

UNCLE NED

"Pilot"

by

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UNCLE NED: "Pilot"

Soft guitar chords of a Blind Faith song from the late '60s.

BLIND FAITH (RECORDING)
"Come down off your throne and
leave your body alone; somebody
must change."

INT. WALSH HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

As moonlight seeps through the curtains, we find EMILY (36).
Lying on her side in bed, in a modest nightgown. The kind
moms wear. As she stares off --

**We see FLASHES of colorful STROBE LIGHTS at a '60's rock
concert; the graceful curves of an ELECTRIC GUITAR; LONG WAVY
HAIR obscuring the face of the muscular man who plays it.**

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

In a dark alley, a CALLOUSED HAND reaches out and grabs the
shirt of a FLEEING MAN, stopping him in his tracks.

(Unlike the gauzy images from the bedroom, these are stark,
over-exposed fragments, jarringly out of place.)

INTERCUT ACTION/RESUME BEDROOM

BLIND FAITH (RECORDING)
"You are the reason I've been
waiting so long; somebody holds the
key."

**More FLASHES: delicate fingers skim across RIPPLING ABS; his
LEGS ENTWINE with hers, skin glistening; hungry LIPS seek out
a woman's slender torso; her BACK arches in desire.**

The fleeing man's shirt RIPS, and as he turns, a FIST
connects with his jaw and a SPRAY OF BLOOD obscures his face.

In the bedroom we see Emily's husband KIERAN (36, clean-cut)
gently rocking into her from behind as she stares into the
darkness. He reaches around and cups her breast. She barely
reacts, the move routine and uninspired.

**The lithe young woman is Emily at 24. Totally uninhibited as
she makes love to the GUITARIST. (We can't make out his face,
but he's definitely not the husband in her bed.)**

Emily closes her eyes and pushes Kieran's hand lower. Suddenly she stops, her voice sharp --

EMILY

No.
 (guiding him)
 Like this. Yes.
 (beat)
 Faster.

The man is SLAMMED against a wall and we hear the unnatural CRACK of bone breaking before he's thrown to the ground. A large WORK BOOT comes down amidst his muffled cries.

Young Emily straddles the Guitarist, her eyes locked on his. Suddenly he flips her over and she moans with pleasure as he takes her from behind.

BLIND FAITH (RECORDING)

"Well, I'm near the end and I just ain't got the time. And I'm wasted and I can't find my way home."

EXT. WALSH HOME - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING (1972)

A two-story Colonial on an oak-lined street in New Jersey. Thirty minutes from Manhattan. But worlds away.

SUPER: PARK RIDGE, NEW JERSEY 1972

EXT. WALSH HOME - NIGHT

Through a SHAKY POV we stagger up the driveway, shifting from the pavement to the house and back again. The house BLURS for a second, then the POV drops and goes BLACK.

ANGLE ON the fleeing/beaten man lying on the asphalt, his shirt torn and splattered with blood. From behind we see him struggle to his feet and continue on.

INT. WALSH HOME - BEDROOM - SAME

Emily's breathing hard, almost there. Suddenly Kieran groans and collapses against her. Staring at the ceiling, she sighs.

EXT. WALSH HOME - BACK YARD - SAME

The man peers in windows and tries a back door, looking for a way in. Stumbling across the patio, he trips on a broken lawn chair and knocks into a rusting Weber grill.

INT. WALSH HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Kieran snores. Hearing noises outside, Emily sits up.

INT. WALSH HOME - FRONT HALLWAY

She peers through the glass panel beside the front door and steps back, stunned. As she opens the door, REVERSE to see --

EXT. WALSH HOME - FRONT STEPS

The beaten man, NED (36). His right hand's bandaged, his face battered. But we can still see his muscular build and the long wavy hair that left her weak when he played his guitar.

His MAGNETIC EYES are weary as he looks up. But instead of helping him in, Emily just stands there, glaring back at him.

Ned shrugs, wincing as he pulls his busted lips into a smile.

NED

Surprise.

INT. WALSH HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

The living room is quiet as Ned sleeps on the pull-out sofa.

Upstairs, Kieran tries to go back to bed. But Emily is too wired to sleep.

KIERAN

He said he got mugged. You think he'd make that up?

(off her silence)

Why would Ned lie? He's obviously in pain.

EMILY

You've seen the people he hangs out with, Kieran. What if he's in some kind of trouble? Do you really want to take that chance?

KIERAN

Emily, this is Ned we're talking about. He just needs time to heal. He won't be any trouble.

She eyes him, not quite believing that.

CUT TO:

IN DARKNESS we hear male VOICES. Muffled but ominous. The volume rises, intensifying as one PLEADS for mercy, until --

INT. WALSH HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Ned wakes, drenched in sweat. Pulse racing, he looks around, trying to orient himself as he struggles to catch his breath.

DISSOLVE TO:

NEWS FOOTAGE: In the b.g. SOLDIERS hang laundry on poles in a mud-filled fort while others huddle together over heroin works, preparing to shoot up.

A BABY-FACED G.I. wearing love beads looks into the camera, his eyes weary and disheartened.

BABY-FACED G.I.

Nobody can tell us why we're here
anymore. I just wanna finish my
time, go home in one piece.

PULL BACK to reveal we're inside --

INT. ACTION NEWS OFFICES - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Where NEWS WRITERS watch a foreign report from Vietnam. One writer reads The NY Times, its headline *THOUSANDS RALLY FOR ERA* above a photo of feminists swarming the Capitol steps.

But the live feed playing on the wall reveals their own show offers a decidedly different perspective on the world.

COMMERCIAL (V.O.)

Coming up on Action News at noon:
how to get the most beef for your
buck at the supermarket.

Emily sits across from her fellow secretary JANE, a plump woman whose fingers fly across her IBM typewriter.

In the light of day, we see that although she's older, Emily is still lovely. But she's guarded now, more refined. Not quick to smile. She makes the trains run on time. It's a thankless job, managing people who don't want to be managed.

And today her mind is elsewhere. She makes a typo, then another. She clenches and opens her hands. But her fingers aren't the problem.

Emily stares at her phone. Finally she picks it up and dials.

INT. WALSH HOME - DAY

Inside the house, we hear RINGING from:

-- a wall phone in the KITCHEN

-- a trimline phone on the UPSTAIRS HALL TABLE

-- an Empress French cradle phone on EMILY'S NIGHTSTAND

INT. ACTION NEWSROOM - SAME

Emily listens intently as it rings. Where the hell is he?

INT. WALSH HOME - UPSTAIRS/AVERY'S BEDROOM - SAME

As the phone RINGS, Ned wanders the house, moving slowly, hampered by his injuries. He glances in a bedroom, sees a tie-dyed bedspread beloved by teenage girls. Stereo and turntable. A poster for the Beatles' "HELP!" on the wall.

INT. ACTION NEWSROOM - SAME

Emily dials again, cradling the phone against her ear as she works. Growing more anxious with each ring.

INT. WALSH HOME - BOYS' BEDROOM - SAME

Ignoring the ringing phone, Ned rolls a Hot Wheels Ferrari across a desk in the boys' room. He smiles as it sails over the edge.

INT. ACTION NEWSROOM - SAME

Exasperated, Emily hangs up and turns to Jane.

EMILY

I need to run an errand. I'll be
back as soon as I can.

INT. EMILY & KIERAN'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ned browses the bedside tables. A handprint paperweight one of the kids made. The self-help book "I'm Ok, You're Ok".

And a PHOTO of Emily and Kieran holding their NEWBORN SON.

EXT/INT. EMILY'S CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

Emily's wood-paneled station wagon is stuck in traffic at the Lincoln Tunnel. She nervously taps the wheel, wishing she could plow through the line of cars blocking her path.

NED (V.O./PRE-LAP)
I can't stop thinking about you.

CROSSCUT ACTION

In the master bedroom, Ned stands over a dresser drawer reading a letter, its paper yellowed and creased with age.

NED (V.O.)
I hear your laughter in every note,
feel your touch in every song.

Through Emily's windshield we see a blur of department stores and old diners as she speeds down the New Jersey highway.

NED (V.O.)
I've never felt like this. I know
that sounds silly. But it's true.

Ned stares at the letter as the words pierce through him.

NED (V.O.)
Tell me you feel the same way.

EXT. WALSH HOME - DAY

Emily's car pulls into the driveway.

INT. WALSH HOME - CONTINUOUS

Entering, Emily pauses. It's quiet. Looking in she sees Ned, asleep on the couch. He looks so helpless, curled into the blanket like a child, his face still bruised and swollen.

Emily waits a moment, watching. Then she quietly leaves.

Off Ned as the front door closes. He opens his eyes and stares out, his face dark and somber.

INT. WALSH HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING

Kieran dishes up ice cream as Emily clears the table. Soft-spoken, with a warm smile and kind eyes, Kieran is a perfect foil for the unrestrained Ned, who revels in entertaining BRADLEY (12, earnest) and COLIN (8, adorably nerdy).

NED

These frat guys kept stealing underwear from your mom's dorm --

KIERAN

-- so while they were in the shower, we took their clothes and left only women's panties.

NED

And we had a photographer from the school paper waiting outside.

KIERAN

Made the front page.

Bradley laughs, clearly impressed, and looks at his younger brother. Isn't Uncle Ned the greatest?

EMILY

Don't get any ideas. You can get suspended for stuff like that.

KIERAN

Or you can finally convince a beautiful girl to go out with you.

He wraps an arm around her. She stiffens a little, then smiles and rolls her eyes. Your father's incorrigible.

Kieran grins at Ned, growing nostalgic.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

That was nothing compared to some of the stuff we did. One time we almost got arrested when --

The back door opens and AVERY (15, smart but defiant) enters.

EMILY

Where have you been?

AVERY

At Molly's. Studying.

She dumps her book bag on the floor. Emily just watches her.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I was. Why don't you ever believe me?

Too tired to argue, Emily puts Avery's dinner on the table. Finishing his ice cream, Colin turns to his father.

COLIN

If he's not your real brother, then how come we call him "Uncle"?

KIERAN

Well, I get along with him better than my real brothers. But you call him "Uncle" out of respect.

NED

And because calling me "Mister" would just be weird. After all, I did change your poopy diapers.

AVERY

Oh, gross.

BRADLEY

Mom, can I help set up Uncle Ned's room this weekend?

Surprised, Emily shoots a look at Kieran --

KIERAN

I was obviously going to discuss it with you first.

EMILY

Obviously.

KIERAN

It's going to be a while before Ned can go back to work. And we have the extra room. Em, I know you were upset after last time --

NED

But I doubt Bradley's the first kid to ever deliver a report on LSD to his third-grade class.

(winks at BRADLEY)

I could be wrong about that.

BRADLEY

He can stay, right Mom?

The kids wait. Emily has no choice but to paste on a smile.

EMILY

Sure. He can stay.

The boys cheer. As they leave the table, Bradley hugs Ned.

BRADLEY

I missed you, Uncle Ned.

NED

I missed you too, kid.

It's a sweet moment. But Emily's eyes grow dark as she watches Ned with her son.

DISSOLVE TO:

Grainy images of the Walsh backyard, circa 1960. The Weber kettle grill we saw earlier is brand new, as is the clear glass patio table across from a shiny green swing set.

EMILY (then 24) tilts her head to drink in the warm sun and laughs as KIERAN (24) and AVERY (2) scamper across the lawn.

INT. WALSH HOME - GARAGE GUEST ROOM - DAY (1972)

We're inside the finished garage, where a **HOME MOVIE** plays on the wall as the family clears storage from the guest bedroom.

Kieran and the boys move furniture while Emily and Avery sort through old clothes and Ned separates broken toys.

Approaching the camera, Kieran takes it - and Ned (24) enters the frame. His hair is long and wavy, and sexy as hell. But he's completely at home playing on the lawn with the toddler.

BRADLEY

Is that Avery?

NED

Isn't she a beauty? Just like her mom.

Emily looks up at the movie on the garage wall. Avery uses the moment to pocket a skimpy CROCHETED HALTER TOP from her mother's old clothes. But she's not fast enough. Seeing her, Emily shakes her head and gestures: Back in the box.

There's static as another home movie begins. Now the adults surround Avery as she blows out a #3 candle on her cake.

The angle widens to show a STRIPPER standing with them, cleavage bursting from her dress as she leans against Ned.

COLIN

Who's that?

KIERAN

Uncle Ned's date.

Now eight months pregnant, Emily eyes the woman, making no effort to hide her disdain.

AVERY

Wow, mom. If looks could kill.

Avery and her pint-sized guests have moved on to hula-hooping in the yard. Emily tries to join in, but despite Ned's help, she can't keep the hula hoop spinning around her large belly. She finally gives up and they collapse on the lawn, laughing.

In the garage, Emily smiles along as the kids giggle. But the look in her eyes is bittersweet.

Another movie. Emily is now 32 and quite enticing in that CROCHETED HALTER TOP, her hair in a pretty PIXIE CUT.

KIERAN

This must have been the Doors concert in '68.

The camera swings up to find Ned in SKIN-TIGHT GREEN PANTS and leather jacket. Pure, raw sexual energy, shredding on electric guitar as the crowd goes wild.

AVERY

I remember that night. Didn't Uncle Ned come home with you?

BRADLEY

Yeah, with that leprechaun.

AVERY

And the police came 'cause he and Ned climbed on the roof and started singing "Danny Boy". At three a.m.

COLIN

He brought a leprechaun?

BRADLEY

Not a real one, lamebrain. Just a guy dressed like one.

NED

Well, it was St. Patrick's Day.

The shot swings down from the stage for a close-up of Emily. She looks straight into the camera and beams.

Ned looks across the room at Emily. And realizes she's been watching him. Clocking his reaction to her image on the wall.

INT. WALSH HOME - GARAGE GUEST ROOM - LATER

The work done, Bradley and Colin carry boxes out.

COLIN

But maybe he was real. Leprechaun's
aren't supposed to tell, you know.

Bradley rolls his eyes. Watching them go, Ned marvels --

NED

They've gotten so big.

KIERAN

A lot can change in four years.

He sets down some magazines by the bed. Ned picks up a LIFE.

The cover headline is "*Elizabeth Taylor's Secrets to Her Youthful Beauty!*" Ned looks at Kieran: you can't be serious.

Kieran shrugs and smiles, embarrassed. There's a beat as he moves Ned's duffle bag to the bed, trying to fill the silence. Ned watches, tapping the magazine on his leg.

NED

Thanks for getting my stuff.

(beat)

We should go someplace. Find a
party, blow off some steam.

KIERAN

Ned, come on. It's not like I can
just pick up and leave.

NED

Afraid you'll miss the weekly
bridge game?

Seeing he's struck a nerve he backpedals.

NED (CONT'D)

Kier, I'm kidding. I appreciate you
taking me in.

He pauses, suddenly serious.

NED (CONT'D)

I owe you an apology. I know I kind
of disappeared on you. And then I
just show up, expecting --

Kieran raises a finger, "one sec" and cocks an ear to listen.
Ned looks confused.

KIERAN

I'm waiting for the violins.
 (off NED's grin)
 Since when do you apologize? You're
 family, stay as long as you like.
 And if you need to talk --

NED

Thanks, I'm good.

KIERAN

You sure?

NED

I'm fine. Really.

He starts to step around Kieran but STUMBLES -- and the jolt to his cracked ribs is like a knife through his chest.

Concerned, Kieran reaches out but Ned snaps --

NED (CONT'D)

I don't need any help!

He leans against the wall, trying to hide how much pain he's in. Kieran pauses, not used to seeing him like this.

KIERAN

Maybe if you talked to someone
 about what happened...
 (beat)
 Come on, Ned. It's me.

Ned looks at him, wanting so much to open up. For a moment it seems like he will. Then --

EMILY (O.S.)

Everything okay in here?

The men look up, annoyed by the interruption. But neither says anything as Emily enters and surveys the room.

EMILY (CONT'D)

You should bring those boxes to
 Goodwill.

KIERAN

I'll do it later.

EMILY

Now's as good a time as any.

A beat; I'm waiting. Kieran caves and gathers some stray items left behind. Broken hula hoops. Mr. Potato Head, missing nose and ears. Kieran turns it over in his hands.

KIERAN

It sounds silly, but it's just so hard to let go of some things.

He doesn't notice that Emily's not looking at him. She's eyeing Ned, who stares back, challenging her to respond.

Kieran reaches for the magazines to take them too. But Ned holds onto the LIFE.

NED

I'll keep this. You never know; Bowie might want these youthful beauty tips.

(off KIERAN's grin)

Tell the boys I'll take them for ice cream. To thank them.

EMILY

Don't worry about that. You just focus on healing. We've got to get you well and back to work, right?

Giving Ned a big smile, she follows Kieran inside the house.

But Ned's grin disappears as he lowers himself to the bed. Reaching into his duffel, he pulls out a small framed photo.

The one of Emily and Kieran holding the newborn.

NED'S POV: Kieran's eyes shine as he cradles the infant.

As we look closer, we see the baby's eyes are open. Peering up at Kieran in wonder.

Ned stares at the photo, softly TAPPING the rolled-up magazine against his injured hand.

His eyes darken as he begins to tap HARDER.

Until BLOOD seeps through the bandage.

Then he HURLS the magazine against the wall.

INT. EMILY'S CAR - TRAVELING - MORNING

Dressed for work, Emily drives down a residential street.

EMILY

All I'm saying is, if you took your car in for regular service, the battery wouldn't die.

Kieran looks out the window, waiting for the lecture to end as she pulls into the parking lot of a parochial high school.

EXT. ST. MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

NUNS in habits herd GIRLS in plaid skirts into the building.

EMILY (O.S.)

Now I'm going to hit rush hour.

CROSSCUT ACTION

But Kieran's focused on one particularly attractive student. NATASHA TURNER. 17 but looks 21. And knows it. The way she carries herself, she makes the modest uniform look sexy.

EMILY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Henry already gave me a hard time about being late. Kieran? Are you listening?

KIERAN

(jumping out)

Yeah. Sorry Em, see you tonight.

He reaches the front steps at the same time as Natasha.

KIERAN (CONT'D)

Morning, Natasha.

NATASHA

Hey Mr. Walsh.

From the car, Emily watches Natasha casually lean in and touch Kieran's arm.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

You know that movie you mentioned, about what happened in My Lai?

SISTER BEATRICE (O.S.)

Don't you have class, Miss Turner?

Principal SISTER BEATRICE (50, imperious) hovers over them.

NATASHA

Yes, Sister Beatrice.

SISTER BEATRICE

And take down that hem. It should reach the tips of your fingers.

The nun demonstrates, arms at her sides, fingertips down. Natasha does the same, turning so Kieran can see only one finger is pointed down. *The middle one.* Kieran grins.

Emily stares at Natasha as the teen enters the school. A car HONKS, startling Emily back, and she drives off.

On the stairs, Kieran braces for another reprimand.

SISTER BEATRICE (CONT'D)

Last month it was desegregation. Now it's Vietnam. You don't need to discuss the war with the children.

KIERAN

They're not children. They're almost as old as the boys dying over there.

SISTER BEATRICE

You're their teacher, Mr. Walsh. Not their friend. I trust you understand the difference.

INT. ACTION NEWSROOM - LATER

Emily rises to pull copy from her typewriter as anchorman GRIFFEN BURWELL enters, still wearing his make-up bib.

As Emily deposits the copy in her out-box, Griffen sidles up and puts HIS HAND ON HER ASS.

GRIFFEN

Emily, honey, how 'bout getting me a cup of coffee?

Perfectly composed, she loads more paper into her typewriter.

EMILY

Griffen, you think your hand would fit under this roller?

(off his confused grin)

'Cause we're going to find out if you don't take it off my ass.

Giving a nervous laugh, he backs away. To the writers --

GRIFFEN

Just what we need, another crazy
women's libber.

As he leaves, Jane calls over --

JANE

Emily? The nurse from your son's
school is on line two.

INT. EMILY'S CAR - WALSH DRIVEWAY - DAY

Emily can hear MUSIC BLARING as she pulls into the driveway.
She slams the gear shift into park and turns to Colin, pale
and sweaty in the back seat.

EMILY

Wait here.

As she climbs out, next-door neighbor DOTTIE BURROUGHS (40)
looks up from gardening/snooping with a judgmental eye.
Embarrassed, Emily shrugs an apology.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Sorry, Dottie. Avery must have left
her stereo on.

INT. WALSH HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Long-haired and grungy MUSICIANS are scattered around the
room. The air stinks of weed, liquor bottles everywhere.

A young DRUMMER taps a frenzied drumroll on the edge of the
coffee table as Ned draws lines of coke across it.

DRUMMER

You're not coming back?

NED

I'm working on something. Could
take a while.

DRUMMER

You can't leave. Your whole life's
on the road.

NED

Ah, man, you're young. You'll see.
After a while, it's not enough.

The drummer looks around the suburban living room at the
family photos, kids' toys, Ethan Allen furniture.

DRUMMER

What the fuck you gonna do here?

Ned just smiles. But as he leans down to snort a line --

MUSICIAN (O.S.)

Yo Ned. Your old lady's home.

Lifting his head, Ned sees Emily in the doorway. Shit.

INT. BOYS' BEDROOM - LATER

Emily checks Colin's temperature and brushes the hair from his forehead as she hums a lullaby to help him fall asleep.

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - SAME

She finds Ned picking up the trash. He follows her into the kitchen, acting like an insolent teenager who got busted.

NED

I didn't know they were coming.

EMILY

That's your defense? You didn't invite them?

NED

I've been holed up for a week. I figured they'd have a beer and go.

EMILY

I can't have this in my house.

NED

Oh, lighten up. I've seen much worse in your house.

EMILY

I mean it. It's not like before.

NED

You're telling me.

She suddenly stops and turns to him --

EMILY

Why are you here, Ned?

His bravado fades as he looks away. She steps closer --

EMILY (CONT'D)

Why now?

NED

I didn't have anywhere else to go.

(looking down)

It's pathetic, I know. But you and Kieran, you're the closest thing I have to family.

(beat)

I'm sorry, Em. My meds ran out.

And I just need to make it *stop*.

Emily softens, seeing how much pain he's in. Reaching behind the spice rack, she pulls out a JOINT and offers it to him.

Surprised, Ned gestures toward the back yard. Join me?

EXT. WALSH HOME - BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Sitting on the back steps, Emily lights the joint and takes a pull, then hands it to Ned. (They pass it back and forth.)

NED

You do this often?

She gives him a look. What do you think?

EMILY

A guy at work gave it to me as a joke. He thinks I need to relax.

NED

Guess you've never gone skinny-dipping with *him*.

He grins. But she's still pissed, not ready to smile back.

EMILY

What happened in New York?

He shrugs, trying to deflect the question.

NED

Some audiences are tougher than others.

(beat)

It was a misunderstanding, Em. No big deal.

Before she can respond, he leans back, admiring the yard.

NED (CONT'D)

Looks nice. Gotta say, I never figured you for the domestic type.

EMILY

What's that supposed to mean?

NED

I always thought you'd be the one to travel the world. Write books, interview movers and shakers.

(she scoffs)

Come on. You know you were smarter than Kieran and me put together.

EMILY

Yeah, well, sometimes life gets in the way.

NED

You didn't have to marry Kieran.

EMILY

What, I should have raised Avery on my own? Or gotten rid of her?

NED

That's not what I meant.

EMILY

I don't regret having kids. I just thought I'd do other stuff first.

She takes a long hit, hands it back to him.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Things don't always work out the way you want them to.

NED

What was it Professor Reid used to say? "We must let go of the life we have planned to accept the one that's waiting for us." Joseph Campbell wrote that.

EMILY

It was E.M. Forster.

NED

Pretty sure it was Campbell.

EMILY

It was Forster.

She shoots a look at him. You do *not* want to take me on. He raises his hands, surrendering. She smiles, relaxing.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I think we have the life we're supposed to. Fact is, I'm lucky. I have a home, my kids are healthy.

NED

You are lucky. Sometimes I wouldn't mind trading places.

Mid-toke, Emily coughs, finding that hard to swallow.

EMILY

Really. You'd give up the jets and the money and the groupies --

NED

And the drugs --

EMILY

And the drugs. You'd give it all up to have what I have?

NED

Yes.

A long beat as she searches his eyes. Then she GIGGLES like a young girl, playfully pushing him as the pot kicks in.

EMILY

You are such a liar!

Ned giggles too. The back door opens.

KIERAN (O.S.)

What's so funny?

Tilting their heads, they look up. Kieran towers over them.

NED

Hey bud. You're so...tall.

KIERAN

Are you high?

EMILY

No, you are.

(to NED)

He *is* tall.

They burst out laughing. Kieran sighs and closes the door.

As their laughter subsides, Emily grows more aware of how close their bodies are, the heat that remains between them. She looks at Ned. Still so tempted by those beautiful eyes. She reaches out to touch his cheek -- but he GRABS her hand.

NED
Nothing's changed.

Off Emily, his words as sobering as a slap in the face.

INT. EMILY & KIERAN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Dressing for work, Emily pulls on the jacket of her J.C. Penney skirt suit and glances in the mirror. All she can see are the dark circles under her eyes. She grabs a compact to blot concealer over them, but it's useless.

Her WEDDING PHOTO is on the dresser before her, the luminous beauty with mischief in her eyes almost mocking her now.

Emily stares at her reflection, the sleepless night written across her face. What happened to that vibrant young woman?

Pulling a prescription bottle from her purse, she shakes out a BENZEDRINE TABLET, pops the pill and dry swallows. Then she takes a deep breath and heads downstairs.

INT. ACTION NEWSROOM - LATER

It's mid-day and the office is humming. Emily's busy at her desk when she hears the familiar summons of her boss.

HENRY (O.S.)
Emily!

Emily grabs her steno pad and heads for --

INT. HENRY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Rumpled but attractive, news director HENRY CARSON (40's) once worshipped Murrow and Cronkite but drank himself down to managing the local news. He likes Emily, works well with her.

HENRY
Hey. Did you see Bill's piece about Nixon's trip to China?

EMILY
Something wrong with it?

HENRY

No. It's good. Ten years, he's never done anything this polished.

He peers through the glass wall of his office into the newsroom where BILL (50) sits, staring into space.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Guess it's true: some people work better under pressure.

Emily pauses, noticing the half-empty bottle of scotch on Henry's credenza. Business as usual. She looks at her watch.

EMILY

Shouldn't you be in the studio?

As soon as Henry leaves, Emily crosses the newsroom to Bill's desk. And we realize he's not gazing into space. He's staring at a photo of an ARMY CORPORAL with a goofy smile.

Emily leans down, resting her hand on his arm. That's when we see the silver POW bracelet on Bill's wrist.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Go home, Bill. Colleen needs you.

Bill nods and rises to go. Emily checks to see if anyone is looking. Then she takes his files and heads back to her desk.

EXT. WALSH HOME - DRIVEWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Their bookbags tossed on the grass, Bradley and PETE (pudgy, 12) shoot hoops as the chords of the Rolling Stones' "You Can't Always Get What You Want" drift down from above.

BRADLEY

Lou Reed, Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple...

PETE

And your uncle goes on tour with them, like a member of the band?

BRADLEY

Well, he's not really my uncle, but yeah, he plays with all of 'em.

INT. AVERY'S BEDROOM - SAME

Avery sits cross-legged, watching Ned demonstrate on her new guitar. (The dialogue can be adjusted for another song.)

There's something about Ned's performance that draws us in. This is where he lives, where he's most himself.

NED

"I saw her today at the reception,
in her glass was a bleeding man.
She was practiced in the art of
deception; I could tell by her
blood-stained hands."

Ned's bruises have faded. But as he tries to strum the guitar strings it's clear his fingers haven't fully healed.

NED (CONT'D)

Shit!

Avery looks at him, but he shakes his head. I'm okay.

NED (CONT'D)

Here, you try.

Taking the guitar, Avery manages a few chords. But she grows frustrated as her fingers fumble across the frets.

AVERY

I can't do it, Uncle Ned.

She tosses the guitar to the side. He studies her a moment.

NED

What's his name?

AVERY

How'd you...?
(off his smile)
Paul. Paul Cullen. But there's no
way he'd ever ask me out.

NED

So ask him. Ave, you want something
in this life, you gotta take it.

AVERY

Yeah, right. I can only imagine
what my mom would say to that.

NED

(sharply)
Let me tell you something about
your mom --
(beat)
I've known her a long time. And
she's very good at getting what she
wants. You could learn from her.

He strums the strings, then adds --

NED (CONT'D)
Just not too much.

INT. WALSH HOME - KITCHEN - LATER

Bradley and Colin compile a PHOTO ALBUM for their parents' wedding anniversary as Avery practices upstairs. Ned softly hums along as he helps sort through OLD FAMILY POLAROIDS.

Bradley picks up a college photo of Ned and Kieran goofing around. As he and Colin laugh at it --

CAR DOORS SLAM outside. Ned signals to Colin "hide the photo album" as Kieran and Emily enter with groceries and KFC.

As Kieran unpacks dinner, Ned nods for Bradley to take one of Emily's grocery bags and she smiles in thanks at her son.

But when Ned tries to take the other bag, Emily rebuffs him and carries it upstairs.

INT. WALSH HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As Emily restocks the hall cabinet, Bradley approaches.

BRADLEY
Why don't you like him?

The question takes her by surprise, but she calmly responds.

EMILY
I don't...honey, we're just really different. I know it's hard for you to understand, but Ned's a very complicated person.

BRADLEY
Not to me. I feel sorry for him. I mean, his life is so cool. But he has no one to share it with.

INT. ACTION NEWSROOM - MORNING

Things are fairly quiet as Emily and Henry review assignment schedules in his office.

Suddenly the phones in the newsroom begin to RING and P.A.s rush to the wires. Emily and Henry hurry in as Dave yells --

DAVE

Armed robbery at Chase Manhattan on
Fifth, at least eight hostages.
Police have the area sealed.

Emily looks at Henry, both of them strangely invigorated.

HENRY

Get Griffen in the studio. I want
to go live asap. And Emily, with
Troy out, we're shorthanded so --

EMILY

Don't worry, I'm on it.
(to JANE)
We'll need a rep from the bank and
a spokesman from NYPD.

Henry smiles. Confident in her ability, he heads out.

As soon as he's gone, Emily reaches for her pill bottle. And
quietly pops another upper.

INT. PARK RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

Lunchtime at Bradley's school. Students pour into the
cafeteria as Bradley and Pete unpack their lunches at a table
filled with other 7th grade boys.

Just as Bradley sets down his Ring Ding, it's SNAPPED UP. He
scowls, knowing without looking who the culprit is.

BRADLEY

Give it back, Miller.

MAX MILLER, (beefy, 14) stands over him, grinning.

MAX MILLER

Who's gonna make me? You?

Bradley looks to his friends. But no one will meet his eye.

BRADLEY

Give it back!

He PUSHES Max. Max PUSHES back harder.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Stop it boys!

Bradley stops and turns to go. But Max shakes his 7-Up and
SPRAYS Bradley, leaving a large WET STAIN across his crotch.

MAX MILLER

Look! Walsh peed his pants!

Bradley stands there, cheeks burning, as Max strolls away.

INT. ST. MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

As the last stragglers leave school, Sister Beatrice patrols the halls. She hears voices coming from Kieran's classroom.

KIERAN (O.S.)

I don't see why you have a problem with it.

NATASHA (O.S.)

But it's *my* decision.

INT. KIERAN'S CLASSROOM - SAME

There's a gleam in Kieran's eye as he watches Natasha pace. She spars like a contender, passionate and indefatigable.

KIERAN

Natasha, every man expects that from the woman he's sleeping with. And if you're not willing...

NATASHA

No, I'm not.

KIERAN

So I don't deserve a say in this?

INT. ST. MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - SAME

Sister Beatrice stands just outside, straining to hear.

NATASHA (O.S.)

It's my body. I decide what I want to do with it. And if I don't want to have a baby, I'm not going to.

Off Sister Beatrice --

INT. WALSH HOME - KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Ned's pulling items from the fridge when Bradley comes home.

BRADLEY

You're making dinner?

NED
Your folks got stuck at work.

Bradley smirks. Until Ned hands him a vegetable peeler.

NED (CONT'D)
Make yourself useful.

As Bradley starts peeling carrots --

NED (CONT'D)
How was school?

BRADLEY
Okay.

NED
Just okay?

Bradley hesitates, staring at the carrot peels.

BRADLEY
Did you ever have someone pick on
you? For no reason?

NED
Sure.

BRADLEY
What do you think I should do?

NED
Well, your dad would probably say
'take the high road'. Walk away.

Bradley sighs, expecting as much.

NED (CONT'D)
But the way I see it, if someone
goes after you he'd better be ready
for whatever you throw back at him.

INT. KIERAN'S CAR - WALSH HOME/DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Kieran pulls into the driveway and turns off his engine. But he stays behind the wheel, staring out.

FLASH TO:

INT. SISTER BEATRICE'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Kieran sits ramrod straight, his face taut with frustration as an irate Sister Beatrice lectures him.

INT. KIERAN'S CAR - RESUME PRESENT

Kieran leans back against the headrest. The sadness in his eyes is unsettling.

FLASH TO:

INT. SISTER BEATRICE'S OFFICE - SAME (FLASHBACK)

Widen to show NATASHA'S PARENTS are also there, arguing with their daughter as she waves a copy of *The New York Times* at them, its banner headline "HIGH COURT RULES ABORTIONS LEGAL".

INT. KIERAN'S CAR - RESUME PRESENT

Headlights appear in his rear-view and Emily pulls in beside him. He climbs out as she jumps from her car, exhilarated.

EMILY

You won't believe the day I had.

KIERAN

Oh, I think I've got you beat.

Too happy to hear the edge in his voice, she kisses him.

EMILY

Happy anniversary.

INT. WALSH HOME - CONTINUOUS

They enter to find the living room lit only by candles, with champagne and a fondue pot on the dining table.

EMILY

What's all this?

The kids beam, proud of their surprise. Colin gives Emily the photo album and hugs her. Touched, she kisses Avery and Bradley, who embrace Kieran before leading Colin upstairs.

There's an awkward beat as Emily and Kieran look at Ned. Keenly aware he's the third wheel, he turns to leave.

KIERAN

Ned. Thanks.

Ned pauses at the front door and nods, his eyes down.

NED

Happy anniversary.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM - LATER

Brushing her hair, Emily peers at the lines forming around her eyes. She breathes deeply, trying to boost her resolve.

INT. BAR - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

Velvet Underground's "I'm Waiting for the Man" plays. It's dimly lit, men in tight jeans and leather jackets.

Ned enters and takes a seat at the bar. The BARTENDER nods.

BARTENDER

Hey Ned.

He pours him a beer and moves off. Ned looks down the bar.

A YOUNG STUD sits at the end. He's boyishly attractive, no older than eighteen. But the look he gives back to Ned is not the least bit innocent.

INT. EMILY & KIERAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kieran waits on the bed in boxers. There's something sweet about his awkwardness as he sits there, half-naked.

The bathroom door opens and Emily appears in a silky negligee. Not her usual attire. Kieran raises an eyebrow, feigning surprise, and they grin like two bashful teenagers.

Climbing onto the bed, Emily straddles him, kissing him hard. Her intensity startles Kieran and he takes hold of her arms.

KIERAN

Hey. Slow down.

Running her fingers down his arms, she whispers in his ear.

EMILY

I don't want to slow down.

She tries to kiss him again but he gently pushes her back.

KIERAN

We've got time. You haven't even opened your present.

He hands her a gift box, long enough for a necklace. Her eyes light up as she starts to tear off the wrapping --

-- but she stops when she sees the name on the pink package: VIBRA TOUCH.

INT. BAR - SAME

The music is louder. Ned continues to eye the Young Stud at the end of the bar.

Ned finishes his beer and without a word he walks past him into the back hallway. After a moment, Young Stud follows.

INT. EMILY & KIERAN'S BEDROOM - SAME

Emily stares at the vibrator as Kieran tries to explain.

KIERAN

You said we could use some help.

EMILY

I meant some *romance*. We barely have sex as it is. Now you want me to just do it myself?

She's more frustrated than angry. Taking her in his arms --

KIERAN

That's not what I meant at all. I love you, Emily.

She searches his eyes, wanting so much to believe him.

PRE-LAP: SHORT BURSTS OF BREATH. They grow louder, faster.

INT. BAR - BACK HALLWAY

The hallway is dark, but as the rear exit opens, they're bathed in streetlight. Pants around their ankles, the Young Stud's arms braced against the wall as Ned rams into him.

CROSSCUT ACTION

Kneeling over Emily, Kieran tugs at himself, trying hard to focus as she runs her hands down his body.

Ned thrusts harder. Eyes shut, taking no pleasure from the exercise. With a loud groan, he finishes.

Kieran finally gives up, collapsing in frustration. Emily curls against him, resting her head on his chest.

EMILY

It's okay.

INT. BAR - BACK HALLWAY

Young Stud zips his pants and smiles. He reaches up to touch Ned's face -- but Ned SLAPS his hand back.

NED

Get the fuck away from me.

He turns and heads out the rear exit.

INT. EMILY & KIERAN'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Emily looks at her husband, asleep beside her. There's still so much love there. But she's powerless to fix what's wrong.

She lies there, considering. Then she picks up the vibrator and goes into the bathroom, closing the door.

Seconds later, we hear its MOTOR come to life.

EXT. WALSH HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Brightly colored helium balloons are tied to the back of lawn chairs. The buffet table is pure Americana: burgers and hot dogs, sides of cole slaw, potato salad, watermelon. Plus a cake decorated with red and blue berries to look like a flag.

KIDS play as NEIGHBORS mill about the yard. Emily moves through, refilling glasses of iced tea and sangria.

Meanwhile, Ned and Kieran are hanging out on the side of the house. Hiding is more like it. Ned points his beer bottle toward a COUPLE (40) and TEENAGE GIRL that Emily is greeting.

NED

Who's that?

KIERAN

Dottie and Chester Burroughs.
Their daughter goes to St. Mary's.
Chester's on the school board.

Dottie's ample figure is squeezed into a red & white dress and blue cardigan. Tragically thin STACY eyes her mother with disdain, wishing she were anyplace but here. But CHESTER (40, fastidious) is raring to go, dressed in an American flag sweater and matching blue pants.

NED

Isn't he a handsome devil. Wonder how long it took him to choose that outfit.

Kieran grins. But his smile fades as Henry, looking nicer than usual, arrives with Dave and Troy. Emily hugs them.

KIERAN

That's Henry. Emily's boss.

Ned notices Henry holds her a bit longer than the others.

NED

He's a friendly guy.

KIERAN

He's okay. But our scotch has a way of disappearing whenever he's here.

Emily glances down the side yard and sees Kieran and Ned. They duck back behind the house --

KIERAN (CONT'D)

Crap.

Approaching, she sees the stash of beer they've hidden.

EMILY

What are you, twelve?
(to KIERAN)
Our guests have been wondering where you are.

She gives Ned an admonishing look, then heads away. Kieran shrugs. Fun time's over. Raising his beer to Ned --

KIERAN

Happy fuckin' Memorial Day.

EXT. WALSH HOME - BACKYARD - LATER

The party's in full swing. Kieran and Ned have joined in and the mood has mellowed as everyone enjoys themselves. A lot.

Someone puts on a RECORD, upbeat and soulful, and a COUPLE starts to dance. Others join in.

Bradley and the other kids laugh at the "old" people dancing. Emily approaches, looking like she's about to reprimand them.

Instead she grabs Bradley's hand and pulls him out to dance. Surprised, he blushes but joins her. And as they dance he grins, happy to see his mom so carefree.

A slow song begins and Bradley begs off. Emily stands there a moment, embarrassed to be out there by herself.

Then Kieran sweeps in and takes her hand, pulling her close. Grateful, she rests her head on his shoulder.

Kieran nods toward Ned, who's mingling with the guests.

KIERAN
See? He's trying.

Ned dances through the crowd with a pitcher, cheerfully refilling everyone's glass.

Dottie sways as she raises hers and Ned fills it to the brim.

DOTTIE
This iced tea is absolutely
delicious. What kind is it?

NED
The kind they make on Long Island.

EXT. WALSH HOME - BACKYARD - LATER

The sun is fading but the party's still going strong. Emily brings more bags of chips out to the buffet.

Feeling no pain, Henry joins her, gushing like a schoolboy.

HENRY
Great party, Emily.

Looking for an excuse to stay, he grabs an empty bowl.

EMILY
No, Henry, I've got this.

HENRY
You saved me from another TV
dinner. It's the least I can do.

She hands him a bag and he grins, enjoying this taste of domestic life. Ned appears and takes a handful of chips.

NED

Look at you, putting the men to work. Now that's progress.

EMILY

Ned, this is my boss, Henry.
(to HENRY)
Ned's a friend of Kieran's.

NED

Friend of yours, too.

Across the yard, Kieran watches Ned lean in and nudge Emily.

NED (CONT'D)

You're a lucky man, Henry, getting to spend every day with our Emily.

HENRY

Yes, I am.

NED

Must be hard, working side by side, sometimes into the night. Even the strongest man would be tempted.

HENRY

(realizing what he means)
What? Oh, no, I never --

EMILY

He's kidding. Ned, tell him.

NED

Yeah, I'm kidding.

With a devilish grin, he leans in to Henry.

NED (CONT'D)

But you must have considered it.

EMILY

Ned...

HENRY

I assure you, our relationship is --

NED

Not that I blame you. She's a beautiful woman, isn't she?

Emily blushes as Henry nods politely. And Ned suddenly takes a sharp turn.

NED (CONT'D)
Then say it. She's beautiful.

Embarrassed, Henry looks down.

EMILY
Stop it, Ned.

NED
Why can't you say it?
(getting in his face)
SAY IT.

HENRY
(nervously)
She's...beautiful.

Kieran approaches as Emily tries to steer Henry away --

KIERAN
What's going on?

Ned JABS Henry in the chest --

NED
This guy wants to fuck our wife!

EMILY
Ned!

Our? She looks at Kieran and Henry. But they're both too drunk to notice the slip. Mortified, Henry looks at Kieran.

HENRY
Kieran, I never said --

EMILY
I'm sorry, Henry, he's --

The other guests are now watching. But Ned is oblivious as he drunkenly rants to Kieran --

NED
That's what happens when you take
your eye off the ball. Somebody
swoops in and steals your home,
your kids, everything you have
right out from under you.

Kieran tries to take Ned's arm, but Ned pushes him away.

NED (CONT'D)
You spend your whole life trying to
do what's right. But do they care?

EMILY

Ned, stop!

NED

Nobody cares.

He JABS Henry again.

NED (CONT'D)

These fuckers do whatever they want. So why can't we?

HENRY

Stop it!

Exasperated, Henry SLAPS Ned's hand and SHOVES him away. Off-balance, Henry throws a PUNCH at Ned -- but it hits KIERAN.

Incensed, Ned PUNCHES back, hitting Henry squarely in the jaw. Dropping him flat on his ass.

Off Emily as she stands there, speechless.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Kieran wearily pushes the cart down the supermarket aisle as Emily fills it with groceries.

EMILY

He has to go.

KIERAN

Ned was out of line, I agree. But Henry did try to punch --

She wheels around, incredulous.

EMILY

Do you honestly think there's any justification for what Ned did? Kieran, we can't expose our kids to this kind of thing.

KIERAN

They turn on the news and see soldiers coming back with their legs blown off. You think some guys getting blitzed at a party will scar them for life?

EMILY

I don't care. I want my home back, the way it's supposed to be.

KIERAN

Fine. You tell Ned he has to leave.

EMILY

No. I'm tired of being the bad guy.
This has to come from you.

Cornered, Kieran struggles for an excuse.

KIERAN

He already sublet his apartment.
Emily, we at least need to give him
a few days.

Emily starts to refuse but he takes hold of the cereal box in her hands, forcing her to meet his eye.

After a moment she lets go. Kieran drops the box into the cart. And they move on in silence.

INT. WALSH HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Later that day. Emily enters to find Ned laughing with Avery as she prepares a school project at the kitchen table.

Emily crosses to the sink for a glass of water, then turns and drinks it, eyeing her daughter until Avery sighs and returns to her work. And Ned goes back to the garage.

INT. WALSH HOME - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The boys lie on the floor eating pizza while they watch TV with Kieran. Emily steps over them to get to the box on the table. As she takes a slice --

Ned emerges from the garage to get some more pizza. He glances into the living room, hoping for an invitation.

From the couch, Kieran waves for Ned to join them. But Emily stares Ned down until he returns to his room.

INT/EXT. WALSH HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

Emily follows Avery downstairs and watches as the teenager carries her sleeping bag to a car at the curb. Avery waves goodbye to her mother, then turns back and rolls her eyes to her FRIEND. As she climbs in the car and unzips her jacket, we see Avery's wearing Emily's old skimpy crocheted top.

Returning inside, Emily sees Colin emerge from the garage to get a soda from the fridge.

EMILY

Why were you in the garage?

KIERAN

They just took some board games out. I said it was okay.

EMILY

Well, it's time for bed. Honey, go put your pjs on.

COLIN

Aw, Mom, it's still early.

EMILY

Tell Bradley to come in too.

COLIN

He's not here.

KIERAN

I thought you guys were playing Monopoly with Uncle Ned.

COLIN

Yeah, but they left.

Emily looks out the side window. Her station wagon is gone.

INT. EMILY'S CAR - TRAVELING - NIGHT

Bradley sips a milkshake as Ned drives down the highway.

BRADLEY

I don't understand. If you weren't touring, how come you didn't visit?

NED

It's hard to explain, buddy. Your mom never said anything to you?

Before Bradley can respond, they reach the entrance to the George Washington Bridge. Bradley's eyes brighten as he looks beyond it to see the glimmering lights of Manhattan.

INT. WALSH HOME - BOYS' ROOM - NIGHT

Colin has drifted off to sleep. Kieran closes the book they were reading and tiptoes out.

INT. WALSH HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The dishes are done, but Emily's still cleaning. As she shoves a mop into a bucket, the soapy water SLOSHES OVER --

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. WALSH HOME - DRIVEWAY - FOUR YEARS EARLIER

A SOAPY SPONGE sails across the hood of the car, hitting Bradley as he washes the station wagon with Kieran.

Bradley looks up in surprise -- until he notices Ned, smirking as he washes the other side.

Bradley grins and TURNS THE HOSE on Ned, who volleys back another sponge as they race around the car. Caught in the crossfire, Kieran gets doused.

But the battle is between Bradley and Ned, and there's a charged energy as Ned's eyes fill with mischievous glee.

Across the lawn, Emily kneels in a flower bed, her hair in the PIXIE HAIRCUT we saw in the home movies. She stops gardening to watch their fun. But she's not smiling.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. WALSH KITCHEN - RESUME PRESENT

Kieran enters the kitchen, breaking Emily's reverie.

EMILY

Watch it!

Seeing the wet floor, he jumps back. He reaches for the fridge, but she blocks him, mopping her way out of the room.

KIERAN

I was just gonna get a beer.
Christ, I hate it when you're like
this. You get all wound up --

EMILY

I'm not wound up. I just want to
know where they are.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

The station wagon moves through the East Village.

INT. EMILY'S CAR - TRAVELING - NIGHT

Bradley stares at the gritty neighborhood. Fascinated but a little unnerved. Ned seems revitalized by the field trip.

He slows, nodding toward a rundown building.

NED

My first apartment. I had a fifth floor walk-up and three roommates.

Entering Greenwich Village, he points out music clubs.

NED (CONT'D)

Got my start there. Jammed with Clapton, Jimi Hendrix. Man, he was something.

Bradley nods, not sure what prompted this trip down memory lane. But flattered he was chosen to go along.

EXT/INT. BITTER END - NIGHT

A BLUES RIFF beckons as they enter the club. Ned wraps his arm around Bradley's shoulder.

NED

All the greats play here. Reggie!

REGGIE, a massive black bouncer, greets Ned with a bro-hug.

Bradley turns away, captivated by the bizarre assortment of people walking past. Guys with dyed hair, tattoos and bell-bottoms. Women in leather hot pants and knee-high boots.

REGGIE

Tyrone's looking for you. And he's fuckin' pissed.

Ned shoots a look at him. Not in front of the boy. Reggie finally notices Bradley.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

I didn't know you had a kid.

Bradley laughs: "yeah, right" as Ned smiles. Reggie nods hello to Bradley, then gives Ned a sincere shrug --

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Sorry, man. Can't let him in.

INT. WALSH HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A police SIREN wails in the distance. Emily stares out the window, waiting until it fades.

The floor creaks above her. Kieran, getting ready for bed. She eyes the ceiling with resentment. How can he think about sleep while Bradley is still out?

Emily looks over at the door to the garage, then glances up at the ceiling again, considering.

INT. EMILY'S CAR - GREENWICH VILLAGE - NIGHT

Bradley waits in the car outside the club. It's cold and dark. He looks at the grimy street, his enthusiasm waning.

He sees Ned emerge from the bar with a SKINNY BLACK GUY, a silver hair pick stuck in the side of his afro.

Bradley sits up. Finally. But instead of returning to the car, Ned and the guy head for an alley beside the club.

REVERSE ANGLE

A blue CHEVY NOVA is parked across the street. Inside, TWO BEEFY SILHOUETTES watch Ned disappear into the alley.

Stereo booming, a souped-up Cadillac cruises past the Nova and slows in traffic beside the station wagon.

INT. EMILY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

As Bradley takes in the Caddy and its PIMPED-OUT DRIVER, he hears the CLICK of STILETTOS on the sidewalk behind him.

He turns to see a TALL BLONDE in a MINI-SKIRT stroll past.

Sensing his stare, she leans down and smiles as she peers through his window.

Bradley shrinks back, seeing "SHE" is actually a HE. The TRANNY leans forward and lifts her skirt --

BRAD'S POV: the Tranny's PACKAGE pressed against the window.

NED (O.S.)

Hey!

Pulling the Tranny back by the neck, Ned SHOVES her away.

NED (CONT'D)
 What the fuck are you doing?

The Tranny trips and lands on the curb, CURSING. Ned jumps in the car and turns to Bradley.

NED (CONT'D)
 You alright?

Bradley nods, shaking.

NED (CONT'D)
 Sonofabitch.

Ned sniffs, wiping powder from his nose. As they drive away, he steals a glance at Bradley who's trying hard not to cry.

NED (CONT'D)
 Let's keep this between us, okay?
 Your mom doesn't have to know.

Still shaking, Bradley stares at the dash in front of him, afraid to look back out the window.

INT. WALSH HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kieran comes downstairs in his pajamas. Emily's not there. He looks in the kitchen. Not there either.

Turning to go, he hears sounds coming from the garage.

INT. GARAGE GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room's a mess, Ned's belongings strewn everywhere as Emily frantically roots through his stuff.

KIERAN
 What the hell are you doing?
 (pulling her up)
 Emily, what is wrong with you?

She scowls, her eyes blazing with a manic urgency.

EMILY
 He ever tell you who beat him up?
 Do we even know why he's here?

Kieran shakes his head in frustration. Not this again.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Kieran, we haven't seen him in years. You don't know what he's been doing. People like Ned --

KIERAN

People like Ned? You're talking about him like he's some guy off the street.

EMILY

You don't understand...

He sighs, exasperated.

KIERAN

What don't I understand?

He looks closer. She's near tears. Growing alarmed --

KIERAN (CONT'D)

Emily. What don't I understand?

Guilt fills her face and she can't meet his eyes. But before he can press further, they hear the car pull up the driveway.

Emily races to the door as Bradley and Ned enter. She pulls Bradley to her --

EMILY

Where have you been? Are you okay?

Confused by her fervor, Bradley flinches, shrugging her off.

BRADLEY

I'm fine, Mom.

KIERAN

Where were you?

NED

We went for ice cream and drove around town. Sorry, I didn't realize it was this late.

Bradley is silent, his eyes down.

KIERAN

Next time just ask first, okay?

NED

Sure. I'm sorry, Em.

Emily doesn't respond. She just keeps watching Bradley.

INT. BOYS ROOM - NIGHT

Bradley climbs into bed. Kieran sits on the edge, trying his best to sound casual --

KIERAN
Where'd you and Uncle Ned go?

Bradley hesitates, uneasy.

KIERAN (CONT'D)
Bradley?

BRADLEY
I don't want to get him in trouble.
He said it's better if it's just
our secret.

INT. WALSH HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Listening outside the door, Emily pales.

KIERAN (O.S.)
Brad, where'd he take you?

BRADLEY (O.S.)
He wanted to show me where he
works. But he said Mom would get
upset if we went into the city. Am
I in trouble?

KIERAN (O.S.)
No. Just go to sleep.

Hearing him coming, Emily slips off down the hall into --

INT. MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

She stands there, shaking, her back pressed against the wall. Slowly she sinks to the floor as tears stream down her face.

INT. PARK RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Bradley watches his History TEACHER write on the blackboard.

TEACHER
Executive, Legislative... What's
the third branch of government?

A SECRETARY enters and hands the teacher a slip of paper.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
Bradley Walsh?

INT. PARK RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAY - SAME

Stepping into the hallway, Bradley finds Ned. Holding up a brown paper sack.

UNCLE NED
Forget something?

Bradley grins and takes his lunch. The bell RINGS and kids pour out of their classrooms.

Max appears across the hall, laughing with friends as he opens his locker. Ned notices Bradley's reaction.

UNCLE NED (CONT'D)
That him?

Bradley nods, embarrassed. Seeing some friends --

BRADLEY
I gotta go. Thanks Uncle Ned.

He runs off to join them. Ned remains there, watching Max.

INT. ACTION NEWSROOM - DAY

From her desk, Emily glances at Henry through the wall of his office as she tries to work up the courage to go in.

INT. HENRY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

He's reading news copy and doesn't look up as she enters.

EMILY
Henry, I want to apologize for what happened at the party. Ned was completely --

But Henry cuts her off, holding up the copy.

HENRY
I was going over what you wrote on the bank robbery. And I noticed something. The language, the style, it's the same as Bill's last piece. And Troy's. And Dave's.

She looks down, knowing what's coming.

HENRY (CONT'D)
How long have you been doing this?

EMILY
Henry, I was just trying to --

HENRY
These are experienced newsmen.

EMILY
I realize that, but --

HENRY
They don't need some girl from the
steno pool rewriting them.

She bristles at the slight. But he's too wound up to stop.

HENRY (CONT'D)
I thought you had more respect for
the job. Not to mention me. You
pull something like this, it looks
like I don't know what's happening
in my own newsroom!

His outburst galls her. Without thinking she blurts out --

EMILY
You think I like doing that? Making
sure you all look good, not taking
any credit for myself? You think I
enjoy cleaning up everyone's mess?

There's a long beat as Henry stares at her. Then he sighs.

HENRY
Jane, call personnel. Tell them I
need a new secretary. Make sure...

Before he can finish, Emily grabs her purse and runs out.

EXT/INT. EMILY'S CAR - OFFICE PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

The parking structure is deserted as Emily jumps into her
car, breathing hard.

She slams her hand against the wheel, trying not to cry.

There's a beat. Then all her rage pours out in a primal yell
as she PUMMELS the wheel.

INT. PARK RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

The bell RINGS and the hall fills with students as Bradley and his friends head to their lockers. Suddenly he stops.

The PRINCIPAL is standing beside Max's locker. Waiting as a SECURITY OFFICER opens it.

The officer reaches in and removes a BAGGIE OF WEED.

As he holds it up, Max rounds the corner.

PRINCIPAL
Mr. Miller.

Seeing the baggie, Max stops.

MAX MILLER
That's not mine.

The officer takes his arm. Max starts to panic.

MAX MILLER (CONT'D)
It's not mine! I don't know how it
got there!

Bradley watches as they lead Max off. His satisfaction marred by a disturbing suspicion.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL - BAR & GRILLE - DUSK

Kieran's car is outside a bar in a suburban shopping mall.

INT. BAR & GRILLE - SAME

Kieran and Ned drink tequila in a run-down Naugahyde booth.

KIERAN
All we were doing was debating Roe
v. Wade...

Ned laughs as a hapless Kieran tries to explain.

NED
But Sister Stick-Up-Her-Ass thought
you knocked the kid up?

KIERAN
She even called Natasha's parents.

Ned sits back, laughing even more.

NED

And made you sit there, like some teenager caught with his dick in his hand? Man.

Kieran pauses, regretting his decision to tell him. They've been here a while. And he knows Ned can turn on a dime.

NED (CONT'D)

Is she hot, this Na-TA-sha? Does she *get your motor runnin'*?

KIERAN

Cut it out.

NED

I can see her now. Long legs, big tits, nice juicy pussy --

KIERAN

Stop it. She's my *student*.

NED

Then why the fuck are you hanging out with her? Jesus, Kieran.

Kieran looks around for a waitress, trying to get the check.

NED (CONT'D)

Is this really the life you want? How long you gonna keep it up?

He looks at the sad REGULARS rooted to their bar stools.

NED (CONT'D)

This town is like a tomb.

KIERAN

I'm not the one who's too scared to go back to his job. His home. What are you running from Ned?

Ned stares back, then deflects it with a sardonic smile.

NED

You used to be so much fun. Didn't give a shit what people thought.

KIERAN

Yeah, well, I grew up. You should try it sometime.

NED

This isn't about growing up. She carries your balls in her purse.

Kieran rises, tossing bills on the table.

KIERAN

You don't know what you're talking about.

Ned grabs his arm, stopping him.

NED

When have you ever made a decision for yourself? Huh? When was the last time you took the wheel?

INT. WALSH HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Emily sits at the kitchen table, staring at the newspaper HELPED WANTED ads. A few are circled in red marker.

She closes her eyes, wishing she could just put her head down on the table, make it all go away.

AVERY (O.S.)

Mom?

Avery stands in the doorway in her pajamas. Emily folds the paper so she won't see.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Can I ask you something?

This is hard. She hasn't confided in her mother in a while.

AVERY (CONT'D)

What do you do when you like someone...but you know he'll never like you back?

Before Emily can answer, Kieran and Ned stagger in, laughing and drunk off their asses. Kieran stops when he sees Emily.

EMILY

Avery, go to bed.

Eyeing her father, Avery heads upstairs. Ned gives Emily a drunken salute and stumbles out to the garage.

As Kieran starts to leave the room --

EMILY (CONT'D)
Where have you been?

KIERAN
(sighing)
Not now, Em.

He tries to step around her, but she blocks him.

EMILY
This isn't college, Kieran. You
can't just disappear whenever you
feel like it.

KIERAN
Believe me, if I disappeared
whenever I felt like it --

EMILY
You could have called. You have a
responsibility --

He lashes back, his tone sharp --

KIERAN
I'm aware of my *responsibilities*.
And I have been, for the past --

EMILY
The past what? Sixteen years?

Seeing the hurt in her eyes --

KIERAN
Em, I'm sorry. I didn't mean --

But the damage is done. Kieran sighs, kicking himself as he
watches her walk away --

INT. WALSH HOME - KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

The house is still. Dressed for work, Emily lays the kids'
lunches on the counter. As she heads for the door --

TIME CUT TO:

INT. WALSH HOME - KITCHEN - LATER

The kids grab their lunches and head out the front door.
Emerging from his room, Ned sees them and calls to Bradley --

NED
Hey Brad. Wait up.

EXT. WALSH HOME - CONTINUOUS

Bradley pretends he didn't hear and keeps walking. Ned catches up with him on the driveway.

NED
Hey. How'd it go yesterday?

Bradley looks at him. His suspicions confirmed.

BRADLEY
You didn't have to do that. I could've handled it. My own way.

NED
No other way to deal with someone like that.

But he can see how upset Bradley still is. He leans down, his hand on the boy's shoulder.

NED (CONT'D)
I know it's not easy. But there are always going to be people who try to push you around, force you to do whatever they want.
(beat)
Part of being a man is standing up and saying "Enough."

The bus appears on the corner. Bradley runs for it, wondering what prompted Ned's impassioned advice.

INT. NEWSROOM - MORNING

The newsroom is empty as Emily packs up her desk. The elevator DINGS and Jane enters, followed by Dave and Troy.

Jane gives a sympathetic smile, not sure what to say. As soon as Henry arrives, the others disperse.

EMILY
I just need a few minutes.

Henry approaches, staring at the boxes.

HENRY
What are you doing?

EMILY
You fired me.

HENRY
No I didn't.

EMILY
You had Jane call personnel. To
replace me.

HENRY
Yes, but you're not fired.

Confused, Emily waits. He gives a sheepish shrug.

HENRY (CONT'D)
We could use a good researcher.

Oh. Emily pauses. She deserves more. But she'll take it.

EXT. WALSH HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Kieran, Ned, Avery and Bradley are in their bathing suits,
standing around a LARGE WOODEN BARREL filled with water.

Returning from work, Emily walks around the side of the house
as Colin runs out in his swim trunks.

COLIN
Mom! Isn't it great?

Bewildered, Emily stares at the patio.

AVERY
It's called a hot tub.

Emily looks at Kieran, shocked he didn't consult her. He
shrugs off her disapproval.

KIERAN
Come on, live a little.

EMILY
It takes up half the patio.

BRADLEY
Please, Mom, can we keep it?

AVERY
Please?

COLIN
Please?

It's five against one. Emily doesn't stand a chance.

INT. WALSH HOME - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Emily gathers clothes and toys as she walks up the stairs. She passes the boy's room where Colin sleeps as Bradley listens to a Mets game on the radio.

Pausing in the doorway, Emily watches her son clutch his baseball glove to his chest as he roots for his team.

Sensing her, Bradley looks up. She quickly smiles and turns off the radio, kissing his head. Time for bed.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Emily continues down the hall toward her bedroom. The door is closed. As she reaches to open it --

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - FOUR YEARS EARLIER

Emily's hair is in that pixie cut. Standing in the hallway, she can hear MUFFLED VOICES inside as she opens the door.

It's twilight and the bedroom is in shadow, lit only by a spray of light from the master bath within.

Emily can just barely see NED and KIERAN in silhouette. Engaged in a heated argument. Hearing her, they turn --

CUT BACK TO:

INT. EMILY & KIERAN'S BEDROOM - RESUME PRESENT

Emily blinks. The room is empty. The phone RINGS. On the second ring she answers it.

EMILY

Hello?

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Henry's in his barcalounger, a glass of scotch in his hand.

HENRY

Emily? It's Henry.

INTERCUT CONVERSATION

EMILY
Everything okay?

HENRY
I just wanted to tell you...
(beat)
You need to go to personnel
tomorrow. To fill out a new W-2.

She already knew this. But she's willing to play along.

EMILY
Alright.

HENRY
And Emily...
(beat)
I'm sorry about what I said. You
know I'd be lost without you.

EMILY
Goodnight Henry.

She hangs up, resting her hand on the receiver. With a small smile, she begins to undress for bed.

INT. WALSH HOME - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

We hear Avery practicing guitar. A shower comes on in a bathroom upstairs as voices drift up from the backyard.

EXT. WALSH HOME - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Kieran and Ned are in the hot tub, drinking beer. They hear Avery playing; she's getting better. But Kieran winces as she begins the song for the umpteenth time.

KIERAN
You had to give her a guitar.

Ned grins. They fall silent and we can feel the tone shift.

NED
Have you thought about what I said?

KIERAN
Yeah.

NED
And?

KIERAN

I think it's asking a lot.

Off Ned's look --

KIERAN (CONT'D)

Come on, Ned. We've been down this road. Sure, there are problems. But Emily and I love each other. And I couldn't do that to my kids.

NED

They're not stupid, Kieran. They know you're not happy. Don't you think you deserve to be?

KIERAN

In a perfect world...

He pauses, clearly torn. Upstairs, Avery begins the chorus.

AVERY (O.S.)

"You can't always get what you want, you can't always get what you want..."

She trails off and we hear the guitar repeat the line once more. Then Ned softly finishes the refrain --

NED

"But if you try sometime, you just might find..."

(beat)

...you get what you need."

A beat as Kieran looks at Ned. Then he takes Ned's face in his hands and KISSES him.

REVERSE to show the POV from an upstairs window. WIPE to --

-- Avery, playing guitar on her bed

-- Bradley, in the shower

-- And Emily, at the window. Watching Kieran and Ned.

There's no shock on Emily's face. Just quiet resignation. She knew who Ned really came back for.

EMILY (PRE-LAP)

You're not welcome here, Ned.

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. WALSH HOME - FRONT YARD - FOUR YEARS EARLIER

Emily stands with Ned on the front steps, speaking low.

EMILY

If you really care about him,
you'll walk away.

Ned shoulders his overnight bag and glances over at the curb, where Kieran and the kids wait to drive him to the train.

NED

Pretend all you want, Emily.

He watches Kieran affectionately roughhousing with his kids.

NED (CONT'D)

Eventually Kieran will decide for
himself. And there won't be
anything you can do about it.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. WALSH HOME - BACKYARD - RESUME PRESENT

In the hot tub, Ned brushes Kieran's hair from his eyes. Kieran smiles, truly happy, and leans in for another kiss.

Emily stands watching for a moment. Then she turns away.

INT. EMILY & KIERAN'S BEDROOM - DAWN

First light is just breaking. Kieran's flat on his stomach, out cold. Emily stares up, her eyes dulled by sleeplessness. She climbs out of bed and pulls on her robe.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

She finds Ned at the counter, waiting for the coffee to brew. Emily stands in the doorway, watching him.

EMILY

It's not going to work, you know.
Kieran loves me. And our kids.
Just 'cause you're hell-bent on
getting revenge...

NED

It has nothing to do with you.

EMILY

I must have been crazy, thinking you'd changed. Far as you're concerned, only one person in this world matters. And that's you.

NED

That's not true.

His voice is soft, his eyes strangely vulnerable.

NED (CONT'D)

You can't imagine what it's like, to have everything you care about taken away.

EMILY

Are you honestly trying to play the victim here?

(beat)

How do you think I felt, when I found out you were --

NED

I can't change who I am.

EMILY

You could have told me.

(beat)

Oh, but then I wouldn't have slept with you.

NED

I didn't know then.

EMILY

I don't believe you.

They stay there, eyes locked for a moment. Taking a deep breath, Emily turns away to pour a cup of coffee --

EMILY (CONT'D)

I want you to leave. Today. Tell Kieran you've found a new place...

NED

I'm not going anywhere.

The certainty in his voice forces her to turn around.

NED (CONT'D)

I have a right to be here. Just as much as you.

Emily pauses, trying to read him.

EMILY

So what, we just play house? Tell the kids, "no big deal, Uncle Ned's moving in. Oh, and by the way, he'll be sleeping with Daddy."

(beat)

I don't think so.

NED

It's not your decision to make.

She struggles to stay composed, in control.

EMILY

You promised me, Ned. You stood in this room and promised to walk away.

But he only grows more assured.

NED

A lot has changed. You don't have the leverage you did back then. Bands don't care anymore who I sleep with. Hell, some would like me better if they knew.

Emily feels the ground beneath her shift as she remembers their conversation, smoking pot on the back steps. Softly --

EMILY

You said you'd give it all up to have what I have.

NED

Yes, I did.

She stands there, stunned. Ned calmly takes the cup from her, pours himself some coffee.

NED (CONT'D)

And I think Bradley deserves to know who his father is. If you have a problem with that, I can always hire a lawyer.

EMILY

Bradley adores Kieran. It would destroy them.

NED

Not as much as finding out you kept this from them for so long.

EMILY

What was I supposed to do? Half the time you were so strung out, you didn't even know what city you were in. I couldn't do that to him.

NED

He's old enough to know. If that's not what you want...then don't force my hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WALSH HOME - DAY (SOME TIME LATER)

The summer sun is hot as Kieran and Ned play basketball with the boys.

Kieran passes to Colin, but Bradley swoops in, stealing the ball. Bradley passes to Ned, who fakes Kieran out and charges in for a lay-up.

Bradley raises his arms in triumph as Ned pulls off his sweat-soaked T-shirt. Revealing his tanned SIX-PACK ABS.

ANGLE ON: CHESTER BURROUGHS

standing in his yard transfixed, unable to take his eyes off Ned's body as he waters the same patch of lawn over and over.

Kieran pats Colin's arm. We'll get 'em next time. He heads inside as the boys return to the court for a rematch.

BRADLEY

Uncle Ned, another game?

Emily's car pulls into the driveway.

NED

Give me a minute.

As Emily gets out, Ned helps her unload the groceries. Seeing Chester, Emily nods.

EMILY

Hi Chester.

CHESTER

Thought you said he was just
visiting.

Emily pauses, looks at Ned. He smiles at Chester.

NED

I like it here. Think I'll stick
around for a while.

Taking the bags, he follows Emily into the house. As Chester
turns away, the basketball bounces past him down the drive.

Follow the ball as Colin chases it into the street --

-- where it comes to rest beside a blue Chevy Nova.

A THUGGISH MAN leans against the Nova. He reaches down and
picks up the basketball.

Colin slowly approaches, not sure what the man will do. But
he simply holds the ball out to the boy.

Off Colin, as he takes the ball and returns up the driveway,
glancing back over his shoulder at the strange man.

Still watching his home.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW