, Michael? He came down here to find investors for that moronic

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)
club, didn't he?

HAROLD
He came down here for Alex's funeral.

SARAH
Maybe..

HAROLD
(reacts to this)
Whoa! You're in no condition to discuss
this.

SARAH
Harold, you can't change people's
lives for them. Who are you, John
Bairsford Tipton?

HAROLD
I'm going to sleep.

SARAH
How can you sleep? I'm not even tired.

INT. DEN

Chloe sleeps on Nick's lap. Michael has not moved. Nick stares
at the blinking television. The MUSIC fades away.

DISSOLVE TO pounding surf. Rising sun.

A TITLE APPEARS: SATURDAY

EXT. BEACHFRONT - MORNING

This morning, Sam has joined Harold and Nick for a run along the
beachfront. They are slowing to a walk now; Sam is only slightly
less bushed than Nick. Harold is not even sweating.

SAM
... Some people think suicide is the
ultimate act of self-absorption.

NICK
Why do you bring that up? Alex didn't
commit suicide. It was an accident.

HAROLD
That's right. He was shaving. Alex
always had hairy wrists. I always
thought masturbation was the ultimate
act of self-absorption.

SAM
Do you jerk off?

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

Does a bear have fleas?

SAM

(corrects him)

No -- Does a bear shit in the woods?

HAROLD

Does a bear jerk off?

NICK

I shit in the woods, but I can't jerk off.

SAM

Do you think we're all trying to avoid dealing with Alex? Every time it comes up, somebody changes the subject.

NICK

Hey, it's a dead subject.

Sam shoots him a look.

SAM

I'm getting tired of all these jokes. What are we afraid of? To show our feelings? Or are we mad at him for leaving us here with no explanations?

NICK

I could say something really funny about that, but I won't.

Sam doesn't think that's funny. Harold notices something up ahead.

HAROLD

Great, they got here early.

He takes off running toward the Summer House, where a van is parked in the driveway.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Sam and Nick, having straggled in, walk up to the neatly-printed, beige and green van in the driveway. On the side of the van is the large silhouette of a dog running in jogging shoes. In large letters underneath is painted -- RUNNING DOG ATHLETIC FOOTWEAR CENTERS. And under that, in smaller type, the twenty-six South-eastern locations. To the side, the motto: "Sole Food for Every Sport".

Harold comes back out of the house with a fifty year-old DRIVER, who wears a beige and green Running Dog uniform. Harold stops

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

on the verandah as the Driver heads back to the van.

HAROLD

Thanks a lot, Tony. I appreciate it.

DRIVER

Yes sir, Mr. Cooper. My pleasure.
Have a nice weekend now.

The Driver gets in, waves and drives off. Sam and Nick watch him go. They're impressed.

SAM

(to Harold)

Yes sir, Mr. Cooper.

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INT. STAIRWAY

Meg is coming down the stairs as Harold and his two sweaty companions come in from the verandah. She scans them with bleary eyes as they pass her on the stairs, going up.

MEG

Take a shower, for godsake ...
animals.

WE FOLLOW Meg through the den. As she approaches the kitchen door, she almost trips over Michael's comatose body, sprawled on the rug. She steps over him and goes into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

Meg comes in. She is so intent on her first cup of coffee from the steaming coffee maker that she at first misses the sight on the kitchen table. With a mug and ashtray safely in hand, she turns to the table. Neatly stacked at one end is a pyramid of shoe boxes from various athletic manufacturers. In bold letters on each box has been marked a name. She extracts the one marked "MEG" from the stack and sits down. She sips some coffee, lights a cigarette and opens her box, lifting out a bright, orange and green running shoe. She places it carefully next to her ashtray and looks at it as if she's never seen anything like it before.

We are in a FULL SHOT of the kitchen now, in the soft morning light, and the CAMERA will now be LOCKED DOWN in this spot for the next three scenes. We DISSOLVE TO:

A LITTLE LATER. Meg is still sitting in the same spot and is now reading the newspaper. Karen, in a robe, is busy and efficient at the stove, cooking up a storm. Nick sits at the table and is putting on his new pair of running shoes, a dazzling silver and blue. Karen brings a plate of food to Meg and, as she does, we see that she is already wearing her new shoes; they are bright yellow and orange. Meg nods a "thank you".

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

KAREN

So you just fell asleep?

MEG

(mock remembering)

I said that, didn't I? Didn't I say that?

NICK

About five times.

MEG

I did not "know him" in the Biblical sense. Does that make it clear enough, Karen?

KAREN

I don't know why you're so touchy.

MEG

I don't know why you're so curious.

Nick has stood up and walked around. He looks at his feet with pleasure.

NICK

These feel great. I'm never taking these off. I'm going to sleep in them.

MEG

(looking up from paper, to Karen)

That doesn't mean he's going to have sex with them.

DISSOLVE TO:

A LITTLE LATER. Meg and Nick are gone. Karen still cooks. Sam and Chloe are at the table. Harold works at a counter. The pyramid of shoe boxes is disappearing; the boxes are scattered about the room. The two men are freshly showered.

HAROLD

(to Sam)

So what do you think about Michael's latest brainstorm?

SAM

I'm not sure I want to be part owner of some jet set greasy spoon. You think we could stall him for a while?

Karen has proudly brought a picture perfect breakfast plate to Sam. They hear the ROAR of an engine from just outside the window. It moves away.

SAM

Jesus, what's that?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

Nick wanted to run out to the property again and be back before the game starts.

Chloe looks up, interested. She walks over to look out the window.

DISSOLVE TO:

A LITTLE LATER. Sarah is alone in here, huddled over a cup of coffee, looking beat. Michael lurches into the doorway, squints around and stumbles over to the coffee. He looks worse than Sarah. He brings a cup to the table and sits down, in pain. He notices the lone remaining shoe box, but it's too far away to investigate.

MICHAEL

Are we the first ones up?

EXT. LAKE - MORNING

Sam and Karen are in a rowboat on the placid lake in the town park. They lean toward each other either for warmth or for increased intimacy.

SAM

Christ, who even knows what it was all about. You remember Alex used to call me Sam the Sham.

KAREN

No, don't say that. It was real. I remember standing on campus with thousands of people listening to you. And you really moved them.

SAM

(shakes his head)

But now ... I'm reaching millions of people every week and, hell, you know, it's just garbage.

KAREN

That's not true. You're entertaining people. God knows we need that now.

SAM

Yeah? I don't know. I try. At least once every show I try to put something of value in there. But, I don't know ...

KAREN

You do. I can see it. I feel like my kids have gotten something out of J. T. Lancer.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

SAM

Really?

(Karen reassures him)

Kids. Well there you are. You've done something there. You've really built something with Richard, I'll bet.

Karen looks away a moment. When she speaks, there's no harshness in her voice.

KAREN

You know the secret of Richard? You remember my father?

Sam does, with disgust. What a jerk.

KAREN

Well I didn't want that to happen to me. Richard looked like everything that had been missing in my childhood. I knew a guy like that could build a stable environment for children. And he did.

(she pauses)

It's just that now, well ...

SAM

What?

KAREN

Well, you know. It's well, it's not like talking to you.

(Sam looks away, embarrassed and pleased)

All my life, deep inside, I felt there was something I wanted to express. I have always felt, I don't know ... stymied.

(she looks up)

But, look, I'm proud of what I did. I'm doing a good job raising my sons. And if it meant I had to give up my writing, well, that's the way it goes!

Sam tries desperately to remember her writing. Karen sees his struggle.

KAREN

Oh, you probably don't even remember my writing.

SAM

Sure I do.

KAREN

It was just some poems and short stories.

(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)

I didn't show them to many people.

(touches his knee)

But what's the point of talking about it. I made my decision. My kids come first. It's just that now it leaves kind of, I don't know, a space. And all of Richard's country clubs and home improvements and business dinners, well ... it's pretty superficial stuff.

Sam, following as best he can, nods sympathetically.

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KAREN

I'm not complaining. Maybe I am.
I'm sorry. Being with you opens me up somehow. Forgive me.

Sam puts a hand on her. No forgiveness necessary.

EXT. DILAPIDATED FARM HOUSE (ON HAROLD'S LAND) - DAY

Nick sits in a doorway of the old house looking off at the woods.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY (THE SUMMER HOUSE) - DAY

Sarah is coming down the hall with an armload of linen as Karen comes upstairs. From below Karen we HEAR the unmistakable strains of the University of Michigan FIGHT SONG, "Hail to the Victors" emanating from a television turned unreasonably loud. Downstairs, Michael is singing the words, badly, along with the music. There is a rumbling on the steps behind Karen, and Harold, a football tucked snugly under his arm, tears up the stairs past her and heads for his bedroom.

HAROLD

I'm late, I'm late, for a very important date ...

He disappears into the bedroom as Sarah shares a familiar look with Karen. Almost immediately, Harold reappears, wearing a blue and gold Michigan Tam O' Shanter and muffler and heads back downstairs.

HAROLD

(over his shoulder)

Come on, girls, the game is starting.
You don't want to miss any of the Blue.

He is gone. The women head for their respective rooms.

KAREN

Time to wash my hair.

SARAH

Me, I always read.

They go in and close their doors.

INT. DEN

Starting at floor level, we see several sets of flashily-bedecked, running shoe feet scattered among the rearranged furniture. The game commentary blasts from the television along with the crowd roar. The watchers, who we see in a moment, are hurling their own abuse back at the tube, displeased with the quality of everything they're seeing, from the play-by-play to the coaching to the color of the opposition's uniforms. There is a WHISTLE in the game and Sam's feet leap into the air in protest. The camera rises to take in the action in the den: Harold and Sam have prime spots near the front; Chloe, crocheting in a chair, watches with intent calm; Meg and Michael are together on a couch in the second row.

SAM

(outraged)

What! What was that? What are they calling that?

CHLOE

Clipping.

HAROLD

That was a clean hit!

CHLOE

(shakes her head)

He clipped him.

SAM

(to Chloe)

What the fuck are you talking --

(catches himself)

I'm sorry, Chloe.

She waves it off. The Referee, on TV, confirms it: Clipping. Chloe smiles down at her crocheting.

HAROLD

Where the hell is Nick? I can't believe he's missing this.

MICHAEL

(to TV)

Come on, Blue, you're not supposed to fold 'till the fourth quarter.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Sarah sits on the big bed. Karen has been drying her hair at the dressing table, but now she sits watching Sarah.

SARAH

I sometimes wonder if maybe I was just sick of being such a good girl. I can always be counted on to do the right thing. That's a disgusting curse. I

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

probably thought that Alex could touch that part of me that was unpredictable. And magic. The part I was always afraid of. Who knows if it's even there.

(she folds her legs under her)

When it was over, everything went back the way it was before. That's what we all said, that's what we agreed upon. I was sorry that everybody had to know about it. That was as much my fault as anything. But, of course, things weren't really the same. Alex withdrew from me then. I was probably different with him. We never wanted Harold to think ... well, you can imagine. So we had finally consummated --

(makes a face)

-- this ancient, lurking passion. And all it had done was put up a wall in our friendship.

INT. DEN

The game and the watchers have calmed down a little. On-screen, Michigan attempts a rare pass and is intercepted. Harold lets the popcorn dribble from his hand in disgust. Meg sinks back into the couch. Michael slides down a little too, so they have a tiny modicum of privacy and gives her an odd look. She's quizzical.

MEG

What? I didn't throw the ball.

MICHAEL

(hushed tone)

So, what am I, chopped liver?

MEG

(mystified)

What are you talking about?

MICHAEL

You know.

MEG

No, I don't.

MICHAEL

You know --

He makes a cradling gesture with his arms and begins rocking their invisible child. Meg can't believe what she's seeing. Her head lolls away in stupefaction. Her tone is hushed.

MEG

(drawn out)

Michael!

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

You asked Sam.

MEG

(mortified)

What, is it published somewhere?
On the nightly news?

MICHAEL

Look, you know we can do it. We've
done it.

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Meg rolls her eyes, he misunderstands.

MICHAEL

You remember? The March on Washington?
(tickles her, slyly)
The Armies of the Night?

She bats his hands away.

MEG

I remember.

MICHAEL

I thought you'd be grateful.

MEG

You're sweeping me off my feet.

MICHAEL

(a little too loud)

I thought you wanted a kid.

Sam is reaching for a ball flipped to him by Harold; it goes through his hands, incomplete. Chloe politely watches the game.

MEG

Michael, I thank you.
(puts a hand on his leg)
This is a big decision. Let me get
back to you in the third quarter.

She gets up and leaves.

EXT. FRONT LAWN (THE SUMMER HOUSE) - DAY

Halftime. Harold, Michael and Sam are tossing the football around with unreasonable spectator vigor. Meg comes out and stands on the verandah watching. Michael notices her and poses playfully, showing off the muscles he could hand down to their progeny. She waves him off, laughing, then notices something up the block which distresses her greatly.

WHAT SHE SEES: Nick's Porsche is pulling slowly up to the curb, followed closely by a police car.

CONTINUED:

MEG (O.S.)

Oh-oh.

Meg comes off the porch and moves toward them as Nick and the young cop, PETER, get out of their cars. The men notice now, too, and come up to the cars. Peter speaks with a southern drawl which he is exaggerating for the occasion. Harold's natural accent deepens for this conversation. Nick is hostile, belligerent.

HAROLD

Hi, Peter.

PETER

How're you doing, Harold. This fella claims to be one of your guests. That true?

HAROLD

That depends. What'd he do?

PETER

For one thing, he ran a red light.

NICK

No I didn't.

PETER

Then he became abusive to me, verbally.

NICK

What, you got etiquette laws down here? Twenty-five bucks he's hitting me for.

PETER

But the main thing is he looks like he could be one of them Yankee drug dealers we sometimes get passing through on their way to Florida.

NICK

(indicating Meg)

Here's my attorney. I don't have to take that slanderous talk.

MEG

(professional voice)

Uh ... excuse me officer, that's true. Do you have, uh, probable cause for, uh, --

Peter is looking beyond her at Sam.

PETER

You J. T. Lancer?

CONTINUED:

SAM

Yes sir, officer.

PETER

(to Meg)

What's that make you -- Perry Mason?

HAROLD

He looks a little suspicious to me, too. What do you say we take him out back and beat the shit out of him? But we gotta hurry. The second half of the Michigan game is about to start.

PETER

Yeah? Who's winning?

HAROLD

Michigan, temporarily.

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PETER

That'll change. How's Sarah?

HAROLD

Okay.

PETER

Real sorry to hear about Alex.

HAROLD

Thanks, Peter.

PETER

You know, I'd be willing to let this whole thing drop, if you could persuade Mr. Lancer here to show me how he hops into that sportscar of his on TV.

Sam laughs it off.

PETER

I'd really appreciate it. I see that every week and I've always wondered. Myself, I always have to open up the door.

Harold is laughing now, with Michael.

NICK

Don't do it, Sam.

SAM

(admonishing)

Nick.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Sarah has come to the window. We are looking down on the scene at the curb over her shoulder. The crowd around Nick's car opens up. Nick grudgingly gets out of the way. Sam steps back and sets himself uncertainly.

SARAH

I don't believe this.

Sam runs up and hops toward the car. His left leg catches on the door and he sprawls into the car, smashing his right arm against the door. He lays there limply as the group crowds around. Sarah has flinched on impact.

SARAH

I knew it.

She goes to the closet, snatches up a black doctor's bag, and heads down.

EXT. FRONT LAWN

Michael and Meg help Sam, his right arm bleeding, toward the house. Sarah comes out on the verandah and holds the front door open for them. Peter is back in his car and Harold is speaking to him through the window.

PETER

(accent lighter)

Sorry about that. I thought they could really do that stuff.

HAROLD

It's not your fault.

Peter drives off and Harold turns back toward the house. Nick is wiping up some blood from the front seat of the Porsche.

NICK

Since when did you get so friendly with cops?

Harold stops on his way toward the house. He looks at Nick with barely controlled fury and disgust. He doesn't want to explode. He starts away again.

NICK

(reading it)

What?

HAROLD

(whirls on him)

You know you're fucking stupid! First of all, that cop has twice kept this house from being ripped off. He happens to be an incredible guy. And you --

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

He looks toward the house, pained. He doesn't want to go on. He starts walking briskly toward the steps. Nick follows him aggressively.

NICK
(challenging)
Come on, Harold, what is it?

Harold stops on the porch steps and looks down at Nick. He controls the volume of his voice, so as not to share it with those inside, but he is furious.

HAROLD
What is it with you? Is jail another experience you want to try -- see what that's like?

He shakes his head, starts to go inside, stops and turns back to Nick.

HAROLD
You know, I live here. This place means something to me. I'm dug in. I don't need this shit.

Harold goes inside, slamming the door. Nick just stands there.

INT. KITCHEN

Meg watches as Sarah finishes expertly cleaning and bandaging the nasty cut on Sam's arm. Sarah's hands are wonderfully dexterous and confident. Meg and Sam appreciate that with a kind of glee, proud of her skills. The ROAR of the game comes from the other room.

SAM
You know I really can do it. It's these damn running shoes that are so good for you. Practically killed me.

SARAH
(mock solicitous)
We know you can, Sammy.

MEG
(laughs)
Being a private eye is dangerous work.

There is a crazed CHEER from the den. Sam is antsy.

SAM
(to Sarah)
I gotta get back in the game, coach.

CONTINUED.

CONTINUED:

She releases him with an "all done" gesture. He pops up and heads for the den.

SARAH

Walk!

He throws her a look and goes into the den passing Michael who just sticks his head into the kitchen.

1202582

MICHAEL

(to Meg)

You know, we're deep in the third quarter.

Meg reacts with a face.

MICHAEL

(backing out)

Just testing you! A little joke.

He is gone and the women are alone. Sarah cleans up her supplies.

MEG

Michael has graciously agreed to act as stud for me. A repeat performance.

Sarah is stopped by this news.

SARAH

He didn't say that, did he?

MEG

It was almost that romantic.

SARAH

(grimaces)

So whatcha gonna do?

Meg is silent for several moments. She looks at Sarah, her mind working.

MEG

Nah ... I can't do it with Michael. Too much history there. It's not right.

(Sarah nods)

I can't believe this, I'm deciding this this second, as we speak.

Sarah puts her arm around her.

MEG

It's not going to happen this weekend. Maybe this is a sign from God that I should reconsider.

(a beat)

(MORE)

MEG (CONT'D)

Too bad I'm an atheist.

Sarah hugs her.

INT. DEN

The game ends on television. Michigan has eeked out the victory. The crowd in the room is joyful. As the final gun sounds --

SAM

All right! You squeaked by with another one, Bozo.

MICHAEL

Go Blue! Great team, great school. That does it -- I'm going to pay back my student loan.

CHLOE

U. S. C. will eat 'em up.

HAROLD

Don't say that. It's true, but don't say it.

Nick, who has been sitting alone in the back, sidles up and flops down next to Harold and speaks quietly to him.

NICK

The easy thing would be for me to say I'm sorry.

Harold just looks at him.

NICK

But rather than that, I want you to know -- I'm giving up drugs forever.

Harold gives him a long, "yeah, right" look and starts to get up. Nick stops him with a hand.

NICK

Friends?

Harold touches him with a casual benediction. Okay.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Chloe is doing the same tortuous dancer's stretches as when we first saw her in the main title, and in exactly the same place on the rug. But now, Nick is VIDEOTAPING her and we see part of this scene on the CAMERA MONITOR and part in the room. Chloe is sweating and her speech is broken by her exertion.

CHLOE

Like what?

CONTINUED:

NICK

Anything -- just say anything. Tell us about your past.

CHLOE

I used to live with Alex.

NICK

Before that.

CHLOE

Before that? Randy.

(pauses, stretches)

I don't like talking about my past as much as you guys do.

NICK

Okay, I'll buy that. Can you tell us anything about Alex?

CHLOE

Well, he was cute ... He said we made a good couple because I had no expectations, and he had too many.

INT. DEN

TV SCREEN. Chloe's interview continues as the tape of it plays.

CHLOE (ON TAPE)

He believed in reincarnation.

NICK (ON TAPE)

Yeah?

CHLOE (ON TAPE)

He never ate meat. He said he was afraid he was going to come back as a steak.

The unseen watchers in the den laugh at this.

NICK (ON TAPE)

What else?

CHLOE (ON TAPE)

He said maybe he should have accepted the Rutledge Fellowship.

On the tape and in the room, there are several silent moments. On the tape, Chloe pauses in her stretching and peers at Nick, unseen behind the camera.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

CHLOE (ON TAPE)

(gently)

What's the matter, Nick?

The tape ends abruptly, replaced by static snow. Now, for the first time, we see the watchers in the den: Sarah, Nick, Harold and Michael. They are very quiet.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - EVENING

Sam is waiting out by the jeep, moving around restlessly, all alone. Now something occurs to him: he looks around, determines he's alone, then takes a tentative, measuring run - up to the open driver's door of the jeep, as though practicing for some future leap into it, Lancer-style. Karen comes out of the house and Sam abruptly stops, embarrassed. As she approaches in the half-light, he is awestruck -- she looks especially pretty right now, her newly-done hair meticulously casual, very flattering. She walks up very close to him and he can not resist taking her in his arms, Lancer-style; this maneuver he does very well indeed.

SAM

The biggest mistake I ever made
my life was not trying harder to
steal you away from Nick.

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KAREN

You know, I always wanted you to try.

SAM

(surprised)

No ... I never had that feeling.

KAREN

I guess you weren't paying attention.

This is rather big news to Sam. He looks at her thoughtfully.

SAM

Well, it's a little late now.

KAREN

Is it?

Now Sam is really thrown. He involuntarily lets her go and peers, questioningly, into her eyes.

SAM

What are you saying?

KAREN

I think you know. I think you've
known this whole weekend.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

His mind races, trying to figure out what exactly he's known.

SAM

You mean, you and Richard ...?

She nods.

KAREN

You see? You've always been able to read me. You know my life with Richard isn't working.

SAM

(nonplussed)

... I could tell you weren't completely ... but, I didn't think ...

KAREN

(very quietly)

I'm going to leave him.

Sam looks faint. Harold comes bouncing out of the house toward them in high spirits.

HAROLD

Okay, Sam, let's get the Wonton Express rolling here. Karen, you wanna take a ride?

Sam, still stunned, looks in confusion between Harold and Karen. He doesn't know if he should take off right now. Karen speaks to Harold but looks only at Sam. There is a romantic lilt in her voice.

KAREN

No, you go ahead ... I'll be right here.

She steps slowly away from Sam. Sam, in a daze, goes around to the passenger door.

HAROLD

(to Sam)

Just climb in there regular, okay, Sam?

They get in and Harold pulls out, slamming a ROCK 'N ROLL cassette into the dash.

EXT. BEACHFRONT ROAD - EVENING

The jeep tools along the beachfront to the beat of the music.

INT. JEEP

Harold rocks in his seat to the MUSIC. Sam still looks bamboozled.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

(indicates tape deck)

Listen to that stuff. Remember when we saw them at Cobo? You probably don't, you were hallucinating pretty heavy that night.

(no response from Sam)

And we didn't even have any drugs.
Ba-boom!

He delivers this last line like a stand-up comic. Sam seems not to have heard any of this.

SAM

Have you noticed anything unusual about this weekend?

HAROLD

You mean other than Alex dying and all?

SAM

I've been getting some pretty weird propositions around here.

HAROLD

Yeah?

SAM

I don't think I could live down here all the time.

EXT. PARKING LOT, CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The jeep is parked outside.

INT. CASH REGISTER, CHINESE RESTAURANT

A dark-haired, Semitic American WAITRESS is ringing up their take-out order, which sits in several huge brown bags on the counter. She eyes Sam.

WAITRESS

You J. T. Lancer?

SAM

(shuffles)

Yeah.

WAITRESS

(indicates Harold)

So how come he's paying?

Harold leans across the counter, playful.

HAROLD

(to Waitress)

And what part of China are you from?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

WAITRESS

(pushes the bags at him)

I'm a Jap.

EXT. THE SUMMER HOUSE (DINING ROOM WINDOWS) - NIGHT

Starting at a distance; we MOVE SLOWLY IN on the golden glow emanating from the dining room. The group is in there, the refuse of their Chinese meal heaped about the table. Lots of empty wine bottles and beer cans as partial explanation of the raucous good cheer we see in pantomime. When we get CLOSE TO THE WINDOWS, we see that they are taking turns opening their fortune cookies and reading their fortunes to the group. As the CAMERA REACHES THE WINDOW, Michael is cracking his cookie and the others are focusing on him, though the relentless comments never really abate.

INT. DINING ROOM

Michael motions for relative quiet and reads his fortune.

MICHAEL

(reading)

"Friendship is the bread of life..."

"Ooohs" and "Aahs" for the sappy message; a "How true!" and a "I thought beer was the bread of friendship or something". Michael motions for quiet; he's not done --

MICHAEL

(reading)

"... but money is the honey."

SARAH

(through the laughter)

It doesn't say that!

Michael offers it to her as proof; in fact, it does say that.

SARAH

Jesus! Even the fortune cookie people have gone cynical.

HAROLD

That's not cynical, it's pragmatic.

MICHAEL

I think it's touching.

EXT. GARBAGE CANS - BACKYARD/GARAGE - NIGHT

Karen and Sam carry the dinner refuse across the lawn. They look oddly romantic in the moonlight, this pretty couple, each with an armload of garbage. Silently, they deposit their bags in the cans. When their hands are free again, they look at

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

each other a moment across the lids. Then Sam grabs Karen strongly in his arms and turns her into the shadows of the garage, pressing her against the wall and kissing her passionately. Finally, the kiss breaks --

SAM

(husky voiced)

There's nothing I'd rather do right now than make love to you ...

(kisses her forehead)

... and, when we were done, take you into my life. Have you and your boys come out to L.A. and move into my house. There's plenty of room there. It's lovely.

He holds her close to him.

SAM

... But I can't do that.

She holds him at arms length and looks at him questioningly.

SAM

It has to do with Robin.

Again, she queries him silently.

SAM

No, it's not that. My marriage is completely kaput!

(gathers himself for a speech)

When Robin and I broke up, I had a million good reasons, a million little things that were wrong with her, wrong with us ...

(a beat for effect)

... But when I think about it now, when I see my daughter now with her new father ... I realize that what broke us up, what really did it -- and this is hard for me to admit to myself even now -- what did it was ... boredom. I couldn't stick with it. I'd hate to see you make the same mistake.

She looks at him, noncommittal.

SAM

You're a better person than that.

KAREN

Don't give me that shit.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

He reacts as if slapped. She looks around, her indignation growing. She just can't hold her tongue.

KAREN

For fifteen years you've been acting like I'm the one you really wanted, and you've made sure that everybody knows it. Now, I come down here --

She breaks off, perhaps because she realizes what she's about to say. She gives him a look and walks away toward the house. He does not follow.

INT. KITCHEN

Harold, Sarah and Meg are in here cleaning up. Harold is on the phone with his daughter. Meg and Sarah gleefully follow that conversation through his responses.

HAROLD

... Don't be mad at him, Molly. It's called an "anus" ... I know it's boring to hear twenty times in a row. Just ignore him, honey ... Okay ... Yes, she's right here. Just a minute.

Harold holds out the receiver, but it is to Meg, not Sarah. Meg, pleased, takes the phone.

MEG

(into phone)

Hello muffin ... oh you got it, huh?

(Meg giggles)

... I'm so glad. I saw it and I said I have only one friend in the world who could really appreciate this ... Well, it will be our little secret.

Meg continues to talk into the phone, but her words are drowned out by the opening chords of a ROCK SONG. The MUSIC grows, as the chat continues. We see Sarah watching her friend talk to her daughter; she is pleased and touched by the moment. She looks over at Harold who is unaware of her glance. He too is enjoying it. Sarah regards him thoughtfully.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The MUSIC continues as the CAMERA MOVES CLOSELY through the dirty ashtrays, empty coffee cups, half-filled wine glasses, and crumpled rolling papers of a long evening's talk. It is MUCH LATER and the entire group is sprawled about the room in various stages of relaxation and inebriation. Bright new running shoes have been shucked in little piles. A large joint is slowly

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

passed around the room; several people hand it on without a toke -- they've either had enough or they're favoring alcohol. Their TALK is a growing murmur underneath the strains of the MUSIC. Slowly, the volume relationship switches as the MUSIC recedes and the TALK suddenly becomes very clear, with --

NICK

So what would that have meant?

MEG

(upset)

What do you mean? It would have told us something.

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HAROLD

What are you talking about?

NICK

Meg is pissed off 'cause Alex didn't leave us a suicide note.

(to Meg)

You think he could have summed up his reasons in a note?

MICHAEL

Maybe a long note.

(takes a toke)

I can sum up people's whole lives in thirty-two paragraphs. I once did an entire rock band in a page and a half. And they had two drummers.

SAM

(angry, to Michael)

Why do you think this is funny? One of our best friends has decided to kill himself and we don't have a fucking clue as to why.

NICK

You never know why anyone does anything. I don't know why I chose these socks this morning.

SAM

That's a nice equation -- your socks and Alex's death.

HAROLD

They are pretty sad socks.

Sam gives him a look.

MICHAEL

I believe the old theory that everybody does everything in order to get laid.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

KAREN

Who said that -- Freud?

MICHAEL

No, I did.

NICK

I don't do anything to get laid.

SAM

You don't do anything.

NICK

I do something. I spend long hours at risky, boring work of a totally indefensible nature -- so watch it. I have my pride.

MEG

(quietly)

All I'm saying is, how could we have let Alex slip away like that?

MICHAEL

Maybe he let us slip away. I never heard from him.

SAM

Did he hear from you?

MICHAEL

I tried plenty. He resisted it.

HAROLD

It's true. We saw him a lot, but he didn't tell us much. Not me, anyway. I can't speak for Sarah.

SARAH

I knew he was unhappy, but that doesn't tell you much. I had no idea how bad it was.

(her eyes flick over Chloe for only a moment)

I think he purposely wanted to cut off from all of us because he was so unhappy with where he was at.

KAREN

Is that true, Chloe? Did you feel that?

CHLOE

(thinks about it)

I don't know. We had some good times.

(MORE)

CHLOE (CONT'D)

I haven't met that many happy people in my life. How do they act?

SAM

I'm sitting here and I realize I don't even know what he was doing with his time these last five years. I remember he left that caseworker job in Boston, but, Christ, that must have been '78 or so. And I don't even know why he started doing that. The guy was a scientific genius -- what was he doing welfare work for? Then what -- construction or something?

(Harold confirms it)

What was that all about?

SARAH

He didn't know what to do.

MICHAEL

I can relate to that.

MEG

Well, I did talk to him a lot and he always seemed real happy. He gave me that definite impression.

MICHAEL

Oh, so now he's a lying son-of-a-bitch?

Harold smiles, despite himself. Meg and Sam are unamused.

NICK

(to Sam)

What do you think -- if you'd been in touch with him you could have saved his life? You have that kind of effect on the people in your life? Keep them all jolly, do you? Wise up, turkeys, we're all alone out there. And tomorrow we're going out there again. I think it was damn straight of Alex not to cook up some neat, phoney, Reader's Digest condensation of his screwed-up life for our entertainment. I'm so sick of people selling their psyches for a little attention. He was classier than that.

SARAH

Yeah, that was a real classy number he pulled up in the bathtub.

NICK

Hey, you know for some people it's not a question of why to kill yourself, but why not.

CONTINUED.

CONTINUED:

SAM

Give me a break, Nick. Spare us the tragic existential pose.

NICK

Sorry, Sam, didn't mean to get into your area.

HAROLD

Now, calm down, boys. We're all friends here.

Nick laughs at that.

MICHAEL

This is a well-known dynamic. Seen it a million times. Some people ease the pain of separation by denigrating the relationship.

NICK

(withering)

You're so deep.

Michael just smiles; Nick doesn't bother him.

MEG

I think Michael's right. I feel shitty tonight about ten different ways. I don't want to let this go.

Sarah puts a hand on Meg.

MICHAEL

That's healthy. The only way to avoid pain like that is to pretend you don't care. I know. I've left more places than you'll ever go to.

NICK

(to Sam, refers to Michael)

Give him your "pose" line, Sam. There's the existential man for you.

(to Michael)

You're one tough cookie, aren't you? I could say you're one cold, manipulative, using guy and it wouldn't bother you a bit.

MICHAEL

(smiles)

I'm deeply hurt.

HAROLD

At least our last night is going to be a fun one.

CONTINUED:

SARAH

Please don't do this, guys.

KAREN

(peacemaker)

This is happening because we all really miss him and we're really hurting.

NICK

I think that's a crock of shit. I think we're afraid just the opposite is true. Alex died for most of us a long time ago.

SAM

(angry, defending Karen)

I think you're a crock of shit. Don't speak for me or anybody else. You hate your life, that's your problem. Don't tell us what we feel.

NICK

(gleeful)

That's it! That's all. I'm saying -- "if I hate my life, that's my problem." Too bad you weren't around to comfort Alex just as compassionately.

Sam stands up, suddenly.

SAM

Nick, we go back a long way and I'm not going to piss that away because you're higher than a kite.

NICK

Wrong. A long time ago we knew each other for a short period. You don't know anything about me. It was easy to get along back then. No one ever had a cushier berth than we did. It's not surprising our friendship could survive that. It's only out here in the world that it gets tough.

HAROLD

Nick.

SAM

(to Nick)

I don't care what you say. I know I've loved you and everyone here. And I'll believe that 'till I kick.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

6
He walks out of the room and slams out the front door. The others watch, pained.

KAREN
(to Nick)
What's wrong with you? What's happened to you?

NICK
(points at her, pleased)
That's all I'm saying. How many times are you going to make my point for me?

Karen gets up and goes after Sam.

EXT. BEACHFRONT

Sam walks alone in the moonlight along the beachfront.

KAREN (O.S.)
Sam! Wait.

Sam turns and waits. Karen comes up and stops a few feet from him. They look at each other. Then Karen slips under his arm and they walk on, together.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The tension level here has dropped.

MEG
(to Nick, quietly)
Yeah, I guess I do believe you can help people. Sorry about that.

Harold nods. He agrees with her.

SARAH
(getting up)
I do too, Nick. Not that we can save people. Probably not. But we can do what we can do. That's how I feel. So lay into me now. Really let me have it.

NICK
Hey, I was just trying to keep the conversation lively.
(Michael smiles, looks at him)
I know, you are Spartacus too.

MICHAEL
I'm willing to go with the majority. What goes around comes around, you know.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Sarah is headed for the kitchen.

NICK

(calls after her)

So you're gonna continue to love me
no matter what, huh?

SARAH

(over her shoulder)

Just don't cross me. Harold, would
you give me a hand in here?

She disappears into the kitchen. Harold gets up and follows
her. Meg gets slowly to her feet, woozy.

MEG

I think I've had enough.

INT. KITCHEN

Sarah is fixing up the coffee machine. She hits bottom in the
large coffee can and goes into the dark pantry. Harold comes
in, looks for her and steps to the door of the pantry. Sarah's
arms come out and pull him in.

INT. PANTRY

Only the light from the kitchen illuminates their embrace.
Sarah kisses the surprised man.

SARAH

I love you very much.

HAROLD

Hey, I'm yours.

SARAH

Harold, I want you to do something
for me.

HAROLD

Anything. I'll even marry you if
you want. Wait. I already did that.

SARAH

(hugs him tight)

Yes, you did ... thank god.

(a beat)

It's about Meg.

The MUSIC begins again -- ROCK 'N ROLL. It continues --

INT. LIVING ROOM

Michael sits alone in the corner of the room with the video
equipment. He is reading the instruction manual with stoned

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

eyes; he's having comprehension problems. Behind him, Chloe has risen and is now standing before Nick.

AT NICK AND CHLOE, she takes his hand. Nick looks at their hands.

NICK

Where to?

Chloe indicates upstairs.

NICK

You know I don't do anything.

Chloe "shh's" him and draws him out of his chair.

INT. MAID'S ROOM

Meg is getting undressed. There is a KNOCK at the door.

SARAH (O.S.)

It's me.

MEG

Come on in, no one else will.

Sarah comes in. She stands near the door, smiling.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Sam and Karen are rolling on the sand, vigorously entwined, working at their clothes.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Harold sits on the bed in his undershorts, nervous. There is a TAP on the door and Meg comes in, closing the door behind her. She is wearing the flannel robe we saw on Thursday night, which Harold had declared his affection for. Meg models it for him shyly. Harold remembers his manners and jumps up. He takes her hand and leads her toward the bed, a little formal.

HAROLD

This bed has been lucky for Sarah and me.

MEG

I've got to try to relax.

HAROLD

Yeah. I think I just forgot how to do it.

They sit on the bed and look at each other. Meg laughs, just for a second. Harold wants to know why.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

MEG

It won't sound like I mean it.
 (he encourages her)
 Well ... I feel like I got a great
 break on a used car.

INT. CHLOE'S ROOM

Nick and Chloe are standing before the crowded closet. One half of it contains Chloe's clothes, but their attention is on the other half -- the well-worn wardrobe of the late Alex Marshall. Chloe calmly slides the hangars along the pole, systematically showing Nick each shirt, each pair of jeans. Occasionally, Nick interrupts her murmured commentary to note an item. They're just looking. Now Chloe comes to a worn leather jacket. She turns toward Nick to display it better. He remembers it well. For the first time, we see tears on Chloe's face.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Sam and Karen make hot, passionate love on the cold beach.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Meg and Harold make sweet, gentle love on the warm bed.

INT. DEN

TV SCREEN. We see a tape shot in the living room. Sarah, giddy, waits on the couch as Michael appears from behind camera and carefully positions himself next to her, peering back at the camera.

MICHAEL (ON TAPE)

(toward camera)

... This should work ...

(to Sarah, conversational)

... Well, Sarah, here we are ...

(she nods)

... I must tell you, I'm picking up vibrations here at the house, and I am almost certain there is sex going on around here ...

(she laughs)

... Sarah, have I ever told you how beautiful your eyes are?

She laughs and pushes him away. He falls momentarily out of camera range, then pops back up.

SARAH (ON TAPE)

So, Michael, tell me about your club.

MICHAEL (ON TAPE)

Ah, forget it. Fuck the club. I can't
 (MORE)

MICHAEL (ON TAPE) (CONT'D)
deal with those hours. It'd be nothing but aggravation. And let's say it becomes really successful, right? I become a star. What happens? People Magazine will send some nasty schmuck like me to do an interview. Big fucking deal. Nah, I'm going back to my novel. I'm going to write about this weekend.

SARAH (ON TAPE)
(laughs)
What was it going to be about before?

MICHAEL (ON TAPE)
Last weekend.

DISSOLVE TO: Sunrise over the water

A TITLE APPEARS: SUNDAY

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We begin PULLING BACK, to take in the beachfront. We see the path along the beachfront from a high angle, and then Harold runs into frame, off on his morning run, and we continue PULLING BACK into --

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Sarah, dressed as she was the night before, is standing at the window, looking out. She watches her husband run away. She looks over toward the bed.

Meg is sitting there under the covers. She looks at Sarah, smiling. They're both happy. The room -- in fact, the whole house -- is bathed in a warm, rosy light this morning.

INT. CHLOE'S ROOM

Chloe is asleep in the bed. Nick sits at the desk, slowly going through a stack of Alex's papers and memorabilia. Now he picks up a yellowed clipping from THE MICHIGAN DAILY newspaper. He holds it delicately in his fingers and begins to read.

INT. DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM (KAREN'S ROOM)

Karen is packing her massive wardrobe neatly into her big suitcase. Sam finishes dressing on the bed. He puts on a shoe.

KAREN
Maybe if Richard and I bring the boys out to L.A., you could get us in to see one of the studios.

SAM
(looks at her back a moment)
Yeah, sure. Absolutely. No problem.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

KAREN

Good ... Richard would like that.

INT. HALLWAY - FIRST FLOOR

Michael comes out of the office, newly-awakened and a little rocky. He comes down the hall and stops at the entrance to the den. He looks out toward the front porch.

WHAT HE SEES: Harold, back from his run and soaked with sweat, stands out on the porch with Nick. They talk. Harold puts a hand on Nick's shoulder and smiles.

Michael turns and walks into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

Lots of people here: Karen, Meg and Sam are at the table with coffee, food and cigarettes. Sarah works at the stove. Michael heads for the coffee machine.

MICHAEL

Good morning, youngsters.

They greet him.

MICHAEL

So, how'd everybody sleep last night?
 Did anybody sleep last night? I know
 I did. All alone in my big Castro
 Convertible. I felt like Fidel himself...
 except he's probably not so lonely.
 Slept like a baby. Even wet the bed.

SARAH

Drink your coffee, Michael.

Sam finishes writing his address in Meg's address book and slides it across the table to her, open. Meg looks at the book.

MEG

Good. That's great. You'll be
 hearing from me whether you like
 it or not.

(she reads the address)

2352 Vista de la Viejo Compasino.
 That's cute.

Nick and Harold come in.

HAROLD

Good morning, everyone.

NICK

(to Michael)

Look what I found in Alex's papers.

CONTINUED.

CONTINUED:

Nick hands the yellowed MICHIGAN DAILY clipping to Michael, who smiles as he recognizes it and begins reading it. Nick continues around until he is behind Sam; he puts his hands on Sam's shoulders and rubs them in a contrite, conciliatory gesture. Sam hesitates only a moment before accepting, touching Nick's hand.

Harold bounces cheerily up to Sarah at the stove and kisses her on the cheek.

HAROLD

How're you doing, baby?

SARAH

(sotto voce, kidding)

You don't have to be in such a good mood.

Harold laughs. Still sweaty, he moves on to the sink and begins running the cold water.

MEG

(to Karen)

I know I'm going to be in Detroit on this deal sometime. I'm dying to meet your boys.

KAREN

I'd love it.

MICHAEL

You're all welcome in New York City. Not in my apartment, you understand, but in the city. And I will accompany you anywhere. I'll even get you into Elaine's.

SAM

I thought Elaine's was dead.

MICHAEL

That's why I can get you guys in.

Nick has taken his coffee to the table.

SAM

(to Michael, indicating clipping)

What's that?

MICHAEL

This is the column I wrote in the DAILY about Alex when he turned down the Rutledge Fellowship. You remember it?

(eyeing clipping)

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

This is not bad. Good clean style. Lean. Economical. Just the right touch of ideological fanaticism.

SARAH

I remember Alex was really angry about that.

MICHAEL

What are you talking about? I made him famous. You think he saved it for twelve years because he hated it?

NICK

He also saved his induction notice.

Sarah moves with a dirty pan to the sink. Harold is there drinking his water. She turns off the cold, turns on the hot and begins scouring.

MEG

I'm collecting addresses, Nick. Do you have one or should I just take down your license plate?

NICK

Well, actually ...

Harold jumps in here. He addresses the room, but he is looking at Sarah.

HAROLD

You can reach Nick here for a while. Nick and Chloe are going to stay here and do some work out at the old house.

There is a pregnant silence in the room. Sarah registers Harold's words, thinks about it a second, and then accepts it with a smile. Nick has been watching her reaction. She reassures him with a look. Finally --

KAREN

Well, I guess there's a certain symmetry to that.

Nick laughs.

HAROLD

So, what's the flight schedule here? Any way to coordinate some of this airport transport?

Sarah turns back to her scrubbing, an odd, bemused look on her face. We are ON HER ALONE now and slowly we begin to move down her arms toward her scrubbing hands. The first chords of the TRANSITIONAL ROCK SONG begin to fade in as we continue to hear --

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

NICK (O.S.)

I'll be glad to drive someone.

MEG (O.S.)

That's fine ... if we can take Harold's car ... and get Harold to drive it.

NICK (O.S.)

Ah, you're no fun.

We are on Sarah's hands now, and the pan she's cleaning, and the water, which seems to wash all things away ...

MICHAEL (O.S.)

That won't be necessary. You see, Sarah ...
Harold, we took a secret vote. We're
not leaving ... We're never leaving.

2
5
2
0
2

The group in the kitchen behind Sarah laughs. And it is the last sound we hear from that kitchen. The SOUND OF THE WATER is louder now. And, of course, the MUSIC. It continues to grow.

And before we even notice, we are deep in a SLOW, SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

Another dirty pan, in another older, dirtier sink. Sarah's hands are there, but the CAMERA MOVES OFF THEM now to follow the stream of water up to an aging faucet. And higher, to a window behind the sink. On the sill is a rag-tag collection of plants, some of which look suspiciously illegal. Out the window is a slice of Midwestern neighborhood done in late fall colors. But the window is closed, and what we notice first is Sarah's reflection in it, as she works at the sink. The reflection is a little hard to read so her image is thin, as though locked in her own dissolve. But even so, we can see that her hair is different. And she is younger.

A TITLE APPEARS: SUNDAY

NOVEMBER 30, 1969

INT. KITCHEN - THE ANN ARBOR HOUSE - DUSK

Sarah is in the midst of preparing yet another, earlier, meal for the group. The old kitchen is in chaos. Meg, unseen as yet, hidden by the open door of the refrigerator, is helping her. The MUSIC is coming from a transistor radio on the counter. The swinging door out to the dining room is closed. Everyone is, of course, much younger; their hair and clothes radically different.

SARAH

So that's what you did all night,
talked about the Law Boards?

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

MEG (O.S.)

That's right. That's why I went out with him.

SARAH

So what'd he say?

MEG (O.S.)

He said it's a real bummer. All day long, about 50,000 multiple choice. He said he barfed before and after.

Sarah finishes with the pan and returns to food preparation.

SARAH

No one barfed during the Med Boards, but one guy died.

Meg stands up and closes the refrigerator door with her foot. Her arms are full of salad ingredients, which she proceeds to prepare next to the sink, taking frequent drags from a burning cigarette.

MEG

Don't talk about medicine. Not in my condition.

SARAH

I'd think barfing would be the sensitive subject.

MEG

I haven't had that yet. Think that's a good sign? Think maybe this is all hysterical? Please god.

SARAH

The only hysterical part is you did it with Michael.

MEG

Don't rub it in.

SARAH

The phrase is "don't put it in." If you had that straight you wouldn't be in this shape.

MEG

It's my last march, that's all I can say. The fucking war can go on forever.

Sarah lights a cigarette from Meg's pack.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

SARAH

No Vietcong ever knocked you up.

She opens the oven door and bastes the large turkey cooking there.

SARAH

Why am I doing this? While Alex sleeps? It's his turkey.

MEG

Where is everybody? I thought this was a communal meal.

Meg has a dish of celery, carrots and olives ready. She goes with it through the swinging door into the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM

This whole house is much more cramped than the one on the Carolina Shore. It seems a little claustrophobic in contrast, an impression reinforced by its state of extreme disorder. The dining room opens through an alcove into the living room, which features a motley array of dilapidated furniture, a huge selection of records, and various piles of junk. A large, torn sofa sits lengthwise, its back to the dining room. But closer, next to the stereo, is an old swivel chair. Sitting in it, his back to us, reading something on his lap, is a male with extremely long hair under a huge set of headphones. A record turns silently on the stereo. Meg places her dish on a table set with an unusual variety of dishes and silverware.

MEG

Michael ... Michael ...
(no response)
... Michael!

Still no response. Meg walks over and spins the chair around. Could this be Michael? In contrast to the balding, short-haired fellow from the Shore, we have a bearded pile of hair. His features are barely discernible in there. On his lap is a notebook and an instantly recognizable, yellow and black, paperbound "Cliff Notes" synopsis of a novel. He takes off the headphones.

MICHAEL

What?

MEG

Could we have some help?

MICHAEL

(holds up Cliff Notes)

Meg, I have a blue book tomorrow on this entire novel and I don't know whether I'm going to make it if you continue to hassle me with the housework.

CONTINUED.

CONTINUED:

MEG

Will you bring in some chairs from
the porch?

He stands up and starts across the room as Meg heads back
toward the kitchen.

MEG

Where's Alex?

Michael points to the unseen side of the sofa and pantomimes
a sleeping Alex. Michael goes out the front door.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DUSK

Michael comes out and begins to wrangle a couple of the ancient
lawn chairs toward the door. He stops as he spots Harold running
down the block toward the house. Harold is wearing shorts and
a worn Michigan tee-shirt despite the nippy, fall weather. He's
sweating from a long run. He finishes his run by cutting across
the next door neighbor's front lawn. The NEIGHBOR, a working-
class chap in his late thirties, is scrubbing something on his
front porch. He eyes Harold malevolently.

HAROLD

(to Neighbor)

Hey man, what's happening?

NEIGHBOR

(unhappy)

You're ruining my lawn, that's what's
happening.

As Harold darts between the beat-up, old cars in his own drive-
way, Michael looks across the porches at the Neighbor and flashes
him the "V" peace sign.

MICHAEL

(to Neighbor)

Peace, brother.

The Neighbor gives him a nasty look and goes back to his work.
Harold has come up on the porch and now holds the screen door
open as Michael struggles through with his chairs.

HAROLD

Let me give you a hand.

He applauds Michael.

INT. KITCHEN

Harold comes in, dripping sweat, and gives Sarah a bear hug. She
"yuchs", pushing him away.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

What can I do?

MEG

(takes a drag on her cigarette)

You can take a shower. Do us all a favor.

SARAH

See if you can get Nick and Karen to stop long enough to eat this meal.

Harold spots the second cigarette burning in the ashtray and holds it up.

HAROLD

(to Sarah)

Is this yours?

SARAH

(caught, challenging)

What of it?

HAROLD

Nothing.

He crushes it in the ashtray.

MEG

You know, I heard running is really bad for you.

HAROLD

It's been good for me. My knees are shot. Didn't you hear about my 4F?

He grins and exits.

MEG

(looks at Sarah)

Is that right? That's great!

INT. STAIRWAY AND UPSTAIRS HALL

Harold bounds up the stairs and stops at the first door, which he opens. In the gloom across the room, Karen snatches a sheet up to cover her naked breasts. Nick is barely discernible beside her. They are talking.

HAROLD

Time to eat -- some food.

He moves off down the hall cheerily, leaving the door open. Karen yells after him.

KAREN

Knock!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Harold knocks on the hall wall. He turns in to the bathroom and switches on the light. Dozens of cockroaches scurry for cover. Harold takes no notice of them as he goes across the room and turns on the shower. It dribbles out spasmodically. Harold goes out of the bathroom and back down the hall. As he enters the room across the hall from Nick's bedroom, Karen has reached their open door. She slams it.

INT. NICK'S BEDROOM

Very dark in here. Karen, in panties, is fussing with a confusion of switches on the dresser. She accidentally turns on first a strobe light, then a black light, before successfully locating the lamp switch. She then begins to dress: in black tights, a leather miniskirt and a sexy peasant blouse. Still no clear sight of Nick.

NICK (O.S.)

Karen, I get the feeling that you don't believe in the infinite potential of man. I can see it very clearly, even in this light. You, me ...

We cut to Nick --

NICK

... we're actively evolving.

KAREN

You're evolving yourself right into Viet Nam. Most guys with a 14 draft number are in a heightened state of panic.

NICK

You know, you have a great ass.

KAREN

You're making me very angry. I don't think you take our engagement seriously. I think maybe we should call it off. You don't want to marry me.

NICK

You know Blumberg?

(she nods)

Blumberg had a girlfriend who kept telling him he was going to get bored with her, she wasn't smart enough for him. One day he got bored with hearing that.

Karen pulls a chair up to his dresser and begins applying heavy eye make-up and long earrings.

KAREN

Don't threaten me, Nick. I know what

(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)

this is. This is your buddy Alex. Big hero. Turns down the best opportunity he's ever going to have, to make some adolescent statement about "imperialism".

NICK

He speaks highly of you. Karen, what is this really about? Is it about the Graduate Record Exams? Is it going to make everything right in your world if I get a Ph.D.?

KAREN

At least you'd be assured of work.

NICK

Why don't you get the Ph.D.? And I'll go into publishing or advertising or whatever it is this week.

KAREN

My career plans are a joke to you.

NICK

I love your career plans. Your plans don't require four more years of school. Anyway, Sam assures me the Revolution will be here by the end of January and all the Ph.D.'s are gonna be shot.

KAREN

Sam's a good one to listen to. Mr. Flash. The only Marxist I ever met with a hairdryer.

NICK

Sam has charisma.

KAREN

How do you make a living out of charisma?

Downstairs, the phone starts ringing. It takes a long time before it's answered.

Nick sits up on the side of the bed and reaches for his pants. His posture dejected, defeated.

NICK

Okay. I give up. Whatever you want I will do.

Finished with her make-up, she takes her toothbrush and goes to the door, where she stops and looks at him.

KAREN

You did take that tab of mescaline, didn't you?

CONTINUED:

She goes out.

NICK
Do I look like I'm on mescaline?

He does indeed.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL/BATHROOM

Karen goes down the hall into the bathroom. Harold is in the shower, behind the curtain. Karen gingerly opens the medicine cabinet and carefully takes out the tube of toothpaste, holding it between two fingers. She looks down with disgust, then flushes the toilet. Harold screams in pain and jumps away from the spray.

HAROLD
Jesus!

KAREN
Oh. Sorry.

She brushes her teeth.

INT. STAIRWAY

Nick comes out of his bedroom and starts down the stairs. On the landing, he stops by the open window. Sam is out there, cutting across the Neighbor's lawn toward the house.

NEIGHBOR
Get off of my lawn!

SAM
The lawn belongs to the people.

Sam gives the Neighbor the raised fist, Black Power salute. The Neighbor gives Sam the Italian, "up-yours" salute.

Nick goes downstairs, where he passes Michael, on the phone.

MICHAEL
No mother. I'm not on anything.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Nick goes into the living room. Sam comes in; even now, his jeans are neatly pressed. He unloads his gear. Sarah is in the dining room.

SARAH
Sam, you're late.

SAM
No problem. I'll have it ready for you in five minutes.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

He goes into the kitchen.

SARAH

Nick, will you wake Alex up? I think his turkey is ready.

Sarah goes back in the kitchen. Nick nods, walks over and unplugs the headphones. The MUSIC comes up loud. Nick walks across the living room to where ALEX is sleeping, head buried in the sofa. He looks almost dead. He is wearing the same leather jacket we saw in Chloe's room, but it is not as battered. Nick sits down on the sofa and nudges him gently.

NICK

Maharishi Alex. Time to return to the material world.

Alex comes slowly back to life. He rolls over, waking up. He looks at Nick.

ALEX

Hi. What time is it?

NICK

It's late.

ALEX

Man, I had the weirdest dream. You lost all your teeth.

NICK

I lost all my teeth?! Thanks a lot, pal!

Michael comes in.

MICHAEL

Alex, my mom thinks you did a great thing. Loved my column, by the way.

ALEX

You sent it to them already?

MICHAEL

My father, on the other hand, thinks you're an asshole. Although he loved my column too. So you got an even split out of Yonkers.

NICK

I love these private ethical decisions.

Alex gets up.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

ALEX

I would rather not make light of my irritation with you, Michael. I've got a good week's worth of rage left.

MICHAEL

I've made you a star. How are we going to enlighten the masses if people of principle try to keep their actions a secret? Besides, you'll probably get laid because of this thing. Maybe we'll both get laid.

ALEX

(almost to the kitchen)

Just so it's not the same girl.

1202582

Alex goes into the kitchen. Michael sits down to his Cliff Notes again. Nick, on his knees, begins pulling at the cushions of the sofa.

NICK

You know I think I dropped a big piece of hash down here.

MICHAEL

(shakes his head, still on Alex)

You try to do something nice and no one appreciates it.

NICK

I'm sure that next year those kids in Bed-Stuy are going to appreciate your honky ass all over the place.

Michael, who has been trying to read, closes his eyes at the thought.

MICHAEL

Please don't talk about that. There's still a possibility of my C.O. gambit working. And I think I'm developing a heart murmur.

Nick finds a chunk of something, smells it and holds it up for Michael to see.

NICK

You think this is hash or very old chocolate?

INT. KITCHEN

Alex has just rolled a joint. He takes a toke and passes it to Meg, then claps his hands enthusiastically. Sam works at his sauce.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

Sarah picks a strand of wet pasta off the refrigerator.

ALEX

Okay. I'm ready to start cooking!
You chicks want to help me?

Sarah shoots him a dirty look. He grabs her.

ALEX

Come on, mama, none of those bad vibes.
I was with you in spirit.

He tickles her and she giggles. Harold walks in.

HAROLD

Hey, what are you doing with my woman?

MEG

Possessiveness is so bourgeois.

HAROLD

You know, where I come from, we were
looking up at bourgeois.

ALEX

(letting go of Sarah)

It's true. Harold is my working class
hero.

SAM

(to Alex)

I just came from the SPA meeting ...

ALEX

Any new women?

SAM

... As a matter of fact, yes, but that's
not the point. Your name came up several
times. Everybody thinks this Rutledge
thing was right on ...

Alex makes a sour face. More publicity.

SARAH

Harold, you want to put some glasses on
the table?

SAM

... show those running dog imperialists
you can't be co-opted.

HAROLD

Really right on. Not too many people

(MORE)

1202582

HAROLD (CONT'D)

can give up \$6,000 a year to study in the field of their choice.

MEG

Don't forget the assured deferment.

HAROLD

Yeah. Who needs something like that at a time like this?

ALEX

Maybe you could just lend me one of your knees.

HAROLD

What's mine is yours.

ALEX

(touches Sarah)

Now he tells us.

SAM

Harold, don't you think it matters that the sponsoring corporation manufactures defoliants and who knows what else?

HAROLD

It's not the sponsoring corporation. It's an independent foundation.

SAM

Don't be so naive, Harold. The whole thing is probably a CIA front. You think they're studying proton physics to feed the third world?

They begin making carrying trips into the dining room.

SAM

(to Alex)

That's what you study, isn't it? Proton physics? Whatever the fuck that is.

ALEX

Not anymore. I'm giving it up. Every fucking job in the field is in the military-industrial complex.

SARAH

(a finger to Alex's chest)

Plastics.

ALEX

I'm going to become a cobbler.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

MEG

Alex, didn't you know Giapetto was a CIA agent?

ALEX

Where's the wine?

SARAH

You about ready with that, Sam? Everything is going to get cold.

INT. DINING ROOM/LIVING ROOM

Alex comes in with the wine. Nick sits on the sofa, deftly fashioning a hash pipe out of silver foil.

MICHAEL

(to Nick)

... I could take over the New York journalism power structure in two weeks.

NICK

(looks at his watch)

Okay ... Go!

MICHAEL

(holding up Cliff Notes)

You see this? This is what I'm talking about. This is the truth.

ALEX

What is it?

MICHAEL

The Brothers Karamazov.

ALEX

I can't get into Dostoyevsky. All that Russki guilt.

MICHAEL

Great. We're getting the literary opinion of a physics major. A guy who thinks "A Perfect Day For Bananafish" is the greatest story ever written.

1202582

Karen comes down the stairs. Her hair has been brushed five hundred strokes. She crosses to the kitchen door where she is almost bopped by Meg, pushing through with an armload.

KAREN

(to the kitchen generally)

I'm going to clean up. So stop with the dirty looks.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

SAM (O.S.)

I'll help you.

Sarah brings out food.

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SARAH

Alex, you going to carve your turkey?

Alex goes into the kitchen.

SARAH

Nick, you want to sit down? That could be your contribution.

Sam comes out with his pasta dish.

SAM

Karen, I can't wait for you to taste this.

KAREN

(icy dismissal)

I don't like noodles.

SARAH

(looks at table)

Is that everything?

MEG

I think so. Let's sit.

They all move toward seats.

NICK

(brings smoking pipe to the table)

You want a hit?

MEG

What is it?

NICK

I think it's a Hershey bar.

INT. KITCHEN

Alex is alone in here now. The door to the dining room has swung shut and so the conversation from there is slightly muffled. Alex has the turkey on a big platter. He stands poised, a little like a symphonic conductor, a long carving knife in one hand and a fork in the other. He looks at the turkey. There is a wide, gleeful grin on his face, but whether it is from the conversation he is overhearing, or from some mysterious appreciation of the turkey's perfection, or from general pleasure at his situation, we will never know. What we do know, from his several tentative approaches is that he is having trouble making the first cut.

CONTINUED:

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL (O.S.)

This is not bad, Sam.

SAM (O.S.)

It's better when you use a fork.

MEG (O.S.)

Could I have the salad?

NICK (O.S.)

What is this stuff?

MEG (O.S.)

Which?

NICK (O.S.)

The orange stuff.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

That's your napkin, Nick.

SARAH (O.S.)

Haven't you ever seen a sweet potato?

KAREN (O.S.)

So where's this famous turkey?

There is a long moment of silence from the other room, practically the first we've heard in this house. Then, finally --

HAROLD (O.S.)

Alex, we need you in here.

Alex puts the knife and fork on the platter and picks it up. He carries the unscathed turkey through the swinging door, into the dining room, in to his friends.

FADE OUT

THE END