

EXT. TRAIN - DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN

Suburban Connecticut, outside of New York City, 1973. The still after a terrible storm. Trees dripping, their branches torn, the air warming just before the break of a new day. The train lies dark and motionless, a few flashing yellow emergency lights up front, as a work crew removes debris from the track.

INT. TRAIN. PRE-DAWN

Various passengers, huddled uncomfortably, cold, asleep.

On Paul Hood, 15-and-a-half, stoner-preppie look, hunched up in his seat under the faint emergency exit light. He reads his Fantastic Four comic book by the pale light of the emergency exit sign.

Suddenly, the lights begin to flicker on and the hum of the train's engines returns.

The conductor enters the car, blasting forth in his classic nasal voice.

CONDUCTOR

Good morning ladies and gentlemen --

He sounds like a baseball announcer.

PASSENGERS

(mumbling, ad lib)

What ladies?

CONDUCTOR

-- this train originating at New York's Grand Central Station is back in service - next stop will be New Canaan, Connecticut. New Canaan, Connecticut, next stop!

He moves on to the next car.

The train begins to move.

Paul rubs his elbow against the window and looks out into the still-dark early morning.

He looks back down at his comic book.

On the comic book: Reed Richards (also known as Stretch) has zapped his young son with a cosmic ray gun to neutralize the destructive energy that Annihilus has implanted in him.

The Thing, Medusa, Flame, and Richards' wife Sue Storm look on, stunned.

"THEN YOU'VE TURNED HIM INTO A VEGETABLE. YOUR OWN SON." "DON'T YOU SEE, SUE? HE WAS TOO POWERFUL... IF HIS ENERGY HAD CONTINUED TO BUILD, HE WOULD HAVE DESTROYED THE WORLD!"

Paul looks up again, thinking.

PAUL (V.O.)

In issue number 141 of The Fantastic Four, published in November 1973, Reed Richards has to use his anti-matter weapon on his own son, who Annihilus has turned into a human atom bomb. His son is the result of Richards' coupling with the earthling Sue Storm, and the problem is that the cosmic rays that infused Richards and the rest of the Fantastic Four on their aborted moon mission have made young Franklin a volatile mixture of matter and anti-matter.

EXT. TRAIN BRIDGE. PRE-DAWN

The train moves slowly through a suburban, semi-forested landscape.

PAUL (V.O.)

And that's what it is to come from a family, if you analyze it closely. Each of them is negative matter for the other ones. And that's what dying is -- dying is when your family, which is in fact your personal negative matter from which you emerge -- it's when the family takes you back, thus hurling you back into negative space...

INT. TRAIN. CONT'D.

On Paul, as the sun breaks over the horizon. His face glows

warmly in the yellow light. He looks down idly at the comic book.

PAUL (V.O.)

So it's a paradox -- the closer you're drawn back in, the further into the void you're thrown.

EXT. CONRAIL STATION. EARLY MORNING

The train slowly pulls in.

The train doors open, and Paul, weary from the long night, emerges. He sees his family gathered at the other end of the platform -- Ben, 40, a bit worse for wear but still retaining traces of his boyish looks; Elena, 37, distant and elegant even in her oversized sweater; and Wendy, 14, a sullen suburban Lolita.

He pauses, regarding them.

They stand, silent, even dignified, awaiting him.

EXT. ST. PETER'S SCHOOL. MORNING

To establish. A typical New England prep school.

INT. PAUL AND FRANCIS'S DORM ROOM. MORNING

Cramped, a mess, but quaint. Paul shares the room with Francis Davenport IV, a dissolute, smart-ass son of money.

Paul's alarm clock rings. He slams his hand down on it and jumps out of bed, fully clothed in his rumpled preppie uniform of frayed khakis, loose tie, shirt with one tail untucked in, etc. Across the room, Francis beckons from his desk, as he finishes loading up a four-foot-high bong.

FRANCIS

Arise and shine, young Hood.

PAUL

I hope you changed the water in that bong from last night.

FRANCIS

(finishing a hit)

The water, as you call it, is a special mixture of amaretto and Ben&Ben blended for just the exact chemical interaction with the last

of our precious Thai stick.

Paul reluctantly walks over and takes a hit. He coughs, spewing uninhaled smoke.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Waste not Master Hood -- that was \$20 for the bag.

PAUL

(gathering books, papers,
almost talking to
himself)

Man, Francis, you are one drug addled elitist freak, and when the revolution comes I do not want to be lined up with you and shot, 'cause you're fucking ripe for political reeducation, you know, like in the fields.

FRANCIS

Paul, cancel your mental appointments, baby. What are you, like still stoned from last night?

PAUL

(spraying some chloroform
mouth spray)
I gotta get to English class.

INT. ST PETERS' CLASSROOM. DAY

An English class in progress.

Paul Hood sits blankly, hardly listening, until he hears the teacher call out.

TEACHER

Libbets?

LIBBETS

What Dostoyevsky is saying here is that to be a Christian is to choose, because you have to choose of your own choice, but since you can't choose to be good because that would be too rational you have to choose to be bad -- it's existential.

TEACHER

Thank you Libbets, that's a very compelling summary, but --

Paul looks at her, smitten. Marge, Paul's friend, notices his look.

INT. ST. PETER'S HALLWAY. DAY

As class lets out, Paul accosts Libbets.

PAUL

Um, Libbets. Hey, Dostoyevsky, I'm also really a fan, and what you were saying, you know, have you ever read The Idiot?

LIBBETS

The Idiot?

PAUL

If you liked Notes from Underground, you'll love The Idiot.

LIBBETS

(turning to go)
Great, thanks for the tip.

PAUL

(after her)
The Idiot.

INT. ST. PETER'S HALLWAY. DAY

Paul walks with Marge.

PAUL

I'm in love with Libbets Casey.

MARGE

Yeah, well, you've been in love with like every other girl here, I was wondering when you'd get around to Libbets.

PAUL

It's beyond mere physical attraction.

MARGE

That's good, because I don't think

Libbets is capable of the sex act.

PAUL

Truly? Do speak.

MARGE

My diagnosis is messed in the head.
A poor little rich girl -- I mean
check out the jeans and fur look.
And lend your ears to this
brutality. Like her mom and step
dad and her step-sisters are going
to Switzerland to ski over
Thanksgiving break -- and like they
didn't invite her!

PAUL

How do you know this shit?

MARGE

They did it last year too. It's
like traditional or something.
They've got this humongoid Park Ave
apartment and she just holes up
there with a wad of cash.

(beat)

Aren't the hugely wealthy sad?

PAUL

(pause)

You think Francis is going to beat
me to the punch here?

MARGE

Since he sleeps with every girl you
ever show an interest in, why don't
you just keep your Libbets thing a
secret from him?

PAUL

Good thinking Marge.

INT. SCHOOL PARTY. NIGHT

Paul, Francis and friends enter the dark, crowded room.
Various kids are awkwardly dancing to some progressive fm
style undanceable rock (Jethro Tull, etc.) Francis hands Paul
the tail end of a joint, but Paul waves it away.

PAUL

No more man. I'm about to drop as

it is.

FRANCIS
See ya.

PAUL
Where you going?

FRANCIS
Paul, let me enlighten you about something.
You and I exist on two opposite sides of a great existential divide, that being your pathetic virginity on the one hand and my astonishing number of sexual conquests on the other. I'm off to get laid. See you.

PAUL
Flame on, asshole.

FRANCIS
And remember, with your erogenous zones lubricated as such with the mighty herb, do not attempt terrestrial contact with members of the opposite sex -- because you drone on like a motherfucker when you're stoned.

He waves his fingers toward Paul's eyes, in the classic "stoned" gesture, then wanders off.

Paul looks on at the gathering. Marge waves to him from the dance floor.

LATER:

INT. SCHOOL PARTY. CONT'D

Paul wanders, stoned, through the party. He sees Libbets from across the room. She seems to be surrounded by friends.

INT. PARTY. CONT'D

Paul has cornered Libbets and is talking over the music. There are just a few people left, most of them making out with each other.

PAUL

(stoned)
-- because I've been reading Kerouac and Ginsberg and those guys were creating beat culture and traveling and sleeping wherever, and, of course, with all kinds of people, but when you read carefully the various contemporary accounts of their lives, and, uh, these guys didn't bathe much, I mean they were really filthy, with like genital crabs, lice, exceptionally strong body odor...

Libbets smiles through her yawn.

EXT. SCHOOL BENCH. NIGHT

Paul sits alone on the bench, freezing cold, eating a donut. Some kids from across the lawn yell good-night to him.

INT. DORM ROOM. EVENING.

Paul is at his desk. Francis enters, wrapped in a towel, fresh from the shower.

PAUL
How can you do that man?

FRANCIS
Do what?

PAUL
Sleep all day. I mean, look, it's already getting dark outside, and you're just getting up.

FRANCIS
(beat)
Um, Libbets Casey.

PAUL
What?

FRANCIS
Aha! I could sense the vibe.

PAUL
What do you mean?

FRANCIS

Am I right or am I right?

PAUL

Shit. You're not planning --

FRANCIS

My man, I speak to you solely as a comrade in arms offering unconditional aid. I've been giving this one a lot of thought, and I believe that the two of you together might just reach that higher ground that --

A knock at the door.

STUDENT (O.S.)

Hood, telephone.

Paul rolls off his bed, opens the door.

PAUL

Don't mess with Libbets. I mean it!

INT. DORM HALLWAY. NIGHT

Paul walks to the pay phone at the end of the hall.

PAUL

Hello?

INTERCUT - HOOD HOUSEHOLD. NIGHT

It's a modern (shag carpet, geometric-patterned wallpaper, etc.) suburban house.

Ben Hood talks on the phone, a drink in his hand.

BEN

Paul?

In the background, we can see Wendy watching Richard Nixon on TV.

PAUL

Hi dad.

BEN

Hey guy. Things ok up there? You all right?

PAUL

I'm fine dad.

BEN

Well good. Just confirming. You'll be on the 3:50 Wednesday afternoon.

PAUL

Well dad, actually I thought I'd take the morning train on Thanksgiving -- got a lot of studying, papers, you know, lab experiments --

BEN

Lab experiments? Right smart guy -- Paul, you know your mother's gonna be disappointed not to see more of you -- In fact, let me make this more than a simple request guy, I think you should...

IN THE BACKGROUND:

NIXON

(on TV, from San Clemente press conference)

Well, with regard to the questions as to why Americans feel we were wrong to make the tapes, that is not particularly surprising. I think that most Americans do not like the idea of taping conversations and, frankly, it is not something that particularly appeals to me...

BEN

Hold on for a second.

(turning)

Wendy, you want-to say hi to your brother?

She frowns.

BEN (CONT'D)

Come on!

She gets up sullenly and goes to the phone.

WENDY

Charles.

PAUL

Charles. Have you been keeping out of my shit? Have you refrained from entering the sacred precincts of my room?

WENDY

I have not touched your sh--
(looks at father)
Stuff. You watching this?

PAUL

Watching what?

WENDY

Nixon, doofus! It's incredible. He should be shot.

BEN

(overhearing)
Hey, that's the president of the goddam United States you're talking about, Wendy!

From the kitchen, Elena overhears. She's dressed to go out, but in the process of making a Kraft macaroni and cheese dinner for Wendy.

WENDY

He's a liar!
(still talking more to her father than into the phone)
Dean told him on March 21st about Kalmbach and Hunt, all about the payoffs to the Watergate burglars, so you tell me where the so-called "Dean Report" is, but you can't because it doesn't exist, because he lied about Haldeman and Erlichman and the April 17 tape, that's why! Liar!

Ben retreats, going to the wet bar to pour another drink.

BEN

(muttering)
OK, OK, the defense rests.
(to Elena in the kitchen)

Want another?

ELENA (O.S.)
No thank you. We should be off.

BEN
Gotcha.

He puts the bottle back down without pouring.

INTERCUT BACK TO PAUL:

PAUL
(on the phone)
Hey Charles. Charles, calm down --
I wasn't in on it.

Elena, putting on her coat, comes into the den and gives Wendy a kiss on the forehead as Wendy mumbles her good-byes to Paul on the phone.

ELENA
Dinner's on the counter. We'll be
at the Williams's -- you know the
number.
(takes the phone from
Wendy)
Paul. Hi. Is there anything you'll
want, any particular kind of food
or snack or anything we can stock
up on?... You're all right? ... OK.
See you next week. I love you.

Back to Nixon on the TV.

NIXON
We must recognize that one excess
begets another, and that the
extremes of violence in the 1960s
contributed to the extremes of
Watergate...

On Wendy as she regards the TV, hearing her parents' farewells as they leave through the front door.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. NIGHT

A large New England Colonial, with a few modern additions and touches. We hear the sound of dinner chatter.

INT. WILLIAMS DINING ROOM. NIGHT

The kitchen door swings open into the dining room, and Mikey and Sandy Williams emerge, each holding platters of food. Mikey, 15-and-a-half, lost in space, and Sandy, 14, a sullen and barely pubescent boy, each have towels draped over their forearms -- they are the evening's "waiters".

They move unsteadily to the table, at which sit their parents Janey (38, a hard-edged, sharp-witted beauty) and Jim (43, large and a bit goofy, a genius inventor), together with their guests, Ben and Elena Hood, and neighbors Dorothy and Ted Franklin.

We jump cut through the evening's conversations, seen mostly from the furtive POV's of the boys.

BEN

His brother came back --

DOROTHY

From where?

BEN

Vietnam.

DOROTHY

Oh. Are we going to talk about this, about...?

ELENA

You should hear. It's very sad, he was --

JUMP CUT:

Janey is whispering something into Mikey's ear, who returns to the kitchen.

JIM

It was a benefit for the ACLU or something, and Harry Reems himself was there --

DOROTHY

The man with the -- from Deep Throat?

JIM

The very one -- something about a first amendment defense fund -- well I believe in it --

DOROTHY

Ted took me to see it.

JANEY

Ted, how romantic.

DOROTHY

I have to say, the movie didn't do much for me. But being in that theater, surrounded by all those horny young college boys and perverts, there was something in the air that --

JUMP CUT:

The boys are pouring wine.

JIM

-- pulls right up to the pump, jumps out like there's no gas shortage, oblivious, and by this point everybody in line's piling out of their cars ready to kill the guy, when they notice it's that Reverend Edwards --

BEN

The Unitarian? The new one?

JIM

Yeah -- claims he pulled off Creek Road and didn't notice the line going back Mill Street for half a mile.

BEN

He's either got his head in the clouds or up his --

DOROTHY

I hear he's slept with half the women in his congregation --

TED

Lucky bastard!

As this is said, Mikey accidentally spills some wine on Ben.

BEN

Hell! -- I mean, no problemo there
Mikey. Here, I --

Janey leans over with her napkin and attempts a cursory wipe of Ben's pants. Is there a just barely noticeable frisson between Ben and Janey as she removes the napkin? If there is, Elena doesn't -- or pretends not to -- notice.

CUT TO:

The boys, now in pajamas (Sandy's with padded feet, Mikey's a combination of t-shirt and pj bottoms) are bringing out coffee and dessert. The adults eye Mikey's handling of the coffee pot with some nervousness.

DOROTHY

(unconvincing)

So fascinating. Do you get free tickets to the movies, that kind of thing?

BEN

No, my job is just to analyze the entertainment stocks and advise our institutional investors on where to put their money. It's --

ELENA

Don't be so modest, Ben. It's a job that requires a certain prescience with regards to entertainment trends. You were the first to predict that Billy Jack would be a hit --

BEN

(with a bit too much conviction)

And as usual no one believed me...

Silence.

CUT TO:

The dinner party has moved to the living room for after dinner drinks. Elena remains behind to help Janey pick up the table. She stacks a plate on top of another.

JANEY

Please don't.

ELENA

It's not a bother.

JANEY

I insist.

(beat)

Don't touch them.

Elena realizes that there's an edge to Janey's voice.

ELENA

Oh.

JANEY

(realizing she's gone too
far)

It's really quite all right.

ELENA

Of course.

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

The party progresses. Mikey and Sandy are lying on their stomachs at the top of the stairs, out of sight.

DOROTHY

And to think -- they met at a key party of all things.

ELENA

A key party?

DOROTHY

You know, it's a California thing. That scuzzy husband of hers dragged her kicking and screaming to one when they were out in L.A. you know, the men put their car keys in a bowl, and then at the end of the evening the women line up and fish them out and go home with whoever's keys they've got. Anyhow that's how she met this Rod person or whatever his name is and he's left his wife and she's packing for California. Irwin is devastated. It's so ironic.

JANEY

Ironic?

DOROTHY

(caught out)

Well, um, yes. Ironic. His name is Rod.

INT. WILLIAMS FRONT HALLWAY. NIGHT

The guests are leaving. The men shake hands, the women kiss, and the men and women awkwardly peck each others' cheeks.

ELENA

Thank you Janey.

DOROTHY

It was lovely!

BEN

Hey Jim, next time you've got to fill me in on whatever it is you're up to these days.

JIM

Will do.

INT. STAIRWAY. NIGHT

At the top of the stairs, a rather dejected Sandy and Mikey finish spying on the leave-takings below. Mikey nudges Sandy, and they silently head back the upstairs hall.

INT. MIKE'S ROOM. NIGHT

They enter Mike's room -- the door has a "nuclear waste positively no admittance" sign on it.

As Mikey reaches his bed, he doubles over, groaning, and starts to make retching noises. He then throws himself onto the bed, his head leaning over the far side.

Sandy walks over and sees a pile of vomit next to the bed. Taken aback for a moment, he then reaches forward and picks it up -- it's fake plastic vomit. He throws it on top of Mike's back, but Mikey doesn't take notice.

SANDY

Stupid!

(pause, looking sullenly
at Mike's back)

Is Wendy Hood your girlfriend?

MIKEY

(not looking up, but
alarmed)

Who said so?

SANDY

No one.

MIKEY

I don't have a girlfriend.

Mikey returns to his reading -- a copy of *The Sensuous Woman*, obviously well pawed over. He absentmindedly picks his nose. As he flips the pages, a beautiful, almost electrical HUMMING SOUND begins to fill his ears. He frowns and pauses to listen to it.

Sandy, who has picked up a balsa wood miniature plane, obviously doesn't hear it.

Mikey focuses on the plane as Sandy waves it through the air. Perhaps the hum is the sound of its engines as it soars through the sky...

INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

There is a large poster of a cartoon version of Richard Nixon "Tricky Dick" -- on her wall. Wendy is on the phone to her friend Beth.

WENDY

-- he knows that when the March
24th tape -- you know with Dean,
where Dean tells him that there's a
cancer growing on the presidency --

She pauses as Beth asks a question.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Who? No way. He's like a big
infected whitehead wearing jeans. I
wouldn't --

She hears the downstairs door open.

WENDY (CONT'D)

(whispering)

-- shit, it's my parents.

She turns her light out.

INT. HOOD UPSTAIRS HALLWAY. NIGHT

Ben and Elena walking past Wendy's room to their bedroom.

BEN

You'd think she'd learn how to cook a chicken, eh? My drumstick was still frozen when you cut inside there. I'm probably going to get whatever that disease -- and Jim, how that guy ever became a millionaire --

He pauses before a hall table, and, with his eyes, traces the telephone cord under Wendy's room.

BEN (CONT'D)

Hmm. I knew she'd still be up.
Watch this --

But Elena simply continues into the master bedroom.

He starts to pull gently on the cord. And continues pulling. No response for a few seconds. Then:

CONTINUED: 25

WENDY (O.S.)

(yelling behind her door)
Dad stop it!

BEN

Get to sleep young lady -- and I mean it.

Wendy opens the door to her room.

WENDY

Fascist!

BEN

If I were a fascist I would have sent you to one of those Southern military academies a long time ago. Now get to bed.

She slams the door.

He opens it.

INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

Ben enters the room, angry.

BEN

Hey!

Wendy jumps into bed and under the covers, pulling them up over her head. He stands over her, looking down at the crumpled pile of sheet and blanket.

BEN (CONT'D)

(softening)

Hey, kiddo. Sleep well, huh.

He places his hand where her cheek should be, and caresses the sheet.

WENDY

(without pulling the sheet
down, but nicely)

Good-night dad.

BEN

Good night kiddo.

Ben turns to the door, where he sees a silent Elena standing in her nightgown, a slight smile on her face.

INT. HOOD BEDROOM. NIGHT

Elena is sitting cross-legged, eyes closed, on her side of the bed. We hear the toilet flush from the master bath, and see Ben emerge in his boxers. He pauses in front of the bed, looking at Elena.

ELENA

(without opening her eyes)

You're staring at me.

BEN

I wasn't star--

ELENA

I've been thinking, Ben, about Wendy. I was going to ask if she'd come with me sometime to meet Dr. Woolens.

BEN

That shrink -- the one you always wanted me to see? I thought you

dropped him.

ELENA

I did, but -- somebody should probably see her, talk to her... You think she's ok?

BEN

Why shouldn't she be?

Elena just gives him a look, more sad than angry.

BEN (CONT'D)

(pause)

Then again, why should she be? I mean with us, with our...

ELENA

So maybe you'll come too?

BEN

Oh not again Elena! If we've got problems, why can't you just come out and talk about them.

ELENA

It's you Ben who needs to talk. I've had my say, and I'm waiting to hear back from you.

BEN

Yeah but Elena, even you don't believe all that "I'm OK. You're OK" stuff you keep babbling about -- you say so yourself. I've been all ears for about ten years now on his subject, and --

ELENA

-- And you haven't moved out yet. It's because you're too lazy, Ben. Too scared or lazy to either deal with us or simply make a decision --

BEN

Elena.

Silence.

ELENA

(sighing)

Sleep in the study? Please.

Ben picks up a pillow and walks out, pausing wistfully at the door.

BEN

Good night.

ELENA

Good night.

INT. WENDY'S ROOM. NIGHT

Wendy hears her parents' door close and sees a strip of light illuminate under her door as the hall light goes on, then off.

EXT. MANHATTAN OFFICE BUILDING. DAY

A nondescript, cleanly "modern" building. Engraved on the doors: "Shackley and Schwimmer, Securities Brokerage - Established 1964"

INT. SHACKLEY AND SCHWIMMER CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY

Ben, seated, is finishing a brief presentation to a small group of men, which includes George Clair, mid-thirties, unctuously handsome.

BEN

But what, exactly, is stagflation, this mixture of inflation and stagnation, and how should we in the securities industry understand and accommodate it? Well -- and I hope I'm not out of bounds here - think of the money supply as a large male organ, continuously inflating, and yet, the societal vaginal cavity simply wants more. As the vicious circle of higher returns without real satisfaction continues, the money-organ may seem to be in demand, but in fact even the most inflated capital is unwanted. This is why I suggest that while we engage this mawing abyss for the highest returns, we at the same time fantasize, so to speak, of the safe harbor of capital appreciation.

The aging boss nods agreement.

SHACKLEY

(more or less mumbling)
Brilliant, brilliant.

George Clair just grins.

INT. BEN HOOD'S OFFICE. DAY

Ben is gathering papers, readying to leave. He looks up to see George Clair in his doorway.

GEORGE

Hey there Benjie, you're becoming quite the in-house philosopher. When do you have time to think up all that stuff -- Shackley sure eats it up.

INTERCUT HALL IN FRONT OF BEN HOOD'S OFFICE

As we see that Clair is deftly fondling Hood's attractive secretary as she is seated in the cubicle beside the door to his office. She looks up coyly at Clair, hidden for the moment from Ben's view.

Ben comes out of his office, pulling his coat on. Clair and the secretary pull back, but it's clear that Ben has some sense of what's transpiring between them.

BEN

George, I'm just trying to get a global view of things -- can't just look at the small picture.

There's an obvious rivalry between the two of them.

GEORGE

And speaking of which, you have those market share charts Mr. Shackley was asking about?

BEN

Gotcha George, not a problem. Tomorrow. Hey, you want to start covering the old filmed entertainment sector yourself?

GEORGE

Ben you know that's your territory
- and I wouldn't dream to trespass
- you're the expert. Hey, how do
you think Paramount's gonna do with
that Blatty novel, what's it
called? The Exorcist?

BEN

Overpriced bomb, cost over \$6
million -- no stars, and no one's
into the horror genre these days
anyway. I'm advising the company
recommend reducing positions there.
It's disaster films that are gonna
stay at the top.

GEORGE

Brilliant. Hey, you heading out a
little early today?

BEN

Got a meeting uptown.

GEORGE

(already moving off)
Right o'.

BEN

Up the organization!
(then, to himself)
Bastard.

The secretary pretends not to hear.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CLUB. DAY

An august New York institution. To establish.

INT. CLUB RESTAURANT. DAY

A stuffy, Ivy League atmosphere. A decades-old tradition of
serving overcooked American food. Ben is seated across from
his father, Harold Hood, a retired curmudgeon. There is a
walker parked by Harold's chair.

HAROLD

(waylaying a passing
waiter)
I'd asked for that double martini
about three hours ago!

WAITER

Coming right up, sir.

HAROLD

So asking me out for lunch -- what prompted this exceptional event? -- Of course I'm paying.

BEN

We don't have to always go to your club, dad.

HAROLD

And why are you still calling me dad? You're forty years old already, and --

BEN

-- Well what am I supposed to call you?

HAROLD

That's besides the point.

The martini arrives, along with Ben's beer.

BEN

I was actually trying to see about getting a little advice, you know --

HAROLD

Advice? I'm supposed to be getting the stock tips from you, Ben. Unless - have you quit your job? They fired you?

BEN

You know, dah--

He looks up and sees his father slurping his martini, not paying attention.

BEN (CONT'D)

Actually it's not about work, it's advice about --

HAROLD

Oh for crying out loud Ben, you don't mean to tell me that your marriage is going down the drain now --

BEN

Well, Elena and I have kind of been talking, not really talking, but --

HAROLD

-- Your mother, God bless her, stood by me for forty-two years -- we never once contemplated divorce - I assume you're talking here about divorce? The very thought --

BEN

But dad, you guys truly hated each other, I mean really hated each --

HAROLD

-- Waiter! Where's my cobb salad?
(back to Ben)
You want advice Ben? If your big brother were still alive I'd have him go out into the back yard and beat some sense into your head. Look kid, you married that woman against my advice --

BEN

-- What advice? You never --

HAROLD

That's besides the point. The point is if I'd had any sense in me I'd have divorced your mother 40 years ago, and that's the truth, and here it is, 1972 --

BEN

-- 73

HAROLD

-- 73, and divorce is as easy as paying off a traffic ticket, and for crying out loud, Ben, be a man and just get it over with. I would have if I'd had the chance.

Ben ponders, as the food arrives.

BEN

(weakly)

But...

HAROLD

But what?

BEN

But I -- well maybe I love her.

Elena.

His father rolls his eyes and stabs his salad with a fork.

HAROLD

Christ Ben! Make up your mind and eat your lunch.

INT. BOOK STORE. DAY

Elena browses the self-help section. A longish-haired, slightly gone-to-seed, but still handsome clergyman pauses next to her. He's wearing an ecclesiastical collar and bell bottoms.

He pulls out a copy of *Me, Myself and I*, glancing again at Elena.

PHILIP

Elena. Elena Hood, am I right?

ELENA

Yes.

PHILIP

Reverend Edwards. Philip Edwards. You came by and checked out the congregation a couple of times last year.

ELENA

Yes, it was -- I ended up --

PHILIP

(smiling)

No need to make excuses --

EXT. NEW CANAAN HIGH SCHOOL FIELD. DAY

A cool gray afternoon. A group of boys are playing flag football on the field, while two groups of girls are gathered underneath the bleachers at either end, warily smoking cigarettes.

Wendy, Beth, and a couple of other girls are gathered in one

group.

BETH

(referring to one of the
girls gathered in the
other group)

She said you licked Dave Brewster's
weenie in the third floor bathroom.

WENDY

She's a liar. I wouldn't touch Dave
Brewster's dick if you paid me.
It's probably crawling with v.d.
after he put it in her, which he
did.

The conversation peters out at this point, as the two groups
of girls give each other the hairy eyeball from afar.

Wendy looks through from beneath the bleacher seats onto the
field where the boys are playing.

A group of boys break from a huddle, Mikey among them.

The quarterback takes the hike and Mikey runs out for a pass.
As he runs, his breathing increases in volume, filling his
ears, and transforming into the humming sound he'd heard
before.

The quarterback spots him and throws a long one.

He runs in an oblivion of beautiful white sound.

The ball drops next to him as he continues, in a world of his
own, to run.

Suddenly, the humming ends and he stops and turns around, to
see all the other kids just standing there looking at him.
One of them makes a pot-smoking gesture, as if that's the
explanation.

MIKEY

(as he returns to the
group, ball in hand)
Did anybody hear that?

The other kids snicker. Wendy looks on, and catches Mikey's
eye for a fleeting moment.

WENDY

I gotta go.

She takes hold of her bicycle and pushes off.

INT. COFFEE SHOP. DAY

Elena and Philip are seated at a booth.

PHILIP

It's been a tremendously
transformative year -- maybe a
little controversial of course, but
we're breaking down the old
Unitarian barriers --

ELENA

I suppose my reluctance was the
group aspect of it -- I've never
been much of a joiner, although I
still consider myself a somewhat
religious person --

PHILIP

Well I of course flatter myself
that our church is not exactly what
most people would call organized
religion -- at times it's the
disorganization that's liberating --
and of course I've begun to
minister much more in what one
might call therapeutic
environments, in small groups, and
one on one, couples --

Elena looks outside the window, and sees Wendy speed past on
her bicycle.

ELENA

(cutting him off)

My daughter. I haven't been on a
bike for years.

(still not really looking
at him)

When was the last time you rode a
bike?

PHILIP

(a bit taken aback by the
abrupt topic change)

They say you never forget.

ELENA

(jarred back to his
presence)
Forget what?

PHILIP
Forget how to ride a bike.

Silence.

ELENA
No, of course you don't, you're
right.

EXT. FIVE AND DIME STORE. DAY

Wendy pulls her bike up to the back, locks it, and walks in.

INT. FIVE AND DIME STORE. DAY

Wendy moves with a certain amount of stealth through the
aisles, arriving at the candy selection.

She looks around.

She takes a package of twinkies and slips them into the
oversized pockets of her painter's pants.

She turns around, and her breath goes out of her -- an OLD
WOMAN has been watching her shoplift. The woman looks sadly
at her, but says nothing. Wendy slowly walks past her and out
the back door of the store. The woman looks on.

EXT. FIVE AND DIME STORE. DAY

As she walks her bike onto the sidewalk, Wendy comes across
Sandy.

SANDY
Hey Wendy.

WENDY
Hey Sandy.

SANDY
Mikey was looking for you.

WENDY
Yeah? See ya.

She pushes off on her bike.

Sandy gazes after her. He takes his G.I. Joe out of his coat pocket, and points it at her.

SANDY

Bam.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS. DAY

Wendy flies along on her bike. It's a desolately beautiful fall day.

EXT. SILVER MEADOWS PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE. DAY

Wendy rides by the front gates of the posh grounds of the private psychiatric clinic. A security guard leans against a booth.

Once a bit past the gate, she gets off her bike and walks it into a grove of trees near the front drive.

EXT. SILVER MEADOWS. DAY

Mikey is waiting amid the trees next to his bike as Wendy arrives.

MIKEY

Want some gum?

WENDY

Sure.

(pulling them out of her
pocket)

Twinkie?

MIKEY

(opens his mouth,
displaying the gum on his
tongue)

I'm chewing.

She puts the Twinkies back, and pops the gum in her mouth.

They stand together chewing.

WENDY

(after a pause)

Did you tell Sandy?

MIKEY

Tell Sandy? What?

Wendy doesn't say anything.

MIKEY (CONT'D)

You didn't tell him either, did you?

EXT. SILVER MEADOWS SWIMMING POOL. DAY

The wind is picking up and the light is fading. Mikey and Wendy climb the fence around the pool, which is empty and half-covered in dead leaves and twigs.

They climb down into the concrete recess and walk into the deep end, leaning against the far wall of the pool.

They each matter-of-factly take their gum out and put it behind their ears.

They begin not so much to kiss as to place their tongues in each others' mouths.

We see them from high above the pool, as the dead leaves swirl lightly around them, Mikey groping under Wendy's poncho.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. DAY

To establish.

INT. WILLIAMS GUEST ROOM. DAY

A couple are in the final throes of lovemaking. We see Janey Williams's face, more or less enjoying the proceedings. The man gives a final heave and groan, and rolls off to reveal himself to be -- Ben Hood.

JUMP CUT TO:

Janey smokes a cigarette. Ben is babbling.

BEN

We were golfing, and you know, golfing to me is something I'm supposed to enjoy, and I was on the goddam golf team in college, so it's something one would assume I do well -- I used to do well -- but basically these days golfing for me is like hoeing, or plowing.

Janey smiles briefly at this.

BEN (CONT'D)

It's like farming. I am basically chewing up large tracts of expensively landscaped scenery with overpriced sticks, and George Clair has obviously, in the mere two years since he joined the firm, he has obviously been taking secret lessons with a golf pro, and I assume the entirety of his disposable income has been devoted to humiliating me on the golf course. And the guy talks - incessantly -- throughout the entirety of the miserable 18 holes - on topics that are the supposed domain of my department --

JANEY

Ben--

BEN

Yeah?

JANEY

(gently)

You're boring me. I have a husband. I don't particularly feel the need for another.

BEN

You have a point there. That's a very good point. We're having an affair. Right. An explicitly sexual relationship. Your needs. My needs. You're absolutely right.

JANEY

You should probably get dressed. The boys will be home soon.

BEN

Gotcha.

She wraps a blanket around herself and gets up.

EXT. BACK OF WILLIAMS HOUSE. EVENING

Ben cautiously walks out the back door and heads for the side gate.

INT. HOOD KITCHEN. EVENING

Wendy enters the house as Elena is finishing supper preparations.

WENDY
Hi mom.

ELENA
Hi Wendy.

Without waiting for instructions, Wendy starts pulling out plates and silverware and setting the table.

ELENA (CONT'D)
I saw you on your bike today.

WENDY
With Mikey?

ELENA
Who?

WENDY
Nobody.

ELENA
Mikey Williams?

WENDY
We were just riding around.

Elena takes this in.

ELENA
Well, you looked very -- free --
when I saw you.

Wendy continues setting the table.

ELENA (CONT'D)
Weightless almost -- as if I were
seeing my own memories of being a
girl. There was something internal
about it.

WENDY
Mom. Are you ok?

ELENA

Wendy, of course. I'm sorry. You must think I'm ripe to be checked into Silver Meadows.

WENDY

You're not a psycho!

ELENA

The people at Silver Meadows aren't psychos.

WENDY

I know. They're rich drug addicts and celebrities. When I saw James Taylor there, and --

ELENA

We've been through this Wendy James Taylor was actually at that clinic up near Boston.

WENDY

Well, I saw what I saw, and if you don't want to believe me --

ELENA

Oh Wendy.

Wendy frowns.

WENDY

They need the money for my band uniform at school.

ELENA

I thought you quit the band - I never hear you practice anymore.

WENDY

I don't really need to practice. I just play a few notes, you know, so I thought maybe I'd stay in.

ELENA

Well, I'm sure your father and I would love to hear what you're playing these days. Maybe after dinner.

INT. HOOD LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Ben and Elena take their seats on the sofa. Wendy stands before them holding an enormous trombone, with a music stand and sheet music in front of her.

She puffs a series of seemingly disconnected notes in waltz time.

When she's done, she looks up from the sheet music to her parents.

They applaud.

BEN

Can't wait to see how it fits in with all the other instruments.

Elena gives him a look.

INT. HOOD KITCHEN. NIGHT

Elena is sorting through bills and writing checks at the kitchen table. Ben comes in and fills a glass with ice.

ELENA

The Halfords have invited us again this year.

BEN

You want to go?

ELENA

What do you think?

BEN

Well, it is a neighborhood tradition.

He comes up behind her, looks down at the checkbook.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm, uh, going to bed.

ELENA

So early?

BEN

Rough day. Good night.

He leans over and kisses her on the cheek. She sniffs.

ELENA

Is that a new aftershave?

He recoils a bit.

BEN

Oh yeah. Musk, or something. You like it?

ELENA

Hmm. Good night.

He walks uncertainly from the room. Does she suspect?

INT. MIKE'S ROOM. NIGHT

Mikey is painfully at work writing an English essay. Sandy comes to the door with a geometry textbook.

SANDY

Mikey?

MIKEY

Yeah?

SANDY

Geometry?

MIKEY

Sure, anything but this English.

Sandy puts the open textbook in front of him.

SANDY

Why are you so good at math but not in English?

MIKEY

I'm not good at math. Just geometry.

He looks at the book.

MIKEY (CONT'D)

(drawing out his examples on a piece of paper)

It's like, you know when they say "two squared"? And you think it means 2 times 2, equals 4? But really they really mean a square. A square with a side of two. And the area of the square is four. Like

every time you use the word, like squared, or cubed, it's really space, it's not numbers, it's space.

And it's perfect space, but only in your head, because you can't draw a perfect square, like in the material world, but in your mind, you can have perfect space.

(pause)

You know?

As Mikey goes on, we see his geometric doodles, and hear faintly the HUMMING SOUND under his voice.

SANDY

Yeah. But I just need some help with my homework.

A knock at the door. Jim stands in the doorway with a suitcase in his hand.

JIM

Hey guys, I'm back.

MIKEY

(honestly confused)

You were gone?

Sandy looks at Mikey as if pondering a lost cause.

JIM

(a look of disappointment)

Yeah Mikey. Yep, I was in Houston, working on some great new ideas about silicon, which comes from sand, very conductive. How you guys doing? How's school?

Mikey's still flustered.

MIKEY

Uh, I dunno. OK I guess.

JIM

Hmm. Alright!

He walks off.

SANDY

You really didn't notice? Man, he's been gone for three days.

INT. WILLIAMS BEDROOM. NIGHT

Janey is reading, still dressed, on the bed. She nods to Jim as he enters with his suitcase.

JANEY
Good trip?

He nods and puts his suitcase down, then sits heavily on the side of the bed.

JIM
(as he sits)
You bet.

It turns out it's a water bed, and his weight creates a wave that nearly pushes Janey off her edge of the bed.

JANEY
Jesus, Jim!

JIM
(jumping up, which only creates another wave)
Sorry honey. Hell, we've got to trade this thing in for a normal bed.

JANEY
Just be careful.

JIM
(as he begins to unpack)
You notice anything with Mikey lately? The kid seemed a little out of it tonight, eh?

JANEY
Tonight? Jim, he's been out of it since he was born.

JIM
Hell, I guess he takes after me, huh?

He laughs to himself.

She gives him a look.

INT. COFFEE SHOP. DAY

Elena and Philip Edwards are having coffee again.

PHILIP

In many ways, the church-bound tradition of the father, son, and holy ghost is simply a version of the parent-child-adult triad within us all. It's a primitive set of symbols for our inner psychology.

ELENA

You're saying that Christ is the child, and --

PHILIP

-- And God the angry parent, and the Spirit the hope of an integrated adult self.

ELENA

All well and good -- But tell me again what is it exactly that you believe in?

PHILIP

You ask what the point is?

ELENA

That's right.

PHILIP

Self-realization. Ministering to help people reach their fullest potential. Would you believe me if I told you I want you to see yourself reach your fullest potential and self-realization?

ELENA

I would say it sounds like you're trying to get me into bed.

PHILIP

If that's a potential you see yourself fulfilling... I mean...

(flustered)

My, I sound a bit --

ELENA

I'm sorry. That was stupid of me. I didn't mean to be so rude.

PHILIP

You weren't. You actually, for some reason, you have the effect on me of making me feel just a tiny bit ashamed of myself.

ELENA

But not too ashamed.

PHILIP

(smiling)

Now you are being rude.

ELENA

And you're still trying to get me into bed.

PHILIP

Ouch.

Just then, Dorothy Franklin passes by their table, a smirk firmly implanted on her face.

DOROTHY

Hello you two. Am I barging in on some kind of religious study group? Elena, you look marvelous. Will I see you and Ben at the Halford's?

ELENA

I suppose we'll make an appearance.

DOROTHY

And Reverend Edwards? Did you make the list?

PHILIP

(laughing)

I believe so Mrs. Franklin.

DOROTHY

With the two of you there it will be positively a revival! I'm off!

She scurries out of the coffee shop.

PHILIP

I'm afraid she's something of a gossip, isn't she?

ELENA

(gathering her things to go)

I'm afraid people around here provide her with quite a bit to gossip about.

(getting up)

Take care.

PHILIP

That I will indeed.

INT. CLASSROOM. DAY

Mikey is reading his English paper before the class.

MIKEY

Because of molecules we are connected to the outside world from our bodies. Like when you smell things, because when you smell a smell it's not really a smell, it's a part of the object that has come off of it -- molecules. So when you smell something bad, it's like in a way you're eating it. This is why you should not really smell things, in the same way that you don't eat everything in the world around you - because as a smell, it gets inside of you. So the next time you go into the bathroom after someone else has been there, remember what kinds of molecules you are in fact eating.

An embarrassed silence.

INT. SCHOOL MUSIC ROOM. DAY

Band practice. The New Canaan High School band is doing a wind version of a popular rock tune.

In front, there's Wendy, in halter top and hip-hugging bell bottoms, incongruously blowing away on her trombone -- this being her one stab at extracurricular activities.

In the flute section directly behind her is Sandy, piping

away on a tiny piccolo. He sits on a riser slightly elevated above her.

He directs downward at Wendy a protracted regard, a look of intense concentration on his face.

SANDY'S POV:

Wendy's backside, her pants pushed outward in the back, affording Sandy a libido-charged view of the top of her bum crack.

Push in on a close-up of this cherished abstract landscape, then back to Sandy's furrowed face.

INT. CLUB RESTAURANT. DAY

Ben and Harold are at their table again. Lunch is being cleared.

HAROLD

It's not the taxes I object to.
It's all the fines and penalties.

BEN

Alright dad. But you sold the house, you didn't tell anyone, including the IRS, and I'd of certainly liked to have seen if there was any old stuff --

HAROLD

It was all junk!

Another pause. Ben decides not to pursue an overworked topic.

BEN

Oh. Elena wanted to know when we could expect you on Thanksgiving. It's just going to be you this year.

HAROLD

Ben, I'm going to Florida. I hate Thanksgiving and I hate the cold. I have a new nurse. She's a negro, she weighs three hundred pounds, and I've decided to leave my entire estate to her.

Ben spits his drink out.

BEN

What?

HAROLD

Jesus, Benjamin, you're still as gullible as ever.

BEN

That was a joke? You don't tell jokes.

HAROLD

I thought I'd start trying. If you don't mind. But I am going to Florida and I do have a new nurse.

INT. TRAIN. EVENING

Ben sits in the moving train, commuting home. He puts down his paper to look at this fellow passengers. [NOTE: He is in the same seat as was Paul at the beginning of the film.]

INT. HOOD DEN. DAY

Elena sits in a yoga pose.

INT. HOOD GARAGE. DAY

Elena enters the garage from the kitchen and turns the light on.

She finds an old bicycle and pulls it out.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS. DAY

Elena rides her bike into town, infused with the girlish sense of freedom she imagined for her daughter.

Suddenly, there's a pop -- a tire is blown out. She slows down and gets off the bike. As she bends to look at the wheel, a station wagon slows near her. The driver's side window rolls open. It's Janey Williams.

JANEY

Need a lift?

INT. JANEY'S CAR. DAY

Elena sits in the passenger seat. The two women are obviously uncomfortable with each other.

Silence.

ELENA

Thanks again. For the dinner.

JANEY

Thanks for eating it. I don't know why I even pretend I can cook.

ELENA

I used to know how to cook.

JANEY

It's not like we're too busy.

They smile, barely.

ELENA

I'm thinking of going back to school.

JANEY

Social work?

ELENA

How'd you know?

JANEY

Educated guess.

ELENA

I'm that predictable? No, you don't have to answer that. It's just that with the kids almost grown --

JANEY

You don't have to apologize. I'm too much of a cynic. You actually seem to be trying to figure things out -- don't mind me.

She pulls the car over.

EXT. FIVE AND DIME STORE. DAY

Janey's car pulls to the curb.

INT. CAR. CONT'D

JANEY

Here you are.

ELENA

(opening her door)

Thanks for the lift. If the bike's
any bother--

JANEY

None at all. I'll leave it in front
of your garage. Happy Thanksgiving.

EXT. FIVE AND DIME. CONT'D

Elena watches the car pull away. She turns and walks into the
store.

INT. FIVE AND DIME. DAY

Elena moves through the aisles, putting various sundries into
a basket.

She pauses in front of the lipsticks.

She picks up a lipstick, looks at it, then quietly places it
in her pocket.

We see her reflection in the security mirror above the aisle,
as she quickly exits the store.

The middle-aged lady behind the counter watches her leave.

EXT. FIVE AND DIME. DAY

In a wide shot, from across the street, we see Elena leave
the store, followed by the shopkeeper who runs behind her and
taps her on the shoulder. They converse for a minute, and
Elena is accompanied back into the store.

Through the store windows we see her take the lipstick out of
her purse. She's obviously distraught -- offering to pay,
talking quickly, etc. The shopkeeper is holding a telephone,
not yet decided on whether to call her in.

PAUL (V.O.)

To find yourself in the Negative
Zone, as the Fantastic Four often
do, means that all everyday
assumptions are inverted -- even
the invisible girl herself becomes
visible, and so she loses the last
semblance of her power.

INT. TRAIN. DAY

Close on images from The Fantastic Four.

"HERE IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE, HIS
POWERS ARE HALVED. WE CAN DO
NOTHING BUT WAIT... AND PRAY" "BUT
WHAT ABOUT FRANKLIN? HE'LL BE
KILLED!"

Paul sits reading on his way home.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. DAY

Janey pulls up in the driveway. As she gets out of the car,
she hears a small explosion from the back of the house.

EXT. HOOD BACKYARD. DAY

Janey comes around the back to discover Sandy stuffing a
model airplane with m-80 firecrackers. He lights them and
runs back a safe distance. The plane explodes, its wreckage
joining the debris from a few other dolls, models, and toys.

JANEY

Sandy!

Sandy looks up -- busted.

Janey marches over to him.

JANEY (CONT'D)

You little idiotic prick, you could
blow yourself fucking sky high with
all this demented crap.

Sandy looks on the verge of tears. She softens and bends down
to him.

JANEY (CONT'D)

(sighing)

Hey.

(picking up the
firecrackers)

I'll take this stuff.

SANDY

You going to tell dad?

JANEY

Would it matter?

(sees something else lying
on the ground)
And what's that?

SANDY
(sniffling)
You know, it's the whip -- the one
uncle Frank got me from Mexico.

JANEY
It's not packed with explosives, is
it?

SANDY
No!

JANEY
(going into the house)
Play with the whip.

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM. DAY

Mikey and Wendy are in front of the TV, watching a rerun of
Divorce Court.

JANEY
Oh. Hi Wendy.

WENDY
Hi Mrs. Williams.

JANEY
Mikey, have you heard the
explosions coming from the
backyard?
(he stares blankly at her)
Do you know what Sandy's been up
to?

MIKEY
(honestly oblivious, as
usual)
I dunno.

She pauses, then walks into the kitchen.

EXT. WILLIAMS BACKYARD. DAY

Sandy flicks his enormous whip in the direction of a small
bush.

One by one, he snaps off its leaves.

INT. WILLIAM KITCHEN. DAY

Janey hauls a turkey out of a bag and into the fridge.

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM. DAY

Mikey and Wendy are still in front of the TV.

Janey comes in again and looks at them.

JANEY

Don't you kids have homework?

MIKEY AND WENDY

(without looking up, in
unison)

Thanksgiving break.

She walks out of the room again.

Sandy comes in, whip in hand, looks over at Mikey and Wendy, then walks over to them, and, without a word, slumps down beside them and watches the TV.

EXT. TOWN STREET. DAY

Elena walks unsteadily, pausing to rest against a brick wall. She takes a deep breath, then walks to a corner where a local taxi station wagon sits idling. She gestures to the driver, who beckons her in.

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM. DAY

Later, still mentally devolving in front of the TV, but with various junk food detritus surrounding them and a different show, a rerun of the original Highway Patrol.

Sandy wanders off.

CUT TO:

Later.

Wendy gets up, goes upstairs, and wanders down the hall to the bathroom.

She gets to the door just as Sandy gets there from the opposite direction.

WENDY

After you.

Sandy hesitantly opens the door, as Wendy still hovers by it.

SANDY

Well, you can...

WENDY

Hey Sandy, what were you blowing up out there? Your mom was pretty p.o.'d.

SANDY

All my model planes.

WENDY

The ones you built?

SANDY

They were old. And they couldn't fly anyhow. I'm going to get a radio-controlled airplane at Christmas, and then I'll stuff it full of m-80s and then fly it into Mrs. Burgess's English class and blow it up.

WENDY

I have to go to the bathroom.

SANDY

Yeah.

But he stays put, unaware it seems that he's blocking the doorway.

Wendy looks around -- no one in sight.

WENDY

I'll show you mine if you show me yours.

Sandy goes wide eyed, and almost against his will backs into the bathroom like a feather.

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM. DAY

Mikey looks up from the TV, wondering where Wendy is. He eats another Pringle.

INT. WILLIAMS BATHROOM. DAY

Wendy flips up her dress for Sandy.

He slowly unzips, his hand unsteady. We can tell from the look on Wendy's face that she's feeling a bit sorry for the little guy.

Suddenly Sandy turns beet red, and bursts into tears.

SANDY

What do you want?! What do you want? Get out! Get out of here!

The door flips open -- and Janey Williams appears.

JANEY

(sizing up the situation)
Shit.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. DAY

Janey is giving Wendy a lecture

JANEY

A person's body is his temple, Wendy. This body is your first and last possession. Now as your own parents have probably told you, in adolescence our bodies tend to betray us. That's why, in Samoa and in other developing nations, adolescents are sent out into the woods, unarmed, and they don't come back until they've learned a thing or two.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE DOORWAY. DAY

Wendy is led to the door by Mrs. Williams.

Wendy trades a glance with a sullen Mikey, who sits in the living room pretending to ignore her.

EXT. STREET. DAY

Wendy walks her bike with the wind in her face.

From behind her, Mikey rides up on his bike and rides alongside her.

She doesn't look at him.

Trying to stay on his bike, but moving slowly, he wobbles, nearly falling off.

MIKEY

I don't ever want to see you.

WENDY

Then why'd you come after me?

EXT. HOOD HOUSE. DAY

The taxi pulls up. Elena gets out and pays the driver.

INT. HOOD KITCHEN. DAY

Ben is in front of the open freezer, trying to get something out. He hears Elena come in the front door.

BEN

Elena. I need some help here if this thing's gonna defrost by tomorrow.

She comes up and together they tug and pull until they succeeded in extracting a large, frozen turkey. As they pull it out, it slips from their hands and, after a dull thump, slides along the floor.

They smile.

Elena bends over to pick it up. Ben observes her. She notices his look.

BEN (CONT'D)

Here.

He goes over and picks up the turkey, placing it in the sink. He looks back at her and notices her vaguely distraught look.

BEN (CONT'D)

You all right there?

ELENA

Oh. Sure, I -- Did you remember to pick up the cranberry sauce?

BEN

Um, yes.

They stand together, his concern and her vulnerability forming an awkward attraction between them.

ELENA

Because you like it on your turkey sandwiches.

BEN

I do. I'm -- are you...?

ELENA

I... I think I am...

BEN

(pause)

You know Elena, I've been thinking--

ELENA

Ben, maybe no talking right now? If you start talking, you're going to--

She kisses him as if she needed him.

INT. HOOD HALLWAY. DAY

Ben and Elena enter their bedroom. Elena closes the door quietly behind her.

INT. HOOD BEDROOM. DAY

Ben and Elena undress shyly.

They make love. Elena's face is almost fearful.

CUT TO:

Elena and Ben lie in bed side by side in the pale afternoon light. Neither speaks. Ben turns on his side, and notices a small tear forming in Elena's eyes.

BEN

You crying?

ELENA

I'm just sad Ben -- I mean it was... you were, but, you know. I just don't know...

BEN

(gently making light)

Whatever that means Elena -- And

you complain about me not communicating... I thought it was --

ELENA

No, I didn't mean to sound negative. It was -- But Ben.

(beat)

What is going to happen with us?
Have you --

BEN

You have to bring this up now?
What? Did I do something here? Is that it? Is it something I did?

ELENA

I wasn't accusing you, Ben. It's just that we've got to be honest. Not just with ourselves, but with the children.

BEN

(pause, sitting up)

Hell, I know. I -- I guess if you want to accuse me, you've got --

(looks at watch)

Oh hell! I've got to pick up Paul. I almost forgot.

He gets up and starts to get dressed.

ELENA

You were saying?

He smells the armpits of the shirt he's putting on.

BEN

Yikes -- I was hoping to wear this thing to the Halford's Friday.

ELENA

That shirt?

BEN

What?

ELENA

Leave it -- I'll wash it for you.

He looks at her ruefully.

EXT. HOOD STREET. DAY

Wendy walks and Mikey rides along.

WENDY

You have to follow me?

MIKEY

I dunno. I --

They're now in front of the Hood's house.

EXT. HOOD HOUSE. DAY

Ben exits the house in a rush, and sees Wendy and Mikey on the street in front.

BEN

Hey there Mikey, how's business?

CONTINUED: 85

MIKEY

(tripping off of his bike)

Business? Uh, I dunno.

Ben grimaces, fiddles for his car keys.

As Mikey remounts and rides off, Wendy passes her father on the driveway.

BEN

I'm picking up Paul at the station
- want to come?

WENDY

Nah.

BEN

What you been up to?

WENDY

Nothing.

INT. HOOD LIVING ROOM. DAY

Wendy enters the house and climbs the stairs.

She sees the crumpled bed sheets in her parents' room and hears Elena in the shower.

EXT. NEW CANAAN STATION. DAY

Paul walks to the parking lot with his father, who carries his duffel bag.

EXT. STREETS. DAY

Ben's car heading back to the house with Paul.

INT. HOOD CAR. DAY

BEN

So how's school treating you?

PAUL

All right.

BEN

Classes?

PAUL

Good.

BEN

Grades?

PAUL

Fine.

BEN

Anyone special? You know...

PAUL

Hnnn.

BEN

Well it's good to see you -- we miss you around the house and all, but this St. Peter's, it's top of the line, eh?

PAUL

Yeah.

BEN

You know Paul, I've been thinking, maybe this is as good a time as any to have a little talk, you know, about -- well --

He makes a sharp turn. Paul puts his arms up on the dashboard

to steady himself.

PAUL

(nervous)

About?

BEN

Well, the whole gamut. Facts of life and all. Some fatherly advice, because, I tell you, there's things happening that you're probably old enough... well...

(pause)

For example, on the self-abuse front -- now this is important - it's not advisable to do it in the shower -- it wastes water and electricity and because we all expect you to be doing it there in any case -- and, um, not onto the linen, and not on your sister's underwear or any clothing belonging to your mother --

He pauses to gauge the effect of his monologue on his son, then continues.

PAUL

Uh, Dad --

Just then Ben runs a stop sign and almost slams into another car.

BEN

Holy! Well. If you're worried about anything, just feel free to ask, and, uh, we can look it up.

PAUL

Uh, dad, you know I'm 16.

BEN

All the more reason for this little heart to heart... great.

EXT. HOOD HOUSE. DAY

The car pulls up. Paul gets out, looking shell-shocked. He sees Wendy waving to him from a second floor window. He nods back.

BEN

Um, Paul. On second thought, can you do me a favor and pretend I never said any of that.

PAUL

Sure dad.

BEN

Thanks.

In the doorway, Elena waits.

INT. HOOD HALLWAY. DAY

Paul knocks on Wendy's bedroom door. She opens it.

PAUL

Hello, Charles.

WENDY

Greetings, Charles.

INT. WENDY'S ROOM. DAY

Paul and Wendy sit on the floor.

PAUL

How are the parental units functioning these days?

WENDY

Dad's like doing his Up With People routine, mom hasn't been saying much.

PAUL

I don't know. Dad seems a little weird.

WENDY

Yeah well wait till mom opens her mouth.

They both ponder silently. Then:

PAUL

May I operate your telephonic apparatus?

WENDY

Why don't you use the phone
downstairs?

PAUL

Calling an individual, Charles, in
New York. Confirming a social
outing for Friday night.

WENDY

Can I come?

PAUL

It's a one-on-one kind of date
thing.

WENDY

With who?

PAUL

Her name's Libbets.

WENDY

Libbets? What kind of a name is
Libbets?

EXT. HOOD HOUSE. DAY

Morning. To establish.

INT. HOOD BEDROOM. DAY

Elena is coming out of the master bathroom in a robe, a towel
wrapped around her head.

ELENA

The turkey in?

BEN

Stuffed and baking.

INT. HOOD HALLWAY. DAY

Ben Hood pads down the hall in his bathrobe, tries the
bathroom door. It's locked.

BEN

Anyone home?

INT. HOOD BATHROOM. DAY

The shower is running, but Paul is standing by the open

window, puffing on a joint and trying to blow the smoke outside.

PAUL

I'll be out in a second.

Ben walks back to the bedroom, smirking.

BEN

Sure you will.

INT. HOOD DINING ROOM. DAY

One by one, each member of the Hood carried in a final item to place on the overstuffed Thanksgiving table. Then, one by one, they each silently take their seats.

They look over the table. No one moves.

BEN

Well, it's great we can all be together. And this Thanksgiving, no hysteria, no yelling, especially with grandpa not here, although we miss him. So let's do it right and actually, Wendy, why don't you say grace. You used to love to say grace, remember.

Wendy grimaces, as they all bow their heads slightly.

WENDY

Dear Lord, thank you for Thanksgiving, and for letting us white people kill all the Indians...

Everyone looks up.

WENDY (CONT'D)

... and steal their tribal lands and stuff ourselves like pigs

Mutterings and groans: "Wendy!" "For Christ's sake" etc.

WENDY (CONT'D)

... while children in Africa and Asia are napalmed and --

BEN

Jesus all right enough!

They all unceremoniously start to dig in.

FADE OUT:

INT. WILLIAMS GUEST ROOM. DAY

Janey Williams is pouring Benjamin Hood a drink from a bottle of vodka. Benjamin is already unbuttoned and shoeless; Janey still fully dressed.

JANEY

Here.

BEN

After the Thanksgiving I had, I need it. You having one?

JANEY

In a bit.

She sits next to him, he kisses the back of her neck.

BEN

You know, I think Elena might suspect something.

Janey gives him a rather contemptuous look.

BEN (CONT'D)

(thinking aloud)

Maybe it's all for the better, you know?

Yesterday, at dinner, well, she hasn't said anything... has she acted funny to you, I mean, have you noticed anything?

JANEY

(almost ironic)

Have I noticed anything? I'm not married to her Benjamin, you are. I think you've probably a better vantage point from which to observe her.

BEN

Yeah, but, I -- I've been working a lot lately, and -- No, that's not it. I guess we've just been on the verge of saying something, whatever

it is, just saying something to each other. On the verge.

Janey gets up.

JANEY
I'll be back.

Benjamin looks at her quizzically.

BEN
Huh?

JANEY
Birth control.

BEN
Right. Gotcha.

She leaves the room.

He leans back onto the bed. Sits back up. Takes a sip of vodka. Puts the glass down. Takes his socks off. He's now in just his jockey shorts and shirt.

Faintly, he hears a door close. The front door?

He takes another sip.

He hears another sound.

BEN (CONT'D)
Janey?

Nothing.

He goes to the door and carefully opens it.

BEN (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Janey?

He hears, quite audibly, a car door open, close, Janey's car start and pull out.

He runs to a front window just in time to catch a glimpse of her driving off.

BEN (CONT'D)
Shit.

INT. GUEST ROOM. LATER

Benjamin sits on the guest bed, still in his underwear, drinking from the bottle.

He gets up and starts to wander around the house, still holding the bottle.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. CONT'D

Benjamin saunters through. He presses on the king-sized bed -- it undulates.

BEN

Water bed! Dig it!

He wiggles comically, making more waves.

JUMP CUT:

Ben idly goes through Janey's drawers.

INT. WILLIAMS MASTER BATHROOM. CONT'D

He rifles through the bathroom cabinet, checking out the medicines.

INT. WILLIAMS BEDROOM. CONT'D

He notices a garter belt hanging from the walk-in closet door. He picks it up and twirls it.

INT. MIKEY'S ROOM. CONT'D

Benjamin walks in, an obvious look of distaste.

He sorts through a few of Mike's things -- monster eyes that glow in the dark, The Sensuous Woman, etc.

He twirls the garter belt absentmindedly, then tosses it into the back of Mike's closet.

INT. GUEST ROOM. CONT'D

He finishes putting his clothes back on. As he reaches for the door, he hears voices and quickly steps back in again.

Teenage voices. Mikey and Wendy.

MIKEY (O.S.)

See, no one's here. Maybe you want

to go to the basement?

WENDY (O.S.)
Maybe we can just watch some TV.

MIKEY (O.S.)
There's a TV in the basement.

Hood hears their steps down into the basement.

INT. BASEMENT. DAY

Wendy and Mikey stand in the middle of the semi-lit basement.

MIKEY
Maybe we can mess around. You know,
only if you want to...

WENDY
I don't know.

MIKEY
Why did you -- with Sandy?

WENDY
I don't know.

MIKEY
You like him? He worships you.

But Wendy doesn't seem to hear -- she's drawn to an object lying next to a bean bag chair off to one side.

WENDY
Hey, what's this?

With a look of utter fascination, she picks up a Nixon mask, looking at it as though it were an archeological find.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Wow!

MIKEY
Wendy!

She puts the mask on.

WENDY
(from behind the mask)
I won't take my pants off. But I'll
touch it. That's as far as it goes.

Mikey looks totally confused.

Remaining fully clothed, Wendy loosens Mike's belt, showing no excitement from behind her mask, and lets him climb on top of her for a dry hump.

Just then, a shaft of light hits them from the top of the stairs -- Ben towers above them, looking down.

Mikey flips over immediately and pulls his clothes together, grabbing a TV Guide as Wendy stands up, the mask still on.

As Ben descends Mikey, still stuffing his shirt-tail into his pants, pretends to flip through the TV Guide.

MIKEY

(muttering)

When worlds collide.

WENDY

Huh?

MIKEY

4:30 movie. When Worlds Collide.

Ben arrives, folds his arms.

BEN

What the hell are you kids doing down here?

WENDY

What do you think we're doing, dad?

BEN

What do I think? I think you're probably touching each other. I think you're touching that reckless jerk-off, for god's sake, and I think he's trying to get into your slacks. I think, at fourteen years of age, that you're getting ready to give up your girlhood --

MIKEY

Hey, hang on there, Mr. Hood --

BEN

Don't you direct a single word at me, Mikey. I don't want to hear it.

I'll be speaking with your parents about this situation very soon. Bet your ass on that, son. Young lady?

WENDY

Talking to me, dad?

BEN

Who else would I be talking to? And take that thing off!

WENDY

(pulling off the mask)

Well, then forget all this stern dad stuff.

BEN

I'm not interested in your smart ass remarks now, lady. Let's go. Right now. You and I can discuss it on the walk home.

She stands next to Mikey for a moment, both on the verge of tears.

EXT. STREET. EVENING

Hood and Wendy walk through a cold drizzling rain.

He looks at her from time to time, then takes her arm.

BEN

Look, kiddo, don't worry about it. I really don't care that much. I'm just not sure he's good enough, that's all.

WENDY

Huh?

BEN

I mean, he's not serious, he'll end up living off Janey and Jim, you watch.

It's just that you develop a sense when you get older, if things are going to work out or if they won't, and sometimes it's not worth the mess...

She looks at him. They keep walking. She walks through a

puddle.

BEN (CONT'D)
Your toes cold?

WENDY
Yeah.

He stops and lifts her in his arms.

BEN
I'll carry you up the drive.

She puts her arms around his neck and he lifts her up.

On her face, as he carries her -- a look of blank but real intimacy.

INT. HOOD FRONT HALL. EVENING

Hood and Wendy enter, wet and cold, muttering hellos.

ELENA (O.S.)
(from the kitchen)
Dinner in ten minutes.

BEN
You go dry off now.

Wendy heads for the stairs, Hood following.

INT. HOOD BEDROOM. EVENING

Hood finishes taking off his wet clothes as Elena enters and turns on a light. She stands watching him.

BEN
Never guess where I found her.

Not much response From Elena.

BEN (CONT'D)
In the basement over at Janey and Jim's. With that weirdo Mikey. Not even a TV on.
And they're on the floor and he's got his trousers down though thank goodness she's still dressed. Well, I really let him have it!
(a nervous laugh)
... and Wendy came home

peacefully... Hey, should I dress for the Halford's now, or - give me your -

ELENA

Up to you. I'd like to go early and leave pretty soon after that.

BEN

I get you loud and clear... hey, you look nice.

ELENA

So what were you doing in the Williams' basement anyway?

BEN

Oh, just dropping off a coffee cup. Jim left it, last time he was over. It was on the dash of the car. You were, you know, reading, thought I'd just catch some air. Let's eat.

ELENA

Oh right. The mustache coffee cup. The one that was sitting on the dash.

BEN

Yeah, that one.

ELENA

That one.

She walks down to the kitchen, Benjamin following her.

INT. KITCHEN. EVENING

Wendy is already in the kitchen, fishing through the drawers for silverware and napkins.

Paul enters.

PAUL

See you.

BEN

Stay out of trouble.

ELENA

You'll be on the 10:30 train?

PAUL
11:30?

ELENA
Paul --

BEN
Ah let the guy have his fun. What's
the name of this girl with the Park
Avenue address?

PAUL
Libbets. Libbets Casey.

BEN
Libbets? What kind of name is
Libbets?

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT

A silent dinner of turkey sandwiches with Elena, Benjamin,
and Wendy. The turkey carcass sits, embarrassed, in the
middle of the table.

Wendy, finished, gets up from the table. Opens the fridge,
but finds nothing. Then goes to the candy shelf and grabs
some Hot Tamales, leaving the room without a word and going
into the den.

INT. DEN. NIGHT

Wendy turns the TV on.

TV
... and that ends today's highlight
coverage of the Watergate affair.

WENDY
Shoot.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT

Hood and Elena rise from the table with their dishes.

BEN
What's for dessert?

ELENA
See for yourself.

BEN

No advice from the experts, huh?

His plate slips out of his hands into the trash. He fishes it out and sets it on the counter.

ELENA

Don't start.

BEN

You think I --

ELENA

I have no idea.

BEN

What's on your mind? Don't --

ELENA

It wouldn't make a pleasant evening, if that's what you're after. I don't want to talk about it. Stupid mustache cup.

BEN

What do you mean?

ELENA

Don't be dim.

BEN

Elena, what are you're talking about?

ELENA

I'm not surprised.

BEN

Listen, Elena, if you're gonna pull that passive aggressive stuff on me again --

ELENA

Your unfaithfulness -- that's what I'm trying to talk about. Your unfaithfulness. Your betrayal. Your dalliance. And you won't do me the dignity of being up front about it.

BEN

(quieter)

Am I unfaithful? Is that what you're trying to say?

ELENA

It's a starting place.

BEN

Well, what kind of faithfulness are you after?

ELENA

If you're going to insult me --

BEN

What else could I be? What else could I be? We're not living in the real world here. You're living out some fantasy land from the past, or some advice or something from those psychoanalysts... there are some hard facts here.

Silence.

BEN (CONT'D)

It's the law of the land... the government, the world, those two guys on the Yankees... And I'm not having any fun at it, I can tell you that. I'm not...

INT. DEN. NIGHT

Wendy puts the volume of the TV up, to drown out a conversation she can almost overhear but doesn't want to.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT. CONT'D

ELENA

Oh lord. You think I'm so dense. And now you want to be seen with your dense wife at the cocktail party. You want to wear that ridiculous shirt which doesn't go with those pants at all. You want to wear that, and you want me to shake hands with your friends and make conversation and dress up in an outfit that shows a lot of cleavage and you're not going to accord me the respect of talking

honestly about this... You don't really know what this feels like.

BEN

(whispering)

Sure I do. Do I know what loneliness feels like? Sure I do. I know a lot about it, if that's what you mean.

ELENA

Benjamin. That's supposed to explain it?

Seemingly tired, he stands before her. Silence. Elena sighs, then walks into the den.

INT. DEN. NIGHT

ELENA

We're going to the Halford's. The number's on the calendar in the kitchen. We should be home around 11.

WENDY

(eyes still glued to the TV)

Is it a big party? A big neighborhood party?

ELENA

I suppose. Why?

WENDY

Just curious. If there's a problem, I guess I'll just call you there to interrupt.

ELENA

What sort of problems are you planning exactly?

Elena kisses the top of her head.

WENDY

(still watching the TV)

Oh I thought I'd steal the station wagon, drive up to a commune. Or set the house on fire. You know.

ELENA

Just bundle up. It's supposed to freeze tonight. We'll see you in the morning.

EXT. HOOD HOUSE. NIGHT

Elena and Ben emerge from the house, and look up at a darkening, foreboding sky. A light rain falls. They jog toward their car.

INT/EXT. HOOD CAR. NIGHT

The car moves slowly through the rainy suburban streets.

Inside, Elena and Ben don't speak.

EXT. HALFORD HOUSE. NIGHT

Their Firebird pulls up. There are already many other cars parked on the lawn and driveway.

INT. HALFORD FOYER. NIGHT

Hood and Elena enter. Dot Halford accosts them.

DOT

Ben, Elena. Wonderful! Wonderful!
So wonderful to see you.

Finishing the last of a celery canoe, she kisses the air next to Ben's ear and gives Elena a manic hug.

Then, picking up a white salad bowl from the hall table:

DOT (CONT'D)

Would you care to play? New this year.

Close on: the bowl full of keys.

DOT (CONT'D)

Strictly volunteer, of course. You can put your coats in the library if you like.

ELENA

Oh, damn. Uh, I've left the --

BEN

You've...

ELENA

In the car.

BEN

Oh, yeah. Yeah, we'll be right back, Dot.

INT./EXT. CAR. CONT'D

Ben and Elena climb back in the car and close the doors, shivering.

ELENA

This just isn't the best moment for this.

BEN

I know, I know. I had no idea --

ELENA

That this was going to be a key party?

BEN

Yeah, well, if we'd understood we could have invented some kind of excuse. A key party -- did you see how stuffed that bowl was already?

ELENA

Well?

BEN

I think we're here and we don't have to stay -- we ought simply to put in an appearance and then we can head home.

ELENA

Damn it, Ben --

BEN

I'm not staying at this party so we can go home with someone else's wife. That's not why we're here, right? We're simply being neighbors here, and I think we should do just that --

ELENA

You're not going to --

BEN
I'm not.

ELENA
You have some marker, that's what I think, if you want to know the truth.
You have some marker and you're going to put it on the house keys so that Janey can find them and then when I get back to the house I'll find the two of you in there and Wendy'll be able to hear you and Paul will be back and he'll hear you and I'll catch you, that's what I think. She'll be swearing and banging against the wall and I'll catch --

BEN
Elena.

She rubs her eyes.

BEN (CONT'D)
Elena, it's not what you think. It's not a big plot. Honestly. Honestly. I don't know if you want to go over this now, but it's just something that comes over me. I don't feel good about it. I know I've done what I didn't want to do. I don't know --

ELENA
Well, I'm really pleased to hear a confession.

BEN
Elena, you're just getting wound up to get wound up.

ELENA
Thanks for the diagnosis, Ben. Thank you. So let's just go to this fiasco if that's what you want to do. Let's just go on in. I'd rather talk to anyone else but you.

She pulls the keys out of the ignition, gets out of the car, and slams the door. He follows her.

INT. HALFORD FOYER. NIGHT

ELENA

Oh, Dot!

Elena, entering the house again, tosses the keys at Dot Halford, who looks surprised.

Hood slides in behind his wife.

Dot drops the keys into the bowl.

Slow-motion, close up: the keys, on their equine chain, fall in with a THUNDEROUS CRASH.

INT. HALFORD LIVING ROOM. CONT'D

The room is crowded with nervous, expectant couples and various groupings.

Elena slips into a side room.

Benjamin heads over immediately to the drink table and pours a stiff one, turning around to find at his elbow none other than George Clair.

GEORGE

Benjie!

BEN

Clair, George Clair! What the hell brings you to New Canaan?

GEORGE

Well, it's the funniest thing. I've been talking to some investors -- a little outside venture, you understand, between you and me -- about a scheme to manufacture a new Styrofoam packaging. Little peanut like pieces that can really keep an item free from trauma during shipping. Miraculous. Anyway, it turns out the genius behind the whole project is your neighbor, Jim Williams. How about that!

BEN

Well, hey, isn't that a one-in-a million coincidence. A real dreamer, Jim Williams, eh?

GEORGE

Darned right. Look here, Benj, whaddya make of this sequel to The Godfather? You think it's gonna work?

BEN

Don't see how. I think the public's had its fill of this gangster stuff. No, trust me -- disaster pics. And air hockey.

GEORGE

Yeah, good.

Benjamin catches a glimpse of Janey, voluptuously attired, across the room.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Well, gonna make a break for the hors d'oeuvres guy.

BEN

Yeah, see you bright and early Monday am.

(beat)

Say, where's the wife?

GEORGE

(winking as he goes)

In Rhode Island with the folks. I'm a free agent tonight.

At this, they both notice Elena slowly gliding across the other side of the room. Clair gives Ben a sideways glance, then moves on.

Ben makes straight for Janey, who pretends to be preoccupied with a plant.

JANEY

Oh jeez, Benjie. Well, here you are.

BEN

Damn right, but where the hell were you?

JANEY

(looking around)

What are you talking about?

BEN

(whispering, but too loudly)

Don't bullshit me around, Janey. Jesus Christ, I waited around for more than half an hour, in nothing but my boxer shorts, and -- and what's all that about? What the hell happened?

Janey takes a sip of her drink.

JANEY

A prior engagement overcame me.

BEN

What?

JANEY

Listen, Benjamin Hood. I have obligations that precede your... from before you showed up. One or two, you know, good-natured encounters, that doesn't mean I'm... I'm not just some toy for you. When I remembered some chores I wanted to get done before the party, I just did them, that's all, because I wanted to do them before I saw Jimmy.

BEN

Jimmy? Jimmy? I don't know how to take this. And what do you mean, Jimmy? I thought you said you and your husband --

JANEY

How you take it isn't all that interesting to me, Benjamin. I'm sorry --

BEN

I just can't believe you could be so --

Stalling, he watches her take another sip of her drink and wander off.

The air is filled with talk of Watergate, Billie Jean King, the Oil Crisis, the Mets.

Benjamin goes over to the couch, where Dave Gorman is chatting up an attractive younger woman.

GORMAN

(lighting up a joint)

Welcome to the Monkey House has been a seminal influence on me -- hey Benjamin -- give it a try? This stuff will make some sense out of those larger questions.

BEN

(waving it away)

Thanks for the advice Dave.

But then, Benjamin changes his mind.

BEN (CONT'D)

Uh, well, what the hey...

Taking the joint, he tugs on it, holding the smoke in his lungs.

BEN (CONT'D)

(coughing)

Good shit.

GORMAN

Sure is good shit. It's opiated. I had it in my chamber for a while. I was smoking this other --

BEN

It's what?

GORMAN

Don't fret, Benjie, it's --

BEN

Darn it, Dave.

He rises unsteadily, weaving through the room's conversations.

JACK MOELLERING

Take California. They've got their own airline in-state that's not subject to the fare controls. Compare Sacramento to L.A. on the controlled airlines and you'll see what Friedman is saying -- supply and demand, less restriction.

Benjamin walks over to a window. The outdoor lamps illuminate a new and heavy downpour of frozen sleet.

INT. CONRAIL TRAIN. NIGHT

Paul is seated, reading the latest number of The Fantastic Four comic book. The cover displays a lurid, atomically glowing baby.

The conductor walks through the cabin.

CONDUCTOR

Approaching our final stop, Grand Central Station.

Paul looks out the window at the tenements of Harlem, barely visible through the walls of sleet. Soon the train enters the tunnel toward the station.

EXT. PARK AVENUE APARTMENT BUILDING. NIGHT

Paul gets out of a cab and heads inside. He's met by the doorman.

PAUL

Libbets Casey, please.

DOORMAN

Your name?

PAUL

Paul Hood.

DOORMAN

(a smirk)

Elevator on the right. Eighth floor -- she's waiting for you.

INT. HALL IN FRONT OF LIBBETS' APARTMENT DOOR. NIGHT

Paul rings the bell.

LIBBETS (O.S.)

(from the other side of
the door)
Open it Paul!

Paul opens the door, and enters the apartment.

INT. LIBBETS' APARTMENT. NIGHT

It's half dark, has an air of old wealth.

Libbets skids across the parquet floor to him.

LIBBETS
Excellent. We were waiting!

She turns and runs into the den.

PAUL
(under his breath)
We?

And there, in the den, cleaning an ounce of dope on an open copy of Nixon's Six Crises, is -- Francis.

FRANCIS
(lifting the book up)
You oughtta read this Hood, Nixon,
our leader, all ye need know about
the travails of life. Check out the
Checkers speech stuff.

PAUL
(all hope drained from
him)
Francis. You gonna leave the seeds
in there? In the binding like that?

FRANCIS
All will be revealed, baby.

The television is turned on to a weather report about the coming ice storm.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
Awesome sleet and rain.

LIBBETS
Major.

FRANCIS
Howdy there. You, young knight. Can

you check on the mead? Can you
sally forth and secure us some more
mead?

PAUL
Huh?

FRANCIS
(nasal voice,
impersonating a TV
character)
Moisture! Moisture!

LIBBETS
(pointing)
Beer. In the pantry.

Paul trudges disconsolately out of the room.

INT. LIBBETS KITCHEN. NIGHT

Paul, after wandering a maze of halls, enters the kitchen,
where he takes a six-pack out of the fridge and returns to
the living room.

INT. LIBBETS LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

He enters the room with the beer.

LIBBETS
Frankie opens them with his teeth.

PAUL
(handing him a beer)
Hey, it's a sellable skill.

Francis licks closed a second joint, then takes the beer and
opens it with his rear molars.

FRANCIS
Hell on the fillings.

Paul opens the other two beers and hands one to Libbets. They
light up a joint.

FRANCIS
Everything's gonna freeze, the big
freeze.

LIBBETS
Yeah, Paul, are you gonna get home

okay?

Paul and Francis exchange a look.

She puts an Allman Brothers tape on the 8-track and turns the TV down.

INT. HOOD BATHROOM. DAY

Wendy enters the bathroom.

She fills the sink with water, then turns off the tap. She takes a razor blade from the counter, and slowly, determinedly, holds it to her wrist.

She presses it into her skin, drawing a small drop of blood.

WENDY

Ouch!

She drops the blade and splashes water on her wrist, grabbing some toilet paper and holding it against the tiny wound.

WENDY

Stupid.

She hears the phone ring and walks downstairs.

INT. HOOD DEN. NIGHT

Wendy picks up the phone.

WENDY

Hood residence.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN. NIGHT

Mikey is on the other end of the line.

MIKEY

You're parents at that party?

INTERCUT:

WENDY

Yeah. Yours?

MIKEY

You get in trouble?

WENDY

Maybe. Can't really tell yet.

MIKEY

I'm sorry if I got you into trouble. Maybe we don't have to, you know... unless you really want to.

WENDY

Yeah.

MIKE

I'm going to Silver Meadow, check out the ice storm... You wanna come.

WENDY

Maybe.

MIKE

Yeah. OK.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. NIGHT

Mikey, bundled up in a huge orange ski parka and cap, heads for the door.

SANDY

Where you going?

MIKEY

Out.

SANDY

It's freezing.

MIKEY

(pausing)

Yeah. When it freezes, I guess that means the molecules are not moving. So when you breathe, there's nothing in the air, you know, to breathe in to your body. The molecules have stopped. So it's clean.

Sandy just looks at him. He walks out into the night.

INT. HALFORD'S. NIGHT

Elena sits on a couch, talking to no one, barely looking up,

when someone stands in front of her.

ELENA

Reverend Edwards.

PHILIP

Perhaps you might find it in your heart to call me Philip?

He sits beside her.

ELENA

You're here... I'm a bit surprised.

PHILIP

Sometimes the shepherd needs the company of the sheep.

ELENA

I'm going to try hard not to understand the implications of that simile.

Philip's about to reply, but thinks better of it.

They sit glumly next to each other for a minute. Then Philip rises.

PHILIP

Forgive me.

He walks swiftly to the hall and hurriedly fishes his keys out of the bowl, then heads for the door.

TED FRANKLIN

(passing by)

I hope those weren't my keys.

He laughs at his own joke as Philip rushes out the front door.

Back to Elena, even more forlorn than before.

INT. LIBBETS APARTMENT BATHROOM. NIGHT

Paul enters the bathroom. We hear Francis' and Libbets' voices from the other room, laughing.

He pees.

At the sink, he pauses in front of the medicine cabinet, then

opens it.

PAUL
Eureka.

He pulls out some bottles.

PAUL
Valium. Seconal. Uh,
(can't quite pronounce
this one)
Par-er-goric?
(a beat, looking into the
mirror for effect)
Francis Chamberlain Davenport the
Fourth -- tonight you sleep the
sleep of the just.

He pockets the Seconal and turns out the light.

INT. LIBBETS APARTMENT DEN. NIGHT

Paul re-enters the den to find Francis alone.

PAUL
And whence has yon virginal maiden
absconded?

FRANCIS
Like into one of the other 20 or so
bathrooms they've got in this
place.

Paul takes out the bottle and opens it.

PAUL
Check it out. Not for the faint of
heart.

FRANCIS
Pharmaceutical! You are a god.

PAUL (CONT'D)
(picking up beer, trying
to hurry before Libbets
returns)
One for you and one for me.

He hands a pill to Francis, then pretends to pop one into his
mouth and takes a swig of his beer. As Francis downs his own,
Paul pockets his unswallowed pill.

LIBBETS

(in the doorway)

No candy for me?

FRANCIS

Groovy.

(to Paul)

Young master of the revels, a treat for our hostess?

PAUL

Well, uh, I don't, it's really --

LIBBETS

What is it?

FRANCIS

Come on Paulie, share the wealth. You copped 'em from her mom's stash anyway.

LIBBETS

Let's see!

PAUL

(hand in pocket)

Libbets, you really shouldn't mix and match, you know with the beer. I'll put 'em back.

Libbets reaches into his pocket and pulls out the bottle.

LIBBETS

Oh far out, Paulie. Hey look, these expired like five months ago. You think they're better aged?

She opens up the bottle and takes one out.

PAUL

Maybe you should have just a half.

LIBBETS

Thanks for the advice dad.

She takes the pill.

Paul looks on, thwarted.

INT. HALFORD'S. NIGHT

Ben is back at the bar, pouring another tall one. Mark Boland sidles up next to him.

BOLAND

Benjie, feeling no pain.

BEN

As the Indian saying goes, pain is merely an opinion.

BOLAND

(nodding across the room)

Hey -- check it out. Maria Conrad's brought her son.

(walking off)

I wish some of the gang had brought their daughters!

Ben feels a wave of distaste at the joke.

He looks across the room as Maria and her son Neil (stringy hair, acne, tie-dyed turtleneck, patched jeans) are engaging Janey and Philip Edwards in conversation.

INT. LIBBETS' APARTMENT. NIGHT

Paul, Francis, and Libbets sit on the floor, listening to the music blasting at full strength.

Libbets and Francis are obviously on the verge of unconsciousness. Paul regards them with a look of apprehension on his face.

INT. HALFORD'S. NIGHT

Neil has now cornered Janey.

NEIL

As Werner says, there is nothing to get. That's It. When you get that there's nothing to get. That's the training, when you ask yourself, the question, "What is is?"

JANEY

Wait, this is the training, where they don't let you go to the bathroom?

NEIL

That was the hardest part. But I did it. And you get into some far out shit.

INT. LIBBETS' APARTMENT. NIGHT

Libbets puts a blanket over a sleeping Francis, who's crashed out on the floor in a corner. Francis alternates between snores and various mumbled delirious ravings.

FRANCIS

The foot... the foot... toeclipper man...

Paul is sitting on the couch, and Libbets comes back and sits at his feet, facing up to him.

PAUL

I guess he's just real exhausted from, you know, tests and stuff.

Libbets is herself somewhat in dreamland.

LIBBETS

Yeah.

PAUL

You know Libbets, I really feel, you know, like a real connection to you --

LIBBETS

Yeah but you don't even know me really.

PAUL

Sure I do, you know, like your aura. That you give off.

LIBBETS

My what?

PAUL

It's like very positive, and I feel a real special feeling, because you really --

LIBBETS

And I have a special feeling too, because I do. It's special.

PAUL

You do? I'm glad. Because I feel
for you --

LIBBETS

And I have a feeling for you too,
because you're just like -- I feel
for you like you're -- you're just
like --

PAUL AND LIBBETS

(simultaneously)
-- like a brother.

PAUL

Yeah, you're not alone with that
line.

LIBBETS

I do.

PAUL

Right. Cool. So, how about we take
a bath together?

LIBBETS

(consciousness fading
fast)

Hah hah you're funny. A bath. Like
a brother and sister. Oh man, I'm
so wasted.

Her head bobs and weaves, her eyes close, and suddenly her
head falls forward with a whoosh toward the couch -- smack
dab between Paul's legs.

She begins to snore instantly, her open mouth nuzzling into
his crotch.

Paul doesn't move, doesn't even breathe. Then, slowly, he
leans his back into the couch, without shifting the rest of
his body.

He looks as though he has simultaneously won the lottery and
received a lobotomy.

INT. HALFORD'S. NIGHT

The crowd's a bit thinner than before.

As Dot Halford begins calling out for everyone's attention, a

few couples make their last-minute way to the door.

DOT

OK everyone. We have a little business to attend to now. So everyone who'd like to stay, please gather in the living room.

She scoops up the bowl and places it on a high end table which has been put in the middle of the room.

BEN

(walking up to Elena)
Ready to go?

ELENA

We're not going anywhere.

Elena waves at Janey Williams, who is standing across the living room.

Janey looks back without expression.

INT. LIBBETS' APARTMENT. NIGHT

Libbets and Paul in the same position whence last we saw them.

Paul delicately leans to one side of the couch and picks up a phone. He dials a number.

INTERCUT:

INT. HOOD LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

The phone rings. Wendy picks it up.

WENDY

Hood residence.

PAUL

(whispering)
Charles, what time is it?

WENDY

Is this Charles?

PAUL

What time is it?

WENDY

Um, ten-o-five. Why? Where are you?

PAUL

I'm, uh, in the midst of a moral dilemma. And I was wondering, because I know you're a very moral person, and --

WENDY

And?

PAUL

Shit. I can't really talk about it. I guess I better get to the train.

WENDY

Right.

PAUL

What are you doing at home on a Friday night?

WENDY

I have plans.

Paul hangs up the phone and looks down at Libbets.

Libbets' Allman Brothers tape has run out. The machine makes a repeated clicking sound as the take up reel continues to circle. The only other sound is the noise of the wind and rain lashing against the apartment's windows.

EXT. HOOD HOUSE. NIGHT

Wendy emerges from the house and gets on her bike, but the ice makes it too slippery. The storm is now in full swing. She gets off and walks.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

Wendy walks, barely keeping her balance in the wind.

INT. HALFORD'S NIGHT

All the couples are now gathered for the key selection process, men on one side of the room, women on the other. The storm can be heard outside.

DOT

Well, what shall the order be, alphabetical? In order of

appearance?

PIERCE SAWYER

Golf handicap! Lowest handicap does the honors.

Nervous laughter.

DOT

Golf handicap? Ladies, isn't it up to you?

MARIA CONRAD

Oh I'll go first, damn it. Let's just line up and get it over with.

Maria chooses Stephen Earle. Hands the keys to him. A smattering of applause as she takes his arm and they leave.

MARIE EARLE

Good luck!

Neil watches his mother's exit.

JUMP CUT TO:

A few more couplings.

JUMP CUT TO:

Helen Worthington approaches the bowl. Helen Worthington has the size and shape of a sumo wrestler.

There is a nervous shifting of weight on the male side of the room.

Helen delicately reaches into the bowl. Her hands emerge with a key chain.

George Clair steps forward, obviously depressed, as a collective sigh of relief goes up from behind him. Ben looks on, momentarily triumphant.

Elena smiles to herself.

JUMP CUT TO:

The Gadds choose each other.

MRS. GADD

Oh, my own husband. Isn't that

against the rules?

DOT
Try again?

MRS. GADD
(relieved)
Oh, I think not.

Mr. Gadd smiles as they leave, obviously happy to go.

Finally, only Mark Boland, Neil Conrad, Janey and Jim Williams, Rob and Dot Halford, Sari Steele, Benjamin and Elena.

DOT
Getting down to the wire!

Elena steps forward. Benjamin is obviously agitated.

Close on Janey's hands selecting -- away from Ben's equine key ring.

She lifts up another key ring -- Neil Conrad, the teenager.

She hands the self-important-looking Neil his keys and they turn to go.

Jim Williams smiles mysteriously to himself.

Ben suddenly lurches forward, semi-drunkenly, trying to separate Neil from Janey.

THE GROUP
(ad lib)
Hey hey Ben, hang on there a sec.

He backs off, ashamed, and, taking a step backwards, trips over the coffee table.

Mark Boland helps lift him up.

BEN
Sorry... maybe I should... the bathroom?

DOT
Right down the hall, Ben.

BEN
(muttering)

Sorry, I'm sorry. Uh, I'll be back.

Dot follows Mark Boland down the hall behind Ben.

Suddenly, it's just Elena and Jim Williams, and Sari Steele and Rob Halford.

ROB HALFORD

(taking Sari's arm)

Actually, we didn't put our keys in at all. But you won't spread it around? It's my party, and Dot isn't... hey, we're just going to slip upstairs for a while. You folks like a cup of coffee or something before we go?

Elena and Jim look at each other.

ELENA

Rob, we'll fix it for ourselves. You two go and get acquainted. We'll let ourselves out the front door.

Jim and Elena stand there alone.

JIM

Well, I have to say I don't have much faith that my car keys are still in that bowl. Doesn't seem entirely safe, leaving your car keys around?

ELENA

Let me.

She takes the bowl and dips her hand in. Two sets are left. One, her own, she avoids. She takes out Jim's keys and walks across the room, handing them to him.

JIM

Thanks, but -- oh, I don't think so. It's been kind of a discouraging evening.

ELENA

You couldn't have hoped for much better when you came up the walk.

JIM

Somehow it was different in my imagination when I thought about it. Actually, I didn't think about it at all, really.

They sit down on the sofa.

JIM

You want coffee or something?

ELENA

Well, maybe they have one of those filter jobs in the kitchen --

JIM

Look, Elena, the fact that we're neighbors... you know, close friends, well it sort of makes this a little strange, don't you think?

ELENA

My husband is probably passed out in the bathroom, or at least he wishes he were. I've been married to him for 17 years and I don't have any intention of going in there to get him... so what I'm proposing is that since your wife has gone off with a boy, and since you are standing here alone, I'm proposing that you and I do what makes sense. Stay warm. Pass some time. That's all.

They both look at their hands.

ELENA

Now don't make me feel as if I'm being too forward, OK? If you don't --

JIM

What the hey. Let's go for a drive.

ELENA

Okay. Shall we clean up around here first? Do you think it's all right--

JIM

Nah, that wasn't in the contract.

But they still walk around turning off lights.

In the hallway, Elena looks a bit mournfully at the light seeping from underneath the bathroom door. She hears the sound of running water from inside.

Then she goes into a sideroom and joins Jim. They pick up their coats.

EXT. HALFORD HOUSE. NIGHT

Elena and Jim walk outside into the freezing, pelting rain.

Covering their faces, they jog to his car, an oversized Cadillac. A thick glaze of ice forms on his windshield.

INT. JIM'S CADILLAC. NIGHT

They climb in.

JIM

We're going to have to defrost this thing for a while.

He turns on the ignition, and the vents start to blow cold air at them.

He leans over and kisses her.

ELENA

Do these seats go back?

That starts it. He jumps at her, unbuckling her and unzipping himself.

They tangle uncomfortably for a few seconds. And then, comically, he's in her.

With a groan, it's over in a flash.

Jim pulls himself off, readjusting his pants.

JIM

That was awful, really awful. I'm so sorry, Elena.

Elena has somehow worked herself into the cavity of the glove compartment, and is trying to figure out how to extricate herself.

JIM

Things are really rotten at home.
You wouldn't believe how rotten.
Janey's sick. She's unstable, I
guess... it's not the right time to
tell you... but that's it -- it's
like I can't make her happy, the
boys can't make her happy, she just
doesn't --

ELENA

Jim, maybe we should just go. I've
got to look in on the kids. Paul is
supposed to be coming back in from
the city.

JIM

Jesus, let me make it up to you --
I can do better than that, honestly
--

ELENA

Well, we can talk about it.

JIM

That's fine. I wouldn't expect you
to see it any other way.

ELENA

Maybe you just need -- look, can
you wait here a sec, I need to tidy
up -- just a minute, I'll be right
back. You'll wait?

JIM

Of course.

She opens the door and walks back to the house.

INT. HALFORD'S. CONT'D

Elena hesitantly walks to the bathroom.

She opens the door. Ben's sitting on the floor, next to the
toilet, woozily flipping through the pages of a magazine.

BEN

Elena.

ELENA

Ben, I've got a ride home. Maybe
you should sleep this one off on

the couch here?

BEN
I'll drive you --

ELENA
Ben.

She sits on the toilet next to him, stroking his hair.

ELENA (CONT'D)
You're in no condition to drive.
We'll talk in the morning, OK?

He sits, accepting and quiet.

ELENA (CONT'D)
You'll get some sleep on the couch
out there?

BEN
(looking up at her, with
gratitude)
Sure. I'll try. And we'll talk in
the morning?

ELENA
We'll talk in the morning.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. NIGHT

Wendy walks up the drive in the rain, pauses, then goes to the front door and knocks lightly. The door swings ajar. She pushes on it, and lets herself in.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. NIGHT

WENDY
Anyone home? Hello.

Wendy wanders into the living room, then climbs the steps. The sound of the wind and the darkness begin to scare her.

She goes into Mikey's room -- it's even more of a disaster zone than usual.

She sees on the wall his dark-light poster of the 12 (sexual) positions of the zodiac.

She notices the black garter belt on the floor, and picks it up, absentmindedly swinging it in her hand as she walks out

of the room.

She walks back down the stairs and into the kitchen, leaving the garter belt on the counter.

She opens the refrigerator, grabs a jar of peanut butter, and scoops some up in her finger. As she puts her finger in her mouth --

SANDY

Wendy.

She gives out a little yelp.

WENDY

Sandy, you scared the shit out of me.

SANDY

What are you doing?

WENDY

Just thought I'd stop by.

SANDY

Mike's out -- I think he went to Silver Meadow to see if you were hanging around there.

WENDY

Yeah.

SANDY

(pause)

Are you his girlfriend?

WENDY

No.

INT. JIM'S CADILLAC. NIGHT

Elena gets in. They drive off silently.

EXT. STREETS. NIGHT

The car moves haltingly through the sleet and ice, inches up a hill, then falters and slides back silently, circling a couple of times before crashing into an embankment.

INT. CAR. NIGHT

As the car slides and crashes amid Jim's and Elena's screams.

Silence.

JIM

You okay?

ELENA

Yeah. You?

JIM

Yes. Well, I guess we can walk from here.

EXT. CAR. NIGHT

Jim and Elena get out, shaky, from the car.

They pause for a moment.

The street lamp above them sizzles, but stays on.

They start to walk.

INT. LIBBETS' APARTMENT. NIGHT

Paul and Libbets, still frozen in the same position. Finally, Paul gently pushes Libbets' head back.

It slides off his leg and, as Paul lurches forward in a failed attempt to grab it, Libbets flops backwards, her head hitting the carpet with a dull but decidedly loud thump.

PAUL

Oh shit!

Paul gets up, looks down at her.

She snores.

He runs over to a side table and sees the clock: 11:10.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Oh shit oh shit.

He grabs his comic books and runs for the door.

INT. TAXI. NIGHT

The driver impassively inches down Park Avenue.

PAUL

Oh shit oh shit. C'mon!

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION PLATFORM. NIGHT

Paul sprints down the platform just as the doors are closing. He barely makes it into the train.

INT. TRAIN. NIGHT

Paul walks through the nearly empty train car and finds a seat. He pulls his Fantastic Four comic book out of his coat pocket.

INT. HALFORD KITCHEN. NIGHT

Ben makes his way to the kitchen, pours himself a cup of coffee.

He sees himself reflected in the black glass of the cabinets.

INT. SANDY'S ROOM. NIGHT

Sandy and Wendy are sitting on the floor. He grabs his G.I. Joe.

SANDY

Check this out. He's supposed to talk all kinds of stuff, but he's like malfunctioned.

He pulls the dog tag on the doll, and G.I. Joe emits a plastic macho voice.

G.I. JOE

Mayday! Mayday! Get this message back to base!

SANDY

Same thing. Again and again.

Wendy takes the doll and yanks the cord.

G.I. JOE

Mayday! Mayday! Get this message back to base!

SANDY

It's gonna get a lot colder tonight, I predict. Probably a blackout. Do you have candles in

your house?

I know where the candles are, and I have my own flashlight. Over there. Also, I know where every emergency exit is on this floor.

During the course of his monologue, as Wendy looks on, Sandy calmly ties a noose for his doll.

SANDY

This knot's called a bowline.

He puts the noose over the doll's head, as Wendy holds him.

G.I. JOE

Mayday! Mayday!

SANDY

Let's hang him.

Sandy drapes the noose over the edge of a dresser drawer. G.I. Joe dangles. They both look at him in silence.

The silence continues.

WENDY

He's dead.

SANDY

If it wasn't raining we could take him outside and blow him up.

WENDY

He wouldn't blow up. He'd just get all mangled or twisted.

She takes him down and lays him flat on the bed. And then begins to remove his clothes.

Sandy looks on, desirous.

WENDY

Well.

(noticing his lack of anatomy)

It looks like someone got to his private parts before us.

SANDY

Communist Viet Cong.

WENDY

They left it in the jungle.

They speak with high seriousness.

Wendy slides up on the bed where Sandy sits, a pillow on his lap, and one by one, with exaggerated slowness, she removes her snowboots, as if they were stiletto heels.

WENDY

Can I get into your bed?

(pause)

With you?

Sandy begins to shake.

SANDY

We -- we have to go to the guest room. We can't stay in here. What if Mikey? My parents?

WENDY

Don't worry about them. They're at that party, getting drunk and falling all over each other and making jokes about McGovern and stuff.

Sandy begins to cry.

SANDY

It's just -- it's just --

She takes his hand, and they walk out of the room and down the hall, into the guest room.

INT. GUEST ROOM. NIGHT

Wendy and Sandy enter. She sees the vodka bottle on the dresser.

WENDY

Want a drink?

SANDY

Vodka?

WENDY

You never tasted the stuff?

She fills the glass to the brim and hands the bottle to

Sandy.

They clink and each toss back a sip -- Wendy almost the entire glass.

Sandy coughs and gags, but swallows.

WENDY

Try again.

He does.

SANDY

It feels warm.

WENDY

One more shot?

SANDY

Okay.

They drink.

WENDY

Under the covers.

Under they go, and soon every layer of clothing emerges.

WENDY

(feeling her way)

Get 'em off.

Sandy begins to laugh, and soon Wendy joins him.

They roll around on top of each other for a while.

WENDY

Have you ever had a nocturnal emission?

SANDY

Huh?

WENDY

That's the name for when you wake up and find this little pool of sticky stuff, like after a sexy dream.

Sandy shakes his head.

WENDY

They didn't tell you this stuff
yet? What planet do you live on?

Sandy doesn't answer, but climbs back on top of her and
kisses her neck.

SANDY

I love you.

WENDY

That's nice. Are you drunk?

SANDY

I don't know. How do I know?

WENDY

I don't know either. You spin
around, when you lie down.

Sandy rolls off her and lies on his back.

SANDY (CONT'D)

I don't think I'm spinning.

They cuddle up together.

He yawns. She yawns.

EXT. SILVER MEADOW. NIGHT

Mikey walks along the edge of the empty pool in the rain. He
climbs up on the diving board and bounces lightly on it, but
then gets off and stands, looking down at the pool again.

EXT. SILVER MEADOW. NIGHT

Mikey walks across the field.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

The storm has let up. Mikey walks along. With a running
start, he slides on the ice down a hill.

He walks back up and slides again, hollering with joy. He is
an image of a tiny yet absolute and positive freedom.

The streetlights sputter on, then off.

INT. WILLIAMS GUEST ROOM. NIGHT

Sandy and Wendy lie asleep.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

A power line is down. It hisses and HUMS -- a humming very much like the humming Mikey has been hearing earlier.

The humming takes on the same transcendent tonality to which Mikey has become so accustomed at such moments.

Mikey sits down on a metal street guardrail, to ponder the sound and the snaking coil of electricity.

A strange look of almost religious wonder overcomes his face, as the power line connects to the guardrail.

MIKEY

Oh shit.

Glued by an electrical pulse to the rail, he shakes as the current flows through him.

After a minute, his body slumps and slides down the road.

INT. TRAIN. NIGHT

As Paul sits reading on the moving train, the lights inside begin to sputter, and the train begins to slow. After a few moments, the train grinds to a halt, and Paul and his few fellow late night passengers are left in near total dark, with only the light of an emergency exit sign above Paul's head to light the scene.

The train is eerily silent.

EXT. HOOD CAR. NIGHT

Ben drives home.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

An emergency vehicle, lights flashing, crawls by Ben's car. He drives on slowly.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF WILLIAMS HOUSE. PRE-DAWN

Jim and Elena arrive on foot.

JIM

You want to come in, get a cup of coffee -- warm up? I can either

walk you home, or you could crash
in the guest room.

ELENA

Sure. Maybe coffee.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN. PRE-DAWN

JIM

Phone's out. I hope the pipe's --

He walks into the kitchen. The pipes have begun to burst.
There's a water leak running down the walls, forming a puddle
on the floor.

Elena has walked into the kitchen behind him. She leans
against the counter, picking up the garter belt without
thinking for a second, then putting it back down.

JIM

Oh well. Why don't you put on some
dry socks -- and we've got some
rain boots in the guest closet back
there. Last room upstairs -- back
of the hall.

Elena climbs the stairs in her bare feet.

INT. WILLIAMS GUEST ROOM. CONT'D

Elena opens the door, and discovers Wendy and Sandy asleep.
She stands before the bed, and gazes down on them.

They look almost angelic.

Wendy, sensing her presence in the room, opens her eyes,
slowly coming out of sleep.

ELENA

(heartbroken, softly)
Get dressed.

Elena walks out of the room, back to the kitchen.

Wendy gets out of bed quietly, leaving Sandy sleeping
peacefully.

She looks at him lovingly, and tucks the blanket back up
around him.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN. DAWN

Elena and Jim are drinking coffee.

ELENA

You should let him sleep.

Wendy enters. She looks inquisitively at the two adults.

WENDY

Where's dad?

INT. HOOD CAR. DAWN

Ben continues to drive slowly. He looks out his side window, and sees something. He puts on his brakes.

EXT. STREET. DAWN

Ben gets out of the car, and stands on the top of an icy embankment. In a clump of bushes is the orange glow of a parka.

He walks hesitantly toward it. Mike's body lies face down in the wet ice.

Ben leans down and turns the body over, then stands back in amazement and saddened shock.

He stands there for a moment, then picks Mike's body up, carrying him over the hill and onto the street. We see now that he is parked just a short block from the Williams's house.

He bypasses his car and walks directly down the street toward the house. The effort is obviously enormous. He falls from time to time, then gets back up.

INT. TRAIN. PRE-DAWN

Various passengers asleep.

Paul, hunched up in his seat under the faint emergency exit light, cold. He reads his comic book by the light of the emergency exit.

"DON'T YOU SEE, SUE? HE WAS TOO
POWERFUL... IF HIS ENERGY HAD
CONTINUED TO BUILD, HE WOULD HAVE
DESTROYED THE WORLD!"

Suddenly, the lights begin to flicker on and the hum of the train's engines returns.

The conductor enters the car, blasting forth in his classic nasal train conductor voice.

CONDUCTOR

Good morning ladies and gentlemen --

On Paul, squinting in the harsh light.

EXT. TRAIN BRIDGE. PRE-DAWN

The train moves slowly through a suburban, semi-forested landscape. On the street below the bridge, an emergency highway crew is removing a fallen tree, their trucks aglow in flashing yellow lights.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN. DAWN

Elena pours Wendy a cup of coffee. They're both in their coats.

WENDY

I don't like coffee.

ELENA

It'll warm you up.

Elena sits next to her. They both raise their cups and sip the coffee, not noticing the simultaneity of their movements.

INT. GUEST ROOM. DAWN

Jim watches the sleeping Sandy, picks up the half-empty bottle of vodka, pours himself a drink. The noise wakes Sandy up. Jim sits down on the bed at his feet and takes a sip.

SANDY

Dad?

Jim looks at him.

INT. KITCHEN. DAWN

Elena and Wendy hear a hollering from outside, get up to see what it is.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. DAWN

Elena and Wendy come out the front door, as Ben lays Mikey's body onto the ground before the front steps.

ELENA

Ben?

He's too breathless to speak.

They stand there, looking down at Mikey.

Behind Elena and Wendy, Jim appears.

He pushes softly by them toward the body of his son.

BEN

Jim -- he was just up -- in Silver
Lane -- I think maybe -- a power
line --

Jim picks up his son.

He carries him silently into the house.

Sandy, now standing inside the foyer, pushes himself back
against the wall as they pass, without expression.

After a moment, from outside, the Hoods can hear Jim's
wailing.

BEN

Do you think? Maybe we should call
someone --

ELENA

The phone's out.

BEN (CONT'D)

Yeah. Well, we can just --

ELENA

Ben, I don't think he wants us
here.

Wendy has been watching Sandy through the screen door.

WENDY

Wait, I --

She turns back up the front steps and gently goes in --

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM. CONT'D

on the living room floor, Jim is hugging Mike's body, his
shoulders shaking uncontrollably, sobbing.

Wendy walks and stands next to Sandy, who is filled momentarily with a brief inexplicable rush of anger toward her -- but she takes him and gives him an awkward, childlike hug, then turns and runs out the door, joining Ben and Elena on the driveway. Sandy watches her go, his face wet with tears.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. CONT'D

ELENA

Oh you know, for a minute I thought it was --

BEN

Paul? Yeah. You think --

WENDY

He's probably been waiting all night at the station.

BEN

C'mon.

EXT. STREET. DAWN

Elena, Wendy, and Ben reach the car and get in. The car starts and drives off.

There are more crews out cleaning up the storm's debris and fixing the power lines as they drive.

EXT. CONRAIL STATION. EARLY MORNING

The train slowly pulls in. The Hood family walks down to the end of the platform.

The train doors open, and Paul, tired and a bit cramped, emerges. He sees his family gathered at the other end of the platform, and walks to them.

They stand, silent, even dignified, awaiting him.

When he joins them they all walk silently to the car and get in.

INT. HOOD CAR. EARLY MORNING

Sunlight floods in and temporarily blinds Ben as he starts the engine.

He squints, his eyes tearing a bit from the light.

He looks around, first at his wife, then at his two children sitting in the back seat.

He turns off the engine. Quietly, he begins to cry.

He turns to the back seat.

BEN

There's something -- your mother
and I -- have to tell you two --

Elena puts her hand out, almost touching him.

ELENA

(softly)

Ben.

Paul looks at Wendy, silently asking her what's happening.

She casts her eyes downward, as does he.

ELENA (CONT'D)

(her hand still not yet
touching him)

Ben.

EXT. STATION PARKING LOT. MORNING

From above:

The car, the first morning light shining upon it.

THE END