

FADE IN:

TIGHT CLOSE - JOE THERRIAN - MORNING

He's in his mid-thirties, his face relaxed in sleep, childlike. Nestled soundly a tangle in the arms of his wife.

THE CAMERA STAYS CLOSE. SLIGHTLY BLURRED, SOFT, SLOWLY SWINGS ROUND

TIGHT CLOSE - SALLY THERRIAN

She's in her mid-thirties, with large deep eyes. She watches her husband unguarded in sleep. Her pretty face, alert, she's barely breathing. Traces the just visible lines around his eyes, and mouth. Brushes fingertips against his eyelashes.

TIGHT CLOSE - SALLY'S HAND PULLS THE BEDROOM SHADE.

It retracts with a loud WHACK, sun, sky, trees.

STEVEN (O.S.)

And breath...and chataronga...

EXT. POOL AREA - DAY

We're in the middle of a yoga lesson. Joe and Sally stand on their mats. Steven, their instructor, wanders around the couple issuing soft-spoken instructions.

A large room with hard wood floors, dominated by a huge fireplace. The dining room on one side, living room on the other. Floor to ceiling windows overlook the back porch garden pool... The house is classic Neutra. All GLASS and SMOOTH LINES.

The calm is broken by the telephone. Joe and Sally ignore it until the answering machine picks up. They break their yoga poses and listen.

The CAMERA hovers over the answering machine.

LUCY (O.S.)

(over answering machine; sweet, British, slightly desperate)

Joe, it's Lucy. Remember me? It's the black sheep here. Bah...not funny.

Haven't heard from you, need you, call me. Love you madly. Hi, Sally. Joe, I'd love to talk to you before I go...

JOE
Go where?

LUCY (O.S.)
(over answering machine)
It's a damn nuisance you aren't here, big brother. Sorry I drone on. I miss you.
I lo--

The machine cuts her off.

NEW ANGLE

Joe and Sally have resumed their positions. This wasn't the call they were waiting for.

WIDE SHOT

AMERICA, forty-one, and ROSA, fifty, struggle up the steps of the back porch carrying grocery bags and packages, come through the sliding glass door...

THE CAMERA FOLLOWS THEM

Through the dining room and into the kitchen, watches the two unpack groceries, flowers, etc., and start to dress the dining room table. They speak quietly to each other in Spanish.

JOE
America, could you just...

America closes the sliding doors between the kitchen and the dining room, giving the couple their privacy.

JOE (CONT'D)
(calls out)
Thank you, America!

STEVEN
Okay, let's just take a deep breath, let your ribs expand and relax. And reach up and into downward dog.

Otis, the Bisenji/Sheperd mix, sleeping on his leopard pillow, stirs, stretches and groans.

JOE AND SALLY
Good boy, Otis.

The phone RINGS again.

VOICE (O.S.)
(over answering machine)
Hello, I have Dr. Harmon calling for
Sally Therrian.

Sally jumps out of the down dog position and runs to the
phone, all angles.

SALLY
Hello, hi, hi...and? Thank God.

Sally stands with the phone to her ear, her back to Joe.

EXT. POOL AREA - CONTINUOUS

Joe watches her from his position, not concentrating on the
teacher waiting a sign. Sally returns to the lesson. They
do their handstands against the wall, on either side of the
front door.

SALLY
No luck.

JOE
Oh, well, we'll just have to try again.
Sound like a plan?

Sally nods, she and Joe, at Steven's instructions, come out
of their handstands and lie on the floor in a stretched
relax, facing one another.

SALLY
Happy anniversary, baby.

JOE
Happy anniversary.

They smile.

STEVEN
And change sides...

America slides open the dining room doors. The dining table
is covered with bundles of freshly cut flowers. Rosa is
singing in Spanish.

AMERICA

(with the authority of long
years of service)

Mr. Joe, we have to have the house. If
you please now...

JOE

It's yours.

The CAMERA glances off photos of the couple: portraits and
candid, their wedding day, with friends, on vacation,
tumbling on the lawn, and the like.
Some framed and hung, some taped to the fridge or simply
leaning on a shelf. It's clear that at least a handful are
by the same photographer, black and whites, grainy and
beautiful.

There are lots of photos of Joe and his sister Lucy,
documenting their relationship from childhood. There's an
ANNIE LEIBOWITZ photo-shoot of Sally carelessly displayed
somewhere.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Joe stands behind Sally in front of the full length mirror,
his arms around her, stroking her belly.

JOE

I love you. Most beautiful woman in the
world.

SALLY

Hardly...

JOE

Accept a compliment.

SALLY

I think you're the most beautiful woman
in the world.

They move toward the bed.

JOE

What did you get me?

SALLY

In the morning, after everyone's gone and
there's just us.

She pushes him on the bed.

JOE
Kiss my eyes.

She does.

SALLY
My wrists.

He does.

JOE
Kiss the back of my knees.

SALLY
Through the sweats or not?

JOE
Not.

She pulls down his sweats. She kisses the back of his knees.
He turns, stares up at her.

SALLY
What?

JOE
You didn't kiss anyone else's knees, did
you?

Sally shakes her head.

SALLY
No. Did you?

JOE
(after a beat)
No. I missed that.

SALLY
I missed all of you. We're okay, aren't
we?

JOE
We're great.

SALLY
I mean, you're really back.

JOE
For good.

They begin to make love...the phone RINGS.

JOE (CONT'D)
Don't get it.

SALLY
Well, it might be Clair. They're threatening not to come...

JOE
What?

SALLY
They can't find a sitter...
(into the receiver)
Hello? Excuse me? Yes, uh, hold on.
(she looks at Joe)
Just a moment.
(puts the call on hold)
It's Skye Davidson. She needs directions to the house. You invited Skye fucking Davidson to our anniversary party?

JOE
Okay. I'm sorry, look, I meant to tell you. It was the only chance I had to meet her.

SALLY
You invited her to our anniversary party? I didn't even invite my mother.

JOE
She goes on location tomorrow. Sally, I'm sorry. Look, I can't keep her on hold.

SALLY
(pissed)
No, no of course not. It's Skye fucking Davidson, for fuck's sake.

JOE
(regards her)
You want me to uninvite her?

SALLY
No, no of course not. How old is she? Twenty-fucking-two?

She gets out of bed, starts into the bathroom. The CAMERA is with her.

SALLY (CONT'D)

(into the bathroom mirror)

And she's a stinking fucking actress, for fuck's sake.

JOE

(into the receiver)

Skye!

(his face lights)

I'm so glad you're able to make it...it's our sixth, actually.

(flattered)

You read the book again? Well, no, the ending to chapter six...it's just that it's not filmic.

We tried it in an earlier draft, but, it just wasn't filmic... Well, sure, we can absolutely look at that again. If you're coming from Laurel, you want to take Sunset west, we're just past Will Rogers State Park. Three blocks west of that, you want to hang right. It's about three quarters of a mile up a big white thing on the left.

Sally's started the bath, and is watching him from the doorway. He meets her eyes mid-sentence.

JOE (CONT'D)

Oh? I don't think tonight. I'm sure they're well behaved. All our friends have dogs, and they always want to bring them. We'd be outnumbered, you see? So we sort of put a ban on it. Sorry.

He rolls his eyes. Sally walks back into the bathroom, she isn't buying it.

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

I'm looking forward to meeting you, too. And Skye, I'm thrilled that you're willing to take this leap with me. Eternally grateful, really.

SALLY

(into the bathroom mirror)

I'm going to throw up.

JOE (O.S.)
I can't imagine anyone else playing
Genna.

SALLY
(sanguine)
Really?

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

The doorbell rings. There are two closed doors on either side of the room. The bed shows no sign of consummated sex. Joe comes through the left hand door, nearly dressed.

JOE
Who the fuck can be here at this time?
It's not even seven!

Sally comes through the other door, one shoe off, one on.

SALLY
Oh Jesus, who else is always early for
Christ's sake?

NEW ANGLE

Sally kisses his cheek on her way to the door.

SALLY (CONT'D)
Promise you'll be nice to the neighbors.

JOE
I'll say as little as possible.

Sally exits the bedroom.

HOLD ON JOE

For a moment, then Sally re-enters, kisses him deeply.

SALLY
I love you.

INT. FOYER - EARLY EVENING

The house is filled with exquisite flower arrangements, candles everywhere.

JERRY and JUDY ADAMS are on the porch, just beyond the glass of the front door. Their argument is inaudible. They're in their mid-thirties, conservatively dressed. She's stunning,

genetically nervous. Jerry carries a briefcase. She's got the gift.

Sally opens the door. Hugs and buses them, hello.

JUDY

I know we're early, we're so early.
Sorry.

JERRY

You have to sign your taxes anyway.

SALLY

(a grin)
Of course we do.
(to Judy)
We have to sign our taxes.

JOE

(kisses Judy; all charm)
You can never be too early or too thin.

JERRY

Happy anniversary, buddy! Six months ago, who would have thunk it?

Jerry hugs Joe.

JOE

(sotto)
Well, not me, to be honest.

JERRY

(sotto)
Don't fuck up again. It's got a ripple effect. Sally suffers, we all suffer.

JUDY

(offers)
We have a gift?

JOE

Thanks, I'll take that. Champagne?

JUDY

Lovely.

Joe moves toward the kitchen.

JERRY

(a moment, to Sally)

We closed.

SALLY
Fantastic.
(takes his hand)
Out here.

They step out onto the porch. Judy's left alone, unsure whether to follow or not.

JUDY
(finally, to no one, and to no response)
The house looks beautiful, are those hydrangeas?

She stands awkwardly in the middle of the foyer.

EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS

JERRY
Joe officially owns No. 4, Cheyenne Walk, Chelsea, London, England. No small doing.

SALLY
I love you, you're a genius.

Behind them, in the foyer, Judy wanders aimlessly.

JERRY
I suppose. Sally, that's quite a gift. I'm not sure it's in your best interest.

SALLY
I adore him.

JERRY
The realtor'll be here tomorrow in the morning. The house had to go on the market to insure the loan on the London flat.

SALLY
I know. I know that. Don't spoil it.

JERRY
What you earn has to double in order to cover expenses in London, it's an outrageously expensive city.

SALLY

We've only been over this how many times?

JERRY

You only made half your quote this year.

SALLY

Well, you're a tower of support.

JERRY

I worry because you don't. It's my job. I'm feeling guilty. I would've liked it if you waited until the two of you were on more solid ground.

SALLY

(direct, simple)

We couldn't be on more solid ground.

JERRY

Whatever you say. Listen, I love you.

Otis is barking.

JOE (O.S.)

Otis! No barking!

SALLY

(touched)

And Joe's huge in Europe. He's like a rock star in London. His novels sell millions.

JERRY

Not millions.

SALLY

He's directing now.

JERRY

They're paying him scale.

The CAMERA catches sight of Joe behind them. He moves through the foyer and into the living room with a tray of glasses and Judy in tow.

SALLY

He gets huge advances on his novels. He's going back to that. You know how he hates it here.

JERRY

There's still time to undo this.

SALLY

(kisses his cheek)

We'll be fine.

JERRY

(re: barking dog)

Did you invite them?

SALLY

The Roses? And of course they said yes.

JERRY

That was the plan. And you're thrilled to have them.

SALLY

Whatever you say.

JERRY

Did you tell Joe to behave?

SALLY

Yes.

JERRY

Did he promise?

SALLY

Scout's honor.

JERRY

Before I forget.

(pulls a novel from his
briefcase)

Put it on the bookshelf.

She flips the book -- on the back is a full page picture of RYAN ROSE.

SALLY

You're out of your mind.

JERRY

Just do what I say, alright?

SALLY

How much bowing and scraping do you want us to do?

JERRY

Beats a lawsuit.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joe and Judy sit on opposite sides of the sofa -- slightly uncomfortable with each other.

JOE

(to fill the silence,
conspiratorial grin)
I love gifts. What did you guys get us?

JUDY

(chokes on the champagne)
Nothing that can't be exchanged.

JOE

Oh. Well. Good.

JUDY

Congratulations on the deal. How exciting. Is Sally doing Sally? I mean it's Sally. The character that's based on Sally. The character that's based on Sally in the book.

JOE

The novel. No, Skye Davidson is playing the lead.

JUDY

Oh my God, I'm a huge Skye Davidson fan. She's very beautiful.

JOE

Yes, she is.

JUDY

(trying harder)
But I am right, yes? She's based on Sally.

JOE

It's a novel.

JUDY

Still. Well. Let's drop it.

JOE

Yes.

JUDY

I'm not much of a reader, but I do love autobiographies, even biographies sometimes. Mostly non-fiction. Did you read the new Styron?

JOE

No.

JUDY

It's very good.

(a moment)

I understand you won the Booker Prize.

JOE

Yes I did.

JUDY

(another moment)

Is your script much like the novel? Jerry says it's very good. But you know, you read the novel, and then you see the movie - and most of the time you say, "what's this?" You know? I sometimes think we're better off not reading the novel at all. Because, we come with expectations... and of course, we know where we're going. Don't you find?

JOE

Don't I find what?

JUDY

I don't know why Joe, we've known each other how long...

JOE

Not long.

JUDY

(benign)

Don't be silly.

JOE

Joking.

JUDY

Yes I know. I started to say... I started to say Joe that --

JOE
Do I put you off?

JUDY
You manage to throw me off balance. I
adore you.

JOE
And I you.

JUDY
But I'm always afraid I'll say something
stupid.

JOE
Ah.

JUDY
And so I always manage to, do you see?
Like the book/script thing, do you see?

JOE
Mmm hmmm.

INT. FOYER

CAL and SOPHIA GOLD are there with their children - JACK and
EVIE - eight and six respectively. Carrying gifts and totes
with toys and changes. Jerry and Sally have gathered them up
and ushered them in.

SALLY
You know Jerry.

CAL
Yes, of course.

SOPHIA
I'm the wife. We've met.

JERRY
(hugs her)
You, I know.

SALLY
(to Evie)
Hey, beautiful girl.

She picks up the four-year-old, swings her around. Jack
hides behind his father's legs.

SOPHIA

(a grin)

Jack? Jack, you promised.

The little boy comes out from behind his father's legs, covers his eyes with his hands.

JACK

(sings)

Happy anniversary to you. We're glad Joe came home. Don't split up again. Cause we like the food.

Much laughter and clapping.

JOE

(in the archway)

Jack. Did you compose that yourself?

CAL

Absolutely.

JOE

Had a little help?

CAL

Absolutely not.

JOE

It has your ring.

CAL

I'm not that good.

JERRY

Cal, my wife Judy.

JUDY

Nice to meet you.

CAL

I think we've met, actually. No? At another one of these things?

JUDY

No, I don't think so.

JERRY

(to Cal)

Congratulations on the Academy Award.

Great performance. Really warranted.

SOPHIA
He thought so.

JERRY
Sally always manages to get robbed.

SALLY
(a mortified grin)
Enough about me.

SOPHIA
Evie has a little something for you.

Evie shakes her head.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)
You do.

EVIE
(even)
I don't think so.

SALLY
Since when are you so shy?

EVIE
(her mother's daughter)
Never.

SOPHIA
(bright smile)
Honey, we have gifts for you and all
sorts of surprises. Where is America? I
know she's here somewhere.

Joe reaches for the gifts.

JOE
I'll take them.

SOPHIA
No, I have a little talking to do with
America. Privately. I'll find her.

SALLY
(to Sophia)
In the kitchen.

JOE

Who'd like to go and find Otis?

EVIE
Me!

JACK
I guess.

JUDY
The infamous dog?

JOE
He's the best dog in the world.
(to Judy)
They're both coming tonight. Not my
idea.

JUDY
Ours.

JOE
It's Jerry's worst idea.

CAL
What's that?

JOE
The neighbors from hell. The kind that
lay in wait. I'd rather move actually.
Wouldn't I?
(to Sally)
Wouldn't I?

SALLY
(small smile)
Yes.

JOE
(to the kids)
Okay. Last one to find Otis is a smelly
old bum.

Joe goes off with the children to find Otis. Cal sits at the
piano, plays.

INT. FOYER - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Joe holds Evie in one arm. Jack stands beside him, holds his
hand. MONICA and RYAN ROSE face him across the threshold --
the NEXT DOOR NEIGHBORS. She's in her late twenties - and
beautiful, eyes everywhere - star struck and house struck.

Ryan is somewhat older, a little awkward in company, swallowing resentment and a little self righteous.

JOE

Well, hello you two.

(putting Evie down; to Jack)

These are the people who live next door.
Say hello.

Jack does.

JOE (CONT'D)

And close the door, Jack. Because if we leave it open, Otis will run out and you know what will happen then?

JACK

Uh, uh.

JOE

He'll run next door into their backyard and he'll bark and bark and bark and eat their pitbull for his dinner. Is it a pitbull?

RYAN

(not amused)

No, actually.

JOE

(to Jack)

Oh whatever. We don't want that to happen, do we?

JACK

No?

RYAN

It's a rottweiler, actually.

(to Jack)

I don't think our rottweiler is in any danger, Jack.

JOE

Well, Jack and I are very relieved.

RYAN

I thought this was a party. Are we going to talk about the dog thing?

MONICA

Please, Ryan.

JOE

(kisses her cheek and shakes
his hand)

No, he's absolutely right. You're
absolutely right, Ryan. Dog talk must be
banned. Canine conversations are
completely discouraged... it's really
good of you to join us. Can I get you a
drink?

RYAN

Not for me, thanks.

An awkward moment.

MONICA

(checks with Ryan)
Something soft.

JOE

Right away. Are you sure you wouldn't
like something soft, Ryan?

RYAN

I'm sure, yes.

Sally has watched some of this from the archway, joins them
super-friendly.

SALLY

Hi. Monica and Ryan?

MONICA

Sally?

SALLY

Yes. And you've met Joe.

RYAN

Yes.

SALLY

(a deep breath)
Well, so glad you decided to come.

MONICA

We could hardly say no.

SALLY

Oh?

Joe slips the coke into Monica's hand.

SALLY (CONT'D)

(takes the gift)

Thank you. This was so unnecessary. I hope you've noticed that Otis isn't barking as much. We keep him in at night.

RYAN

At 4:30 today he barked for a solid fifteen minutes. I have it on tape.

SALLY

You're keeping a record, are you?

RYAN

It's just very distracting when you're trying to work.

MONICA

Ryan.

RYAN

(to Joe)

I'm sure you understand.

SALLY

Well the neighborhood is full of dogs, and it's not always Otis.

RYAN

Well today it was Otis. And you should keep him away from our yard. Because Sheila will defend herself.

MONICA

Ryan!

SALLY

(cuts off response from Joe; to Ryan)

Are you working on a new book?

RYAN

(caught short; flattered)

Well, yes, actually.

MONICA

He always has two or three going...

SALLY

Really? Joe can't manage more than one at a time. With huge gaps in between.

NEW ANGLE

MAC and CLAIR FORSYTHE wave from the door. Clair's arms are full of presents. Mac carries three video cameras under his arm. He's got Otis by the collar.

MAC

You lose this?

JOE

(re: Otis)

Ah there's our snookums now.

RYAN

Yes, well, but I haven't won a Booker either. Or the Whitebread.

MAC

The gate was open.

SALLY

Well, not yet.

(she reacts to Mac)

The gate was open?

JOE

It's taken care of.

MONICA

I think Ryan needs a new publisher. I think he's outgrown him. They're just not doing their job.

A silence. Awkward smiles go all around.

SALLY

Hors d'oeuvres or something?

MONICA

Yes, great! It's a beautiful house.

SALLY

Thank you. I understand you're an interior decorator.

MONICA

Yes.

SALLY

I so wish I'd known.

MONICA

Well, whoever did this is amazing.

SALLY

I did it.

JOE

(comes on them with the
Forsythes in tow)

She rarely cops to it.

(kisses Sally's cheek)

Otis is home.

CLAIR

(re: the gifts)

Where can I put these?

Sally takes the gifts from her.

CLAIR (CONT'D)

What a fucking day! We only just got a
sitter. I don't know her from fucking
Adam. She could be a serial killer. I'm
going to have to call every ten minutes.
You have to let me give out the number.

SALLY

Of course.

MAC

She already has.

CLAIR

It's alright, isn't it?

SALLY

Of course it's alright.

MAC

Clair is a hovering mother.

CLAIR

I'm not.

SALLY

This is Monica and Ryan. Mac and Clair.

Clair takes a glass of champagne off the tray as they make their way down the hall.

CLAIR

(a wide professionally
ingratiating smile)
So nice...

MONICA

And for us... Truly.

CLAIR

Well...

MONICA

You will never know.

CLAIR

(pleased)
Oh.
(to Sally)
I have a four-thirty call. AM. So we
may have to leave early.

SALLY

Why didn't you bring him?

CLAIR

What?

SALLY

Why didn't you bring him?

CLAIR

(searches)
He's allergic.

SALLY

Oh.

CLAIR

To dander. Otis.

SALLY

Oh.

CLAIR

Didn't I say?

SALLY

Well, probably.

CLAIR

They can tell from the eyelashes, you know? He's got eyelashes yay long. They must be a foot long. The older you are when you have a baby, the more likely this stuff is to crop up.

SALLY

(muted)

Oh.

The Roses are happy to stand there on the fringe. Next to someone they've only seen on screen and magazine covers.

Clair's not in the least put off by them. She manages to smile at them inclusively from time to time.

CLAIR

So they tell me. Not soon enough, of course.

(kisses her cheek)

How are you, Sal? You look fantastic. It changes your life, you know. A baby. It puts everything in perspective, doesn't it. Doesn't it, Mac? You can't be the center of your own world, anymore.

MAC

(as grounded as Clair isn't)

It's an object lesson in grace.

(on seeing Cal Gold on the back porch)

Wow! Look who's here before me! My leading man is on time for once.

CAL

(at the piano)

Those who can't direct.

MAC

Fuck you.

EXT. POOL AREA

Mac and Cal sit on the porch sharing a joint. Cal is maybe the only living complete works of Shakespeare and pulls out his most arcane quotes on occasion.

CAL

Are those our dailies? You're totally outrageous. It's their anniversary. Is nothing sacred! Well...so...how am I?

MAC

(laughing)

Oh man, you are so fucking funny in the kitchen scene.

CAL

I liked the third take, the accidental disaster with the silverware.

MAC

Nothing you do is accidental...

MEDIUM FULL SHOT

The CAMERA spots GINA TAYLOR through moving bodies. Tall, beautiful, centered grace. She's got a Leica around her neck... drops her two large camera bags on the floor.

Several of the other guests greet her, Mac among them.

TIGHT CLOSE

Joe sweeps her up to his arms. It's an intimate, appreciative embrace. Theirs was a mid-30s relationship, certainly pre-Sally. Maybe his first important love.

GINA

(re: the cameras)

I'm the hired help.

JOE

(affectionate)

Fuck you.

GINA

I never put myself in harm's way.

JOE

Anymore.

GINA

No, not anymore. Happy anniversary, scout.

NEW ANGLE

Sophia bursts from the kitchen.

SOPHIA

Oh my God! America told me your neighbors are coming?

SALLY

And here they are!

SOPHIA

And she was saying how happy you were to finally have them over. Because you're both, so, what - introspective? And you should have done it ages ago. I'm Sophia Gold.

(rescuing Sally)

Come meet my husband, Cal.

MONICA

Cal Gold?

SOPHIA

The very one. And you are...

SALLY

Monica and Ryan.

RYAN

Rose.

SOPHIA

Sorry?

RYAN

Ryan Rose.

SOPHIA

Yes.

She shakes his hand. He's amazed at the solid grip.

SALLY

He's a novelist.

SOPHIA

Ah.

SALLY

Like Joe.

SOPHIA

Hmm.

(to Sally)

Where are my kids?

SALLY

In the guest room. I've laid out a paint table for them.

SOPHIA

I hope they're watercolors!

SALLY

Nevermind.

SOPHIA

(to Monica)

Would you like to meet my husband?

It's all Monica can do to keep from putting her hand to her chest.

MONICA

I'd be thrilled.

SOPHIA

Then he'll be thrilled.

She ushers them toward the living room.

JOE

(re: Sophia, appreciative)

She's such pure evil.

Sally approaches, gives Gina a warm kiss on the chest.

SALLY

Thanks for coming.

GINA

Happy anniversary. You're a good match, you two.

(to Joe)

Can you help me with this stuff?

JOE

(re: one of her bags)

That for us?

GINA

What a nose. You missed your calling.

JOE
Can I open it?

GINA
(defers)
Sally?

JOE
Please?

SALLY
He's impossible. Go on then.

Joe rips open the gift. It's a framed black and white of Joe, Sally and Otis lying on the couch. It's clear which photos in the house are Gina's. It's a breathtaking print, an amazing caught moment. All light and shadow. A touching study.

SALLY (CONT'D)
(respectful of the talent)
It's beautiful, thank you so much.

Joe, moved somehow, hugs Gina to him. Kisses her.

JOE
I love you, Gina Taylor.

Sally's uncomfortable, a little jealous... feels intrusive. Aware that Gina got there first. Knew him when. And always captures something naked and vulnerable in his face.

CUT TO:

INT. GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

In the center of the room a low table with paints and crayons and glue and baubles. Two child size chairs either side. Empty, the table hasn't been touched.

Evie stands against the far wall. She wears a helmet and is surrounded by toy suction arrows. The arrows make a perfect outline of her head and body. Jack stands three feet away, bow in hand -- the archer prepares his next shot.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Cal is at the piano, charming the neighbors. Judy chats with Mac. Jerry is on his cellphone, holding his Palm Pilot, his hand pressed against his ear to block out the chatter. Sally joins Cal on the piano stool. Sophia moves to Clair on the

couch, kisses her cheek.

SOPHIA

You look so well, Clair. A wraith.

CLAIR

(pleased)

You think so!? I've been working out a lot since the baby. And I've been working. And that takes it's toll, you know.

SOPHIA

I'm glad that's all over for me.

CLAIR

Don't you miss it?

SOPHIA

Never.

CLAIR

Really.

SOPHIA

Not for a second. Cal can have all that.

CLAIR

Really?

SOPHIA

So where is young Jonah?

CLAIR

With a sitter. We have a sensational sitter. Jonah's really comfortable with her. You know, a second mom sort of. Like part of the family. Amazing with kids.

She inadvertently touches the beeper on her belt, and it beeps. She jumps.

SOPHIA

What is that thing?

CLAIR

So this sitter can always reach me. I'm still not used to leaving him.

SOPHIA

You should have brought him.

CLAIR

(shrugs)

Dander. He's allergic. Otis.

SOPHIA

Oh. Do you have any pictures?

CLAIR

Pictures. They're always in my tote. I left my tote in the damn trailer. But! He's Mac all over again. Imagine Mac shrunk to two-and-a-half feet. The fact is they probably didn't even need me for this birth.

SOPHIA

Are you the funniest person I know, or what?

CLAIR

I can't think how you gave it all up, Soph.

Sophia sends her a soft, content smile. Otis comes over and nuzzles Clair's knee.

CLAIR (CONT'D)

(freeks)

Oh my God, the dog!

INT. KITCHEN/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Clair leads Sally towards the bedroom.

CLAIR

It sounds hysterical, but Otis just rubbed up against me and I'd kind of like to change into something of yours. You know it could be disaster. He's so allergic. It's terrifying.

SALLY

Borrow whatever you like.

CLAIR

I'll change back before we leave.

SALLY

(pointed)

Whatever you like. I'm afraid it'll all be too big for you.

(a moment)

Are you alright, Clair?

CLAIR

I'm fine. I'm fine. Well, I'm a little stressed. And I've been taking pills to get my weight down since the baby.

SALLY

I'd say it was down.

CLAIR

And the doctor said they might make me a little jumpy. I've got a ghastly headache, actually.

SALLY

You want a Tylenol, or something?

CLAIR

I'd love a Xanax.

(a moment)

Sally, please don't tell Sophia that I'm not breast feeding.

SALLY

Why would she care?

CLAIR

You know Sophia. She's so damned judgemental. And she's so damned... perfect. And so fucking... serene. Just fucking don't tell her. Because you know Mac thinks she's God. And I can feel him comparing.

SALLY

You need to knock off the pills, Clair.

CLAIR

Just don't fucking tell her.

SALLY

It's not going to come up.

INT. FOYER - LEVI PANES THROUGH THE GLASS DOOR - DAY

A Peter Sellers look-a-like holding a violin case.

JOE
(opens the door)
Panés! How are you?

PANES
Oh, you know, I am.

JOE
Has she called?

PANES
She'll never call again. She called last week to tell me she'll never call again. Where's Sally?

SALLY (O.S.)
Here I am. Panés, my love!

Sally starts down the hallway.

SALLY (CONT'D)
(for Panés; a long supportive hug; a kiss)
Good, you brought your violin. I want you to play.

PANES
It's a machine gun. I thought I'd kill myself.

SALLY
Are you lovesick?

PANES
Suicidal. It's much less codependent.

SALLY
Will champagne help?

PANES
Not enough.

Sally takes Panés into the living room where everyone chats, drinks, smokes. They all like each other out of habit, if nothing else. Ryan and Monica are on the fringe, stand at the edges of conversation. There's always someone at the piano, and they can all pretty much play.

SALLY
Panés is here!

PANES

(gives everyone a shy, pained
little wave)

Oh great.

Everyone stops, turns, toasts.

EVERYONE

Panes!

MONICA/RYAN

(a little late; into silence)

Panes.

Panes gives them another little wave. Doorbell rings.

TIGHT CLOSE - SKYE DAVIDSON

SKYE

Hi.

She's the young, beautiful actress who'll play the lead in
Joe's film.

JOE

(his face lights up)

Skye!

She's in jeans, but somehow looks dressed to the 9s.

SKYE

You're Joe, aren't you?

(nods knowingly)

I recognized you from the book jacket.

Joe grins from ear to ear. Uncharacteristically star struck
in front of this beauty.

JOE

How do you do, Skye?

SKYE

Oh, I love that.

(throws arms around him)

I'm just great. I'm so happy to be here.

And I apologize for invading you. And

I'm so happy you asked me to. I'm so

touched. I know how private you and

Sally are.

JOE

(uncomfortable)
Yeah, well, it's just us and a few hundred of our closest friends.

SKYE
(genuine)
When I read your work I felt that you knew me. Women must tell you that. And this one in particular speaks to me, do you know? I am Genna. How many women must tell you that. And the script is wonderful. Wonderful and lean and visual...

JOE
I'm so happy you like it. I'm so relieved you said yes, and I'm really, um, what, thrilled, yes actually, to finally meet you.

SKYE
You're going to be a remarkable director, a brilliant director.

There's a long moment.

JOE
(finally)
I think you're my first Goddess.

Sally and Panes have been watching from the living room.

PANES
She's even better looking in the flesh.

SALLY
Really? I need a drink. Come hide with me.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

America and Rosa are working at the counter, Panes and Sally come through.

SALLY
Oh, Jesus, Panes. I can't, I can't believe that bitch is in my house.

PANES
You don't know she's a bitch.

SALLY
She's all over him, are you blind?

PANES
It could be worse.

SALLY
How?

PANES
She could be playing the role in Joe's movie that should be yours.

SALLY
Fuck you, Panes.

PANES
You see, that's worse.

SALLY
I just wanted tonight to be with the people we love.

PANES
Like your business managers?

SALLY
They're not just our business managers, Panes.

PANES
Oh, okay, forgive me. Your neighbors are here, for fuck's sake.

SALLY
Exactly what I mean. It's all ruined.

PANES
It's not ruined, for fuck's sake. It's one of your parties.

SALLY
I don't want it to be just one of our parties.

PANES
"How are you really doing, Panes?"
"Lousy, thank you, I'm falling apart."

SALLY
Like the last time.

PANES

No. No, not like the last time. She was the rest of my life.

SALLY

Like the last time.

PANES

I wasn't finished.

SALLY

Okay.

PANES

"We can't stand seeing you like this, Panes. I hate you being alone. Why don't you stay with us for a while?"

"I'd love to, thanks."

SALLY

It's our anniversary, Panes.

PANES

I didn't hear me say tonight.

SALLY

We're just feeling our way back.

PANES

"Otherwise, we'd insist on your being here."

SALLY

You know it's true.

Skye bursts into the kitchen, Sally and Panes freeze.

SKYE

(stuck)

Oh my God, sorry. I'm interrupting.

SALLY

I'll be right out.

PANES

(over Sally)

Come on in.

SKYE

I'm in the same room with Sally Nash. Oh

my God. You're my icon. I've been watching your films since I was a little girl. Like, four years ago I followed you all around the Beverly Center - at least half a day, working up the courage to introduce myself.

Joe enters the kitchen, watches.

SALLY

I don't think I ever spent half a day in the Beverly Center.

SKYE

Whatever, do you remember? I've seen all your movies. When I was in rehab, the second time, they wouldn't even let us see your drug addict movie. They said you were too real. I worship you. And I couldn't be more flattered, because I know the part I'm playing in Joe's movie is based on you as a young woman.

Joe winces, uncomfortable, picks up the bottle of wine and leaves.

SKYE (CONT'D)

And I'm overwhelmed. And I want to do it justice. And I hope we can spend time together. And I'm gushing. It's my worst quality.

PANES

Not at all.

SKYE

Oh my god. I've been so rude. I'm Skye Davidson. Has anyone ever told you, you look like Peter Sellers?

PANES

No, never.

SALLY

(overlapping Panes)
Everyday.

PANES

I'm Levi Panes. Will you excuse us, Skye? It's time for Sally's meds.

Panes steers Sally out of the kitchen.

SALLY

It's nice to meet you... again.

They go. Skye is left in the kitchen alone.

SKYE

(to America)

Oh my God, she remembers me!

INT. FOYER - MEDIUM CLOSE

Sally and Panes start down the hall in search of privacy.

SALLY

(under her breath)

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

CLAIR

(on the way down; a dream in
white)

My God, your wardrobe is incredible. It
took me forever to decide. Oh, and I
found Dr. X, thank you. You saved my
life.

She moves past them.

SALLY

(a moment; sotto)

Shit!

PANES

(re: the dress)

I'd cut off her red wine if I were you.

SALLY

Shit. It's my Galiano.

PANES

What does that mean?

SALLY

About five thousand dollars. With my
discount.

The CAMERA follows them into the bedroom. They flop down
onto the bed and into FRAME.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

More guests have arrived. Sophia and her children play with Otis. America and Rosa pass round hot hors d'oeuvres.

Joe places Gina's photo on the mantelpiece.

GINA
(regards him)
Directing suits you.

JOE
I'm not so sure. Look again in three months.

GINA
It must be nice having so many strangers kiss your ass all of a sudden.

JOE
Ow! Gina, you obviously need to get fucked.

GINA
Just did. Jealous?

JOE
When does he graduate high school?

GINA
(laughing)
Oh, very jealous.

Joe laughs.

GINA (CONT'D)
I saw Lucy when I was in London, she seems okay. It's hard to tell with her.

JOE
Shit, I forgot to call her back. She's off on a trip somewhere. Oh God, my grandad's flat in London's been sold.

GINA
In Cheyene Walk? Lucy's going to have a meltdown. Oh, I'm so sorry.

JOE
I should have damn well bought it. Well, we can't afford it. The movie's going to eat up a year of my life and I'm getting

paid next to nothing. Do you know how much Skye Davidson's getting? Four million.

GINA
Yeah, but I hear she gives a mean blow job.

JOE
You really need to be fucked.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

SALLY
So how are you really doing, Panes?

PANES
Why don't you go fuck yourself?

SALLY
(laughs)
No. Really. For real. Really.

PANES
I'm worried about your Galiano.

SALLY
(slaps him)
You're a shit.

PANES
No, really, five thousand with your discount.

He rolls out from under her swat, she misses him.

PANES (CONT'D)
You hurt, you know. You're stronger than you think.

They lie prone across the bed, about a foot apart. Contemplating the floor.

PANES (CONT'D)
(finally)
How's the movie going? Your movie. You are making a movie, aren't you?

SALLY
Yes. Fine.

PANES
That's it? Yes. Fine?

SALLY
I don't want to talk about it.

PANES
Why not?

SALLY
I never like to talk about my work.

PANES
Alright. Well, that's something new.

SALLY
No. Not something new.

PANES
Well, something's wrong.

SALLY
Nothing's wrong. It's great, okay?
Having the time of my life. Mac's a
fantastic director. And what can anyone
say about Cal that hasn't been said. And
it's great working with friends, blah
blah blah.

PANES
(a moment; little smile)
Um. Happy for you.

SALLY
Thanks.

PANES
So tell me, how's it going?

SALLY
Oh you know. No doubts. No second
thoughts. Am I a monster?

PANES
You're my best friend.

SALLY
That's not an answer, is it?

PANES
Yes, you're a monster.

She takes his hand. Sounds of the party come from below.

SALLY

(a moment)

Thank you, Panes.

PANES

You don't need to thank me.

SALLY

(another moment)

We're going to have to go back out there.

PANES

I guess.

But neither of them moves.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SANFORD JEWISON is at the piano playing his own stuff, oblivious to the din. The CAMERA gets a glimpse of Ryan through the French doors at the pool, alone, a glass of Perrier in his hand.

MEDIUM CLOSE

Monica alone, uneasy, starts to pour herself a glass of champagne. Jeffrey gets to the bottle first.

JEFFREY

Let me.

(pours for her)

I'm Jeffrey.

MONICA

Monica.

JEFFREY

And you know our friends, how?

MONICA

We live next door.

JEFFREY

Oh. You're them.

MONICA

Excuse me?

JEFFREY

We've heard lots about you.

MONICA

(lost)

You have?

EXT. POOL - CONTINUOUS

Judy Adams lost herself a little, steps outside, sits alone...

JUDY

(smiles over at Ryan)

Hi.

RYAN

Hi. A little close in there.

JUDY

Yup.

INT. MUSIC LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

A small, narrow room. Not much more than an alcove. With space for a desk, stereo equipment, and shelves packed with CDs. The topmost shelf is a line of record albums.

Joe's picking through the CDs. Monica wanders in from the living room, toting a glass of champagne... watches him for a moment.

MONICA

Your Eames table is incredible. And the B&B. I just put that in a client's home, actually, but in red.

JOE

You're an interior decorator, right?

MONICA

(nods)

Sally did all this herself?

JOE

In fits and starts -- and then, later, of course, she had to accommodate me. So things shifted a little bit then, became more eclectic. And it keeps changing.

MONICA

(somehow at a loss)
Mmm. It says something about the two of you maybe.

JOE
Yeah, we're in a constant state of flux.
(re: champagne)
I see you've moved up from the soft stuff.

MONICA
Oh, yes. You know Ryan's been sober eight years. And it's difficult if I... you know. It's better if I don't.

JOE
Uh-huh.

MONICA
I'm a little nervous, so...

JOE
Oh.

MONICA
A little out of my element.

JOE
No you're not.

MONICA
Well, yes. Yes, in fact. A little on the outside, yes. And there's been all this friction.

JOE
Hm.

MONICA
I don't know why, but these misunderstandings have a way of escalating.

JOE
Very well put.

MONICA
I think a lot of this could have been avoided if Sally made more of an effort.

JOE

What?

MONICA

But you're very private people. You know, there's a kind of elitism...

JOE

(pissed)
Elitism?

MONICA

The wrong word, maybe. Delete that. And, you know, the dog barks incessantly.

JOE

And you know, he really does not.

MONICA

And Ryan works at home.

JOE

And your phone calls are nasty and abusive. And I've come this close to suing you for harassment. And you're only here because we're supposed to be sucking up to you.

Her eyes well with tears.

JOE (CONT'D)

Oh shit. I'm sorry.

MONICA

Well, that's what Ryan thought. I was more generous, actually.

JOE

Oh shit. I'm sorry. I'm a total fucking maniac. Delete all that, okay? I spoke for myself, this needn't rub off on my wife. Oh shit. I get pissy sometimes. Much worse than Otis. Otis doesn't bite. It's just, I really love my dog and he doesn't really bark a lot. We live in a canyon. We hear dogs barking at night, too. And it's not Otis.

Monica starts to laugh.

MONICA

Alright.

It appears she's consumed more than one glass of champagne.

JOE
Easy tiger.

MONICA
Alright. Please don't tell Ryan I'm drinking.

JOE
Scout's honor.

MONICA
(grins)
I'll be your best friend.

She feels they've bonded. She pulls a well-thumbed copy of Joe's novel from her purse.

MONICA (CONT'D)
Would you sign it for me.
(digs for a pen)
I'm sure this is inappropriate.

JOE
We're way past inappropriate.

Monica giggles, presses back the bubble rising in her chest and moving toward her throat. Manages not to burp.

MONICA
(as he signs it)
I'll treasure this.

He moves towards the doorway, Monica at his heels.

JOE
I need to leave you now.

MONICA
I will treasure this.

JOE
(shouting down the hall)
Sally!!!!

INT. DAILIES ROOM - LATER - DAY

Sally's team prepares clues for charades. Sally writes them

down, throws them in a bowler hat. Her teammates are Panes, Sophia, Mac, Ryan, Sanford and Jeffrey.

SALLY
Panee?

PANES
From Jewish Folk Poetry, a song cycle...

MAC
What?

SALLY
Trust him.

PANES
It's Shostakovich.

Ryan spots his book on the shelf and pulls it out, delighted.

SALLY
Sandy...

SANFORD
The Wind Up Bird Chronicle.

SALLY
(turns to him)
Ryan?

RYAN
(pleased)
I didn't know you had this.

SALLY
Oh. Well, yes. It's extraordinary. You think you could sign it for us?

RYAN
Absolutely. You always wonder where your books end up. Why don't we use it?

JUDY
Good idea.

RYAN
There's not a chance in hell anyone will get it...

MAC
Down by Law.

SOPHIA

Who's not going to get that in fifteen seconds.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joe's team works on it's clues. Teammates: Gina, Cal, Clair, Skye, Monica, Jerry and Mary-Lynn. Everyone is talking over each other and fighting for attention. There are a lot of strong personalities here.

JOE

Can we... one at a time? Hold it down, and one at a time. You're last, Cal.

CAL

Why last?

MONICA

The Katzenjammer Kids.

There's a hush.

MONICA (CONT'D)

You know. It's the Funnies. The Katzenjammer Kids. It's my mother's favorite charade's clue. No one ever gets it.

Pause.

JOE

Alright. Good. Fine, I vote for that.

He writes it down.

MONICA

With a "Z." K. A. T. Z.

GINA

When the Pawn Hits the Conflicts He Thinks Like a King What He Knows...

People hoot, throw their cocktail napkins.

GINA (CONT'D)

What?

SKYE

Utopia Parkway...

They all start talking on top of each other again.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The teams have come together.

JOE

Who's keeping time?

Mac raises his hand on Sally's side, Jerry on Joe's.

JOE (CONT'D)

Two minutes.

SALLY

(deferring first turn to Joe)

It's alright. Be our guests.

She offers the hat.

JOE

(offers the hat)

You darling.

Panes reaches into the hat.

PANES

(reads clue; to Joe)

What is it?

Joe whispers to him.

PANES (CONT'D)

What's a sign for that?

JOE

Come on, Panes...

JERRY

Go!

Panes mimes a belly laugh.

JEFFREY

What the hell is that?

SALLY

What is it Panes?

Panes sighs.

SOPHIA

Two words.

He belly laughs.

JUDY

Funny.

A finger to his nose - elongate the word.

SANFORD

Funnies?

Panes does an "ON THE NOSE." Gets on all fours. Licks his paws.

RYAN

The Katzenjammer Kids.

The team applauds delight. Panes preens. Joe's team looks over at Monica.

JERRY

(already pissed)

It's only just started. Great. The husband's on the other fucking team.

Jerry reaches into the hat. Looks at the clue.

MAC

Go.

JERRY

Hey! Would you?

MAC

It was fifteen seconds.

JERRY

I don't think so.

MAC

Are you always this much fun?

SALLY

(a grin)

Take your time, Jer.

JERRY

I'm ready.

He gives the clue "a song."

CAL
Song.

He gives "cycle."

GINA
Cycle.

CAL
Two words. Second word.

Jerry goes to work on "sounds like" for the word Jewish.
Strokes beard, thinks, tries "sounds like" again.

TEAM
Think. Pain.

CAL
(among others)
Ponder.

JERRY
Come on, folks.

CAL
First word.

Jerry does the sign for the "short word."

TEAM
To, the, but, or...

Jerry shakes his head. Goes to the third word.

TEAM (CONT'D)
Third word. One syllable.

Jerry pulls his ear, "sounds like". Slides his finger
through the O created by his thumb and forefinger.

TEAM (CONT'D)
Fuck...sounds like... Fork. Flock...

he does the finger sign again.

TEAM (CONT'D)
Fuck. Folk.

Jerry gives them "on the nose."

TEAM (CONT'D)
Second word.

MAC
Thirty seconds.

Jerry turns, gives them a dirty look.

JOE
Jer. Over here. Over here.

TEAM
Second word.

He strokes his beard again.

SKYE
(blurts out)
From Jewish Folk Poetry.

Jerry looks at her, amazed. She stands, throws hands up in triumph, does a little victory circle.

The CAMERA CUTS through the rest of the game, aggressive, competitive, verging on hostile. Sally is often aching from laughter, tears streaming down her face.

JERRY
Time. Hey! Time. Judy! Time you guys.
Hey!!

JUDY
(she's up; turns to him, zeig
heil's him)
Ya Vhol. What are you, a fucking Nazi?

JERRY
Well it's fucking time.

TIME CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT

JERRY (CONT'D)
(shouting guesses)
Walk. Cripple. Limp. Ankle. Second
syllable. Second syllable. Move on to
the fucking second syllable.

Gina giving clues starts to laugh.

JERRY (CONT'D)
(sings out)
The clock is ticking!

Gina loses it, cracks up.

MAC
Time.

TIME CUT TO:

Jeffrey's on his feet, giving the clue.

SALLY'S TEAM
(unison)
Quote. Play.

SOPHIA
Oh shit. It's one of Cal's. Obscure
Shakespeare, folks.

Cal gives her a little wave from the other side.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)
(calls over to him)
Maybe something original for a change.

Cal blows her a kiss.

SALLY'S TEAM
(in unison)
Ten...twenty...thirty...seven, eight.
Thirty-eighth word...thirty-seventh word.

Gina's been taking shots through the course of the game, and the FRAME will freeze black and white on one of another delicious moment. There's a spectacular shot of Sally, unaware, laughing, sad soft eyes on Joe.

MEDIUM CLOSE - AMERICA

She watches the game from the archway, waits for a break. Sky's up. Joe's team yells frantic guesses. Jerry's suicidal.

Sally's team watches, self-satisfied, throw barbed asides.

SALLY
(to Joe's look; innocence)

I didn't say a word.

MAC
Time!

JERRY
What was it? What the fuck was it?

SALLY
(small grin)
Ryan's novel.

JERRY
Ryan's novel?

JUDY
Ryan's novel, Jerry.

AMERICA
(sings out)
Dinner!

SALLY
Still champions.

JOE
Panes is not on your team anymore.

PANES
What did I do?

SALLY
Panes is not on my team anymore. I'll
have Panes if I like.

AMERICA
Dinner.

SALLY
Dinner.

JOE
It's an unfair advantage.

SALLY
You've got Cal. You've got Gina. You've
got Skye? We're the leftovers.

JOE
Okay, knock it off.

SALLY
Truce?

JOE
Truce.

SALLY
Dinner.
(on the move)
Don't be angry.

JOE
(pissed)
I'm not fucking angry, for God's sake.

EXT. POOL AREA - MAGIC HOUR

Evie and Jake run along the side of the house. Behind the glass walls the CAMERA catches adults moving through the living room and into the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM - MAGIC HOUR

Most everyone's moved through to the dining room. The table is filled with platters of beautifully prepared food. Candles, flowers.

ASTRID, newly arrived, carrying a miniature furball, of questionable breed, is first in line and halfway around the table. She feeds "Anouk" bits from the table enroute.

ASTRID
(barely looks up as Sally comes
into the room)
So who won?

SALLY
(raises her hand)
A triumph. When did you get here?

ASTRID
Ten, fifteen minutes ago.

SALLY
Why didn't you come in?

ASTRID
I hate the sight of blood. You guys
don't take prisoners.

SKYE

(charmed by the bundle in
Astrid's arm)
Oh how sweet.

The furball bares teeth and growls.

ASTRID
She's insanely jealous.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MEDIUM CLOSE ASTRID - NIGHT

She slips another morsel into Anouk's mouth, murmurs baby talk, allows the dog to take a bit of chicken from between her teeth.

CLAIR
That's revolting, Astrid.

People sit in small groups, eating dinner, catching up. Latecomers, bunch around Joe. Sam Feckman, an actor also in Mac's film, holds forth.

Panes finds room next to Skye.

PANES
Is there space here?

SKYE
Yes.

PANES
Do you need anything else?

SKYE
No, no thanks.

He sits on the floor along side her. They eat in silence for a moment.

PANES
(finally)
I was impressed.

SKYE
Oh?

PANES
The charades.

SKYE
Thank you.

PANES

That was my clue.

SKYE

Oh?

PANES

The Shostakovich.

SKYE

Really??

PANES

(does Seller's Indian)

Oh yes, indeed. That was my clue, you see.

Skye giggles appreciative response.

PANES (CONT'D)

(still Indian)

So you are well acquainted with this Shostackovich, as am I.

Other arrivals pick their way through bodies and plates. Walk over to Sally and kiss her cheek. Joe and Gina and Jeffrey sit off to the side.

JOE

I hate the idea of some one else living in it.

Joe pulls Sally to him and wraps his arms around her.

JOE (CONT'D)

Sally's never even seen it. I thought we'd raise our kids there.

Sally held in Joe's arms, smiles. The cat who ate the canary.

JOE (CONT'D)

Have I ever told you how Lucy and I nearly squashed each other getting into the dumb waiter.

GINA/JEFFREY/SALLY

Yes./Often./I stopped counting.

JOE

The dumb waiter was our...

GINA
Escape hatch.

JOE
(eyes her)
Escape hatch. And Dad was having a go
about the garden. Something was
misplanted...

SALLY
Not properly watered.

JOE
Whatever!
(to Gina)
You know how he gets. Well, he went
absolutely bonkers. Lucy and I were
frantically trying to scramble into the
dumb waiter and I didn't fit any more.
It was almost fatal. And that, my dear
friends, is the day...

SALLY/JEFFREY
I realized I had become a man. Ta da!

GINA
You're not a man, Joe. You're a boy.

JOE
(childishly)
So?

GINA
(laughs)
I love you, Joe Therrian.

SALLY
(at a loss, small)
Me too.

Sophia watches from across the living room.

NEW ANGLE

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Astrid squeezes in next to Sally, on her second portion of
everything. She allows Anouk to nibble from her plate.

ASTRID

You're not upset that I brought the dog?

SALLY

Would it make a difference?

ASTRID

Anouk isn't like a dog, really. More like a small person. So is there anyone here for me? No one looks new.

(fixes on Ryan)

Who's that?

SALLY

You don't want that. It's married and it's the neighbor.

ASTRID

Oh I think he's cute. How's the marriage part working out?

SALLY

You're fucking desperate.

ASTRID

Like you didn't know.

(re: Skye)

Who invited the bimbo?

SALLY

One guess.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The CAMERA stays close on the cake as America wheels the cart into the living room. The top of it sports Sally and Joe's faces on either side of Otis, a detailed edible photograph. There are three sixes across the top.

There's a freed up pathway. Cal taps the side of his champagne glass with a fork.

SOPHIA

(re: the cake as it comes in)

Part of our gift. Honey!!

CAL

(clinks his glass)

Here, here.

Clair picks up discarded dinner plates. Otis takes care of

those behind couches, under tables.

The gifts are stacked high, near the fireplace. Sally is on the floor, nestled between Joe's knees, leaning back against him. His arms are wrapped around her, face pressed against hers.

There's a SERIES OF CUTS through speeches, gifts, entertainment. Sophia and Cal do a well rehearsed, very funny, impromptu something with their kids.

Panes and Mac do an interpretive dance symbolizing the marriage.

Cal and Sophia carry sleeping children down the hall.

There are speeches about Sally and Joe, outrageously dirty, funny, sometimes touching - that cover their recent separation, the custody of Otis, their trying to have a baby...

Panes plays a piece on the violin. Someone else sings. And finally...

MEDIUM CLOSE - SKYE

She looks out at the guests...

NEW ANGLE

They look back at her.

SKYE

I wasn't prepared to say anything. I'm honored to be a part of tonight. To be in the same room, with my favorite living actress...

The CAMERA barely catches the grimace on Mac's face; Clair elbows him.

SAM

(sings out)
Still living.

SKYE

And my favorite novelist. And all their amazing --

SAM

(sings out)

And talented.

SKYE
Friends. And talented friends. This room is so filled with love..

ASTRID
(sings out)
And the winner is...

PANES
Let the woman speak.

SKYE
And I brought a gift of love. A gift that is love.

She pulls an envelope from behind her back, which she's decorated in flower-child fashion; it harkens back to the sixties, puts it into Sally's hand, kisses her cheek.

SKYE (CONT'D)
(tears up)
Happy anniversary. Thank you for making me a part of it.

SALLY
(pours the pills into her hand)
What are they?

JOE
(pleased, surprised)
Dolphins. Great.

SALLY
It's ecstasy, Sal.

SKYE
I think there are sixteen there.

JOE
(kisses Skye)
This is an amazing present. What a sweetheart you are.

Skye's pleased she's made him happy.

SALLY
(regards Joe; to Skye)
What a sweetheart you are.

A pall descends on the party. There's a FULL SHOT of the group. Nobody quite knows what to do. There's torn wrapping paper all over the room.

ASTRID

(Anouk still in her lap)

It's late.

(kisses Anouk)

You sleepy baby?

There are awkward excuses. Some of the guests leave.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The core group remains.

JOE

I think we should all take it tonight.
Everyone's staying, stays. No driving.
That's the rule. I love you Sally-Mae.
You're going to have a fabulous time.

SALLY

I'm worried about my spine. I'm very
worried about my brain and my spine.

SOPHIA

(laughs)

Oh honey, you're gonna love it.

JOE

(to her Look)

Sophia's going to do it, Panes is going
to do it, trust me.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Cal carries the envelope into the room.

CAL

(on seeing America, bursts
into)

America, America God shed his light on
me.

He dances her around the kitchen, he picks up the sterling
dish, arranges the pills, carries them back to the living
room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ecstasy is passed from guest to guest. Ryan expects Monica to abstain.

MONICA

(his glare; simply)

I want to try it, Ryan.

EXT. POOL - LATER

The drug has begun to take effect. The party is now in full swing. Music is playing, and Sophia and Clair are dancing.

People are swimming, some naked, some in swimsuits. Judy floats around the pool on an inflatable dog.

Sally and Skye cuddle together on one of the benches round the pool, chatting; a friendly, feely touchy conversation. Joe passes around bottles of water and chewing gum to everyone, emceeing the event.

Everyone is relaxed and open, except Ryan, who sits beside Monica at the edge of the garden, separated from the others.

MONICA

I love it here. Don't you love it here, Ryan? I love it here. And I love tonight. And I love these people. And this feels utterly fantastic, Ryan.

(touches her own cheek, ever so lightly; shivers against the sensation)

Utterly fantastic.

RYAN

You know what Sally Therrian was saying about your spine and your brain? She didn't pull that out of thin air. It causes brain damage. You'd better drink a lot of water.

MONICA

Do you want to go home, Ryan?

RYAN

Yes.

MONICA

I think you should then. You should look in on Sheila.

RYAN

I'm not going to leave you alone.

MONICA

They're really nice people, Ryan.
They're like us...

RYAN

They're nothing like us.

MONICA

I think you need to speak for yourself,
Ryan. But I think you're really nice
people...

She puts arms around him, kisses his cheek. He stiffens.

RYAN

Are you making an ass of yourself?

MONICA

There's only you, Ryan. You know what,
Ryan? You're beautiful. I love you so
much... You need...

RYAN

I don't need a drug.

MONICA

You need a good review and you'll be
fine. The whole color of the world will
change, mark my words.

She gets up.

RYAN

Ready to go?

MONICA

I'm going to go get my swimsuit. I do
know, Ryan, this is non addictive so you
mustn't worry.

(turns back)

Ryan, you're a great man.

The CAMERA follows Monica along the side of the pool. She
passes Sophia and a very exuberant Clair.

The CAMERA stays at the pool. Clair tears off Sally's
Galiano, flings it to the ground and dives topless into the
pool.

CLAIR
This water is great!

JERRY
(swimming past her)
Wanna dive for a baton?

MEDIUM CLOSE UP - JUDY

She stands at the side of the pool.

JUDY
Okay, I'm about to throw five colored batons in the water. Then I'm going to count to three, and then you may start diving. I'm playing too. The red one is ten extra points. Ready?
(she throws batons in)
One, two, three, go!!

There is a melee of diving and screaming.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD LANDING

It's at the end of a bridge, overlooking the pool. Voices drift up from below. Mac and Joe walk in circles pacing around one another.

MAC
You got your DP?

JOE
What? Oh yeah, the camera man? They gave me a list.

MAC
And you got Skye Davidson. Pretty big leagues for a first timer. Do you even like movies?

JOE
Not particularly. Weird, isn't it? God I'm rally up. Do you feel anything yet, Mac?

MAC
Kind of. Hey, look - John Seale, Oliver Stapelton, Darius Khonji - they're friends. And great DP's I could give

them a call for you.

JOE

Thanks, Mac.

(regards him)

And thanks for being so supportive about all this.

(throws arm around him, hugs him close)

I really love you, you know.

MAC

Hey, I'm happy for you, buddy. Anything I can do.

JOE

(lets go of Mac)

God, I really need to jump about a bit.

(begins jumping)

How's your film going?

CAL

It's going. It's going.

JOE

And how's the diva doing?

MAC

Well, you know...good days, bad days.

JOE

I meant Sally.

MAC

I meant Sally.

JOE

(stops jumping, studies him)

Oh. You're serious.

MAC

(throws and arm around him)

No. No.

(a beat)

Let me tell you something. Directing's the best preparation possible for fatherhood. The sleep depravation alone.

JOE

Oh don't. Everyone says that.

INT. MUSIC LIBRARY

Sally's taken Gina's photograph of them from the mantelpiece in the living room, and looks for a spot for it on the CD shelves. Sophia is studying the CDs very intently. They are both bopping to the music.

SALLY

(re: the photograph)
Isn't this a fabulous picture?

SOPHIA

Yes.

SALLY

She's such a great photographer.

SOPHIA

Hm.

SALLY

So where should I put it?

SOPHIA

I thought it was okay where it was.

SALLY

It's much more personal in here.

SOPHIA

A notch above the storage room.

SALLY

We're always in here.
(regards the photo)
She really gets him, doesn't she?

SOPHIA

The both of you.

SALLY

But she really gets to the heart of Joe,
doesn't she? She's a genius.

SOPHIA

So how much do you hate her?

SALLY

Big time.

They both laugh, then...

SOPHIA

Well, I don't trust her. I never have.

SALLY

She took our wedding photos, for chrissakes. You don't trust anyone.

SOPHIA

(a moment simply)

I trust you.

SALLY

Oh Soph...

SOPHIA

You'll hate it in London. It's wet and miserable. A medical hellhole Sally. It's socialized. Beds in the corridors. Terrible plumbing.

SALLY

And the food sucks, I know.

SOPHIA

You are not having your baby in London. You're going to have your baby at Cedars in Beverly Hills, America, delivered by Dr. Milton Cohen. Period. And you're getting that epidural right away, don't let anyone talk you into any of that Lamase bullshit. There's no excuse for pain like that.

SALLY

Sophia! I'm not even pregnant!

SOPHIA

Well good. Thank God.

SALLY

Let's go in the kitchen and spy on everyone.

SOPHIA

Oh honey, let's.

They've started to walk through the house.

SALLY

(stops short; turns to her)

What do you mean, thank God?

SOPHIA

Well, are you sure about this baby thing? It's not the ticking clock shit, is it?

SALLY

No, no, not at all... I mean I've still got plenty of time. Don't I? I mean I still have a good six years, whatever. We could have three kids yet, if we wanted. And I know I've always said I never wanted kids, and I didn't... but this year, I really, truly, feel ready...

SOPHIA

Honey, I'm not worried about you. You are going to be a fantastic mom. Not an issue. I pressed you, remember? Joe, on the other hand, is a different story.

SALLY

(laughs)

Oh Soph, Joe loves kids. Joe wants kids. Joe thinks he needs kids.

SOPHIA

He wants playmates. Oh he's a sweetheart, Sal, you know I love him. But he's not going to be a good father. He's just not parenting material.

SALLY

Hey, let's sit down. I bet the rug feels really nice against your skin.

Sally drops out of frame.

SOPHIA

Don't try and change the subject.

(sitting, joining Sally)

Oh God, it feels great! He's just a little narcissistic, irresponsible and unreliable.

SALLY

And Cal's this massive adult?

SOPHIA

Cal knows who he is. Did you notice how happy Joe was when the drugs came out

tonight?

SALLY

You weren't exactly horrified.

SOPHIA

(laughing)

I don't have a drug problem.

SALLY

Neither does Joe.

SOPHIA

His sister does. Big time. And the New York Times says addiction is genetic -- I'll e-mail you the article.

Sally stares at her friend suddenly mute, eyes wide.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

You don't have kids to keep a marriage together, Sally. It's only five months since Joe came back.

SALLY

(getting up)

We're fine. We're great. We're having a baby and we're moving to London.

SOPHIA

(following her)

Well, you weren't fine last summer when you went Sylvia Plath on me in Connecticut.

SALLY

Not nice. Not kind.

SOPHIA

Ha! Not half so not kind as your husband was in his portrayal of you in his novel.

SALLY

Why are you doing this?

SOPHIA

His image of you is a possessive, fragile neurotic.

SALLY

(tearing up)

But I am a possessive, fragile neurotic.

SOPHIA

(also tearing up)

No you are not. You're Sally Nash.
Listen to me, you're Sally Nash. You're
my best friend and I love you more than
anyone, and you're not going to move to
London to have the offspring of a
sexually ambivalent man-child. "Oh now
I'm a novelist, oh now I'm a director..."
English prick bastard Joe Therrian who's
probably going to leave you for Skye
Davidson anyway.

They hug a bit weepy.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

He's always one step removed, always
looking over his shoulder always looking
for something else, something more
intoxicating, and I don't mean drugs. I
love him, Sal, but he's a child. He's
not ready.

(a choked sob, tears well and
fall)

Oh God, you're so lucky you don't have
kids. You can't stick your head in the
oven. You can't take a handful of
Percoden if you want to, or slit your
wrists. You can't do yourself in. Kids
rob you of that option. Trust me.

(a beat)

Oh my God, this ecstasy must be really
good.

EXT. POOL SIDE - CONTINUOUS

Joe and Cal sit by the edge of the pool watching Skye dance
by herself at the far end. Joe has his hand on Cal's chest.
Cal is stroking Joe's hair.

JOE

Isn't Skye amazing?

CAL

She's got great tits.

JOE

She's a constant surprise.

CAL
And you've only just met.

JOE
Yeah, I know... But she's only twenty seven and...
(taps his head)
The wisdom. She's an old soul. She knew that Shostakovich thing. Did you notice?

CAL
Absolutely. And she's got great tits.

JOE
Yeah, God she really does have great tits, great tits. I can't wait to work with her.

CAL
The camera loves her. A great actress.

JOE
With great tits. I'm going to ask her if I can touch them.

He gets up to go towards Skye, is stopped by...

EXT. MEDIUM SHOT - CLAIR

Clair is climbing up the pool steps.

CLAIR
Has anyone seen Mac?

JOE
(pointing further up the property)
I saw him wandering over there, I think.
How're you feeling, Clair?

CLAIR
I'm so good.

She kisses Joe and Cal, and goes off to find her husband.

CAL
Poor Mac. It's been a bit of a struggle.
I'm sure Sally's told you.

JOE
No, what?

CAL
The movie.

JOE
Oh, she's really enjoying it. I think.
Is Mac okay?

CAL
I don't know what's going on. I don't
care to guess. Mac's really unhappy.
She isn't there, that's all. She's no
idea what she's playing, not a clue.

JOE
Who, Sally?

CAL
And, you know it isn't rocket science,
this script. She can barely get the
lines out. There was a scene last week -
she sobbed, through every take. I know
crying's easy for her but it's a fucking
comedy, Joe. Something's gone. You
know, that thing that was Sally - that
always surprised you. It's gone. I
think she's scared. And that's death.

JOE
I still think she sails above the rest.
I mean not like her early films. But
those were all such great directors.

CAL
Mac's a pretty great director, Joe. He's
a woman's director. And nothing's
happening. Course he won't fire her,
because of the friendship... But it was
discussed. He had to battle his studio
to get her in the first place.

JOE
What?

CAL
Hey, listen, I love her. She's Sophia's
best friend.
(to Joe's stare)
I never said any of this, alright. I'll
deny it on the stand...
(into the silence)

You guys are gonna have kids. That is so great. Maybe that's what this is all about. Maybe she doesn't want to do this anymore. You know adults don't do this for a living. You guys are gonna have your kids, you'll be directing -- one asshole in the family is enough. Sophia knew that intuitively. Look at Clair. Clair's a mess.

(throws an arm around him)
Make sure she gets the epidural. Forget that natural childbirth shit. Everything's going to be what it's supposed to be. "Life is but a walking shadow. A poor player who struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more..." And speaking of me, the role of Leo in your film?

JOE
(stares at him)
Leo?

CAL
Any thoughts on casting yet?

JOE
(regards him)
Leo? It was out to Jude Law. Jude passed.

CAL
Well, I can't make any promises, and of course I haven't read the script but I loved the novel...when are you shooting?

JOE
October-ish.

CAL
I have a small window of time.

JOE
Leo. Leo's twenty-eight, Cal.

CAL
Scratch the two, write in a four.

JOE
Scratch the two, write in a four.

CAL

You've got a lot of fucking gall. Thirty nine.

JOE

Five years ago, I was at the party, remember?

Joe looks up and sees Sally standing in the sun room. He blows her a kiss. She kisses her finger tips and puts her hand flat against the window pane.

INT. BEDROOM CLOSET - TIGHT CLOSE - SALLY

She's in her wardrobe pacing back and forth a bit frantic. Trying on clothing, tossing garments to the ground. The floor is a heap of discarded ideas. She pulls on jeans and a t-shirt. Very similar to what Skye is wearing. She sits a moment on the floor. The sounds of the party below are muted.

SALLY (O.S.)

Oh Warren, that was awful, I can't sing.

The CAMERA stays with Sally as she gets to her feet, walks along the corridor, toward the sound of her voice.

INT. DAILIES ROOM - NIGHT

Mac is on the edge of the couch, elbows on knees, staring at the television screen - watching his dailies. At some point he drops his head. Stops watching...

INT. MOVIE SET

CAL'S VOICE FROM THE T.V. (O.S.)

You sing like a bird.

SALLY'S VOICE FROM THE T.V. (O.S.)

A bird with dropsy. A caged bird. That hasn't long to live.

CAL'S VOICE FROM THE T.V. (O.S.)

You seem so alive up there.

Sally stands at the open door. Stunned. Watches Mac watch her. Watches herself, with a professional, acute eye. More critical than Mac's could ever be.

SALLY (ON TV)

I was faking it. I've been feeling caged

for sometime. Funny, huh?

MAC

(moans)

No, it's not... Fuck fuck fuck fuck.

INT. CORRIDOR - CLOSE SHOT - SALLY

She backs up into the corridor mortified. Leans against the wall.

CAL'S VOICE FROM THE T.V. (O.S.)

It's preposterous. You're free to do whatever you like.

SALLY'S VOICE FROM THE T.V.

Yes, well, we'll see won't we?

MAC (O.S.)

Jesus Christ.

SALLY

(a deep breath)

Well...wow...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Clair's started down the hallway, reaches the landing. Sally rushes into the guest bedroom to avoid her. Clair, just missing Sally, wanders into the dailies room.

INT. DAILIES ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLAIR

Mac? Oh there you are. What are you doing, honey? No more work. Don't you feel breezy.

MAC

I'm in mourning.

CLAIR

You can cut around it, whatever it is. You always do.

MAC

Not this time.

CLAIR

It's always not this time. If you can do it around me, you can do it around

anyone.

She walks in front of the television set, blocks it with her body, switches it off.

MAC

(an observation)

You don't have any clothes on.

CLAIR

How nice for everybody. Come swimming.
The water's glorious.

(re: the film)

You'll fix it. You'll come up with one
of your brilliant ideas.

MAC

Or I won't. I can't help her. I'm out
of my depth.

CLAIR

Things always look much worse in the
morning.

MAC

I don't know how to make her funny.

CLAIR

You're coming swimming in the pool, and
in a few minutes you won't even remember
what it's about. You won't care who's in
your damn movie.

MAC

(really stoned)

What what's about?

CLAIR

I...wait, what are you talking about?

INT. GUEST ROOM

MEDIUM CLOSE

Jack and Evie are asleep across the bed.

NEW ANGLE

Sally sits at the edge of the bed, regards the sleeping
children. Reaches over and smoothens the tangled, tousled
hair. Studies their faces.

EXT. POOLSIDE - JOE'S POV

Monica sits on the steps of the pool. She looks frightened, uncomfortable.

JOE
Are you okay?

MONICA
I don't think so. I feel. I feel a bit funny.

JOE
Let's go for a walk.

He puts his arm around her and leads her away from the pool.

EXT. BACKYARD LANDING - NIGHT

MONICA
I've never done this before.

JOE
Oh? It's easy. You just put one foot in front of the other... That's a good girl.

MONICA
I'm a little in the puke zone.

JOE
(giving her some water)
Here, drink this. Drink lots of water.
(puts the bottle in her hand)
Hold on to this. Take deep breaths.
Nice and slow.
(sits her down; produces a lollipop)
Would you like a lolly?

MONICA
What am I, five?

JOE
You're never too old for a lolly. I'm having one.

MONICA
(a grin)
Okay.

He pulls out another one.

JOE
Lemon or raspberry?

MONICA
Lemon.

JOE
Lemon it is.

The two suck on their lollipops for a moment.

MONICA
(finally)
Ryan's really angry with me.

JOE
I think he's really angry with me too.

MONICA
(laughs)
It's really not the same thing.
(a moment)
He was really nicer when he drank.

JOE
I'm sorry.

MONICA
Eight years, though. That's quite an accomplishment.

JOE
That's a lot of those.

MONICA
Medallions.

JOE
A lot of cakes.

MONICA
Yes.

JOE
And he doesn't smoke?

MONICA
He has to find non-smoker's meetings that used to be almost impossible, you know?

It's gotten much better.

JOE
How long have you been married?

MONICA
Nine...nine, yes? Nine years, just about.

JOE
You must have been a baby.

MONICA
Oh yes. Nineteen...just.
(a moment)
I'm cold.

JOE
Come here.

Joe holds Monica.

MONICA
(a moment)
That's very nice.

JOE
I like you.

MONICA
I'm so glad. You know, I recognize that passage in your book. The bit about us running into each other in the movie theatre.

JOE
Sorry?

MONICA
I know you changed it to a bookstore. And the color of my hair. But the moment was exactly the same. The same, you know, dynamic. And almost verbatim, wasn't it?

JOE
(humors her)
Yeah, it was. For a writer nothing's sacred.
(thinks a moment)
No, nothing at all.

MONICA

I think it's great that I made an impression at all, you know.

Joe regards the open trusting face, is touched by it. Leans in, kisses her lips very lightly... and again. Her arms can't make up her mind, whether to come up around him or not. Finally do.

SALLY (O.S.)

Otis!! Otis, come! Oh fuck!

She appears beside them.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Someone left the goddamn gate open. Otis got out. Skye and I, well the... I came out of the house and the fucking gate was wide open.

JOE

Oh for fuck's sake. Nobody uses that gate.

MONICA

(horrified)

I'm sorry.

SALLY

(raging)

There's a goddamn sign on the gate.

MONICA

I'm so sorry.

SALLY

You fucking cow, can't you read?!

MONICA

(at a loss)

I...

SALLY

How long ago was it?

JOE

Stop being such a bitch, Sal.

MONICA

I'm so sorry.

JOE

It was a mistake. This isn't a plot to do in Otis.

SALLY

Don't be so sure.

JOE

Listen to yourself...

(to Monica)

Don't worry, it's alright. We'll find him.

(to Sally)

What's wrong with you?

SALLY

(re: Monica)

She left the fucking gate open.

JOE

Well he can't have gone far.

SALLY

Can't have gone far? He's like a greyhound. He could be miles away.

JOE

He'll find his way back.

SALLY

There are fucking coyotes out there.

JOE

(calming)

Sally, calm down. We're not going to find him any quicker by you being hysterical.

Monica retreats, backs off a step or two.

SALLY

Fuck you.

JOE

Or shitty!! Otis!!

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

America and Rosa are cleaning up. Ryan hangs around chatting.

RYAN

How long have you worked for the Therrians?

AMERICA

(shrugs, polite but annoyed)
A long time.

RYAN

So you were here when they were doing the work on the boundary fence?

AMERICA

Oh yes.

RYAN

Did you know the contractor?

AMERICA

Very well.

RYAN

Was it a contractor?

AMERICA

It's the way they do things.

RYAN

To code?

Her back is to him. She exchanges a glance with Rosa, and the Spanish equivalent of "who is this wanker?"

RYAN (CONT'D)

Did you see permits? Did he have a license?

AMERICA

You should talk to Mr. Joe.

Monica bursts into the room.

MONICA

Ryan, you've got to come! You've got to help me find the dog! I let their dog out. We need to find the dog.

RYAN

You're not serious.

MONICA

I left the gate open and Otis got out!
He could get hit by a car!

RYAN

God willing.

MONICA

We have to find the dog, Ryan.

RYAN

Why?

MONICA

(regards him)

Because we're nice people, and because
what goes around comes around.

(desperate)

Because, God help you if something
happens to that dog?

RYAN

Excuse me?

MONICA

All the ugly phone calls? We're not the
only people with a tape recorder, Ryan.

(a beat)

They've gone to the canyon, we should go
towards the PCH.

EXT. CANYON - MOMENTS LATER

Panes and Skye search the canyon for Otis. They both carry
lanterns.

PANES

Otis!! Shostakovich identified with the
Jew. He felt persecuted, hunted, crushed
under the thumb of Stalinist imperialism.

SKYE

Not to mention Andrew Zhdanov... Otis,
come!!

PANES

Andre Zhdanov? How the hell do you know
about Andre Zhdanov?

SKYE

Who doesn't know about the infamous composer's conference of 1948 where Zhdanov persecuted the leaders of Soviet Music - Shostakovich, Prokofieve, and Myaskovsky.

PANES

I'll tell you who doesn't know, cute girls don't know.

SKYE

Do Peter Sellers again.

PANES

(a la Sellers)

Otis you crazy dog! Otis are you in this God forsaken Canyon? My people are very hungry.

SKYE

I just did a movie about Bob Yar, I played Gittle, the Jewish milkmaid who gets shot in the head, and they used Shostakovich's 13th Symphony.

PANES

Set to the poem of Yetveshenko!

SKYE

Exactly! So I dug it, and I did a lot of research.

PANES

Do you really, you really, like Shostakovich?

SKYE

Yeah.

PANES

Would you, like, marry him?

SKYE

If he were still alive, maybe.

PANES

How about someone who really really liked Shostakovich?

SKYE

(smiling)
Are you asking me to marry you?

PANES
No, I'm just testing to see how deeply
perverted and impulsive you are.

SKYE
(laughing)
Very.

PANES
Oh good, I'm worse... Are you really
twenty-two?

SKYE
Who told you that? No. I'm twenty...
(lops off two years)
Five.

EXT. CANYON - CONTINUOUS

Sally and Joe have lanterns. Panes and Skye are up ahead.
We hear them calling for Otis.

SALLY
Otis!!!!

JOE
(on her heels)
Otis!!!!

SALLY
Otis, good boy, come here. Oh my god, oh
my god, oh my god.

JOE
This is a nightmare. We should have kept
him upstairs.

SALLY
It was done. When Sophia put the kids to
bed, America brought Otis in the room and
closed the door. It was done.

JOE
Well someone clearly let him out before
Monica opened the gate.

SALLY
Oh fuck you, and fuck Monica while you're

at it. But I guess that's what I interrupted.

JOE

Jesus, Sally. You are a medical miracle. The only person who's ever taken ecstasy and become angrier.

SALLY

Yeah, let's talk about that. You seem to be rather an expert. I don't remember in the last five months of counselling you ever mentioning ecstasy or going to rave parties.

JOE

Rave parties?! That's so typical - you would think it was called rage. Perfect!

SALLY

What else don't I know about, Joe? Let's get really clear here.

JOE

Sally, so I took a few pills. I went out dancing. I tried to forget how upset I was about splitting up with you. I haven't lied to you. I told you about the people I've slept with. I just didn't mention the few occasions I took drugs because you're so fucking judgmental I knew I'd never hear the end of it, and you have so little faith and so little trust in me. Sally, we're back, I love you. Trust that. Please let's not do this.

SALLY

Otis! Come! Good boy! Come!

JOE

Otis!

SALLY

I'm not sure we understand that word in the same way.

JOE

Love?

SALLY

You walked out on a five year marriage.

JOE

That hasn't the first fucking thing to do with love. It's whether we can live together... like this! All the time.

SALLY

It's not like this all the time.

JOE

DO I want anyone else? No. Do I want to be with you for the rest of my natural life? I'm trying.

SALLY

And how hard it hit?

JOE

Just stop right there, Sally. We've been through this.

SALLY

You've been through it. That's how you love people. When it's easy for you, when it's convenient for you.

JOE

Sally, first of all, you're talking bullshit. And second...

SALLY

You want to talk about bullshit? Lucy called you three times this week. She's a fucking mess, Joe. Your sister is a fucking mess. She needs you. I talk to her more than you do.

JOE

That is not true.

SALLY

It is true. You know how you love, Joe? You dedicate a book to someone.

JOE

Every novel I've had published in every language I've dedicated to Lucy.

SALLY

Right. And when was the last time you

spoke to her?

Joe is silent.

SALLY (CONT'D)

And how fucking dare you cast Skye Davidson in that part? Have you any idea how humiliating that is for me? I'm an actress! It's about our marriage for fuck's sake. Everybody knows that...

JOE

It's a novel.

SALLY

About me!

JOE

Who the fuck do you think you are? The part of Genna is not just about you. It's about every woman I've ever loved in my entire life. Including my mother. The character is also clearly in her early twenties, Sally.

SALLY

What are you saying?

JOE

Hello? Last birthday was?

SALLY

I don't look my age, Joe.

JOE

Sally, I have never considered you for this part because you are too old to play it. And you are out of touch with reality if you think differently.

SALLY

It's a shit novel anyway.

JOE

Well there you go. I let you off the hook. You're one goddamn lucky actress.

SALLY

Not really. I mean your books have always been pop, but this is the shallowest of the bunch. That's what all

our friends think, anyway.

JOE

Okay. If we could've, by some miracle, stripped ten years off your face, still couldn't have got the thing made. Because I don't mean anything as a director, and your name doesn't mean fuck all anymore. And the people that can hire you are afraid to, because they think you're phoning it in. That you don't have... Oh Christ, Sally.

SALLY

Who? Who? Who thinks that?

JOE

Your director and your co-star of your current movie. Don't dish if you can't take it, Sally.

SALLY

Mac? Mac says it? Cal?

Joe doesn't respond.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Cal, too?

JOE

Sally, for Christ's sake.

SALLY

Anyone else?

JOE

This is insanity.
(moves toward her)
Sally...

SALLY

Don't.

JOE

Don't push me away.

SALLY

I had an abortion two weeks ago.

JOE

Don't do this.

SALLY

I found out I was pregnant and it scared the shit out of me.

JOE

(threatens)

Don't do this!

SALLY

I told you when we met I never wanted children. I don't want kids in my life. We talked about it. You weren't listening.

JOE

You changed your mind.

SALLY

I wanted you back.

Joe slaps her hard across the face.

SALLY (CONT'D)

You think this was to hurt you?! My God, Joe. It isn't about you.

JOE

What?! You aborted our child?!

SALLY

I'm a monster. Exactly.

JOE

You're not ready.

SALLY

Don't make allowances. I'll never be ready. Some people just shouldn't have children. I'd be a terrible fucking mother, Joe. I did want it for us. But I couldn't do it. I don't really think I can do it.

JOE

I wasn't part of that picture at all, was I? I wasn't part of that decision. Did I occur to you at all? It's a fucking farce. It's a fucking farce. How long did you think you could keep it going. You're amazing. Do you have any idea

what you've done to us?

SALLY

Yes.

JOE

I'll never forgive you.

SALLY

I know.

JOE

I have no idea who you are.

They stand their in silence. Joe is devastated. We hear Skye and Panes up ahead calling for Otis.

INT. POOL - CONTINUOUS

SILENT UNDERWATER SHOTS

Of Mac, Judy and Clair. Mac directs an underwater ballet, a la Esther Williams.

There's a sequence of TIGHT OVERLAPPING SHOTS of Mac, smiling, swimming underwater. His image of himself... SLO-MO compounded by water-weight.

The drug has clearly taken effect. Mac opens his mouth to direct his actors, forgets where he is, begins to choke, and cough, is clearly in trouble.

Oblivious, Judy and Clair turn somersaults.

Mac begins to panic. He is drowning.

He begins to sink. Panic gives way to acceptance.

Jerry's body flies past FRAME, splashes hard into the pool. The LENS is water-splattered.

MEDIUM-CLOSE SHOT UNDERWATER

Jerry's body sweeps past the lens, smooth and sleek as a Dolphin. He grabs Mac...

EXT. POOL - CONTINUOUS

Jerry pulls Mac to the surface. Clair and Judy are out of the pool. Jerry drags the limp body from the pool, pumps Mac's chest - it's clear he knows what he's doing. Mac

coughs up a load of water.

CLAIR

Oh my God. Honey???

There's a moment. Mac begins to sob.

JERRY

He's okay, Clair. You wanna give him a little room?

MAC

(his face against concrete)
Man, I must really be stoned.
(wipes tears from his face with his hand)
Thanks, buddy.

CLAIR

Honey?

Mac raises his hand, arrests her from coming nearer.

MAC

I'm fine, babe.

JERRY

Give him a minute, Clair.

MAC

(humiliated)
Hey.
(looks over at Jerry)
Thanks, buddy.

JERRY

Anytime, sport.

MAC

(wants to say "don't call me sport")
Yeah, thanks pal.

CLAIR

(helpless)
Honey?

They all stand around watching him. Mac gets up.

MAC

I'm fine, babe. I'm gonna take a little

walk. I need a minute. Let's forget it.
My life didn't pass in front of my eyes.
So, it probably wasn't that close.

JERRY
Probably not.

MAC
(to Jerry)
So, you've got lifeguard papers, or what?

JUDY
There's a test, you know.

JERRY
(embarrassed)
Forget it, Judy.

CLAIR
(still scared)
Honey?

MAC
I'll be fine. Really babe. Give me a
minute.

The CAMERA stays on Mac as he walks around the side of the house, down the steps through the basement.

INT. BASEMENT - MEDIUM FULL SHOT

Mac begins to tremble, sob convulsively. He bites down on his lip, clinches his fist, tries to pull himself together.

MAC
(paces; at himself)
You're okay. Buck up. Come on, be a man. It could happen to anybody.
(tears start again)
If you don't stop, I'm going to punch your face in.
(another moment)

He pulls a towel off a stack and they all fall on the floor.

MAC (CONT'D)
Oh shit. I can't fucking do anything right. Come on, come on. Oh thank you God for giving me this chance. Thank you for having Jerry here to save me. I promise I will never cheat on my wife

again. I will never take drugs again,
and I will be a great fucking husband and
a loving father. I am a great father! I
have terrific friends. I am a brilliant
director. Well-respected. I won a
Golden Globe, how 'bout that? Yeah, man,
it's alright, it's alright, it's alright.
And God, I will be humble.

INT. MUSIC LIBRARY - MEDIUM FULL SHOT

Gina regards the photographs she brought for Joe and Sally.
She lifts it from the shelf, the phone rings, the machine
picks up.

MAN'S VOICE

Joe, Joe! It's your Dad! Pick up,
Joe...

Gina sets the photo on the desk, leans it up against the
wall. Joe and Sally's faces stare out of it.

GINA

(picks up receiver)

Harry, hi, it's Gina! Gina. Is
everything alright?

(a deep intake of breath)

Oh my God. When? He's not here.

They're out looking for Otis. The dog,
Harry.

(tears start down her face)

I love you so much. Lucy's a fighter,
she'll make it. Whether she wants to or
not. Harry. I'm so sorry. I will.

(writes down the number)

Yes I will. Take care, Harry. Bye.

She puts down the phone. Stares into Joe's face, looks up at
a photo on the wall that she took of Joe and Lucy.

EXT. BACKYARD LANDING

Jerry and Judy are making out.

JUDY

Are you my big brave boy? Are you my
brave hero?

JERRY

You're crazy baby. I love you.

JUDY
Are you my big hard hero?

JERRY
Do you want me to save you? Do you want
me to save you?

JUDY
Oh yeah...

JERRY
Oh yeah... I'm gonna save you.

JUDY
Oh yeah?

JERRY
Let me heal you, baby.

JUDY
(mantra)
Oh Jesus oh Jesus oh Jesus.

Grunts, groans, a scream, a peel of giggles.

JERRY
Oh yeah.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gina pulls Joe's clothes out of the closet, out of the
drawers. There's an overnight bag on the bed.

EXT. POOL AREA

Cal and Sophia lie cuddled on a lounge chair, blissed out,
counting the windows of the house.

SOPHIA
...no, no, start again.

CAL AND SOPHIA
One, two, three, four...

Clair wanders up. She's changed into her own clothes.

CLAIR
I've lost my husband and my beeper. Have
either of you seen either of them?

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Clair, Mac, Sophia, Cal and Gina are waiting. The overnight bag rests near the coffee table. No one speaks.

There are sounds of the search party approaching.

NEW ANGLE

Panes, Skye, Sally and Joe come into the room dogless.

JOE
What is it?

GINA
Let's go upstairs, okay?

Joe looks from Gina to the others.

GINA (CONT'D)
Let's go upstairs.

They move out of the room.

SALLY
(on the way upstairs)
Is it Otis?

Skye and Panes look at the other guests.

SKYE
What happened?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Gina closes the door.

JOE
The suspense is killing me.

GINA
Harry called.

JOE
(growing dread)
And?

GINA
(there's now way to say it)
Lucy overdosed.

JOE

(a long moment)
But she's alright.

GINA
She's in ICU.

Joe's legs give way. He sort of sits on the floor.

JOE
(laughs; shakes his head)
Stupid tart.

GINA
She left a note.

JOE
(realizes the import; to Gina)
Fuck you.

Tears start down Sally's face.

GINA
You need to call your dad.

JOE
Leave us alone right now.

GINA
I've booked you a flight and packed you a bag. You just need to get into a car and go.

SALLY
Would you leave us alone right now?

GINA
I love her too, Joe.

JOE
Alright, good. Thanks for your trouble.
So will you leave Sally and me alone
right now?

SALLY
(a shrug; simply)
Everybody hates the messenger.

Gina exits.

SALLY (CONT'D)
(to Joe)

I'm coming with you.

Joe starts to cry. Sally holds him, kisses him, strokes him, rocks him.

JOE

(inconsolable)

I don't want you to go.

He wipes tears away that start afresh; his nose is running, he wipes that too.

JOE (CONT'D)

I can't go tonight. I don't want to be on a plane on my own tonight.

SALLY

I'll be with you.

JOE

I don't want to go tonight.

SALLY

You don't have to.

They sit on the floor. Sally soothing, rocking Joe like a baby.

JOE

(bereft)

Stupid tart.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Gina's put up some coffee. Sophia, Cal, Mac and Clair stand around awkwardly. Sally comes into the room.

MAC

How's he doing?

SALLY

Not good.

GINA

He's gonna miss his flight.

SALLY

Yeah.

All the guests are a little stunned.

GINA

Is he not going? I booked a flight.

SALLY

He's not going tonight.

GINA

I told his father he'd be on that flight.

SALLY

Well you could tell him otherwise. It was good of you to be all this help. But he doesn't want to go tonight.

GINA

Jesus, Sally. I'm not the enemy.

SALLY

And you're not the wife.

GINA

It's not a contest.

SALLY

Damn straight.

CAL

Should I go up?

SALLY

I don't think so.

CAL

You want us to stay?

SALLY

Maybe not.

MAC

So much for ecstasy, right?

They all laugh a little.

SOPHIA

Let's get the kids.

CLAIR

Oh my God, the sitter.

SALLY

(laughs)

Oh Clair, you're so... You know. You just put things in perspective.

INT. MUSIC LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Joe listens to the answering machine message Lucy left that morning. He plays it again and again.

HE fast forwards to his father's voice. Presses the STOP button. Sits there, stunned.

JOE
(dials phone, a moment)
Hey, Dad...

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cal and Sophia bundle up their sleeping kids. The CAMERA follows them to the landing as they head downstairs, pass Sally who is coming up.

SOPHIA
I'm going to be home all weekend, call if you need anything.

Sally kisses Cal's cheek.

CAL
Hang in.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Panes and Skye are fucking on Joe and Sally's bed. Sally walks in on them searching for Panes' ear, her best buddy.

SALLY
(resigned)
Oh perfect!

EXT. BACKYARD LANDING - MEDIUM FULL SHOT

Jerry and Judy lie alongside each other, hands propping heads. They aren't privy to anything that's happened.

JERRY
I call that a perfect day.

JUDY
A perfect night.

JERRY

Damn near.

(long moment)

And a damn near perfect drug.

JUDY

Hm. We should do it again.

JERRY

Just every once in a blue moon, you know.

JUDY

Hm.

(a long moment)

You think we should ask them for their landscaper?

JERRY

Hm. Do you like fucking out of doors?

JUDY

Not as a rule.

JERRY

(a long moment)

They didn't sign their goddamn tax returns!

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sally stands at the threshold, watches Cal and Sophia load their kids into the car.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Clair and Mac and Gina hug and say their goodbyes to Sally.

GINA

(kisses Sally; whispers)

Take good care of it.

SALLY

Count on it.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Monica and Ryan return from their unsuccessful search. They come through the gate with it's sight: KEEP GATE CLOSED. Monica and Ryan start for the kitchen entrance.

INT. KITCHEN - FROM MONICA AND RYAN'S POV

Sally and Joe are alone in the room. They hold each other, weep...

RYAN
(appalled)
Jesus Christ, it's a fucking dog!

MONICA
(regards them)
Don't go in, Ryan.

RYAN
What?

MONICA
Let's just go home, okay?

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A much embarrassed Panes and Skye enter.

PANES
Coffee?

JOE
Sure.

PANES
I'll do it.

Panes starts to make some; Skye starts to clean up glasses and ashtrays.

SALLY
You don't need to do that.

SKYE
I don't mind...

SALLY
Relax. You've done enough.

EXT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

We see Judy and Jerry bounding around the side of the house. Jerry has his briefcase in his hand. They are laughing. They enter the kitchen. The camera stays outside. We see them brought up short by the gloom, but hear nothing.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sally and Joe are at the table, signing their tax returns. Jerry supervising. All is quiet. Judy's sunk into a chair.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Morning's finally come. Light fills the room, empty except for party debris.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

It's empty but for glasses, wrapping paper, abandoned dishes of leftover cake.

INT. EMPTY KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bed is ruffled and indented from the sleeping children. Their drawings and paints strewn all over the floor...and Walls.

INT. EMPTY DEN - CONTINUOUS

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bed still shows the remains of Panes and Skye's love making.

The CAMERA moves through the suite into the bathroom. Sally's in the tub. Joe comes into the room in the buff.

JOE

Can I come in?

Sally looks up at the nakedness.

SALLY

Sure.

HE slips into the tub with her. They lie there facing each other.

OE

My plane leaves in a few hours.

SALLY

Okay. Do you want me to come with you?

JOE

(simply)

No.

SALLY

Okay.

JOE

(a moment)

Pretty much a disaster, tonight, wasn't it?

SALLY

I guess.

JOE

Life gets messy. Ugly messy. But I don't understand you. And I don't think I ever understood Lucy. I don't understand throwing it away. How do you throw all that away? Any of it. I want it all. You guys want guarantees? I want the possibilities. And all kinds of crap comes with that. A lot of bad shit. And I think that's okay with me because, because of the rest of the stuff. All the good shit. All the surprises. It's a fucking miracle when you come down to it.

(a moment)

We'd have had amazing children, you and me. We'd have had a ride. You'd have surprised yourself.

(regards her)

I'll never love anybody else, you know.

SALLY

(a little choked laugh)

Me too.

JOE

That's under lock and key.

SALLY

Me too.

Joe reaches out of the tub for gift-wrapped box. He hands it to sally. It's their ritual gift-giving site.

Sally opens the gift. Takes out a Calder mobile.

JOE

Happy anniversary.

SALLY
It's a Calder.

JOE
I know.

SALLY
He's my favorite.

JOE
I know. It's for the baby's crib.

SALLY
Ah...

She hands him a small wooden box. He opens it, takes out a set of keys.

SALLY (CONT'D)
They're the keys to your grandad's flat.
Happy anniversary, baby.

JOE
Oh, Sally Mae...

He can't say anymore.

SALLY
I know.

JOE
Will you make love with me?

SALLY
Sure.

She reaches out with both arms.

INT. BATHROOM - TIGHT CLOSE

Joe and Sally tenderly make love. It's the dissolution of their marriage.

INT. FOYER - NINE A.M.

America and Rosa begins to clean up the debris from the party.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A taxi pulls up. Joe gets in with his bags. The cab backs

out...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MEDIUM CLOSE

The two wedding rings rest on the nightstand, hers nestled in his. Sally's hand opens the drawer, sweeps the rings into it.

EXT. HOUSE - LATE MORNING

The "FOR SALE" sign is hammered into the ground.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGH SHOT - CONTINUOUS

Otis wanders along the street, up the driveway and disappears through the flap in the kitchen door.

FADE OUT.