

THE CORRECTIONS

by
DAVID HARE

Based on the novel by Jonathan Franzen

Casarotto Ramsay
National House
60 Wardour Street
LONDON W.1.V 4ND

CHARACTERS

Enid Lambert
Alfred Lambert

Gary Lambert
Chip Lambert
Denise Lambert

Caroline Lambert

Aaron Lambert
Caleb Lambert
Jonah Lambert

Gitanas Misevicius
Brian Callahan
Julia Vrais
Robin Passafaro

Melissa Paquette
Robi Zito
Sinead Callahan
Erin Callahan
Kim Chantrel
Cherry Dietl
Stig Soderblad
Signe Soderblad
Per Nygren
Inga Nygren

Dean of College
Doctor Hedgpath

Waiters
Cooks
Academics
Check-out staff
Bar staff
Receptionists
Bodyguards
Police
etc

1

INT. BAR. NEW YORK. DAY.

1

A veneered bar in New York. It's day, but there's little daylight indoors. There's a wooden-topped table, with a couple of small single-shot whisky glasses. A man's trembling hand is pouring whisky uncertainly. Beside the glasses, a lit cigarette is burning. As he pours, GITANAS MISEVICIUS'S voice is heard. He's from Lithuania and his English is pleasantly accented.

GITANAS' VOICE

For every boom, there's a bust.
That's just a fact. Everything that
goes up is one day going to come
down. History tells us that.
There's always a correction. Of
course there is.

The shaking, scarred hand has poured two whiskies. Now it flicks ash from the table, and then reaches for a silver-foil packet. Fingers rip the foil and take out a couple of Advils which they throw in the whisky.

GITANAS' VOICE

It's a stupid kind of person who
thinks in the middle of a boom 'Hey
this boom is going to go on for
ever.' And the cleverest man of all
is the man who knows exactly when
to get off. That's another fact.

The hands reach for the whisky-Advil mix, and then the empty glass comes down onto the table. A puff at the cigarette, then a re-fill.

GITANAS' VOICE

In fact, I tell you : there's only
one group of people - I tell you
this - only one group, only one
kind of person who's stupider than
all the rest - you might say
they're stupidest people in the
world. Who are they ?

GITANAS is heard to pause a moment, as if he might get an answer. None comes.

GITANAS' VOICE

They're the people who never
climbed on the boom in the first
place.

The person GITANAS is addressing across the table is CHIP LAMBERT. He's 39, in black leather, with a couple of rivets in his ears.

He's striking, tall, gym-built with butter-yellow hair, dressed young for his age. He's thinking hard about what GITANAS has just said.

GITANAS

You know what I'm saying, Chip ?
You understand what I'm saying ?

CHIP

Yes. I believe I do.

2 INT. BANK. PHILADELPHIA. DAY. CREDITS. MUSIC.

2

Music. The scenes in the credits sequence melt one into another. First, GARY LAMBERT, having packed up his desk and turned off his computer, is walking away from his work at the end of a day in the large CentTrust bank in Philadelphia. He is already talking on a mobile phone. GARY is 43, an attractive man, neat, with tin-gray hair, well turned-out but tense, making a business suit look like casual wear. As he walks past his colleagues out through a large open-plan office, GARY smiles or nods at them, while all the time listening and talking.

GARY (PHONE)

Mom, I don't know if we're going to be able to come for Christmas this year after all. I really don't know. I know what we agreed, I promised I would try. I know what it would mean to you. Mom, if I could, I would - why would I not ? - if it were me alone, think about it - think about it, Mom -

GARY has come into the elevator area, full of fellow bankers, all heading home.

GARY (PHONE)

Hold on, I have to call you back,
I'm just getting into the
elevator...

Even as he speaks, his voice drifts and overlaps with DENISE in the next scene.

3 INT. THE GENERATOR. PHILADELPHIA. NIGHT. CREDITS. MUSIC.

3

The Generator is a fashionable restaurant in Philadelphia. It has been forged out of a power station, so all along one wall, behind glass, is a stainless steel kitchen in which the cooks are seen to perform in a cabaret of flame and flamboyance. There are seven or eight CHEFS, and around them, like worker bees, are young, conspicuously attractive WAITERS, mixed by race and gender, firing in orders and waiting impatiently. The room is packed. At the center of the operation, an eye everywhere, is DENISE LAMBERT.

She is 32, tall, dark-haired, working at her range like a musician at her instrument, a glass of wine always to hand. As she cooks she is speaking into a white phone lodged on her shoulder, off an endless white cord.

DENISE (PHONE)

Mom, I know how important it is, believe me, I do. I know. And I'm not going to let you down. You know that. I never have let you down. It's just at this very moment...

There is a penetrating scream of 'Two ribs, two sauerkraut, four cherry duck' from a WAITER which cuts right through Denise's call.

DENISE (PHONE)

At this very moment...

But a plate catches her attention as it goes by and she yells.

DENISE

Don't plate those fuckers ! Don't fucking plate them until they've been sauced !

DENISE turns back into the phone to apologize.

DENISE (PHONE)

I know, I'm sorry, Mom, I don't usually speak like that, well I do, but I don't actually speak like that in front of you...

But already, the sound of her voice has begun to drift and overlap with the next scene.

4 EXT. STREET. NEW YORK. DAY. CREDITS. MUSIC.

4

CHIP is on a payphone on a busy street in the Lower East Side of New York. Along the sidewalk, people are going by, talking, absorbed in their own worlds.

CHIP (PHONE)

I promised to call you. I'm calling, OK ? What more do you want ? I'm writing a screenplay, remember ? So. By Christmas, for all I know it may be in production. I'm going to have to be on location.

CHIP is struggling to put up with what he is hearing.

CHIP (PHONE)

I know, but, the problem is : you write something set in Boston, these guys go and film it in...I don't know...Paraguay. That's what they do. I don't know why, it saves money, that's what they say...

But already, GARY'S voice is heard taking over as CHIP'S drifts away.

5 INT & EXT. CAR. DAY. CREDITS. MUSIC.

5

Now GARY is driving his spacious leather-seated Saab through the suburbs of Philadelphia. He looks out at the smart, woody residences, enjoying the prosperity of his car and of his surroundings. He relaxes back, comfortable, detached, not getting too worked up. The phone is hand-free.

GARY (PHONE)

Mom, there is no need to raise your voice. There is really no need. I know how Dad is. Believe me. I saw him. I saw him a few weeks ago, remember ? I am well aware of his condition. I don't think that is true, Mom. I really don't think that is true.

Already, DENISE'S voice is heard taking over as GARY'S drifts away.

6 INT. THE GENERATOR. NIGHT. CREDITS. MUSIC.

6

DENISE has taken the long lead of the phone and is walking away from the range into a darkened corner, not wanting to be overheard.

DENISE (PHONE)

If I can just point out : Can I just say something here ? Mom, there are two different issues. One) You, Mom, would like your whole family to gather together in the family home in Omaha. You personally would like that. And Two) My father is not very well. He has the beginnings of...an illness. So let me just say : these are two issues, they are entirely separate issues...

DENISE turns and CHIP'S voice is already taking over.

7 EXT. STREET. NEW YORK. DAY. CREDITS. MUSIC.

7

CHIP is waving his arms, becoming a little desperate.

CHIP (PHONE)

I'm not saying I'm going to be in Paraguay for Christmas, I may not be in Paraguay, I'm saying it's an example, Mom, it's an example...

CHIP makes a gesture of despair, but CAROLINE is already audible.

8

INT & EXT. GARY'S HOUSE. DAY. CREDITS. MUSIC.

8

In the back yard of Gary Lambert's family house on Seminole Street, Chestnut Hill, his wife and their three children, AARON, 14, CALEB, 11, and JONAH, 7, are all playing soccer. A spacious, suburban lawn, and behind it, a well-appointed schist-sheathed house. Lush vegetation and forest lend it a fairy-tale feeling. Making a sudden turn of speed with the ball, to devastating effect, is CAROLINE LAMBERT. She is 45, an image of radiant motherhood in her tracksuit, her slim bloneness matured into something deep and alluring. She is yelling at the kids with a look of delight on her face.

CAROLINE

I'm going through, I'm going through, I'm gonna score, I'm gonna score !

Meanwhile, in the front drive, GARY is driving his Saab into the garage, his voice beginning to rise in disbelief, his sang-froid melting.

GARY (PHONE)

"One last Christmas" ? Mom, do you actually hear yourself ? Do you actually hear what you say ?

But before he gets his answer, the sound of DENISE in the kitchen has taken over.

9

INT. THE GENERATOR. NIGHT. CREDITS. MUSIC.

9

A fire has broken out in the stir-fry area, flames are leaping, but it is being dealt with in the way of busy kitchens habituated to minor industrial accidents. People run with wet cloths. DENISE'S attention is always on the phone.

DENISE (PHONE)

"One last Christmas" ? That is blackmail, Mom. You know damn well what it means when you say "One last Christmas"...

But even as DENISE turns her back on the fire-fighters, CHIP'S voice is taking over.

10 EXT. STREET. NEW YORK. DAY. CREDITS. MUSIC.

10

A HOMELESS MAN, in a padded jacket has appeared, imploring CHIP for money. CHIP puts his hand over the phone and turns violently.

CHIP

No, I can't spare a fucking dollar,
you give me a fucking dollar more
like...

The HOMELESS MAN reels away shocked, as CHIP turns back to the phone and GARY takes over.

11 INT & EXT. GARY'S HOUSE. DAY. CREDITS. MUSIC.

11

Now GARY is walking through the hall of his large house, full of the evidence of children. There are computer games and televisions in every room. GARY has put his briefcase down, and is back on his mobile as he walks through to the kitchen and goes to the fridge. With one hand, he takes a frozen glass out of the freeze box, drops in a couple of ice cubes, pours a shot of vodka, drinks it, cleans the glass under the tap and puts it back in the freezer : with the other, he goes on talking to his mother.

GARY (PHONE)

I'd just like you to remember,
Mom : for the last eight years - do
you remember this ? you've come
here for Christmas, you and Dad
have spent Christmas in
Philadelphia, with me, with
Caroline and with your
grandchildren, that's the way we've
done it - you've come to us ; you,
Mom, have come to us - and I don't
think honestly you or Dad can put
your hand on your heart and say you
haven't had a good time... I would
actually say a very good time...

Now GARY is looking out from the kitchen window. CAROLINE has scored again. She is leaping around like a mad thing, as the three boys tumble around her, laughing.

CAROLINE

I win ! I win !

GARY watches thoughtfully as CAROLINE runs towards her boys. Meanwhile DENISE'S despairing voice takes over.

12 INT. THE GENERATOR. NIGHT. CREDITS. MUSIC.

12

DENISE is walking back and forth, as everyone else resumes cooking around her.

DENISE (PHONE)

Mom, we have two hundred covers in tonight, this is the busiest night of the busiest week in the busiest restaurant in town...

She turns at the top of her walk as CHIP overtakes her, increasingly agitated.

13 EXT. STREET. DAY. CREDITS. MUSIC.

13

CHIP is getting over-involved.

CHIP (PHONE)

It's perfectly simple, there's a mix up, it's a mix-up, that's all, I was AT&T, now I'm... Sprite...and there's some... whatever...hand-over period, no I don't have a mobile, and for the moment, it's true, for the moment, I am making calls in the street...

CHIP has begun to kick the metal side of the phone booth, but GARY is taking over.

14 INT. GARY'S HOUSE. DAY. CREDITS. MUSIC.

14

GARY is speaking with evident sincerity into the mouthpiece.

GARY (PHONE)

The last thing I want in the world - as you well know - is to hurt you - or to hurt Dad - either to hurt you or to hurt Dad. That is not what I want.

GARY turns back to the window and he watches as CAROLINE puts her arms round all three of the children. They all have their backs to him as they walk away in an image of steadfast family solidarity.

GARY watches for a moment, silent.

15 INT. THE GENERATOR. NIGHT. CREDITS. MUSIC.

15

DENISE has seen a passing plate and is holding her hand over the mouthpiece of the phone and screaming.

DENISE

That meat is raw, it is fucking raw, don't send that fucking meat out in that state...

DENISE turns back to the phone. But already CHIP'S voice is replacing hers.

16 EXT. STREET. NEW YORK. DAY. CREDITS. MUSIC. 16

CHIP is now looking round the street.

CHIP (PHONE)

This call is running out, I have no more quarters, Mom, I'm running out of quarters...

17 INT. GARY'S HOUSE. DAY. CREDITS. MUSIC. 17

GARY has turned his back on his family.

GARY (PHONE)

Mom, I have to go now, that was the door, there's definitely someone at the door...

18 INT. THE GENERATOR. NIGHT. CREDITS. MUSIC. 18

Now, a loud crash of plates as two CHEFS collide and crockery goes spinning.

DENISE (PHONE)

I have to get back now, Mom, I have to leave this, we have a forty minute back-up, I do actually have to work...

19 SPLIT SCREEN. STREET/RESTAURANT/HOUSE. CREDITS. MUSIC 19

The screen splits in three - the three children saying similar things, slightly differently, each one at the same time reacting to the situation around them : DENISE approving plated food, CHIP nodding at the woman behind him who wants the phone, GARY lifting a hand in greeting to CAROLINE who has at last noticed him standing at the kitchen window.

GARY/DENISE/CHIP (PHONES)

I'm going to have to call you back.
I'm going to call you back. We're going to have to talk about this some other time. I can't talk now, Mom. I'm going to call you Sunday. I just can't make any promises. I can't promise. I'll talk to you. I'll talk to you tomorrow. I'll talk to you sometime.

The three figures become smaller as they say goodbye. Their surroundings widen. The ambitious size of the restaurant becomes apparent. The telephone becomes a dot in the distance in a busy New York street seen from above. Gary's house becomes one among many, ranged neat and affluent in the vernal suburb of Philadelphia.

The three voices mingle. Then, the clear-cut sound of three phones going down.

20

INT. ALFRED & ENID'S HOUSE. OMAHA. DAY. CREDITS.

20

ENID puts the phone down quietly in a detached suburban home in Omaha, Nebraska. An old-fashioned house with a timeless air, on two principal floors and decorated with nice solid objects and furniture. There is Spode and Waterford on show : *Architectural Digest* is fanned on a glass table. The prevailing peace contrasts with the frenzy of their children's milieus. ENID is in her early seventies, short, eager, once slender and dark-haired, still in good shape except for a noticeable bad hip. Opposite her in a large armchair ALFRED is sitting - a one-time Kansas farm boy, strong, independent, stoic, the two of them the obvious progenitors of the family's good looks. ALFRED is 79. His body and words have the dislocated feel of the mid-stages of Parkinson's disease. He looks up from the paper.

ALFRED

So ?

ENID smiles, content.

ENID

They say they're all coming for Christmas.

CAPTION

A plain caption reads : JANUARY

21

INT. HALL. COLLEGE. DAY.

21

The paneled hall of a college in New England. Three DEANS of Faculty are at a polished wooden table. Opposite them is CHIP, dressed less uncompromisingly than in previous scenes, an academic aiming for casual respectability. There are no rivets yet. The senior DEAN is an older white woman who, like the other two, has a file unopened on the table in front of her. At her side is a younger black woman professor of Chip's age, and an elderly male.

DEAN

You realize this is an extremely serious charge.

CHIP does not answer.

DEAN

The rules of the college are clear. You know the code.

CHIP

I helped write the code.

DEAN

You did.

The DEAN glances sideways.

DEAN

Today you must not speak directly to Miss Paquette. Anything you have to say, you must say through me. Is that also clear ?

CHIP

Why, sure.

CHIP deliberately doesn't look sideways. At the side of the room MELISSA PAQUETTE is sitting, 18, with long dark hair. She wears second-hand overalls, like a garage mechanic, with the name Randy embroidered on her upper pocket.

DEAN

Miss Paquette has alleged that you helped her with her principal term paper. She's saying in fact that you largely wrote the paper for her.

Again CHIP does not answer, nor look sideways. MELISSA recrosses her legs.

DEAN

This in itself would be a violation of the code. Is there anything you want to ask at this stage ?

CHIP

Yes there is.

The board are impassive. MELISSA is leonine, gleaming.

CHIP

I'd like from Miss Paquette...for Miss Paquette to give an account, through you, of the circumstances, of the exact circumstances in which she says this essay was written.

DEAN

Yes.

Again, the DEAN keeps her poker face. She looks a moment at MELISSA, who shines with modest innuendo.

DEAN

She says you wrote it with her in a motel.

22 INT. CAFE LOUCHE. KITCHEN. PHILADELPHIA. DAY.

22

The kitchen of a bistro in Philadelphia. In contrast to *The Generator*, *Cafe Louche* is quiet and orderly. It's been a slow lunchtime, and DENISE is left with one or two SOUS-CHEFS packing away unused food in swathes of sani-wrap or neatly into Tupperware. The maitre d', ROBI ZITO, is a short frizzy-haired New Yorker. He puts a scrawled note into her hand.

DENISE

What's this ?

DENISE opens it and looks at it a moment.

DENISE

Who's it from ? Is it a guy ?

ZITO indicates the main room. DENISE goes to the porthole of the kitchen door to look. Sitting at a table by himself in the nearly-empty restaurant is a 35 year-old with sandy hair, freckles on a meaty face, and winning blue eyes.

ZITO

He's over there. He's been in for three days.

23 INT. CAFE LOUCHE. DINING ROOM. DAY.

23

BRIAN CALLAHAN looks up as DENISE heads towards him. He has an unfinished espresso in front of him. DENISE is in her chef's outfit which includes a signature saying *Cafe Louche* on her upper pocket. She is wiping her hands warily on her apron. The restaurant is cozy, familiar, well-tried.

BRIAN

Brian Callahan.

DENISE

Denise Lambert.

BRIAN

I know. Forgive me, I've taken the trouble to find out.

BRIAN smiles at the note in her hand.

BRIAN

I've just eaten an exceptional lunch.

DENISE

What did you have ?

BRIAN

I had the *cog au vin*. It's not the first time, in fact I've eaten here quite a lot. Maybe you've seen me ?

DENISE shakes her head. She's suspicious, but BRIAN'S manner is open and sunny.

BRIAN
Would you like to sit down ?

DENISE
No thank you.

BRIAN looks not at all rebuffed, becoming, if anything, more amenable.

BRIAN
I can tell you, I've tried every serious restaurant in Philadelphia - some of them many times. I've been wanting to find the best cook in the city.

DENISE
I'm not that.

BRIAN
Or has the potential to be. I don't know how much you take home, but whatever, I'll offer double.

BRIAN sits back, pleased with the drama of his offer.

BRIAN
Tell me what to do and I'll do it.

DENISE is looking at him, intrigued now.

BRIAN
Perhaps I might take you out for a drive ?

24 INT & EXT. CAR. PHILADELPHIA. DAY.

24

It's a sunny, brisk January day, and BRIAN is completely at ease at the wheel of his pistachio-colored Volvo station wagon, his radio playing cheerfully. Industrial Philadelphia is going by - the huge factories of the Pennsylvania heartland. DENISE is beside him, in blue jeans, beginning to enjoy herself.

BRIAN
I had a computer business...

DENISE
I see...

BRIAN
Which I sold about a year ago. I'm in that happy position : I don't actually ever have to work again.

DENISE looks at his strong, fair-haired hand on the wheel, noting the wedding ring.

BRIAN

Most people say they envy me. Not you ?

DENISE just smiles.

DENISE

What kind of business was it ?

BRIAN

Perhaps you've heard of it : You take a tune, any tune, the software breaks the melody down into its coordinates, then it spits out a list of every song that's in any way similar. All the songs you might have missed. All the pleasure.

BRIAN gives her a broad grin. DENISE can't help being charmed.

BRIAN

That's when you make a lot of money. Something is useful but it's fun as well.

BRIAN swings the car round a corner, deliberately dramatic. In front of them is an enormous disused brick power station. BRIAN stops the car.

25 INT. POWER STATION. DAY.

25

DENISE and BRIAN walk up a filthy, darkened staircase. They come out on the fourth floor of what was the Philadelphia Electric Company dirty-coal power plant. A vast space, empty but for some filthy turbines, with a pitted floor, and Chartres-like banks of high, open window-spaces. Beyond them, the river. DENISE stands a moment, awed.

BRIAN

Don't say I've succeeded in impressing you.

DENISE walks further into it, taken aback both by its scale and the state it's in.

BRIAN

The workshop of the world.

Still DENISE says nothing.

BRIAN

What are you thinking ?

DENISE

I'm thinking of all the money
you're going to lose.

BRIAN

Look. There aren't any pigeons. No
puddles. That's a very good sign.
And don't overlook the view.

BRIAN gestures to the river. He's unanswerable.

BRIAN

You tell me that if we glass the
whole thing in, steam-clean the
turbines and lay down a floor,
people aren't going to flock ?

DENISE

Depends what you give them to eat.

BRIAN smiles, enjoying her directness.

DENISE

When are you hoping to open ?

BRIAN

May.

DENISE looks at him sardonically.

BRIAN

That's what I want to discuss with
you. The menu.

DENISE

Do you know anything about the
restaurant business at all ?

26 INT. BAR. PHILADELPHIA. DAY

26

Now BRIAN and DENISE are together in a modern, trendy bar
with schmaltzy music. It's too early for happy hour, so there
aren't many people about. The remains of several martinis are
stacked on the table in front of them. DENISE has relaxed
now, surrendering to BRIAN'S charm.

BRIAN

It's a dream offer, isn't it ?
'What would you cook if you could
cook anything you want ?'

DENISE smiles.

BRIAN

First off - did I mention ? - I'd
like to send you to Europe. Why
not ? You need ideas.

DENISE

What is this ? 'Queen for a Day' ?

BRIAN

I don't think so. In three months' you're going to be working harder than you've ever worked in your life.

BRIAN smiles, wide open.

BRIAN

Besides, I'd like to come with you.

DENISE

Really ?

BRIAN

Don't worry. Only for some of the time. Paris. Maybe Rome as well. Eat some dinners. After all, I want to get something out of this.

BRIAN has said this without any apparent guile. DENISE is looking at him, trying to work him out. BRIAN stares back and his stare embarrasses her.

DENISE

Say.

BRIAN

You're not married ?

DENISE shakes her head.

DENISE

You ?

BRIAN

Very much so.

There is a short silence.

DENISE

What does your wife think of the restaurant idea ?

BRIAN

Robin ? Oh. Robin thinks I should do what I want.

27 INT. GARY'S HOUSE. DAY.

27

GARY, back from work, lets himself into the house. It's dark outside, but the light is on in the hall. He puts down his case, listens a moment, then he goes upstairs.

On the first floor of the house is the children's television and games room. He looks in. CAROLINE is sitting on a black leather sofa, dressed in sweatpants, her arms round AARON, CALEB and JONAH. All four of them are engrossed in a television cartoon. They look up briefly at the sight of GARY and all say 'Hi, Dad'.

GARY

Shall I make dinner ?

CAROLINE

Would you ? Thank you.

CAROLINE smiles, then they all return to the television. GARY walks down the corridor and goes into the master bedroom. GARY sits down on the large, oaken bed.

GARY puts his head in his hands.

Fade.

CAPTION

A plain caption reads : FEBRUARY

28

INT. HOSPITAL. OMAHA. DAY

28

DOCTOR HEDGPATH'S consulting room in a large Omaha hospital. ENID is sitting opposite a desk in a startlingly bare room, which has only a desk, a screen, some chairs and some framed pictures of Dr. Hedgpath with his wife and children. He is black, still only in his late twenties. He comes out from behind the screens. He goes behind the desk and sits down. A moment later, ALFRED appears also from behind the screen, wearing a check shirt and jacket.

ALFRED

Well ?

ALFRED sits down beside ENID opposite the doctor.

HEDGPATH

What I'd say about any degenerative disease, Mr. Lambert, is that there's a physical process - we both know that - but just as important, we shouldn't forget there's a psychological process as well.

ALFRED looks at him, showing nothing. ENID is being self-consciously good, resisting the urge to comment.

HEDGPATH

I'm new to this district, but people tell me, sir, you were a railwayman...

ALFRED

That's it. That's what I was.

ENID

Alfred was a manager.

HEDGPATH

Yes...

ENID

He ended up chief engineer.

ALFRED

Let the man speak, Enid. I worked on the railway. That's what the man's saying.

ENID

No, it's just - doctor, you're making it sound as if Alfred was driving an engine. He wasn't driving an engine.

ENID smiles as if the idea were self-evidently ridiculous.
HEDGPATH has the air of a man who has dealt with other Enids.

HEDGPATH
(MORE)

The point I'm making Mrs. Lambert :
Your husband led an active life.
His whole life, he was active.

HEDGPATH speaks directly to ALFRED.

HEDGPATH

Now : dealing with the disease,
there's a drugs regime. Of course.
I'll give you drugs. But, Mr.
Lambert, attitude is also
important.

29 INT. CAR. DAY

29

ALFRED is driving home with elaborate care in his Oldsmobile. His motor faculties still permit him to be in charge of a car, but it is an act of concentration which takes his whole mind and body. ENID is beside him, at once satisfied and reproving. Omaha moves to a stately pace : slow traffic, slow lights. ENID shakes her head, as if she cannot believe how completely she's been vindicated.

ENID

It's what I've been saying. I've been saying this to you and you never take any notice. Nothing's going to get better unless you make it get better.

ENID(cont'd)

Dave Schumpert has ten times the problems you have, he's got one lung and a pace-maker, he's had a colostomy for fifteen years, and he and Mary Beth have just got back from snorkeling in Fiji. And what's more, Dave never complains. I've never once heard him complain.

ALFRED looks straight ahead, eyes on the road, as if he has his own view of Dave and Mary-Beth. Some time goes by before he speaks.

ALFRED

I'm not going again.

ENID

What do you mean ? What do you mean, you're not going again ? To the hospital ?

There is a short silence, ENID deciding not to fight this battle right now.

ALFRED

There's nothing they can do.

ENID

That's the contrary, the exact contrary of what the doctor said. There's lots they can do. There's no end to what they can do. For a start they've given you drugs.

There is a third silence, this one the most charged of the lot, ALFRED firm, ENID refusing to concede defeat.

ENID

I think he's a very nice man.

ALFRED

That's not the issue is it ?

30 INT & EXT. ALFRED AND ENID'S HOUSE. HALL. DAY

30

No sooner has he carefully let himself in the door than ALFRED is heading straight for the stairs which lead to the basement. ENID is closing the door behind him.

ENID

Where are you going now ? You going downstairs ?

ALFRED

Where do I go every day ?

He's almost gone. ENID accepts.

ENID

You mind yourself on the stairs.

ALFRED

I'm minding myself.

31 INT. BASEMENT. DAY.

31

ALFRED comes down into the basement. The limitless clutter contrasts with the neatness of upstairs - as if the sheer jumble of life has been driven underground to where ALFRED spends his day. It is dominated by a large ping-pong table, at one end overflowing with correspondence, at the other with a portable TV, opposite a large blue leather armchair. The detritus of two lives has sunk to the bottom. ALFRED moves gingerly but clear of purpose, heading towards his den : a laboratory to one side of the main area.

Here, the dusty, elaborate apparatus of home-grown scientific experiment : chemicals, microscopes, an old electric arc furnace. The evidence of thirty years of private endeavor is everywhere around. On the brick walls a couple of framed patents. ALFRED looks round intending to do something, not quite remembering what. He thinks, then reaches for a hammer and some bolts. He shifts a tin full of screws and nuts and underneath it he sees a photograph peeping out. With a slightly shaking hand, he picks it out.

ALFRED looks at himself in his thirties, in jeans and check shirt, standing on the track, beside the great engine of a gleaming train. He looks virile, handsome, incorruptible. ALFRED, a blankness in his eye, stares at his young self.

32 INT & EXT. TRAIN. DAY.

32

Seen from outside the window, CHIP is traveling on a Metroliner through the New York upstate countryside. He is sitting next to the window, staring out. Dressed entirely differently, he resembles his father.

33 INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION. NEW YORK. DAY.

33

DENISE is waiting for CHIP as he gets off the train. He looks aggressive and jaunty as he comes through the crowd, but in New York, DENISE looks more lost, a little less secure, in her jeans and leather jacket. She embraces him at the gate.

CHIP

Hey, Denise, there you are. I didn't think you'd make it.

DENISE

I said I'd make it, didn't I ?

CHIP

The good sister.

DENISE
Don't count on it.

DENISE smiles. CHIP puts his arm round her as they walk out onto the concourse.

CHIP
I'd do the same for you, you know that.

DENISE says nothing, not believing him.

DENISE
Let's get something to eat.

34 INT. DINER. NEW YORK. DAY

34

The professional off-duty, DENISE has chosen a greasy spoon. She and CHIP are sitting with coffee, in a booth next to the window. The busy streets of New York are outside. DENISE is attentive, tactful. CHIP is distracted, chain-smoking.

CHIP
I know what I'm doing. Of course I know what I'm doing. Do you think I'm completely fucked up ?

DENISE
No.

CHIP
Well then.

DENISE waits a moment, wanting his anger to calm a little.

CHIP
Well then.

CHIP looks out the window.

DENISE
What happened ?

CHIP
When ?

DENISE
With this girl ? What happened ?
Did she make a play ?

CHIP
What do you want ? Do you want the whole story ?

DENISE
I don't need the story, if that's what you mean.

CHIP shrugs, as if it's all the same to him.

CHIP

Well.. there was a misunderstanding and then it was like they could hardly wait to fire me. I didn't know I was hated. You look round your colleagues, hey, it turns out they hate you.

CHIP nods, as if the injustice amuses him. The WAITRESS arrives with two bacon and eggs. They say nothing till she leaves. They are quiet now.

DENISE

How much do you need ?

CHIP

I wouldn't mind ten. Have you got ten ?

DENISE nods, tacit. They both look at their food, neither of them starting. CHIP lights another cigarette.

CHIP

I know it's a lot. I need a lawyer.

DENISE

You're going to fight it ? Are you sure that's wise ?

CHIP ignores the question.

CHIP

At the end of the semester she made a speech.

DENISE

She was on your course ?

CHIP

Yeah. The girl stands up, she makes a speech saying my class is bullshit, what's wrong with capitalism ? and it's only because people are so fucking spoilt they have to find fault with something. Their lives are so easy, capitalism's the only thing they can think of to complain about. Meaning me, she's attacking me.

CHIP shrugs.

CHIP

It was obvious.

DENISE

You mean it was a play ? You took it as a play ?

CHIP

Come on, Denise, I'm not a total idiot.

DENISE

But you're saying you didn't fuck her ?

DENISE no sooner says this than she regrets it.

DENISE

All right, forget it, I didn't ask. I don't mind if you're lying, Chip.

CHIP

I'm not lying.

DENISE

I don't give a damn. Honestly. I don't have a moral thing about lying.

There's a silence. CHIP looks away. The food gets cold in front of them.

CHIP

"I did not have sexual relations with that woman".

DENISE

What I'm saying is : lawyers are expensive. They take a long time and they charge a lot of money. I just don't want to give you the money if at the end of it all, you're going to lose.

CHIP

Fuck you. I'm not going to lose.

35 INT. DINER. DAY.

35

DENISE'S hand as she finishes writing the check which reads : CHIP LAMBERT, TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS. She signs her name, then hands the check across. CHIP takes it, saying nothing. DENISE reaches for the bill.

36 EXT. STREET. TRIBECA. DAY.

36

DENISE and CHIP are walking through Tribeca hastening to their next appointment. CHIP has cheered up immoderately, seems almost happy, chattering away.

CHIP

We're living through this period of systemic decadence, that's all it is - we all know it - what happens is - you see it everywhere - people can't relate - how can they ? The system's failing, so people feel themselves to be failing. We can't find ourselves. We aren't authentic.

CHIP throws a glance at DENISE.

CHIP

What are you up to by the way ?

But DENISE'S attention is on the doorway of a prosperous loft-building.

DENISE

Here it is.

CHIP

Did you say you were going somewhere ?

DENISE

Europe.

But DENISE has already gone ahead into the building.

37 INT. PROCURO PRODUCTIONS. DAY.

37

A converted loft in Tribeca is the HQ of an independent film production company. There is a waiting area dominated by foreign posters of Godard, Kieslowski and Tarkovsky pictures. Beyond, a corridor leading to glass offices. DENISE is embracing JULIA VRAIS, a dramatic-looking woman of exactly DENISE'S age. She has chocolate-brown hair and is wearing a tight green sweater.

DENISE

Chip, this is Julia Vrais.

JULIA

How do you do ?

DENISE smiles as they shake hands.

DENISE

I was telling him, you're one of my oldest friends.

JULIA

We go back. We were at college together.

They all start walking towards JULIA'S office, DENISE looking a little reluctant.

JULIA

Denise says you're a professor...

CHIP

That's right, though maybe Denise said just at this moment...

DENISE

I mentioned...

CHIP

I'm in a passage of quasi-disillusionment. I'm taking a voluntary sabbatical...

JULIA

Uh-huh...

CHIP

So I can get on with more important things than preparing preppy white trash to pass their lives on Wall Street sucking the blood of the innocent. That's what brings me here.

They have reached JULIA'S office.

DENISE

I'm going to leave you two guys. I have to go to the airport. Julia, I'll call you when I get back.

JULIA says 'Goodbye, have a great time' to DENISE, then goes into her office. She looks splendid in her sweater. DENISE embraces CHIP. He speaks under his breath.

CHIP

You didn't mention the tits.

DENISE looks at him, not amused.

DENISE

Chip. Don't fuck this up..

DENISE goes, leaving the two of them together. JULIA has heard nothing, and settled at her desk underneath a huge Montgomery Clift. She looks at CHIP.

JULIA

So. What's the pitch ?

Fade.

CAPTION

A plain caption reads : MARCH

38 INT. KITCHEN. LAMBERT HOUSE. OMAHA. DAY.

38

Breakfast in Enid and Alfred's kitchen. GARY is sitting back from the kitchen table, looking exasperated. The table is littered with electrical goods - switches, pieces of wire, light bulbs and so on. JONAH is contentedly eating toast smothered in honey. ENID is pottering at the sink making fresh coffee, loading dirty dishes, also happy.

GARY

Mom, I don't get it. I really don't get it.

ENID

Of course you do, Gary. I've explained to you. Do you want some more coffee ?

ENID holds the pot out to him. GARY shakes his head.

GARY

Suddenly I'm meant to be the bad guy - I'm the bad guy ? because I'm the one who bothers to come home ? I'm the one who's saying : look, hold on, we do have to face reality here. And I'm punished for that ?

ENID

I don't think anyone mentioned good or bad, did they ?

ENID is smiling as if GARY were still a child. JONAH looks across, round-eyed.

JONAH

Dad...

GARY

Yes ?

JONAH

Do you mind if I don't come with you ? Do you mind if I spend the morning with Granny ?

GARY

Of course not, Jonah. Spend all the time you want with your granny.

ALFRED appears at the door, dressed to go out. He has declined since February. His tie is skewiff, his collar is standing up and his hair is spiky.

He's watered it and it hasn't stuck. He looks like a cartoon drunk. ENID is still smiling at JONAH.

GARY

You ready ?

ALFRED

I am.

ENID

I like that.

ALFRED

What do you like, Enid ?

ENID

A boy who's in love with his granny.

39

INT & EXT. CAR. OMAHA. DAY

39

GARY is driving the Oldsmobile, ALFRED sitting beside him. There is ice and the remains of snowfall on the roads. It's hard to tell if ALFRED'S distant expression is stubbornness or the disease.

GARY

Yesterday, I took a look at the house. I looked the house over. Inside and out.

GARY takes a quick look to see if he's getting a reaction.

GARY

You might as well face it, Dad : the place is falling apart.

ALFRED

That's what you say.

GARY

I'm just being practical. It's a practical fact. You aren't rich. Your house is your principal asset. Another winter is just going to add to the damage.

GARY smiles, the reasonable man.

GARY

Best thing, you can move somewhere smaller, somewhere that's easier to manage. Then you can pocket the profit and invest it aggressively. In fact, I'm happy to invest it for you. I'll manage it.

ALFRED

Your mother doesn't want to move.
She's fond of that house.

GARY keeps going, keeping his tone amenable.

GARY

Dad, if you don't go somewhere more
practical, there'll be an accident.
And then you'll end up in the
nursing home.

ALFRED

I've no intention of going to a
nursing home.

GARY

Just because you don't intend to
doesn't mean it won't happen.

ALFRED is looking out the window. He has no idea what they're
doing.

ALFRED

Where are we going ?

GARY

You know where we're going. I told
you. We're going to the hardware
store.

ALFRED smiles at some secret joke.

GARY

I don't know why you find that
funny. We're getting a dimmer
switch for the kitchen.

ALFRED

She and her romantic lighting.

GARY

Well ? She gets pleasure from it.
What do you get pleasure from ?

GARY has said something aimed to hurt. ALFRED, vague a moment
earlier, now does not miss GARY'S tone. ALFRED is silent for
a moment, then mutters.

ALFRED

House isn't an asset. House is a
place where you live.

They have swept into the enormous empty car-lot which takes
up acres in front of the mall. GARY opens the passenger door
for his father. As ALFRED gets out, GARY speaks again.

GARY

Dad you're going to have to make
some decisions.

40 INT. SHOP/WAREHOUSE. DAY

40

The DIY shop is four football fields of racks and shelving, loaded with every piece of household goods imaginable. ALFRED has insisted on wheeling the trolley and inspecting the shelves himself. He is oppressed by GARY'S impatient presence behind him. After a silence, he speaks as if in answer to an unspoken criticism.

ALFRED

Can we just buy a dimmer switch ?
Can we just do that ? Because where
I come from, there's a rule.

GARY

I know your rules.

ALFRED

You don't interfere in other
peoples' business.

GARY

I'm not 'people'. I'm your son. I'm
doing what a son does. I'm helping.

ALFRED

You can help them. But you don't
tell them what to do.

ALFRED has chosen a piece of equipment, plainly believing it
to be a dimmer switch.

GARY

That's not a dimmer switch.

ALFRED

I know it's not. I know it's not a
dimmer switch.

41 INT. SHOP/WAREHOUSE. DAY.

41

Now they are standing at the check-out line. It's the only
one open, so there are a couple of people in front of them.
ALFRED has nothing in his trolley except one dimmer switch.
Again, a moment or two goes by before he speaks.

ALFRED

And I don't invest money. I don't
approve of it.

GARY

You do invest money. You just invest it badly because for some reason that's what you call integrity. Because you don't mind eating peanut butter sandwiches. It never seems to occur to you my mother might like something different.

ALFRED has got his pocketbook out in a deliberately diversionary tactic, and has turned to the CHECK-OUT GIRL.

ALFRED

I'm asking, young lady, how much this dimmer switch costs.

42 INT. SHOP/WAREHOUSE. DAY

42

GARY is standing a little way off, to look at his father. What he sees is an aging man counting out dollar bills with intent, rapt care, one by one, with shaking hand from his pocketbook. ALFRED smilingly thanks the CHECK-OUT GIRL.

43 INT. CAR. DAY.

43

They are sitting side by side in the car lot. GARY has not started the car. ALFRED is turning the packet over and over in his hands. Outside, it has come on to snow.

GARY

You're just angry with me. You're angry with me because I'm telling the truth. Things can't go on as they are.

ALFRED is unyielding.

ALFRED

Gary, I have an affliction...

GARY

A lot of people have afflictions. If that's your excuse, fine. If you want to feel sorry for yourself, fine, but why drag Mom down ?

ALFRED

Well. You'll be leaving tomorrow.

GARY

Meaning what ? That you'll sit in your chair and Mom will clean and cook for you ?

ALFRED refuses to answer.

GARY

Do you ever ask yourself what the point is ? There's no point to life if it's something you just have to endure.

ALFRED

No comment.

GARY

What do you mean, 'no comment' ?

ALFRED

Just that. No comment.

GARY takes this as confirmation of what he wants to say next.

GARY

I think you have to take account of something, Dad. You're depressed. You're clinically depressed and you need specialist treatment.

ALFRED

Well ? So are you.

GARY

Me ? I'm depressed ? Me ?

ALFRED

That's what I said. Figure it out.

GARY

Dad, I'm not the one who sits in a chair all day and sleeps. I work in a bank. I have a wife and three children, and I'd say they're in pretty good shape.

ALFRED smiles again to himself.

GARY

I'm not even going to discuss this.

ALFRED

Ah, so now you know how it feels.

GARY

There is no comparison. There is no comparison at all.

GARY turns back, furious, to start the car. The wipers clear the snow which has gathered all over the windscreen.

ALFRED

I look at your marriage, I see what I see. Someday you'll see it too.

GARY moves off. He is shaking his head, wondering how the conversation can have gone so wrong. ALFRED seems content.

ALFRED
Peanut butter's good food.

44 INT & EXT. LAMBERT HOUSE. DAY.

44

GARY parks the car and gets out, so angry with his father that he doesn't bother to help him out, just goes straight into the house and into the kitchen where ENID is cooking lunch. JONAH is studious, reading a book at the table.

ENID
Ah there you are, you're back, I've been talking to Jonah...

GARY
Yeah and I've been talking to your husband. I'm going to have a beer...

GARY opens the fridge, sorting through the mounds of food and drink inside.

ENID
And Jonah likes this idea that this year everyone should have Christmas in Omaha.

GARY turns, his anger at bursting point.

GARY
Mom, it's March. We don't talk about Christmas in March. Remember ? We don't talk about it in June or August. Remember ?

There is the sound from outside of ALFRED crashing into the hall table.

GARY
Jesus ! Dad can't even get into the house without falling over. You've got water pouring through the roof upstairs -

ENID
Gary I know we can't be here for ever. I know that.

GARY has taken his beer across to the table and flips the top. He sits down.

ENID

But I don't think there's anything
nicer in the world than a family
Christmas.

There is a moment's silence. GARY takes a thoughtful look at
ENID whose back is turned at the sink. Then he speaks quietly
to JONAH.

GARY

Jonah, can you just leave us for a
moment ? Can you, please ?

JONAH

Sure, Dad.

JONAH gets down from the table. GARY goes and closes the
kitchen door, rather to the surprise of ALFRED who is passing
in the corridor.

GARY

Mom, OK, let's agree. I'm
suggesting : if I can get Caroline
and the children for Christmas, if
I can do that - I'm not saying I
can, but if I can - if I can
deliver them...

ENID

A family Christmas...

GARY

That's right...then what ? After
Christmas you'll go somewhere
sensible ? Is that a deal ?

ENID smiles beatifically.

ENID

Well, Gary, that would be the
moment to think about it, wouldn't
it ?

45 INT. PLANE. DAY.

45

In the window seat, GARY is flying home with a look of deep
longsuffering on his face. The vastness of America below.
JONAH, beside him, looks up from his book.

JONAH

Dad, that was a lovely visit.

GARY smiles. He ruffles his son's hair affectionately.

JONAH

I'd like to go back just as soon as
we can.

GARY
We will. We will go back.

Fade.

CAPTION
A plain caption reads : EASTER

46 EXT. CAPE MAY. NEW JERSEY. DAY.

46

A beautiful day in Cape May, a seaside colony. A series of fashionably run-down bungalows. DENISE has parked her two-seater next to BRIAN'S familiar Volvo. BRIAN appears in long shorts and a sports shirt at the front door to find DENISE unloading carrier bags from an upscale delicatessen.

BRIAN
Hi, there you are. You made it. Well done. And the day's turned out wonderfully.

BRIAN kisses her casually on the cheek and takes as many bags as he can manage.

DENISE
Hello Brian.

BRIAN
Robin's dying to meet you. Oh, this is great. This is so kind of you.

DENISE
I thought I'd make dinner, why not ?

47 EXT. CAPE MAY. DAY.

47

There is a deck at the back of the house, then sand and dune with a stunning view of the ocean. ROBIN PASSAFARO (CALLAHAN) is standing, re-painting the outdoor furniture. She is 36, dressed like a grad student in yellow sweat pants, a Phillies jersey, sneakers and wire-rim glasses. She could hardly be less cool. BRIAN leads DENISE out onto the deck to meet her.

BRIAN
Robin, you've never met.

ROBIN
Oh. No.

BRIAN
This is Denise Lambert. Robin, at last.

ROBIN wipes her hand on her pants and offers it, a little formal, cold.

ROBIN

It's very nice to meet you.

DENISE

You too. Brian's talked a lot about you.

ROBIN looks down. Is it shyness or hostility ? She puts down the paint brush.

ROBIN

Brian, I'm going to go check on the girls.

48

INT. CAPE MAY HOUSE. DAY.

48

Inside, the bungalow is pleasantly furnished with open-plan kitchen and living room giving onto the deck and ocean beyond. DENISE is making the best of things, preparing a dinner of halibut steaks with mussels and roasted peppers. As she works, DENISE looks out of the window.

BRIAN and ROBIN'S two young daughters, SINEAD and ERIN, are playing in the dunes. ERIN is the younger, chunkier, SINEAD the finer. BRIAN comes into view, holding a beer and calling to the children. 'Hey gentle, gentle !' Then ROBIN appears beside him. DENISE tenses. After a moment BRIAN puts his arm easily round ROBIN'S shoulder and they stand side by side watching the girls. The image recalls GARY'S point of view in Scene 14.

DENISE looks down, gripped by strong feeling.

49

INT. CAPE MAY HOUSE. NIGHT.

49

It's dark outside. The dinner table has a nice improvised holiday feel. The food is terrific. ROBIN is scoffing hers as if she hasn't eaten for months. The children are eating more calmly, enjoying themselves. BRIAN smiles, expansive.

BRIAN

It seems a bit hard inviting you for the weekend then expecting you to work.

DENISE

Why not ? You're paying me.

DENISE reaches for the wine, trying not to be thrown by ROBIN'S ambivalence.

DENISE

Did Brian tell you ? We ate some fantastic meals together in France. Brian kept saying how much you'd have enjoyed it.

BRIAN
I begged Robin to come, but she
doesn't like to leave her project.

ROBIN
No. I don't.

DENISE
Brian explained all about it. I'd
love to come and see the project if
I may. Perhaps we can fix a time ?

ROBIN
Whenever.

50 INT. HOUSE. NIGHT.

50

Later. DENISE has put on a CD and curled up with a book on the sofa downstairs, her legs under her, like a cat. From where she sits, she can see to the top of the stairs. She sees just the bottom of BRIAN'S legs, as he calls to the GIRLS. 'I'm coming in later, I want to find you asleep.' Then ROBIN'S bare legs appear briefly beside his. The sound of their bedroom door being closed.

51 EXT. CAPE MAY. DAY.

51

Morning. The GIRLS are burying each other in the sand. 'You be Count Dracula and I'll be the virgin' 'OK'. It's early, the sun is not yet high and DENISE appears on the deck, alone, carrying a cup of black coffee. She sips it, enjoying herself.

SINEAD
You be Jimmy Hoffa and I'll be the
Mob.

ERIN is roaring with laughter, as SINEAD throws sand over her. DENISE is so intent on them that she turns and almost bumps into ROBIN who is coming out of the door, wearing a plain gray one-piece swim-suit.

DENISE
Oh I'm sorry.

ROBIN
It's OK.

She pads straight past her. DENISE blushes, as if nothing had covered ROBIN'S nakedness. ROBIN heads for the heated pool, takes off her glasses and dives into the water. Her gaucherie becomes unexpected elegance. DENISE watches, transfixed.

52 EXT. CAPE MAY. DAY.

52

Afternoon. DENISE is walking by herself on the sand. There's very few people about.

She looks up to the house from the beach and she sees ROBIN and the GIRLS packing stuff into the Volvo. DENISE approaches the house from the back. BRIAN is sitting on the deck reading a magazine.

DENISE
What's happening ?

BRIAN
Oh. Robin's decided she's desperate to get back to the project. She's leaving for town. She doesn't want to spoil your weekend, so stay as planned, she's saying.

DENISE frowns a moment.

DENISE
But we should all go back, shouldn't we ?

BRIAN
Not really. It seems pretty wonderful out here, and Robin's going to be busy so I won't see her anyway.

DENISE
OK.

BRIAN
She's happy if we stay.

DENISE
OK.

53 EXT. HOUSE. DAY

53

Seen from a distance, everyone is talking at once, saying goodbye on the doorstep. The GIRLS have befriended DENISE, telling her how much they liked her cooking. They all kiss. DENISE is promising to cook for them again, while ROBIN is running through domestic arrangements with BRIAN. Then she turns to DENISE, shrugging.

ROBIN
Sorry about this. It's how it worked out.

The three of them go to the car. BRIAN and DENISE watch and wave.

54 EXT. DECK. DUSK

54

Later. The sun is going down. BRIAN is stretched out on the deck, reading alone. DENISE appears silently in the doorway.

BRIAN

Easter's always deceiving isn't it ? The days are warm, then night comes, you realize it isn't summer.

DENISE is still, not moving.

DENISE

Brian I don't think we can do this.

BRIAN

Do what ?

DENISE

Stay in this house together.

BRIAN barely reacts. He doesn't seem surprised.

BRIAN

Denise, we just traveled in France. A couple of times we stayed in the same hotel. As far as I remember nothing untoward happened. I can't see the difference.

DENISE

There is a difference.

55 INT. HOUSE. CAPE MAY. NIGHT.

55

Later. It's dark. DENISE is leaning against the stove, the dinner cooking behind her. She's looking at BRIAN who is unaware of her look, because he's listening happily to a CD. Then he turns and sees.

BRIAN

What ?

DENISE moves impulsively across. It's her initiative, but he meets it, getting up as she comes near. They start kissing passionately, as if they've held off a long time. They stop for a moment. Then they start kissing again. BRIAN leads DENISE towards the stairs.

56 INT. GUEST BEDROOM. NIGHT.

56

DENISE is on one side of the bed, taking off her jeans, BRIAN on the other also undressing. It is dark in the room. BRIAN stands up to take off the last of his clothes and he is naked. DENISE still has her top and knickers on.

DENISE

I can't do this. And I don't just mean in this house, I mean ever.

BRIAN stands, not moving, a few feet from the bed.

DENISE

It's wrong. Isn't it ? Isn't it wrong ?

BRIAN

I don't know. I've never done it before.

DENISE

Well I have. It's what I do. I fuck up peoples' lives. And this time I don't want to.

BRIAN is looking at her. She looks away.

DENISE

Let's go back to town.

57 INT. CAR. NIGHT.

57

They are side by side in DENISE'S two-seater, speeding back. Their two faces, darkness around. The atmosphere is calm, both knowing they have done the right thing. BRIAN turns and looks, as if there is more to her than he can hope to understand. DENISE looks ahead. Then, the sound of the following scene.

CHIP'S VOICE

I want to do it again.

JULIA'S VOICE

You can't. You can't do it again.

58 INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT. HUDSON STREET. NEW YORK. NIGHT.

58

CHIP and JULIA are laughing in bed. They have fucked themselves to a standstill. It's rather a magnificent, formal apartment and there is a large window which looks out onto the Hudson.

CHIP

Why not ?

JULIA

Because that's all we do. We fuck and fuck and fuck and fuck.

CHIP

Isn't that what everyone does ?

JULIA

No. Actually no. Most people do drugs.

CHIP

Well, that's good, isn't it ?

JULIA

No. No, it isn't good. Because the only reason you don't do drugs is because drugs cost money and sex doesn't. That's why you love it. That's why you do it over and over, because it's free.

CHIP

I have no money ! I've got no fucking money !

CHIP reaches away from JULIA to get a cigarette from the bedside table and speaks more to himself than to her.

CHIP

I need to call Denise. I need more cash.

JULIA sits up in the bed and sits cross-legged. The sheet falls into her lap. She is naked above the waist.

JULIA

You know, Chip, I've been meaning to say : There's something I have to tell you if...you know...if we're going to go on.

JULIA hesitates a moment.

CHIP

I have the feeling this is going to be to do with the Russian, is it ?

JULIA

He's not a Russian.

CHIP

OK, Lithuanian...

JULIA

He's from Lithuania.

CHIP

OK. And what is it you...

JULIA

Chip, do you think you could stop...

CHIP

What ?

JULIA

...stop just for a moment, stop staring at my breasts ? Just for a moment ? And listen ?

JULIA is irritated, all humor vanished. CHIP makes a gesture meaning 'Fire away'.

JULIA

Fact is, you go on all the time about the consumer society, the degrading reduction of women to function - what do you call it ? 'the women-as-objects horseshit' - and even as you say it, even as you're talking, when I sit down to listen, I just know you'll be looking right between my legs...

CHIP

I thought we were talking about the Russian.

JULIA

So we are. Same thing.

CHIP

It's his apartment.

JULIA

Yes.

CHIP

And ? So ?

JULIA

What I didn't tell you : we're married.

There is a moment's silence. CHIP is thoughtful, quiet.

CHIP

No. No, you didn't tell me.

The two of them look at each other a moment.

CHIP

Are you still married ?

JULIA

Chip, do you think you could just stop for a moment...

CHIP

Well cover them for fuck's sake !

CHIP has shouted. Dramatically, JULIA throws off the sheet and walks naked to the bathroom. CHIP watches her backside as she goes. Alone, he makes a 'women are impossible' gesture. JULIA comes back wrapped in a white towel. She sits on his side of the bed and lights a cigarette.

JULIA

He had to go back. I refused to go with him.

CHIP

Why ? Why wouldn't you go with him ?

JULIA

Because I didn't want to go to Lithuania. I wanted to stay here. What that means : I didn't love him enough. I never love anyone enough. I wanted to say that. I wanted to tell you that.

JULIA is tender now, as if the earlier outburst of temper had cleansed her.

JULIA

Do you think I'm a terrible person ?

CHIP

Of course I don't think that.

JULIA

Don't you ?

CHIP

You know what I think.

JULIA scrutinizes him a moment.

JULIA

Yeah, but that apart. The thing you like apart.

CHIP

It isn't apart. How can it be apart ?

Something in CHIP'S manner scares JULIA. He's so serious.

JULIA

Chip...

CHIP

Take your towel off.

59

INT. LAMBERT HOUSE. OMAHA. NIGHT.

59

ENID is sitting up in bed, cutting out coupons from the ads in magazines. She puts them in bundles, which she wraps with a rubber band. The place beside her is vacant. After a while, she gets up from the bed, and goes out onto the landing.

ENID

Alfred ! Alfred ! Are you coming to bed ?

60 INT. LAMBERT HOUSE. OMAHA. NIGHT.

60

ALFRED is sitting in his blue leather armchair. The TV is playing on the ping-pong table. He is staring ahead, at nothing. He seems to hear ENID'S voice calling 'Alfred ! Alfred !' but he does not react. He waits a moment, then closes his eyes.

61 INT. GARY'S HOUSE. PHILADELPHIA. NIGHT.

61

GARY is sitting at his computer screen, late at night. It is covered in figures. He switches it off, then reaches for the remains of his vodka. He puts the glass down, then walks along the darkened corridor. CAROLINE has fallen asleep with the bedside light on. She is nothing but a muzz of warm flesh and a shock of blonde hair. GARY looks at her longingly, standing over the bed, still dressed, not moving.

GARY

Caroline. Caroline...

She does not hear him. She does not move.

Fade.

CAPTION

A plain caption reads : THE OPENING

62 INT. THE GENERATOR. DAY.

62

Morning. The restaurant space has been transformed. The windows are glassed in, the turbines gleaming. About forty contractors are at work in hard hats, cutting sheet metal, constructing the kitchen area and putting in wiring. At the center of all the preparation is ROBI ZITO.

ZITO

That goes down over there. Then
that there. That there. That's it.
That's how it goes.

Everyone moves to his instructions. Then ZITO goes down a corridor at the back of the kitchen, and frowns at the closed door of what will be the chef's office. He opens it. It is full of junk and cardboard boxes. In the corner is a desk and a computer at which there are signs of work - piled invoices, papers. Under the desk, DENISE is asleep on the floor, curled up. ZITO hunkers down beside her. DENISE wakes.

ZITO

What happened ?

DENISE is awake but she doesn't respond, just grimaces.

ZITO
 Nobody needs to work this hard.
 Denise. Something's wrong, isn't
 it ? Why don't you tell me what's
 wrong ?

DENISE doesn't respond.

ZITO
 You should take some time off.

63 EXT & INT. CAR. PHILADELPHIA. DAY 63

DENISE is driving, apparently at random, through industrial Philadelphia. Then, thoughtful, she takes a turn.

64 EXT & INT. CAR. DAY. 64

DENISE is sliding through the ghetto of Point Breeze. There is project housing, cinder-blocked terraces of abandoned homes, burnt-out shops, kids playing in the street. DENISE comes to the place she is looking for. A whole block has been razed. DENISE gets out of the car. Through steel-wire fencing she can see a large city garden, still being excavated. Turned away from her, she can see ROBIN working alone with a hoe in the corner. DENISE stands a moment, readying, unobserved.

65 INT & EXT. PROJECT HOUSE. POINT BREEZE. DAY. 65

The project house stands alone on the corner of a block. A black GIRL of college age is sitting at a computer in a bare room. Behind her is a blackboard with names and rota details - Hours to Date, Dollars to Date etc. DENISE comes through the open front door.

DENISE
 Here for Robin.

GIRL
 She's in back.

The GIRL nods her through towards the garden. DENISE comes out into the project. It's on a surprising scale. ROBIN is hoeing alone wearing a black bandana and a very dirty T-shirt saying QUALITY DAY CARE : PAY NOW OR PAY LATER. She looks thinner, more intense than ever.

DENISE
 Hey.

ROBIN looks up. She shows no reaction to DENISE'S presence.

ROBIN
 Well.

They look at each other a moment.

ROBIN

It never occurred to me you'd come here.

DENISE

Why not ? Why didn't it occur to you ? Didn't I say I wanted to see it ?

ROBIN shrugs an admission.

DENISE

Well then why wouldn't I come ?

ROBIN is looking at her, giving nothing away.

ROBIN

I thought you were busy opening your restaurant.

DENISE

It's not my restaurant. It's Brian's.

ROBIN

Whatever.

DENISE is not giving ground.

ROBIN

What do you want ? A guided tour ?

DENISE

May I explain something to you, Robin ?

DENISE, defiant, hesitates for one second only.

DENISE

It's this. I'm not really into guys.

ROBIN

Pardon me ?

DENISE

Long time, I was. Now I'm not. Does that make sense ? I don't know how else to put it. I used to sleep with men. Now I don't. That's what I'm explaining.

ROBIN is holding her hoe, taken aback.

ROBIN
That's very funny.

DENISE
Well thank you.

ROBIN
What, you sleep - Does Brian know that ?

DENISE
The subject hasn't come up. Why ?
Do you want me to tell him ?

ROBIN relaxes. Her laugh is unselfconscious, full-throated.

ROBIN
Oh God. That is funny. You must admit that is actually funny.

DENISE
Does that mean I qualify for the tour ?

66 EXT. PROJECT. DAY.

66

DENISE and ROBIN are strolling round the project. Rows of vegetables, freshly planted. ROBIN can't help smiling.

ROBIN
It didn't occur to me, it just didn't occur to me.

DENISE
No. Well.

ROBIN
I mean, it doesn't. Does it ?

DENISE is slightly irritated by ROBIN'S naivety.

DENISE
This is bigger than I was expecting. Was it all your idea ?

ROBIN
I guess it was. Sure. Sure, it was my idea : any neighborhood kid between 12 and 16, we pay minimum wage plus vegetables plus any share of the profits ha-ha.

DENISE
Was this after Brian made his fortune ?

ROBIN doesn't answer.

DENISE
I thought he made a lot of money ?

ROBIN
It isn't guilt, if that's what you mean.

DENISE
All right...

ROBIN
Yeah but I hate that word. Why do people always say 'guilt' ? It's more like : if you go round, if you actually open your eyes, how can you bear it ? If you look around you. When you can so easily do something about it ? It's the greatest idea in America, isn't it? You put something back.

DENISE walks beside her. She's lost for how to react to such unexpected feeling. ROBIN looks down, burning red with self-consciousness.

DENISE
What does Brian feel ?

ROBIN
What about ? What does Brian feel about what ?

DENISE
The project.

ROBIN
Oh. Probably he's pissed off with me and he doesn't even know it. You know Brian. He's like you. He thinks life's about winning.

DENISE
Don't you ?

ROBIN
No.

They walk a moment, then ROBIN answers the unspoken question.

ROBIN
I don't know what it's about but it's not about winning.

DENISE looks. ROBIN smiles again at DENISE'S revelation.

DENISE
Well I'm glad I've done something
to amuse you.

67 INT. CAR. DAY.

67

Now they are traveling in DENISE'S two-seater, ROBIN beside her where BRIAN had been before. Their two faces, silent.

68 INT. ROBIN'S HOUSE. FEDERAL STREET. DAY.

68

A three-story terraced house. DENISE lives like a bohemian - scarcely any decoration, open brickwork, uncurtained windows, as if she'd just moved in. Meals are on a ping-pong table, but there is a large cooking range. ROBIN is eagerly scoffing down kidneys and with good red wine. DENISE is sitting opposite with a glass of wine, not eating, just watching.

ROBIN
I can see what he wants. I know
what Brian wants me to be.

DENISE
Sure. It's obvious.

ROBIN
He's bored. I know he's bored. He's
already said he wants to leave
Philadelphia.

DENISE
You don't want to go ?

ROBIN
I like this kind of life. The way
you live. I always want to eat off
a ping-pong table.

DENISE watches, enjoying her. ROBIN eats a little more, then risks a confidence.

ROBIN
It's weird. I assumed he was
grooming you to be my successor.

DENISE
You weren't fighting very hard to
stop it. I thought what kind of
person leaves her husband alone
with a woman like me ?

ROBIN
Because if it's going to happen.

There is a silence, neither entirely knowing what's going on.
ROBIN breaks it.

ROBIN

These kidneys are good, can I have some more ?

DENISE gets up and goes to the cooker.

ROBIN

Is this the sort of food you're going to serve ? I mean, in the restaurant ?

DENISE

My mother's family's from Poland. I loved her cooking. Ribs. Sauerkraut. Big Polish sausages.

ROBIN

Isn't it all a bit heavy ?

DENISE

Can be. So the trick is to make it light.

DENISE stands over ROBIN, putting down a third kidney, like feeding a child. Then lifts the bread basket.

DENISE

Have some bread.

ROBIN wipes up with the bread. DENISE sits opposite, puts her legs on the table.

ROBIN

Is your mother still alive ?

DENISE

Of course. But my father's ill.

ROBIN looks a question.

DENISE

You could say he has the beginnings of Parkinson's, but that's not the real problem.

ROBIN

What is ? What is the real problem ?

DENISE

I'd say depression.

ROBIN

Why ?

DENISE

Because he's always lived with my mother. Because she's unbearable. Because she's from the mid-West, she's disapproving and judgmental of everyone and everything - there's only one way of living and that's her way. Spend time with her, you want to kill yourself, that's all.

DENISE gives a look meaning 'Shocked ?' But ROBIN says nothing.

DENISE

Dessert ?

ROBIN shakes her head.

ROBIN

I have to go to mass.

DENISE

I'm sorry ?

ROBIN

There's an evening mass I want to catch.

DENISE

OK.

DENISE nods ironically, but irony flies past ROBIN.

ROBIN

The thing is, I don't know how to say this. I don't know if you like kids but...I happen to know they'd love it if you had time to drop round. Hang out.

DENISE

Why, sure.

Neither knows how to end the encounter. ROBIN picks up her things to leave the room.

ROBIN

'Bye.

DENISE stands a moment. Then remembers to follow.

69

INT. THE GENERATOR. NIGHT.

69

Opening night. The restaurant is magnificent. There is an invited crowd, every table packed. ROBIN is sitting at a table with BRIAN'S friends. SINEAD and ERIN are there.

ROBIN has put a dress on for the occasion. It's not her element, but she's not uncomfortable either. BRIAN has just got up and is holding his hands up to still the applause.

BRIAN

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm not a speaker. I don't make speeches. All I want to say is, I had an idea : I'd start a restaurant, I'd build a restaurant. And people would eat here, they'd have a meal here, they'd sit back at the end, and then they'd say : 'Hey I could live in Philly if I had to.'

There is knowing laughter and applause. ZITO signals to his teams of alluring WAITERS and they fan out through the restaurant, carrying out the first courses, cool and disciplined. It's show-business.

70

INT. THE GENERATOR. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

70

Later. DENISE is working by herself preparing desserts. The meal is over, but she's still at it, detached from what's going on. BRIAN appears, holding a glass of champagne.

BRIAN

All right ?

BRIAN kisses her on the cheek to congratulate her.

BRIAN

I don't know what you said to Robin but she seems much happier.

DENISE

Good.

Fade.

CAPTION

A plain caption reads : SUMMER

71

INT. DARKROOM. GARY'S HOUSE. PHILADELPHIA. DAY.

71

GARY'S dark-room is above the garage of the house. There are shutters on the windows which are currently open. GARY has a camera with all the latest gizmos, and through a telephoto lens is following a game of football in the steamy summer drizzle in the back garden. He stops on AARON, then on CALEB and takes photos of them both. Then the lens finds CAROLINE in goal, bobbing around, waiting for CALEB'S shot. He is about to click, when he notices her putting her hand onto her back, and feeling it as if in pain. He zooms in towards her. GARY frowns. He clicks.

72

INT. DARKROOM. GARY'S HOUSE. DAY

72

Later. The shutters are now closed. GARY is swishing developing fluid, watching an image of CAROLINE playing football come through. Then the sound of the boys, AARON and CALEB, yelling for him.

AARON & CALEB'S VOICES

Dad ! Dad ! Come quickly ! Dad !

GARY turns, irritated.

GARY

Aaron, I've told you before : the red light is on. You may not come in when the red light is on.

AARON'S VOICE

Mum's hurt herself, she's really hurt herself.

GARY

I understand. I understand what you're saying.

AARON'S VOICE

And granny's on the phone.

AARON is beating at the door of the dark-room.

GARY

I'm coming.

73

INT. GARY'S HOUSE. DAY.

73

GARY followed by AARON and CALEB is marching, all cool efficiency, towards the kitchen, where CAROLINE is sitting in pain on a chair, holding her back with her hands. JONAH is at the kitchen table, reading.

CAROLINE

I was going to get the phone, I was just running in to get the phone, I meant to tell you your mother's been calling all day...

GARY

Well, we both know what she wants.

CAROLINE

Then I fell. I fell on the way in.

GARY

Oh, and now I suppose this is my mother's fault ?

GARY shakes his head at the ridiculousness of the suggestion. He picks up the cordless phone from the table. CALEB appears at his side, holding a catalogue.

CALEB

Dad...

GARY

Caroline, I think you'll find - if you remember - that your back was already hurting. I doubt you really hurt your back on the way to the phone.

CALEB

Dad can I talk to you for a second...

GARY

Not at this moment, Caleb, your grandmother's on the line...

CALEB

I just want...

GARY

Not now, I said !

CALEB turns as if this is the typically impossible behavior of a parent.

CAROLINE

I think I may have hurt myself, Gary. I think maybe I should check in at the hospital.

GARY ignores this, his manner changing to upbeat as he talks into the phone.

GARY

Hi ! Mom, how are you ? Can you just hold on a moment ? Look, I can call you, then it's on my dollar, OK ?

ENID is heard briefly to respond before GARY abruptly clicks the cordless shut and starts re-dialing.

GARY

Caroline, look, there's no avoiding it, we have to settle this...the whole Christmas question...

CAROLINE

Gary, do you think you could do me a favor - don't call your mother back right now ?

GARY

I have to say : Mom's point is perfectly reasonable, it's not unreasonable. They're going on a cruise in the fall...

CAROLINE has got up to nuzzle him, her head on his shoulder, in a little-girl way.

CAROLINE

Can we leave this, Gary ? Can we leave it ? Please.

GARY

...and they'll happily come visit on the way home if they know that this year we're finally going to spend Christmas in Omaha. All she's saying is : she needs a decision.

GARY turns again, re-connected.

GARY

Mom. It's me. On my dollar. Yeah.

CAROLINE is backing away in disbelief.

CAROLINE

Do you hear yourself ? Do you ever hear yourself ?

GARY

Going through to the study, Mom...

GARY walks on through with the phone leaving CAROLINE behind him, shaking her head. ENID'S VOICE is heard inquiring if GARY'S all right.

GARY

No, what happened is, Caroline's in a little bit of pain, nothing serious, just her back again...

GARY carries on through, all the time listening to ENID.

ENID'S VOICE

You know I hate to say this, but aches and pains are part of getting older. If I wanted to, I could tell you about my hip all day long.

GARY

Fair point, yeah.

GARY sits down at his desk. CALEB reappears at the door with the catalogue. Again, GARY puts his hand over the receiver, and loudly whispers.

GARY

Caleb, can you just back off ? Can you back off please ?

ENID'S VOICE

So what have you two decided about Christmas ? You said you'd be coming.

GARY

No, Mom, actually what I said was : we would try, we would try to come...

AARON has appeared at the study door. He speaks at the same time as ENID.

AARON

Dad, Mom's back really is hurting and she says she needs you to drive her to the hospital...

ENID'S VOICE

What happens is, if you don't make flight reservations early enough, then there simply aren't any seats left...

GARY is nodding and gesturing to say 'I'm coming' to AARON.

ENID'S VOICE

And if you remember, I did promise Jonah we would go see the Nutcracker...

GARY

Just to be clear : Jonah's not making the decisions round here. Jonah doesn't have to pay for the tickets, excuse me.

GARY hears a breathing noise on the line.

GARY

What the hell - Caroline !
Caroline, are you on the line ?

There is a slight electronic click.

GARY

Mom, I'm sorry I'm going to have to go, I'm going to call you back.

GARY just hears ENID saying 'Gary, what's going on ?' before he slams down runs from the room, passing AARON on the way.

74

INT. LAMBERT HOUSE. STAIRS AND UPSTAIRS. DAY.

74

GARY is bounding up the stairs, talking to himself, a man on a mission.

GARY
Unbelievable. Un-fucking-
believable.

GARY storms into the master bedroom. CAROLINE is curled up on the bed, holding an ice-pack against her lower back.

GARY
Were you listening ? Were you
listening to me ?

CAROLINE curls up more tightly. GARY turns in disbelief.

GARY
Caroline, you were doing the one
thing I specifically asked you not
to do. We have talked about this so
many times.

There is a silence. When CAROLINE speaks she is very quiet.

CAROLINE
I picked up the phone, I wanted to
call the hospital.

GARY dismisses this, lethal now.

GARY
Caroline I will do anything you
want on one condition. On one
condition, do you hear me ?

CAROLINE cowers slightly, looking up at him innocently.

GARY
On the condition that you tell me
the truth. I saw you ! I saw you
out there in the garden. Holding
your back. And now you are
seriously asking me to believe -

CAROLINE
I fell. I told you. I fell. Running
for the phone.

GARY
I saw you, for Christ's sake ! With
my own eyes. Caroline, why are you
lying ? Why are you lying to me ?

Behind him at the door AARON has appeared.

AARON

Dad ! Dad !

GARY turns. There is a look of genuine agony on AARON'S face.

AARON

Stop shouting at her !

GARY

All right.

There is a moment when AARON is on the verge of unmanly tears.

AARON

Do. Not. Shout. At. Her.

GARY

It's OK, Aaron. Shouting's over

AARON goes. From the corridor, the sound of his bedroom door being slammed. GARY stands, still wired, not knowing what to say. He paces the room. Time goes by.

CAROLINE

Gary, you've got a problem, you know.

75

INT. LAMBERT HOUSE. DAY.

75

GARY walks along the corridor and knocks on AARON'S door. No answer. GARY opens it. AARON is lying face down on his bed. His room is a jungle of magazines, abandoned laundry and CDs. GARY sits down on the bed.

GARY

I'm sorry. That was bad. I'm sorry.

There is no response.

GARY

Sometimes your mother has trouble, you know, she has trouble admitting she's in the wrong.

AARON

Her back is hurt.

GARY

Sure. I know that.

AARON has not turned over. GARY tries to normalize.

GARY

OK. I'm going to make dinner. What d'you say to mixed grill ?

There is no response. GARY is conciliatory.

GARY

Listen, let me ask you one thing.
You were out there with Mom. Just
tell me, Aaron, I think I'm right
about this. She was limping, wasn't
she, before she came inside ?

At last AARON stirs, turning over and looking at GARY.

AARON

You are horrible. You are a
horrible Dad.

76

INT. KITCHEN. EVE.

76

GARY has taken the frozen vodka bottle out and put it on top
of the fridge. He stands, leaning with one arm against the
fridge, looking down. He finishes his vodka with an air of
relief. Pours another.

77

EXT. DECK. EVE.

77

GARY is out on the deck with the barbecue, cooking a
prodigious mixed grill. There are steaks, sausages, chicken
legs, vegetables etc. He seems to have eased up, but as he
flips charred meat, there is a tell-tale alcohol-driven over-
confidence to his gestures. CALEB appears at his side, still
with his catalogue.

GARY

Yes ? Caleb.

CALEB

What I wanted to ask, Dad : I want
to buy a surveillance camera.

GARY

A surveillance camera. Huh.

GARY nods, trying to be reasonable, the good-friend Dad. He
flips some meat.

GARY

Caleb, is this one of your fads ? I
mean, this house is full of
electronic junk. We have more
electronic junk -

CALEB

This is a hobby Dad. You said when
you were young...

GARY

In Omaha...

CALEB

Yeah. You said like everyone had hobbies, that was one of the things you said was like great when you were growing up.

GARY frowns slightly, taking him seriously.

GARY

It's what ? What is it exactly ?
This...equipment ?

CALEB

A surveillance system, Dad. So I can watch everything that's going on in the house.

The drink swilling inside him, GARY thinks over the implications..

CALEB

It only costs six-fifty. Mom said I could have it.

78

INT. KITCHEN. EVE.

78

AARON and JONAH have set the table, and are waiting, JONAH still with his book. GARY and CALEB come in, GARY grandly carrying a big plate covered with meat. He sees AARON is eating chips.

GARY

Here it comes ! Don't spoil your appetite, guys.

AARON

Yeah, gotta save room for mixed grill.

AARON rolls his eyes satirically at CAROLINE who is coming, limping into the kitchen. CAROLINE seems to smile back. Then she catches GARY'S eye for a moment. Together, at the same moment, they both look away.

79

INT. KITCHEN. EVE.

79

Later. The meal is desultory, only GARY trying to seem enthusiastic. Everyone has huge plates of grilled animal. CAROLINE is not lifting a fork. After a few moments, GARY speaks, pleasant.

GARY

I seem to be cooking every evening.
I don't know how that's happened.

CAROLINE

If it's too much for you, we can send out.

GARY

I like eating in.

CAROLINE

So.

Everyone else keeps quiet. GARY attempts a joke.

GARY

Somebody else could cook.

CAROLINE

No-one else wants to.

GARY glances up and sees that his three kids and their mother are all smiling, as if he were somehow ridiculous. He tries to keep calm.

GARY

I've been speaking to Caleb here about his latest...idea. As if we didn't have a house full of all the things he's interested in one day and forgets the next.

GARY smiles to say 'We all know Caleb', but CAROLINE is already speaking.

CAROLINE

Caleb wants to install a demanding, complex piece of technology. He wants to do something creative and you make him feel guilty.

GARY assents, avoiding argument.

CAROLINE

I've said, if he wants it, I'll pay.

80 INT. KITCHEN. EVE.

80

The others have gone. GARY is clearing up, pushing meat into the sink grinder. From upstairs, he can hear cartoons on the TV. Then CAROLINE laughing with the boys. He catches the words 'I said, well how do you think I hurt it ?' Then laughter.

GARY turns on the machine and the meat is ground away.

81 INT. STUDY. NIGHT.

81

It is dark. GARY is at his computer, an empty glass beside him. He looks at the screen. Into the search engine he types the words 'BEAUTIFUL' 'BLONDE' 'NUDE'. Then he presses 'GO'.

82 INT. BEDROOM & BATHROOM. NIGHT.

82

GARY is in the bathroom, brushing his teeth. He angles the little cabinet mirror so he can see into the bedroom. CAROLINE is turned away in her nightdress, apparently asleep. GARY turns out the bathroom light. He goes into the bedroom. To his surprise, without turning, CAROLINE speaks.

CAROLINE

My point is this : I'd like you back, Gary.

GARY

I'm sorry ?

CAROLINE

That's my point. I would like just a brief sighting of the man I married.

GARY stands a moment, not speaking.

GARY

What is this about ? Is this about Christmas ?

CAROLINE turns and looks at him.

CAROLINE

Chip's got the right idea, you know ? He's bright, he's funny, he's smart, your brother. He just says 'Fuck family. I'm not pretending. I'm not doing it.' He refuses. He downright refuses. He knows something we don't. Family doesn't exist.

GARY

The boys exist.

CAROLINE

Yeah. The boys exist.

CAROLINE is moved at the thought of the boys.

GARY

I don't understand. Why won't you tell me the truth ?

CAROLINE

What truth, Gary ? I'm telling you the truth : I don't want to go to Omaha. I've told you a thousand times. I don't like Omaha, I'm not happy there and I'm not going. It's not my idea of fun, being insulted by your mother.

GARY

She doesn't insult you.

CAROLINE

She can come here. She's welcome here.

CAROLINE sits up in the bed.

CAROLINE

You made me a promise, remember ?

GARY

I made you a promise, yes. That was eight years ago.

CAROLINE

The last time we went : we would never go there for Christmas again. So ?

GARY doesn't answer.

CAROLINE

So ?

GARY

Things have changed.

CAROLINE

You want me to go to Omaha so I can book in for a six-day lecture from your mother on how to bring up my kids ?

GARY

No !

CAROLINE

Oh yeah, that's really my idea of fun.

GARY

That's not what this is.

CAROLINE

Being criticized. Being reproached.
What, we all spend a week
pretending it's Peiora and it's
1964 ? 'Wipe your plate. Do up your
necktie. No TV tonight.' That's
festive. I mean, that's really the
festive spirit...

GARY

Come on, Caroline...

GARY is making an appeal, but CAROLINE is gaining attack all the time.

CAROLINE

You know something ? I don't want
my children looking back on
Christmas as the time when
everybody screamed at each other.

GARY

It's not that bad.

CAROLINE

Isn't it ? Your mother gears up for
365 days just so she can let loose
for one glorious week. 'We didn't
do that in my day. Kids weren't
spoilt in my day.'

CAROLINE is suddenly passionate.

CAROLINE

I am sick and tired of being told I
bring my children up wrong !

GARY

That's not what she's saying !
That's not what she said !

The row has accelerated way out of control.

CAROLINE

And what's worst, Gary, what's
worst is : whenever she starts, you
take her side. Hey - no question,
I'm a lousy mother !

GARY turns, desperate.

GARY

All right, to be fair, I know, I
know you don't want to go...

CAROLINE

Aaron doesn't want to go, Caleb doesn't want to go.

GARY

I know that, I know they don't, I know they don't want to, but I'm asking, all right ? I'm asking. Like a person ? Like a husband ? Perhaps you haven't considered : They're going to be selling that house soon, all they want is we visit one more time before they die, Caroline, before my parents die...

CAROLINE looks at him, unimpressed.

GARY

Jesus ! Somebody tell me what's happening ! Somebody tell me what's going on !

GARY turns, disbelieving, another situation slithering away from him.

GARY

My dad's sick, all I'm asking is five days in Nebraska, and my wife is lying there... Two hours ago she was screaming to go to the hospital. Seems fine now ! Seems better now !

A mad, terrifying gleam has come into GARY'S eye, but CAROLINE is steady, on the brink of tears.

CAROLINE

What you don't understand : this is an emotionally healthy family. I am a loving and deeply involved parent. These kids...these kids are my best friends. I have three intelligent, creative and emotionally healthy children. If you think there's a problem in the house, maybe you better take a look at yourself.

GARY can't answer. He just stares..

CAROLINE

I'm the one who went to the therapist, remember ? I'm the one who actually dealt with their problems.

There is a silence. GARY is quiet now.

GARY

What does that mean ?

CAROLINE

You know what it means. Do me a favor and call Doctor Pierce. You're ill, Gary. You're seriously ill. You've been like this for six months.

GARY

Like what ? Like what ?

CAROLINE looks as if the question is superfluous, as if his current behavior were proof of what she is saying.

GARY

You don't want to go to Nebraska, and I've got a problem ?

CAROLINE

You walk round all day like you want to kill yourself. I'm telling you : I can't deal with you any more. Not unless you admit it. Not unless you face it.

Her tone is so final, so desolate that GARY cannot reply. He pulls back the sheet on his side of the bed and gets in.

GARY

Five days ? You can't do five days for a woman who has nothing in her life ?

CAROLINE looks at him like she isn't fooled. She turns off the light. GARY lies beside her, then reaches out to touch her. She tightens her fetal position against him.

GARY

You tell me we're going to split up over a trip to Nebraska ?

83

INT. ELEVATOR & OFFICE. BANK. DAY.

83

A hot morning. The elevator at Centrust bank is packed. GARY stares ahead of him. Only when he gets out does he notice someone he hasn't acknowledged. KIM CHANTREL is an assistant in her early twenties, blonde, carrying a briefcase and tightly clothed. They walk together towards the office.

KIM

Good morning, Mr. Lambert.

GARY
Morning, Kim.

KIM
Getting warm, isn't it ? Don't you
sweat in this weather ? However
many clothes you take off ?

GARY
Yes.

Without further acknowledgement, GARY walks to his desk and
sits, flicks on his computer. He stares into the distance.

84 INT. CHIP'S APARTMENT. EAST 9TH STREET. NEW YORK. NIGHT. 84

CHIP, sitting by a computer, also staring, in the corner of
his small apartment with a modern sofa to one side. Like a
Russian, he has hung hundreds of pages on lines with clothes
pegs, so the room is festooned with his screenplay. There is
an overflowing wastepaper basket. CHIP sits, in despair.

85 INT. THE GENERATOR. PHILADELPHIA. NIGHT. 85

DENISE, in chef's gear, comes to the phone on the kitchen
wall. Beyond, the room is pretty empty. Business looks slow.

DENISE
Yes ?

CHIP'S VOICE
Denise. Hey.

DENISE
Out of the blue, and all you say is
hey ?

DENISE is staring, discontented at how few customers are in
the huge space.

86 INT. CHIP'S APARTMENT. NIGHT. 86

CHIP is sitting at the desk, turning a cigarette packet over
with his fingers.

DENISE'S VOICE
I haven't heard from you for
months.

CHIP
No. Well.

DENISE'S VOICE
How are you ? Did you call Dad ?

CHIP doesn't answer.

DENISE'S VOICE

Oh God, Chip, why not ? It was his birthday. You're the favorite son. He lives for the sound of your voice. Why do you never speak to him ?

CHIP is holding the phone away from his ear, not listening to every word.

CHIP

I will. I will speak to him. Right now I'm speaking to you.

DENISE'S VOICE

To say what ? To say what, Chip ? I'm busy.

CHIP

Then I won't keep you long.

A silence. CHIP rotates the cigarette pack a few more times.

CHIP

Denise. Another ten ?

87

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

87

DENISE is too angry to answer. She just stares, then quietly puts the phone down. She goes back over to the range where her crop-haired young sous-chef, CHERRY DIETL is in charge of the dozens of pots and sauces.

DENISE

I'm taking over.

DENISE takes a half-ready dish out of CHERRY'S hand. She busies herself, her thoughts all the time on CHIP'S call.

88

INT. CHIP'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

88

On a computer screen, the legend : *THE ACADEMY PURPLE*, A Screenplay by Chip Lambert. CHIP stares blankly. Then he bangs a series of keys until it reads : *THE ACADEMY PURPLE*, A Tenth-Rate Useless Piece of Crap by Chip Lambert. CHIP gets up and examines a couple of wine bottles, which prove to be empty. CHIP throws himself down on the sofa, full-length, and lights a cigarette. Above the sofa are art-works, based on photos of women's genitals. He takes a couple of puffs, then looks a moment at the lit end. He puts his left palm up into the air, and then, moves the cigarette slowly, deliberately into the palm. The flesh burns.

89

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

89

DENISE is thinking hard, her hands working away underneath her without instruction. Then she turns.

DENISE
Cherry ! Cherry ! Can you take this
back ?

Puzzled, CHERRY reappears at her side. DENISE leaves her station.

90 INT. CHEF'S OFFICE. RESTAURANT. NIGHT. 90

DENISE comes in to the still-bare office and goes to a drawer to take out her check book. She writes CHIP LAMBERT, TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS.

91 EXT & INT. CALLAHAN HOUSE. PANAMA STREET. NIGHT. 91

ROBIN, sweat-panted, opens the door of their big brownstone to find DENISE waiting outside with a couple of videos in her hand. ROBIN is delighted.

ROBIN
Hey you made it. Well done.

DENISE
I took the night off.

ROBIN
Great. Brian's away. Did you bring
us some movies ?

DENISE is coming into the hallway of the house, which is decorated in a tussle of styles. Modish interior decorating by BRIAN, junk by ROBIN.

DENISE
Yeah. Wait Until Dark.

ROBIN
OK.

The title is enough to make ROBIN blush as DENISE passes her.

DENISE
Something Wild.

92 INT. SINEAD'S BEDROOM. NIGHT. 92

DENISE is teaching SINEAD the tango. They have music playing loud. DENISE is very good at it and plays the man, taking SINEAD in her arms and leading. Their two faces, very close together. ERIN and ROBIN are watching and laughing.

93 INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT. 93

Later. DENISE is rustling up a supper for the four of them in the kitchen. The GIRLS are laughing happily in the distance and DENISE is smiling to herself.

ROBIN

You seem so happy here.

DENISE

I am. I am happy here. I'm the youngest, remember ? That's my skill.

ROBIN frowns from the table, not understanding.

DENISE

Arriving last and getting on with everyone.

94 FILM : WAIT UNTIL DARK.

94

AUDREY HEPBURN, blind, yelling out at a criminal, played by ALAN ARKIN, to tap his stick so she can tell where he is. The tap of his stick, then HEPBURN'S face, luminous with fear. HEPBURN looks like DENISE.

95 INT. SITTING ROOM. NIGHT.

95

ROBIN and DENISE are sitting together on the sofa, watching the scene above. They are side by side. It is very late, it is dark, and they both have glasses of whisky. DENISE casually lets her hand fall not too far from ROBIN. ROBIN doesn't react. AUDREY HEPBURN again, more intense.

96 INT. SITTING ROOM. NIGHT.

96

Later. The movie ends. ROBIN hits the zapper. DENISE'S hand stays where it is.

ROBIN

So.

There's a silence. Neither of them move.

ROBIN

You know Brian's started investing in movies. That's where he is. He's away for three days.

DENISE says nothing. ROBIN frowns.

ROBIN

Do you think...

DENISE

What, Robin ?

ROBIN

Do you think he's seeing someone ?

DENISE makes no reaction.

ROBIN

He's fed up with me, you know that,
don't you ?

DENISE is deadpan. Again, she waits.

ROBIN

You've lived with guys. Haven't
you ? How many times did you do
it ? How many times a week ? What's
normal ?

DENISE looks 'You tell me.'

ROBIN

We do it twice a month. TWICE A
MONTH !

DENISE smiles at ROBIN's sense of injustice.

ROBIN

I think once a day. That's what I
like. That's normal.

ROBIN is smiling at her next thought.

ROBIN

It would be funny. What if I were
the one ? If I were the one who
cheated ?

Silence.

ROBIN

Totally joking.

97 INT. BEDROOM. DENISE'S HOUSE. FEDERAL STREET. NIGHT. 97

DENISE is lying alone in her bed, wide awake. She sits up.

DENISE

Fuck this ! Fuck it !

98 INT & EXT. DENISE'S HOUSE. DAY. 98

The doorbell rings. DENISE goes bewildered to the front door
in a shirt and little else. ROBIN is outside, as if her
appearance on the doorstep is completely expected.

ROBIN

I just took the kids to school.

ROBIN comes into the house, passing her.

99

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

99

ROBIN comes into the kitchen, DENISE following. DENISE heads for the stove.

DENISE

Coffee ?

ROBIN

Yeah.

DENISE fills an expresso machine. ROBIN stands by the table.

ROBIN

So. I've been thinking.

Something in her tone compels DENISE who turns. Together, they move across the room. They kiss and start ripping off each others' clothes. They go down, making love on the kitchen floor.

100

INT. CHIP'S APARTMENT. DAY.

100

CHIP is under the sheet attempting early-morning love with JULIA. But suddenly JULIA grabs sheets and covers, gathers them around her and shoots out of the bed.

CHIP

What ? What's wrong ?

JULIA

What do you think is wrong ?

JULIA disappears into the bathroom, slamming the door.

CHIP

Jesus Christ ! What is it ? What the fuck is it ? What have you been taking ?

CHIP jumps out of bed, as if electrocuted. JULIA comes out of the bathroom, furious, pulling on clothes.

JULIA

Have you written a word ?

CHIP

What ?

JULIA

Have you written a single word -
Are you ever going to do anything
with your life ? Ever ?

JULIA is dressing angrily, at astonishing speed.

CHIP

Julia. What the fuck is this ? What have I done wrong ?

JULIA goes to the door and opens it.

JULIA

Oh and something occurred to me, Chip. Tell you what. The reason you always want to do it, the reason you do nothing else ? I worked it out. Maybe it's because you want to try and get it right for once.

JULIA goes out. CHIP picks up an empty wine-bottle and throws it against the vagina-covered wall.

101 INT. GARY'S HOUSE. PHILADELPHIA. DAY.

101

GARY is in the kitchen, staring at a bowl of cornflakes. Then he puts on his jacket, takes his briefcase and heads for work. As he passes through the hall, CAROLINE is coming downstairs, still in her pajamas, her hair blowsy with sleep.

GARY

This is ridiculous. This is just ridiculous.

CAROLINE stops on the step, not moving.

GARY

Talk to me ! Speak to me !

CAROLINE

Admit you're ill. Then I'll talk to you.

GARY looks at her, then goes to the front door and leaves.

102 INT. GARAGE. DAY

102

GARY gets into his car in the garage. He sits in the car, not starting it, not knowing what to do, not moving. Underneath, the sound of DENISE nearing climax.

DENISE'S VOICE

Oh God ! Oh God !

103 INT. DENISE'S APARTMENT. DAY.

103

DENISE and ROBIN, naked, roll together over and over across the kitchen floor.

Fade.

CAPTION

A plain caption reads : THE FALL

104 INT. LA GUARDIA AIRPORT. NEW YORK. DAY.

104

ENID and ALFRED are coming down the arrivals concourse at La Guardia, looking the very spirit of the mid-West, ALFRED in straw fedora, paddling at the air with his hands, ENID in yellow slacks, taking care of her hip. They have shoulder bags saying *Nordic Pleasurelines*. CHIP is waiting, embarrassed, half-hiding his face at the barrier. ALFRED heads straight, taking hold of CHIP'S arm like a life-line.

ALFRED
Well ! Well !

ALFRED looks at him with pleasure. ENID arrives just behind.

ENID
Chip, what on earth have you done
to your ears ?

CHIP
Dad, Mom. Good to see you.

105 INT. LA GUARDIA AIRPORT. DAY.

105

The three of them are walking together down to the baggage area, CHIP carrying the shoulder bags. ENID is looking disapprovingly at CHIP'S trousers.

ENID.
Those aren't leather, are they ?

CHIP
Yes.

ENID
How do you wash them ?

CHIP
They're leather. They're like a
second skin.

ENID
We have to be at the pier no later
than four o'clock.

They have come to the carousel area. CHIP gets a trolley and finds ALFRED beside him, looking at the rivets in his ears.

ALFRED
What's that ? Wrought iron ?

CHIP
Yes.

ALFRED
Looks like an old quarter-inch
rivet.

CHIP
That's what it is.

ALFRED
What do you do ? Crimp that ?
Hammer it ?

CHIP
It's hammered.

ALFRED whistles, the engineer impressed and fearful. CHIP
dives for the carousel.

CHIP
I'll get the bags.

106 EXT. LA GUARDIA. DAY.

106

CHIP comes out with a trolley loaded with bags, ENID and
ALFRED following. CHIP hails a cab with a Bangladeshi driver,
and they put the bags in the back.

107 INT & EXT. TAXI. QUEENS. DAY.

107

The taxi heading into Manhattan, the three of them together,
ENID in the middle.

ENID
Did you take your pill ?

ALFRED
Yes, I took my pill.

ENID turns to CHIP, lowering her voice dramatically.

ENID
Doctor Hedgpath has him on a new
medication. His tremor's much
better. The only side-effect is he
may hallucinate.

CHIP
That's quite a side-effect.

CHIP raises his voice.

CHIP
How are you feeling these days,
Dad ?

ALFRED
Any better I'd be in heaven, any
worse I'd be in hell.

ALFRED looks out of the window. They are on a bridge where the whole Manhattan skyline opens up. ALFRED has tears in his eyes.

ALFRED
This is one of the great cities of
the world.

There is a moment's shared silence.

ENID
Does anyone smell fish ?

CHIP
We're near the ocean.

ENID
No it's you. It's your jacket. It
smells strongly of fish.

ENID buries her face in his sleeve.

CHIP
Mother. Please.

108 INT & EXT. TAXI AND E.9TH STREET. DAY.

108

The cab has drawn up outside CHIP'S building. ENID searches out her purse and gives CHIP money to pay the cab. As his parents get out, CHIP pushes the notes into the little tray, then gets out to deal with the baggage.

ENID
How much did you give him ? You
gave him far too much.

CHIP
About fifteen per cent.

ENID
More like twenty, I'd say.

CHIP
Let's have a fight about this, why
don't we ?

As CHIP struggles with the bags, the DRIVER drives cheerfully away.

DRIVER
. You all have a good day now.

ALFRED
Twenty's too much, Chip. A dollar
is still a lot of money.

ENID

I give fifteen when the service is exceptional. But it has to be really exceptional. Ten is the standard.

CHIP holds open the apartment building door.

109

INT. ELEVATOR. DAY.

109

Now CHIP has got all the bags in, and they are waiting for the slow-moving elevator to close its doors.

ENID

Did you hear we went to Dean Driblett's house-warming ?

CHIP

How would I hear that ?

ENID

He always asks after you. He's very proud you lecture at college.

CHIP

Mom, he was a classmate, not a friend.

The doors have closed and they are on their way.

ENID

They'd had it catered and they had pyramids of shrimp. And I mean pyramids.

ALFRED has his 'no comment' look.

ENID

Dean Driblett has a beautiful house. Didn't you say, Al, it probably cost a million dollars ?

ALFRED

I thought it was ostentatious. I thought the shrimp was ostentatious.

ENID

It may have been frozen.

ALFRED

People are easily impressed. They'll talk for months about pyramids of shrimp. Well, see for yourself. Your mother's still talking about it.

The elevator arrives.

110

INT. LANDING & APARTMENT. DAY.

110

As ENID, ALFRED and CHIP come out of the elevator with all the bags, JULIA is just leaving the apartment. Over her shoulder she has a DreamWorks tote bag, and in her hand she has a screenplay. She seems flushed, in a rush.

CHIP

Hey what's going on ? What's happening ?

JULIA sees she can't get out of meeting ENID and ALFRED.

CHIP

This is my girl-friend Julia.

ALFRED

It's a pleasure to meet you, Julia.

CHIP

You don't know my father, my mother.

Everyone says hello out on the landing. CHIP casually ushers his parents into his apartment.

CHIP

Mom, Dad, you go on in.

As his parents disappear, CHIP turns urgently on the landing to JULIA.

CHIP

What are you doing ? I thought you were staying for lunch.

JULIA says nothing.

CHIP

So ?

JULIA shrugs slightly, disliking the situation.

CHIP

OK. So I'll see you later then.

JULIA

Well that's it. That's what I'm saying.

CHIP

What ? What are you saying ?

JULIA says nothing. CHIP raises his voice in open panic.

CHIP
Julia, tell me.

CHIP takes a nervous look round at the apartment. But JULIA is calm, level.

JULIA
I read the screenplay.

CHIP
And ?

But JULIA just smiles as if everything is now clear.

JULIA
Can I say, I sat here while you were at the airport, and I thought I'm going to do something for myself. For once in my life, I'm going to act self-interestedly in a relationship. And d'you know what ? I'm feeling pretty good about it.

CHIP looks at her, disbelieving

CHIP
What is this ? What are you saying ? You're making some decision, you've had some sort of moment because you don't like my screenplay ?

JULIA
Have you read it ?

CHIP
Of course. Of course I've read it.

CHIP waits.

CHIP
Well ?

JULIA
It's boring, Chip. It's long and it's boring and at the end, finally, it's about nothing but tits. You're 39, Chip. It's time you grew up.

JULIA turns and goes to the elevator.

CHIP
Julia, for fuck's sake, this isn't you. This is the pills. This is the pills talking.

JULIA
I feel pretty good.

The elevator door closes on JULIA, just as ALFRED opens the apartment door.

ALFRED
Chip, please tell your girl-friend
here, she'll be very welcome if she
desires to stay for lunch.

CHIP pushes open the door of the apartment to yell at ENID.

CHIP
Hang on, hang on in here, OK ? I'll
be right back...

CHIP heads off quickly for the stairway, as ENID and ALFRED stand bewildered.

111 INT. STAIRS. DAY.

111

CHIP is running like a lunatic down the stairs which wind round the elevator shaft.

CHIP
Julia, for God's sake, where are
you going, what the hell are you
doing ?

112 EXT. EAST 9TH STREET. DAY.

112

It has started to rain. CHIP comes running out into the street to catch sight of JULIA getting into a yellow cab, and driving off.

CHIP
Julia ! Julia !

He runs uselessly a few yards after the cab. Then he turns to find DENISE has just got out of another cab, carrying an umbrella, a bunch of sunflowers, and a pastry box.

DENISE
Hey big brother. Is that Julia I
saw ?

CHIP
Yeah. That was Julia.

DENISE
What's going on ?

CHIP is standing looking desperately at the street where the cab was. Now he turns.

CHIP

Look, Denise, I'm sorry, I'm going to have to leave you to hold the fort...

DENISE

Are Mom and Dad here ?

CHIP

They're upstairs. I am sorry. There are some corrections I've got to make.

DENISE

Corrections ?

CHIP

To the screenplay. They're just corrections but I've got to make them.

DENISE frowns, re-winding the scene in her mind.

DENISE

What was Julia doing ? Was she leaving you ? She looked like she was leaving you.

CHIP

There's a poached salmon in the fridge...

DENISE

Chip, has it occurred to you perhaps it's rather important you stay ?

CHIP

Yes, that has occurred to me.

DENISE

Dad is sick !

DENISE has suddenly raised her voice.

CHIP

All right. The most I'll be gone is ninety minutes.

DENISE

I said, has it occurred to you ? You haven't even seen your own father in four years ! Don't you think it's possible - it's just possible - maybe there are more important things in life than yourself and your relationships ?

CHIP looks at her a moment, the victim, not the accused.

CHIP

Oh I see, and you're the person
to tell me, are you ? You ? Of
all people ? With your past ?
It's you to lecture, is it ?

DENISE stands stunned at this sudden attack. CHIP sees a cab.
Instinctively, he feels his pockets, which are empty.

CHIP

Oh shit.

DENISE

Chip, do what you like. Go where
you want. I don't care. But no more
money. No more money, OK ?

CHIP

Jesus, Denise. I wasn't asking for
money.

DENISE

Because frankly, Chip - where does
it end ?

DENISE turns and heads towards his building. CHIP shakes his
head in anger, then dives into the traffic.

113 EXT. LOWER BROADWAY. DAY.

113

The rain is heavier now. Crowds hurry by with umbrellas. CHIP
is going downtown against the flow, without an umbrella, as
fast as he can, his feet splashing.

114 INT. PROCURO PRODUCTIONS. TRIBECA. DAY.

114

CHIP comes soaking wet into the reception area of the film
company and rushes towards the RECEPTIONIST. She is in her
20s, the height of Tribeca cool.

CHIP

Is Julia here ? I need to see
Julia.

RECEPTIONIST

She's already gone.

CHIP

Well, where is she ? Where did she
go ?

RECEPTIONIST

She left for the day.

The RECEPTIONIST is looking at him. He looks mad and soaked.

RECEPTIONIST
Is your name Chip ?

CHIP
Yes, it is.

RECEPTIONIST
Julia said if you came, best thing,
talk to the man in her office.

CHIP looks puzzled.

RECEPTIONIST
Something about how she wanted to
help you ?

The RECEPTIONIST looks up as if the last part of the message
is incomprehensible.

115 INT. CORRIDOR & OFFICE. DAY.

115

CHIP walks cautiously down the corridor not knowing what he
will meet. When he gets to JULIA'S office, he stops. Sitting
behind her desk, watching a CD, is a MAN who looks rather
like CHIP, but with bad posture and crooked teeth.

CHIP
I'm sorry. This makes no sense
but I was told to speak to you.

MAN
Sure. You must be Chip.

CHIP nods

MAN
Julia calls me. She tells me to
come in because she thinks you'll
be here.

The MAN has not moved from his position behind the desk. His
English is strongly accented. He clicks off the CD and puts
it in his pocket. He gets up, smiling.

MAN
You don't know who I am.

CHIP
No. Not for sure.

GITANAS
I'm her husband.

CHIP
Well.

CHIP shifts.

GITANAS
Gitanas Misevicius.

CHIP
Chip Lambert.

GITANAS
I know.

They have shaken hands. GITANAS beams at him.

GITANAS
She suggests we go for a drink.

116 INT. CORRIDOR & STAIRS. DAY.

116

GITANAS MISEVICIUS and CHIP move quickly along the corridor, out onto the third floor, and then down some wide, open stairs which lead to the street. CHIP is trailing, trying to get out of the invitation. They look like twins.

CHIP
It's difficult, you see - my
parents - they're from the mid-West
- they're just here today, they're
leaving on this ridiculous cruise,
I have to go back and make lunch
for them...

GITANAS
This won't take long.

GITANAS throws him a glance.

GITANAS
Did you know Julia well ?

CHIP
Oh. No. Not at all. Barely.

GITANAS
That's what she says to me.

CHIP
I'm writing a script for her.

GITANAS
She calls me this morning, she's
reading your screenplay, she thinks
"This is a gifted, intelligent
person and pretty soon he's going
to be needing a job."

CHIP
But I have a job.

GITANAS looks 'Don't kid yourself'.

CHIP

Eight months ! I've worked eight months on that script !

GITANAS puts his arm round CHIP as they disappear.

117 INT. BAR. DAY.

117

Impetuously, GITANAS kicks open the door. It's the veneered bar from Scene 1. It's too early to be busy. CHIP follows.

CHIP

I don't understand. When did she call you ? She called you this morning ?

GITANAS

That's right. We're in America, why don't we drink whisky ? Barman, two whiskies.

GITANAS is leaning against the bar, expansive now, getting out a cigarette.

GITANAS

Don't worry. I'm not keeping you long. I have a proposition. That's why I meet you.

CHIP looks at him, bewildered. As he turns to the bar, GITANAS casually adds.

GITANAS

Chip, this is my point : I can get you out of all this.

118 INT. KITCHEN. CHIP'S APARTMENT. DAY.

118

DENISE has taken off her coat and got stuck in to preparing the meal in the tiny kitchen. She has taken the food CHIP prepared from the fridge and now she is also making beautiful little hors d'oeuvres of her own. ENID comes in.

ENID

Can I help you ? Can I help in the kitchen ?

DENISE doesn't turn, just re-doubles her work effort, as if to keep her mother at bay.

ENID

Really, I don't know why Chip invited us if he wasn't going to eat lunch with us.

DENISE

Conceivably, he hadn't planned on getting dumped this morning.

ENID ignores DENISE'S tone.

ENID

How do you think your father is ?

DENISE

Well...

ENID

Do you know he fell down the basement stairs again ? Did I tell you that ?

DENISE

No, you didn't tell me that. You can find me a vase.

DENISE gestures towards the sunflowers. ENID opens a high kitchen cabinet. Inside are the photographs of vaginas which CHIP has stuffed away out of sight for his parents' visit.

ENID

What on earth - what on earth are these ?

DENISE looks up a moment from her work, cool.

DENISE

What do you mean 'what are they' ? You know full well what they are.

ENID

No I don't.

DENISE stops, irritated with her.

DENISE

You don't know ? You don't know what they are ?

ENID

I don't want to know.

DENISE

Yes. Well that's something else entirely, isn't it ?

DENISE has said this unkindly and now for a moment, all avoidance is put to one side. Then ENID closes the cupboard and looks down at the tit-bits.

ENID

Those look nice.

DENISE
I'll make more. These are for Dad.

119 INT. CHIP'S APARTMENT. DAY.

119

As ENID puts the flowers in a vase, DENISE comes into the main room where ALFRED is perched looking ridiculous on CHIP'S modernist sofa.

DENISE
Something to tide you over while I
get lunch.

ALFRED
I'm grateful to you.

DENISE
Thank you.

DENISE puts the plate down. ALFRED looks so out of it, struggling so hard to keep a grip on reality that DENISE stands, overwhelmed.

ALFRED
Denise.

DENISE
Yes ?

ALFRED
Did I drive Chip away ?

120 INT. BAR. DAY.

120

CHIP is sitting back from the table, opposite GITANAS. GITANAS is studying CHIP as if monitoring his responses. They both seem supple, freed-up with whisky.

GITANAS
Well ? So what are you thinking ?

CHIP smiles, a man of the world.

CHIP
I recognize what you're saying.

GITANAS
You do ?

CHIP
Of course. What you're describing.
Not just in Lithuania, it's
happened all over the world.

GITANAS corroborates, pleased.

GITANAS

You're right. After the wall fell, the Americans started investing. You bought up everything. And ten years later, where are we ? Twenty per cent unemployment. Food is scarce in the shops. Our infrastructure falling apart.

CHIP

The good old market.

GITANAS

Correct.

GITANAS is thoughtful.

GITANAS

America saves you. But then it ruins you too.

CHIP looks away. GITANAS goes into his thoughts, so CHIP has to prompt him.

CHIP

So - what - you've started a website ? People go to the website ?

GITANAS

There's a prospectus. Description of the country : 'a country of three and a half million people...

CHIP

'Rich mineral resources...

GITANAS

You got it.

CHIP

'Unique potential...

GITANAS

That's it. 'You can be part of it.' So. You get sent a legal document. It's simple. It's elegant.

GITANAS stops a moment, at the heart of his scheme.

GITANAS

You're actually buying shares in a country.

GITANAS looks, impressed at his own daring.

GITANAS

I tell you the truth. I'm playing
at my laptop one day. I'm playing...
I have the idea : Lithuania
Incorporated.

CHIP

It was a joke ?

GITANAS

Correct. But at once - wow - people
start sending in dollars.

GITANAS becomes absorbed in his thoughts. For a moment
GITANAS absents himself. Then he remembers to speak again.

GITANAS

And now what I need is a writer. I
understand from Julia you lecture
in college.

CHIP

I'm on sabbatical.

GITANAS

Sure. Sure you are.

GITANAS looks CHIP in the eye. Then he looks away.

GITANAS

I'm paying in cash.

CHIP

Cash ?

GITANAS

American dollars. Three weeks in
advance. First class accommodation
in Vilnius.

CHIP

Vilnius ?

GITANAS

Sure. Look, we're selling a
product. You need to be on site.

CHIP

Is Lithuania a dangerous country ?

GITANAS shrugs slightly.

GITANAS

It will always depend what you do.

121 CHIP'S APARTMENT. DAY.

121

The three of them - ENID, ALFRED and DENISE - are sitting at the small table. DENISE has made the meal beautiful, but she has already pushed her plate to one side. ALFRED is trying to get a shaking fork into his mouth, but it falls off.

ENID

And what about you, Denise ? You've told us nothing about what's happening in your world.

DENISE

I'm fine. I've brought some dessert.

DENISE gets up to open her pastry box. ENID smiles knowingly.

ENID

Don't worry, I'm not going to ask about your private life.

DENISE

Good. That's why it's called a private life.

ENID

I always say : there's nothing sadder in the world than a woman who leaves it too late to settle down.

DENISE comes back with the flan which she begins to cut.

DENISE

Oh I don't know, I can think of a few things.

ENID

All right, you have your smart answers. You never tell us anything about your men-friends.

DENISE

Dad, I admire the Navy, don't you ?
'Don't ask. Don't tell.' My opinion, it's a pretty good motto.

But ALFRED'S attention is elsewhere - on something he has seen in the window.

DENISE

Dad...Dad what is it ?

ALFRED

No I'm looking at those children over there.

DENISE
Children ?

DENISE can't see them. ALFRED lifts a bony finger.

ALFRED
There. There. And there.

ENID has started eating her flan but she sees the reflections in the window.

ENID
Al, those aren't children. They're flowers.

DENISE
Dad.

DENISE puts a hand on his shoulder. ENID has spoken as if this happens all the time and is nothing. As DENISE sits, ENID realizes it is something she is used to but which shocks DENISE. DENISE looks at ALFRED.

DENISE
You should eat more.

122 INT. MEN'S ROOM. BAR. DAY. 122

The lighting is neon. CHIP, washing his hands, looks as if he is in Eastern Europe already - unshaven, cold-eyed, pale. He looks deep in the mirror as he splashes cold water on his face. His mind made up, CHIP opens the door.

123 INT. BAR. DAY. 123

GITANAS hasn't moved. CHIP comes and sits opposite him.

CHIP
I've just got one question. Is this what's called wire-fraud ? Is this the practice known technically as wire-fraud ?

GITANAS looks at CHIP, not answering.

GITANAS
I am for a while ambassador, did Julia tell you ?

CHIP
You were at the UN ?

GITANAS
And then briefly I am vice-President.

CHIP
Of Lithuania ?

GITANAS
Where else ?

GITANAS shrugs slightly.

GITANAS
We were robbed. We were stripped of everything. A rich powerful country makes rules by which my country is dying.

CHIP nods, thinking.

CHIP
How much ?

GITANAS
A thousand dollars a week.

CHIP
And I think you promised three weeks' advance.

GITANAS has a briefcase full of notes from which he takes three thousand dollars. CHIP puts it in his inside pocket.

CHIP
Thank you.

GITANAS gets up, the deal done.

GITANAS
We're leaving this evening.

CHIP
This evening ?

GITANAS
We go to the airport at once.

CHIP
I'll need my stuff. Where shall I meet you ?

CHIP has followed him to the door. Now GITANAS turns and embraces him.

GITANAS
Chip, I trust you. You're my new friend. But we travel together.

CHIP smiles. The odd thing is, he can't help liking him.

GITANAS

Don't worry, I pay for the cab.

124 INT. CAB. DAY.

124

GITANAS and CHIP are traveling in the back of a yellow cab. Now that he is leaving, the streets of New York are moving to CHIP. He is looking at the people, the shops, the chatter, the clutter of downtown. He is so deep in thought that CHIP does not notice that GITANAS is watching him.

GITANAS

All right ?

CHIP

Yes. Yes, I can't wait.

125 EXT. E. 9TH STREET. DAY.

125

The cab draws up. CHIP gets out and heads for the door of his apartment block, then turns to look back. GITANAS smiles and waves to say 'I'm here, I'm not going anywhere'. CHIP goes in.

126 INT. ELEVATOR. DAY.

126

CHIP going up alone in the elevator. In the mirror he can look at himself. The prospect of his flight from this life wells up in him, like happiness itself.

127 INT. APARTMENT. DAY.

127

CHIP unlocks the door. His family are gone. CHIP looks round. The dishes are neatly washed and stacked. There is a bunch of sunflowers, splendid, in the middle of the room. CHIP stands, moved by the sense of their recent presence.

128 EXT. MIDTOWN PIER. DAY.

128

A gleaming white cruise ship, the *Gunnar Myrdal* is docked beside the shed where elderly people are gathering to board. DENISE has organized her parents' luggage with HANDLERS. She heads through the crowd to where they are standing waiting.

ENID

So where are you heading ? Do you go back to Philly ? Please talk to Gary about Christmas. You do look darling.

DENISE

Thank you.

DENISE hugs her.

ENID
Your hair is just lovely. And
please try and come for a week.

DENISE
I'll come for five days.

DENISE turns to her father.

DENISE
Dad.

DENISE kisses him. He lowers his voice.

ALFRED
You must speak to Gary.

DENISE
I will. I will speak to Gary.

ALFRED
You must.

ALFRED is trying to hold on to DENISE physically and he is giving her his whole concentration. ENID is behind, pretending not to listen.

ALFRED
You must. Your mother wants this
Christmas in Omaha. I don't have
long.

DENISE
I'll talk to him. I promise.

ALFRED holds his look. Then impulsively he turns away.

ALFRED
Well then, it's said.

ALFRED moves over to join ENID, his hands bouncing in the air. DENISE feels herself beginning to cry. They all wave and mouth 'Goodbye'. They begin to walk up the gangplank, ALFRED holding on to the rail. DENISE watches as they disappear.

129 INT. AIRPLANE. NIGHT.

129

The Helsinki plane. Dark. CHIP is dozing. GITANAS is beside him, his laptop on. CHIP wakes, surprised to find himself where he is. GITANAS speaks unexpectedly.

GITANAS
So Julia.

CHIP
I'm sorry ?

GITANAS

My wife.

CHIP

Oh. Yes.

GITANAS

Julia wakes up one morning. She says 'Enough of men with cigarette burns.'

CHIP tries to focus, still sleepy. Instinctively, he curls his own palm, hiding the burn. Meanwhile GITANAS rolls up his sleeve. All down his arm, disfigured scar tissue with burn holes.

GITANAS

Soviet military prison. 1991.

CHIP

You were a dissident ?

GITANAS

A dissident. Precisely.

CHIP

My god.

CHIP looks. The burns are scary. GITANAS has got out the CD from his pocket and he is booting it into his laptop.

GITANAS

I'm kind of scared to look at this. This is a security precaution. A motion detector. Is that the right name ?

The screen is turned away from CHIP, but GITANAS can see it.

CHIP

Where was this detector ?

GITANAS

In my old apartment.

CHIP

I see.

CHIP is grave, fearful. GITANAS watches a moment.

GITANAS

You should take a look.

GITANAS turns the screen towards CHIP. Eerie in the darkness of the plane, the phantom image of CHIP fucking JULIA on the bed in the apartment.

CHIP looks a moment, then at GITANAS who stares back. Then GITANAS reaches out and takes the CD out of the laptop. He holds it in front of CHIP'S face.

GITANAS

Fuck you. Fuck you and take it. I never want to see it again.

CHIP takes it and puts it in his pocket. There's a weird complicity between them, and CHIP doesn't feel too bad, almost cheery. There's a STEWARDESS going by.

CHIP

I'd like another whisky.

CHIP has raised his hand for the drink and GITANAS notices.

GITANAS

Your palm.

CHIP

It's nothing.

GITANAS

With a cigarette ?

CHIP nods.

GITANAS

You do it to yourself. Pathetic American.

CHIP

Different kind of prison.

CHIP looks away. The STEWARDESS puts down a miniature. CHIP opens it and pours. Then he looks at GITANAS at exactly the same moment that GITANAS looks at him. The two men smile at the absurdity of it, forgiving each other in an instant.

GITANAS

You're right.

There is a moment. Then GITANAS reaches across and kisses CHIP on the cheek. Neither man says anything. CHIP sits, drinking his whisky, oddly content.

130

INT. KITCHEN. GARY'S HOUSE. PHILADELPHIA. EVE.

130

In similar mood, GARY is sitting alone at the kitchen table, enjoying his first illicit vodka after work. It is quiet. GARY is content as he drains his glass and then goes to the freezer to get the bottle again. As he does, he hears a whirring noise behind him. He turns and looks upwards. Attached to the ceiling, CALEB'S surveillance camera, glinting, catching him in his guilty action.

131 INT. CALEB'S ROOM. EVE.

131

An eerie, phantom GARY, reacting to the discovery of the camera by trying to hide his bottle. The image of GARY with his vodka has the same snowy quality as CHIP with JULIA. CALEB, with his monitor screens, sits placidly watching.

132 INT. DENISE'S HOUSE. FEDERAL STREET. PHILADELPHIA. DAY. 132

DENISE opens the door. A morning ritual : ROBIN is in a track-suit and has car keys in hand. DENISE is in shorts. Without speaking, ROBIN goes past and up to the kitchen. DENISE follows. ROBIN crosses and kisses her longingly on the neck.

ROBIN

Hi.

ROBIN moves away. DENISE has picked up something in her manner.

DENISE

And ?

ROBIN

I needed to see you. I needed to talk to you.

DENISE

OK. Do you want some coffee ?

DENISE is by the stove. ROBIN shakes her head.

DENISE

Well, here I am.

DENISE waits. ROBIN is nervous.

ROBIN

Denise...

DENISE

What ?

ROBIN

Don't make it more difficult.

ROBIN has sat down at the kitchen table.

ROBIN

I've been talking to Brian.

DENISE

OK.

DENISE lights a cigarette.

DENISE

What does Brian say ?

ROBIN

He thinks I'm spending so much time
at the project I'm turning into an
irresponsible mother.

DENISE

Well ?

ROBIN frowns at her question.

DENISE

Does he have a point ?

ROBIN

Denise, for goodness' sake...

DENISE

For goodness's sake, what ? No,
tell me, I'm interested. Is this
something you and I need to
discuss ? Brian's critique of you ?
We need to dissect it ?

ROBIN raises her voice, trying to cut through DENISE'S
hostility.

ROBIN

Denise, I'm feeling terrible.

DENISE

I'm not surprised.

ROBIN

What does that mean ?

DENISE

You're married. You have two
children and every morning you rush
round like a banshee to fuck the
living daylights out of another
woman. I think you can expect to
feel terrible.

ROBIN

Hey now come on -

ROBIN is at her most college girlish. But now she starts to
explain with real feeling.

ROBIN

Brian is saying...he's saying he
thinks our marriage may be over.

Again ROBIN waits, but DENISE shows no reaction.

ROBIN

He says I take no interest in anything he does. He says we're drifting apart. And...I don't know...I feel he's right. He's right. I'm being unfair to him. Let's face it, he's never done anything to me.

ROBIN pauses. Her eyes are beginning to fill with tears.

ROBIN

Every day, all day, I'm longing for you. It's not fair to Brian.

There is a silence. All the time DENISE has been watching ROBIN trying to work out what has really been going on. When she speaks she is very quiet.

DENISE

You've been fucking him, haven't you ?

ROBIN

I'm sorry ? What did you say ?

DENISE

You heard me.

ROBIN is staring in disbelief at DENISE'S reaction. But DENISE is serious.

ROBIN

I sleep with him. Occasionally. We're married.

DENISE puts her coffee cup in the sink.

DENISE

Fair enough, you're right, it's over. Why don't we forget it ? Good idea. And now I need to get going. I'm already late.

DENISE makes to go. ROBIN is paralyzed, miserable at the table.

ROBIN

Denise...

DENISE

What ?

ROBIN

You might at least say something !

DENISE

What is there to say ? We're adults. Or at least one of us is.

DENISE suddenly raises her voice.

DENISE

I don't want you fucking him ! I can't bear to think of it. All right ? I've said it.

ROBIN is nodding as if this is proof of everything she feared.

ROBIN

Denise, you know you can be horrible. Why can't you say something kind ? You never call me. It's always me that has to call you. You never tell me you love me. You've never said it once. Not once. Why is that ?

DENISE

Because you're right : I'm a horrible person. Now if you don't mind, I'm going to work.

(MORE)

ROBIN, shocked, calls out, but DENISE interrupts angrily.

ROBIN

Denise...

DENISE

There's nothing to talk about ! There's nothing to say ! Jesus, you told me - at the project, you told me - "I hate that word 'guilt'. I hate it," you said. Well, for someone who hates it you accord it an awful lot of respect.

ROBIN

That isn't fair.

DENISE

Isn't it ?

ROBIN is reproached, cowering, but DENISE is unyielding.

DENISE

You see, that's what I mean by being an adult. There are contradictory feelings. That's what it means. Feelings which can't be reconciled. Know what that condition is called ?

DENISE(cont'd)

It's called 'adulthood'. And people get used to it. They live with it. They expect their feelings to tear them apart. They don't go round whimpering. Because whimpering is pointless and stupid.

DENISE turns back towards the sink.

DENISE

Go back to Brian. Make that noise that you make. Make it for him.

ROBIN is devastated, not moving from the table.

ROBIN

You are so fucking tough.

DENISE

Yes.

ROBIN

What's that about ?

DENISE

I just told you. You think we're going to buy a clapboard house near the project, settle down together, wear big sneakers, cook vegetarian and bring up the girls ? I don't think so, Robin. It's not going to happen. So why don't we leave it at that ?

Tears are pouring down ROBIN'S face.

ROBIN

I can't leave it.

DENISE

You'll get over it. Light some candles, why not ? Say eight 'Hail Marys'. Isn't that what you do ?

DENISE goes and sits down at the other side of the room. She lights a cigarette.

ROBIN

I don't get it. I can't work it out. Either you love me desperately or you don't love me at all.

DENISE

Yeah, well, happen you'll just have to guess.

Finally stung too often, ROBIN gets up. She takes her car keys from the table.

ROBIN
 You think this behavior is clever.
 Know what I think ? You can't see a
 future. And that makes you angry.

DENISE stares, giving nothing away.

ROBIN
 I'm leaving. I shan't see you.
 Goodbye.

ROBIN turns and goes out. DENISE, expressionless, goes on
 smoking in the corner.

133 INT. THE GENERATOR. KITCHEN. DAY.

133

DENISE is at the range. The restaurant is not yet open.
 Behind her, WAITERS AND CHEFS are having their morning meal.
 BRIAN appears with a newspaper in hand.

DENISE
 Hey.

BRIAN
 Have you read it ?

DENISE
 What is it ?

BRIAN
 It's the *New York Times*.

DENISE
 I don't take it.

BRIAN
 Neither do I.

BRIAN hands it to her, aglow with excitement. DENISE just
 throws her eyes over it, as if it's only what she's
 expecting. Then she goes back to work.

DENISE
 I'm going to need a shit-load of
 extra tables.

BRIAN
 Surely.

DENISE
 I'm thinking, maybe four fours and
 an eight. I need a reservationist
 who actually knows how to screen.

DENISE looks round a moment, lowering her voice.

DENISE

And Brian...we need to get rid of Robi.

BRIAN

I'm sorry ?

BRIAN frowns, taken aback.

BRIAN

Denise, he's a friend of yours. You brought him in.

DENISE

Brian, I got you this far. I promised you the best restaurant in town. This review says that's what we've got. Robi can't cut it. Get rid of him.

DENISE goes on working.

BRIAN

Do you want the paper ?

DENISE

I'll look at it later.

BRIAN puts it down beside her. She takes no notice.

134 INT. THE GENERATOR. DINING ROOM. DAY.

134

The group are laughing and talking easily together in the empty restaurant. BRIAN walks the great space towards them. Everyone applauds : 'Great review', 'Well done', 'Fantastic'. BRIAN smiles, says 'Thank you' and leans over ROBI ZITO.

BRIAN

I wonder, Robi, could I have a word ?

135 INT. GUNNER MYRDAL. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

135

The dining room of the big Scandinavian liner. ENID and ALFRED have dressed for the first evening at sea, and they are shaking hands with the other retired people at their table - the Norwegian NYGRENS and the Swedish SODERBLADS. PER NYGREN is tall with huge ears. SIGNE SODERBLAD has a lot of suntanned shoulder and décolletage. ENID moves round keeping up a stream of consciousness. ALFRED has become like someone pretending to be a human being, oddly detached.

ENID

Now this is where we eat, we all have our places, very nice to meet you, isn't this fun ? This is my husband Alfred.

SIGNE
Signe Soderblad.

NYGREN
Per Nygren. My wife Inga.

Everyone has now sat down.

NYGREN
So, have you done this before ? Are you interested in gambling ?

ENID
Oh no I don't think so. Well maybe a little. We're really taking this cruise for the leaves.

NYGREN
Ah yes. Apparently they're a veritable cascade of color. Stunning Northern scenery.

ENID has her napkin out, as NYGREN turns politely to ALFRED.

NYGREN
And you, Mr. Lambert, what was your profession ?

ALFRED'S mouth moves. It's a moment before anything comes out.

ALFRED
I worked on the railway.

ENID
Isn't this enjoyable ? Alfred was an engineer.

Everyone waits. Then, suddenly, ALFRED speaks from his innermost being.

ALFRED
The whistle of a train can raise spirits on a February morning

A silence. ALFRED seems so powerfully nostalgic no-one can think what to say.

ENID
Do we choose from a menu or do we eat what we're told ?

136 INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

136

Later. ALFRED is concentrating like mad not to spill soup, but his eye is drawn irresistibly to the tanned breasts of SIGNE SODERBLAD opposite.

NYGREN

And wonderful - you have three children...

ENID

Yes. They all went East. Nobody cares for the mid-West any more. My middle son's an academic. He's very highly thought of indeed. My older boy's a banker. He has three lovely children, and a wife who's...well, she doesn't work. She's never needed to, if you understand me.

NYGREN

I do.

SIGNE is smiling warmly at ALFRED. NYGREN prompts ENID again.

NYGREN

And you also have a daughter.

ENID

That's right. She cooks at a new restaurant in Philadelphia. Alfred, do you remember its name?

SIGNE

Not the Generator?

ENID

Yes it's called the Generator.

SIGNE

Unbelievable. Stig and I ate there last week.

ENID

Well, what a small world.

STIG

The food was miraculous.

ALFRED has got up from the table.

ALFRED

I'm sorry. Excuse me. I have to go.

ENID

Alfred -

SIGNE

Are you all right, Mr. Lambert?

ALFRED

Never felt better.

ALFRED puts down his napkin. Then heads off to the dining room door. ENID smiles as if this were perfectly normal.

NYGREN

It seems you have the perfect family.

ENID blushes with pleasure, accepting the compliment.

ENID

Oh. You can never say perfect.

137

INT. BAR. NIGHT.

137

In the bar a band, in blazers, are playing corny show tunes. The NYGRENS and SODERBLADS are on banquettes at the side, the sea behind them, relaxing with ENID, who finds herself sitting next to STIG SODERBLAD.

STIG

It's nice that you have a few drinks with us.

ENID

I haven't done this for so long. My husband...well, I always have to drag him along. Dave Schumpert says Alfred's the kind of man who always says no before he says yes.

ENID'S tone is light-hearted, not self-conscious.

STIG

That must have been very hard for you.

ENID

Pardon me ?

STIG

If you like to enjoy yourself.

ENID

Oh yes. Of course, when we married, I knew this about him. Alfred is very strong-willed.

There is a silence. SIGNE has been following the last bit.

SIGNE

I wanted to ask you, Mrs. Lambert. Is his illness serious ?

ENID

Oh no. He's coping fine.

138 INT. CABIN. NIGHT.

138

A lower-deck cabin, functional merely. ALFRED is sitting on the edge of the bed. He is wearing trousers and a vest. His hands are folded to keep them under control. He is looking fiercely at an unseen companion. He listens, and hearing nothing, replies.

ALFRED

Speak up. By all means, speak up if you dare. I'm not afraid. I'm saying nothing.

ALFRED sits, determined to say no more. He looks defiantly at his opponent.

ALFRED . . .

I will die before I tell you anything. You'll get nothing from me.

139 INT. BAR. NIGHT.

139

Later. The music has become more romantic. The party of five is yet more relaxed. STIG is smiling at ENID, who is enjoying herself.

~~STIG~~ (MORE)

And you ?

ENID

Say again ?

STIG

You haven't told us what you did.

ENID

Oh I did nothing. I'm not quite sure what I've been doing all these years.

STIG

No ?

ENID

I'm not the gifted one.

STIG is waiting for her to say more. But she's embarrassed, unused to this attention from strangers. STIG throws a look to the NYGRENS who are also listening now.

STIG

So how did you meet your husband ?

ENID

Oh. Well, Alfred was a farm-boy from the dust-bowl.

ENID(cont'd)

Kansas, you know. And my mother had a boarding-house. I did the cleaning and laundry. And what happened was : Alfred had just started in his new job. He came to our town and he rented a room..

STIG smiles at his wife to get her attention.

STIG

Are you listening, Signe ? Enid has an extraordinary story.

ENID

No. Not extraordinary. Nothing extraordinary.

STIG

At least allow, a beautiful story.

STIG is smiling, but ENID is in agony, her confidence gone because she is talking of real things. STIG prompts her.

STIG

My fault. I interrupted.

ENID looks away.

ENID

I've drunk a little too much.

140 INT. LANDING. NIGHT.

140

The group make their way to their cabins. A pair of white double doors are marked 'First Class'. STIG opens them for ENID, but she stops, apparently confused.

ENID

Oh no. I don't think we're here. We're on the lower deck. We prefer it.

STIG

Quite right.

ENID

The last thing anyone needs is a porthole.

STIG smiles and gestures to help her in her confusion.

STIG

Mrs. Lambert, good night. It's that way, I think.

141 INT. CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

141

ENID makes her way back along the corridor to her cabin. As she tries to open the door, it resists. She is puzzled. She pushes harder but something is lying against it.

ENID

Alfred ! Alfred ! What's going on ?

142 INT. CABIN. NIGHT.

142

ALFRED has pulled the bedclothes off and lain on the floor to keep the door closed. He is dressed only in his pajama bottoms and has all the sheets and blankets wrapped around him. He looks completely mad. ENID pushes at the door, forcing him back, and he scrambles backwards across the room on the floor.

ALFRED

I've got to get up. I've got to get going. It's time.

ENID

Alfred...

ALFRED

I've got to go to work.

ENID has forced her way in and found ALFRED on the floor swathed in sheets.

ENID

Alfred, it's midnight.

ALFRED

I'm telling you it's morning.

ENID closes the door, horrified. ALFRED is staring and now he suddenly explodes, spitting words out defiantly right at her.

ALFRED

I'm fucking telling you woman. I'm fucking telling you. Fuck, fuck and fuck !

ENID stands, stock-still, just watching.

ENID

Alfred...

ALFRED

I'm not taking this. I don't have to take this.

There is a silence. ENID stands appalled.

ENID

Alfred, what do you see ?

ENID makes a move towards him. She reaches out a hand.

ENID

Alfred, you need to give me your blankets. Give me your blankets and I'll make up your bed.

ENID moves and he scrambles away a little, but less frantic now.

ENID

Stay. It won't take me long.

143 INT. CABIN. NIGHT.

143

A bit later. ALFRED is calm now, sitting in the corner on the floor watching ENID as she works, making the bed. There is an expertise in ENID'S movements as if the simple act of folding the sheets correctly were satisfying. ALFRED watches.

144 INT. CABIN. NIGHT.

144

A few moments later. ENID is helping ALFRED into a fresh, soothing bed. As he lies down, he looks up at her, gentle.

ALFRED

Enid, what's happening ? Where are we ?

ENID

We're sailing. We're here to look at the leaves.

145 INT. CABIN. NIGHT.

145

ENID is sitting alone, fully dressed, in the bathroom, thinking. Then she gets up and goes to the bathroom door. The light is out and ALFRED is asleep, his dreams playing across his face as he lies. ENID stands watching.

146 EXT. WOODS. NEW ENGLAND. DAY.

146

Seen from the ship, the abundance of the New England fall - a riot of greens, yellows, browns, like abstract painting. Then, on the ship, ALFRED standing at the rail next to ENID, both wrapped against the cold. ALFRED is staring blankly. ENID turns to look at him, almost with curiosity, as if considering a stranger. The leaves go by, glorious.

147 INT. CENTRUST BANK. DAY.

147

KIM CHANTREL is sitting at her desk, still dressed for summer. She smiles across at GARY. He pretends to be absorbed in his work. She looks him straight in the eye.

The phone in front of GARY rings, and he picks it up at once. The sound of CAROLINE in panic.

CAROLINE'S VOICE

Gary !

GARY

What ? What is it ? What's happening ?

CAROLINE'S VOICE

Gary. Come quickly. I need you.

At once, GARY puts down the phone, picks up his jacket and flies out of the office, waving vaguely at a COLLEAGUE.

GARY

I'm sorry. Caroline wants me. I've got to go.

KIM watches his flying figure departing from his desk.

148 INT. CAR. DAY.

148

GARY is driving back at great speed, but with a look of anticipation, as if the marital war is at last over. He looks in the mirror and confidently changes lane to overtake.

149 INT. GARY'S HOUSE. DAY.

149

CAROLINE is standing in the hall, awaiting GARY'S return. The sound of GARY'S car sweeping into the drive. CAROLINE goes and flicks the switch to turn off the alarm system, then opens the front door to see GARY hurrying from the car.

CAROLINE

Oh Gary, thank God you've come.
There's somebody out there.

GARY

Out where ?

CAROLINE is guiding him by the arm towards the living room window.

CAROLINE

Somebody's watching. There. In a car. Over there.

GARY is at the window, but CAROLINE pulls him back behind the curtain.

CAROLINE

Don't make it too obvious.

GARY looks out. He can see the lush vegetation of the garden and the street beyond.

CAROLINE

Gary, they've been watching all day. I thought nothing of it at first. And the sign has gone. Do you see ?

GARY frowns, looks again at the front garden.

CAROLINE

The security sign ?

150 EXT. FRONT GARDEN. DAY

150

GARY is standing with his hands on his hips in the garden, looking round. There is nobody to be seen. CAROLINE tentatively opens the door and comes to join him.

GARY

There's nobody here.

CAROLINE

Then they've gone. Completely ?

GARY nods.

CAROLINE

You must have scared them off.

GARY looks at her coldly, not believing they ever existed, but not daring to say so.

GARY

Yes. Hopefully.

CAROLINE

Can you put up a new sign ?

151 EXT. GARDEN. DAY.

151

GARY, in shirt-sleeves, has a jackhammer and is banging a stake into the old hole. On the ground is a gaudy yellow sign saying *Security by Neverest*. GARY is sweating, going at it with violence disproportionate to the task. CAROLINE appears beside him.

CAROLINE

I don't think a stick's going to do it any more.

GARY stops, about to reply.

CAROLINE

Gary, be serious. How many have we lost ? They've stolen at least five. I think it's better you nail the sign to the tree.

GARY

Nail it ?

GARY is on the point of losing it altogether.

GARY

Caroline, it's just...rationally,
that's like saying - if we chain a
security sign to a tree, it's like
saying : look, come and get us !
Even our signs get stolen !

CAROLINE

I didn't say chain. I said nail.

CAROLINE is stone cold, as angry as he is.

CAROLINE

You don't seem to realize. I'm
alone here all day. And with what's
happening to you, I'm more and more
alone. All right ? And I get
frightened.

There is a silence. GARY just looks at her, lost.

CAROLINE

I was frightened !

CAROLINE turns and goes into the house. GARY stands, furious.

152 INT. HOUSE. DAY.

152

Later. GARY comes sweeping into the house, jackhammer in
hand. He is running with sweat. He passes AARON who is
sitting playing a computer game.

AARON

Hi, Dad, you making dinner ?

GARY

Yeah. Making dinner ! Putting up
signs ! Hey, why don't I re-wire ?
Anything else you guys need doing ?

GARY sweeps on into the kitchen.

153 EXT. BACK GARDEN. EVE.

153

GARY has lit the barbecue and is loading it with hunks of
meat. He puts them on flat, pats them down, then goes back
into the house.

154 INT. KITCHEN. EVE.

154

GARY goes to the fridge to pour himself a vodka, still steaming with self-righteousness. The jackhammer is standing by the fridge.

GARY

Jesus !

GARY pours and drinks. Then he drinks another.

GARY

Jesus !

GARY shakes his head, as if this is what he has to put up with. Then casually he looks to the kitchen window. Outside, flames are leaping. The barbecue has caught fire.

155 INT. KITCHEN. EVE.

155

The family meal. GARY has given the less suspicious pieces to the others, but his own is virtually incinerated. He has exercised greatly and drunk a lot of vodka. He looks sweaty and peculiar as he chews at his charred meat. He looks up to find AARON, CALEB, CAROLINE and even JONAH staring at him.

GARY

What ?

Nobody speaks.

GARY

What ?

GARY swallows an enormous lump of meat. There is a dribble of saliva running down his chin, and his face is streaked with black marks from the barbecue.

AARON

Dad, are you feeling OK ?

GARY

Fine, Aaron, thank you. After dinner, I'm going to trim the hedge.

CAROLINE

D'you think...

CAROLINE hesitates.

GARY

Do I think what ?

CAROLINE

Is this a good moment ?

GARY turns, stone-cold, to the children who are watching him apprehensively.

GARY

She's told you, hasn't she ? Your mother has told you I'm clinically depressed ? Did she tell you that, Aaron ?

He looks AARON straight in the eye.

GARY

Did she ? Did she ?

AARON'S eyes begin to fill with tears. Then he looks down, a tacit admission. GARY hits the table with his fist.

GARY

Fuck this, Caroline ! Fuck your whispering !

GARY gets up from the table. The children all look down, terrified.

CAROLINE

Gary...

GARY

I'm going outside.

156 EXT. GARY'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

156

The enormity of the night. GARY flips switches and lights come on, like stadium lights throwing patches of illumination onto the fairy-tale house. In the distance, GARY is seen in shirtsleeves, madly pulling an eight-foot stepladder and a motor-cutter towards the yew-hedge. Then he pulls off his shirt, a T-shirt underneath. The abrasive roar of noise, heard from afar, as he starts up the machine.

157 EXT. GARY'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

157

A few moments later. He is trying to reach across the hedge for the furthest bit of growth. In frustration, GARY puts the still-running hedge-cutter in his left hand, and then tries to jump the ladder the extra foot. In doing so, he loses his grip for a moment and the electric blade cuts deep into the meaty part of his right thumb.

GARY

Oh Jesus ! Oh Jesus Christ !

158 INT. GARY'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

158

Cupping his hands together, GARY comes running into the house. The blood is pouring out so fast that it overflows like a Jackson Pollock across the hall floor.

GARY heads towards the ground-floor bathroom. Inside, he kicks the door shut, then lets the blood pour into the sink. He turns on a tap, holding the wound under, then wraps a towel round the hand. He takes a second towel and starts cleaning up the blood from the floor. On his knees, he moves back into the hall, one hand wrapped in a blood-red towel, the other wiping up his bloody trail.

159 INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT. 159

Putting the stopper in his mouth, GARY twists open the vodka bottle. The towel in his other hand is soaked red and is dripping more blood onto the floor. With his spare hand, GARY unwraps four Advils and swallows them, then drinks from the vodka bottle. Then he sees a plastic Bran'nola bread bag. He wraps it round the soaking towel to contain the excess blood.

160 INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT. 160

CAROLINE is turned away from GARY, sleeping, unaware. GARY is lying on the other side of the bed, his eyes open. Painfully, making sure not to wake her, he lifts his arm out from under the blanket. The towel and bag are still wrapped round it. He turns over, away from CAROLINE, cradling his throbbing hand against his chest.

161 INT. BEDROOM. DAY. 161

Light is beating at the curtains. The sound of the day outside. GARY is lying on his back, asleep now. He opens his eyes to find CAROLINE dressed and back from the school run, standing looking down at him from the end of the bed.

CAROLINE

What is it ? Are you sick ?

GARY doesn't say anything. He realizes his bagged hand is above the blanket but he does nothing to withdraw it.

CAROLINE

What is this bag for ? My God. What did you do ?

GARY does not move or answer.

CAROLINE

Gary, say something. Are you depressed ?

CAROLINE sits down on the side of the bed.

CAROLINE

Show me your hand.

GARY lets her take the bag. She takes the plastic off, then delicately unwraps the towel underneath, which has dried rusty scarlet. With great care, she unwinds it and sees the deep, encrusted scar on his hand. She looks into his eyes.

GARY

Yes.

CAROLINE

Yes, what ?

GARY

I'm depressed.

CAROLINE closes her eyes in gratitude.

CAROLINE

Thank you.

CAROLINE is genuinely moved.

GARY

I'll go. I'll go at Christmas. If I have to, I'll go alone. No-one who doesn't want to, has to come with me.

CAROLINE'S eyes fill with tears.

GARY

I surrender.

CAROLINE

Oh Gary, Gary. Come here.

In a full act of reconciliation, he lifts his scarred hand above his head. As she kisses him, he raises his arm higher and higher as they begin to make love.

162 INT. THE GENERATOR. NIGHT.

162

DENISE is sitting alone in the restaurant late at night. Just a few washers-up and one WAITRESS are left. She is enjoying a cigarette and a late-night brandy. She looks up and finds BRIAN standing opposite her.

BRIAN

Hi.

BRIAN looks tired, late-night attractive.

DENISE

I thought you were screening your movie.

BRIAN looks 'I was'.

DENISE

How did it go ?

BRIAN shrugs to say 'Oh, fine'. DENISE signals to the WAITRESS to bring a second glass. BRIAN sits down.

BRIAN

I think my marriage may be over.

DENISE says nothing. The glass arrives. BRIAN smiles at the WAITRESS. DENISE is impassive.

BRIAN

I told Robin she had to come to a screening. I made it a condition. I've put a lot of work into this film. A lot of money.

DENISE

She didn't show ?

BRIAN shakes his head.

DENISE

Do you know where she is ?

BRIAN

At a meeting against capital punishment.

They both smile.

BRIAN

This sackcloth business is completely out of control. She wants us all to move into the project. She's saying our house is too big. 'Who needs a house this size ?' She's pushing me.

DENISE

Sounds like she's pushed you.

BRIAN smiles. DENISE is intent, not moving.

BRIAN

We had a row. Things got said. Things we aren't going to forget.

There's a silence. DENISE'S gaze is unwavering.

DENISE

Try your cognac. It's good.

163

INT. CAR. NIGHT.

163

DENISE and BRIAN traveling together, side by side, in silence. The image is repeated from Scene 57, just their two faces, suspended in the darkness.

164 INT. BATHROOM. ROBIN'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

164

DENISE is sitting in her bathroom, thinking. Then she gets up and looks at herself in the mirror. And after a moment, she seems to say 'Fuck it.' She opens the bathroom door. BRIAN is lying in the bed, under the sheets, waiting for her. DENISE turns out the bathroom light. Darkness.

165 INT. BEDROOM. DAY.

165

It's morning. The doorbell ringing insistently. DENISE frowns, pulls on some clothes and gets up, going to the window. She looks down and sees ROBIN on the stoop.

DENISE

Oh shit, it's Robin.

BRIAN stirs in the bed, then sits up.

BRIAN

It's fine. Really it's fine. I don't care if she knows.

DENISE

No, but I do.

DENISE is looking anxiously out of the window at the impatient ROBIN and to BRIAN'S pistachio-colored Volvo which is parked directly on the other side of the road opposite the front door. DENISE starts pulling on more clothes.

DENISE

Stay here. She's going to know if she looks.

BRIAN

What's to look at ?

DENISE

Your car.

166 INT & EXT. DENISE'S HOUSE. DAY.

166

DENISE opens the door. ROBIN is outside looking even more anxious than usual, pushing past straight into the corridor.

ROBIN

Denise, I'm desperate.

DENISE

OK.

ROBIN

Brian hasn't even come home.

ROBIN has gone on up the stairs, while DENISE is left holding the open door, staring across the street at BRIAN'S recognizable car.

ROBIN

We had a row. I think my marriage
may be over.

DENISE closes the door and follows ROBIN up the stairs. They go into the kitchen.

ROBIN

I'm going crazy. Every single day I
go to the church...

DENISE

Robin, I'm sorry, I know it's
important...

ROBIN

Every day, I'm trying to pray, and
all I can think of is you. Wanting
to be back with you again.

DENISE is trying to be calm.

DENISE

Robin, I do want to see you. I do.
But I have to go to work right now.

ROBIN looks at her longingly, then speaks quietly.

ROBIN

When will you be free ?

DENISE

When I've done lunch.

ROBIN is on the point of falling into her arms.

ROBIN

Oh Denise...

DENISE

Really.

ROBIN accepts what she's saying.

DENISE

All right ?

ROBIN

Yeah. What time ?

DENISE

Two. At the restaurant.

ROBIN stands, reluctant to go. Then she kisses DENISE lightly on the cheek.

ROBIN

Two, then.

ROBIN goes out. DENISE listens to the sound of her going down the stairs. Then goes to the window and looks down into the street. The front door slams, then ROBIN'S slim figure appears, crossing the road. Half-way, at the sight of BRIAN'S car, ROBIN stops dead. At once DENISE'S phone rings and, unthinking, she reaches for it, as if to stop its noise.

DENISE

Yes ?

DENISE looks down as ROBIN hovers in the middle of the road, then turns and heads back quickly towards the house.

GARY'S VOICE

Denise. It's Gary. There's been an accident.

At once the door bell starts ringing insistently.

DENISE

Gary, I'm sorry, can you just hold on a moment - I'm sorry -

DENISE puts the phone down and goes downstairs to open the door. Without even looking at DENISE, ROBIN brushes straight past and goes up the stairs.

ROBIN

Don't touch me, don't even look at me ! Where is he ?

DENISE

Robin...

DENISE runs up the stairs, but ROBIN is already ahead, through the kitchen and on into the bedroom. For a second, DENISE glimpses the astonished BRIAN, before the bedroom door is slammed. The sound of ROBIN screaming from inside : 'What do I feel ? What the fuck am I meant to feel ?' DENISE stands a moment, then picks up the phone.

DENISE

Gary, yeah, I'm sorry, what's happening ? An accident, you said ?

GARY'S VOICE

Yeah. Dad fell off the ship..

DENISE

Oh my God.

GARY'S VOICE

Yeah. They had to get a helicopter.
Apparently they towed him for a
mile. Denise. Denise.

But DENISE'S attention has been transfixed by the sound of
the row coming from the bedroom. ROBIN has plainly confessed
her relationship, because BRIAN can be heard shouting 'You
what ? You did what ?'

DENISE

Gary I am sorry. I am listening. I
am listening really. Is he all
right ?

Before DENISE gets an answer, ROBIN comes storming out of the
bedroom, walking straight past DENISE and out of the room.

DENISE

Oh fuck. Robin, listen - just once!
It happened once !

ROBIN

Don't come near me ! Don't ever
come near me !

ROBIN has gone. DENISE turns back to the telephone.

DENISE

Gary, I'm going to have to call you
back later. I'm sorry.

DENISE puts the phone down. The bedroom door is slightly
ajar, but DENISE can see and hear nothing. Tentatively she
calls out.

DENISE

Brian. Brian...

But when BRIAN appears, he is as angry as ROBIN. Dressed now,
he storms past DENISE pausing only for a second.

BRIAN

You're fired !

BRIAN is already gone. The slam of the door. DENISE stands
alone, the whirlwind past.

167

EXT. SHIP. DAY.

167

Hot sun. The Nordic sunbathing area. Seen from behind and
high above, SIGNE SODERBLAD is taking off the top of her
bikini. From this angle, her legs are not visible as she next
takes off the bottom half, and lies down to stretch out in
the sun.

Above her, ALFRED is standing at the rail of the ship in his old raincoat, straining to see her body. SIGNE begins to luxuriate in the sunshine, her breasts glowing with health. ALFRED moves as close as he can to the rail to look down, and then he just pushes himself an inch or two further to try and see below her waist. For a moment he sees her entire nakedness, and then he loses his grip.

168 EXT. SHIP. DAY. 168

Seen from the sea, ALFRED'S body falling from the rail and toppling into the water.

169 EXT. WATER. DAY. 169

Seen from under the water, ALFRED'S look of astonishment as he passes down further, then levels out. A moment of orientation and surprise, and then he turns.

Fade.

CAPTION

A plain caption reads : CHRISTMAS

170 INT. GITANAS' VILLA. VILNIUS, LITHUANIA. DUSK. 170

The long Baltic evening. CHIP is sitting at a computer console which has been improvised in the ballroom of a stucco villa. It is peeling spectacularly, and the enormous, once-rococo rooms are empty but for the operation. CHIP is working contentedly at his website when GITANAS appears behind.

GITANAS

How's it going ?

CHIP

It's wonderful.

CHIP sits back and bangs a couple of buttons. Up comes a black and white image of a war-torn, scarred city and a legend reading **BEFORE : SOCIALIST VILNIUS.**

CHIP

I find the more preposterous I make it...

CHIP hits another button. A color image of a honey-lit harbor-side development of boutiques and bistros and the legend **AFTER : FREE-MARKET VILNIUS.**

CHIP

The more patently satirical...

GITANAS

Whatever you're doing it's working.
We took in forty thousand dollars last week.

CHIP punches and the machine lets out a loud fanfare, plus a visual with a flag which reads : **CONGRATULATIONS - YOU ARE NOW A FREE MARKET PATRIOT OF LITHUANIA.**

GITANAS

Come on, it's time to stop work.

171 EXT. VILLA AND STREET. VILNIUS. EVE.

171

GITANAS and CHIP come out of the huge, crumbling villa, past barbed wire and lookout posts, through a military-looking gate and into the snowy streets of Vilnius. Into step behind them fall two large BODYGUARDS, one with a ponytail, both with dark glasses, suits bulging.

GITANAS

Your sister's been calling.

CHIP doesn't respond, just goes on walking.

GITANAS

Chip, she calls twice a day. She said your father had an accident.

CHIP

He's fine. He was fine. They pulled him out of the sea.

GITANAS

What does she want ?

CHIP

Who ?

GITANAS is exasperated by his evasiveness.

CHIP

All right ! If you really want to know, she wants me to go home for Christmas.

GITANAS

And won't you ?

CHIP walks out into the middle of the road, like a bolshy teenager.

CHIP

I have nothing in common with these people. They simply aren't people I like.

GITANAS

They're your family.

CHIP

Or even people I know.

GITANAS looks at him reproachfully, then heads towards a night club with a neon sign saying MUSMIRYTE. He goes in, CHIP following.

GITANAS

And when she calls again ?

CHIP

Ignore her.

172 INT. NIGHT CLUB. EVE.

172

Continuous. As they go into the night club, there is a walk-through metal detector. The sound of Western music. Automatically, GITANAS and the BODYGUARDS all take out guns. As the three guns go down on the counter, CHIP speaks.

CHIP

Gitanas, I'm happy out here.

173 INT. GARY'S HOUSE. PHILADELPHIA. EVE.

173

GARY is at his computer. Unexpectedly, CAROLINE kisses the top of his head. There is a new warmth between them, everything seeming resolved.

GARY

What ?

CAROLINE

I got the tickets.

GARY

Tickets ?

CAROLINE

Remember ? We made a deal.

CAROLINE kisses him again and disappears. GARY is left by himself, thoughtful.

GARY

OK.

174 INT. GARY'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. EVE.

174

Everyone back round the table at the end of the evening meal. AARON and CALEB are watching JONAH. CAROLINE is speaking very calmly, very gently.

CAROLINE

There's no pressure. Really. The whole point is, Jonah, you can do what you want. Your father has made it very clear. In this family. What matters in life is personal choice.

CAROLINE looks down, moved by her own words.

CAROLINE

I feel that very strongly.

JONAH nods, taking it in.

JONAH

Mom...

CAROLINE

I did get four tickets. Before you say anything, Aaron and Caleb and I are definitely going. If you choose not to, that's fine. The choice is yours. Agree, Gary?

GARY

Yes I agree.

CAROLINE has looked to GARY for corroboration. JONAH seems genuinely torn. His brothers are watching him. GARY shifts, uneasy.

GARY

Though Jonah did promise his Granny...

CAROLINE

No he didn't promise. Did you?

JONAH looks, wide-eyed, not wishing to testify.

CAROLINE

What he said was : he'd like to if he could.

CAROLINE is gentle, open. GARY is watching, not risking another intervention.

CAROLINE

So. It's up to you. You can either visit your Granny in Nebraska. Or you can go to *The Lion King* in New York City.

There is a silence. JONAH'S look to his mother is steady, as if the decision is finely balanced. But GARY looks down.

175

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

175

GARY is packing his suitcase. He looks sad. Again, from nowhere, CAROLINE steps behind him, and embraces him. She kisses him on the lips, then looks in his eyes.

CAROLINE

I can't wait until you get back.

CAROLINE smiles, then goes into the bathroom and closes the door. GARY stands, looking at her departed figure.

176 INT. LAMBERT HOUSE. OMAHA. DAY.

176

ENID is opening the door of her Christmas-decorated house. GARY has one small suitcase and speaks at once, bad-temperedly anticipating the scene that follows.

ENID

Where's Jonah ? Isn't he with you ?

GARY

He isn't.

ENID

Gary. You said he would come.

GARY kisses his mother as peremptorily as possible, then moves on into the house.

GARY

No, what I actually said was : he would come if he could. Jonah has a high fever. He has a fever of 100.

ENID

100's not high.

GARY

It's uncomfortable to fly with.

GARY is on the point of losing his temper altogether. He raises his voice.

GARY

Look, what's the point ? Jonah's not here ! He's not here !

ALFRED is heard to call from downstairs.

ALFRED'S VOICE

Who is it ?

ENID

Gary's here.

There is a moment's pause, then the sound of disappointment.

ALFRED'S VOICE

Oh. Only Gary.

GARY stands, looking directly at ENID.

ENID

I think it's very selfish of you,
Gary. I've been looking forward to
Christmas with Jonah.

GARY

Yeah. Well you just have to make do
with me.

177 INT. BASEMENT. DAY.

177

GARY comes tentatively down the stairs of the basement, not knowing what he will see. In the blue leather chair, his father has fallen asleep, his mouth open. ALFRED'S face has aged shockingly in the last couple of months. It looks ravaged, blotchy, marked with suffering. GARY looks at him, then at a chain of Christmas lights which are draped messily over the ping-pong table. He has fallen asleep on the job.

GARY across to the corner of the room. Just out of ALFRED'S reach, propped upright against the wall, is a shot-gun, ready for action. GARY stands, thinking.

178 INT. NIGHT CLUB. NIGHT.

178

GITANAS, CHIP and the BODYGUARDS have plainly been drinking for some time. The place is packed with people sitting on banquettes. Through the door come three GANGSTERS in black suits. As they pass through the metal detectors, the red light starts flashing, and beeping. GITANAS looks up at once, and pushes CHIP away towards the back door.

GITANAS

Let's get out of here.

CHIP

My God, they've got guns.

GITANAS

Yes of course.

The BODYGUARDS are hustling a terrified CHIP and GITANAS out down a back corridor. The GANGSTERS are following them. As the hustle through the back door, there is the sound of a shot. CHIP and GITANAS go on out, leaving the BODYGUARDS.

179 EXT. STREET. NIGHT.

179

CHIP and GITANAS run down a back alley behind the club and out in the frosted street. Police cars with sirens and flashing lights come from every direction. At once GITANAS pulls CHIP into a darkened doorway as the POLICE stream into the night club.

CHIP

What's wrong ?

GITANAS

It's the police. Let them go.

GITANAS and CHIP watch the POLICE pouring into the club. From the alley the BODYGUARDS come haring down as fast as they can to join them. The sound of more shots.

180 INT. VILLA. NIGHT.

180

The darkened villa in the night. Nothing moves. Then GITANAS' Ford Stomper arrives at high speed, swerving dramatically into the gates of the villa. With a screech of brakes, it draws up. Everyone jumps out and runs very quickly inside.

181 INT. VILLA. NIGHT.

181

Later. No lights on. The room CHIP worked in is silent. The BODYGUARDS are positioned at the windows with guns, looking out into the night. CHIP is sitting on the floor, with a bottle of vodka at his feet. GITANAS arrives beside him, with a huge bundle of cash, which he holds out in front of him.

CHIP

What's this ?

GITANAS

Termination.

CHIP takes the money unwillingly.

CHIP

Gitanas...I don't want to leave.

GITANAS

You have to. These people will come after us. They know how much money we're making.

CHIP

You've given me a fortune. This is a fortune.

GITANAS

It's twenty thousand dollars. I'm trying to say thank you.

CHIP

It's not what I want.

The men look at each other. CHIP is moved. No-one has ever been this kind to him.

GITANAS

Why are you so frightened ? Why are you scared to go home ?

GITANAS looks him in the eye. Then GITANAS reaches for the bottle and walks a couple of paces away, drinks.

GITANAS

We have to get going. This country's falling apart.

182 INT. VILLA. DAY.

182

The peaty light of day. They are in the huge stairwell. The BODYGUARDS are outside, on lookout round the silent grounds. In the snow, the Ford is loaded to the limit - with luggage, computers, everything they have. It looks like a safari. CHIP is with his suitcase, as GITANAS hands him what looks like a military field-phone.

GITANAS

I got you a line.

CHIP takes it nervously.

CHIP

It's Chip.

ENID'S VOICE

Chip ! I don't believe it. Where are you ?

CHIP

I'm in Vilnius. But I'm coming home.

ENID'S VOICE

Oh Chip, oh Chip...That's the best Christmas present I can think of.

ENID is heard weeping with joy. GITANAS watches. The BODYGUARDS have completed their inspection and are ready to depart.

CHIP

OK. I have to go. See you tomorrow.

CHIP gives the phone back to GITANAS. The two men walk out into the dawn to join the BODYGUARDS who are grouped round the Ford waiting to go.

183 INT. LAMBERT HOUSE. OMAHA. DAY.

183

ENID comes into the living room triumphant, where ALFRED is watching television in front of the Christmas tree. The place is extravagantly festooned for the season.

ENID

Alfred. Alfred. Chip's coming for Christmas.

ALFRED

Chip ?

For the first time, ALFRED brightens, just at the word.

ENID

Chip's coming. You see. I knew. I
always said Chip would come.

GARY is in the corner of the room, reading a book.

GARY

Chip in Omaha ? I'll believe that
when I see it.

ENID

Oh this is going to be a great
Christmas. Isn't this wonderful ?

GARY

If.

184 EXT. OMAHA AIRPORT/CAR. DAY.

184

GARY drives in a hire car towards the terminal at Omaha airport. DENISE is on the sidewalk, waiting. She has more make-up than usual, she is wearing a pink-trimmed coat and she is smoking a cigarette. She has a suitcase beside her, and loads of food bags. GARY drives up and gets out to help.

GARY

Hi, Denise. How are you ? My God,
you look terrible.

DENISE ignores this, opening the passenger door.

GARY

You know, there's no question, you
can't smoke in the car.

DENISE grinds the cigarette out with her booted heel, and then gets in. She kisses GARY on the cheek.

DENISE

Hi, bro.

185 INT. CAR. DAY.

185

They drive through the Christmas streets on the way back.

DENISE

So tell me, how are they doing ?

GARY

More or less as you'd expect.. Mom
is doing what she always does.

DENISE
Meaning what ?

GARY
Obsessing about anyone who's absent
while oppressing anyone who's not.

DENISE takes a sideways glance at him.

GARY
She's got this idea that Chip's
going to make it from Vilnius.

DENISE
Chip ? Did Chip get in touch ?

GARY
Yeah, but on CNN this morning they
said they're closing the airport.
Apparently there's some sort of
coup. Sounds like a basket-case
country.

DENISE
My God, do you think he's all
right ?

GARY bristles at the question.

GARY
Chip ? Of course Chip's all right.

DENISE smiles slightly at GARY's bad temper. She takes out
a cigarette and lights it, blows smoke. GARY opens the
window.

186 INT. LAMBERT HOUSE. DAY.

186

ENID is at the door waiting to welcome DENISE as she comes
through, carrying the food bags. ENID embraces her.

ENID
Oh sweetheart, you're here.

DENISE
Hi, Mom.

ENID
What's that smell ? Have you been
near someone who's smoking ?

DENISE has already moved past her and headed on in to the
kitchen. Meanwhile GARY is coming in the front door carrying
DENISE'S bag.

DENISE
No. I've been smoking.

ENID

Oh Denise, I don't want to criticize...

DENISE

How's Dad ?

DENISE has gone into the kitchen and is putting the bags down on the counter. ENID is still talking in the hall.

ENID'S VOICE

But did anyone tell you it's bad for your health ?

DENISE

Really ? No I'd never heard that.

DENISE starts unpacking bags : a displacement activity. GARY appears behind her.

GARY

Also, by the way, I did mean to mention : Dad's got a gun.

DENISE

He's always had a gun.

GARY

Yeah. But he's saying if anyone tries to park him in a hospital he's going to shoot himself.

DENISE looks at him. GARY smiles, satisfied.

GARY

All right ? Just so you know.

187 INT. THEATER. DAY.

187

The young BALLERINAS pirouette through *The Nutcracker*. A creamy image of row upon row of young girls in tutus. In four seats side by side sit ALFRED, GARY, ENID and DENISE, two empty seats beside them. DENISE looks at her mother. The years have dropped away. ENID is rapt, spellbound, content.

188 INT. LAMBERT HOUSE. KITCHEN. EVE.

188

DENISE has taken half-cooked ribs out of the oven and is basting them. ENID is pottering around behind, getting out glasses and plates.

ENID

I think they get better every year, don't you ?

DENISE

Who ?

ENID

The ballet. Those young girls, I don't know how they get their feet to do what they do. You know it can do them terrible damage when they grow up.

DENISE

So I believe.

DENISE puts the ribs back in the oven and closes the door.

ENID

Now, Denise, I've kept you the best job of all.

ENID is holding a small ornament : the Christ baby in a walnut shell.

DENISE

Oh Mom...

ENID

No, really. I've kept Him specially for you.

DENISE shifts, uneasy.

DENISE

Look, honestly, Mom. Why don't you do it ?

ENID

But Denise, it was you...

DENISE

I know...

ENID

...it was always such a big moment...

DENISE

I know...

ENID

...you pinned the Infant Christ on the Advent Calendar. Your little face used to light up.

DENISE looks at her a moment, torn between anger and being overwhelmed.

DENISE

Mom. I'm not that child. I'm no longer a child.

For a moment, it looks as if there may be a confrontation but DENISE reaches out and touches her mother on the arm.

DENISE

Honestly.

DENISE smiles and reaches for leaves to make a salad. ENID resumes with crockery. There's a silence.

DENISE

Mom, I think if you're going to come live in Philadelphia, then there are some things I do need to tell you. Things I'd like to get straight.

ENID smiles contentedly.

DENISE

Like, for a start, I didn't quit the Generator. I was fired.

ENID smiles as if this idea were impossible.

ENID

Well pardon me but I don't think that's very likely.

DENISE

It's true. And do you want to know why ?

ENID

Actually, Denise, I'm enjoying my Christmas and at this moment, no, I don't want to know.

ENID has been surprisingly firm. DENISE turns back to her work. A few moments go by, the women both working.

DENISE

Another thing : you keep saying when am I going to get married ?

ENID

Well now you do have my interest.

DENISE turns and looks at her.

DENISE

Tell you : I'm not. It isn't going to happen.

ENID

You don't know that.

DENISE

But that's what I'm saying. I do.

There is a moment's silence, mother and daughter looking at each other.

ENID

Denise, you don't see this but I see it : you're still very young and very darling. Now didn't you promise you'd help your father with his exercises ?

ENID smiles blithely at her and goes out with the infant Christ.

189 INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

189

ENID comes into the sitting room where GARY is sitting reading. She goes to the Advent Calendar, and into the last place she fits the image of the Christ baby. She smiles with unalloyed happiness. GARY watches from his chair.

190 INT. BEDROOM. EVE.

190

DENISE comes into the master bedroom to find ALFRED lying on top of the bed in his pajamas. He smiles in welcome, as if surprised to find her in the room.

ALFRED

Denise.

DENISE

Yes. OK, I've come for your exercises.

ALFRED

My exercises ?

DENISE

Yes.

DENISE smiles at him reassuringly and reaches for the instruction chart.

DENISE

You've got your pajamas on.

ALFRED

Oh yes.

DENISE

No it's just...it's only six o'clock.

ALFRED

Well I know that.

DENISE catches ALFRED looking at her resentfully. She smiles, easy.

DENISE
Don't look at me like that.

DENISE goes and sits on the bed beside him.

DENISE
Now. Number One. You lift your right knee.

ALFRED
Like this ?

DENISE
Towards your chest.

ALFRED has put his hands on his knee and is gingerly pulling it towards his chest.

DENISE
That's great. Again.

ALFRED does it once more.

DENISE
Now with your left.

ALFRED does it again, with his right.

DENISE
Yeah, OK, but this time with your left knee.

ALFRED does it again, identically.

DENISE
Dad. Your left.

DENISE puts her hand on his left knee, and gently pulls it towards her.

DENISE
Now you try it.

ALFRED
Try what ?

DENISE
Put your hands on your left knee and lift it.

ALFRED
Which is my left ?

DENISE smiles and touches it again with her hand.

ALFRED
And what do I do ?

DENISE is slightly irritated.

DENISE
Dad, could you please just
concentrate ?

ALFRED
Concentrate ?

DENISE
Yes.

ALFRED
To what end ?

DENISE takes a deep breath.

DENISE
OK, let's leave that one. Let's
take the second exercise. This is a
good one, remember ? The hip roll.
I like this exercise. It makes you
feel good. Lift up your right leg.

ALFRED lifts both his legs slightly off the bed.

DENISE
Your right leg. Lift up your right.

ALFRED
Well that's what I'm doing. For
God's sake what is the point ?

ALFRED has raised his voice, pleading with a look of terror
in his eyes. Instinctively DENISE reaches for his legs to
help him, but as puts her hand under his leg, she freezes in
horror. ALFRED looks straight at her.

ALFRED
I know. I know what I've done.

DENISE is shocked, taken aback.

DENISE
Wait here. I'll get you a towel.

191 INT. BATHROOM. EVE.

191

Continuous. DENISE comes into the bathroom to get a towel.
She looks in the mirror and sees the reflection of an old,
frightened man lying flat on the bed. She breathes in.

192 INT. BEDROOM. EVE.

192

Continuous. DENISE goes puts the towel between her father's legs and wraps it round him, like a nappy. ALFRED is watching her all the time. After a while, she stops.

DENISE

What ?

He doesn't answer.

DENISE

What, Dad ?

ALFRED speaks with great difficulty.

ALFRED

It was never my intention...that you should be in this position. It is not at my wish. I have no wish to involve you.

DENISE

I know that, Dad.

ALFRED reaches out and touches her hand.

ALFRED

Now, please, you go and have fun.

193 INT. STAIRS. EVE.

193

DENISE comes down the stairs, thoughtful. When she gets half-way down she sits on the stairs to think. GARY appears at the sitting room door, as if drawn by her mood.

DENISE

He's pissed himself.

GARY

Is he all right ?

DENISE nods.

DENISE

I guess, the fact is, I didn't ever really know him. If you loved him, it was clear. You could do him no greater kindness than not to get close to him.

DENISE stops a moment.

DENISE

With him, love isn't a matter of approaching. It's a matter of keeping away.

DENISE gets up, comes down the last couple of stairs and walks on into the kitchen.

194

INT. KITCHEN. EVE.

194

Continuous. Inside the kitchen, ENID is wrapping her last Christmas presents, making bows and writing cards to attach to piles of boxes. DENISE comes in.

DENISE

Mom.

ENID

You all right, dear ? How was your father ? Did you do the exercises ?

DENISE

As much as we could. You didn't mention...you didn't tell me...

DENISE has gone to the stove to resume cooking, but now she turns.

ENID

What ? What didn't I tell you ?

DENISE

He can't tell his left from his right.

ENID barely concedes.

ENID

No sometimes, it's true. It's the medication.

DENISE

It's not the medication. Mom ! He can't tell his left from his right!

DENISE has raised her voice. The two women look at each other a moment.

DENISE

All right, I'll get on with my cooking...

She puts her hands up, in surrender. But before she can turn back, ENID speaks.

ENID

He's not going to get better, is he ?

DENISE

No. No, I don't think so.

There is a short silence.

ENID

It's not the medication.

DENISE

No I don't think it is.

ENID shrugs slightly.

ENID

And really there's no point in trying to live next to you in Philadelphia if he can't even follow instructions.

DENISE

Not really.

DENISE looks down.

ENID

He told me that under the water, he kicked. He could have gone under. But he chose not to.

ENID looks at DENISE as if this represents some small thread of hope.

ENID

So many things you think are going to matter turn out not to matter.

DENISE

Some things still matter.

ENID

Perhaps.

ENID looks at her, pleading.

ENID

Denise, what do we do ? What's the way forward ?

At once the doorbell rings..

ENID

It's Chip !

DENISE

Mom, I don't think so.

ENID

It is. It has to be Chip. Who else can it be ? He said he was coming.

DENISE

Mom I think you do have to face the fact...

195 INT. HALL. NIGHT.

195

Continuous. ENID has got up to go to the door. GARY appears from the sitting room.

ENID

Gary ! Gary ! It's Chip...

GARY

Mom, Chip is never going to make it. He won't !

ENID

I told you and you didn't believe me! None of you believed me.

ENID swings open the door. Opposite are a group of local carolers. They stand suspended for a moment. And then in a joyful burst, they launch a capella into 'It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas.' ENID looks, astonished. Then DENISE and GARY appear behind her. The three of them stand, taken aback by the singers.

196 EXT. LAZDIJAI. LITHUANIA. NIGHT.

196

The Ford Stomper speeding through the night. One of the BODYGUARDS is driving, and GITANAS is next to him. CHIP and another BODYGUARD are in the back. They are driving along a whitened gravel road beside a frozen lake, their headlights cutting into otherwise pure dark. From the opposite direction comes a convoy of three jeeps. The DRIVER makes a warning remark in Lithuanian to GITANAS, who agrees. Then GITANAS turns round and looks back. He can see the three Jeeps have stopped and are turning back in the empty road.

GITANAS gives an instruction in Lithuanian to the DRIVER. At once they accelerate sharply. CHIP and GITANAS look back at the three Jeeps pursuing them. The DRIVER is pushing the Stomper to the limit and the three Lithuanians are all talking to one another excitedly. CHIP is terrified.

GITANAS

It's all right, don't worry, we'll get you to the border.

CHIP

It's OK. I can walk.

GITANAS

We'll get you there.

As he says this, the DRIVER misjudges a sharp bend and the car skids off into the air. They sail off down a bank towards a frozen marsh. The car lands. Silence.

197 EXT. LAZDIJAI. LITHUANIA. NIGHT.

197

CHIP looks round, dazed. The car is on its side. Computers, baggage, files are everywhere. Chaos. From the window above him CHIP can see MASKED MEN coming from their jeeps. They are in uniform, with stocking masks and carrying guns. CHIP looks to GITANAS who has blood running from his forehead and chin.

CHIP

Who are they ?

GITANAS

Police.

CHIP

Police in ski-masks ?

Before GITANAS has answered, one of the POLICE has reached in and is ordering them to climb out of the car. The four men clamber out, all with various cuts and bruises. The POLICE bark out instructions to them, taking the weapons from the BOYD GUARDS at gunpoint. CHIP is standing by himself, but now a POLICEMAN puts a gun to his head and says one word in Lithuanian.

GITANAS

He wants us to strip.

198 EXT. MARSH. NIGHT.

198

CHIP is standing alone now, a little way off from the scene of the accident. He is taking off his trousers and T-shirt, so that he is stripped down to his socks and underpants. He stands, shivering in the snow. At the car, the MASKED POLICE are going through all the luggage, throwing the contents of the suitcases and boxes onto the ground. They are shouting in Lithuanian as they search the car. GITANAS, also in his underpants, comes over to join CHIP.

GITANAS

They're claiming we're smugglers.

CHIP

I see.

GITANAS

They claim we're smuggling tobacco.

CHIP

And who are they really ?

GITANAS

I'm afraid they're really police.

CHIP looks at them shouting and ripping up the floor of the car.

CHIP

My God.

GITANAS

I know. Tonight is kind of like
Mardi Gras. Anything goes.

The POLICE have found what they wanted. Under the car floor is GITANAS' stash of cash, neatly bundled. There is a cry of Lithuanian which includes the words 'American dollars' in English. CHIP looks at GITANAS.

199 EXT. MARSH. NIGHT.

199

Later. The three jeeps roar away into the distance. The four men are left standing in their underwear, lit only by headlamps from the abandoned, sideways-open car. Luggage spills out onto the frozen ground. Their clothes are in piles where they have been searched. The four men move gingerly to pick up their clothes and put them back on. CHIP reaches down for his trousers, puts his hand in the back pocket. He takes out a small overlooked bundle of dollars, looks at it.

200 EXT. MARSH. NIGHT.

200

Later. The four of them are dressed. CHIP is preparing to say goodbye to GITANAS.

CHIP

You didn't need to take me to the border.

GITANAS

Bullshit. They would have found us anyway. That's how it is.

GITANAS gives him a map, a cigarette lighter and an apple. CHIP smiles and the two men embrace warmly

CHIP

I'll see you in New York.

GITANAS

I don't think so.

CHIP

You'll always be welcome. You can stay at my apartment.

CHIP smiles, but GITANAS shakes his head.

GITANAS

This is my country.

The truck is on its side behind him, the entire contents on the ground, but still there are tears in his eyes as he says this. CHIP nods, then turns and heads down the road.

201 EXT. ROAD. NIGHT. 201

The darkened road leads through whitened forests to the border. CHIP trudges alone.

202 EXT. ROAD. DAWN. 202

The very first gleam of light across the landscape. Through the forest comes the dawn. CHIP looks from the top of a hill, an empty road winding inexorably away into the distance. His stubble has grown, his face is smeared with blood but a new cheer has come into his step as if exhaustion is making him lightheaded.

203 EXT. BORDER. POLAND/LITHUANIA. DAWN. 203

CHIP presents his passport into the little booth at the border. The GUARD looks at it, and at the seal of the United States of America. He looks CHIP in the eye, a look both of envy and dislike. He thrusts the passport back at CHIP who is impassive.

204 EXT. ROAD. POLAND. DAY. 204

CHIP walks along the forest road. A logging truck, blasting smoke into the clear air, comes near and CHIP thumbs. It slows to take him into town.

205 INT & EXT. TRUCK. WARSAW. DAY. 205

Now the truck is passing through Warsaw. The city is decked out for Christmas and covered in snow, but it is very busy, as the logging truck makes its way through the heavy traffic. CHIP looks at the DRIVER beside him, huge, impassive, undisturbed.

206 EXT. WARSAW AIRPORT. DAY. 206

CHIP jumps down, says goodbye to the DRIVER, then runs in to the airport terminal.

207 INT. LOT POLISH AIRLINES DESK. DAY. 207

CHIP goes quickly up to the desk where a GIRL with red apple-cheeks is on duty.

CHIP
I wonder, is there a flight to
America ?

GIRL
We go to Chicago.

CHIP

That's fine. How much is it ?

CHIP takes out his last bundle of dollars.

GIRL

How much have you got ?

208 INT. WARSAW AIRPORT. DAY.

208

CHIP is running down an interminable, deserted corridor, the last man on the plane. The STEWARDS are waiting, and as soon as he goes in, they close the plane door.

209 EXT. OMAHA, NEBRASKA. DAY.

209

Christmas morning in Omaha, Nebraska. No-one to be seen. Thick snow on the ground. Christmas lights and decorations everywhere. A huge Santa, driving an enormous sled with illuminated reindeer. The streets of the mid-West at their most characteristic - gas stations, fast-food restaurants, malls, all bedecked. Then round a corner comes CHIP, exhausted, filthy, carrying nothing, in a sweater and trousers. He looks up wonderingly at his surroundings.

210 EXT & INT. LAMBERT HOUSE. OMAHA. DAY.

210

The suburban avenue leading up to his parents' house is also empty as CHIP comes through the snow to his parents' house. He approaches the front door, which has a wreath on it. He stands, then rings the bell. CHIP waits, looking to see if there is any movement behind the curtains. Suddenly, unexpectedly, the front door swings open and his father is standing opposite him. ALFRED'S face lights up.

ALFRED

Well ! Well, look who's here.

The sound of ENID coming down the corridor.

ENID'S VOICE

Don't tell me, who is it ?

ALFRED

Just look who's arrived !

ALFRED has grabbed CHIP'S hand and won't let go. ENID is coming into the hall, trying to push her way past.

ENID

Didn't I say ? Didn't I say from the start ?

ALFRED is holding on to CHIP.

ENID

Oh let me get close, let someone
else have a go !

ENID puts her arms round him.

ENID

I knew ! I just knew you'd not miss
this !

CHIP

Mom.

ENID

My word, you're scratchy and
smelly. What happened to your
luggage ?

CHIP

I lost it.

ENID

Well why did you do that ?

ENID looks at him impatiently.

ENID

Don't just stand there. Come in.

CHIP steps into the familiar house.

211 INT. LAMBERT HOUSE. DAY.

211

ENID has gone on ahead, leaving ALFRED shakingly to close the
door.

ENID

Denise ! Denise ! Guess who's here.

CHIP stands at the living room door, taking in the whole
Christmas scene. The tree, the presents, the wrapping paper.
Kneeling in front of the fireplace is DENISE, wrapping some
remaining presents. She looks up, then gets up and moves
quickly across to embrace CHIP. DENISE holds him tight, and
he whispers in her ear.

CHIP

You know I'm not staying. I'm
staying three days. Three days max.

But DENISE takes no notice, just clinging to him in a way
CHIP doesn't understand.

DENISE

Oh Chip !

CHIP
Hey, what's going on ?

DENISE
Never mind. Just 'Chip'.

DENISE finally releases him, and GARY has walked over. They embrace awkwardly.

GARY
Never thought you'd make it.

CHIP
Well neither did I.

ENID and ALFRED have come in and are watching, as if just staring at some miracle.

ALFRED
Well !

Then ENID leaps into action:

ENID
Chip, you get cleaned up. Gary has to leave at eleven. Oh this is just perfect. It's absolutely perfect. What a perfect Christmas.

ENID has disappeared, still talking. The three children stand together in a room, no-one else there. None of them can think of anything to say.

212 INT. BATHROOM & BEDROOM. DAY.

212

CHIP in the shower of his parents' bathroom lets the hot jets play down hard on his face. He soaps vigorously, the sense of his experiences draining away. Then CHIP steps out and reaches to put a towel round his waist. He goes into his parents' bedroom, then out into the corridor, where he finds ALFRED passing.

CHIP
Oh Dad...

ALFRED
Yes ?

CHIP
I wondered if I might borrow some clothes.

ALFRED looks at his son, naked above the waist.

ALFRED
That is a decision I leave entirely to you.

213 INT. BEDROOM. DAY.

213

Later. CHIP is standing in front of the mirror, dressed as ALFRED. He is adjusting a woolen cardigan, which covers a check shirt. He looks at himself a moment, before GARY comes in, carrying a box of cartridges for ALFRED'S shotgun.

GARY

You saw how he is ?

CHIP

Of course.

GARY

I took these away.

GARY puts the cartridges down on the dressing table in front of CHIP. CHIP glances down, then goes on combing his hair. GARY sits down on the bed.

GARY

So. What exactly were you doing ?

CHIP

Oh. I was helping a friend in Lithuania.

GARY

Helping ? Helping him how ?

CHIP

We defraud American investors.

GARY

Jesus, Chip you don't want to do that.

GARY is serious. CHIP shrugs slightly

CHIP

Don't I ? I'm not sure. Look at it morally. I mean, from the moral point of view, I have more sympathy with innocent Lithuanians than I do with their greedy American exploiters.

GARY nods as if this is sadly typical.

GARY

All right, Chip. If you want to be a Bolshevik, fine, you go ahead. But don't come to me when you get arrested.

CHIP

Do you know, that's something I'd
never even thought of doing ? It
wouldn't occur to me.

CHIP has said this without malice, just smiling to himself.
But now the two brothers look at one another. ENID'S voice is
heard from downstairs.

ENID'S VOICE

Are you fellas ready to eat ?

214 INT. DINING ROOM. DAY.

214

The dining room table is laid with a holiday cloth. In the
center, there are pinecones, holly, candles and silver bells.
GARY, DENISE, CHIP, ALFRED, and ENID are round the table
eating breakfast. There are scrambled eggs and bacon, a
stollen and fresh breads which DENISE has baked. Everyone
eats for a while in silence, the family finally assembled.
After a while ENID speaks.

ENID

You don't have to gobble so
quickly.

GARY

As a matter of fact I do. I've only
got twenty minutes.

ENID looks at him to plead, but he won't be stopped.

GARY

It's hardly my fault if my brother
was late. Turns out, he was too
busy stealing from his fellow
countrymen to make the effort to
get here on time.

DENISE

Now Gary...

GARY

To whom he's so superior !

Nothing is going to stop GARY now. He turns to CHIP.

GARY

Why don't you tell her ? Why don't
you tell your mother what you told
me ? Do you know what Chip's been
doing in Russia ?

CHIP

It wasn't Russia.

GARY

Oh fat difference !

GARY is now looking angrily across the table at CHIP. DENISE is cringing.

ENID

Now Gary, I've been looking forward to this. I've dreamt of this Christmas all year.

GARY

Oh, and it's my fault you live your whole life in the future ?

DENISE

Gary, why can you never shut up ?

DENISE has raised her voice. But GARY'S response is a cold anger, the sum of all he has suffered not just in this family, but in his other. He pushes his plate to one side.

GARY

It's so easy, isn't it ? Everyone picks on Gary. Gary's the asshole. Everyone gets angry with me. Why ? Because I'm the only person here who's actually facing reality.

There's a silence. ENID speaks, but only to herself, a token.

ENID

That language. At breakfast.

GARY looks round the table, practical, furious.

GARY

All right. So, Chip. How long are you here for ?

CHIP

I've said. I'm staying three days.

GARY

Good. Denise ? You're leaving when ?

DENISE

I'm leaving...

GARY

You're leaving on Sunday ? Am I right ?

DENISE nods, abject. Everyone round the table is still.

GARY

So, Mom, what happens Monday ?
Tuesday ? Dad ? What happens ? I'm
actually asking.

Nobody replies.

GARY

Dad, show me your left hand. Show
it to me.

But ALFRED is now so fearful, so full of paranoia he does not
understand.

ALFRED

What is he asking ?

DENISE

Gary, stop it ! Stop it at once !

GARY just looks at her.

GARY

Stop ? I should stop ? Tell me :
Why would it help if I stop ?
Explain to me. When all I'm saying
is : we have to make a plan. And
somehow that's the wrong thing to
say ? When my mother is quietly
going crazy, when Enid can't cope
any more with someone who's
desperately ill ? And I'm wrong to
mention it ?

There is a silence. CHIP is just watching.

DENISE

No..

GARY

Well ?

GARY stares at them, but nobody responds.

ENID

Can't we leave it till after the
holiday ?

GARY gets up.

GARY

I want to know what everyone's
planning. What are we planning ?
Somebody tell me - what do we do ?

The other four cannot answer. ALFRED is looking at GARY as though he is terrified. GARY nods, his point made and then turns to go.

GARY

I'm sorry. I ruined your breakfast.
Mom, I have to go.

DENISE

What, you just go ?

GARY

All right, but at least things are
out on the table. I feel a lot
better.

DENISE

Oh great. Gary feels better.

But GARY is immune. He has kneeled down next to his father, who looks scared.

GARY

Dad, I love you and I'll see you
again.

ALFRED

What's he say ?

GARY

You, my feckless sibling.

GARY spreads his hands on CHIP'S head in what he intends as a gesture of affection. Then he kisses DENISE, who does not get up, on the cheek.

GARY

My sister.

GARY lowers his voice to his mother.

GARY

Mom, I'm sorry.

ENID

You could have waited.

GARY

I know.

Now he kisses her too. Then stands a moment.

GARY

I have a plane to catch. You know
I'll be there for you. Whatever you
decide. See Doctor Hedgpath on
Monday, then call me.

GARY goes out. They all sit and hear the door slamming. Then the sound of a car starting up. ALFRED now looks seriously insane. Nobody moves.

DENISE

Oh well I'm so glad he feels better.

ENID

No, he's right. We can't go on as we are.

DENISE

Mom...

ENID

We can't. I've known it. He's right.

CHIP is staring at his mother. ENID turns her gaze to him for help, and CHIP recognizes her plea. He looks down, ashamed.

215 EXT. LAMBERT HOUSE. NIGHT.

215

It's snowing. It's dark. The curtains are not drawn, so the living room with its lit tree and its Christmas warmth is visible in the night. DENISE comes out of the front door, and crunches across the new snow. Once far enough away, she stops and lights a cigarette. She turns a moment and looks back. Then she hurries off into the night.

216 INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

216

ENID is sitting by the fire, gnawing at her lip. CHIP is sitting in the seat opposite, staring into the fire.

ENID

You haven't opened your presents.

CHIP

Maybe in the morning.

ENID

I'm sure I didn't get you anything you'll like.

CHIP

It's nice you got me anything.

ENID shakes her head.

ENID

This isn't the Christmas I'd hoped for. Suddenly Dad can't do a thing. Not a single thing.

CHIP is silent, not answering.

ENID

Will you stay for a week and help me take him to the hospital ?

CHIP

He says he'll kill himself rather than go into the hospital.

ENID

That isn't an answer, Chip. That's not the question I asked.

CHIP sighs, trapped now, trying to be tactful.

CHIP

I owe Denise a lot of money. I've got to start working. I've got to get back to work. I can only stay for three days.

ENID

Stay a week.

CHIP

No.

ENID

Then we'll know. We'll see how he copes in the hospital. After a week we can judge. If you stay for a week, that'll make it much easier.

CHIP shakes his head.

CHIP

Mom, I don't think so. I can't.

ENID nods very slightly, at the inevitable.

ENID

So. It falls to me then. I guess I always knew that it would.

There is a silence, neither of them moving. Then CHIP reaches forward and puts more logs on the fire.

217 EXT. OMAHA. NIGHT.

217

The same malls, the same gas stations, the same reindeer and Santa as in Scene 209, but now strongly illuminated against the night. And this time it is DENISE, cigarette in hand, who comes crunching in the snow.

218 INT. LAMBERT HOUSE. NIGHT.

218.

ENID has made an improvised bed in the den. She is in her dressing gown, on the edge of her bed.

Opposite her is a photograph of ALFRED as a young man, standing on the track, next to an engine. She takes it in her hand and looks at it.

219 INT. LAMBERT HOUSE. NIGHT.

219

DENISE lets herself in the main door of the house, quietly, not realizing anyone is still up. She seems under terrible strain - her eyes red, and a slightly mad intensity in her. She is about to tiptoe towards the stairs when CHIP speaks from the living room.

CHIP

Hey.

DENISE still has her coat on as she goes in to the living room to find CHIP sitting by the fire.

DENISE

Where's Mom ?

CHIP

Gone to bed.

DENISE

Not a great day for her.

CHIP

No.

DENISE hunkers down by the fire and puts her hands out to warm them.

CHIP

Where have you been ?

DENISE

Why do you think I've been anywhere ? I went for a walk.

CHIP waits, a little nervous of how fragile she seems.

CHIP

So what have you been doing ?

DENISE

Oh...

CHIP

They say you're not cooking.

DENISE

No.

CHIP

Why is that ? Was that something personal ?

CHIP takes her silence as assent.

CHIP
What happened ?

DENISE
I did what I always do.

CHIP
What's that ?

There is a moment's silence.

DENISE
Push things too hard.

DENISE looks deep into the fire, as if searching there.

DENISE
Chip ?

CHIP
Yes ?

DENISE
I need to ask you a favor.

CHIP shifts, uncomfortable.

CHIP
If it's to do with money...

DENISE
It is.

CHIP
Listen - I'm starting a new job.
I'm going to get a job. Wherever.
First thing when I get back to New
York.

DENISE
That's not what I meant.

But CHIP takes no notice.

CHIP
The joke is, I meant to tell you, I
actually had twenty thousand
dollars. In cash. In my hand. I had
your money.

DENISE
That's not what I'm saying. Please
listen.

CHIP

What ?

DENISE

Why won't you listen to me ?

For the first time, she has turned to look at him. CHIP sees how red her eyes are, how ravaged she seems by suffering

DENISE

Chip, I need you to help me. I've asked you one favor the whole of my life. To come here for Christmas. I now need another.

She hesitates.

DENISE

I want to forgive you the debt. I mean it. Wipe it out. Forget it. You owe me nothing.

There is a moment, then CHIP shakes his head.

CHIP

Denise, for goodness' sake...

DENISE

Please.

CHIP

No I can't do that.

DENISE

Why not ?

CHIP

I've been a shit. I've been a shit to you. To everyone. Especially about money. I'd like just a little self-respect. I want to pay you back. I don't want to be a shit for the rest of my life.

DENISE turns back to him.

DENISE

Do you know what 'forgive' means ?
Can't you stand to be forgiven ?

There is a silence. CHIP looks away.

CHIP

I know what it means, but it's not something I want.

DENISE

I'm not doing it for you. I need you to say 'Yes.' Right at this moment. Say 'Yes, thank you.'

CHIP looks at her, not sure how to deal with her.

CHIP

Can we discuss this tomorrow ? In fact, better still, can you lighten up ? You're scaring me. Can you stop being so weird ?

DENISE just looks more deeply into the fire.

CHIP

Funny thing, I looked round at breakfast, I thought : I'd always assumed I was the most unhappy person in this family. Some funny way, I'm the least unhappy.

DENISE

Well then.

DENISE nods as if her point were proved.

DENISE

Will it help if I ask something else ?

CHIP shrugs to say 'Go ahead'.

DENISE

Mom has to have somebody. Really. She has to. Someone has to stay here next week. And I am going to die if I stay in this house past Sunday. I will literally cease to exist.

CHIP is completely still now.

DENISE

Chip, I need you to stay. Someone has to stay and it has to be you.

CHIP

I don't get it. Are these two requests connected ?

DENISE

They can be. If that's what you want.

CHIP

OK. In that case, forgive me...
like, ten thousand. Forgive half
the money and then we'll both stay
on half the week.

DENISE

No.

CHIP

Two-thirds ?

For the first time DENISE smiles.

CHIP

Just as long as you smile.

From upstairs the sound of ALFRED calling out in distress.

ALFRED'S VOICE

Chip, Chip, can you help me ?

CHIP looks at DENISE. There is a moment when they sustain
their look, neither of them wavering, neither of them moving.

ALFRED'S VOICE

Chip.

DENISE

He calls your name even when you're
not here.

ALFRED'S VOICE

Chip. I don't understand this
blanket. Can you help me ? Please
come and help me.

There is another silence.

ALFRED'S VOICE

Help me.

Neither of them have moved. They are just looking at each
other now.

CHIP

All right if it makes you feel
better, I won't pay you back.

DENISE

Thank you.

CHIP has finally conceded, and the concession brings calm.
After a moment :

ALFRED'S VOICE

Chip...

DENISE
He's calling.

CHIP
Yes. I'd better go.

CHIP still does not move. Then after a few moments, he raises his voice.

CHIP
Dad, I'm coming. I'm coming. Hold on.

DENISE stays sitting by the fire. She looks up at him from the fire, as he moves across the room, smiles at her and goes out into the hall.

220 INT. HALL AND STAIRS. NIGHT. 220

Continuous. CHIP stands a moment at the bottom of the stairs, looking up. ALFRED calls out once more.

ALFRED'S VOICE
Chip.

CHIP heads up the stairs.

221 INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT. 221

Continuous. CHIP comes to his father's half-open door. The light is on beside the bed and ALFRED is lying contorted, the sheets and blankets twisted round him. At the sight of CHIP, his expression changes minutely in welcome.

CHIP
Yes. Dad. Tell me. What do you need ?

CHIP closes the door.

Fade.