

THE GRIGSBYS GO BROKE

**Second Draft
March 4, 2003**

EXT. MANSION. NIGHT

A grand, Tudor Gothic at the end of a stately drive.

INT. MANSION. KITCHEN

A harried, young, female SERVER holds a silver drinks tray high as she wends her way through the noisy, hot tumult of CATERING STAFF preparing pass-around service, drinks, and dinner for 150. CAMERA FOLLOWS her through a butler's pantry and down a narrow service passage. She turns, on the move, to open a swinging door with her backside and exits into a vast reception hall brimming with well-heeled COUPLES.

INT. MANSION. RECEPTION HALL

She moves through the crush with dispatch as we catch bits of CONVERSATION - toddler's achievements, travel plans, market gossip - and exits into a gallery, past a STRING QUARTET playing a baroque arrangement of an 80's rock anthem, and into a conservatory where a group of COUPLES are chatting among the forced spring bulbs. COFFEY and BILL GRAINGER, STEPHANIE and MARSHALL HOUK, and JUDITH and GARY GRIGSBY. They are all attractive, fit, impeccably groomed, superbly dressed and excessively cultured.

MARSHALL

The idiot got crushed in the tech rebound. How's that for stupid?

Without so much as a glance to the Server, he replaces his empty drink with a fresh one. The others do the same.

COFFEY

I heard that they're dipping into their children's trust funds.

Gary nabs the Server's sleeve as she exits.

GARY

You gave me an olive. I wanted an onion.

He sets the drink on the Server's tray. She forces a smile that Gary doesn't see as he turns back to the conversation.

STEPHANIE

I'll bet you dollars to doughnuts the reason they're not here tonight...

COFFEY

They can't afford the \$25,000 donation

STEPHANIE

Exactly.

COFFEY

Paula Carmicheal told Betsy Rawlins that they sold their Matisse to Walter Weems.

MARSHALL

It wasn't a Matisse. It was a Picasso.

GARY

I had lunch with Noble at the University Club a week ago. He said everything was great.

BILL

Who signed for lunch?

GARY

(thinks)
I did.

Bill gives Gary a nod and a wink.

MARSHALL

There's no trick to figuring out who's lost their money. The real art is in knowing who's going to lose theirs next.

Judith gives Gary a sidelong glance as she tries to hide behind her wine glass.

INT. MANSION. LIBRARY

A sumptuous room with a Picasso over the black marble fireplace. BARBARA WEEMS, a stout, bejeweled matron, sits on a chintz sofa with CONGRESSMAN LARRY MERCER, a short, husky, middle-aged politician with an oily comb-over. WALTER WEEMS, a craggy blueblood, sits in a wing chair opposite his wife and the Congressman. The Congressman's Chief of Staff, TED WESTBROOK, a tall, gaunt man in his late 20's, stands at the fireplace studying the Picasso.

WALTER

How's your dear Cynthia?

CONGRESSMAN

Very well, thank you.

Barbara smiles and turns her attention to Walter.

WALTER

(to Congressman)
What about our project?

CONGRESSMAN

It's moving ahead.

WALTER
(after a pause)
It was moving ahead in the fall session, Larry.

WESTBROOK
You can't be too obvious when you're trying to get federal approval and funding for what amounts to the expansion of a private school in a wealthy community.

WALTER
(sharply)
I'm talking to the Congressman, son.

CONGRESSMAN
(nervous)
A couple years ago I could have walked this through committee like a poodle on a leash. We're in some tough times now. Everybody and their uncle's got an eye on us.

WALTER
(firmly)
I'm asking my friends to write you some pretty big checks.

WESTBROOK
Those checks can't be made out to the Congressman directly. You know that?

Walter glares at Westbrook.

CONGRESSMAN
Ted? Walter's an old hand at this.

The Congressman turns back to Walter.

CONGRESSMAN (cont'd)
(clears his throat)
I know how important this is to you and Barbara and your marvelous town and I can't possibly thank you enough for your support. I'll get it done.

Walter lets the Congressman squirm for a moment.

WALTER
(after a pause, with a smile)
I know you will.

INT. RECEPTION HALL. LATER

GUESTS are gathered to greet the Congressman. Walter and Barbara escort him into the hall. Westbrook follows a few steps behind using his height to study cleavage.

INT. LIBRARY. ENTRANCE

The Graingers and the Houks stand in the doorway, looking into the hall.

STEPHANIE

The Grigsbys didn't have much to say when we started talking about the Abbotts.

MARSHALL

One wonders.

BILL

However, unlike the Abbotts, they did kick in their \$25,000 for the school.

COFFEY

School? I thought we were bribing a Congressman.

BILL

(irritated)

Why don't you shout it, dear?

INT. RECEPTION HALL. SAME TIME

Barbara and Walter Weems introduce Gary and Judith to the Congressman.

BARBARA

May I present our Congressman? The Honorable Larry Mercer.

(gestures to Judith and Gary)

Mr. and Mrs. Gary Grigsby.

As the Congressman shakes Gary's hand, Judith looks at Westbrook. He's eyeing her bust. She discreetly puts her hand on her neckline. Westbrook gives her a wink.

CONGRESSMAN

Delighted to meet you, Greg.

WALTER

Gary's in real estate.

GARY

It's my pleasure, Congressman.

WALTER

And his lovely wife, Judith, is in...?

JUDITH
Financial management.

The Congressman's eyes twinkle. She offers her hand.

CONGRESSMAN
The pleasure is all mine.

INSERT: HANDSHAKE

The Congressman's middle finger instinctively finds and settles atop her three carat diamond.

EXT. HOUSE. NEXT MORNING

A large and elegant brick and stone Colonial on a manicured two acre lot.

INT. HOUSE. SHOWER STALL

Water spews from a dozen heads on the three marble walls. A waterproof television is tuned to the financial station. Judith steps into the fog and mist.

INSERT: SHOWER TV

Judith wipes her hand across the screen to clear the fog. The DOW FUTURES are down 29.

CU. JUDITH

She stares at the screen with concern. A tinny, electronic version of "SHARP-DRESSED MAN" COMES UP.

CU. COMPUTER SCREEN

Photos of a suit, a shirt, and a tie. The shirt overlays the suit and the tie overlays the shirt creating an outfit.

INT. DRESSING ROOM

Suits travel THROUGH FRAME on a motorized rack. The rack stops, reverses, and stops again. Gary, wearing a dressing gown, removes a suit and admires it.

INT. KITCHEN

Kitchen and breakfast room decorated down to the fruit in the bowl on the island. The housekeeper, ANNIE, is studying the kitchen computer.

INSERT: COMPUTER MONITOR

The family breakfast menu scrolls up and stops.

DAMON: FROOT LOOPS - NO YELLOW. ORANGE - SECTIONED W/O SEEDS. SOY MILK - ROOM TEMPERATURE.

INT. GIRL'S BATHROOM

WENDY GRIGSBY, 12, is doing her make-up. She's wearing a plaid skirt, white blouse, and matching school tie. With a remote control, she turns up her MUSIC. She removes an invitation from her mirror and studies it proudly.

INSERT: INVITATION

It reads in gold:

WENDY McLAREN GRIGSBY
CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO CELEBRATE HER
THIRTEENTH BIRTHDAY
THE SECOND DAY OF JUNE OF THIS YEAR
NINE OLD HUNT ROAD, ALDEN HILLS, ILLINOIS
REGRETS ONLY

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM

DAMON GRIGSBY is a stocky, tough sixth-grader. He's wearing flannel pants, white shirt, and school tie. He slips his cell phone into his pocket, thumbs through the cash in his wallet and exits leaving his wall-mounted, flat-screen HDTV on.

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM

The nanny, MARLENA, is dressing four-year-old GRACIE GRIGSBY. As Marlena buttons her blouse, Gracie takes off her socks. Marlena points an angry finger at Gracie. Gracie grabs the finger and tries to bite it.

INT. ENTRY HALL

Gary is at the bottom of the stairs modelling his suit in an antique gilded mirror. His cell phone rings.

INSERT: CELL PHONE

A text message: BANK CALLED. URGENT. Gary clears the message and checks his hair in the mirror.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Judith, dressed in a black suit, grabs her briefcase from the bedside and glances at the TV. The DOW FUTURES are now down 87 points.

INT. KITCHEN. BREAKFAST ROOM

Gary is taking vitamins with juice. Damon is watching television and eating cereal. Wendy is on the telephone.

WENDY
Are you kidding? A cruise? How
chintzy. I have to grab a minute
with my dad. Let me call you from
the car.

She holds the phone over her shoulder.

WENDY (cont'd)
Dad? I need you to drop by school
and excoriate my French teacher.

Annie takes the phone from Wendy and hangs it up.

DAMON
Annie?

He holds up a yellow Froot Loop.

ANNIE
Sorry.

WENDY
Damon? Please. I'm speaking.
(continues)
Eliza Grainger put a watch to the
amount of time he spends with the
boys versus the girls and the girls
are running a semester deficit of
over an hour.

Judith enters. She sniffs.

JUDITH
Annie? Do I smell bacon?

ANNIE
(cautiously)
I'm making the corn and leek
chowder. It has a little bacon...

JUDITH
You can't just put bacon in our
food without me knowing about it.
We don't eat bacon. You eat bacon.

ANNIE
Sorry.

JUDITH
Throw it out.

She sits at the breakfast table. HIGH-PITCHED CATERWAULING
approaches O.S.

JUDITH (cont'd)
(to Annie)
Will you go see what Marlana is
doing to Gracie to make her scream
like that?

Annie hurries out of the room.

JUDITH (cont'd)
(to Gary)
That tie doesn't go.

WENDY
I wasn't going to say anything.

GARY
(to Judith)
I told you there was something
wrong with the wardrobe software.

Annie and Marlena enter, each holding one of Gracie's hands.
She refuses to walk. They are holding her off the ground.

JUDITH
No! No! No!

Annie and Marlena release Gracie. She sits on the floor.

JUDITH (cont'd)
If she doesn't want to walk, don't
drag her. You're stressing her
tendons, for God's sake.

MARLENA
She's been very bad today.

JUDITH
Well, what does that say about how
you're doing your job?

Gracie grins.

JUDITH (cont'd)
You're going to have to work with
her, intelligently, until she's out
of her terrible fours.
(to Gracie)
Will you have breakfast with us?

Gracie takes off a shoe and fires it at the table.

GARY
Now you only have one shoe.

Gracie pulls off her other shoe and fires it at the table.

GARY (cont'd)
Now you don't have any shoes.

JUDITH
If you don't want to have breakfast
with us, we'll feel very sad.

GRACIE
I don't like to eat with you.

JUDITH
Why?

GRACIE
You talk too much.

JUDITH
I promise I won't talk too much if
you'll have breakfast with us.

Judith crosses her heart. Annie and Marlana exchange looks.
Marlana curls her lip. Gracie gets up and walks to the table.

GRACIE
Fine.

She looks at Marlana and points to her chair. Marlana quickly
pulls out the chair and holds it as Gracie climbs onto it.
Annie serves her toast and an egg white omelette. Gracie
takes a bite of toast. Judith looks at her watch.

JUDITH
Big kids hurry up.

WENDY
Dad's taking me because he has to
talk to Mr. Duke.

JUDITH
(to Gary)
She told you she has boy/girl
wrestling in gym? I don't think
that's appropriate.

DAMON
That was me and, frankly, I can't
wait. It's rare in a school
environment that you can combine
sex and violence.

WENDY
You're barbaric.
(to Judith)
I e-mailed you about Mr. Duke from
my bedroom last night.

JUDITH
I didn't check my mail. I'm sorry.

She pops a grape in her mouth. Gary gets up from the table.

GARY
(to Wendy)
Let's go. I have a 9:45.

Judith rises and crosses to Gracie. She tries to kiss her.

GRACIE
Excuse me. I'm eating.

JUDITH
Can I call you after school?

GRACIE
Not from the car. It's annoying.

JUDITH
If I don't call, I'm in my car.

EXT. HOUSE

The garage doors open. A Range Rover and a Mercedes back out leaving an old Explorer in the third bay.

INT. KITCHEN

Annie and Marlena are looking out the breakfast room window.

GRACIE
Are they gone?

ANNIE
Yes.

GRACIE
Gimme the bacon.

EXT. ALDEN HILLS. DOWNTOWN

A handsome mix of shops and restaurants. Judith's Mercedes rolls through town.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Judith Walker Grigsby's office.

INT. MERCEDES

Judith is on the hands-free.

JUDITH
(brusque)
Check a stock for me. Armarina.

EXT. CHICAGO. LASALLE STREET. BUILDING

UP ANGLE on a solemn, limestone bank building.

INT. BANK. OFFICE

A choice corner office, decorated in mahogany and chintz. Judith's assistant, DELILAH, a blithe, young woman, is looking at Judith's trading screen. Judith is on the SPEAKER PHONE.

JUDITH (O.S.)
(angrily)
Hello!?

DELILAH
Okay. I got it. Trading's been halted.

JUDITH (O.S.)
What?!

EXT. EXPRESSWAY. ON RAMP

Judith's Mercedes speeds down the ramp and into traffic.

DELILAH (O.S.)
On the business wire it says,
Flaccithol...is that how you say
it?

JUDITH (O.S.)
YES! READ!

DELILAH (O.S.)
Flaccithol was denied approval by
the FDA....

INT. MERCEDES. JUDITH

Her jaw drops in disbelief.

EXT. ALDEN HILLS ACADEMY

A complex of elegant Neo-Georgian, brick buildings.

INT. ALDEN HILLS ACADEMY. GYM

A large, well-equipped gymnasium. BOYS and GIRLS are wrestling. Two girls against one boy. Damon and his two best friends, JONAH GRAINGER and BENTSEN HOUK, are sitting on the bleachers. Jonah is tall and handsome. Bentsen is short and chunky and looks younger than the other two boys.

JONAH
This is horrific. You see how
Madison is holding Jacob down while
Megan makes the pin? It's totally
rigged.

BENTSEN
I can't afford to lose to a girl.

DAMON
It's a sad day if one guy can't
equal two girls. Unless you guys
are...I won't say it.

BENTSEN
Girls?

DAMON
Do you feel like a girl, Bentsen?

A WHISTLE BLOWS O.S.

JONAH
You're up, big mouth.

DAMON
It's all about where and what you
grab.

Damon exits. Jonah grins.

JONAH
If he loses, we'll still be
laughing about it at Yale.

INT. ALDEN HILLS ACADEMY. CAFETERIA

The cafeteria is configured like a food court with potted plants, tables, chairs, and serving stations offering different cuisines. Wendy is holding court with half a dozen girls her age. Her best friends, ELIZA GRAINGER and DUCIE HOUK, sit on either side of her. Eliza is blonde and boyish. Ducie is short and thin with raven hair.

ELIZA
The tempura is a tad greasy.

DUCIE
They're using Portobelo mushrooms
again. They absorb a lot of oil.

WENDY
Do you guys think it would be too
pretentious for my birthday to have
a sleep-over at a really nice hotel
downtown?

ELIZA
Why would that be pretentious?

WENDY
We can shop during the day, do
dinner, sleep at the hotel, then
on Sunday we'll just do...whatever.

ELIZA
Are you inviting boys?

WENDY
I thought about having my parents
book a club for Sunday and getting
a band and then bringing in the
boys but it doesn't really work.
Our boys are so...

ELIZA
Embryonic.

DUCIE
I hate to say this but the cutest
boys are, unfortunately, in public
school.

ELIZA
It's sick but it's kind of true.

WENDY
Definitely.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE. SAME TIME

Gary gets out of his Range Rover and puts on a shiny, black hard hat. He walks mincingly through the dirt and debris to the site. He is greeted by his partner, JERRY GRIMES. He's with a CONSTRUCTION FOREMAN. WORKERS are exiting the site.

GARY
Sorry, I'm late, guys. I had a monster latte and couldn't find a bathroom.

JERRY
I've been trying to get a hold of you. We got a problem.

GARY
No porta-potty?

JERRY
The bank pulled our financing.

Gary's jaw clenches.

GARY
(to the Construction Foreman)
Can you excuse us?

JERRY
He knows. Everybody knows.

GARY
Maybe if you could keep your mouth shut.

CONSTRUCTION FOREMAN
(to Jerry)
I'm sorry about this, Jerry, but I gotta pull my guys off the job.

JERRY
I understand.

GARY
Understand what?
(to the Foreman)
Nobody's leaving until I say so.

CONSTRUCTION FOREMAN
Let me tell you something, playboy.
The nineties are over and so...
(pokes Gary in the chest)
...are you.

He exits.

GARY
(brushing dirt off his
tie)
Goddamn ape!

JERRY
The banks revalued our holdings.
We're 11 million short. We're
finished.

Gary is stunned.

INT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. KITCHEN

Gracie is sitting in a chair looking up at the wall phone.
Marlena and Annie are watching her from behind.

ANNIE
Your mommy is a busy lady.

GRACIE
Put a cork in it.

ANNIE
Watching the phone don't make it
ring.

Gracie gets up from her chair.

GRACIE
She boned me again.

Gracie marches out of the room.

GRACIE (cont'd)
Bring me Cinderella and a Coke. No
ice.

INT. OFFICE. CU. COMPUTER MONITOR

Trading screen. It's all red.

INT. OFFICE

Judith stares at the screen in disbelief. Delilah enters
cautiously.

DELILAH
(gently)
How are you?

Judith pushes her chair back and breathes a sigh of defeat.

JUDITH
How am I?
(pause)
I'm broke. How are you?

EXT. ALDEN HILLS. PARK. OVERHEAD

PUBLIC SCHOOL KIDS are hanging out on the playground equipment. CAMERA BOOMS DOWN and PANS OFF the park to the library across the street and the PRIVATE SCHOOL KIDS perched on the steps dressed in school uniforms.

EXT. LIBRARY. STAIRS. GIRLS

Wendy, Ducie, and Eliza climb the stairs to the library. Their attention is on the kids in the park.

WENDY
That we breathe the same air as
they do. Weird.

ELIZA
You know what sucks?

DUCIE
Don't start talking about taxes.
It's so boring.

ELIZA
It's true, though. Our families pay
most of the taxes and we don't even
use the damn schools. Then if we go
to our own park, they harass us.

THEIR POV

A handsome, young eighth-grader in a zip jacket is sitting on the back of a park bench chewing on a plastic straw. His name is KIP REGNER. Sitting at the end of the bench is a cute, tough, boyish, seventh-grade girl. Her name is SIOUX PLUMMER.

CU. WENDY

Kip has caught her eye.

EXT. LIBRARY. GIRLS

Wendy continues to watch Kip. Eliza opens the library door. She motions impatiently.

ELIZA
Wendy? Hello?

Wendy catches herself. She turns and enters with the others.

INT. DRUGSTORE. SAME TIME

Damon, Jonah, and Bentsen are shopping the candy display. PUBLIC SCHOOL KIDS enter led by a tough 11-year-old named WADE. They encircle Damon and his friends.

WADE
Are you cool because you wear ties?

DAMON
Oh, God. It's the gangstas. We're
not cool because we wear ties,
we're cool because, simply, we're
not you.

WADE
You're really funny.

DAMON
Are we in your way? Did you want to
steal something?

WADE
I want to ask you a question.

DAMON
No, we haven't.

WADE
Haven't what?

DAMON
Been arrested.

WADE
You don't own the town. Okay? If
you keep acting like you do, we'll
have to prove to you that you
don't.

DAMON
Should I be worrying about a drive-
by? On bikes? Excuse me.

He pushes Wade aside.

BENTSEN
Damon!
(to Wade)
He's sorry.

DAMON
(to Bentsen)
Your ass.

He walks to the counter.

BENTSEN
You had a question?

WADE
We heard that you guys are
wrestling girls in gym.

JONAH
True.

WADE
(with a grin)
Did your boy get beat?

Bentsen and Jonah exchange nervous glances.

INT. DRUG STORE. COUNTER

Damon lays a twenty on the counter for his candy. He glances back at the others. He's annoyed. He sees Bentsen and Jonah step around the other boys. Their guilt is obvious. The Public School Boys laugh.

EXT. DRUGSTORE

Bentsen and Jonah are waiting for Damon. He exits the store.

DAMON
What you did you say to them?

JONAH
Bentsen said the girls kicked your butt.

Damon shoves Bentsen aside and walks away.

BENTSEN
(to Jonah)
You're such a liar!

EXT. LIBRARY. STEPS. LATER

Sioux and Kip wend their way through the immovable PRIVATE SCHOOL KIDS.

INT. LIBRARY. STUDY TABLES

Wendy, Ducie, and Eliza are putting their books in their backpacks after study.

DUCIE
Just so you're prepared, my Mom's going to go on for at least ten minutes about how genius your birthday invitation is.

ELIZA
Speaking of which, I think it would be a good idea to include Emma Carmichael on your invite list.

WENDY
Why would I do that? She's a troll.

ELIZA
True. But I have it on good authority that she saw us cheating on our French exam.

Ducie and Wendy look at her in alarm.

ELIZA (cont'd)
Don't worry about it. If you invite Emma to your party, a social event the likes of which she's only dreamed about, we'll own her for life.

Wendy and Ducie smile and nod at Eliza's cunning. Ducie spots Kip and Sioux.

DUCIE
Whoa. What's that?

Eliza and Wendy look.

ELIZA
Oh, God. Here we go again. The peasants' rights debate.

DUCIE
Just because he rides a dirt bike he thinks he's hot snot.

WENDY
Give me your water bottle.

DUCIE
It's cherry Slurpee.

Wendy laughs.

WENDY
Better.

INT. LIBRARY. REST ROOM AREA

Kip is waiting outside the rest rooms. Wendy, Eliza, and Ducie approach. He's apprehensive. Wendy waves to him.

WENDY
Hi.

He's too suspicious to respond. Before she slips into the women's rest room, she takes a second look at Kip.

ELIZA
(to Kip)
Are you lost?

Kip shakes his head, no.

ELIZA (cont'd)
I don't think you or your girlfriend belong in here.

KIP
She's not my girlfriend and this is a public place.

DUCIE
So is the park. But you don't let
us go in there, do you?

KIP
Why don't you have your parents buy
it for you?

ELIZA
(to Ducie)
Isn't that funny?

DUCIE
Hilarious.

INT. WOMEN'S REST ROOM

Wendy bends down and looks under a stall.

HER POV

Sioux's shoes, jeans, panties.

INT. REST ROOM. WENDY

She takes careful aim with the water bottle straw. She
squeezes it.

INSERT: SIOUX'S JEANS

The cherry Slurpee splatters on and into Sioux's jeans.

INT. LIBRARY. REST ROOM AREA

Sioux SCREAMS O.S. Wendy exits casually.

WENDY
(to Kip)
Bye.

The Girls follow her.

EXT. EXPRESSWAY

The Range Rover and the Mercedes are weaving in and out of
rush hour traffic.

INT. RANGE ROVER. GARY

He's on the speaker phone.

GARY
I'm an idiot?! Who was taking
financial tips from an old college
flame who used to make LSD in his
bathtub!

JUDITH (O.S.)
Who was borrowing from the Saudis
to pay the French to keep the
Japanese off his back?!

Gary lays on his HORN.

INT. ANOTHER CAR

The DRIVER looks in his mirror.

INSERT: MIRROR

The mirror is filled with Range Rover.

EXT. EXPRESSWAY. CAR

The Range Rover cuts onto the shoulder and passes the car.

INT. CAR. DRIVER

He looks out his passenger window.

HIS POV

Gary's yelling and waving his free hand as he speeds past.

INT. CAR. DRIVER

He looks forward. A beat and he looks out his passenger window again.

HIS POV

Judith speeds past on the shoulder, yelling.

EXT. TOWN. LATER

The Mercedes and the Range Rover pull up to a four-way stop.
Judith and Gary are unaware that they are next to each other.

JUDITH (O.S.)
If I knew you were taking on so
much debt, I wouldn't have traded
so aggressively!

GARY (O.S.)
If I knew you were trading so
aggressively, I wouldn't have taken
on so much debt!

She turns right. He turns left.

INT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. KITCHEN

Annie is preparing dinner. Wendy enters and dumps her backpack on the table. She looks through the mail.

WENDY
What's for dinner?

ANNIE
Your mother is having fish. Your father is having chicken, Damon is having a turkey burger, Gracie is having scrambled eggs with chives and you wanted tempura.

WENDY
I had tempura for lunch. I'll have a tofu enchilada.

ANNIE
I'll have to go to the store for tortillas.

WENDY
Send Marlana.

ANNIE
She's busy with Gracie.

INT. GRACIE'S BATHROOM

Gracie is giving Marlana a makeover.

GRACIE
You look prettier already.

She steps aside, revealing Marlana. She has lipstick from her nose to her chin. Her eyes are black with mascara, her cheeks are brown with blush. Her hair is gelled into tight lumps and her eyebrows are penciled half-way up her forehead.

GRACIE (cont'd)
Don't move. I'm going to get my Mom's armpit shaver.

Marlana's jaw drops.

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE

The Range Rover approaches from LEFT, the Mercedes from RIGHT. They turn into the drive and pull into the garage. They slam on their brakes and SCREECH to a halt. The garage doors come down.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Judith is rifling through her underwear drawer. Gary is half under the bed. Judith finds an old pack of Marlboro Lights with one stale cigarette in it.

JUDITH
Got it!

INT. BATHROOM. CU. EXHAUST FAN. LATER

The fan is on. CAMERA TILTS DOWN to find Judith sitting on the edge of the bathtub and Gary sitting on the closed toilet lid. They're calmly sharing the cigarette as they contemplate their fate.

JUDITH
We're screwed, aren't we?

Gary nods.

JUDITH (cont'd)
What do we do?

GARY
We sell the house and whatever else
we have to until we've paid off our
debts.

Judith takes the cigarette from Gary.

JUDITH
Where are we going to find a job?
Nobody's going to hire me after
this.

GARY
I might be able to pull something
together.

JUDITH
What?

GARY
I don't know.

He takes the cigarette from Judith.

GARY (cont'd)
If we have to, we'll take whatever
we can get.

JUDITH
Do you still have that property
over on the west side?

Gary nods.

JUDITH (cont'd)
Is it rented out?

GARY
Not since fall. But you're not
going to like it.

JUDITH
Is it paid for?

Gary nods.

JUDITH (cont'd)
I'll like it.

INT. BEDROOM

Wendy and Damon are at the door. Wendy knocks.

WENDY
Mom? Are you guys smoking?

O.S. the BATHROOM FAN is turned on.

GARY (O.S.)
We're talking.

DAMON
They're having sex.

WENDY
No. This is much worse.

O.S. the TOILET FLUSHES.

EXT. ALDEN HILLS. STREET. DAWN

Judith, Coffey, and Stephanie are jogging into town.

STEPHANIE
Wendy's birthday invitation is
amazing.

COFFEY
It's fabulous. Who was your
printer?

JUDITH
(distracted)
Thank you.

COFFEY
Who?

JUDITH
I'm sorry. What?

Coffey glances across at Stephanie.

COFFEY
(after a pause)
Is something bothering you?

JUDITH
No. Why?

COFFEY
You're not holding up your end of
the conversation.

JUDITH
I'm not?

STEPHANIE
Judith. We're your friends. We can
read you like a book.

COFFEY
This is not an easy town to keep a
secret in.

JUDITH
I know.

STEPHANIE
We can't support you unless we know
what's going on.

JUDITH
My kids don't even know.

They disappear around a corner.

INT. COFFEE BAR. LATER

It's crowded with noisy COMMUTERS, JOGGERS, MOMS. Judith,
Stephanie, and Coffey are at a table, hunched over lattes.
Judith has just concluded her confession.

JUDITH
Please don't say anything.

COFFEY
Of course not.

Judith kisses them both.

JUDITH
Thank you.

She exits. The Crowd falls SILENT and turns to Coffey and
Stephanie. Coffey smiles cattily.

COFFEY
(to the Crowd)
It's true.

The Crowd BUZZES.

INT. DOWNTOWN MEN'S CLUB. DINING ROOM. DAY

Gary enters the elegant and sedate dining room and greets the
paunchy, middle-aged MAITRE D' with a friendly grin.

GARY
Hey, Lorenzo. How are you?

The Maitre d' doesn't look up from his reservations diary.

MAITRE D'
Mr. Weems is at his table.

GARY
(after a puzzled pause)
Thank you.

Gary enters the dining area. The Maitre d' looks back at him.

INT. DINING ROOM

Walter Weems has finished his lunch. Gary approaches the table. He's surprised to see that Walter has already eaten.

GARY
Walter?

WEEMS
Hello, Gary. Sit down.

Gary sits across from Walter.

WEEMS (cont'd)
I got here early. I went ahead and ordered.

Walter leans back to allow a WAITER to clear his plate.

WEEMS (cont'd)
(to the Waiter)
It was delicious.

WAITER
Coffee?

WEEMS
Just the check, thank you.

The Waiter exits.

WEEMS (cont'd)
How's Judith?

GARY
Fine.

WEEMS
A little birdie told me she got let go. Something about not being able to cover her margin calls.

GARY
We had a bad week. Yes, it's true.
(pause)
I need help, Walter. If I could get a line of credit...

WEEMS

You can't get any credit, Gary. You stuck a lot of people with overvalued real estate that they can't turn.

GARY

I have to make a living, Walter.

The Waiter returns with Walter's check.

WEEMS

(as he signs the check)
We often stumble before we soar.

He hands the check to the Waiter.

WEEMS (cont'd)

Thank you.
(to Gary)
There might be something I can do for you, Gary.

Gary brightens.

WEEMS (cont'd)

I've always admired that lovely little Picasso drawing of yours. If the price is right, I'll buy it.

He rises.

WEEMS (cont'd)

My best to Judith and the kids.

He pats Gary on the shoulder and exits. Two BUSBOYS begin to break the table down. Gary lifts his elbows. The Busboys remove the tablecloth.

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. AFTERNOON

Wendy runs across the lawn.

INT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. STAIRS

Wendy charges up the stairs. She's been crying.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Judith is on the phone. She has the want ads section of the paper in her lap.

JUDITH

I should also mention I have an MBA.
(listens, defeated)
That's true. Except you can't buy a cup of coffee for a quarter any more. Thank you, anyway.

Judith hangs up. The door flies open and Wendy storms in.

WENDY
Is it true!?

JUDITH
What?

WENDY
Don't lie to me.

JUDITH
What's the matter?

WENDY
We're broke?

JUDITH
Who told you that?

WENDY
Eliza.

Judith's eyes narrow angrily.

EXT. LIBRARY. STEPS

Bentsen, Jonah, and several other PRIVATE SCHOOL KIDS are sitting on the steps. Damon approaches.

DAMON
What's up?

He attempts to sit next to Jonah. A KID slides over to fill the empty space.

JONAH
Wrong side of the street, dude.

DAMON
What's that supposed to mean?

Jonah points to the park.

JONAH
That's your territory now.
(pause)
You're getting kicked out of school.

DAMON
For what?

JONAH
Your parents can't pay tuition.

DAMON
Yeah, right.

JONAH
Your Dad screwed up his business
and your Mom got crushed in the
market.

(gestures to the park)
You're one of them now.

Damon steps back off the step. He turns and heads down the street. The Boys watch him with smug smiles. Bentsen rises.

JONAH (cont'd)
Sit down, Bentsen. He's nobody
anymore.

Bentsen balks. A long beat and he sits.

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. NIGHT

The lights are on.

INT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. LIBRARY

The kids are sitting on the sofa. Wendy and Damon are staring at the floor. Judith is sitting on an ottoman. Gary is leaning on his desk.

GARY
It's all true. I'm very sorry.

Damon and Wendy don't react.

WENDY
(not looking up)
How did this happen?

JUDITH
I don't think it's productive at
this point to spend time on what's
already happened. We have to look
ahead to where we go next.

DAMON
Please don't say we're going to
Tucson to live with Grandpa.

JUDITH
No. We're staying in Alden Hills.
Dad and I have a piece of property
that he bought a few years ago when
he was thinking about doing some
residential projects.

DAMON
(looking up, alarmed)
The tear-down in Mulletville?

WENDY
Oh, my God.

GARY
Mulletville?

DAMON
That's what the neighborhood's
called.

WENDY
We're going to live in Mulletville?

JUDITH
For the time being.

GRACIE
How big is the pool?

DAMON
If we're living in Mulletville, I
guess we'll be going to public
school?

JUDITH
For the time being.

WENDY
Quit saying 'for the time being.'
Like it's going to be a week. Like
it's going to be okay.

GARY
Aren't you being a little selfish?

WENDY
Me? Did I destroy my kids' lives?

JUDITH
Don't talk to your father that way.

Wendy stands up.

WENDY
I can't listen to any more of this
crap. Excuse me.

She exits.

JUDITH
Wendy!

DAMON
Mom? Don't make it worse.

JUDITH
How am I making it worse?

DAMON
She was a princess and now she's
not. She has to adjust. Look how
long it took her to get used to her
own damn boobs.

GRACIE
Those are hardly boobs.

GARY
Let's not talk about that, please.

GRACIE
Fine. There's not much to talk about.

DAMON
Joke's over. Zip it.

GARY
I appreciate your attitude, buddy.

JUDITH
You're being very mature.

DAMON
I don't like it, but I'm not going to get an ulcer over it. That's your job.

He exits.

GRACIE
I gotta run. I promised Marlana I'd give her a pedicure before dinner.

She runs out.

JUDITH
Oh, my God. I didn't even think about Marlana or Annie.

GARY
We'll have to see what we can work out. I'm sure they're going to want to stay with us.

INT. DINING ROOM. LATER

The family is eating in silence. Judith looks at Gary. He nods sadly. Judith RINGS an antique silver servant's bell. Annie and Marlana enter and begin clearing dishes.

JUDITH
Annie. Marlana. Not now with the dishes. In a minute.

Annie and Marlana back away from the table.

JUDITH (cont'd)
While we're all here, en familia, I want to say a few words. Mister and I have run into a little bad luck. But we want you to know that we love you and we consider you part of our family.

(MORE)

JUDITH (cont'd)
We're going to move to another house nearby so there are going to be a lot of changes and a lot of work. Mister and I will do everything we possibly can to keep us all together.

GARY
En familia.

MARLENA
(after a pause)
You don't got a job no more, huh?

JUDITH
No.

MARLENA
Mister?

Gary shakes his head, no.

MARLENA (cont'd)
You got any cash?

GARY
Not much.

JUDITH
What do you say?

MARLENA
Me? Arriba de tu culo.

Judith looks at Annie.

ANNIE
She said, "up your ass."

JUDITH
Excuse me?

MARLENA
Up yours, too. And his and hers, and the little one, too. Up all your ass.
(to Gracie)
And you, little mocosa, I hate you.

She picks up Gracie's milk glass and pours it over her head.

GARY
Marlena!

GRACIE
Mommy!

Marlena marches out of the room. Judith mops Gracie's wet head with her napkin.

JUDITH
Annie? Get a towel.

ANNIE
You get it yourself.

JUDITH
Annie. No. Not you. Please.

ANNIE
You owe me 480 dollars. Pay me or I
call the government for you not
paying my taxes.

JUDITH
How can you say that?

ANNIE
You don't got any money. I can say
whatever I want.

She crosses to the door.

ANNIE (cont'd)
Maybe you'll come clean my house.

She laughs and exits.

WENDY
Oh. My. God. The maid fired us.

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. FRONT LAWN. DAY

A FOR SALE sign comes INTO FRAME OVER CAMERA.

EXT. RANGE ROVER DEALER

The black Range Rover with a sign on the windshield -
EXECUTIVE DRIVEN! LOW MILES!

EXT. MERCEDES LOT

The silver Mercedes - ONE OWNER! LIKE NEW!

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. PARKWAY. MORNING

A sign on the parkway - ESTATE SALE. CAMERA TILTS UP from the
sign to the house. The driveway is crowded with cars.

INT. HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Gary is sitting on a plastic storage box at a folding table
in the vast, empty room. He's doing figures in long hand.
Judith enters with coffee.

GARY
In rough figures, I think we're
there.

Judith sets down the coffee. Gary slides a plastic box over for her to sit on.

JUDITH
(looking at his figures)
I never thought I'd be excited to
have a net worth of zero.

GARY
We really cut it close. There's no
reserve. We're down to the bone.

JUDITH
Did you account for my wedding
ring?

GARY
No. Of course not.

JUDITH
We have groceries, moving costs,
utilities, insurance, whatever we
have to put into the new house...

GARY
No.

JUDITH
Please. It's okay.

She removes the ring and the last remnant of her former life.

JUDITH (cont'd)
(takes a breath)
I'll survive.

She sets the ring on the folding table.

INSERT: RING

CAMERA PUSHES IN to hold on the sparkling diamond.

INT. ALDEN HILLS ACADEMY. HALLWAY

Wendy is emptying her locker. Eliza, Ducie, and a new girl,
MARY ROSE, approach. Ducie is demure.

ELIZA
Hi, Wendy.

She gives the Girls a cold glance.

ELIZA (cont'd)
We feel really bad that you're
leaving.

WENDY
I'm sure.

ELIZA
I hope we can still be friends.

WENDY
Not likely.

Mary Rose steps forward.

MARY ROSE
Wendy? I'm Mary Rose. I want to
thank you for making an opening for
me at the school.

WENDY
I hope you enjoy my identity.

ELIZA
If you want to hate us, we
completely understand. Here.

She hands Wendy a wrapped gift. Ducie tries to give Wendy a hug. Wendy ducks it.

ELIZA (cont'd)
We'll always love you.

The Girls exit. Wendy looks at the pretty, little package.

INT. HALLWAY

Eliza and Mary Rose LAUGH as they turn the corner. Ducie lingers, sadly looking back at Wendy.

CU. WENDY

She's suspicious. She tears the paper off the gift box.

INSERT: GIFT BOX

Wendy lifts the colored tissue paper to reveal the birthday invitations she sent Eliza and Ducie.

CU. WENDY

Her eyes fill with tears.

EXT. ALDEN HILLS. TOWN. MORNING

Their old Explorer cruises through town. A new stepladder is lashed to the roof. Its back window is broken, and flaps open and closed every time the Explorer hits a bump in the road.

INT. EXPLORER

Gary's driving. Judith is next to him. Damon, Gracie, and Wendy are in back. Wendy is hunched over in the seat. They're all dressed in casual clothes.

GARY
Wendy? What are you doing?

WENDY
We're riding through town in the
maid's car with a ladder strapped
to the roof. I'd rather not be
seen, it you don't mind.

DAMON
Not to make you feel worse, but
it's not the maid's car anymore.

EXT. ALDEN HILLS. RAILROAD TRACKS

The Explorer passes the Alden Hills Academy and, leaving the fine homes on their generous properties, crosses the railroad tracks and disappears into Mulletville.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD. MORNING

A neighborhood of small, neat, well-kept houses. Kids are playing in the street. The Explorer comes down the street.

EXT. STREET

The Explorer pulls up to the curb. The family gets out of the car and stares past CAMERA with expressions of incredulity.

WENDY
No way.

Judith leans over towards Gary.

JUDITH
Are you sure this is it?

GARY
Sycamore Lane. 1444?

Judith nods grimly.

GARY (cont'd)
This is it.

THEIR POV

A neglected, one-story ranch house with missing shingles and shutters, broken windows, a crumbling blacktop drive, overgrown shrubs and lawn, and a TV antenna dangling off the roof.

INT. HOUSE. LIVING ROOM

Gary shoulders open the door and enters. Judith steps in, followed by Damon, Wendy, and Gracie. The kids are in shock.

GARY
Wait'll we fix 'er up.

The room is dingy and dirty with filthy, red, shag carpet. Venetian blinds are drawn casting a sickly, yellow pall over the room. Gary tries to pull up the blinds. The mounting brackets rip out of the rotting wall and the blinds fall to the floor.

WENDY

I think I saw this place on Cops.

Gracie steps forward and sniffs.

GRACIE

Who cut the cheese?

JUDITH

Nobody, sweetie. It's the carpet.

Wendy puts her shirt over her nose to block the smell.

INT. BATHROOM

Gracie turns on the light. The shower turns on, spewing brown water. Gracie quickly turns off the water. The toilet flushes.

INT. KITCHEN

Wendy and Damon walk into a tired 50's kitchen with original appliances and a sagging, sheet vinyl floor. Damon opens the refrigerator. He gags at the stench.

WENDY

Old food?

DAMON

Dead cat.

Wendy looks like she might throw up.

EXT. BACK YARD

A rotting wood deck and a hot tub. The garage roof is sagging. The burned carcass of a riding lawn mowing is overturned in the weeds. Gary looks into the hot tub.

HIS POV

A pair of mens' briefs floating in a foot of green water.

INT. BEDROOM

Judith is surveying the trashed room. A bicycle has been shoved into the wall. There's a puddle in the middle of the room and a mirror on the ceiling. Judith picks up a black vinyl bra. Gary enters.

GARY

Wow. It's a lot worse than I remember.

JUDITH
How are we going to live here?

Gary puts his arm around her.

GARY
Humbly.

EXT. HOUSE. LATER

A small moving truck pulls away, having finished unloading the Grigsbys' few remaining possessions. Gary and Damon are getting a few final boxes from the Explorer. HAROLD CHAMBERLAIN steps out of the house next door. He's in sweatpants, slippers, flannel shirt, and a vinyl cap. He opens a package of bologna and peels off a slice. He wings it onto the roof of his house. He notices Gary and Damon.

HAROLD
(with a friendly grin)
Feedin' the cat!

EXT. HAROLD'S ROOF

A cat climbs out of the chimney and retrieves the bologna.

EXT. HOUSE

Harold peels off another slice of bologna.

HAROLD
She never leaves the roof. We got a dog that doesn't know a puppy from a pussy.

Gary and Damon manage polite smiles.

HAROLD (cont'd)
Need a hand?

GARY
Thanks, we're okay.

Harold gives a nod towards the Grigsby house.

HAROLD
I'm glad someone's finally moving into this place. It's been a real eyesore. One of those hot-shot real estate jerks bought it a few years back for an investment then left it to rot.

Gary nervously busies himself with the boxes.

GARY
That's a shame.

HAROLD
Yeah. It's a little rundown, but
don't you worry. It'll fix up nice.
These old houses got good bones.

Gary and Damon hurry to the front door with the boxes.

HAROLD (cont'd)
You'll be happy here. We're good
people. We look out for each other.

GARY
(to himself)
Just what we want.

Damon slips inside. Gary turns and waves to Harold.

GARY (cont'd)
Thank you!

HAROLD
Just give a holler if there's
anything we can do for you...

Gary shuts the door. Harold scratches his head in
bewilderment at Gary's brusque attitude.

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. NIGHT

The lights are on.

INT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. LIVING ROOM

Wendy, Damon, and Gracie are sitting on the old basement
couch, watching a Green Acres rerun on a beat-up, portable TV
with tin-foil rabbit ears. The picture is dim and flickering.

GRACIE
Put on Nickelodeon.

DAMON
We don't have cable. It's this or a
soccer game in Spanish.

They sit for another moment, squinting as they try to make
out what's on the TV screen.

GRACIE
Try the soccer game.

INT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. KITCHEN

Judith stares at the gas range in bewilderment. She puts a
sauce pan on the range. She turns the knob to high, but not
far enough for the electric starter to click on.

CU. GAS RANGE

HISSING loudly as gas spews out.

INT. KITCHEN

Judith picks up a can of Spaghetti-O's and looks for something to open it with. She finds a corkscrew. She attempts to drill holes in the can lid.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Gary is on his hands and knees, trying to assemble a bedframe.

INT. BATHROOM

Gracie has just used the toilet. She flushes it and goes to the sink to wash her hands. The toilet begins to RUMBLE. She turns and stares at it in horror...

INT. KITCHEN

Judith has punched holes in the top of the can and is shaking the Spaghetti-O's into the sauce pan. She bends down and sees that there's no flame. The HISSING continues.

JUDITH
(yelling to Gary)
Honey? I think the stove is broken!

GARY (O.S.)
(from the bedroom)
Make sure the pilot light is lit!

Judith nods and looks for matches.

INT. BATHROOM. TOILET

Gracie is backed into a corner as the toilet continues RUMBLING and shaking. With a LOUD BANG, the lid flies up and backed-up sewage spews out. Gracie SCREAMS.

GRACIE
Daddy!

Gary rushes into the bathroom. He reacts in dismay as he wades in to try and fix the toilet.

INT. KITCHEN

Judith finds a pack of matches in a drawer.

INT. BATHROOM

Gary stands ankle-deep in sewage. He's stuffing a bedsheet into the toilet to stem the flow. The pipes RATTLE and the bed sheet is sucked into the toilet.

JUDITH (O.S.)
Honey? Where's the pilot light?

GRACIE
Should I go get the bedspread?

GARY
No.
(yells to Judith)
If you can come into the bathroom
and disinfect Gracie, I'll light
the stove!

EXT. HAROLD'S HOUSE. PATIO. SAME TIME

Harold is sitting on the patio, having a beer with his wife,
VERN, a big, jolly woman in her late 40's.

VERN
I spoke with the Gummers today.
They're putting together a little
welcome committee to greet the new
neighbors on Saturday.

HAROLD
Good idea. I'm sure they can use
some help getting settled. From
what little I've seen, it don't
look like they ever owned a home.

INT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. KITCHEN

Gary lifts the stove top and locates the pilot light. He
slips a wicker wastebasket over his head and opens the
matches.

EXT. HAROLD'S PATIO

Harold finishes his beer and rises.

VERN
I don't think they're so much shy
as just plain busy. That house is a
fright.

He helps Vern to her feet.

HAROLD
It's ugly, but you know what? It's
home.

VERN
Yep, and there's nothing quite as
exciting as the first night in your
new house.

They exit. CAMERA HOLDS on the hedge between Harold's house
and the Grigsbys' house. There is a FLASH, a BANG, and the
sound of BREAKING GLASS. A moment later a fireball rises
above the hedge.

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. BACK DECK. LATER

A half-burned wicker wastebasket stuffed with singed clothing sits on the deck.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. NIGHT

Light from the street lamp shines across the room which is dominated by their bed and its regal headboard. Judith is in bed. Gary enters in satin pajamas and sits on the bed.

JUDITH
Did you get the black stuff off
your teeth?

Gary nods. He tests the sturdiness of the bed.

JUDITH (cont'd)
You're lucky you didn't lose more
than your chest hair.

Gary slips under the covers.

GARY
We haven't slept in a room this
small since grad school.

JUDITH
We haven't been this broke since
grad school.

GARY
We were happy then. We'll be happy
again.

JUDITH
(unsure)
Will we?

Gary looks at Judith with concern.

JUDITH (cont'd)
I just want to make sure we do
what's right for the kids. If it
was just you and me, I wouldn't be
so worried.

GARY
Sure. But this isn't permanent.
We'll get back on our feet.

JUDITH
I know. But in the meantime, maybe
it would be better if I did take
the kids to Tucson...

Gary looks to her in concern.

GARY

As bad as things are, we're a long way from splitting up and relocating. We'll get through this. It isn't going to be easy, but I promise you, everything's going to be alright.

Judith nods. Gary rolls onto his side and kisses her. As their lips touch, the bed collapses with a LOUD CRASH. The headboard rips free from the wall, taking the plaster and lath with it.

INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM

Gracie and Wendy are on twin mattresses. Boxes are piled in a corner. The closet is overflowing with their wardrobes.

GRACIE

Wendy? Can I sleep in your bed?

WENDY

Why?

GRACIE

I'm scared.

WENDY

Of what?

GRACIE

I'm not sure.

After a long beat, Wendy lifts her covers. Gracie slides out of her bed and slips into Wendy's bed.

GRACIE (cont'd)

I've never said this to you before but I think I have to now.

WENDY

What?

GRACIE

Thank you.

INT. DAMON'S ROOM

He's in bed. The lights are out.

DAMON

I'll never snowboard again. I'll never see Hawaii again. I won't get a car when I'm 16...

A light goes on in the house next door casting a faint light on Damon's bed. He sits up. CAMERA PUSHES IN on his face.

HIS POV

The bedroom window of his 17-year-old neighbor, BATHSHEBA JOHNSON. She's come from the bath with a towel around her body and another on her head. She removes the towel from her head. Damp blonde hair tumbles to her shoulders.

CU. DAMON

He watches in rapture.

HIS POV

Bathsheba shakes out her hair and reaches for the towel around her body.

CU. DAMON

He GROANS.

INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM

Gracie lifts her head.

GRACIE
What was that noise?

WENDY
Puberty.

EXT. PUBLIC SCHOOL. MORNING

A rambling 60's-era public junior high school.

INT. SCHOOL. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

The school principal, DR. GLENN, a cheerful, middle-aged man with a walrus moustache walks Wendy out of his office.

DR. GLENN
I think you're going to find that the only difference between public and private education is that we have a heck of a lot more fun here.

He snorts.

DR. GLENN (cont'd)
Any questions?

Wendy shakes her head, no.

DR. GLENN (cont'd)
Alrighty. That's it on my end. I'll turn things over to your official student guide.

Wendy looks forward and blanches.

HER POV

Sioux is standing in the door. She's grinning.

 SIOUX

 Welcome.

INT. CLASSROOM

A female TEACHER stands at the front of the class with her hand on Damon's shoulder.

 TEACHER

 I want your warmest welcome for our
 new student, Harmon Grigsby.

The boys in the class are grinning.

CU. WADE

His grin is especially broad. He puts his thumb up his nose.

INT. CLASSROOM

Damon listlessly shakes listless hands as he walks to an empty seat at the back of the class.

 WADE

 Welcome, cake-eater.

Damon shakes Wade's hand. His eyes shift down to his hand with revulsion.

 WADE (cont'd)

 Sorry. I don't have a nanny to wipe
 my nose.

INT. JUNIOR HIGH. HALLWAY. SIOUX AND WENDY

Sioux and Wendy work their way through the crowded hallway.

 SIOUX

 This must be so depressing for you.

 WENDY

 I can handle it.

 SIOUX

 From the stars to the swamp.

 WENDY

 Your words.

 SIOUX

 You lost your cash, you better lose
 your attitude or it's going to be a
 painful ride to high school.

Sioux opens a bathroom door for Wendy.

SIOUX (cont'd)
Girls bathroom. You're familiar
with these?

Wendy gives her a chilly look. She enters.

INT. BATHROOM

BOYS at the urinals look to the door in horror.

THEIR POV

Wendy stands frozen in the rest room vestibule. She puts her
hand to her mouth and runs out.

EXT. HANDY HANK HOME CENTER

An enormous home improvement store.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE

A windowless, cinder-block office. The MANAGER is wearing a
plaid company vest. He's looking at Gary's job application.

 MANAGER
Plenty of college.

 GARY
 (proudly)
BA, MA, MBA.

 MANAGER
How's your Spanish?

 GARY
I took six years of French.

 MANAGER
Your construction experience was in
what trade?

 GARY
Primarily finance. A little
marketing.

The Manager sets Gary's application on the desk and leans
back in his chair. He puts his hands on his belly, slides his
index finger into his shirt, and plays with his naval.

 MANAGER
I'm looking for a reason to hire
you, Harry. And I'm not finding
much. Help me.

 GARY
I want to work, I need to work. I'm
willing to start at the bottom.

MANAGER
This is the bottom, Harry.

GARY
And that's fine with me.

MANAGER
How do you feel about a three month trial?

GARY
I have no problem with that.

MANAGER
Alright then...

The Manager pulls his finger out of his shirt and shakes Gary's hand. Gary struggles to hold a smile.

MANAGER (cont'd)
Welcome to the Handy Hank family.

GARY
Thank you.

The Manager opens his desk drawer.

MANAGER
All I need is proof of citizenship and a urine sample.

He sets a plastic cup in front of Gary.

EXT. DAYCARE CENTER

A slightly rundown building with a fenced-in play area. A sign over the door reads: 'LIL STINKERS DAYCARE.

INT. DAYCARE CENTER

An open room full of tables, chairs, and toys. A group of TODDLERS and PRE-SCHOOL-AGED KIDS are seated in a group on a carpet. A matronly TEACHER with a fuzzy upper lip stands before the kids with her hands on Gracie's shoulders. Gracie is staring up at her.

TEACHER
Children, today we have a new 'Lil Stinker. Her name is Gracie. Can everyone say, "Hello-o-o, Gracie!"

KIDS
Hello-o-o, Gracie!

TEACHER
Now, Gracie, what do you say?

GRACIE
I say you need a shave.

The Kids all laugh. The Teacher scowls.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE. HANDBAGS

Judith is behind the counter in the handbag department. She's being trained by a portly, female FLOOR MANAGER. They're wearing store uniforms.

FLOOR MANAGER
We encourage customers to use our credit card, so first ask if they'd like to use their Kandle-Preston card.

Judith is slightly overwhelmed. Something catches her eye.

HER POV

Stephanie and Coffey are browsing the make-up department.

INT. STORE. JUDITH AND FLOOR MANAGER

Judith is nervously watching Coffey and Stephanie.

FLOOR MANAGER
I'll let you go ahead. Good luck.

INT. STORE. COFFEY AND STEPHANIE

As Coffey samples a fragrance she sees Judith. She nudges Stephanie.

STEPHANIE
Oh, Lord. How sad is that?

INT. STORE. JUDITH'S COUNTER

Coffey and Stephanie approach. Judith smiles grimly.

COFFEY
Oh, honey, what on earth are you doing?

JUDITH
(brusque)
Working. What can I do for you?

Coffey dumps an armload of designer clothing on the counter. Judith begins pulling tags and ringing up the sale.

COFFEY
All that post-graduate work for this?

Judith ignores the remark and forces a smile. She prepares to bag the garments.

COFFEY (cont'd)
In boxes please.

Judith nods reluctantly and begins to fold the garments.
Stephanie nudges Coffey.

STEPHANIE
Sweetheart, could you please fold a
little more carefully? That's a lot
of money there.

Coffey chokes back a guffaw. Judith bites her lip and refolds
the garment. She reaches under the counter for a large box.

COFFEY
Individual boxes.

Judith exchanges the large box for several small boxes.

COFFEY (cont'd)
Gift boxes.

Judith puts the small boxes back and searches for gift boxes.
A pair of UPSCALE WOMEN shoppers approach the counter and
wait impatiently behind Coffey and Stephanie.

UPSCALE WOMAN
(hissing angrily)
Miss! How long is this going to
take?

Judith pops up from behind the counter.

JUDITH
Just a moment, please...

COFFEY
(to the Women)
She's new.
(to Judith)
Sweetie? You didn't take my credit
card.

Judith is completely frazzled. She takes the card from Coffey
and angrily slides it through the reader, yanking the machine
off the counter. Coffey and Stephanie burst out laughing.

UPSCALE WOMAN
Oh, for God's sake!

The Floor Manager returns as Judith is struggling to put the
credit card reader back on the counter.

FLOOR MANAGER
Judith, I'll take over here. A baby
threw up in casual wear. It'll take
too long to get a janitor up here,
so I need you to clean it up ASAP.

Stephanie and Coffey double over in hysterics. Coffey lets
out a horrendous, horse-like BRAY. Stephanie SNORTS. Judith
turns and rushes away in humiliation.

INT. DAYCARE CENTER

The teacher sits in her office area, gabbing on the phone.

TEACHER
So I told him, unless you plan on
sleeping on the sofa, you better...

A CHILD CRIES O.S.

TEACHER (cont'd)
(annoyed)
Hang on.

The Teacher walks into the main room. Gracie and some of the Toddlers are seated at a table covered with paint and brushes and paper. One of the Toddlers is CRYING.

TEACHER (cont'd)
What's going on?

CRYING TODDLER
Gracie won't share.

GRACIE
She's not even painting a real
picture. She's just making circles.

The Teacher frowns angrily.

TEACHER
I've had enough of your attitude,
Gracie. Now you share the paint, or
you'll have to go home.

GRACIE
Promise?

The Teacher shakes her head in disgust and returns to her office. She picks up the phone and resumes her conversation.

TEACHER
So anyways...

A shrieking SCREAM sends her back to the play room.

INT. DAYCARE. MAIN ROOM

The Crying Toddler is now SCREAMING. Her hair, face, and clothes are dripping paint. Gracie is calmly working next to her. She looks up and smiles sweetly at the Teacher.

GRACIE
Can I go home now?

The Teacher's face simmers with anger.

EXT. HANDY HANK'S. WAREHOUSE. LOADING DOCK

Gary is trying to operate a lift truck. He can only manage circles. A Latino supervisor, LEOBARTO SALINAS, and his helper, a young Latino man, ALBERTO VEGA, approach. Their Spanish is translated into English subtitles.

LEOBARTO
Oye! Estas ensuciando el
piso, estúpido!

ENGLISH
Hey! You're getting tire
marks all over the goddamn
floor, you moron!

Gary turns toward them and stops.

GARY
Excuse me?

LEOBARTO
(sighs, to Alberto)
Contrataron a otro pinche
gringo que era un ejecutivo y
que fue despedido y no sabe
nada. Y es mas facil entrenar
a un gato.

ENGLISH
They hired another big shot
white businessman who got
fired. Cats are easier to
train.

GARY (cont'd)
Buenos dais.

LEOBARTO
Tardes.

Gary climbs off the lift truck. He's dressed in woven leather loafers, linen slacks, a cotton dress shirt, and a Handy Hank vest and cap. He offers his hand.

GARY
Nice to meet you, Tardes. I'm Gary
Grigsby.

Alberto gives Leobarto a withering look.

ALBERTO
Que idiota. Mira lo que trae
puesto.

ENGLISH
What a jackass. Look at what
he's wearing.

LEOBARTO
Tengo el trabajo perfecto
para el.

ENGLISH
I've got the perfect job for
him.

Leobarto turns to Gary.

LEOBARTO
(in English)
Get away from the lift truck and
come with me.

Leobarta takes Gary by the arm and turns him towards the back of the loading dock, where an enormous, ten-foot high pile of fertilizer has been dumped next to a pallet of plastic bags.

LEOBARTO (cont'd)
I want you to bag this fertilizer.

Gary takes a sniff in horror.

GARY
Excuse me, I don't think this is
fertilizer. I think it's manure.

A group of nearby WORKERS LAUGH at Gary. Leobarto rubs his forehead in exasperation.

LEOBARTO
What the hell do you think
fertilizer is made of, pendejo?

Everyone LAUGHS again. Leobarto grabs a shovel and shoves it into Gary's hands. He points to the manure, and then to the bags. Gary daintily tiptoes into the manure, trying to keep his shoes clean. He scoops up a tiny shovelful and plops it into the bag. Alberto and Leobarto watch in disbelief.

ALBERTO	ENGLISH
Le doy una semana.	I give him a week.

INT. JUNIOR HIGH. CAFETERIA

The cafeteria doubles as a study hall. CAMERA FINDS Wendy sitting alone listening to her iPod. She's not eating. LORNA BYRD sets her lunch tray on the table and sits across from Wendy. She's a fast-talking sixth-grader with braces, a sweet but unique face, skinny, and underdeveloped. She gives Wendy a smile. Wendy removes her ear buds.

LORNA
Are you trying to be a pariah?

Wendy doesn't respond.

LORNA (cont'd)
I see you're having an air burger
with conceptual fries. I'm Lorna.
You're Wendy the Pervert.

WENDY
Excuse me?

LORNA
Joke. My brother said you were
cruising the boy's bathrooms. Not
that he minds that sort of thing.

Wendy is offended. She puts her ear buds back in her ears.

LORNA (cont'd)
I'm only kidding. You fell for an
old trick.

Wendy removes her ear buds.

WENDY

What?

LORNA

I said you fell for an old trick.
Not that you didn't deserve it.
What you did to Sioux Plummer at
the library is legendary. Your
reputation preceded you.

WENDY

C'est la vie.

LORNA

Your target selection wasn't very
good. She's a nice person and well-
liked even if nobody can spell her
name. It's Sioux like the Native-
American tribe, not the legal
tactic. Do you want some food?

WENDY

No.

INT. CAFETERIA. SIOUX

She's with her FRIENDS. She's watching Lorna and Wendy. Wendy
looks back at Sioux. Sioux looks away.

INT. CAFETERIA. WENDY AND LORNA

Wendy turns back to Lorna. Lorna sets her salad on the table
and slides it across to Wendy.

LORNA

Don't worry. The cafeteria ladies
wear gloves.

(continues, quickly)

You need to apologize to Sioux.
Shooting cherry Slurpee into the
shorts of somebody our age is
powerfully offensive. If you don't
apologize, it means you don't
recognize the symbolism of your
actions which means you don't
accept that she is an emotional
creature like yourself which we
believe is a fundamental tenant of
elitism. I don't mean to make this
place sound like Baghdad Junior
High, but a simple apology will
save you an acre of misery.

She pops her soda can.

LORNA (cont'd)

That's a cute outfit.

Wendy considers what she's said.

INT. JUNIOR HIGH. GYM. DAY

BOYS play dodge ball. Sides switch and Damon goes to the wall with the other Boys. The COACH BLOWS HIS WHISTLE. The Boys scatter leaving Damon alone. He's pelted with balls. The COACH BLOWS HIS WHISTLE. He walks over to Wade.

COACH
It looks to me like you guys
conspired to cream Harmon.

WADE
No, sir. Harmon's our friend.

COACH
Harmon? You alright?

DAMON
Yep.

COACH
(blows his whistle)
Switch sides.

The Boys change places. Coach exits. The Boys pelt Damon with the balls again.

EXT. GRIGSBYS HOUSE. EARLY EVENING

The Explorer is parked in the driveway. It's full of home improvement supplies that Gary brought home from Handy Hank.

INT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. NIGHT

The family is having dinner in the tiny dining room. Gary and Judith are completely wiped-out. Damon has a split lip.

GARY
What did you do to your lip?

DAMON
Paper cut.

JUDITH
It looks swollen.

DAMON
It's fine.

WENDY
Without being controversial may I
ask what this is on my plate?

JUDITH
It's tuna fish casserole. But it
got a little burned.

Everyone looks down at the unappetizing gray lumps on their plates. Gracie spears a piece of tuna and holds it up.

GRACIE
This is not sushi grade tuna.

JUDITH
It's canned tuna fish.

GRACIE
Fish in a can? Great. What's for
dessert? Profiteroles in a sweat
sock?

Damon takes a bite. He grimaces. Gracie raises her fork. She wrinkles her nose.

GRACIE (cont'd)
Why does it smell like poop?

JUDITH
That's not your food, honey. It's
Daddy.

GARY
I took two showers and used an
entire bar of soap, but I can't get
rid of the fertilizer smell.

Wendy throws down her fork.

WENDY
I'm suddenly not very hungry.
Excuse me.

Wendy gets up and leaves the room. Damon pushes away from the table and stands.

DAMON
Sorry. But I think I'm done, too.

GRACIE
Me, three.

Damon exits. Gracie follows. Judith looks to Gary.

JUDITH
This is hopeless.

Gary sighs.

GARY
It's all in how you look at it.

JUDITH
Who are we kidding? Gracie got
kicked out of daycare. Damon
obviously got in a fight. Wendy
says she's a pariah. I'm a store
clerk, and you spent the day
shovelling feces.

GARY

Manure.

JUDITH

Semantics. We can't go on like this. It's time to talk about Tucson.

Gary nods wearily.

GARY

Maybe so. But not tonight. I'm too tired to think. Let's get some sleep and decide what to do in the morning.

INT. GRIGSBYS HOUSE. BEDROOM. MORNING

Gary and Judith are sleeping on the bed, still fully clothed from the day before.

EXT. HOUSE. EXPLORER

NEIGHBORS surround the car, led by Harold. He opens the back of the Explorer and hands a roll of vinyl flooring to WILL HENRY, a stout, middle-aged African-American. He passes a can of paint to an elderly couple, MR. and MRS. GUMMER.

EXT. HOUSE. LIVING ROOM WINDOW

Damon glances out the window.

INT. BEDROOM

Gary is still asleep. Damon calls for Gary.

DAMON (O.S.)

Dad! Hurry!

Gary sits up with a start.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Gary rushes into the living room, wiping sleep from his eyes.

DAMON

The neighbors are stealing our stuff!

EXT. HOUSE

Gary runs out the door. The family follows.

GARY

Hey! What the hell are you people doing?!

The neighbors, arms loaded with home improvement supplies, freeze.

GARY (cont'd)
Put it back or I'm calling the
police!

Harold Chamberlain steps forward.

HAROLD
Sorry, neighbor. We just came by to
help you fix the place up. We're
the welcoming committee.

The color drains from Gary's face. Judith steps around Gary.

JUDITH
We're so sorry.

Gary holds his shocked expression.

JUDITH (cont'd)
We're the Grigsbys. Hi. I'm Judith.

Harold offers his hand.

HAROLD
Harold Chamberlain. I met your
husband when you moved in.

Vern steps around Harold. She's wearing overalls and a work
shirt.

HAROLD (cont'd)
This is my wife, Vern.

JUDITH
Judith. My pleasure.

HAROLD
Donny!

A gangly, pre-teen, DONNY, approaches. He's wearing a warm-up
suit zippered to the top.

HAROLD (cont'd)
This is our boy, Donny.

Donny offers his hand.

HAROLD (cont'd)
Didn't I tell you, don't shake
people's hands until the sores dry
up?

JUDITH
Nice to meet you, Donny.
(to the group)
I'm so sorry, everyone. We looked
out the window and we saw all of
you...

HAROLD
Not another word. We were going to
knock but we thought we'd surprise
you.

JUDITH
(with an embarrassed
smile)
Well, you certainly surprised my
husband.

CU. GARY

He's still holding his shocked expression.

INT. LIVING ROOM. OVERHEAD. LATER

The old carpet is ripped up to reveal yellow shag beneath.

INT. BEDROOM. WINDOW

An air chisel rips into a rotted sash.

INT. BASEMENT. ELECTRIC SERVICE BOX

The panel opens revealing a tangle of twisted, frayed,
burned, and disconnected wires.

INT. KITCHEN

Harold and Will are pulling up the old vinyl sheet flooring.
Gary steps into the doorway.

GARY
Can you put me to work? I was in
the construction business for
fifteen years.

HAROLD
You ever done any carpentry?

GARY
No.

HAROLD
Dry wall?

GARY
No.

HAROLD
Electrical?

Gary shakes his head, no.

HAROLD (cont'd)
Do you operate any equipment?

GARY
(after a pause)
Palm Pilot.

HAROLD
Why don't you see if the kids need
some help?

INT. KITCHEN. OVERHEAD

As the vinyl comes up, the sagging center is revealed to be a
gaping hole in the floor.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Vern is looking at the filthy, water-stained drapes. Judith
is covering the bed with a plastic tarp.

VERN
You want to hold onto these? They
might clean up.

JUDITH
(gently)
I'm getting new drapes.

Vern sniffs the fabric.

VERN
P.U.! Never mind. Raccoons got
these. You can't wash-out coon
spunk.

INT. BEDROOM

CODY REGNER, an attractive woman in her early 30's, is
steaming wallpaper. A piece of the stained paper falls
revealing that it was covering a hole in the wall. Judith
looks through the hole.

JUDITH
Hi. Judith Grigsby.

Cody sticks her hand into the hole.

CODY
Cody Regner. Nice to meet you.

INT. BASEMENT. CEILING. UP ANGLE

A sheet of plywood slams down over the new joists in the
kitchen floor.

INT. BEDROOM WALL

Sheet rock goes up.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

A table saw has been set up and Will is cutting baseboard. Harold carries a pair of saw horses into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

Harold sets the saw horses down and exits. Mrs. Gummer is making lemonade. Gracie peeks into the room from the screen porch. Mrs. Gummer looks over her shoulder and smiles.

MRS. GUMMER

Are you going to help serve refreshments?

GRACIE

Do I look like a waitress?

Harold enters with a sheet of plywood. Mrs. Gummer steps out of his way and onto the porch as Harold lays the plywood across the saw horses to make a work surface.

INT. SCREEN PORCH

Gracie backs away as Mrs. Gummer enters.

MRS. GUMMER

I'm Mrs. Gummer. Are you Gracie?

GRACIE

Who told you?

MRS. GUMMER

Your sister.

GRACIE

She has a big mouth.

Harold pokes his head in.

HAROLD

All set.

MRS. GUMMER

Thank you.

(to Gracie)

That's Mr. Chamberlain. He's your next-door neighbor.

GRACIE

He's fat.

MRS. GUMMER

I'm a little fat myself.

GRACIE

At least you're honest.

MRS. GUMMER
I'll bet you a nickel that one day
you and I are going to be friends.

GRACIE
You won't live that long.

MRS. GUMMER
Oh, I think I might. I have a lot
of little friends. The moms in the
neighborhood who work leave their
children with me during the day.

GRACIE
Do you have a care provider's
license?

MRS. GUMMER
(chuckles)
I have something much, much better.
I have the trust of my neighbors.

GRACIE
Good luck in court.

MRS. GUMMER
Maybe when your folks go to work on
Monday, you'll come visit me.

GRACIE
I'd rather eat kitty litter.

Mrs. Gummer gives Gracie a smile and returns to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

Mrs. Gummer continues making her lemonade at the kitchen
sink. Gracie peeks into the kitchen and watches her from
behind. Mrs. Gummer senses the little eyes on her. She grins.

MRS. GUMMER
(without turning around)
I'm famous for my lemonade.

Gracie disappears.

EXT. HOUSE

Wendy comes down the walk with an armload of old drapery,
including the bedroom drapes. She winces at the smell of the
material. A gust of wind picks up the drapery and blows it
over her head. She stumbles and falls OUT OF FRAME.

EXT. HOUSE. WENDY. DOWN ANGLE

She sits up with the drapes over her head.

WENDY
This is so sick!

She pulls the drapes off her head and looks up.

HER POV

Kip is standing over her with a pick across his shoulders.

CU. WENDY. DOWN ANGLE

She's startled to see him. She quickly composes herself and brushes the hair out of her eyes.

EXT. HOUSE. WENDY AND KIP

Kip offers Wendy a hand up. She comes up faster than either of them expected and for a moment they are uncomfortably close. Wendy steps back, stumbling on the pile of drapes.

WENDY
(feigned chilliness)
Thank you.

Kip steps around her and heads to the house. Wendy sneaks a look back at him.

EXT. HOUSE. BACK YARD

Harold, Will, and BOBBY REGNER, a ruggedly handsome working man in his early 30's, are finishing the deck flooring.

BOBBY
I don't know why we're doing all
this work for these people. Snobby
bastards deserve to suffer.

HAROLD
Come on, Bobby.

BOBBY
These people have been spitting on
us their whole life. Now, suddenly,
they run into a little bad luck,
and we're supposed to welcome them
with open arms?

WILL
They never did anything to you.
Give them a chance.

BOBBY
Believe me, they're acting all
sweet and nice now, but that's just
what it is. A damn act. You watch,
they'll turn on us as soon as they
get the chance.

Gary comes out with four beers. He sit on the edge of the deck and passes the beers to the other guys.

GARY
I can't tell you how much we
appreciate all the help.

Bobby rolls his eyes.

HAROLD
Forget it.

GARY
I'd like to pay everybody for their
time and all the stuff they brought
over.

HAROLD
We don't get paid to be neighbors.

Gary doesn't argue it.

WILL
Next guy that moves in, you help
him.

HAROLD
So, let me ask you something. Were
you the real estate jerk that
bought this place a few years back
and left it to rot?

Gary nods sheepishly.

HAROLD (cont'd)
The kids were talking about you
coming from the east side.

GARY
Yeah.

HAROLD
Big player?

GARY
I guess I was.

HAROLD
Rolled some snake eyes?

Gary nods.

HAROLD (cont'd)
That's not something we have to
worry about, huh, Will?

Will chuckles.

GARY
We went from the top to the bottom
overnight.

Bobby glares at Gary angrily.

BOBBY
I hate to tell you, bud, this isn't
the bottom.

GARY
(realizing his error)
I didn't mean that literally.

HAROLD
We're the small but fortunate
middle. In this town we're nothing,
but in the bigger world, we're
pretty damn lucky.

He winks and taps his bottle against Gary's bottle. Gary
takes a sip as he considers Harold's words.

EXT. UTILITY SHED. NIGHT

A utility shed behind Will's house is used as a de facto
community center. Grills are glowing in the darkness.

INT. SHED

Tables from around the neighborhood have been set with
plastic tablecloths and disposable dinnerware. Damon, Wendy,
Donny, and Lorna are with the neighborhood KIDS at the buffet
table. They're laughing and goofing around.

INT. SHED. GRIGSBYS

Gary and Judith are watching the kids. They smile.

JUDITH
I can't believe the hospitality
these people are showing us.

GARY
Amazing, isn't it?

JUDITH
Even Gracie's behaving herself.

Judith nods towards a table nearby.

INT. SHED. GRACIE

She's sitting across from Mrs. Gummer. She's staring in awe.

HER POV

Dentures on the table. CAMERA TILTS UP to Mrs. Gummer.
Happily chewing. She gives Gracie a wink.

INT. SHED

Wendy and Damon join Gary and Judith with overloaded plates.

DAMON
I'm so excited to finally eat
something that doesn't come out of
a can.

WENDY
Tell me about it.

The kids begin heartily devouring the food. Judith frowns as she looks at the heavy, greasy barbecue.

JUDITH
Weren't there any low-fat options?

DAMON
Mom? Show a little gratitude, huh?

Judith frowns as she picks up a giant pulled pork sandwich.

JUDITH
I can't remember the last time I
had pork...

WENDY
It's alright, Mom. You won't die.

Gary takes a bite of his sandwich.

GARY
You can do it, Judith. It's good.
Not every day, not every meal. Just
tonight.

Judith steels herself and takes a big bite. Her grimace fades as she likes it. She smiles.

JUDITH
Wow.

INT. SHED. HAROLD

He stands up and BLOWS a DUCK CALL. The shed falls SILENT.

HAROLD
To our new neighbors and our new
friends.

Gary and Judith smile warmly at the generous welcome.

HAROLD (cont'd)
May you be with us always.

Their smiles contract slightly.

CU. WENDY

She looks over her shoulder.

HER POV

Kip is sitting with FRIENDS. He makes a mock toast to her.

CU. WENDY

She turns back quickly and blushes.

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. NIGHT

The lights are out.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. OVERHEAD. LATER

Light from the street lamp shines across the bed. Judith and Gary are in bed. She has her head on his chest.

JUDITH

Did you see how happy the kids were tonight?

GARY

Were they having a good time or are they just happy the house doesn't smell like wild game anymore?

Judith smiles and looks up at Gary.

JUDITH

Maybe we can do this.

GARY

No more Tucson?

JUDITH

I just got scared...

GARY

It's okay. It's been a big adjustment for all of us.

JUDITH

It's like starting over, isn't it?

GARY

New jobs. Little house.

JUDITH

Old car.

GARY

Time.

JUDITH

That's true. We had time back then, didn't we? Not every moment was double-booked.

GARY
Simple life. Simple pleasures.

JUDITH
Going to a movie was enough.

GARY
Getting a pizza.

JUDITH
Staying in bed on Sunday.

GARY
Because we were exhausted from
staying in bed on Saturday.

Judith laughs.

GARY (cont'd)
What?

JUDITH
That's why you're wearing your
glasses?

She points to CAMERA. CAMERA TILTS DOWN, off Judith and Gary to the wall and then the bed and Judith and Gary again. The image has been a reflection in the ceiling mirror.

GARY
(embarrassed)
That never even crossed my mind.

JUDITH
It's alright. I didn't take my
contacts out.

She peels back the covers. Gary glances up at the mirror. CAMERA MOVES OFF the bed to the nightstand and an old photo of Judith and Gary as love-struck college students sitting on the porch of an old university rental house.

EXT. GRIGSBYS' HOUSE. MORNING

The house now looks warm and cheerful. A NEWSPAPER BOY rides past on his bike. He tosses a paper into the yard.

CU. NEWSPAPER

It lands on the front walk. The headline reads -- CONGRESSMAN LARRY MERCER WINS VOTES FOR RAILROAD OVERHAUL BILL. Under the headline is a photo of the Congressman flashing a smarmy smile. At his side is Ted Westbrook, looking equally wily.

INT. HANDY HANK. WAREHOUSE. MORNING

Leobarto enters the warehouse, a cup of coffee in one hand. He stops as he sees all the fertilizer has been bagged and the entire area has been cleaned.

A forklift approaches and stops. Gary climbs down. He's wearing work boots and jeans. He smiles.

GARY
Buenos dias, Leobarto. I came in early to finish up the fertilizer, and then I unloaded my first truck. Eighteen pallets of shingles.

Leobarto smiles. He's impressed.

LEOBARTO
That's all good, gringo. But that truck you unloaded? I stayed late last night to load it.

GARY
Oh, sorry...

LEOBARTO
No problem. We'll get the guys and reload it together.

EXT. MR. AND MRS. GUMMER'S HOUSE. BACK YARD

Mr. Gummer is supervising a gaggle of PRESCHOOLERS in seed planting in the little garden plot behind the house.

MR. GUMMER
Kristen planted the carrots. Now, what does Anita want to plant?

GIRL
French fries.

EXT. GUMMER'S HOUSE. TERRACE

Gracie is sitting glumly in an old metal garden chair. Mrs. Gummer exits the house with a tray of cups, a pitcher of milk, and fresh-baked cookies.

MRS. GUMMER
Gracie? Are you planting seeds?

GRACIE
Does it look like I'm planting seeds?

MRS. GUMMER
You have to plant seeds if you want cookies.

GRACIE
Don't worry about it. I'm watching my carbs.

MRS. GUMMER
Well, maybe you'll change your mind.

GRACIE
I'll change my mind when you change
your address.

Mrs. Gummer gives Gracie an understanding smile and exits.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE

Coffey and Stephanie are standing at a counter. A SALESWOMAN is ringing them up. Judith steps over and taps her on the shoulder. She lets Judith take over. Judith smiles.

JUDITH
It's good to see you both again.
How are you?

Coffey and Stephanie are surprised to see her.

COFFEY
Fabulous. How are you holding up?

INSERT: SECURITY TAG MACHINE

Judith passes the articles under the machine, but she leaves the security tags on.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE

Judith smiles.

JUDITH
Wonderfully.

She takes Coffey's credit card and runs it through the machine.

COFFEY
I see you finally got the hang of
that.

Stephanie chortles. Judith gives them a big phoney laugh.

JUDITH
I sure did.

Coffey signs her receipt. Judith takes it and surreptitiously switches it with another one before dropping it in the bag.

STEPHANIE
Well, we'd love to stay and chat,
but we have lunch reservations at
Wave.

JUDITH
Yum.

Judith drops a few pairs of designer sunglasses into the bag before she gives them to Coffey and Stephanie. She waves as they walk away. The other Saleswoman returns.

JUDITH (cont'd)
I think they're going to miss their lunch.

Judith and the Saleswoman burst into laughter.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE. ENTRANCE. LATER

Coffey and Stephanie are laden down with bags. They pass through the security detectors. ALARMS BLARE. A heavy-set, butch FEMALE SECURITY GUARD approaches them.

COFFEY
How embarrassing. I think there's been a mistake...

FEMALE SECURITY GUARD
Receipt, please.

Coffey fishes the receipt out of the bag and hands it to the Security guard. She checks the receipt against the contents of the bag.

INSERT: RECEIPT

The name of the customer is FARAKAN MOHAMMED. The only items on the receipt are two pairs of socks and a gravy boat.

INT. STORE

The Security Guard shakes her head.

FEMALE SECURITY GUARD
I'm sorry, Miss Mohammed, but you need to come with me.

COFFEY
Miss who? What!?

The Security Guard roughly takes Coffey and Stephanie by the arms and drags them off as a group of ONLOOKERS watch.

EXT. SCHOOL. LATER

It's late. Damon exits. He's got a hitch in his step and a Band-Aid over his eye. Donny is waiting for him.

DONNY
I heard you got hammered again in gym today.

Damon shrugs.

DONNY (cont'd)
Wade's not going to stop.

DAMON
If I could get him alone, I'd destroy him.

DONNY
That's why he's on you like he is.
He knows you could kill him. All he
wants is for you to suck-up.

DAMON
I don't suck-up.

DONNY
Once. Just once. That's all. He'll
make you do something and you do it
and it's over. He leaves you alone.

DAMON
No.

DONNY
He's got everybody hating you.
Think about it. You're the lowest
of the low now. You can't go
anywhere but up.

Damon walks on ahead.

DONNY (cont'd)
One more thing you should think
about? Wade controls town. If you
think gym was bad, you don't want
to go anywhere near the park
without your parents or a cop.

EXT. PARK. AFTERNOON

Wendy walks through the park. She's never been through it.
She looks at the old trees, the brambles, the rock outcrops.

EXT. PLAYGROUND

The public school KIDS watch Wendy approach. Sioux and Kip
are sitting on swings. Lorna is sitting on a bench. She pats
the spot next to her. Wendy walks through the cold stares to
the bench and sits next to Lorna.

LORNA
What's up?

Wendy shakes her head and shrugs. Sioux gets up from the
swing and heads into the park. The other Kids follow her.
Wendy watches Kip. He exits.

LORNA (cont'd)
I realize coming over here means
something to you. Unfortunately, it
means nothing to them.
(pause)
If we're gonna stay here, I have to
hit the gas station first.

WENDY
For what?

LORNA
Nature is calling me.

She holds up a huge drink cup and rattles the cubes. Wendy grabs her hand and stands. She pulls Lorna along with her.

EXT. LIBRARY

Wendy marches up the steps with Lorna in tow. She bullies her way through the private school BOYS on the steps.

INT. LIBRARY. REST ROOM

Wendy and Lorna enter. Wendy looks under the stalls.

WENDY
Okay.

LORNA
It lacks the reality of the gas station but...

WENDY
I'll watch the door.

INT. LIBRARY. REST ROOM AREA

Wendy exits the rest room. Eliza, Ducie, and Mary Rose approach.

ELIZA
How's life in the Park?

Mary Rose crosses to the rest room. Wendy pushes her back.

WENDY
You can wait.

ELIZA
We don't appreciate you using us to impress your new, may I say, friend?

MARY ROSE
It's not our fault your parents went bankrupt.

WENDY
(to Eliza)
She learns quick. Have you taught her to kiss yet?

Eliza and Ducie blanch.

DUCIE
(nervously)
You leave us alone, we'll leave you alone.

WENDY
 (to Mary Rose)
 They wanted to teach me, but I'd
 rather learn from a boy.

Eliza and Ducie are stunned that Wendy betrayed one of their secrets. Lorna comes out of the rest room.

WENDY (cont'd)
 (to Lorna)
 Shall we?

LORNA
 (to the Girls)
 It was nice not meeting you.

Wendy and Lorna exit.

MARY ROSE
 You guys kissed?

DUCIE
 (to Mary Rose)
 We were in fifth grade.

ELIZA
 It was Ducie's idea.

Ducie is shocked.

DUCIE
 My idea?

EXT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT. NIGHT

A small, squat suburban restaurant/bar.

INT. RESTAURANT. TABLE

Gary is doing tequila shots with Leobarta and Alberto and several other Handy Hank EMPLOYEES. They're wearing their work vests. Gary throws back a shot to APPLAUSE. Leobarta hands Gary a bowl of peppers. He selects one and eats it.

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. LATER

Lights are out. A truck pulls up in front of the house. Half a dozen MEN are in the back. They help Gary out of the truck. He stands drunk and silly on the parkway.

GARY
 Adios, amigos! Me gusto mucho!
 Hagamolo otra vez!

The Truck pulls away. Gary staggers to the door, giggling. He suddenly stops.

GARY (cont'd)
 Ay caramba! Me cague!

INT. HOUSE. MORNING

Judith, Wendy, Gracie, and Damon are standing outside the bathroom door in their pajamas.

WENDY

Dad? Can you hurry up?

JUDITH

Don't bother him. He was out late with the guys from work. He's not feeling well.

DAMON

Then can you write me a note for school? Damon was late because we only have one bathroom and his father took an hour long dump this morning?

GRACIE

Daddy! I have to go!

WENDY

Forget it. I'm going to Lorna's house.

She exits.

JUDITH

Honey?

The door opens a crack.

JUDITH (cont'd)

(to the kids)

Stand back.

Gary hands an empty toilet paper core out the door.

JUDITH (cont'd)

(to Damon)

Run next door and borrow a roll of toilet paper from the Chamberlains.

Gary reaches his hand out the door as Damon exits. He holds up two fingers.

JUDITH (cont'd)

Make that two rolls.

GARY (O.S.)

And some ice.

EXT. JUNIOR HIGH. PLAY FIELD. MORNING

Wade and his minions are throwing pebbles at the lower grade STUDENTS as they cross the field. Damon approaches.

DAMON
Can I talk to you?

WADE
You seem to be doing fairly well.

DAMON
In private?

WADE
No.

DAMON
(after a pause)
Okay.

WADE
I'm listening.

DAMON
I don't want to get my ass kicked
any more.

WADE
No?

DAMON
No.

WADE
Unfortunately, I don't think cake-
eating can be cured. You can go to
our school but that doesn't make
you one of us.

DAMON
What do I have to do?

WADE
You have to prove to me that you're
not loyal to your old school.

DAMON
I'm not.

WADE
Easy to say. Hard to prove.

DAMON
How do I prove it?

WADE
Who's the fat kid you used to hang
with?

DAMON
His name is Bentsen.

WADE
He's your friend?

DAMON
I don't see him anymore.

WADE
But he might still be your friend?
I respect a guy who's loyal to his
friends.

DAMON
Maybe.

WADE
Kick his ass.

Damon doesn't respond.

WADE (cont'd)
If you can't do it, you're still a
cake-eater.

EXT. MR. AND MRS. GUMMER'S HOUSE. BACK YARD. SAME TIME

The children and Mr. and Mrs. Gummer are in the garden. The children are peering into the garden beds. Gracie stands apart from the group trying not to appear interested.

MR. GUMMER
See? These are the plants that came
from the seeds you planted. This is
Charlie's pepper plant.

Gracie turns away. Mrs. Gummer notices. She nudges Mr. Gummer. He nods.

MR. GUMMER (cont'd)
Here's Danielle's cucumber plant.
Hey, Lester, look at your lettuce.

MRS. GUMMER
What's this, dear?

MR. GUMMER
That's Gracie's pumpkin plant.

Gracie's puzzled. She sneaks a look back at the garden.

BOY
She didn't plant any seeds.

MRS. GUMMER
Sure she did. Look, Gracie.

Gracie walks over and kneels beside Mrs. Gummer.

MRS. GUMMER (cont'd)
If you take good care of it, you'll
have a very nice, fat pumpkin for
Halloween.

Gracie gently touches the tiny, tender leaves. She smiles.

MRS. GUMMER (cont'd)
Isn't it wonderful?

Gracie nods. She leans in close to Mrs. Gummer.

GRACIE
(whispers)
Did you plant it for me?

Mrs. Gummer gives her a wink and a smile.

GRACIE (cont'd)
Phew! I thought I was losing my
marbles.

INT. JUNIOR HIGH. CAFETERIA

Wendy works her way through the cafeteria to Sioux's table.
Lorna is sitting next to her. Sioux puts on her war face.

WENDY
I want to apologize for humiliating
you. I did it because I thought
that you were below me. But now I
know it was the other way around.
I'm sorry.

She offers her hand. Sioux looks at her for a long moment.

LORNA
She means it.

Sioux stands up and takes Wendy's hand.

WENDY
Thank you.

She turns and heads across the cafeteria. Sioux watches her.

SIOUX
(after a pause)
Wendy?

Wendy turns. Sioux waves her back.

SIOUX (cont'd)
(to the other girls)
Somebody want to get a chair?

One of the Girls leans across the aisle and shoves a sixth-
grade BOY off his chair. Wendy takes the chair.

LORNA
Okay. New book, chapter one, first
sentence, first word.

WENDY
Hi.

EXT. DRUGSTORE. LATER

Bentsen, Jonah, and a group of their FRIENDS come out of the drugstore. They're rowdy and loud. Bentsen steps forward into CLOSE-UP. He stops laughing. He's worried.

HIS POV

A larger group of public school BOYS are waiting across the street. Wade and Damon stand at the center of the group. Damon steps forward into the street.

EXT. DRUGSTORE

The private school boys watch in silence as Damon approaches. Bentsen steps forward to greet him. He smiles with sincerity. Damon grabs Bentsen and drives him into the drugstore wall.

Bentsen is startled. Damon is enraged. He draws his fist back. Bentsen cowers and turns his face into his shoulder...

Damon lowers his fist.

EXT. STREET. PUBLIC SCHOOL BOYS

Wade grins.

WADE
He can't do it.

EXT. DRUGSTORE

Damon pushes off of Bentsen and steps back. He turns and walks back to the street.

EXT. STREET. OVERHEAD

Damon marches across the street.

EXT. STREET. WADE

CAMERA PUSHES IN on Wade. His smug grin sags.

EXT. STREET. PUBLIC SCHOOL BOYS

Damon draws back his fist and punches Wade. He drops to his knees. Damon steps back, holding up his fists. Wade staggers to his feet. He's bleeding from the nose. He pushes through the Boys and runs off. The Boys CHEER.

CU. DONNY

A huge smile spreads across his cheeks.

EXT. DRUGSTORE. BENTSEN

He stands at the curb, grinning.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD. CU. PLYWOOD. MORNING

An air nailer BANGS along a sheet of plywood. CAMERA PULLS BACK AND BOOMS UP to see Gary, in work clothes, using the air nailer with skill and confidence.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD. STREET

Gary and the NEIGHBORHOOD MEN are building a stage at the end of the block. A lighting rig goes up over the stage.

EXT. FRONT LAWNS. LATER

NEIGHBORS are pitching tents on their lawns.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD. STREET

KIDS are setting up an assortment of kitchen and dining room chairs in front of the stage. At the opposite end of the street, NEIGHBORS are setting up grills and tables.

EXT. STREET. DUSK

Bobby sets a construction barricade at the end of the street. A sign on it reads: ROAD CLOSED. PRIVATE PARTY.

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. NIGHT

The Grigsbys exit in their pajamas and robes. CAMERA FOLLOWS them to the street. Grills are smoking, trees are lit, NEIGHBORS in pajamas are on the lawns and street. The stage is lit. MUSIC IS PLAYING.

EXT. STREET. LATER

Gary and Judith are with Harold, Vern, Giselle, and Will. It's like any cocktail party except they're in pajamas on a front lawn drinking from plastic tumblers.

JUDITH

Everything's so beautiful. The stage is amazing. And the lights...

WILL

Jim Buck works for a firm that does big concerts. He does a nice job.

VERN

You never had a neighborhood slumber party over there on the east side?

Judith and Gary laugh.

HAROLD

(looks at his watch)
Bottoms up, men. We gotta get ready.

Harold downs his drink. The men exit.

EXT. LAWN

Damon and Donny are sitting on the curb eating ribs. Donny pokes Damon. Damon looks up.

HIS POV

Bathsheba and her parents, OLLIE and RUTH, are across the street sitting in lawn chairs with their dinner plates in their laps. They're holding hands and saying grace. Ollie has his pajamas buttoned to the neck. He's wearing a robe and street shoes. Ruth is wearing a housecoat and black, crepe sole shoes. Bathsheba is wearing a full-length nightgown closed at the neck and sneakers.

EXT. STREET. GRILLS

The grills are ringed with children toasting marshmallows on sticks. Gracie is among them. Mrs. Gummer is supervising.

MRS. GUMMER

Last one. We have to get ready.

EXT. GARAGE. ROOF

Sioux, Lorna, and Wendy are sitting on a flat garage roof eating toasted marshmallows.

LORNA

Pretty hick, huh?

WENDY

I think it's fun. So far.

SIOUX

It'll get better.

Kip appears behind the girls. Lorna slides away from Wendy to make room for him. He sits down. Wendy's startled.

KIP

Hi.

Kip takes her stick and eats the rest of her marshmallow.

KIP (cont'd)

Hot.

MUSIC COMES UP.

EXT. STAGE. LATER

Mr. Gummer is PLAYING an old UPRIGHT PIANO in the light of a single spot. In the style of Johnny Mercer, he SINGS the "Firefly Song." The CHILDREN enter wearing tissue and coat hanger wings. They line up and turn around revealing flashing road signal lamps strapped to their bottoms.

EXT. STREET. SEATS

The AUDIENCE LAUGHS and APPLAUDS. MUSIC CROSS-FADES to TRUMPET, ACCORDION, BASS, and PIANO PLAYING "Strip Polka."

EXT. STAGE

A band of middle-aged NEIGHBORS is PLAYING. Mr. Gummer is SINGING. Gary, Harold, Will, and Bobby cross the stage dressed in nightgowns, boots, wigs, and hats. They SING THE CHORUS. Poorly.

EXT. STREET

The AUDIENCE HOWLS WITH LAUGHTER.

EXT. STAGE

The Men fling their hats into the crowd.

EXT. ROOF. GIRLS

The Girls and Kip are LAUGHING. Wendy falls into Kip LAUGHING. She catches herself and straightens up.

EXT. STAGE

The Men let their gowns fall. They're wearing union suits with the sleeves cut off. They turn their backs to the audience and drop their seat flaps exposing their bare bottoms.

EXT. LAWN

The Children are rolling on the lawn SCREAMING WITH LAUGHTER.

EXT. LAWN. THE JOHNSONS

Their heads are bowed in prayer. Ruth sneaks a look.

EXT. STAGE

The Men pull off their wigs and bow.

EXT. STREET. AUDIENCE

They APPLAUD WILDLY. BASS FADES UP. DRUMS and PIANO COME IN. BARITONE SAX PLAYS a slow, sexy version of "Night Train."

EXT. STAGE. CU. BARITONE SAX

CAMERA BOOMS UP from the bell, to the valves and fingers deftly working them, to the mouthpiece and a St. Bernard. His jowls rise and fall as he breathes and blows.

EXT. STAGE

The St. Bernard is sitting on a stool. Will is standing behind him holding the horn, fingering the valves.

EXT. STREET. AUDIENCE

They LAUGH, SCREAM, WHISTLE.

INSERT: ST. BERNARD'S TAIL

It's wagging in time to the music.

EXT. STREET

The neighborhood dogs are mesmerized.

CU. ST. BERNARD

He winks at the dogs.

EXT. STREET. DOGS

They throw their heads back and HOWL.

EXT. AUDIENCE. HAROLD

He jumps up and cups his hands to his mouth.

HAROLD
BLOW, BUDDHA, BLOW!

EXT. STAGE. ST. BERNARD

His eyelids slide closed and he BLOWS A SOLO.

EXT. HAROLD'S ROOF

The cat looks out of the chimney with her paws over her ears.

EXT. STAGE. LATER

Mr. Gummer is at the piano.

MR. GUMMER
Finally, to bring this wonderful
evening to an end, the Johnsons.

Ollie and Ruth flank Bathsheba. Bathsheba SINGS in an angelic voice as Ollie and Ruth HUM along.

BATHSHEBA
Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
Should I die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

EXT. AUDIENCE

Respectful applause.

EXT. STAGE

Ruth, Ollie, and Bathsheba step forward and bow. The floor lights shine up on Ollie and Ruth's faces and up Bathsheba's nightgown, silhouetting her naked body.

EXT. AUDIENCE

The APPLAUSE CONTINUES with an exchange of uncomfortable glances and smirks.

EXT. STAGE

Bathsheba smiles sweetly.

BATHSHEBA
God bless and sweet dreams.

EXT. STREET. DAMON AND DONNY

Damon grins. Donny faints.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD. LATER

It's dark except for camp lights in the tents and the flashlight beams of KIDS and PARENTS going to their tents.

INT. TENT

Kip, Sioux, Lorna, and Wendy are in sleeping bags. A camp light is on. Lorna and Sioux are between Wendy and Kip.

SIOUX
You know what Lorna?

LORNA
We're in the wrong tent.

They unzip their bags. Wendy and Kip sit up in their bags.

WENDY
(nervously)
You don't have to leave.

SIOUX
Bye.

They exit. Wendy looks at Kip.

KIP
Should I leave?

WENDY
Do you want to leave?

KIP
Do you want me to leave?

WENDY
Can I think about it?

KIP
Sure.

He lies back down. She lies down.

INT. TENT

Judith crawls into a dark tent. She lifts the sleeping bag and slips into it. She's a little drunk.

INT. ANOTHER TENT

Gary clumsily wiggles into a sleeping bag and puts his arm around the other person in it. He kisses the person's neck.

INT. A THIRD TENT

Cody crawls into the tent and slithers into a sleeping bag. She squirms out of her black nightie. She tosses it aside.

INSERT: NIGHTIE

It lands atop a huge, pink nightgown.

INT. JUDITH'S TENT

She grins and snuggles back into the other person. An arm slides around her waist.

JUDITH
(whispers)
Your hand feels so big.

VOICE
(whispers)
You butt feels so small.

INT. CODY'S TENT

Cody snuggles against the other person in the sleeping bag.

CODY
(whispers)
Did you shave your back?

VOICE
(whispers)
I had it waxed on Tuesday.

INT. GARY'S TENT

Gary peels back the sleeping bag and looks in horror at a hairy shoulder. CAMERA BOOMS DOWN to see Bobby looking at the hair on Gary's hand. He brushes it with his finger.

INT. CODY'S TENT. VERN

She puts her cell phone to her ear.

INT. JUDITH'S TENT

A phone is RINGING inside the sleeping bag. Judith is GIGGLING. We hear a MUFFLED VOICE answer the call.

VOICE
This is Harold.

Judith's mouth opens in a silent scream.

INT. CODY'S TENT. CU. VERN

The PHONE BEEPS as the call is terminated.

CODY
Is this you, Vern?

VERN
I'm afraid so.

CODY
Then who's this?

VERN
That's my other one.

INT. GARY'S TENT

Gary withdraws his hand.

BOBBY
Any chance you got a flashlight in
your pocket?

GARY
I'd give my left arm to say yes.

EXT. LAWN. TENTS

Flashlights crisscross the lawn as the couples quickly find their spouses and their correct tents.

GARY
Beautiful night.

HAROLD
Not a cloud in the sky.

BOBBY
Good sleeping weather.

INT. WENDY'S TENT

She rolls over to face Kip. He's watching her.

KIP
Can't fall asleep?

WENDY
Can't you?

KIP
I could. If I wanted to.

WENDY
You don't want to?

KIP
Not really.

WENDY
Maybe we should call a truce.

KIP
Are we at war?

WENDY
We're not very friendly to each other.

KIP
A truce is okay with me.

WENDY
We have to go to school together,
we live in the same neighborhood.
We're going to see each other a
lot. Whether or not we want to.

Kip reaches his hand across the tent.

KIP
Truce.

Wendy takes his hand. He holds it. They stare at each other for a moment. He inches a little closer. She inches a little closer. Their hearts are pounding. The tent flap suddenly opens and Ollie and Ruth Johnson crawl in.

OLLIE
Room at the inn?

Kip and Wendy offer polite, embarrassed smiles.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD. WIDE. LATER

A flashlight beam shines up a driveway to an RV.

INT. RV. DOOR

The door opens and Gracie pokes her head in. She turns off her flashlight and enters.

INT. BEDROOM. OVERHEAD

Gracie crawls between the Gummers and slips under the covers.

CU. MRS. GUMMER

She opens her eyes for a moment and grins.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD. DAY

The MAILMAN is leafing through the mail.

INSERT: LETTERS

Identical letters from the City of Alden Hills, Building Department Zoning Board.

INT. GRIGSBYS' HOUSE. NIGHT

Judith and Gary are sitting in the dining room. Gary's reading a letter. Judith is watching him nervously.

GARY

They got everything and it's not enough. Now they want to tear down our neighborhood to make way for their goddamn private school!

He tosses the letter on the table.

JUDITH

How can the city take our property from us?

GARY

They don't take it, they buy it.

JUDITH

What if we don't want to sell?

GARY

We have to. It's the right of eminent domain. It can happen to anybody, anywhere, and it's completely legal.

JUDITH

Did you know they were going to do this?

GARY

It was my understanding they were going to add on to the existing school, not build a new one.

Wendy and Damon enter cautiously.

WENDY

Are you guys fighting?

JUDITH

No.

WENDY

(cautiously)

Did you go broke again?

JUDITH

No, no, honey.

GARY

The city wants to condemn the neighborhood.

WENDY

So? Everybody condemns this neighborhood.

GARY

No, sweetheart. This is a legal thing. They tear down the houses to use the land for something else.

DAMON

They're going to tear our house down?

Gracie wanders in.

WENDY

(slumps in a chair)

What's next? Locusts?

DAMON

What are they going to build?

GARY

A new middle school for the Academy.

DAMON

They're tearing down our neighborhood to build another private school? What the hell is that?

JUDITH

Damon.

GARY

I'll tell you what it is. It's a crock of...I don't know.

GRACIE

Does it begin with an "s?"

INT. WILL'S SHED. NIGHT

The NEIGHBORS are gathered in Will's shed in the early evening. The mood is somber. Harold is addressing the crowd.

HAROLD
Everybody get their letter today?

He waves his letter.

HAROLD (cont'd)
The condemnation hearing is set for next Tuesday night. I want us all to be there to put up a good fight. As you may or may not know, Gary and Judith came from the other side of town. They know some of these people. Maybe they can help us prepare for Tuesday.

Gary and Judith rise.

GARY
The good news, if there is good news, is that if we lose on Tuesday, we get bought out at the market price.

BOBBY
That's not the point.

CODY
How can they just decide to tear down our neighborhood? It's been here for a hundred years. My grandmother lived here.
(to the Gummers)
When did you move in?

MR. GUMMER
When I got out of the service in '45.

JUDITH
If the zoning board deems that it's in the best interest of the city, they can do it.

WILL
To add on to a school we can't afford to send our kids to?

GARY
The truth is it's almost impossible to win one of these things.

VERN
You want us to just roll over?

GARY
Of course not...

Bobby Regner stands up angrily.

BOBBY
I always knew when push came to
shove, you'd show your true colors.

GARY
What's that supposed to mean?

BOBBY
You don't give a rat's ass about
this neighborhood or any of us. And
now you're siding with them.

JUDITH
(annoyed)
That is not true!

Gary puts his arm on Judith's shoulder.

GARY
Look, we'll do everything we can. I
just think we need to be realistic
about our chances.

Bobby shakes his head in disappointment. The neighbors
MURMUR. Their attitude has changed towards the Grigsbys.

EXT. SHED

The kids, who were not invited, are listening at the closed
door. They're worried. Kip is leaning against his dirt bike.

LORNA
It doesn't sound good.

KIP
(to Wendy)
I guess we'll find out Tuesday if
you're with us or not.

WENDY
You're forgetting that this is my
neighborhood, too.

KIP
Is it?

WENDY
Yeah. It is.

KIP
We didn't have trouble like this
until your family moved in.

WENDY
That's pretty ignorant.

Kip climbs onto his dirt bike, starts the engine, and ROARS
off through the backyard towards his house.

SIOUX
He's just upset. Nobody wants to
get their house torn down.

WENDY
Me included.

Wendy thinks for a moment. She exits.

EXT. ALDEN HILLS. TOWN HALL

The centerpiece of a complex of handsome, new municipal buildings, well outside of the old town center, surrounded by conservation land. Wendy's bike is chained to a signpost outside the building.

INT. TOWN HALL. MAYOR'S OFFICE

Wendy is standing in the outer office, before a steely RECEPTIONIST wearing rimless spectacles. She's peering down her nose at Wendy.

RECEPTIONIST
I'm sorry, but the mayor is a very busy man.

WENDY
Yeah. And this is a very important matter. It affects the lives of a lot of families in Alden Hills.

RECEPTIONIST
Let me suggest that you sit down with your Mom and Dad and write the mayor a letter outlining...

Wendy leans forward on the Receptionist's desk.

WENDY
(firmly)
Excuse me. I'm young. I'm not stupid. I don't vote - yet - but I have rights and I plan to exercise them.

RECEPTIONIST
That may be true but you're not going to exercise them here. Good afternoon.

WENDY
Don't think this is over. Don't think we're going to just go along quietly. We know what's going on. My mother is very smart. My father is very...tenacious. We're going to put up a fight. And we're going to win!

Wendy turns on her heels and leaves angrily.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE. DOOR

The MAYOR, a rotund, meek, obsequious man in his mid-50's, has been standing at the door to his outer office, watching Wendy through the jamb. He scampers back to his desk with a concerned look on his face. He dials the phone.

MAYOR
Walter? It's Duncan. Listen, one of the Grigsby kids was just in here, making a ruckus about the hearing next week.

INT. WEEMS HOUSE. STUDY

Walter Weems is seated behind his desk. He frowns.

WALTER
Did she say whether or not they know anything?

CU. MAYOR

Mopping his brow.

MAYOR
Not specifically, but she was pretty fired-up. Either she heard something at home and came in on her own or she's being used to deliver a message.

CU. WALTER

Walter thinks for a moment.

WALTER
I'll take care of it.

INT. HANDY HANK HOME CENTER

Bill and Marshall walk down a broad aisle in the vast store.

MARSHALL
If you see a cab, flag it down.

Gary comes around the corner on his lift truck. He's carrying a pair of toilets on a pallet. He slows to a stop. Bill and Marshall approach. Gary's embarrassed and solicitous. Marshall taps the toilet bowl with his Harvard ring. Bill offers his hand to Gary.

BILL
Gary.

Gary reluctantly shakes Bill's hand.

MARSHALL
I'm not going to say a word, buddy.

GARY
How can I help you?

BILL
We tried to call you here at
the...office?...but whoever
answered the phone didn't speak
very good English...

Marshall chuckles. Gary remains stone-faced.

BILL (cont'd)
Anyway, we were hoping you could
meet Walter and the two of us at
the club tonight. There's something
we'd like to talk to you about.

GARY
What?

MARSHALL
It'll be worth your while. What
time do you punch out?

GARY
Five.

MARSHALL
We'll see you at five-thirty.

Gary nods uneasily.

EXT. CLUB. EVENING

A stately, limestone building.

INT. CLUB. LOUNGE

Gary is seated on a leather couch across from Walter, Bill,
and Marshall. He's still dressed in his work clothes. Bill,
Walter, and Marshall are all dressed impeccably.

WALTER
Thanks for coming, Gary. It's good
to see you.

A WAITER hands Gary a cocktail. Gary takes a sip. He nods
appreciatively. Marshall opens a box of cigars.

MARSHALL
Cohiba? Ted brought them back from
his visit to Havana last month.

Gary takes one and lights it up. It's good.

GARY
So what's this all about?

WALTER
We have some good news for you,
Gary. A few of us at the Club have
gotten together and committed a sum
of money to guarantee a modest line
of credit for you.

Gary looks up in surprise.

WALTER (cont'd)
It's not enormous, but it should be
enough to get your business back.

Gary is overwhelmed.

GARY
I don't know what to say...

BILL
We've got papers right here.

He hands Gary an envelope.

MARSHALL
Put a happy ending on your story.

Gary looks down at the envelope. He smiles. After a moment,
the smile disappears. He looks up suspiciously.

GARY
Why are you doing this?

MARSHALL
We know it's been hard for you. But
this could be your chance. Get your
kids back in a good school. Get the
wife out of the department store.
Find yourself a nice house. Get
back on the golf course.

GARY
Okay, but what do you want from me?

Walter chuckles.

WALTER
You always were a sharp one, Gary.

Bill clears his throat.

BILL
As you know, there's a hearing
coming up about your neighborhood.

Gary's face clouds over. He nods.

MARSHALL
We'd like you to stop making waves
and let events take their natural
course.

GARY
(confused)
Stop making waves?

WALTER
Come on, Gary. Don't play games.
Your daughter was raising holy hell
in the mayor's office this morning.

Gary looks at Walter incredulously.

WALTER (cont'd)
Poor old Duncan almost had a heart
attack. He's not built for that
sort of excitement.

Bill and Marshall chuckle.

MARSHALL
We just think we should all stick
together on this. Maybe you can
even help smooth things over with
your neighbors.

WALTER
It's really a win-win situation for
all involved.

Gary looks at the envelope.

MARSHALL
Look it over. Feel free to vet it.
All we need is a signature by
Tuesday night to make it official.

BILL
Any questions, call me at home or
at the office.

WALTER
Do the right thing, Gary.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL. LATER

The Explorer is parked outside the service entrance.

EXT. MALL. SERVICE ENTRANCE

Judith exits the mall in her work uniform, carrying her lunch cooler. She's with an elderly SALES ASSOCIATE and a willowy, young STOCK BOY. She bids them a cheerful farewell and heads to the Explorer.

INT. EXPLORER. GARY

He watches Judith approach. He's conflicted. Judith waves to him.

EXT. MALL. EXPLORER

Judith gets into the Explorer. It pulls out.

INT. EXPLORER. DRIVING

Gary is somber and reserved. Judith is upbeat.

JUDITH
Mrs. Wick was so impressed with my
first eight weeks in Handbags that
she's moving me into Fine Jewelry.

Gary nods.

JUDITH (cont'd)
Is something the matter?

GARY
I saw Walter, Bill, and Marshall
today.

JUDITH
(suspicious)
Why?

GARY
They want to help me get my
business going again.

JUDITH
Why? Because you're a nice guy?

GARY
No. Apparently Wendy went to the
mayor's office and created a little
scene.

Judith smiles.

JUDITH
Good for her.

GARY
It spooked the guys a little bit.
They don't want us to make any
waves at the hearing.

JUDITH
Did you agree?

GARY
I'm considering it. There's nothing
we can do to stop the neighborhood
from being condemned. And I can't,
in good conscience, turn down an
opportunity for financial security
for my family.

Judith nods nervously. She bites her lip. She's conflicted.

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. NIGHT

The family is having dinner.

GRACIE

I asked Mrs. Gummer today how come she has all those blue lines on her legs. She said they're the paths of all the steps she's taken in her life. Isn't that poetic?

Judith smiles.

GRACIE (cont'd)

For an old gal, she really gets around.

WENDY

Not to bring up a sore subject, but for my birthday, would it be okay if we just did a family thing? I don't want to make a big deal. Especially if we're getting our house torn down.

JUDITH

Whatever you'd like.

WENDY

I don't know everybody yet and I don't want to have to choose who I invite and who I don't.

JUDITH

(after a pause)

Dad has something he'd like to discuss with you. Dad?

GARY

I had a talk with Mr. Houk and Mr. Grainger today.

WENDY

No.

GARY

Can I finish?

WENDY

Why would you talk to them?

GARY

They came to talk to me.

WENDY

To make fun of us? To dump on us?

GARY

They offered me a chance to get my business back.

(MORE)

GARY (cont'd)
Which means we could move, get you
back into the Academy...

Wendy sets her napkin on the table. She stands up.

WENDY
No. That's my decision. I won't go
back. I like it like this.

GARY
Can we discuss it?

She exits.

DAMON
Strike one.

INT. WENDY'S ROOM

She's sitting on her bed. She's angry. Damon enters.

DAMON
Can I come in?

Wendy doesn't answer. Damon sits on Gracie's bed.

DAMON (cont'd)
Let's look at this thing globally.

WENDY
No, let's look at this thing
morally. Dad wants to take money
from people who turned on us when
we had trouble. They didn't just
not offer to help, they actually
hurt us. Didn't they?

DAMON
True. But on the other hand, in a
couple of months this house gets
leveled. Then what?

WENDY
All of our houses get leveled and
all of us will figure something out
together. I'd rather be screwed
with my family and friends than be
safe and alone.

DAMON
(after a pause)
That's a compelling thought.

WENDY
It's inarguable.

DAMON
Alright. I'm with you.

WENDY
You're gross and immature and the
thought that I have to sit on the
same toilet seat as you makes my
skin crawl, but I love you.

She gives Damon a hug.

DAMON
I love you, too.

They break the embrace.

DAMON (cont'd)
That why I've never reminded you
that our underwear is washed in the
same water.

INT. DINING ROOM

Judith, Gary, and Gracie continue their dinner in silence.

GRACIE
If we go back to our old house can
I bring Mr. and Mrs. Gummer with
me? I would really miss them.
They're more fun than a barrel of
monkeys.

Damon and Wendy return to the table.

DAMON
Strike two.

WENDY
Dad? We're way beyond judging your
fitness as a father by how much
money you make.

DAMON
Just the fact that you'd be willing
to bend over for Mr. Houk and Mr.
Grainger is proof that you're a
good Dad.

GARY
It's more complicated than that.

WENDY
But don't you see how much better
off we are? Have you forgotten what
it used to be like? We barely ever
saw each other, and when we did, it
was just to ask for money. Now we
actually spend real time together,
and as surprised as I am to admit
it, I kind of enjoy it. I don't
want to risk losing that.

Judith smiles proudly.

JUDITH
Strike three.

Wendy smiles. Gary looks at Judith in surprise.

GARY
You, too?

Judith shrugs.

GRACIE
Is there such a thing as strike
four?

Gary sighs heavily.

GARY
I know how everybody feels, and I
appreciate it and respect it, but
whatever decision I make is about
business, not where we live.

INT. KITCHEN. LATER

Judith is having a late tea, finishing her bills. Wendy
enters. Judith senses her presence and looks up.

WENDY
Hi.

JUDITH
Why are you up?

Wendy sits down at the table.

WENDY
Okay. Listen. I've been thinking.
If kids think like their parents,
parents must think like their kids.
Eliza's rotten because her parents
are and I was because you were and
now you're not and I'm not. Okay?

Judith is confused but nods her agreement.

WENDY (cont'd)
Eliza Grainger never did anything
for anybody unless she wanted
something from them or they knew
one of her secrets. She wanted me
to invite someone to my birthday
party just to keep her quiet.

JUDITH
So what are you getting at?

WENDY

If she's like her parents and her parents are like her, then Mr. Grainger either wants something from Dad or Dad knows one of Mr. Grainger's secrets. We don't have anything anymore so there's nothing he could want from us. So, the question is, what does Dad know that Mr. Grainger doesn't want him to say tomorrow night?

Judith thinks for a moment.

JUDITH

I think they're just trying to buy our complacency. They don't want us causing any trouble at the hearing.

Wendy shakes her head.

WENDY

But they don't care what we think. It's more than that. They're trying to buy us off because they think Dad knows something. What could that be?

Judith thinks for a moment.

JUDITH

I wonder...Dad and I went to a school fund-raiser at the Weems's house just before we...

WENDY

Crashed and burned?

JUDITH

Our Congressman was there. I remember thinking it was odd.

WENDY

Why?

JUDITH

The only time you see guys like him are when they want money. But it wasn't a political event. It was just for the school, so there was no real reason for him to be there.

WENDY

Then I think we should check him out.

JUDITH

And fast.

EXT. LIBRARY. AFTERNOON

Judith and Wendy walk up the stairs of the public library in town. Wendy has her backpack and books.

INT. LIBRARY

Judith and Wendy are sitting in a computer cubicle. Wendy is at the keyboard.

CU. COMPUTER SCREEN

Google is open. Wendy types in - CONGRESSMAN LARRY MERCER - and initiates the search.

INT. LIBRARY. JUDITH AND WENDY

They study the screen. A slew of news stories come up. The first one - CONGRESSMAN LARRY MERCER...CAMPAIGN FINANCE LAW...INVESTIGATION.

EXT. LIBRARY. LATER

Eliza, Ducie, and Mary Rose take their places on the steps.

INT. LIBRARY

Wendy and Judith are still at the computer. Judith is exhausted and bleary-eyed. Wendy is still searching vigorously. The Alden Hills Academy parents directory is opened next to them. Print-outs of city council documents and newspaper stories are piled around them.

JUDITH

Larry Mercer is definitely a scumbag, but I don't see any connection between him and the school. I think it's a dead end.

WENDY

Keep your chin up.

JUDITH

(sadly)

It's late. We have to go home and get ready for the hearing.

Judith puts her parents directory back in her purse. Wendy holds up her index finger.

WENDY

One more search.

Judith gently folds Wendy's finger down.

JUDITH

We did the best we could.

Wendy sighs and nods sadly.

EXT. LIBRARY. DUSK

Judith and Wendy hurry down the steps. Jonah and Bentsen have now joined Eliza, Ducie, and Mary Rose on the steps. Judith steps through them. Wendy follows cautiously.

JUDITH
Excuse me, guys.

ELIZA
Mrs. Grigsby?

Judith stops at the bottom of the steps.

JUDITH
Oh, hi. I didn't see you.

Wendy steps around Eliza and joins Judith.

DUCIE
Hey, Wendy.

Wendy doesn't respond.

ELIZA
(to Judith)
What are you doing here?

JUDITH
We were using the computer.

ELIZA
Oh. Can't afford your own?

Judith stares at Eliza for a moment. She's about to say something, but Wendy puts her hand on her arm.

WENDY
It's okay. Come on.

Wendy and Judith continue down the steps.

ELIZA
(to Wendy)
Good luck tonight.

WENDY
Same to you.

The Kids laugh. Bentsen looks away. Ducie glares at Eliza.

ELIZA
What's your problem?

EXT. ALDEN HILLS TOWN HALL. NIGHT

Lights are on. CITIZENS are entering.

EXT. PARKING LOT

The Grigsbys get out of the car.

DAMON
It's a very cool idea that the
offspring are coming. We can all
look real pathetic when they vote.

JUDITH
Gary?

She gestures across the lot. Gary and the kids look. Bill, Marshall, Coffey, and Stephanie are exiting a Mercedes. The kids look at Gary with apprehension.

JUDITH (cont'd)
(to Wendy)
Would you and Damon take Gracie
inside, please?

Wendy hesitates.

JUDITH (cont'd)
Please?

Wendy takes Gracie's hand and she and Damon head for the hall. Gary crosses the lot to the Houks and the Graingers. He hands Bill the envelope that was given to him at the club.

BILL
Thank you, Gary.

MARSHALL
It was the right thing to do.

He pats Gary on the arm.

COFFEY
Gary? How would Judith feel about a
rapprochement with Stephie and I?

GARY
It's not a good time.

Coffey takes Gary's hand and gently strokes it.

COFFEY
We'll be patient.

Gary nods and returns to Judith.

GARY
That was disgusting.

JUDITH
They're not offering you money for
nothing. They're doing something
wrong.

GARY
Unless you know what it is, you
can't do anything about it.

JUDITH
This is so frustrating.

GARY
It'll be over in half an hour.

JUDITH
And they'll win.

GARY
They always do.

INT. CITY HALL. ANTE ROOM

Harold and Vern are waiting nervously at the door as the last of the crowd filters into the meeting room. He's wearing his vinyl hat and a suit and a dress shirt that no longer fit. Bobby gives him a pat on the shoulder.

BOBBY
Kill 'em, Harold.

Gary and Judith enter. Bobby's face tightens. He turns his back on the Grigsbys and walks away.

HAROLD
(to Gary)
Did you take a look at my speech?

GARY
It's excellent, Harold.

HAROLD
Man, I'm so nervous, Vern's ass is sweating.

Wendy is at a glass display case adjacent to the doors leading into the meeting room. Inside the case is an announcement of the meeting, a proclamation of its purpose, and a survey of the proposed condemnation site.

WENDY
Mom?

Judith steps away from the others to join Wendy by the glass case. Wendy points to the survey of the condemnation site.

WENDY (cont'd)
Look. See how the sidewalk goes
from the old school under the
railroad tracks to the new school?

INSERT: SURVEY

There is an underpass designated at the railroad tracks separating the neighborhood from the private school and a walkway linking the two properties.

WENDY

There wasn't anything about an underpass in the letter we got.

Judith shakes her head and shrugs.

JUDITH

I don't think it means anything.

Gary shakes Harold's hand. Harold and Vern exit.

GARY

Judith? Wendy? They're starting.

Judith and Wendy cross to Gary. As they approach the door to the main hall, Ted Westbrook, the Congressman's Chief of Staff, walks past them. He looks to Judith and gives her the same wink he gave her at the Weems's party. He enters the meeting room. Something occurs to Judith. She turns to Gary.

JUDITH

How would the city get a railroad underpass approved?

GARY

Probably through our Congressman. Why?

Judith opens her purse and pulls out her checkbook. She frantically leafs through her check stubs.

GARY (cont'd)

What are you doing?

INSERT: CHECK BOOK

She thumbs through her check carbon copies to a \$25,000 check written out to: CITIZENS FOR CHOICE IN EDUCATION. Judith shows the stub to Gary.

JUDITH

That's the stub for the check we wrote for the school fund-raiser. Who was at the fund-raiser? Congressman Mercer. Why?

GARY

I don't know.

JUDITH

He's getting the money. It's a bribe. For the underpass.

WENDY
Mom, that's so genius.

GARY
You think it's a bribe.

WENDY
You don't?

GARY
It's not a bribe unless you can
prove it.

O.S. a GAVEL STRIKES.

VOICE (O.S.)
This meeting will now be called to
order...

JUDITH
What do we do?

WENDY
Gimme that.

Wendy grabs the carbon check copy out of Judith's hand and
runs out of the hall.

EXT. TOWN HALL

Wendy bounds down the steps. Kip and a group of Mulletville
boys are perched on benches at the bottom of the steps
waiting for the meeting to conclude.

WENDY
(to Kip)
Where's your bike?

Kip motions over his shoulder to the woods.

WENDY (cont'd)
I need a ride. Let's go.

She grabs his hand and they take off.

INT. MEETING ROOM

Judith and Gary take their seats. Gary is confused.

GARY
What's she doing?

JUDITH
She'll be fine.

EXT. WOODS

Kip wheels his dirt bike out of the brush onto the walk path.

KIP
This is an off-road bike. I can't
ride it on the streets. I don't
even have a license...

WENDY
Do you want to save your house?

KIP
Of course.

WENDY
Then shut up and take me to the
library.

Kip mounts the bike. He starts the engine. Wendy climbs on
the back.

KIP
Hold tight.

WENDY
No problem.

Kip takes off down the path into the woods.

INT. WOODS

Kip's dirt bike lunges off the path into the trees.

CU. WENDY

She closes her eyes as the bike weaves through the trees.

EXT. WOODS. CREEK

The bike jumps the creek.

INT. HEARING ROOM. LATER

An elegant oak-beam hall. Seven COUNCIL MEMBERS sit at the
head of the room. Walter Weems chairs the council. The Alden
Hills Academy PARENTS, in business attire, sit on one side of
the center aisle. The Mulletville RESIDENTS, in work clothes
and wedding/funeral suits sit with their CHILDREN on the
other side. A REPORTER and a PHOTOGRAPHER from the suburban
newspaper sit on the floor in front of the council rostrum.

WALTER
We're here to discuss Proposal 3811-
14C. Speaking on behalf of the city
is Marshall Houk.

Marshall rises and comes down the aisle to the podium.

EXT. FOREST

Kip's bike races out of the trees and approaches the edge of the road. He's about to pull onto the street, when he sees a patrol car. He abruptly stops. The patrol car passes.

KIP
That would have killed our ride
real quick.

Kip waits until the police car is out of sight. He pulls onto the road and heads the other way.

EXT. STREET. MOVING

Kip races down the street at full throttle. Wendy holds tight as they weave in and out of traffic.

EXT. LIBRARY. DAY

Kip SQUEALS to a halt in front of the library. Wendy jumps off and runs up the steps. Kip swings around into the park.

EXT. PARK

Kip drives up to an enormous statue of the town's founder astride his proud steed. He backs the bike underneath the horse, between its legs, and parks, hidden from view.

INT. HEARING ROOM

Marshall Houk is addressing the assembly from the podium.

MARSHALL
...the construction of said new
school will provide a great
incentive to people of talent and
position to locate in our
community...

Judith looks at her watch nervously.

INT. LIBRARY

Wendy is standing at the main desk before a stern LIBRARIAN.

WENDY
I need a computer right away.

LIBRARIAN
It's Cyber Seniors Night. I'm
afraid all the computers are in use
until eight-thirty.

Wendy turns with concern to the bank of workstations occupied by ELDERLY MEN and WOMEN playing computer solitaire, surfing beanie bag websites, staring at screen savers.

EXT. PARK

Kip waits nervously in the park. As he watches the library, a police car turns onto the square. It pulls up to the curb. Kip watches in dismay as the COP rolls down his window to chat-up a young WOMAN walking her dog.

INT. LIBRARY

Wendy watches the seniors with mounting frustration. Another LIBRARIAN steps out from the back office.

LIBRARIAN

Miriam? Can you give me a hand?

Miriam, the Librarian, exits. Wendy scrambles over the counter and takes over the Librarian's computer. She looks at her mom's checkbook and begins clicking away at the keyboard.

INT. HEARING ROOM. SAME TIME

Marshall has returned to his seat to polite, restrained applause. Walter checks his notes.

WALTER

Next up, speaking for the residents of the neighborhood in question, is Harold Chamberlain.

In marked contrast to the Academy side of the room, the Mulletville residents burst into a cacophony of WHISTLES, CHEERS and FOOT STAMPING for Harold. Harold beams. Walter POUNDS his gavel to restore order to the room.

INT. LIBRARY

Wendy is still at the librarian's computer.

INSERT: SCREEN

Google is open. Wendy enters: CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS - ILLINOIS - CONGRESSMAN LARRY MERCER. She hits return.

CU. WENDY

She glances back nervously at the library office. The two Librarians are talking O.S. She turns back to the computer impatiently, waiting for the results of her search.

WENDY

Come on, come on...

She focuses intently on the screen as her results come up.

INSERT: COMPUTER SCREEN

Scrolling down contributor lists.

CU. WENDY

She leans in on the screen and scrolls up slowly.

ECU. COMPUTER SCREEN. TEXT

The words - CITIZENS FOR CHOICE IN EDUCATION, \$2,875,512.

INT. LIBRARY. WENDY

She smiles.

WENDY
That's it.

Wendy hits PRINT. The Library returns to see Wendy.

LIBRARIAN
Just what do you think you're
doing?

Wendy yanks a sheet out of the printer with a smile.

WENDY
Me? I'm leaving.

She hops over the counter and flees.

INT. HEARING ROOM

Harold is now at the podium speaking. He nervously refers to his handwritten speech.

HAROLD
A decision tonight to condemn our
neighborhood will be a decision to
destroy a neighborhood...

Walter Weems yawns and glances at his watch.

HAROLD (cont'd)
...a way of life for its residents,
a valuable piece of history, and
force over 120 people to leave the
town that...which they call home.

The Photographer has fallen asleep. The Reporter is doodling. Judith is biting her lip nervously.

EXT. LIBRARY

Wendy runs out of the library folding the sheet of paper and stuffing it in her pocket. She looks for Kip.

WENDY
Kip! Kip?!

Kip looks out from his hiding place in the park. The Cop is still talking to the Woman with her dog, sipping a coffee. Kip sighs angrily.

KIP
Now I'll never get my license...

Kip starts his engine and SQUEALS out of the park.

EXT. POLICE CAR

The Officer spills his coffee as Kip ROARS past him. The Officer starts his car.

EXT. LIBRARY. STREET

Kip pulls up to the curb, Wendy climbs on the back. They take off. The patrol car pulls out after them and gives chase.

INT. HEARING ROOM

Harold continues his speech.

HAROLD
They might not be the largest or
the most beautiful homes in Alden
Hills. But the size of...the size
or value of a home is no measure...
(corrects himself)
...measurement of the comfort and
joy it provides to the family that
lives in it.

Coffey and Stephanie are fighting the giggles. Bill and Marshall crane their necks to see what's so funny. They see that Harold's suit pants are an inch above his shoes. He's wearing white socks and scuffed, brown dress shoes.

HAROLD (cont'd)
And it isn't just the houses
themselves that enrich our life,
it's the neighborhood itself.

EXT. STREET

A police car blocks an intersection, lights flashing.

EXT. STREET. REVERSE

Kip and Wendy race down the street towards the blocked intersection. The first police car is in pursuit. Kip jerks the dirt bike to the side. Wendy SCREAMS as he jumps the curb and shoots up a driveway.

EXT. HOUSE. GARAGE

Kip and Wendy hurtle between the garage and the neighboring fence to the alley. Before turning back onto the next street, Kip stops the bike abruptly and waits.

WENDY
(confused)
What are you doing?

Kip holds up his hand for her to wait.

EXT. INTERSECTION. POLICE CAR

The police car backs up to let the first police car make the turn, then follows.

EXT. STREET. NEXT BLOCK

The police cars race down the street, passing the alley where Kip and Wendy are waiting. Kip and Wendy then shoot out of the alley and follow the police cars.

EXT. INTERSECTION

The police cars blast through the intersection followed by the dirt bike.

INT. POLICE CAR

The Officer glances in his mirror. He does a double-take.

INSERT: MIRROR

The dirt bike is in the mirror. Kip waves to the Officer. He makes a turn and disappears from view.

EXT. STREET

The police cars SQUEAL to a stop. They quickly back up to where Kip turned and resume the chase.

INT. MEETING ROOM. DAY

Vern is nervously mouthing Harold's speech.

HAROLD
We can all find other houses but we
will never find the neighborhood
that some people in this town want
to knock down. This unfair action
will separate friends. It will ruin
a network of people who care about
each other. We don't want our kids
to think America is a place where
the interest of the few can
threaten the happiness of the many.

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC

The police cars pursue Kip down a street in a high-end development, past mini-mansions under construction and into a cul-de-sac. One car turns right, the other left. Kip goes straight and over what will become the landscaped center of the cul-de-sac. The dirt bike zips between the police cars a split-second before they lock brakes and collide.

EXT. DEVELOPMENT

The dirt bike tears between the houses at the bottom of the cul-de-sac and disappears into a maze of dirt berms, construction trailers, and supply stores.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET

Additional police cars scream down the street.

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC

The police cars rumble between the houses.

EXT. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Kip and Wendy wend their way through the trailers and heavy equipment.

EXT. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT. FOUNDATION HOLE

Close behind Kip, the police cars bounce across the dirt, approaching a fresh foundation excavation. A narrow plank walkway extends over the yawning pit. Wendy closes her eyes in fear as they approach.

KIP

Hang on!

Kip guns his engine and expertly navigates the dirt bike across the plank.

The first officer in pursuit slams on his brakes as the hole comes into view. The second officer hits his brakes a moment too late. He rams the first car and knocks it into the hole.

EXT. ALDEN HILLS ACADEMY

Police cars approach the Academy, which is adjacent to the housing development.

EXT. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT. BERM

Kip approaches the berm bordering the academy, guns the engine, and roars up it.

EXT. ALDEN HILLS ACADEMY

The dirt bike sails over the road and the police cars.

EXT. ALDEN HILLS ACADEMY. ATHLETIC FIELD

The bike lands on the down slope of the road berm surrounding the field and shoots across the soccer ground, tearing up the turf. Wendy SQUEALS with excitement.

INT. MEETING HALL

Harold takes a sip of water and turns his sheet over.

HAROLD
Finally...

Weems interrupts Harold.

WEEMS
Excuse me, Mr....
(looks at his notes)
...Chamberlain. I think the council
understands your objection to the
proposed action. The hour is late,
we've spent a good deal of time on
the issue and if the council
agrees, I would like to call for a
vote.

INT. HALL. THE GRIGSBYS

Gary looks at Judith with a grimace. She looks back
desperately towards the door.

EXT. TOWN HALL COMPLEX

Two more police cars SQUEAL out of the adjoining station and
pass Kip and Wendy as they approach from the other direction.
The bike stops in front of Town Hall. Wendy hops off.

KIP
I'll lose these guys and meet you
in the woods.

He takes off. Wendy runs for the door. The police cars,
realizing they just passed Kip, turn around to chase after
him. They're joined by the other cars already pursuing him.

EXT. STREET

Kip turns off the road and down a dirt trail, back into the
woods. The police cars turn off the road and follow him over
the rough terrain.

INT. HALL

Weems looks up and down the council. They all nod.

WEEMS
Those in favor of Proposal 3811-14C
please indicate so with a yea.

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Yea.

Coffey looks across the aisle at Judith and grins. Weems
records his own vote.

WEEMS
Yea. Those opposed?

The Council Members are silent.

WEEMS (cont'd)
The yeas have it. The proposal
passes.

Weems BANGS his gavel.

WEEMS (cont'd)
This meeting is adjourned.

The Alden Hills Academy PARENTS applaud politely and
congratulate one another. The Mulletville Residents sit in
stunned silence.

CU. JUDITH AND GARY

Gary puts his arm around her.

GARY
I'm sorry.

INT. HEARING ROOM. DOORS

Ted Westbrook and the Mayor are standing on either side of
the heavy, oak double doors. They exchange smug grins and
lean across the doors to shake hands as Wendy bursts through.
The doors fly open and smack Westbrook and the Mayor,
knocking them to the floor. Wendy rushes in. The doors slam
shut. Everyone turns in startled surprise.

WENDY
I've got it!

Wendy rushes to Judith and hands her the library print-out.
She scans it quickly and leaps from her seat.

JUDITH
Mr. Weems!

The Academy Parents fall silent and look to Judith with
apprehension.

JUDITH (cont'd)
Excuse me, but before this matter
is drawn to a close...

Weems sputters with anger.

WEEMS
It has been drawn to a close, you
nincompoop!

JUDITH
It's not closed until you hear from
me.

Coffey glares at Judith.

COFFEY
(to herself)
Don't do it.

Weems motions to the OFFICER on duty.

WEEMS
Officer, remove Mrs. Grigsby and
clear the hall.

The Officer marches ominously towards Judith. Bobby Regner suddenly steps into the aisle and blocks his way.

BOBBY
Let her be, Ed.

The Officer pauses for a beat, then steps back.

WEEMS
Officer!!

Bobby turns to Judith and smiles.

BOBBY
The floor is yours, neighbor.

Judith smiles gratefully. She walks up and takes the podium. She adjusts the microphone.

JUDITH
On behalf of my neighbors I'm
asking that the chairman, Mr.
Weems, who conspired to bribe a
member of the House of
Representatives, recuse himself and
the vote be retaken.

A MURMUR rises from the audience. Walter Weems leaps from his seat.

WEEMS
THAT'S A GODDAMN LIE! OFFICER!

The Reporter elbows the Photographer. He wakes up suddenly. The Reporter holds his recorder high.

JUDITH
Everyone on that side of the aisle
contributed \$25,000 per family to a
school fund which was illegally
transferred to the campaign of
Congressman Larry Mercer for the
purpose...

The Academy Parents try to SHOUT Judith down. Weems POUNDS his gavel. Neighbors are SHOUTING, babies are CRYING.

MARSHALL
SHE'S OUT OF ORDER!

WEEMS
ARREST THAT WOMAN!

BILL
SHUT UP!

STEPHANIE
STOP HER!

JUDITH (cont'd)
 ...for the purpose of guaranteeing
 federal approval of a railroad
 underpass to connect the Alden
 Hills Academy with our neighborhood
 which would become the site of the
 new Academy middle school and play
 field. Thank you.

COFFEY
 YOU BITCH!

The Reporter scrambles to his feet and pushes his way up the aisle. The Photographer fires off photos of the fracas.

The Mayor and Ted Westbrook stagger to their feet as the Reporter rushes up the aisle. He throws the doors open and runs out. The doors clock the Mayor and Ted Westbrook again. They collapse to the floor.

A Councilman wrestles the gavel from Weems.

COUNCILMAN
 (yelling over the crowd)
 The Chairman is relieved of his
 duties! The vote will be retaken.
 All those opposed, say nay!

COUNCIL MEMBERS
 Nay!

COUNCILMAN
 The proposal is rejected! Good
 night!

The Neighbors CHEER. The Council Members escape in a flurry of photo flashes. Weems takes a swing at the Photographer. The Officer takes Judith's arm and escorts her through the throng of Academy Parents shaking fists and SCREAMING at her.

INT. HALL. GARY

Gary lifts Gracie into his arms.

GRACIE
 Did we win?

GARY
 I think so.

Damon has a huge smile on his face.

DAMON
 She's ruthless.

Wendy pushes through the tangle. Coffey grabs her arm.

COFFEY
 You and your mother are filthy
 traitors.

WENDY
And you're ugly, so what?

She yanks her arm free.

EXT. TOWN HALL

The Officer delivers Judith into the waiting arms of her family and neighbors.

INT. HALL

Bill and Marshall and Stephanie and Coffey step out of the fray. Stephanie is weeping. Coffey is sputtering with fury.

STEPHANIE
I don't want to go to jail!

COFFEY
What kind of country do we live in where one, selfish woman can dictate what one of our finest schools can and cannot do?

MARSHALL
If that SOB thinks he can take our money and stab us in the back...

BILL
I've got friends at the paper.

Bill takes out the envelope Gary gave him in the parking lot.

BILL (cont'd)
His neighbors'll be happy to know that before his wife shot off her big mouth, he was willing to sell them out.

MARSHALL
Make sure the son-of-a-bitch signed.

Bill opens the envelope Gary returned to him earlier and takes out two slips of paper. He stares at them in disbelief.

MARSHALL (cont'd)
What?

BILL
(hands Marshall a coupon)
Here. Save \$10 on Handy Hank Fertilizer.

INSERT: COUPON

A Handy Hank coupon.

EXT. WOODS. DIRT BIKE TRAILS

The cop cars that were chasing Kip are now stuck in a muddy stretch of trail, three facing one way, three the other. A COP is standing behind one of the cars, trying to direct the driver out of the mud. He motions back with his hands.

COP

Rock it!

The driver throws the car in reverse and hits the gas. The WHEELS SPIN, splattering the Cop with mud.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Gary and Judith walk Gracie and Damon to the car.

GARY

You did it.

JUDITH

We did it. We all did it.

GRACIE

Where's Wendy?

DAMON

She's fishing for some affection.

JUDITH

What's that mean?

DAMON

Like you don't know she's in love?

GARY

She is?

DAMON

Dad, the girl carries a toothbrush in her purse. Of course she is.

EXT. WOODS

Kip is sitting on his dirt bike on the walk path. Wendy approaches.

WENDY

We won.

KIP

Yeah. I heard the yelling.

WENDY

Thanks.

KIP

You did it.

WENDY
My mom did it.

KIP
You and your Mom.

WENDY
Okay.

KIP
I'm sorry I misjudged you.

WENDY
It's okay.

He offers his hand. Wendy's disappointed.

KIP
Thank your mom for me.

WENDY
Sure.

KIP
Good night.

He starts his engine and pulls away.

WENDY
For you maybe.

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. MORNING

Gary comes out for the paper. Harold is feeding the cat.

HAROLD
Howdy, neighbor.

GARY
Morning, Harold.

Harold hurls the last slice of bologna onto the roof and walks over to Gary, wiping his hands on his bathrobe.

HAROLD
Our Congressman and quite a few of
our esteemed neighbors made the
front page.

Gary chuckles as he opens the paper to front page photos of
Walter Weems, Marshall, Bill, and the Congressman.

HAROLD (cont'd)
I was talking with Bobby last night
about getting some money together
from the neighbors to help you guys
hire a lawyer.

GARY
We're not going to need a lawyer,
Harold.

HAROLD
What about that \$25,000 donation?

GARY
(with a grin)
The check bounced.

Harold laughs. Gary heads to the house.

GARY (cont'd)
I'll see you tonight.

EXT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. NIGHT

The lights are on.

INT. HOUSE. LIVING ROOM

Gary and Judith are on the sofa reading. Wendy enters.

JUDITH
What did Grandpa say?

WENDY
Weather's good, happy birthday, my
foot hurts, weather's good, don't
smoke, happy birthday, and I hope
you like the Barbie doll.

Gary looks at his watch.

INSERT: WATCH

6:59 and 59 seconds. At 7:00, the lights go out.

INT. HOUSE. LIVING ROOM

Lights out.

JUDITH
Uh-oh.

GARY
Wendy? Go out in front and see if
the lights are out in anybody
else's house.

EXT. STREET

Wendy steps into the street.

WENDY
All the lights are out!

She turns and sees a flickering light that seems to be floating down the street. She's puzzled. The light draws closer and we see that it's a candle burning on a cupcake that Kip is holding. Kip approaches with the cake.

KIP
Happy birthday.

WENDY
Thank you.

KIP
I'm kind of broke. So I couldn't really buy you anything good right now.

WENDY
I don't care.

KIP
I don't know what you want. So I just had to guess. Close your eyes.

Wendy closes her eyes. Kip leans forward and kisses her.

CU. WENDY

Her eyes open wide with surprise.

EXT. UTILITY POLE

Will is on the pole. He's looking down to the ground. Lorna and Sioux are in the Grigsbys' back yard, watching the street through the houses.

SIoux
Okay.

Lorna looks up at Will.

LORNA
Hit it!

EXT. STREET. WENDY AND KIP

Wendy is determined to make the kiss last all night. She has her arms around his neck. He's holding her around the waist. The lights go on. Street lights, house lights, flood lights.

CU. WENDY AND KIP

They're startled and embarrassed.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD

The entire neighborhood is on the street. They break into HAPPY BIRTHDAY. Sioux and Lorna run screaming to Wendy and Kip. They hug Wendy.

KIP
I didn't give you the signal!

SIOUX
(laughing)
Your face is so red!

EXT. GRIGSBYS' HOUSE

Gary, Gracie, Judith, and Damon are on the lawn singing.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD. WIDE

The final verse...

NEIGHBORS
YOU LOOK LIKE A MONKEY AND YOU ACT
LIKE ONE, TOO!

The NEIGHBORHOOD APPLAUDS.

HAROLD
Everybody down to Will's! Dinner's
getting cold!

As the crowd thins. Damon joins Wendy, Kip, Sioux, and Lorna.

DAMON
(to Kip)
Isn't she a lovely woman?

WENDY
Thank you, Damon.

He gives her a hug. Something catches Wendy's eye.

WENDY (cont'd)
Uh-oh.

Ducie and Bentsen step into the light. They're carrying presents. Wendy is apprehensive. Kip puts his arm around her. Damon sets his jaw. Sioux and Lorna put on their war faces. It's like old times. Ducie and Bentsen approach.

DUCIE
Happy Birthday.

BENTSEN
Happy Birthday, Wendy. Hey, Damon.

Wendy and Damon don't respond.

DUCIE
We weren't expecting you to be glad
to see us. It's okay.

Sioux takes the gifts from Ducie and Bentsen.

SIOUX
 She thanks you.
 (to Wendy)
 Let it go. It's fine.

Wendy gives Ducie a hug.

WENDY
 Thanks.

Damon shakes Bentsen's hand.

DAMON
 It's good to see you.

The kids head down the street.

BENTSEN
 What's with all the lights?

DAMON
 Just another Friday night in
 Mulletville.

INT. WILL'S SHED

The Neighbors are gathered in the shed. Wendy makes the first cut in her neighborhood-size birthday cake. CAMERAS FLASH. Damon, Donny, and Bentsen join the others in APPLAUSE.

BENTSEN
 This is so cool.

DAMON
 You think so?

BENTSEN
 Yeah.

Damon looks at Donny. Donny grins.

DAMON
 This is nothing.

EXT. STREET. LATER

Kip walks Wendy home.

KIP
 Good birthday?

WENDY
 I think so.

KIP
 What are you doing tomorrow?

WENDY
I think we should finish tonight
before we worry about tomorrow.

Kip laughs.

WENDY (cont'd)
That's not what I meant.

KIP
Oh, I know. That's not what I meant
either.

INT. GRIGSBY HOUSE. BEDROOM

Gary's standing in the dark at the street-side window. He's
wearing sweats and a T-shirt. Judith enters in her robe.

GARY
She's kissing him again. On the
sidewalk.

JUDITH
It's alright. Flu season's over.

She draws the drapes.

JUDITH (cont'd)
Don't spy.

GARY
I'm not spying. I'm exercising my
rights as a parent.

JUDITH
You're spying. And it's
unnecessary.

GARY
It starts with a kiss. And it ends
with...

Gary takes her hand and slides a ring on her finger.

GARY (cont'd)
It's only half a carat.

Judith looks at the little stone with a warm smile.

JUDITH
It's like the one you gave me
fifteen years ago.

GARY
Actually, it's a little bigger.
But, of course, now I'm a much
richer man.

He laughs.

JUDITH
Don't laugh. You are.

She kisses him.

INSERT: WATCH

Damon's sports watch reads 9:59 and 50 seconds.

INT. DAMON'S ROOM. BED

Damon, Bentsen, and Donny are in the dark at the end of Damon's bed. They're looking out Damon's window. Damon points to Bathsheba's window. The light in her room goes on. Bathsheba returns from her bath wrapped in a towel.

CU. BENTSEN

His eyes are wide with wonder.

HIS POV

Bathsheba loosens the towel around her body. It falls.

INT. DAMON'S ROOM. BOYS

Bentsen GASPS.

CU. BATHSHEBA

She looks over her shoulder to the window and winks. She shuts off the light.

INT. DAMON'S ROOM

Damon and Donny are frozen in surprise.

BENTSEN
God, I hope my Dad goes broke.

END