

UNCLE BUCK

A HUGHES ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION

FIRST DRAFT
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UNCLE BUCK

EXT. CHICAGO SUBURBS. HOUSE. AFTERNOON

A 40's Georgian colonial in an established North Shore suburb. It's late autumn. WE HEAR A SINGLE HEARTBEAT. A TEENAGE girl crosses the lawn on the bias, dragging her feet, head hung enveloped in thought. To the front door. Her name is TIA RUSSELL.

CU. PURSE

Tia digs through her purse, coming up with a key ring.

INT. FOYER

Tia lets herself in and takes off her coat. She's not a happy girl. Very pretty, very mature but stricken with a look of tragic preoccupation. Her clothes are dark and somber. Attractive and stylish in their own way but exclusionary. WE HEAR ANOTHER HEARTBEAT.

EXT. HOUSE. STREET

A yellow school van pulls up in front of the house and a six year old girl gets out. Her name is MAIZY RUSSELL. She's dainty and proper. A girl like they don't make anymore. She's wearing a raincoat and huge backpack. She marches up to the house, careful not to step on any cracks. WE HEAR ANOTHER HEARTBEAT.

EXT. BACKYARD

An eight year old boy climbs over a back fence and scopes out the yard. Considering it safe, he makes a dash for the house. His name is MILES RUSSELL. He's the sort of chipped-tooth scraped-knee boy that grows up between two sisters. He's filthy and torn from a perilous journey home. His Air Jordans are scuffed and trailing splayed laces, his jeans are hanging low in the back. His backpack's split and threatening to spill the books and crumpled papers it contains. ANOTHER HEARTBEAT.

INT. KITCHEN

Tia's drinking a small bottle of Evian. Maizy drops her backpack on the table and takes off her coat.

TIA

Get your backpack off the table. People eat there.

MAIZY

They eat on plates and the plates are on the table.

TIA

Don't give me any crap, Maizy.

MAIZY

I'm telling you said crap.

TIA

There's nothing wrong with crap.

MAIZY

(surprised)

Really? I thought that was a swear.

TIA

You're thinking of "shit".

MAIZY

Oh, right.

The back door flies open and Miles bursts in.

TIA

Do you mind?

MILES

A sixth grader chased me on his bike and I was running and when I got exhausted and fell down, he wailed on me with his shoe.

TIA

You can thank your parents for that.

MILES

Howcome?

TIA

It was their brilliant idea to move here. They weren't making enough cash in Indianapolis, forget that we were perfectly happy. So, thank them for getting treated like shit every day.

MAIZY
I'm telling on that one.

TIA
Shut your face.

He peels off his backpack and drops it by the door.

TIA
That doesn't go there.

He looks down at the backpack. The floor by the door seems as good a place as any.

MILES
Oh, let's have a cow.

He starts to exit the room. Tia grabs him.

MILES
Your nails are digging into my arm, goddamn it!

TIA
Pick it up!

She releases him and he picks up the backpack.

MILES
(indignant)
You're just supposed to open the door for us. You're not supposed to kick us around.

TIA
Maizy? Did I kick you around?

MAIZY
No, but you said "shit" twice.

Tia gives Maizy an impatient look. Maizy qualifies her remark.

MAIZY
But only once for real.

TIA
(to Miles)
I got better things to do than babysit you, you little stain.

MILES

Oh, like what? Hang out with
the friends you don't have?

Tia glares at Miles. He's hit a sore point with her.

TIA

Shut-up.

MILES

You want to make me?

He crosses the kitchen on his way out.

TIA

When our mother-figure isn't
here, I'm in charge.

Miles stops and turns to Tia.

MILES

I'm sick of you calling her
that!

He exits angrily. ANOTHER HEARTBEAT. AND ANOTHER. Maizy looks
at Tia.

MAIZY

I don't know why we need boys
at all. They're so loud.

TIA

We need boys so they can get
married and turn into
shadows.

(on her way out)

Let the dog out.

She exits leaving a severely confused Maizy. A PAIR OF
HEARTBEATS.

INT. KITCHEN. CU. CHINESE FOOD CONTAINERS. NIGHT

Opened carry-out Chinese boxes. A COUPLE MORE HEARTBEATS.

INT. DINING ROOM. LATER

BOB and CINDY RUSSELL are home from work. The family's eating
dinner. Bob's in his early forties, handsome, trim and
healthy. A classic Reagan Era father. Cindy is in her late
thirties. She's attractive and youthful, strong and
successful. The Russells are the modern two income family.
Bob's at the head of the table. Cindy's opposite him. Maizy
and Miles are on one side of the table. Tia's alone on the

other. It's not the warmest domestic scene in town. There's a peculiar stiffness to their interaction. A PAIR OF HEARTBEATS. ..

CINDY
Miles?

He looks from his plate.

MILES
Huh?

CINDY
Did you win at basketball today?

MILES
It's tomorrow.

CU. TIA

She looks at Cindy with a smug smile. ANOTHER PAIR OF HEARTBEATS

CU. CINDY

She knows that Tia's mocking her but lets it pass. ANOTHER PAIR OF HEARTBEATS.

INT. DINING ROOM

Bob senses impending difficulties. He picks up the conversation.

BOB
You'll win. And next week you have a birthday.

Miles smiles.

MAIZY
What about me?

BOB
Your birthday's in June.

CINDY
When Dad goes to New York, I'm taking the week off work.

INT. DINING ROOM. TIA'S LAP. CU. FINGER

She makes a circle in the air with her index finger. A secret insult to Cindy. ANOTHER PAIR OF HEARTBEATS.

EXT. HOUSE. NIGHT

The living room lights go off. The HEARTBEATS BECOME REGULAR AND RHYTHMIC AND CONTINUE. The porch lights go out.

INT. KITCHEN. DOGGIE DOOR

The family's miniature poodle scoots in the doggie door.

CU. ALARM CLOCK

Cindy sets it.

CU. MAIZY

She's asleep in bed. The HEART SKIPS A BEAT AND CONTINUES AT A FASTER RATE.

CU. FRONT DOOR. LOCK

Bob secures it for the night.

CU. MILES

He's sprawled across his bed, sleeping. The HEART SKIPS ANOTHER BEAT AND RETURNING, FALLS OUT OF RHYTHM.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Tastefully decorated. Bob and Cindy are in their iron bed reading business related material. They're wearing half-glasses. The HEART'S TRYING TO GET BACK IN RHYTHM. IT'S BEATING FASTER.

EXT. HOUSE. LATER

The lights are out. The house is asleep. The HEART'S POUNDING, WILDLY ARHYTHMIC. And...IT STOPS.

CU. TIA

In bed, sleeping. Her eyes open -- confused and frightened.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

It's dark. The phone's ringing. Bob and Cindy stir. Bob reaches out and picks up the phone.

BOB
(groggy)
Hello?

He comes quickly to his senses and sits up. Cindy rises up on her elbows.

BOB
Oh, God...

CINDY
(frightened)
What?

BOB
Just a second.
(covers the phone,
to Cindy)
It's your aunt.

CINDY
What happened?

BOB
Your Dad had a heart attack.

CU. CINDY

She's breathless with shock.

INT. KITCHEN. LATER

Bob's leaning against the counter. Cindy's slumped in a kitchen chair, devastated. She's staring at the floor.

BOB
Your Dad's a strong, healthy
guy. He's gonna be alright.

Cindy looks up at him. A tinge of anger. She doesn't want to be cheered up.

BOB
I believe it.

CINDY
Who's going to watch the
kids?

BOB
Marcie? She's right next
door...

CINDY
She's the last person I'd ask
for a favor.

BOB

What about the Neville's?

Cindy thinks for a moment. She nods. A good thought.

CINDY

Would you call? I want to leave as soon as we can.

(pause)

If we were home, I'd be there. I'm so goddamn helpless here.

BOB

Don't start getting down on why we moved. It has nothing to do with what happened.

Cindy knows he's right. She recants.

BOB

What about my brother? I don't know the Neville's from Adam. I'm sure he'd be glad to help out.

CINDY

He doesn't have kids, he isn't even married.

BOB

He's a little out there but he's responsible and he's family.

CINDY

Call the Neville's.

Cindy exits. Bob crosses to the phone.

INT. HALLWAY

Cindy comes up the stairs. She stops as she looks up.

HER POV

Tia's standing at the top of the stairs. She's in a t-shirt and panties, hair pinned up.

TIA

What happened to Grandpa?

CU. CINDY

She's surprised that Tia knows about it.

CU. TIA

Stern, serious and tough as a slab of pig iron.

TIA
And don't lie to me.

CU. CINDY

There's obviously a fissure in their relationship. Cindy's hurt by the remark.

CU. TIA

Still hard and cold.

TIA
I heard you talking.

INT. HALLWAY

Cindy continues up the stairs to Tia.

CINDY
He had a heart attack.

Tia's jaw tightens.

CINDY
But he's okay.

TIA
You can't have a heart attack
and be okay.

CINDY
Honey, I don't know.

TIA
Are we going to Indianapolis?

CINDY
Daddy and I are.

TIA
And we're not?

CINDY
No.

TIA

Thanks.

She turns around and heads back to her room.

CINDY

I love my father very much.

Tia turns.

TIA

So, why did you move away from him? If my whole family moved away on me, I'd have a heart attack, too.

She goes into her bedroom and slams the door.

INT. BEDROOM

Cindy is loading clothes into an open suitcase on the bed.

INT. ROOM. DOORWAY

Miles is standing in the doorway. Hair tossed, scratching his sleepy ass.

MILES

What're you doing? Who slammed the door? Are you going somewhere? What time is it?

INT. CINDY

She turns from the bed to Miles.

CINDY

Come here.

Miles walks over to her. She sits down and puts Miles on her lap.

CINDY

Grandpa's not feeling real good, so Dad and I are going down to see him.

MILES

Is he sick?

CINDY

Sort of.

MILES

With what?

CINDY

He's just a little sick,
honey, and he wants to see me
and Dad.

MILES

Who's going to take care of
us?

CINDY

Mr. and Mrs. Neville.

MILES

Is that a joke?

CINDY

No.

CINDY

You don't like the Neville's?

MILES

Their dog's a ball sniffer.

CINDY

Don't talk like that.

MILES

Mr. Neville yelled at Michael
Larson because their dog was
sniffing Michael's balls.

CINDY

Don't use that word.

MILES

I don't know another word.

CINDY

I'm sure we can talk to Mr.
Neville about the dog...

INT. ROOM. DOOR

Bob's in the doorway.

BOB

Don't bother.

CINDY

She looks past Miles.

BOB

He shakes his head.

BOB

They're in Florida.

CINDY

She sighs in defeat.

CINDY

(to Miles)

You get in bed. You have to
get up for school.

INT. BEDROOM

Bob steps in. Miles turns to him.

MILES

Who's in Florida?

BOB

Just get back in bed.

MILES

What's the other word for
balls?

BOB

Get in bed.

MILES

I think Tia slammed her door
again.

BOB

Now!

Miles hurries out of the room. Cindy looks up at Bob.

CINDY

What do we do?

BOB

I don't think we have much
choice.

CINDY
(cautiously)

Can we trust him?

Bob nods with great certainty.

BOB
Oh, yeah. Sure. He's my
brother, for God's sake. And
believe me, to help us out,
he'll drop everything.

CU. FLOOR

In a darkened room. A booze bottle, a filled ashtray, a dinner plate, plastic cups, an alarm clock, the base portion of a telephone and finally a WOMAN crashes to the floor.

INT. BEDROOM

Lit by a beer sign on the wall. BUCK RUSSELL sits up in bed. He's wearing a t-shirt. His thinning hair's standing on end. He's holding the phone wrong way up.

BUCK
Yo!

The woman, CHANICE BLACKWELL, picks herself up off the floor. She's still half-asleep. She's in her late thirties, an attractive and independent woman. She's tough and a little hard in manner and look. Not so much cheap or easy as strong and pragmatic.

CHANICE
What's going on?

BUCK
Hello?

INT. BEDROOM. BOB

He's sitting on the edge of the bed. In the background, Cindy continues packing.

BOB
Buck? This is Bob.

CU. BUCK

We see Buck in glorious detail. Bloodshot eyes, a couple days growth of beard.

BUCK
(thinks)
Bob who?

CU. BOB

He's embarrassed that Buck doesn't recognize him immediately. He flashes a look to Cindy before speaking.

BOB
(softly)
Your brother.

INT. BUCK'S BEDROOM

Chanice slips back into bed. Buck brightens as he realizes it's his older brother. He clears his throat, setting off the neighborhood dogs in a barking frenzy.

BUCK
Bobby! What's going on? What time is it?

CU. BOB

Bob gets to the heart of the matter.

BOB
(serious)
I need a favor.

CU. BUCK

He's puzzled.

BUCK
I haven't talked to you in a long time. We have to get together. You're living here now, I'm living here.

CU. BOB

He cuts Buck off.

BOB
Cindy's father had a heart attack tonight.

CU. BUCK

The goofy grin drops. He feels foolish for being so exuberant when there's such a grave problem.

CU. CINDY

She's packing the suitcases. She looks up at Bob, hoping they're doing the right thing.

CU. BOB

He explains the favor he needs.

BOB

We want to get down to Indianapolis as soon as possible. But we're stuck for somebody to watch the kids.

INT. BEDROOM

Chanice is curious about the change in Buck's attitude.

CHANICE

Who is it?

Buck waves her off. He's focused on the conversation and is overly sharp with her.

BUCK

Oh, sure. Do we want to do this in the morning or what?

CHANICE

(interrupts)

You start work in the morning.

Buck waves her off again. She's angry. She doesn't realize the seriousness of the matter.

BUCK

Tonight?

(pauses, thinks)

Sure.

Chanice glares at him. There's obviously a history of unorthodox behavior.

BUCK

I'll grab a clean pair of scivies and be on my way.

(pause)

Tell Cindy I'm sorry.

Buck swings his legs over the side of the bed and hangs up the phone. Chanice is still staring at him. He sits for a moment, letting it all sink in.

CHANICE
(bitterly)
So much for your promises.

BUCK
(annoyed)
My sister-in-law's father had
a heart attack.

Chanice doesn't respond. It's something she can't complain about. She has to separate the event from the larger issues.

CHANICE
I'm sorry to hear that.

Buck gets out of bed and crosses to his closet.

BUCK
They need me to watch their
kids.

CHANICE
So, you're not starting work
tomorrow?

BUCK
I don't see how I can.

CHANICE
(facetiously)
And you seem real
disappointed. You were
probably the first call
because he knows you don't
work.

Buck comes out of the closet with an armful of shirts and pants.

BUCK
I work, okay? I just don't
work like you work.

CHANICE
Gambling is not work.

BUCK
Gambling is a hobby.

CHANICE

Oh, sorry. What's your work then?

BUCK

Pardon me. I don't sell goddamn tires. Which is, in your book, the most noble thing in the world. And anybody who doesn't do it is a bum.

Buck pulls a cotton laundry bag out from under his bed and begins filling it with clothing.

CHANICE

Buck, I wouldn't care if I knew you were sincere about me and about helping make some kind of future for us.

Buck crosses to the bed and grabs his pillow. He pulls the pillow out of the case and fills the case with socks and shorts.

BUCK

Working at your place is a future, huh? My wife, my boss.

CHANICE

My husband, my partner.

BUCK

(pause)

Yeah, right. Maybe this is for the best. Maybe we need to cool things off a little bit.

He crosses back to the laundry bag and takes out a pair of sweat pants. He slips them on.

CHANICE

Or, after five years, maybe we need to quit kidding ourselves. I don't have the spare years laying around anymore that I can spend on somebody who won't and maybe can't get serious about himself or anyone else.

BUCK
It's your call.

CHANICE
It's that easy for you to
say?

He reaches under the chair for a shirt. He quickly checks it
for excessive dirt. It's alright. He slips it on.

BUCK
If you're not staying, lock
up. I gotta go. There's two
legitimately unhappy people
waiting for me.

CHANICE
(softer)
Call me if you change your
mind about the job or
anything else.

BUCK
You do the same. The number's
in my book.

He starts to exit.

CHANICE
Buck? If you need help...

BUCK
If I can't handle a couple of
kids for a few days, you're
right about me.

And he's gone.

CU. CHANICE

She sighs in defeat. As much as she loves him, she knows he
can't give her the life she wants.

EXT. STREET

A rusting 1969 Buick Riviera blasts through a suburban
intersection. Music's blasting.

INT. HOUSE. LIVING ROOM

Cindy's dressed and standing at the front window. Bob comes
down the stairs.

BOB
She won't open the door.

CINDY
I don't know what her problem
is.

BOB
Miles is fine. He didn't
remember Buck but it's okay.
He's just glad the Nevilles
are in Florida. He said their
oldest boy terrorizes him.

CINDY
That's not what he told me.
Are you sure Buck knows his
way over here?

EXT. HOUSE

Buck's car's in the driveway. He's standing at the doorway
with his pillow and a grocery bag. He rings the bell for the
umpteenth time.

BUCK
ANYBODY HOME?

A porch light goes on.

EXT. HOUSE. FRONT DOOR

The door opens, revealing a sleepy, puzzled ELDERLY WOMAN.

CU. BUCK

He's startled. He leans back and looks at the house address.
He looks back at the woman.

BUCK
One of us is at the wrong
house.

EXT. BOB'S HOUSE

Bob's standing in front of the house, looking down the
street. We HEAR A CAR ENGINE.

CU. BOB

He's looking down the street.

EXT. HOUSE. STREET

The Buick roars through the FRAME. OC TIRES SQUEAL. The Buick backs into FRAME and stops. Buck gets out and looks at Bob's house.

BUCK

Bob?

INT. KITCHEN

Buck's in the kitchen with Cindy. She's running down the basics of the house and schedule.

CINDY

The kids are going to tell you ninety percent of what you need to know anyway. They can take care of themselves for the most part.

BUCK

Right.

CINDY

You have to drive Tia to school in the morning. And Miles and Maizy.

BUCK

Maizy's the dog?

CINDY

She's the six year old.

BUCK

Right.

CINDY

If things aren't going smoothly, take them to the mall and let them buy something. I know it sounds horrible but it works.

Cindy's remark strikes him as odd. This is contrary to what little he knows about raising kids. He nods in agreement only to cover his discomfort. Bob comes in from the dining room.

BOB

We better hit the road.

CINDY
Okay. Buck, thanks a million.

BUCK
My best to your family.

Cindy exits. Bob hangs back for a moment

BOB
You're alright with this?

BUCK
I'm fine. Get outta here.

Bob exits. Buck watches for a moment before closing the door.

INT. HOUSE. HALLWAY. LATER

Tia slips out of her room and sneaks down the hall.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM

Buck is in his shorts, brushing his teeth in the high-style bathroom. Every possible gadget and accessory. Granite counters, towel warmers, bidet, two-person whirlpool tub, steam shower. Buck flips on a 3 inch screen TV mounted on a bracket on the sink. He's not entirely sure why a TV would be in a bathroom. He crosses to the toilet and sits down. He leans forward and looks at the TV. He gets up and steps into the tub. He sits down and looks at the TV from there.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Tia peeks into the bedroom. She listens to the running water in the bathroom. She slips into the bedroom.

INT. SHOWER

Buck, with the toothbrush in his mouth, looks out from the shower to the TV.

INT. BATHROOM. DOOR

Tia's spying on Buck between the space between the hinges and the jamb.

INT. BATHROOM. BUCK

He exits the shower and crosses to a exercise treadmill. He puzzles over it for a moment. He steps up on it and studies the control panel. He takes the toothbrush out of his mouth.

CU. PANEL

A confusion of touch-pads and displays. Buck's finger presses a touchpad.

INT. BATHROOM

The treadmill suddenly comes to life. The walk surface moves out from under him, and in the blink of an eye, he's thrown to his knees and hurled off the machine. The toothbrush goes flying.

CU. TOILET BOWL

Buck's toothbrush hits the seat and drops in the bowl. Tom Jones' "DELILAH" COMES UP AND CONTINUES.

EXT. HOUSE. MORNING

A crisp late autumn morning. The MUSIC CONTINUES.

INT. HOUSE. STAIRS

Tia comes down the stairs dressed for school. Her outfit is gloomy and extreme. She slows as she hears an OFF-KEY SINGING VOICE FOLLOWING THE SONG.

INT. KITCHEN

Buck's in sweats and a t-shirt. He's at the stove cooking, moving to the music, the source of which is a Proton radio on the counter.

INT. KITCHEN. DOOR

Tia stands in the doorway. She looks Buck up and down.

HER POV. CU. BUCK'S FEET

Grotesquely misshapen and worn, laceless gum sole, canvas top shoes and black socks. MOVING UP the sweat pants to the blown-out seat, to the t-shirt and ENDING on thinning hair standing on end. A spatula COMES INTO FRAME and with the handle end, Buck scratches the top of his head.

CU. RADIO

Tia turns it off.

CU. BUCK

He freezes in mid-note. Thinks a moment and turns.

CU. TIA

Heavy, impenetrable, inscrutable, teenage "I hate you" scowl.

CU. BUCK

Through the scowl he sees the sweet face of his brother's first born, not the petulant, distressed young woman she's become.

BUCK

Tia?

CU. TIA

No reply. No response. She wants to let him know that she's a tough case.

INT. KITCHEN

Buck takes the frying pan he's been attending from the burner.

BUCK

Do you remember me?

Tia ignores him. She opens a cupboard and removes a coffee mug.

BUCK

Uncle Buck? The Uncle Buck?

Tia continues to ignore him as she pours herself a cup of Buck's freshly manufactured coffee matter. Buck begins to catch on to her gig.

BUCK

Coffee drinker, huh?

Tia sits down at the table.

BUCK

Hungry?

TIA

No.

CU. TIA

She sips the coffee. She struggles to repress her urge to grimace. Either she doesn't normally drink coffee or his coffee's horrible.

CU. BUCK

He notes her displeasure with the coffee, despite her efforts to conceal it.

BUCK
Where're the other ones?

CU. TIA

Looks up with loads of boredom and irritation.

TIA
Other ones what?

INT. KITCHEN

Buck pulls a carving knife from a holder beside the stove.

BUCK
The other kids.

He takes a grapefruit from a fruit bowl on the counter.

TIA
They have names. Miles and Maizy.

BUCK
Are Miles and Maizy awake yet?

TIA
I woke them, thank you.

Buck flips the grapefruit in the air and swings at it with the knife.

CU. COUNTER TOP

Two perfect halves of the grapefruit fall on the counter.

CU. TIA

She's disgusted.

CU. BUCK

He retrieves the halves, notes the clean, even cut and plants a half on a plate. He spoons a load of eggs onto the plate.

BUCK
I'm new to this parenting
game.

INT. KITCHEN

Buck drops a piece of toast on the plate.

TIA
(facetiously)
Oh, really? I couldn't tell.

Buck ignores the remark and sets the plate before her.

TIA
Are you deaf? I said I
wasn't hungry.

BUCK
(making cheerful)
This is one of my
specialties.

Tia looks down at the plate.

CU. PLATE

The grapefruit half, very dry scrambled eggs with bits of
bologna, chunks of onions and green pepper.

INT. KITCHEN

Tia pushes the plate away.

TIA
I'd rather starve, thank you.

BUCK
Your call. Does your Mom know
you drink coffee?

TIA
I'm not doing it to impress
you.

BUCK
And I appreciate it.
(pause)
Any particular reason why
you're giving me a hard time?

TIA
Am I giving you a hard time?

Miles walks in. He jumps back in shock at seeing Buck.

MILES
Who're you!?

BUCK
I'm your Uncle Buck.

Miles looks at Tia.

MILES
Is this true?

TIA
Unfortunately.

MILES
You're taking care of us?

BUCK
Lord and Master of this joint
until the folks return.
We're gonna get along great
and we're gonna have a swell
time. Where's...?

TIA
Her name is Maizy. For the
second time.

Buck gives Tia a look. He doesn't care for her mouth. He serves Miles. Miles stares at the food.

MILES
What's this?

BUCK
Army eggs.

MILES
Oh, my God!
(to Tia)
He put onions in the eggs.

BUCK
So?

Tia gets up from the table.

TIA
Have some cereal. I'll check
on Maizy.

She exits. Buck walks back to the stove.

BUCK

Is your sister always this pleasant?

MILES

(thinks for a moment)
No. She's usually in a bad mood in the morning.

INT. HOUSE. MAIZY'S ROOM

Tia and Maizy are sitting on the bed. Tia's combing Maizy's hair. Maizy is whining and squirming.

TIA

You want knots in your hair?

MAIZY

Ow!

TIA

Cut it out!

MAIZY

I want Mom to do it.

TIA

Mom's not here.

MAIZY

She is, too.

TIA

No, she's not. She and Dad went to Indianapolis.

MAIZY

They did not.

Tia stops combing.

TIA

Okay, they didn't.

Maizy turns to Tia with surprise.

MAIZY

They did?

TIA

Yes. And I'm taking care of you.

CU. MAIZY

She looks at Tia with alarm.

MAIZY
But you can't drive!

INT. KITCHEN

Buck's sitting at the table with Miles. They're picking the bologna, peppers and onions out of the eggs.

MILES
Where do you live?

BUCK
In the city.

MILES
What do you do?

BUCK
Lots of things.

MILES
Where's your office?

Buck hesitates, not having an office.

BUCK
I don't have one.

MILES
Howcome?

BUCK
I just don't.

MILES
Where's your wife?

BUCK
(after a pause)
I haven't found her yet.

MILES
Do you have kids?

BUCK
Just myself.

MILES
Are you my Dad's brother?

BUCK
What's your record for
consecutives questions asked?

MILES
Huh?

BUCK
Nothing. Yeah, I'm your Dad's
brother.

Miles nods, satisfied with the answer.

MILES
You have much more hair in
your nose than my Dad.

BUCK
Why, thank you.

Tia walks into the kitchen. Maizy follows. Tia goes to the
cupboard and takes out a box of cereal.

BUCK
(to Maizy)
Hi, there.

Maizy stares at him.

TIA
Say hello, Maizy.

MAIZY
Hello.

BUCK
I'm your Uncle Buck.

TIA
Maizy, sit down.

Maizy climbs onto a chair. Tia serves her a bowl of cereal.

BUCK
What time do we have to shove
off for school?

TIA
Miles starts at 8:45. Maizy
goes at noon.

BUCK
And you?

TIA
I'm not going to school.

BUCK
Pardon me?

TIA
I'm watching Maizy.

BUCK
That's not what your mother
said.

TIA
That's tough.

BUCK
It sure is because you're
going to school.

Tia sits down at the table.

TIA
Is that a fact?

BUCK
That is a fact, that is a
reality and that is a
foregone conclusion.

TIA
And how are you going to
accomplish that?

BUCK
Well, if I can't persuade
you, I can sure as heck tie
you up and throw your snotty
little butt in the trunk of
my car.

Tia leans back in surprise.

INT. CAR. LATER

Buck's driving, Tia next to him, Miles and Maizy are in the
backseat. Tia's fiddling with the radio. The car's vibrating,
rattling and howling with muffler leakage.

BUCK
Who can guess who was
president when this car was
manufactured?

TIA
Abraham Lincoln.

BUCK
Wrong. Miles?

MILES
It smells like carbon
monoxide in here.

BUCK
Carbon monoxide is odorless,
Miles. That's why it's so
dangerous. What you're
smelling is burning oil.

TIA
Is the radio busted?

BUCK
Just give it a whack.

TIA
What?

BUCK
Punch it. Right on the dash.
Give it a whack.

Tia reluctantly smacks the dashboard.

BUCK
Come on, you can do better
than that. Don't tap it,
whack it.

Tia hits it a little harder.

BUCK
I'll tell you what, pretend
the dashboard's my face.
Okay?

Tia gives him a look. She takes him up on the suggestion.
She draws back and gives the dashboard a thundering blow.
The RADIO goes on LOUD.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL. MORNING

A big, sprawling suburban high school. Buck's car pulls in
the lot.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL. MAIN ENTRANCE

Buck's Riviera approaches. The engine's roaring. A trail of blue smoke lingers behind.

EXT. SCHOOL. KIDS

Milling around the front door. High school kids. They look with revulsion as the Riviera rattles up the main drive.

EXT. CURB. RIVIERA

The brakes squeak like fingers coming down a chalkboard as the rolling embarrassment comes to a stop at the curb. It rumbles, shudders, shakes. The only person we see in the car is Buck.

INT. CAR. BUCK

He waits on the car as it goes through its shut-down ritual. He grimaces, holds the pained, anticipatory expression, holds out a finger...

EXT. CAR

It's hissing. Something's going to blow.

EXT. SCHOOL. KIDS

They move back as they anticipate an explosion.

INT. CAR. BUCK

Holding his expression, grits his teeth, wags the finger and BLAM! A huge, wet backfire. He smiles.

BUCK
(with sympathetic
relief)
Ahhh...!

EXT. SCHOOL. KIDS

Scattering, rubbing their ears.

INT. CAR. BUCK

Buck looks down at the footwell.

BUCK
Tying your shoe?

HIS POV

Tia is hunched forward to avoid being seen. She slowly sits up.

EXT. CAR

Tia's head rises ever so slowly in the window and she looks out fearful that she'll be seen.

CU. BUCK

He doesn't get it. He loves the old car and can't imagine it being an embarrassment.

BUCK

What time do you want me to pick you up?

CU. TIA

She turns to Buck. She's angry.

TIA

I'll get a ride.

INT. CAR. BUCK AND TIA

Tia gathers up her books and slips on sunglasses.

BUCK

I got my orders. What time?

TIA

Are you really this stupid? I said, I'll get a ride. I always get a ride.

BUCK

I'll call the school, get the time and you meet me right here.

TIA

Call the school. I won't be here.

BUCK

If you're ashamed to be seen in this car, you won't want me inside asking around about you. The car's a lot prettier than I am, don't you agree? You be here.

Tia stares angrily at Buck. She knows she's lost but won't admit it.

BUCK

You stand me up and tomorrow morning, we'll arrive with the top down.

Tia doesn't react. Buck gives her a little extra incentive.

BUCK

When I ride with the top down, I put zinc on my nose and wear a cowboy hat.

Tia glares at him. She thinks he's being deliberately cruel. She reaches for the door handle. Buck reaches under the seat for a pair of pliers.

BUCK

Four o'clock?

TIA

I can't wait.

He hands her the pliers. She snatches them from him.

TIA

Did you ever have anybody embarrass you like this?

BUCK

Not since I learned to do it myself.

TIA

I can't believe I'm related to you.

She gets the door open and flips the pliers on the seat.

BUCK

You get the pole out of your keister, we'll get along fine.

Tia stares at him with complete disgust. She gets out and slams the door. Buck holds his look on her. He looks in the backseat.

HIS POV

Maizy's sitting in back. She smiles at him.

CU. BUCK

He's puzzled.

BUCK
She hates me, huh?

CU. MAIZY

She confirms with a nod.

MAIZY
She hates everybody.
(pause)
It's just her age.

CU. BUCK

Acknowledges the maturity of the remark with a smile and a slow nod of his head.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS. HOSPITAL

In the heart of downtown.

INT. CARDIAC CARE UNIT. CU. CINDY'S FATHER

He's in his seventies. Pale and fatigued. On the doorstep of death.

INT. WAITING ROOM

Cindy and Bob and Cindy's sister, RUTH, and Cindy's Mother, LEONA. Ruth's in her forties, plain, local, small town. Leona's petite and proper. She's wearing a dress, her hair's done, purse in her lap. She's holding her feelings in as best she can. Ruth is reading a magazine. Cindy's most visibly affected. Bob is standing at the window. Cindy pats her mother's back.

EXT. CHICAGO. ALBERGHETTI TIRE CENTER

A large inner city tire and auto accessory outlet.

INT. TIRE CENTER

Aisles of tires and auto merchandise. A large, noisy discount center.

CU. DIAMOND BRACELET

Pretty little quarter carat diamonds on a woman's wrist. She's holding a telephone. WE MOVE AROUND from the bracelet to her face. It's Chanice.

CHANICE

Whatever you have to do, you
have to do.

INT. OFFICE

A cluttered little office. Chanice has her feet up on the wooden desk.

CHANICE

You don't have to justify
anything to me.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Buck's on the phone. He's undressing. The TV's still on.
LOUD.

BUCK

They were completely flipped-
out when I got here. A
medical emergency in the
middle of the night'll do
that to people.

INT. OFFICE. CHANICE

She's annoyed with him. As usual.

CHANICE

Listen, Buck, for eight years
you've been making plans and
breaking plans. You're worth
less than a Mexican ten
cents off coupon.

INT. BEDROOM. CU. BUCK'S FEET

His shorts drop to his ankles and he steps out of them.

CU. BUCK

He sits down on the edge of the bed.

BUCK

You should be delighted. I'm playing a father role. Isn't that what you've had in mind for me?

INT. OFFICE. CHANICE

She's had enough conversation.

CHANICE

I'm glad you can do it for your brother. You sure as hell can't do it for me.

CU. BUCK

He's getting buried and he knows it.

BUCK

A few laughs, a few drinks, Sunday in bed watching TV. If you want more than that, you better look for somebody else.

CU. CHANICE

She didn't expect such directness so quickly. She's hurt and she's saddened.

CHANICE

I know you think the job I offered you is bullshit and a way to control and ruin your life but it's important to the company and I have to fill it. Unless you tell me otherwise, I'm hiring someone else.

CU. BUCK

He's hurt by the remark. It represents distance from her. He reacts by taking the offensive.

BUCK

Be my guest.

CU. CHANICE

Not what she wanted to hear. But she's determined.

CHANICE

Don't go chaning your mind.
I have to go.

She hangs up the phone and curses softly and sadly.

CU. BUCK

He knows he's losing her. He slowly lowers the phone and hangs it up.

INT. BEDROOM

He stands up and walks to the window. He's completely naked. We STAY ABOVE HIS WAIST. He's depressed, confused and filled with regret.

CU. BUCK

He stares out the window and sighs.

BUCK

Shit...What am I doing? What
in the world am I doing?
(long, lost pause)
I'm standing naked in the
front window.

With no change in expression, he reaches up and pulls the mini-blinds closed.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL. LATER

Tia is sitting in front of the school with her boyfriend. He's a senior, BUG. He's a frightfully thin, pale metal head with dyed blonde dreadlocks. He has his arm draped over Tia's shoulder. She's resting back on his chest.

BUG

Howcome you can't come to my
place?

TIA

My uncle's picking me up.

BUG

How did that happen?

TIA

My parents.

BUG

Is he at all cool?

TIA
He's repulsive.

BUG
If your grandfather dies, are
you stuck with him?

TIA
(defensive)
He's not gonna die.
(pause)
Uncle Shithead's real
temporary. If I can pull it
off with the Queen Mother,
he'll disappear tomorrow.

OC we HEAR the now familiar VOICE OF THE RIVIERA. Bug looks
down the drive. Tia doesn't bother. She knows what it is.

BUG
Whoa. Explain that!

Tia sits up.

TIA
Quick!

She grabs him and kisses him hard and full on the lips.

INT. CAR. BUCK

He sees Tia and Bug. He's not delighted.

HIS POV

Tia getting up from the stairs and kissing Bug. A deliberate
kiss for Buck.

CU. BUCK

He senses that the kiss was planned to crank him up.

BUCK
(to himself)
I gotta rethink my position
on gun control...

EXT. SCHOOL

The Riviera pulls up and stops. It shudders, rattles, coughs
and...

TIA AND BUG

Tia covers her ears and implores Bug to do likewise. After a brief moment of confusion he covers his ears.

CU. BUCK

He leans over on one cheek, squeezes and BLAM!

TIA AND BUG

Bug's impressed by the backfire.

BUG

You know how whipped an engine has to be to blow that loud?

TIA

Call me.

Bug bends down and waves to Buck.

BUG

You ever hear of a tune-up?

CU. BUCK

He leans over in the seat.

BUCK

You ever hear of a ritual killing?

CU. BUG

Looking in the car.

BUG

I don't get it.

CU. BUCK

Calling out to Bug.

BUCK

You gnaw on her face in public like that again and you'll be one.

INT. CAR

Tia gets in and closes the door. Bug leans in and kisses her. Buck hits the gas, spinning Bug away as the old deathmobile squeals away.

TIA
Are you crazy?

BUCK
I can be.

TIA
You could have taken his head off.

BUCK
But would he notice?

TIA
Oh, that's hilarious!

Buck changes the subject.

BUCK
How was school?

TIA
Can we get something straight?

BUCK
The guy's a prowler and you're prey.

TIA
Oh, really?

BUCK
You bet.

TIA
And how do you know?

BUCK
Because when I was his age, I was the guy zoomin' the girls like you.

TIA
I recommend that you stay out of my personal life.

BUCK

Do your parents stay out of
your personal life?

TIA

They don't know my personal
life.

BUCK

Have they met Twiddledink?

TIA

His name's Bug.

BUCK

First or last name?

TIA

First.

BUCK

What's his last name? Spray?

TIA

You should talk, Buck.

BUCK

What's a nice girl like you
doing with a deadman like
that?

TIA

I like him.

BUCK

He like you?

TIA

No. He loves me.

BUCK

You like him. He loves you.
How does that work?

TIA

Where have you been all your
life? In a closet?

BUCK

You don't love him?

TIA

With the exception of my
- sister, my brother and my
grandfather, I don't love
anybody.

BUCK

You got your mother's eyes
and your father's balls.
Actually, your great Uncle
Leon's balls. They were so
big and so tough, Lou Gehrig
hit one of them off the roof
at Briggs Stadium in Detroit.

TIA

You make me sick.

INT. KITCHEN. LATER

Miles is standing on a foot stool washing dishes. Tia walks
in and crosses to the refrigerator.

TIA

What the hell are you doing?

MILES

Uncle Buck said this is how I
earn my keep.

Tia grabs an Evian.

TIA

Howcome the moron didn't use
the dishwasher?

MILES

He couldn't figure out how to
use it.

Tia shakes her head in disgust and exits.

EXT. HOUSE. NIGHT

A stately, three-story Colonial.

INT. HOUSE. LIBRARY

Cindy sits down at a desk in the dark, panelled room. She
dials the phone.

INT. KITCHEN

The TELEPHONE RINGS. Miles listens to the phone for a moment.

MILES
Can somebody get that,
please?

The TELEPHONE CONTINUES TO RING. Miles wipes his hands on the apron he's wearing and jumps down from the stool.

MILES
Do I have to do everything
around here?!

He answers the wall phone.

MILES
Hello?

INT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE. LIBRARY. CINDY

She's on the telephone.

CINDY
Hi, sweetheart. How are you?

CU. MILES

MILES
Fine. I'm earning my keep.

CU. CINDY

The worry has robbed her face of it's color and made her eyes heavy. Her deliberately cheerful tone emphasizes her exhaustion.

CINDY
That's good. Is everything
okay there?
(smiles)
So you like him, huh?
(pause)
Grandpa's doing a little
better and he sends you hugs
and kisses.

CU. MILES

He's on the kitchen phone.

MILES

Tell him I hope he's better.
Do you want to talk to Tia?

CU. CINDY

She smiles.

CINDY

Please. And tell Uncle Buck I
need to speak to him, too.

CU. MILES

MILES

He's tucking Maizy in.

INT. MAIZY'S ROOM

Buck's sitting on the edge of Maizy's bed.

BUCK

I'm really sorry about this,
Maizy, but you have to sleep
in your own bed. You don't
want to sleep with me. I
smell funny.

MAIZY

I sleep with my Dad and he
smells funny.

BUCK

And that's because we're
related. But I smell worse
because I'm single. Single
men smell like worn-out
after-shave and cigarettes
and coffee and Roloids. If
you smell all that while you
sleep, you'll dream about
race tracks and welter-weight
boxers. Don't you want to
dream about princesses and
magic kingdoms?

MAIZY

Not really.

INT. TIA'S BEDROOM

She's on the phone with her mother.

TIA

Next time you take off, why don't hire a murderer to watch the house? This guy's a joke.

CU. CINDY

A moment of knee-jerk concern. Then she considers the source.

CINDY

Why don't you just go your way and let him go his?

CU. TIA

She laughs.

TIA

While he systematically dismantles my life? The guy took off today, left the little guys alone. Plus...

(considers her next statement)

...he drinks.

CU. CINDY

A flash of concern.

INT. MAIZY'S ROOM

Miles walks in as Buck continues to present his argument against sleeping in his room.

BUCK

Another drawback is that I'm a big drooler.

MILES

Mom's on the phone.

BUCK

I have to talk to your Mom.
You think about what I said.
I'm sure that you'll decide
that sleeping in this nice,
fresh, happy bed is
preferable to sleeping with a
funny smelling guy who
snores, yells, drools and has
sent dozens of people to the
hospital over the years with
big toe nail cuts on their
shins.

He gets up from the bed and exits.

BUCK

(to Miles)
Brush your teeth.

MILES

I did. You can feel my
toothbrush.

Buck steps back into the doorway.

BUCK

I have a friend who works in
the crime lab at the police
station and I can give him
your toothbrush and he can
run a test on it and tell if
you actually brushed your
teeth or just ran the tooth
brush under the faucet.

He exits. Miles is startled.

MILES

Oh, my God!

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Buck's sitting on the bed, talking on the telephone.

BUCK

Everything's under control.

CU. CINDY

In light of what Tia said, she's listening to him very
carefully.

CINDY
The kids are okay?

CU. BUCK

He lies.

BUCK
Fine. No problems yet.
(pause)
How's your Dad?
(listens, nods)
Yeah. You just have to wait
and see.

INT. TIA'S ROOM

She's listening to the conversation, her hand over the mouthpiece. She reaches down slowly with her free hand.

CU. TELEPHONE

Tia pushes the button down and carefully hangs up the phone.

CU. TIA

A hard, angry, impenetrable face.

CU. CHANICE

She's in bed, awake, thinking about Buck.

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT. BUCK

He's laying in bed, on his side. Thinking. Lost, middle-age, middle of the night male thoughts. We PULL BACK AND RISE to reveal the full bed. Buck's perched on the edge of the bed, no pillow, no covers. Maizy and Miles are sprawled on the bed perpendicular to him taking up the lion's share of space. They have the pillows and covers.

CU. WASHING MACHINE CONTROL PANEL

A terribly complex, state-of-the-art, control center. A myriad of choices. Number pads. LED read-outs. Lights.

CU. BUCK

Staring at the panel. A look of dumb confusion. He has an armload of laundry. He picks his moment and reaches out to the panel. He reaches just above CAMERA. He pulls his hand back and waits for the result of his action. An electronic BEEPER sounds. He leans forward again.

INT. BASEMENT LAUNDRY ROOM.

A clean, modern laundry room. White and white and white. Slick new appliances. Buck reaches out and tries to lift the lid on the washer. It won't open.

BUCK
Son a bitch...!

INT. KITCHEN

The back door opens and MARCIE DAHLGREN-FROST pokes her head in. She's in her early thirties. Trendy, chic, nosey, annoying, status seeking modern mother. She's wearing the newest in exercise wear, the newest in hair, perfect nails and braces.

MARCIE
Hello?

She doesn't get a reply. She steps in. She looks around the kitchen with horror.

HER POV

The kitchen is a mess from breakfast.

CU. MARCIE

She's shocked.

MARCIE
Oh, my God!

INT. BASEMENT

Buck's yanking on the washer lid. It's filling with water.

BUCK
Goddamn it! Open up!

INT. KITCHEN

Marcie's at the basement door, listening.

BUCK (OC)
I'm gonna get my load in you
whether you like it or not!

Marcie gasps.

INT. BASEMENT

Buck hammers the buttons with his index fingers. Trying them all. He tugs on the lid. No go.

INT. KITCHEN

Marcie tries to peek down into the basement. She gets down on all fours and drops her head.

INT. BASEMENT. CU. MARCIE

Her head appears between the stairs and the basement ceiling.

HER POV

Buck backs into view. He's in his undershorts. We can't see the washing machine. He reaches for a mop.

INT. KITCHEN

The family dog saunters in and stops.

HIS POV

Marcie's rump and bare legs.

CU. DOG

He licks his chops and steps forward.

CU. BUCK

He's angrily approaching the washer with the mop held like a spear.

DOG'S POV. CU. MARCIE'S BOTTOM

MOVING in on those upper thighs.

CU. DOG'S MOUTH. WIDE ANGLE

COMES into CAMERA. The film SLOWS DOWN as the dog's long wet tongue slides out of it's mouth and wipes the lens.

CU. MARCIE

Abject horror. She SCREAMS.

CU. BUCK

He's startled. He SCREAMS and whirls around.

INT. KITCHEN

Marcie is convulsing with shivers from the rude dog kiss planted so near her buttocks. She's frantically rifling through her purse.

INT. BASEMENT

Buck charges up the stairs.

INT. KITCHEN

Marcie stands by the door with a tiny aerosol spray can trained on the door. Buck flies into the kitchen.

MARCIE

Stop!

BUCK

What? Who're you?

Buck takes a step toward Marcie.

MARCIE

Freeze! One more step and I'll spray you! This is Liquid Skunk and it's bad. CINDY!?

BUCK

She's in Indianapolis.

MARCIE

What's she doing in Indianapolis?

BUCK

Her father had a heart attack.

MARCIE

(momentary lapse in her tough attitude)
Oh, I'm sorry.
(tough again)
Who are you and how do you know her father had a heart attack?

BUCK

I'm her brother-in-law.

MARCIE

Who's down in the basement?

BUCK

Nobody.

MARCIE

Who were you talking dirty
to?

BUCK

I was trying to get the
washing machine to work.

Marcie's embarrassed now that she knows the truth.

MARCIE

I apologize.

BUCK

Accepted.

He offers his hand. Marcie shakes it.

BUCK

I'd love to shoot the shit
with you but you've got work
to do.

MARCIE

Work?

BUCK

Housework. You're the
housekeeper, right?

Marcie leans back, deeply insulted.

MARCIE

I beg your pardon.

BUCK

You're not the housekeeper?

MARCIE

Do I look like a housekeeper?

BUCK

I don't know. You're in the
house. I assume...

MARCIE

I am not a housekeeper. I
live in the house behind you.

BUCK

My mistake.

MARCIE

It's my hair? Because of my hair you thought I was the housekeeper?

BUCK

No. I just took a wild guess.

MARCIE

I live behind you. My name's Marcie Dahlgren-Frost. Dahlgren was my maiden name. Frost was my married name. I'm single again but I haven't bothered to lose the Frost.

The conversation dies.

MARCIE

Can I buy you lunch?

BUCK

I'm gonna hang here and try to get the lay of the land.

MARCIE

Rain check?

BUCK

I'm only here for a day or two.

MARCIE

And Cindy said she'd be back in a day or two?

BUCK

She didn't specify. But I assume...

MARCIE

My father's heart attack? I was out of town for three weeks with him. If he needs open heart surgery like mine did...no wonder Cindy didn't call me. You need a relative for an imposition of this size.

Buck's shocked.

INT. TIRE CENTER. OFFICE

Chanice is behind her desk, doing paperwork. She feels a presense. A set of eyes upon her. She turns slowly to the credenza behind her desk.

CU. FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH

A portrait of Buck. A smarmy, eyebrow-raised portrait. It's autographed. "ALL MY BEST TO A REAL SWELL GAL -- BUCK".

CU. CHANICE

She sneers at the photograph and turns it around. She returns to her desk. On her back for a beat. She turns back.

CU. PHOTOGRAPH

On the verso is another portrait of Buck taken at the same time in the same clothes. He's looking over his shoulder at CAMERA. It's also inscribed -- "WHATEVER I DID, I'M SORRY -- BUCK"

INT. OFFICE

Chanice drops the photo in a desk drawer and tries to clear her mind of him. A little smile glimmers across her lips. She runs her hand across her mouth, obliterating it.

CHANICE

Forget it. He's a bum...

CU. BUCK

He's studying a sheet of paper. He has a tough comment to make and is considering how to do it with the least amount of damage.

CU. MILES

He's watching Buck intently.

CU. MAIZY

She's drawing with maniacal concentration, tongue mirroring the motion of her hand. She glances up at Miles.

MAIZY

It sucks, Miles. I told you that.

INT. FAMILY ROOM

Buck, Maizy and Miles are sitting at a game table. Paper and crayons are scattered about as the children have been drawing.

BUCK

Suck, in addition to being a filthy and disgusting word all too awful to come out of such a pretty little mouth as yours, is not the right word for this particular work of art.

MAIZY

Crappy?

MILES

Do you get off on insulting me, freckle-butt?

MAIZY

I don't have freckles on my butt. Those are beauty marks.

BUCK

I'm not familiar with your butt, Maizy, so I might be speaking out of school but I don't think you can call anything on your butt a beauty mark. Beauty and butt just don't work in the same sentence unless you're alot older.

MAIZY

They're not freckles. Freckles are caused by the sun and believe me, I'm not into nude sunbathing.

BUCK

How old are you again?

MAIZY

Six.

BUCK

Really.

(after a pause)

About this picture, Miles.
The word I guess I'd have to
use is inappropriate.

MILES

I don't know that word.

BUCK

That means something's not
right for something. Like...

INT. FAMILY. DOOR

Tia's standing in the doorway.

TIA

You as a guardian.

CU. BUCK

He turns around and looks at Tia.

BUCK

It's Miss Happy Sunshine
Perky Face, Princess of
Pleasant and Perfect.

INT. FAMILY ROOM

She slinks into the room and plops down in a chair.

TIA

That's me.

BUCK

(to Miles and Maizy)
Did either one of you guys
call out for some bad vibes?

MAIZY

Huh?

TIA

Quit ingratiating yourself to
them by running me down in
front of them.

BUCK

Hey, hon, you came in here
with the death face. We're
doing fine all by ourselves.

TIA

The line on you is you're the
bum brother who hangs out at
race tracks and never works.

CU. BUCK

He's surprised she knows so much about him.

CU. MAIZY

She looks down to avoid the unpleasantness.

CU. MILES

He stares at Buck. Then looks to Tia.

CU. BUCK

Opts for honesty. He nods.

CU. TIA

She's a little surprised at his honesty. She was prepared for
a denial and hasn't anything to say.

INT. FAMILY ROOM

Buck holds his look on Tia.

TIA

People talk, people overhear.
I know my Dad loans you
money. You're like our
private family charity case.

Buck keeps staring at her. Her remarks are painful. She pulls
herself out of the chair and shuffles to the door.

TIA

I'm not letting up on you
until you get the hell out of
here.

Tia sneers and exits.

MILES

She's really a waste, huh?

BUCK

No, she's not, Miles. She's
just a little angry.

MAIZY

You should ground her.

MILES

She's already grounded for
smoking cigarettes.

Buck puts on a smile and changes the subject.

BUCK

Let's get back to the picture
here. I think it's great. I
think it's beautifully drawn
but I think if I'd just had a
heart attack, I might think
it's a little...wild.

He hands it to Miles for a second look. He studies it.

CU. DRAWING

Of an elderly man, distinguished by thinning hair, glasses
and facial wrinkles. His face is grotesquely distorted in
pain and he's clutching his heart as a squadron of fighter
planes fire missiles into his heart. At the top it says, "GET
WELL SOON! LOVE YA, MILES.

INT. BATHROOM

Tia is finishing her make-up. She's looks older and a bit too
sexy.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM

Buck roto-tweezer his nostrils. He leans back, checks himself
in the mirror, holds a beat, then grabs his nose and screams
in agony.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Tia's sitting in the living room, looking out the window.
Miles and Maizy come down the stairs.

MILES

Waiting for your sex?

TIA

Shut-up.

Buck lumbers down the stairs. He's wearing a bowling shirt
and jeans. He stops at the bottom of the stairs.

BUCK

Tia?

She looks at him with extreme boredom.

BUCK

You didn't have to blow all that make-up. We're just going bowling.

TIA

You're just going bowling I'm doing a human activity.

BUCK

One whiff of the alley I bowl at and you'll know it's a human activity. It's a great sport and it's virtually impossible to get pregnant while doing it. If you catch my drift.

Tia is revolted. She curls her lip and gives him the evil eye.

TIA

I'll die before I'll go anywhere with you.

BUCK

Tia, the martyr. She died so that young women would never have to bowl against their will.

TIA

Make fun of me, I don't care. I'm not going with you.

MILES

It's gonna be fun.

MAIZY

They have rent-a-shoes.

TIA

And rent-a-foot-disease.

BUCK

We've done the battle of the wills. The deck's stacked in my favor. You're gonna lose again.

TIA

Try me.

BUCK

How would you like to spend the next several nights wondering if your crazy, out-of-work, bum Uncle's going to shave your head while you sleep?

CU. BUCK

He gives her a crazed smile and raises an eyebrow.

CU. TIA

Part of her believes that he might really do it.

CU. BOWLING PINS

A bowling ball rolls INTO FRAME and stops a hair short of striking the pins.

CU. BUCK AND MAIZY

He's leaning over as they both look down the lane.

BUCK

If the object of the game was to get the ball as close to the pins without knocking them over, then you'd be world champion?

MAIZY

Really?

INT. BOWLING ALLEY

An old, inner city bowling alley. Loaded with pot-bellied blue-collar MEN, lacquer-headed middle-aged WOMAN, moussed, bleached, ninety pound, motorhead GIRLS and pumped-muscle, tattooed, bumper bending BOYS. The alley is smokey and loud.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY. TIA

She's sitting uncomfortably at a scoring table. Beside her is a wasted YOUNG MAN with his index finger jammed in a long neck Bud. He's checking her out.

YOUNG MAN

You know what I have on my stomach?

Tia ignores him.

YOUNG MAN

Do you?

Tia continues to ignore him.

YOUNG MAN

I got a snake.

Tia swallows hard.

YOUNG MAN

It's a tattoo. My belly
button's his mouth.

Tia looks slowly around at him.

YOUNG MAN

You know what his tail is?

Buck slides into the booth.

BUCK

You met Beaumont.

YOUNG MAN

New girlfriend, Buck?

BUCK

Niece.

YOUNG MAN

Oh, I'm sorry.

BUCK

Don't worry about it. You got
a game going somewhere?

YOUNG MAN

Yeah. I'm down the way.

BUCK

You're not gonna get a strike
sitting here.

YOUNG MAN

(to Tia)
Nice meeting you.

Beaumont drags himself out of the booth and shuffles off.

TIA
You have alot of nerve saying
anything about my boyfriend.

BUCK
I'd never date him. He's got
a snake on his stomach.

A friend of Buck's leans over the booth and gives Buck a
violent shoulder squeeze. He's a pot-bellied slob, ROG.

ROG
Hey, shithead, where you
been?

BUCK
Rog, I'd like you to meet my
niece and let go of my
shoulder.

Rog realizes he's cursed in front of a child.

ROG
Sorry.

BUCK
She's sorry about it too, but
you can't pick your
relatives. Tia, this is Rog.

ROG
Pleasure.
(continues)
I missed you last night.
Chanice wouldn't let you out
of your cage?

CU. TIA

The mention of Chanice interests her.

CU. BUCK

He hasn't thought about Chanice all day.

BUCK
I'm out in the hinterlands
watching my brother's kids
for a few days.

CU. ROG

He pursues.

ROG

Chanice here? I want to yell
at her.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY. ROG, TIA AND BUCK

Tia's watching Buck for his answer.

BUCK

She's not here.

ROG

I want to let her have it for
not marrying you. If she'd
cave in and marry your
worthless butt, I'd know
where to find you.

BUCK

And I'd know where to find
her.

ROG

I'm just yanking your rip
cord.

(to Tia)

Nice meeting you.

TIA

I'll remember it always.

ROG

(to Buck)

Cute kid.

He takes Buck aside and speaks in low, confidential tones.

ROG

You know, Jimmy Bean's coming
in on Thursday for the Salem
Million at Arlinton Park
Friday.

BUCK

(excited)

No shit?

ROG

That's why I was trying to reach you. He's says it's gonna be a Nagfest. Very easy money. He owes you and he owes me and he owes Ray so he says we should be down at the track about half an hour before post time and he'll give us the tip. He says it's gonna be a one horse race at best. Can you make it?

Buck thinks for a moment. He glances over his shoulder.

HIS POV

Tia's pouting on the bench, Miles is helping Maizy take her ball off the return.

CU. BUCK

A conflicted moment. Gambling, hot tips and kids don't mix too well. He looks back to Rog.

BUCK

Yeah. I'll be there.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY

Rog gives Buck a pop on the shoulder and waddles off. Buck returns to the kids.

TIA

Is he having a baby?

BUCK

With Rog you never know. Old friend. Good friend.

TIA

Weird friend.

BUCK

Yeah, but the nice thing about Rog is he sweats alot.

TIA

What's a Chanice?

BUCK

That's a person who's sometimes found around a Buck.

TIA
- Your girlfriend?

BUCK
A friend. And she's a girl.

TIA
I guess it would be against
the laws of nature to have
you romantically involved
with someone.

BUCK
Not necessarily. Gross and
extremely noisy but not
against any laws of nature
that I know of.

TIA
Are you supposed to marry her
or something?

BUCK
It's come up. But not
seriously.

TIA
Maybe if you got married, you
might stop being such an
asshole.

BUCK
That's a thought starter. So
howcome we're having a
conversation?

TIA
I don't want any of these
disgusting people to sit next
to me.

BUCK
Not because I'm so
interesting?

TIA
Sorry.

BUCK
You're not bowling?

She gives him a dumb look and holds up her beautifully
manicured nails. She wiggles her fingers.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY. BUCK. LATER

Buck's at the ball return. A thin, middle-aged weasel of a man, HARRY, in the next lane, calls to Buck.

HARRY
Hey, Buck!

Buck looks around at him.

HARRY
You took the easy way out,
huh?

BUCK
What's that Harry?

HARRY
You got the kids without
marrying the broad.

Harry laughs. He looks to his bowling mates. They laugh.

CU. BUCK

He doesn't care for the remark. He glances back at the kids. Then down to Harry's ball return.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY. HARRY

He's turned away from Buck, laughing with his buds.

CU. BOWLING BALL

Harry's ball comes to rest on the ball return.

CU. BUCK

He takes the dangling cigarette from his lips and leans over the ball return.

CU. BOWLING BALL

Buck flicks the burning tip off his cigarette into one of the finger holes.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY. BUCK

He rolls his ball. Harry saunters over to the ball return.

HARRY
At least you know how to
bowl, Buck.

BUCK

- You're not only enormously funny, Harry, you're witty, clever and you know how to dance.

HARRY

When did you ever see me dance, putzhead?

BUCK

In about three seconds.

Harry gives buck a disparaging look and inserts his fingers in the ball. He brings it up to his face. The flesh starts to burn, Harry SCREAMS.

HARRY

HOLY MOTHER OF SHIT!

He whips the ball off his finger, sending it banging across half a dozen lanes. He jams his finger in his mouth and does the dance of pain.

EXT. HOUSE. NIGHT

The lights are out.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Buck's in bed. In the middle between Maizy and Miles.

CU. BUCK

He looks down at Miles.

CU. MILES

Sound asleep. Like an angel.

CU. MAIZY

Clutching a filthy, battered stuffed animal.

CU. BUCK

He lays back and sighs sadly.

CU. PANCAKE

A FRAME FILLED with bubbling, simmering pancake batter. SLOWLY PULL BACK to reveal that the pancake is being prepared

on a piece of sheet metal the size of the stove top. The pancake covers six square feet.

INT. KITCHEN

Buck is standing watch over the pancake. He's wearing chino pants and wrinkled white shirt. He's clearly impressed with his pancake.

BUCK

Oh, yeah. Record breaking, goddamn big flapjack. I should name it. The Breakfast Beast...Belly Whacker...The Pantastic Collosus of the Sabbath.

He likes the name.

BUCK

Time to flip you over and make you wail...

He brings up an aluminum snow shovel to flip the pancake with.

INT. HOUSE. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Miles stumbles out of the master bedroom with Maizy.

MILES

What stinks?

MAIZY

Breakfast.

INT. HOUSE. FOYER

Buck's at the bottom of the stairs. He yells up to the kids.

BUCK

Do we have a birthday boy up there?

CU. MILES

He realizes it's his birthday.

MILES

I'm losing my mind! It's my birthday and I forgot to get excited.

INT. FOYER

Miles scrambles down the stairs. Maizy's on his heels. Buck backs into the dining room.

BUCK

I have a surprise in here but you have to wait until I get it ready. No peeking, no cheating or I'll make you eat it.

He slips into the dining room. The kids wait at the bottom of the stairs.

MILES

I'm so flipped-out that I forgot my birthday.

MAIZY

Happy Birthday.

The BEATLES "BIRTHDAY" starts.

BUCK (OC)

Come on in!

The kids cross to the dining room door.

INT. DINING ROOM. DOORWAY

They stand with wide eyes staring into the room.

THEIR POV. INT. DINING ROOM

The drapes are drawn. In the center of the table is the mammoth pancake, festooned with sausages and bacon and drenched in melted butter and maple syrup. Sitting in the middle of it, in lieu of a candle is a flaming butane torch. MUSIC is playing on a blaster and Buck is standing proudly beside the table.

EXT. HOUSE

A Volkswagen Beetle customized to look like a mouse, with big plastic ears on the roof, whiskers on the hood and a tail on the back roars into the driveway and skids to a stop. From inside we HEAR A HIGH-PITCHED GIGGLE. The door opens and disheveled CLOWN tumbles out, laughing.

INT. FAMILY ROOM

Miles and half a dozen of his friends are lounging around the family room. The TV's on. They're bored. Buck walks in.

BUCK

A little delay on the clown.

BOY 1

What clown?

BUCK

Miles' Mom hired a clown.

There's a collective groan from the boys.

CU. MILES

He's nervous. Afraid that his friends are having a bad time.

CU. BUCK

He doesn't understand the gloom.

BUCK

You don't like clowns?

CU. BOY

A snotty, spoiled little face.

BOY

Yeah. About five years ago.
Now they're so boring they
make me puke.

INT. FAMILY ROOM. BUCK

He leans over to Miles.

BUCK

Do you like that guy?

MILES

He's okay. Why?

BUCK

I'd like to yank his
underpants up his crack.

MILES

Don't, please. These are the only friends I have here and they don't even really like me.

BUCK

Are clowns uncool?

MILES

I'm dying about having a clown. My Mom did it without even asking me. She's spending alot of money to make me feel like a baby.

CU. BUCK

He takes special note of the remark. There is alot of information in it although it's not yet clear to him how to use it. He quickly departs the subject.

BUCK

What are you guys into?
Strippers?

MILES

It's not unheard of.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

The clown reaches out and rings the doorbell. He loses his balance and falls into the bushes. Another GIGGLE.

INT. FOYER

Buck crosses the foyer to the door and opens it.

EXT. PORCH. FRONT DOOR

Buck steps out on the porch. He sees the clown car in the driveway. He hears the commotion in the bushes.

EXT. PORCH. CLOWN

He pulls himself up on the porch.

CLOWN

Are you the birthday man?

He cracks himself up.

CU. BUCK

He can't quite tell if this is part of the clown's act or actual deviant behavior.

CU. CLOWN

Beneath a lousy, smeared paint job and a dented red, plastic nose is a man in his early thirties. Blood-shot eyes, breath like Satan's armpits and a crooked smile.

CLOWN

I'm Pooter the Clown.

He reaches clumsily into his giant back pocket and pulls out a huge wallet. From it he withdraws a two foot long business card.

POOTER

My card.

EXT. HOUSE. PORCH

Buck smiles uncomfortably as he takes the card and looks at it. Pooter puts the wallet back in his pocket.

POOTER

Sorry I'm late. I had to work a bachelorette party last night. You need any dildo jokes, I'm the guy.

Buck looks Pooter up and down. He's not pleased with him.

BUCK

Had a few drinks this morning?

CU. POOTER

He takes offense to the remark.

POOTER

You hired a clown, not a priest.

CU. BUCK

He doesn't care at all for Pooter's retort.

BUCK
I have a houseful of kids. I
- don't want some drunk
entertaining them.

CU. POOTER

His eyes narrow in anger.

POOTER
Listen, man, I don't have to
take any shit from you.

CU. BUCK

He comes back just as hard.

BUCK
I generally don't hit women
or clowns...

CU. POOTER

He grabs his lapel and aims a plastic flower at Buck.

POOTER
Smell my flower.

He grits his teeth and squirts Buck.

CU. BUCK

He wipes his face with the back of his hand.

BUCK
Kiss my ass.

He draws his fist back.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The little boys are at the window.

BOY 1
Your Uncle's beating the crap
out of the clown!

BOY 2
This is so cool.

CU. MILES

He's proud of Buck, strange as his behavior is.

EXT. HOUSE. BUCK AND THE CLOWN

Full-blown fist fight. The clown escapes Buck and rushes to his car. He jumps in, locks the door and fires up the engine. Buck grabs one of the mouse ears and tears it off as the VW backs out of the drive. Buck hurls the ear after the fleeing VW.

INT. GROCERY STORE

Buck pushes a shopping cart up an aisle. He's searching for things. He stops a passing STOCK BOY.

BUCK

Excuse me. I've been looking
all over the place and I
can't find the cigars.

CU. STOCK BOY

He looks at him like he asked him if they stocked bull semen.

STOCK BOY

We sell food. Not a lip
cancer.

CU. BUCK

Stares blandly. And continues on his way.

INT. STORE. MEAT COUNTER

Buck's searching the counter. He leans back from the counter and looks at the sign above the section.

HIS POV

The sign reads -- FINE MEATS.

CU. MEAT COUNTER

No meat. Poultry and fish.

CU. BUTCHER

A female BUTCHER in her late twenties is stocking the counter. She notices Buck and offers help.

BUTCHER

Need some help?

INT. MEAT SECTION. BUCK AND THE BUTCHER

He looks to the butcher with a warm smile.

BUCK
Is this the meat section?

The Butcher thinks the question is odd.

BUTCHER
(with a smile)
Yes, it is.

BUCK
I don't see any meat.

BUTCHER
Red meat?

BUCK
Yeah.

BUTCHER
You still eat red meat?

BUCK
(after a pause)
Are you by any chance living
with the guy who doesn't like
cigars?

BUTCHER
We're just dating. How did
you know?

BUCK
Took a flyer.

INT. STORE. AISLE

Marcie's loading up on Evian. Buck makes the turn down the
aisle. She sees him.

MARCIE
Hi.

BUCK
Hello...

He doesn't remember her name.

MARCIE
Marcie. Nice memory.

BUCK
Sorry.

MARCIE
It's okay. You look cute in a
grocery store.

BUCK
They've changed a bit since I
last visited one.

Buck notices Marcie loading the cart with the bottled water.

MARCIE
Water sale.

BUCK
Really?

MARCIE
A dollar seventy nine.

BUCK
A bottle?

MARCIE
Big bottle.

BUCK
What have I been paying?
(thinks)
I think it's about 3 cents
per hundred thousand gallons.

MARCIE
That's tap water. This is
from France.

BUCK
No cigars, no beef but the
waters only a buck, seventy
nine a bottle. I love this
world.

MARCIE
Maybe you need a food guide.
What can I help you with?

BUCK
I'm kind of running out of
ideas for lunches for the
kids to take to school.

INT. SCHOOL. CAFETERIA

A crowded, grade school cafeteria at high noon.

INT. CAFETERIA. MILES

He's at a table with his birthday party friends. He opens the paper bag lunch Buck packed for him. He's embarrassed as he pulls out items not usually found in children's school lunches. A baggie containing a pickled tomato, a small mayonnaise jar filled with milk, a bologna sandwich on a hamburger bun with lettuce, an enormous, severely over-ripe banana and a roll of Tums. Miles' mates stare at him as he unpacks the horror lunch.

MILES

Would anyone like to talk
about a possible lunch trade?

EXT. FOREST PRESERVE. NIGHT

A circle of cars in a parking area deep in the woods. A fire is burning in a trash barrel. Couples are sitting on picnic tables pulled up around the burning barrel. The cars are all turned to the same radio station. Engines are running, windows are open.

CU. BUG AND TIA

They're making out. Bug breaks the kiss, sips a beer, offers Tia some. She declines without hesitation. Bug returns to the kiss. Tia pushes back from him, spits out a mouthful of beer, he's injected into her and slugs him in the chest.

TIA

Pig!

BUG

What?

TIA

That's disgusting.

BUG

I'm sharing.

TIA

I don't want any.

BUG

You're special?

TIA

I can't believe you did that.

BUG

Alcohol kills the germs.

EXT. FOREST PRESERVE ROAD

The Riviera rumbles down the winding road that runs through the forest.

INT. CAR

Buck's driving. Miles and Maizy are beside him.

MILES

I don't get where we're going.

BUCK

I told you twenty five times. We're gonna pick-up Tia.

MAIZY

She went to her cheerleader friend's house for dinner.

BUCK

That's what she said.

MILES

Her friend lives in the woods?

EXT. FOREST PRESERVE. BUG AND TIA

He flips his beer can into the dark.

BUG

There. Gone.

TIA

Sometimes you can be so sweet and most of the times you're just so foul.

BUG

Maybe if we were closer, I'd change.

TIA

What's that supposed to mean?

BUG

It means what it means. We talk. We kiss. End of relationship.

TIA

After a month it's supposed
to be everything?

BUG

Not everything. But
something. I just don't know
how to act around you, I
guess. I love you. I don't
love alot of people. It's not
even an easy thing for me to
say to someone. I know how
serious I am about you. So, I
guess I'm moving on you too
fast because I know this is
real and it's for a long
time.

TIA

You really, honestly believe
that?

BUG

On my mother. Yes.

He leans forward to kiss her. In the near distance, the
familiar Riviera BACK-FIRE SOUNDS. Bug and Tia freeze in mid-
lip weld.

TIA

Shit...

High beams wash them out. They turn squinting, into the
light.

EXT. FOREST PRESERVE

The Riviera rumbles and vibrates. Buck gets out and
approaches the group of kids.

BUCK

Is there a gentleman here by
the name of Bug?

CU. BUG AND TIA

Tia unwraps Bug's arm from her waist and slides down off the
table. Bug follows. He's not as distraught at Tia. Tia takes
his hand and they walk over to Buck.

EXT. FOREST PRESERVE

Buck stands his ground with his hands in his back pockets.
Tia and Bug approach.

BUCK

- They sure are scraping the bottom of the barrel for cheerleaders these days.

TIA

What are you doing here?

BUCK

We were on our way out for ice cream. We thought you might want to join us.

TIA

I said I'd be home at ten. It's not even nine.

BUCK

I didn't say anything about that, did I? I just came by to see if you wanted to go get ice cream. Maybe your Bug might want to join us and we could talk about burying the hatchet.

(to Bug)

You know what a hatchet is?

BUG

It's an ax.

BUCK

Sort of. I have one in my car. I can show it to you.

BUG

I'll pass.

BUCK

I like to carry it because every now and then a situation comes up where you have to use it. Like for example if somebody's been drinking and is about to drive a loved one home. Then I like to know I have it. Not to kill. Just to take a little off the shoulder, elbow. Shave a little meat off a knee cap. You know?

Bug lets go of Tia's hand and takes a step back. Buck turns and heads back to the car. Tia wants to kill him.

BUG

What is the deal with that guy?

TIA

He's crazy. I'm sorry.

BUG

You better split. I don't want him going berserk with an ax on me.

TIA

He's all talk.

BUG

Fine. I'd rather not find out.

TIA

He's gone in a few days. Just relax. I'll get him back.

CU. TIA

She kisses him, making a very grand show of it for Buck's benefit.

INT. CAR

Buck, Miles and Maizy are watching. Buck's fuming at the senseless display.

MILES

That's a pretty stupid thing to do during the flu season.

MAIZY

I'll bet she's getting the tongue.

CU. BUCK

He's alarmed at Maizy's mouth.

INT. HOSPITAL. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

Cindy's mother is at her husband's bedside. She's holding his limp hand, stroking it gently.

INT. HOSPITAL. WAITING ROOM

Cindy's curled up asleep in a chair. She's covered herself with her coat.

EXT. GRADE SCHOOL. MORNING

An old brick elementary school.

INT. SCHOOL. HALLWAY

Buck struts down the hall. He's wearing jeans, a white shirt, a bow tie and a ratty sportcoat. It suddenly occurs to him that he's in a grade school smoking a cigarette. He frantically looks for a place to doff it.

INT. BATHROOM

A boy's bathroom. Buck comes in and pushes open a stall door. He flips the butt in the john and flushes it. He crosses back to the door. Stops, turns and goes back to the two urinals on the wall. They're about a foot and half too low, only a few inches off the ground. He squats down and reaches for his zipper.

INT. SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

A small, cluttered office. Buck takes a seat across a wooden desk from a callous old bitty, MRS. HOARGARTH. She has a prominent mole on her chin. It captures Buck's attention.

BUCK

Morning.

CU. MRS. HOARGARTH

A crooked smile.

MRS. HOARGARTH

I'm Anita Hoargarth.

CAMERA SLIDES DOWN to cut off Mrs. Hoargarth's face at the nose and PUSHES in on the mole on her chin.

CU. BUCK

He's slightly distracted by the mole.

BUCK

I'm Buck Russell, Maizy
Russell's mole.

A quick beat and he realizes what he said. He quickly corrects himself.

BUCK

Uncle. I'm her uncle. Her mother had a conference set with you.

INT. OFFICE

Mrs. Hoargarth nods.

MRS. HOARGARTH

I called for it. I'm very surprised that she's sent a proxy.

Buck immediately dislikes the woman and refuses to be intimidated.

BUCK

She didn't send a proxy ma'am. Her father had a heart attack.

MRS. HOARGARTH

If that's the case then, I understand.

BUCK

It is the case. She wants me to hear what you have to say and report back to her. She apologizes for not being here herself.

MRS. HOARGARTH

Maybe it's better that you're here in her place. I won't have to mince words as I would with a parent. I'm assistant principal here, as you probably noticed from the indications on the door.

Buck nods.

MRS. HOARGARTH

I've been an educator for
- thirty one point three years.
and in those years I've seen
alot of bad eggs. I say eggs
because at the elementary
level we're not dealing with
a fully developed individual.
I see a bad egg when I look
at your niece.

CU. BUCK

He's deeply surprised.

CU. MRS. HOARDGARTH

She leans back in her chair and taps a pencil on the back of
her hand.

MRS. HOARGARTH

She's a twiddler, a dreamer,
a silly heart. She's behind
in her classes, she's a
jabber box and frankly, I
don't think she takes a thing
in her life or her career as
a student, seriously.

CU. BUCK

She's saying everything he doesn't want to hear. He feels
she's unfair and certainly unreasonable.

BUCK

She's also six.

CU. MRS. HOARGARTH

She's confident in her position. She juts out her lower lip
and shakes her head.

MRS. HOARGARTH

That's not a valid excuse.

CU. BUCK

He looks away in disbelief. He comes back ready to do battle.

BUCK

You show me a six year old who doesn't dream, who doesn't have a silly heart, who takes their student career seriously and I'll show you someone who's gonna grow up to either head the Republican National Committee or blow away a dozen people in supermarket shooting spree.

I got about eight minutes of college but I know a good kid when I see one. Because they're all good until dried-out, brain-dead skags like you drag them down and convince them that they're no good.

CU. MRS. HOARGARTH

She's stunned, appalled, horrified.

CU. BUCK

He stands up.

BUCK

You so much as scowl at that kid and I'm coming back for you.

He reaches in his pocket and fishes out a quarter. He flips it on her desk.

BUCK

Take the quarter, go downtown and have a rat bite that goddamn thing off your chin.

He exits.

CU. MRS. HOARGARTH

She's in complete shock. She reaches up and touches her chin.

INT. TIRE CENTER

Chanice is overseeing the assembly of a garish snow tire display. A pair of YOUNG SLOBS are stacking the tires.

CHANICE

When you get them stacked-up,
just dust them. Don't spray
anything on them. People are
attracted by the smell of
fresh rubber, not cleaning
solution.

She turns to exit and runs nose-to-chin with a man, WALT
BERNSTEIN. He's a nice-looking man, simple and solid, a
decent fellow.

CHANICE

Walt! You scared the hell out
of me. How long have you been
standing there?

WALT

I just walked in. What's on
your mind?

CHANICE

Would you ever consider
working for a woman?

WALT

(with a laugh)
Only if I can be on top.

CHANICE

I'm serious.

WALT

Work-work?

INT. CAFETERIA

Another loud, confusing grade school lunch. There's a crowd
gathered around one table.

CU. MILES

He's resigned to another embarrassing lunch. He's staring at
it.

CU. LUNCH

A ziplock bag filled with ribs.

EXT. NEW YORK

Mid-town office building.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM. BOB

He's in a meeting. A heated discussion on a real estate development is underway. Bob is distracted, immersed in thought. Something's gnawing his belly.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING. NIGHT

A four-flat in the city.

INT. APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM

The door opens and the lights go on. Chanice and Walt Bernstein walk in. They've had dinner and a few pops and are affable and familiar.

CHANICE

I forgot what it was like to eat in a restaurant that doesn't have a ketchup bottle on the table.

WALT

Nice little place, wasn't it.

CHANICE

I wine you, I dine you and you still haven't have given me an answer.

WALT

It's a big jump for me. I'm happy doing what I'm doing.

CHANICE

And you're also the biggest liar I've ever met.

WALT

What about what's his name? I heard he was coming to work for you.

CHANICE

We talked about it. But nothing came of it.

WALT

You still seeing him?

CHANICE

On and off. Mostly off.

(changes the subject)

I've been expecting a call from my brother, would you mind if I checked my answering machine?

WALT

Go ahead.

Chanice goes into the bedroom. Walt sits down on the sofa.

INT. BEDROOM

Chanice walks into the fresh modern bedroom. It's large and multi-purpose. There's a desk and a seating group. She turns on the answering machine, kicks off her shoes and goes into the bathroom. She leaves the door open.

CHANICE

My feet, my contacts. I can't stay out this late anymore.

INT. LIVING ROOM. WALT

He smiles at their remark. The answering machine kicks in.

MACHINE

(young male voice)

Chanice? This is Terry. I'm home call me.

(secretary)

Chanice? Walt Bernstein called this morning. I forgot to give you the message.

INT. BATHROOM. CU. CHANICE

Chanice is removing her contact lenses. She smiles at the message.

MACHINE (OC)

(Buck's voice)

Chanice? Buck.

Chanice freezes as she hears Buck's voice.

MACHINE (OC)

I'm just calling to say I miss you.

Chanice manages a satisfied smile.

MACHINE (OC)
I've been thinking about you
alot lately and what we've
talked about, you know, in
the past few weeks.

Chanice soberly considers the message.

MACHINE (OC)
I get in bed at night and I
think about you and all the
time we spent together. And I
think about those two little
dimples on your buns...

Chanice is rattled from her contemplation.

MACHINE (OC)
...Remember we named them?
Lyndon and Johnson I think it
was.

INT. LIVING ROOM. WALT

He cracks a smile.

INT. BEDROOM

Chanice darts out of the bathroom.

MACHINE (OC)
Or was that what we named
your boobs?

INT. BEDROOM

Chanice flies into the bedroom, bangs into Walt, knocks him
to the floor.

MACHINE (OC)
No, your boobs were Mickey
and Minnie and Felix was what
we called your...

Chanice stops the machine.

CHANICE
(to Walt)
Crank call!

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Buck and Maizy are sitting on the bed. Maisy's in her
nightgown.

BUCK

You're sleeping in your own room tonight?

MAIZY

I believe so.

BUCK

That's good, you know. You should be proud. I'm proud of you.

MAIZY

I may flip-out later.

BUCK

The actual going to bed is the scariest part, though. If you can do that, chances are you won't flip-out later.

MAIZY

I'm psyched for it.

BUCK

Can I ask why the change? Have I been really gross? Snoring, swearing in my sleep? Or worse? It could be helpful for me to know this in terms of future living situations.

MAIZY

You mean girls?

BUCK

Or women.

MAIZY

You're not too bad. You smell a little weird but I think it's the kind of smell that adult girls like.

BUCK

That's useful information.

MAIZY

But the main reason is I'm not so scared of something anymore.

BUCK
Is it a real personal thing?

MAIZY
No. It was a lady at school
who was mean to me.

Buck realizes it was Mrs. Hoargarth.

BUCK
She looks kind of like the
back of an elephant with
sideburns?

Maizy smiles.

BUCK
You're not afraid of her
anymore?

MAIZY
She smiled at me and asked me
how I was.

BUCK
That's nice.

MAIZY
Plus she got this huge wart
burned off her face and that
helped alot.

The phone rings. It's grabbed on the first ring.

INT. TIA'S ROOM

She's listening to music, curled up in a rat's nest of
clothes, CD's, books, papers, magazines, trinkets. She puts
the phone to her ear.

TIA
Hi.

INT. CHANICE'S BEDROOM

She sitting in dim light on the phone.

CHANICE
Hi. May I speak with Buck
Russell, please? This is a
friend of his, Chanice Miler.

CU. TIA

A wicked smile. Nothing could play better for her than to intercept a call from Buck's girl.

TIA
I'm sorry, he's not here
right now.

CU. CHANICE

It's curious to her why he wouldn't be home with the kids. If he's watching the kids.

CHANICE
Do you know when he'll be
back?

CU. TIA

Seals it.

TIA
He went out with Marcie, the
lady who lives next door.
When they party they usually
go pretty late.

CU. CHANICE

She's stunned. She loses her words for a moment.

CU. TIA

She knows she got a home-run reaction.

TIA
You want to leave a message?

CU. CHANICE

She clears her throat.

CHANICE
No message, thanks. Bye.

She hangs up the phone.

INT. TIA'S ROOM

She hangs up with a diminishing grin. She sits back on the bed considering what she did. She isn't so much remorseful as

confused about her ambivalence to such an overtly dishonest action.

INT. CAFETERIA

A massive crowd around the Miles' table.

INT. CAFETERIA. MILES

He's rather enjoying his odd celebrity. He opens a sandwich, checks the interior and reports to the crowd.

MILES

Tuna.

(dramatic pause)

No mayonaise!

The crowd bursts into applause.

INT. HOSPITAL. CU. GRANDFATHER

He slowly opens his eyes and looks around.

EXT. HOUSE. DRIVEWAY

Buck is hosing down the pots and pans with the garden hose.

EXT. MARCIE'S HOUSE

She's standing at her fence watching Buck. She's just back from a run and is wet and glistening.

MARCIE

Dishwasher break?

CU. BUCK

He looks up with surprise.

BUCK

No. I'm hosing down the pots and pans. Then I call the dog out. He drinks the water and eats the scraps and I've killed three birds with one stone. What are you up to?

CU. MARCIE

She smiles at his strange behavior.

MARCIE

I just got back from running. You should hose me down.

CU. BUCK

He looks at her wondering if there's a hidden meaning.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Buck flicks the hose in her direction. She jumps back.

MARCIE

Turn that thing off and come over. You're bored out of your mind. You need some adult supervision.

INT. MARCIE'S KITCHEN

Buck's slouched in a chair. Marcie's slinked-out on the counter.

MARCIE

What kind of job do you have that you can drop everything and spend open-ended time with your brother's kids?

BUCK

Obviously one with flexible hours.

MARCIE

Bullshit. You're a party boy. And maybe that's what I'm responding to. I've had it up to here...

She puts the edge of her palm on her crotch.

MARCIE

...with hard-charging success machines. When they talk they sound like the Wall Street Journal for the blind. I'm in the mood for a little careless living.

BUCK

Yeah? From one who's lived there? It's not that great.

EXT. HOUSE

A black Mustang convertible pulls in the driveway. Chanice gets out.

INT. MARCIE'S KITCHEN

She slides off the counter and crosses to the refrigerator.

MARCIE
Cindy hates me, you know.

BUCK
Why?

MARCIE
Because I like Bob.

BUCK
How unreasonable of her.

Marcie takes a bottle of Evian out of the frig.

MARCIE
I'm just interested in him.
I'd never make a move on him.

She tries to open the bottle. She can't get a grip on it. She hands it to him for help.

MARCIE
It's real slippery.

Buck can't get a grip on it either.

BUCK
I'm gonna stay a faucet man.

EXT. HOUSE

Chanice steps down off the porch and walks up the driveway.

INT. MARCIE'S KITCHEN

Buck is gripping the bottle between his knees. He struggles with the bottle.

BUCK
Goddamn it!

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Chanice hears Buck's voice. She crosses the driveway to Marcie's house.

CHANICE
Buck?

INT. KITCHEN

Buck can't get the bottle open.

BUCK

I'll hold it, you play with
it.

CU. CHANICE

She stops in her tracks as she hears the odd statement. She
peeks in the open door.

HER POV. INT. KITCHEN

Marcie blocks her view of the bottle. Marcie wipes her hands
on her rump and leans over Buck. She grabs the bottle top and
twists mightily.

CU. BUCK

He's gritting his teeth and he holds the bottles in his
knees. He opens his eyes for a moment. He closes them for a
split second. He opens them again in shock.

HIS POV

Past Marcie is Chanice in the doorway.

CU. CHANICE

She's outraged.

EXT. HOUSE

Chanice storms down the driveway to her car. Buck runs after
her.

BUCK

Chanice! Nothing was going
on! Look! If we were doing
what you think we were doing
I wouldn't have been able to
run fast enough to catch
you?!

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Chanice stands at the car, unconvinced.

BUCK

We were opening a bottle of water! It was one of the most innocent things I've ever done as an adult!

CHANICE

How many bottles of water did you open last night?

BUCK

Last night?

CHANICE

Maybe Marcie can help you grow up.

She gets in the car.

CU. BUCK

He's puzzled how she knows Marcie's name.

INT. KITCHEN

Buck walks into the kitchen, still puzzled and confused. Tia's sitting at the table. She's waiting for him.

TIA

Problems?

Buck looks at her. He resents her pleasure with his troubles.

TIA

Hurts when somebody screws around with your love life, huh?

CU. BUCK

He knows she had something to do with it.

CU. TIA

Grins like a demon child.

INT. FAMILY ROOM. NIGHT

Buck's sitting in the living room watching TV. Miles walks in. He slides into the chair with Buck.

MILES

What's up, UB?

Buck looks at him. He's not familiar with the new moniker.

MILES
Somebody run over your puppy?

BUCK
What?

MILES
You got the blues?

Buck holds his curious stare on Miles. He hasn't heard him talk like this before.

BUCK
I'm tired.

MILES
Start hitting the sack a little earlier.

BUCK
That's a good idea.

MILES
You know what I'm worried about?

BUCK
The trade deficit?

MILES
No. I'm worried about when you leave that I'll go back to being a slug.

There's a pause as Buck considers the remark.

BUCK
What's a slug?

MILES
That's a guy who's so boring it's okay to wail on him.

BUCK
Oh. You were boring?

MILES

I was just sort of nothing.
My Mom sent out a ton of
birthday invitations and I
only got five guys. That's
not so great. But then you
stomped the clown and
everybody who didn't go
wished they did because it's
so rare that clowns get their
butts overhauled.

Buck nods his understanding.

MILES

And every day at lunch
everybody hangs out with me
to see what kind of weird
stuff you gave me to eat.

BUCK

I gave you weird stuff?

Miles fears that he's offended Buck.

MILES

But that's good because my
whole class hung out with me
just to see what was in my
lunch.

BUCK

And they got a chance to meet
you and know what a good guy
you are. So, that's nothing
to worry about. That's
something to be happy about.

MILES

But I'll still miss you.

BUCK

I'll be downtown. Give me a
call.

MILES

Everything's gonna go back to
normal.

BUCK

What's wrong with that?

MILES

I like it better your way.

BUCK

I'm not the guy you want
around all the time. For the
important stuff, you want
your Mom and Dad.

MILES

You couldn't afford to pay
for my college, right?

INT. TIA'S ROOM

She's hunched-over, drawing on her forearm with a ballpoint
pen. The PHONE RINGS. She answers it.

TIA

Hello.

She lays back on the bed.

TIA

What do you want?

INT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE. LIBRARY. CINDY

She's at the desk.

CINDY

Grandpa's coming out of
intensive care in the
morning. He's gonna be okay.

CU. TIA

She closes her eyes and sighs with relief.

CU. PHONE

Tia hangs it up.

CU. CINDY

She hears the line disconnect.

INT. MAIZY'S ROOM. NIGHT

Buck's sitting on the edge of Maizy's bed.

MAIZY

This praying stuff is
incredible.

BUCK

People have been saying that
for years.

MAIZY

I asked God to make Grandpa
get better and he did.

BUCK

You should thank him.

MAIZY

I will. Then I was thinking
of going for a VCR for my
room and a swimming pool for
next summer. And...

BUCK

You shouldn't pray for things
like that.

MAIZY

Do you know how expensive a
pool is?

BUCK

Maizy, prayers are for
important things. Things that
matter to your heart. Like
your Grandpa. Let's say you
put in a prayer for a
swimming pool and a VCR. And
at the same time, somewhere
another little girl is
praying to save her mother or
someone that she loves. Up
there in heaven the angels
are busy dealing with pool
contractors and the Sony
people about your VCR and
they don't hear this little
girl's prayer. Would that be
right?

Maizy's sufficiently startled.

MAIZY

That's how it works?

BUCK

That's the general idea. I'm not a theologian but the point is, you pray for the absolute most important things.

MAIZY

Does the Bible have a list of these things?

BUCK

No. You know in your feelings if you're praying for something important or something selfish and stupid. You already did that when you prayed for your grandpa.

Maizy takes a moment to digest the information. She nods that she gets it.

MAIZY

Could I pray for you to live here?

BUCK

No, because I already have a place.

MAIZY

But isn't it weird and lonely?

BUCK

Sometimes it's lonely. I'd say it's more messy than weird but it's home and that's where I live and you live here and I can come visit you, can't I?

MAIZY

It'd be better if you were here on a permanent basis.

BUCK

You'll see me if you want. You just go to sleep and think about how great it is that your Grandpa's okay and that your Mom and Dad are coming home. You want a whisker kiss?

MAIZY

- If you insist.

Buck leans over her and gives her a quick rub on the cheek with his stubbly chin. She giggles and pushes him away. Buck gets up and crosses to the door.

BUCK

Sleep like a rock.

MAIZY

Roll like a stone.

INT. HALLWAY

Buck closes Maizy's door and turns to find Tia leaning on her door jamb staring at him.

TIA

You got a minute?

BUCK

(guarded)

I got alot of minutes.

Tia rolls off the jamb, into her room.

INT. TIA'S ROOM

Tia sits down on her bed. Buck steps in. He looks around at all her things. He's a little uncomfortable in the room.

TIA

Now that everything's okay with grandfather, I want to go out tomorrow night.

Buck doesn't respond.

TIA

I know I'm grounded and you're enforcing for my parents but I talked to my mother...

BUCK

You hung up on your mother.

She's caught. Her strategy crashes.

BUCK

You can go crazy when I'm gone but until then, I'm not letting you out.

TIA

You just can't find any way to be cool, can you?

BUCK

You mean easy? No.

TIA

I mean decent.

BUCK

You mean blind?

TIA

Who are you trying to score points with? My parents? How many times have they invited you over here since we moved here? Try none until they went up shit creek and got stuck.

Buck takes the insults as best he can. He stands his ground.

BUCK

Get used on your parents' time.

INT. HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY

It's a mess.

INT. HOUSE. BASEMENT

Laundry's piled-up in front of the washer.

INT. KITCHEN

It's a mess as well. The dog is up on a chair eating off the breakfast plates.

EXT. RUSSELL HOUSE. AFTERNOON

Bug's car is in the driveway.

INT. HOUSE. STAIRS

Tia scrambles down the stairs. She's dressed to go out. She's carrying a backpack. Miles and Maizy are at the bottom of the stairs.

MILES

U.B. went to school to pick you up, you know.

TIA

You tell U.B. when he gets home that he lost, okay.

MAIZY

Lost what?

TIA

Just tell the asshole, he lost. He'll know what it means. I'll see you guys Sunday.

She grabs her purse and dashes out of the house.

MILES

What day is today?

MAIZY

Friday.

MILES

You know what that means?

MAIZY

Jumbo party.

MILES

You can put that on a platter and serve it hot.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL

The Riviera's parked in a nearly vacant lot.

INT. CAR. BUCK

He's sitting behind the wheel waiting. He's angry. He looks at his watch. Tia's given him the slip. He pounds and smacks the steering wheel angrily.

EXT. HOUSE

The Riviera pulls into the driveway. Buck gets out and hurries into the house.

INT. FOYER

Buck comes in and yells.

BUCK

Tia!

Maizy and Miles come out of the kitchen.

MILES

She took a hike, U.B.

BUCK

Shit!

MAIZY

That's a swear.

BUCK

(ignores her)

Did she say where she was going?

MILES

Party. Is that a problem?

BUCK

She was supposed to watch you guys for me. I have to be some place tonight.

He thinks quickly.

BUCK

You ever been to a race track?

EXT. HOUSE. LATER

Buck herds Maizy and Miles out the front door. He locks up.

BUCK

It's alot of fun. Beautiful horses.

MILES

And you win money, right?

BUCK
(after a pause)
- Some people do.

Buck walks the kids to his car. He starts to slow down as he approaches the car.

CU. BUCK

He opens the door for them. He's troubled.

BUCK
Did Bug pick up Tia?

EXT. HOUSE. CAR

Buck pulls the seat forward for the kids.

MILES
Yeah.

BUCK
And she said she was going to
a party?

MAIZY
She said she'd be home
Sunday.

Buck reacts to Sunday. Maizy gets in the car.

BUCK
Sunday?

MILES
Big time party, U.B.

Miles gets in the car. Buck hesitates. He looks at his watch. He gets in.

INT. CAR. CU. BUCK

He starts the engine. He thinks for a long troubled moment. He looks in the mirror.

CU. REAR VIEW MIRROR

Miles and Maizy looking like angels.

INT. CHANICE'S APARTMENT. CHANICE

She's in the bedroom on the phone.

CHANICE

Can't you ever take a hint,
- Buck?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. BUCK

He's on the phone.

BUCK

Chanice, this isn't about me.
I have a problem here at the
house with the kids. Can you
help me?

CU. CHANICE

She doesn't believe him.

CHANICE

What about the babe next
door?

CU. BUCK

He knows she's suspicious.

BUCK

She's not home. I need
somebody to watch the little
kids.

CU. CHANICE

She understands now.

CHANICE

I know why you're calling.
Your horse fixer's in town
and you have to be at the
track. Rog called looking for
you last Friday. What's the
matter, Buck? You can't take
children with you when you
cheat on a horse race? You
get religion out there in the
'burbs?

CU. BUCK

He's offended by the accusation. But understands it.

BUCK

I came close, Chanice. I had 'em in the car even but I couldn't do it. Can we put our problems aside for a second? The older daughter split on me and I need to find her. She's fifteen, she's angry and she's confused. Please. I'm stuck real bad.

CU. CHANICE

She detects a hint of sincerity in his voice.

CHANICE

No games?

CU. BUCK

He shakes his head.

BUCK

No games.

CU. CHANICE

She knows he's upset and his request is legitimate.

CHANICE

Okay, but we're over and I don't want it back again.

CU. BUCK

A touch of sadness in his panic.

BUCK

However it has to be.

INT. KITCHEN. LATER

Buck's in the kitchen with Miles and Maizy trying to figure a strategy.

BUCK

Do you know any of her friends' names?

MILES

She doesn't have any friends.

BUCK

Does she have a phone book or a school directory. If I knew a name or two, we could track her down.

MAIZY

She keeps important stuff in a shoe box inside another box under her bed covered up with an old blanket.

BUCK

You've obviously searched her room.

MAIZY

Only by accident.

BUCK

That's wrong but go and get me the box.

INT. HOUSE. KITCHEN

Jammed with kids. Giant party in progress. MUSIC's howling. Loud CONVERSATION. The phone rings. And rings. A BOY notices it and answers.

BOY

Yeah?

INT. KITCHEN. BUCK

He strains to listen to the voice against the background noise.

BUCK

Hello?
(pause)
Is Tia Russell there?

CU. BOY

He strains to listen.

BOY

Who are you?

CU. BUCK

He answers honestly.

BUCK
I'm her uncle.

CU. PARTY PHONE

It hangs up.

INT. KITCHEN

Buck looks at the phone.

BUCK
He hung up on me.

MILES
You said you were Tia's
uncle. No smart person wants
a grown-up person knowing
there's a party happening.

BUCK
Makes sense.

Buck redials the number. He waits confidently as the phone
rings again.

MILES
Say you're Guns 'n Roses.

Buck waves him silent. He has things under control.

BUCK
Yo. What's going on?

INT. KITCHEN

A GIRL has answered the phone.

GIRL
Who's this?

CU. BUCK

He clears his throat and affects the voice and body english
of someone much younger than himself.

BUCK
I'm a friend of Bug's. From
New York. Who's this?

INT. KITCHEN. GIRL

She leans into the wall to shield herself from the noise.

GIRL

Rachael.

CU. BUCK

BUCK

Yeah? I heard about you.

CU. RACHAEL

She smiles.

RACHAEL

Bullshit.

CU. BUCK

BUCK

No, I did. From Bug. Can I meet you sometime?

(pause)

Yeah? So, when?

(pause)

Yeah? I don't know where you are how can I meet you?

Buck motions frantically for a pen and paper. Miles whips open a drawer and flips a note pad and a ballpoint to Buck.

BUCK

Totowa Lane? What's the address?

INT. KITCHEN

The Girl yells above the noise.

GIRL

What's the address here?

CU. BUCK

He waits for the answer. She gives it and he writes it down.

CU. NOTE PAD

The ballpoint, like all kitchen pens, is dry. He scribbles frantically.

CU. BUCK

He signals for a new writing instrument.

BUCK
- You got a really sexy voice.
Tell me that again.

INT. KITCHEN

Miles gives Buck a crayon.

BUCK
147 Totowa? Lane?

He writes down the number.

BUCK
- I'll be there. Look for me.
I'm the one with the thinning
hair and the bad indigestion.

He hangs up the phone.

BUCK
I haven't used a crayon since
Eisenhower was in office.

INT. KITCHEN. GIRL

She hangs up the phone, confused about Buck's said.

GIRL
Indigestion? That's what my
father gets.

EXT. STREET

The Riviera cruises down a residential street.

INT. CAR

Buck looks at the addresses on the houses, then at the road,
then at the piece of note paper.

EXT. HOUSE

All the lights are on, cars are parked all over, people are
streaming in and out, milling about on the lawn.

INT. RIVIERA

Buck looks out the window.

HIS POV

MOVING to the party house.

CU. BUCK

He looks at the address on the mailbox.

CU. MAIL BOX

The block letters painted on the side read -- 147.

INT. CAR. BUCK

He looks at the address on the paper.

CU. PAPER

In crayon -- 147.

EXT. RUSSELL HOUSE

Chanice's car is in the driveway.

INT. FOYER

Miles opens the mail chute and calls out.

MILES

Who is it?

EXT. HOUSE. PORCH

Chanice bends down to address the mail chute

CHANICE

I'm Chanice. A friend of your
Uncle Buck's?

CU. MAIL CHUTE

Miles peeks out of the chute.

MILES

May I see your driver's
license, please?

EXT. PARTY STREET

The Riviera parks at the end of the line of party cars. He gets out and looks at his sheet of paper then down the street at the party.

INT. RUSSELL HOUSE. FOYER

Miles unlocks and opens the door. Chanice steps in.

CHANICE

Hi. Is you Uncle Buck still here?

MILES

He's out on...

He can't remember. He looks to Maizy.

MAIZY

Virgin Patrol.

Chanice recognizes the remark as a buckism.

CHANICE

Did he tell you I was coming?

MILES

He said a very nice woman was on her way over.

CHANICE

(to herself)

What else could he say?

MILES

Huh?

CHANICE

I said, it's nice to be here.

She looks around.

HER POV

MOVING across the entrance hall starting with the dining room with a heap of laundry on the table, the staircase and the debris piled on the steps and the carpet screaming for a vacuum. At the end of a narrow hall the cluttered kitchen and finally the living room, dark except for a light on one end of the couch. Buck's seat, marked by beer cans, an ashtray and newspapers.

CU. CHANICE

It's worse than she could have imagined. But it's pure Buck and she's vividly reminded of him.

CHANICE

What is this poor man doing in the suburbs?

INT. BEDROOM

Bug's on the bed with a girl (presumably Tia). He's seriously mauling her. There's a knock on the door.

CU. BUG

He looks around at the door.

BUG

I'm busy!

Bug returns to his girl. He's interrupted again. This time by the high-pitched, irregular sound of a small, electric motor at work. He lifts his head to listen.

CU. DOOR KNOB

A screw falls out and another. The doorknob to the floor.

CU. BUG

He looks at the door.

HIS POV

The bedroom door opens and Buck stands, backlit, in the doorway holding a battery-powered electric screwdriver.

BUCK

Now it's my turn to do the screwing.

He flips on the overhead light.

CU. BUG

He's terrified to see Buck. The girl he's with sits up. It's not Tia but another young girl.

CU. BUCK

He's startled to see that Bug isn't with Tia.

CU. GIRL

A chilly, mildly annoyed look.

EXT. STREET. TIA

She's hurt and angry and humiliated. She's walking down the sidewalk. Her eyes are red, her cheeks are damp from a past cry. The tears are gone to a lonely ache. In the distance,

the familiar POW of the Riviera back-firing. Tia rolls her eyes and sighs. Just what she doesn't need.

INT. RIVIERA

Buck's cruising the street slowly, looking for Tia. He spots her. He bites his lip, expecting a difficult time.

EXT. STREET

The Riviera pulls along the curb. Buck hangs his head out the window.

BUCK
You need a ride?

EXT. STREET. TIA

She continues walking, not answering, not looking at Buck.

CU. BUCK

He tries another approach.

BUCK
I'm not the worst person in
the world to talk to. Just
the ugliest.

CU. TIA

No reaction. She just keeps walking.

CU. BUCK

He's getting nowhere. He sticks his head back in the window and stops the car.

EXT. STREET

The Riviera parks and the engine stops with a shutter, a rattle and a POW. The lights go out.

CU. TIA

She continues walking, noting that he's stopped.

EXT. STREET. RIVIERA

Buck gets out of the car and sits on the hood.

EXT. STREET. TIA

From the back. She stops. A long beat and she turns around.

TIA
Are you proud of yourself?

EXT. STREET. BUCK

He doesn't react.

CU. TIA

She continues.

TIA
You were right. Does that
make you feel good? Does that
make you feel sufficiently
superior to me?

CU. BUCK

He shakes his head, no.

BUCK
I don't want to talk about
it. I just want to get you
home so I can go to bed. I'm
tired.

CU. TIA

She doesn't trust him.

TIA
You're suddenly not
interested after harrassing
me for a week?

CU. BUCK

He slides down off the hood of the car.

BUCK
You get in the car, I won't
say another word to you.

CU. TIA

She surprised by his change of heart. She puts up her
defenses and denies that she's affected.

TIA
Fine.

EXT. STREET

Tia walks toward the car. Buck gets in and starts it up. Tia walks around to the passenger side. She has to wait as Buck fiddles with the broken door and the pliers. She gets in.

INT. CAR

Tia looks at Buck. He tries to ignore her.

TIA
Is this a trick?

Buck looks at her and shakes his head, no.

TIA
You know what happened?

Buck nods. Tia looks down at her knees.

TIA
Are you gonna tell my
parents?

BUCK
No.

TIA
Okay.

BUCK
(after a pause)
I've been riding your butt
all week about how you live
your life and I realized
maybe somebody should have
been riding mine. I'm
probably the last guy in the
world you'd want to help but
I could use a little advice
vis a vis Chanice. I've been
stringing her on for about
eight years and maybe you
could help me figure what the
hell's wrong with me.

CU. TIA

She doesn't understand where he's taking the conversation.

CU. BUCK

He's a little embarrassed.

BUCK

(tongue in cheek)

I did such a great job
earning your trust and
admiration I'm confused why I
haven't been able to do the
same with Chanice.

CU. TIA

She cracks the tiniest smile.

TIA

Did you do anything to Bug?

CU. BUCK

He smiles. He turns off the car and opens the door.

CU. TRUNK

The Riviera trunk opens. Bug is in his shorts bound at the
wrists with duct tape. Another piece is across his mouth.

EXT. STREET. BUCK AND TIA

Tia's startled to see him. Buck leans down.

CU. BUG

Buck rips the tape off his mouth.

CU. BUCK

He tosses the tape away.

BUCK

Tell her you're sorry.

CU. BUG

He snarls at Buck.

BUG

I coulda suffocated, you
asshole!

CU. BUCK

He remains calm and passive.

BUCK
I don't know if I told you
... this or not but I'm an
amateur dentist...

CU. BUG

His eyebrows shoot up in horror.

CU. TIA

She cracks up.

INT. RUSSELL HOUSE. KITCHEN. LATER

Chanice and Tia are in the kitchen. It's been cleaned and
Chanice is just finishing the sink.

CHANICE
I appreciate you telling me
all this, Tia, but my
problems with Buck go alot
deeper than a
misunderstanding with a
neighbor lady.

TIA
Don't you think he loves you?

CHANICE
If he did he'd never say it.

TIA
What if he did?

CHANICE
I'd probably suspect that he
needs new tires.

TIA
Seriously.

CHANICE
Honey, you're real nice to
talk about this but I don't
think you understand the
bigger picture. Buck is a
charming man who wants to be
a boy forever. That doesn't
make for a lasting
relationship.

TIA

He could be a father. My
brother and sister love him.
The place was a giant pighole
and he can't cook or do
anything around the house but
he seems to care about the
important stuff.

CHANICE

Did he tell you to say all
this?

TIA

(after a pause)

No.

CHANICE

Really?

Chanice walks over to the swinging dining room door, lifts a
leg and gives it a swift kick.

INT. DINING ROOM

Buck lands on his ass, grabbing his stinging head.

EXT. RUSSELL HOUSE. AFTERNOON

Bob and Cindy pull in the driveway.

INT. KITCHEN

Chanice and Buck are in the kitchen looking up at the
ceiling.

THEIR POV

Two halves of a grilled cheese sandwich are stuck to the
ceiling.

INT. KITCHEN

Chanice looks from the ceiling to Buck.

CHANICE

How'd you do that?

BUCK

I was flipping it.

CHANICE

Have you ever heard of a
spatula?

BUCK
- If I successfully flip it, I
don't get a utensil dirty.

CHANICE
This isn't so bad is it?

BUCK
What?

CHANICE
A house. Kids.

BUCK
Do you know how much money I
lost not going to the track
last night?

CHANICE
You know how much dignity you
gained?

CU. BUCK AND CHANICE

She puts her arms around Buck's neck.

CHANICE
I hate that you're doing
this, but I love why you're
doing it?

BUCK
(smiling)
What am I doing?

CHANICE
You're teasing the shit out
of me.

BUCK
I am?

CHANICE
(mocking him)
I am?

BUCK
Okay. Why am I teasing the
shit out of you?

CHANICE
Because these...

She reaches down and gives Buck a squeeze.

CHANICE
...won't let you admit that a
man can work with a woman
and...

BUCK
(high voice)
I'm getting a stomach ache.

CHANICE
...be a father and take care
of children...

BUCK
(higher voice)
My molars are starting to
hurt...

CHANICE
...and be a husband and a
friend...

BUCK
(higher still)
My sex life is passing before
my eyes...

CHANICE
...and settle down and make a
real life.

She releases him.

BUCK
Bless you.

CHANICE
The job's still open.

BUCK
Sales manager or lover?

CHANICE
Both.

BUCK
Does the lover get a company
car?

INT. HOUSE. STAIRS

Miles thunders down the stairs

MILES
THEY'RE HERE!

Maizy roars down after him.

INT. KITCHEN

Chanice and Buck hear the kids. Chanice looks up at the sandwich still stuck on the ceiling.

CHANICE
That's a nice homecoming
gift.

Chanice exits. Buck opens the back door and whistles for the dog. He comes scrambling in. Buck positions him in front of the stove and turns his head up to the ceiling.

BUCK
In a minute or so, you're
having lunch.

INT. FOYER

Bob and Cindy hug and kiss Miles and Maizy.

CINDY
I missed you guys so bad!

Chanice walks in.

BOB
Chanice!

CINDY
Hello.

BOB
You remember Buck's...you
remember Chanice.

CINDY
Nice to see you.

Buck enters.

BUCK
The cavalry's here! We're
saved.

Buck grabs Bob's hand. He gives Cindy a kiss.

BUCK

I brought Chanice out so she
could see what a master
housekeeper I am.

CINDY

I hope these two didn't give
you alot of trouble.

BUCK

Maizy smokes in bed and Miles
was working the dial-a-party
line pretty regularly.

MILES

He's jerkin' your gherkin.

Buck moves to silence Miles.

BUCK

The important thing is your
Dad's doing great, you're
home, the family's reunited
and Chanice and I are bathing
together again.

CHANICE

(embarrassed)
That's not true.

BUCK

Showering.

TIA (OC)

Mom?

The room falls silent as all eyes turn to the top of the
stairs.

CU. CINDY

She looks to the upstairs landing. Uncertain of what to
expect.

HER POV

Tia's standing at the top of the stairs. She's dressed in
light colors, light fabrics. Her appearance is softer and
saner.

TIA

Can I talk to you for a
minute?

CU. CINDY

She looks at Bob.

CU. BOB

His stomach winds-up a notch.

CU. BUCK

He looks away.

INT. HOUSE. STAIRCASE

Cindy starts up the stairs.

INT. FOYER

Bob looks at Buck with concern.

INT. HOUSE. UPSTAIRS HALL

Tia backs away from the staircase. Cindy reaches the top. They look at each other for a moment. Cindy's cautious and hesitant. Tia's nervous. A long, loaded beat passes and Tia throws her arms around Cindy and hugs her.

EXT. HOUSE. PORCH

Buck and Chanice are saying farewell. All the Russells are on the porch.

BUCK

I'm not going to kiss anyone goodbye because I'm going to see more of you. Chanice and I considering debating the possibility of exploring the feasibility of opening up dialogue on the subject of a tentative discussion of a marriage engagement.

CHANICE

So he says.

CINDY

That's great!

BOB

Congratulations.

MILES

U.B.'s going for the ring in
his nose, eh?

TIA

(to Chanice)
Don't change your name.

BUCK

I'm going into the business
with Chanice. I'm swallowing
my macho pride and I'll be
working for a woman on
Tuesday. I'm Mr. Steel-Belted
Radial at noon on Monday.

Chanice gives him a mock glare.

BUCK

Ten? Nine?

CHANICE

This'll never work.

CINDY

Maybe but it sounds like fun.

BOB

Take care of him.

CU. BUCK

He looks at Tia. He gives her a wink.

CU. TIA

She smiles.

EXT. HOUSE

Buck and Chanice walk to their cars. Chanice gets in hers and
starts it up. Buck gets in his.

EXT. HOUSE. PORCH. THE RUSSELLS

Tia taps Cindy. Cindy looks at her.

TIA

Cover your ears.

Cindy covers her. Miles, Maizy and Bob cover theirs.

CU. BUCK

He winces as he grinds the starter, silently urging it on. It catches. He hits the gas, holds up his finger, waits a beat, points and...

EXT. HOUSE

...the biggest backfire yet. A puff of black smoke and tremendous BLAM! Chanice backs out, Buck backs and they pull away leaving the cloud of smoke and dogs for miles around BARKING and HOWLING.

END