

FEED ME

"the goal of sexual intercourse"

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yyyyhFADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD- LATE AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON a sweet old NUN, a look of extreme horror on her face, We HEAR NED CARROLL'S VOICE, he's in the middle of telling the joke--

NED (V.O.)
--and what does Sister Cleonicus see? Two tenth graders going at it behind the gym--

ANGLE: MARY and her ROMEO locked together, transcending the barriers, her tongue down his throat, his hand inside her blouse--

NED (V.O.) (CONT'D)
--so deep in the deed, they don't sense danger--

ANGLE: two claw like hands, clamp down, one on his shoulder, one on her's--ANGLE: Sister Cleonicus struggling to separate the young lovers--

NED (V.O.) (CONT'D)
--its not easy, they're stuck together like hounds on a hot summer night--

ON THE NUN'S FACE, earnest, sincere, mouthing the words as Ned speaks them--

NED (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Committing sins of a sexual nature violates the laws of chastity! Consider the *consequences!* An hour of passion isn't worth a lifetime of unhappiness! Do you understand?

CLOSE ON MARY'S face, Ned's voice--

NED (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Sister?

On NUN

NED (V.O.) (CONT'D)
What is it?

CLOSE UP OF NED, almost thirty in earth years, terminally adolescent, speaking to CAMERA. We'll learn more about him later.

NED (CONT'D)
 (he desperately wants
 the answer)
 How do you make it last an hour?

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY (EVANSTON, ILLINOIS) -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON WILL PARRISH, deep in sleep.

WILL PARRISH is an explorer without an expedition, a poet without words, a successful business man who imports third-world merchandise from jungles and beachheads he hasn't seen since he married twenty years ago. He met his wife at someone's birthday party. He was drunk, telling the only joke he ever tells, everyone was laughing and when he caught her eye and saw his own reflection, he vowed to learn more jokes, how to juggle, a new language, eat glass--whatever it would take to keep her from looking at anyone else. He misses his sons since they left for college. He is not an articulate man. His heart is full. There are lonely places in his soul. His heroes are athletes.

LIPS nibble his ear, he doesn't stir. The LIPS WHISPER his name "Will?"

He doesn't open his eyes.

WILL
 (mumbling)
 It's Thursday?

Half-asleep, he rolls on his back, disoriented, confused. He opens his eyes, HIS POV: His wife, EMMA.

Emma is a woman who adheres to mathematics as a profession and a religion. Numbers don't lie, don't change, add up, equate. Life, on the other hand, is a barrage of unpredictable variables, dead ends, and reversals. Armed with lists, schedules, and mild OCD, Emma challenges chaos. Tilting at the cosmic windmill. Can't win, but compelled to soldier on. She gauges her love for Will by imagining him dead, pinned under a Fed Ex truck. It never fails to remind her how much she needs him, wants him. Sometimes, lately, she uses the truck to jump-start her libido. She loves her sons, misses them, not as they are now, but as they were at birth; clinging, burrowing creatures, who, fed to bursting, would sleep peacefully in her arms, creating, for a brief moment, a perfectly balanced equation of a rare, non-numerical nature. Her effort to march straight ahead on a winding road often makes life difficult for her near and dear.

She reaches down under the blankets--we don't have to see, we know.

EMMA
 (apologetic)
 Wednesday. I had to move us. I'm
 having my teeth cleaned Thursday at
 eight. It was all she had, I grabbed
 it.

WILL
 (closing his eyes)
 Move us to Friday. I don't feel so
 hot.

EMMA
 Cleaning lady comes Friday.

He opens his eyes. Oh, okay--he rolls on top of her--

CUT TO:

INT. PARRISH KITCHEN - DAY

The television is on, Will's eating eggs, Emma enters, pours
 coffee--looks for sugar--

WILL
 You didn't come.

ANGLE: Emma, her back to him, reacts, spilling sugar-- Caught.
 Shit. Defensive stall.

EMMA
 What?

WILL
 You faked.

She's very busy, wiping spilled sugar.

EMMA
 (I don't speak English)
 Faked?

WILL
 Your orgasm. I'm just asking.

EMMA
 You didn't ask. You said.

WILL
 Okay, I'm asking.

She gulps her coffee, goes for it.

EMMA
 No.

WILL

No, you didn't fake or no you didn't have one?

Spin it, girl.

EMMA

It was cerebral. I had a cerebral orgasm.

She smiles brightly, pats him on the shoulder--we follow her to the adjoining mudroom--she's in a hurry.

INT. MUDROOM - CONTINUOUS

As she puts on her boots--Chigago winter

WILL (O.S.)

"You say cerebral, I say fake, you say cerebral, I say fake, tomato, potato, cerebral, horsepoop--"

EMMA

(overriding, taking the offense)

Orgasm is your goal, not mine.

WILL (O.S.)

Sex doesn't have a goal.

Now we're on Will--

INT. PARRISH KITCHEN - DAY

WILL

(cheerfully)

That's the whole Protestant revolution in a nutshell, Emma. That's the whole Nike campaign.

EMMA (O.S.)

(reasonably)

Then why do you have to come before we stop?

She comes out of the mudroom--looks at him as she puts on her coat--

WILL

That's how I know to stop. That's how I know we're done.

EMMA

Two people forming an intimate bond isn't something that gets "done" like a roast beef.

WILL
I was being considerate.

EMMA
(buttoning her coat)
When you wait for me, I feel
pressured, that's all.

WILL
Oh, now I'm the bad guy.

EMMA
(putting on her gloves)
Didn't say that.

WILL
Did.

EMMA
Didn't.

WILL
Did.

EMMA
Didn't.

WILL
Did.

EMMA
Didn't!

She blows him a kiss and hurries out.

INT. CARROLL'S KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Born as a piano bar, CARROLL'S is a traditional American restaurant. Dinner Monday through Saturday, 5 pm to 12:30 AM. There's a lunch-to-go menu, pick up or delivery, from 11:30 AM until 3 PM. Sundays are dark. Gourmet that feels like comfort food, no molecular bullshit, the signature dish doesn't change, stay til midnight, maybe Alice Carroll will sing one pre-arranged request. Family owned and operated, profiting since 1979.

The kitchen is controlled chaos, fresh food deliveries coming in, lunch prep, repair on a freezer gasket, several languages are spoken among the staff and one crazy Salad Man mutters "son of a bitch, son of a bitch" as he dices.

The restaurant was built in 1937, the kitchen is big, updated in the early fifties, stainless steel, linoleum floor.

ALICE CARROLL, bottle blonde, fighting age, former supper club chanteuse, drinking coffee in her private corner, reading the paper, crying silently, dabbing her face with a paper

cocktail napkin. Alice was never chatty, now she's the Ancient Mariner on weed. It's almost as if she's running lyrics, or scat singing--advice, tales of the past, tales of the crypt. She's not a fool, she just can't settle on a thesis for her legacy. We HEAR LOUD MALE VOICES in the dining room--an argument. Emma enters, carrying her briefcase, walking past Alice, plucking the paper out of her hands, not stopping.

EMMA

Mom. You promised.

ALICE

(rising in protest)

I was not reading the obits.

She follows Emma into--

INT. BACK OFFICE

Desk, outdated computer, file cabinet, messy bulletin board, Emma trashes the newspaper, whips out her MacBook Air, starts printing--

ALICE

(blowing her nose in
the cocktail napkin)

A woman jumped off the roof and now he's paralyzed. It's terrible. It wasn't the obits, it was the front page of the living section.

She pulls the paper out of the trash--

ALICE (CONT'D)

She fell on her fiancée, he was trying to catch her. She's dead and he's in the hospital. Twenty-six years old. Paralyzed from the neck down.

(showing Emma)

Living section.

EMMA

(stop)

I'm trying to straighten out the payroll. I have to be in my office at ten. Why is Dad yelling?

ALICE

Your brother changed the menu without asking. Listen to me, Emma.

The printer spits out checks--

ALICE (CONT'D)

If someone wants to die, *get out of the way.*

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

Did he think he could catch her?
From the sixth floor? He deserves
to be paralyzed, he's stupid. Truly.
She was stage four.

Emma examines the printed checks--

ALICE (CONT'D)

You know who had cancer and didn't
know it? Carlo Ferinacci. The
Italian movie star. He used to come
in here all the time, not to eat,
just to hear me sing. It drove your
father crazy. Never ordered dinner.
Not even a drink.

Emma starts out of the office with the checks, Alice following--

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

She's on Emma's heels--

ALICE

Cancer of the liver. Boom. God, how
he wanted me. He could have had
anyone.

And on into--

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Busboys are setting up for lunch, bartender restocking, decor
is old school, no bullshit. It was good enough then, it's
good enough now. Dark leather booths, traditional piano
bar, framed photos of young Alice and deceased celebs. Just
past the bar, LEN CARROLL is outside the men's room, roaring
like Lear, quoting from a menu in his hand.

ALICE

Anyone. Sophia Loren. Not even a
drink. He called me *cara mia*. I
thought your father would kill him.

LEN

(an obscenity)
"Herb encrusted!"

EMMA

Dad, sign these, please.

He takes them from her. A short, don't-shove-me Jew who can't
let go and won't admit he's hanging by a thread. Getting
deaf, finding religion, he is morphing into the grandfather
he never knew. On his tombstone: Don't trust the bartender,
keep the bread hot, push the shrimp balls.

LEN

People don't want to spend all night reading a menu--they want to order, they want to eat, they want to flirt with the girl, close the deal. If I want to read, I'll go to the library. "Wood-fired"? Who gives a crap how it got hot? Seriously, answer that question.

He goes to the bar to sign the checks, Emma looks at her mother.

EMMA

What's the goal of sexual intercourse?

ALICE

(stupid question)

You have two beautiful boys at Ohio State.

(indicating men's room)

Talk to your brother.

Emma looks at her watch and pushes open door to the men's room.

INT. MEN'S ROOM (CARROLL'S) - DAY

CLOSE ON NED CARROLL stands unmoving, facing the wall, resting his forehead on the tiled wall above the urinal. Alice's youngest, breast-fed too long, a twenty-something adolescent, a culinary artist, a seeker. He's good-looking and can have anyone he wants. He falls in love with women who are terminally ill or married.

NED

I did tell him, you know I told him. I *showed* him. He hates me.

EMMA

He loves you.

NED

(darkly)

He's had a good life. Why doesn't he die?

EMMA

Don't say that.

Len has resumed his tirade outside the door.

LEN

"Baby lettuce!"

NED

I came up with something last night,
a variation on Dad's stuffed chicken.
A shao hsing wine infusion. It's a
Chinese steal, but I take the curse
off with a truffle surround and no
rice. That's our new identity.
Adventure. I want risk-takers in
here.

LEN

"Cauterized!"

NED

(shouting back)
Caramelized! You blind son of a bitch!

Emma looks at her watch.

NED (CONT'D)

Give me your belt, I'll hang myself.

EMMA

What's the goal of sexual intercourse?

NED

(matter-of-fact)
To fold your soul into the soul of
another until there is no separateness
and you see the Divine. Why?

INT. BACK OFFICE

Emma hurriedly stuffs her MacBook Air back in her briefcase,
nearly colliding with Alice as she heads out.

ALICE

Sunday dinner, don't forget. If I
tell you something can you pretend
to be surprised when you find out?
And can you act like you're happy,
and not say anything that might sound
like you think it's a crazy idea?

EMMA

Mom, I'm late.

ALICE

Your brother is getting married again.

INT. JOHN'S SPANKING BRAND NEW CONVERTIBLE VOLVO - DAY

JOHN

(aghast)
You told my mother? Why does she
have to know?

JOHN CARROLL, the oldest, the one least tied to the family, the one most like Len in appearance and manner. Like Pacino in Part III, they pull him back in. He has two daughters, an ex-wife, and a bride-to-be. It's been five years since his acrimonious divorce began. It drags on in mediation, court, on his answering machine and in his driveway. He is secretly frightened of re-marrying. He doesn't understand his daughters, he should have had sons. He always seems a little tired, like a soldier who has been too long at war. MERYL drives, allowing him to drink his coffee and eat his low-fat, nine-grain scone. John never had a real mother. Mama Meryl is fifteen years his junior, good-natured, big-boned, shelter in a storm. She sells hypo-allergenic cosmetics. They met in a mall when John's daughter shop-lifted a hypo-allergenic lip liner.

MERYL

We're getting married. She's your mother, John.

JOHN

We're already living together. What's going to change? Why does anyone have to know?

MERYL

You mean, why does Amanda have to know.

JOHN

(now you've done it)
You said her name.

INT. EMMA'S VW - DAY

She starts her car, Len taps on the window, she rolls it down.

LEN

To release the tension.

EMMA

What?

LEN

Sex. The goal is to release the tension.

INT. JOHN'S VOLVO - DAY

MERYL

(reasonably)
The girls will tell her if you don't.

JOHN

No names. Say ex or ex-wife.

MERYL
 (firmly)
 Amanda.

JOHN
 (bitterly)
 Thank you.

MERYL
 (chiding)
 You demonize her.

JOHN
 Say it two more times and when she
 appears in the rearview mirror we'll
 see who demonizes.

MERYL
 Our marriage will put an end to her
 reconciliation fantasy.

JOHN
 (huh?)
 I'm not getting gardenias, Meryl.
 I'm getting court orders from her
 attorney. Still. After five years.
 Doesn't that tell you something?

MERYL
 (wisely)
 He's her cupid.

JOHN
 He's her pimp. I'm taking it in the
 ass. Don't underestimate the danger
 here. She's a very sick woman. We
 will not have her blessing.

MERYL
 Just tell her. She's like a child.
 What can she do to hurt us?

INT. AMANDA'S BASEMENT - DAY

The serial killer hideout, the war room. Photos of Meryl clutter the wall. A chalked pentangle on the floor, votives burning at the star points. GRUNTING SOUNDS. ANGLE: DOORWAY CHIN-UP BAR: AMANDA'S FACE comes into camera as she tries to do a pull up, her face contorted. She's an angry little terrier of a woman. A fear biter. A reincarnated haggernash.

SOUND OF AMBULANCE SIREN

INT. HOSPITAL OR - DAY

Will is on the table, his chest cracked open, surrounded by doctors and nurses--MEDICAL JARGON is flying. We HEAR:

DOC

This thing goes into the arch. I think we're going to have to arrest him. Brenda, let's get the ice.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

TITLE: ONE HOUR EARLIER.

The bathroom door is half-open, inside we vaguely glimpse Will's naked torso in the mirror. He's acts like a different man--young, silly, playful. Up against him in the tiny bathroom is JULIE, a twenty-nine year old Korean girl, half undressed, laughing, bumping into Will as she tries to pin her hair up.

JULIE

Airplanes toilets are bigger than this!

(teasing him)

Want to join the mile high club?

WILL

Join? I'm the president. You can be vice president--do you have any vices?

She laughs, he loves it--

WILL (CONT'D)

Did I say that? I'm sorry, that's awful, that's not even a pun.

He bumps her deliberately--

WILL (CONT'D)

Oops, heavy turbulence. Fasten your chastity belt for take off.

Julie, laughing, swats him with a towel--

WILL (CONT'D)

The captain has turned off the no twerking sign.

(lispng)

Coffee, tea--me?

JULIE

(giggles)

God, you're funny.

WILL

Prepare for emergency landing, going down--

He goes to his knees, disappears under frame--

JULIE
Whoohoo! First class!

ON JULIE, ready to soar--WILL SAYS SOMETHING, it's not clear.

JULIE (CONT'D)
(playful)
No talking during take-off!

Something's not right--

JULIE (CONT'D)
Will?

She looks down--HER POV: He sags to one side, against the tub.

JULIE (CONT'D)
(uncertain)
Will! Will?

She lets go of his head, he falls, she SCREAMS.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

John sits in a very public restaurant. He looks at his watch.

AMANDA
Hello, John.

He looks up, there's Amanda, pale, wan and heroic--next to her, an Ichabod Crane look-alike. As they sit down--

JOHN
I said no lawyers.

AMANDA
Dr. Crane is my therapist. I thought it would be helpful if he met you.

John stares at Crane in disbelief.

CRANE
(to the waiter)
Menu?

JOHN
I'm not buying him lunch.

AMANDA
(to Crane)
You see what I mean?
(to John)
If this is going to be about money, call my lawyer.

JOHN
(fuck me)
Order whatever you want.

AMANDA
I'm not hungry.

CRANE
(to waiter)
I'll have the shrimp risotto.

WAITER
Something to start?

Crane starts to speak, looks at John, changes his mind, shakes his head. John points to the drink sitting in front of him, the waiter nods and goes off.

AMANDA
(sadly)
You're drinking again.

JOHN
I'm having a drink.

AMANDA
Two.

John takes a deep breath.

JOHN
Let's not be John and Amanda right now. Let's just be Gwen and Molly's Mom and Dad.

CRANE
Very good, John.

JOHN
Does he have to talk?

AMANDA
Is it about custody? If it's about custody, call my lawyer.

JOHN
It's not about custody. It's about me.

AMANDA
(to Crane)
Surprise?

JOHN
(to Crane)
I don't want to fight. Tell her, Icabod.

AMANDA

What do you want, John?

JOHN

A new life. A second chance. I want to get married again.

Amanda's eyes fill with tears. Crane digs into his risotto.

AMANDA

I've prayed for this.

JOHN

You have? Really? Well, that's a relief. I was afraid you'd--hey, great. Okay. That's very decent of you. I appreciate it.

(to waiter)

Check?

(to Crane)

How's the risotto? Get enough shrimp?

AMANDA

We've both learned a lot since the first time.

JOHN

I hope so. I hope so. God, I really hope so.

AMANDA

We had happy family times.

JOHN

(when?)

Of course we did.

AMANDA

We can have them again. Do the girls know?

JOHN

Meryl said I should tell you first.

AMANDA

Meryl?

It dawns like a mushroom cloud after a direct hit--matching horror. John's cell phone RINGS in his pocket--they speak over each other, it's like bullets flying--

JOHN

(simultaneous to Amanda)

Seriously, how crazy are you? Why would I want to marry you again?

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

After the self-righteous Easter egg hunt you put me through, five years in and out of court, pocketing every cent of my retirement, she did not drop out, she left school to support her sick father, that's right, that's right, you left me, you left me and what's wrong with selling cosmetics? It's called earning a living, you should try it some time
(into phone)

Hello? Emma, I can't talk right--oh shit. Where? I'm coming-

AMANDA

(simultaneous to John)

That woman will not raise my daughters, do you hear me? She's a high school drop-out for god's sake, she sells lip-liner, you don't love her, she's just a distraction from the pain, you were crushed when I left you, crushed, she was there, she was easy, I want full custody now, you don't think I'll get it? How can you expect me to work with an anxiety disorder? The law says you owe me, you think I like going to court, you force me to go to court, why can't you give to me? You have no heart!

He is already standing, throwing money on the table as he heads for the exit--

INT. ICU - DAY

Will lies heavily sedated in ICU, attached to the appropriate monitors, air tubes, chest tubes, IV--Emma sits next to him, getting as close to him as she can, whispering in his ear, holding his hand.

EMMA

I'm here now. Everything's going to be all right.

INT. ICU LOUNGE - NIGHT

Emma paces the tiny lounge between Meryl and Ned, gripping Ned's right arm, Meryl's left. Outside the lounge, at the end of the corridor, John is speaking with a FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR--a woman in a nice sweater set and glasses.

EMMA

(darkly)
I killed him.

MERYL
He's not going to die.

EMMA
(bitterly)
I forced him to have sex with me on
an off day.

MERYL
An off day?

NED
I don't want to hear this.

EMMA
It was the orgasm.

NED
You're my sister. Please don't make
me picture you in bed--
(picturing it)
--on top of Will, gyrating and
thrusting or--or--pinned under him,
moaning and thrashing.

MERYL
Shouldn't someone call your parents?

EMMA
No, no, they can't find out. They'll
come here, I don't want them here.
Neddy, you didn't tell them?

NED
I said I was going to the zoo.

EMMA
The zoo?

NED
They don't like the zoo. They don't
ask to come along when I say I'm
going to the zoo. I always say the
zoo.

MERYL
(to Ned)
John wants you.

ANGLE: John beckoning.

ANGLE: Ned pries Emma's fingers off his arm. She grips
tighter.

EMMA
What is it? What's happening?

NED

(prying her fingers)
It's just about the insurance.

EMMA

It doesn't matter about the insurance,
tell him. I'll sell the house,
anything, everything.

(she means it)

He's my whole world, Ned. Whatever
it takes. Nothing else matters, okay?
I can't imagine life without him. I
can't.

Meryl SOBS.

ANGLE: CLOSE on John and Ned, against the wall, facing each other, as nurse cross in front of them, pushing carts, carrying charts, etc. John was twelve when Ned was born. John still feels all the things he felt then: appalled, protective, jealous. Ned still feels what he felt at birth: self-absorbed, bewildered, respectful. Shared experience has given them a common language. They are both Len's sons--quick to anger, quick to forgive.

John speaks in an undertone, glancing around, as if he's selling crack in a schoolyard.

JOHN

Then I said, what the f word, pardon my French, goes on here? Why didn't someone notify my sister when they brought him in? And she says, excuse me, but he was John Doe, he had no identification. And I say, where was his wallet and she says, in his pants pocket, and I say why couldn't someone look in the pocket and she says, because he wasn't wearing any pants. Are you with me?

NED

And you say, where were his f wording pants?

JOHN

And she says, in the f wording motel, Mr. Carroll, which appears to be the operative f wording word.

There is silence as they consider the implications. Ned looks back at Emma, then to John.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Travelodge, off I5.

More silence--what now.

NED

So we're going to beat the crap out of him, right?

JOHN

If he lives.

NED

(appalled)

Of course if he lives. Why would we beat the crap out of dead man? What did you think I meant? If he lives. Of course if he lives.

EXT. INTERSTATE 5 - NIGHT

John's Volvo speeds down I5. Ned SINGS to the tune of "I KNOW AN OLD LADY WHO SWALLOWED A FLY"--

NED

"I don't know whyyyy, he unzipped his fly, perhaps he'll die."

JOHN

This isn't a road trip.

NED

I'm nervous, I'm filling the silence of God.

JOHN

There it is.

He crosses two lines of traffic to the exit, pulling off the interstate--pulling into the parking area of the Travelodge Motel.

EXT. TRAVELODGE - NIGHT

There are only a few cars in the lot. John brakes, his car face to face with Will's Lexus.

INT. JOHN'S VOLVO - NIGHT

They stare at the Lexus.

JOHN

Is it his?

They both get out.

EXT. TRAVELODGE - NIGHT

John bangs the hood of Will's car with his fist.

NED

You want to key the car? I won't tell.

John bangs the hood again with his fist.

JOHN

If he dies, we piss on his grave.

NED

I'm not peeing on any graves.

JOHN

She's our *sister*.

NED

That's no reason to piss on a man once he's dead. You want someone to piss on you when you're dead?

JOHN

What the hell do I care, I'm dead. Just say yes now and you can back down later. Make me happy.

NED

I like Will. We both like Will. He's a good guy. So lets not piss on his grave, okay?

JOHN

(okay)

But you'll beat the crap out of him if he lives.

NED

You have my word.

John gives the hood a final, regretful, apologetic tap.

JOHN

Take my car, I'll take his. You follow me, we'll drop his off at the house, go back to St. Mary's.

John rubs his forehead, paces a little, looks up at the sky.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(finally)

We'll say his car was at the gym. That'll cover his bare *tuchas* on all counts.

NED

Lie to Emma? Beat him up, piss on his grave, cover his *tuchas*?

JOHN

Let's hear your plan. What's that?
 Speak a little louder. What's that?
 You don't have a plan? We go with
 mine.

NED

Is this some primordial male bonding
 thing? Everyone at the bachelor party
 promises to cover for the other
tuchas? I don't remember that. Was
 it when I went to answer the door
 for the lesbian strippers?

JOHN

Yes.

NED

(taken aback)
 Really?

JOHN

Marriage is a social institution
 created for the purpose of economic
 and political stability. The key
 word here is stability. Sometimes,
 you have to put a matchbook under
 the table leg.

NED

How can a marriage be stable if two
 people lie to each other?

JOHN

(kindly)
 I'm talking about the lies we tell
 ourselves, you moron. Not each other.

John gets into Will's car, starts it, drives past Ned.

INT. ICU - NIGHT

Emma sits there, watching Will breath. Meryl sits next to
 Emma.

EMMA

Do you ever picture John dead?

MERYL

(horrified)
 Heavens no.

EMMA

Sometimes I picture Will dead. Not
 when I'm angry or anything. Just
 when I'm afraid I don't care anymore.

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

I picture him walking across the street and getting hit by a Fed Ex truck. Then I picture myself kneeling next to him. I imagine how awful I'd feel, taking his cold, lifeless body in my arms. I imagine it until I can't bear it and I know I still love him. I made this happen. I asked for this.

MERYL

Emma, you're not being rational.

EMMA

(distraught)

If he dies, his last memory is me faking an orgasm.

MERYL

(uncomfortable)

I'm sure he didn't know.

EMMA

Oh, he knew. That's how close we are. I can't fool him about anything. He's the one person who knows me in all the ways I don't let anyone else know me. Maybe not even myself. And I know him. I don't mean the easy things, like how many sugars he takes or even what he's thinking before he says it. That's just twenty years in the same foxhole. I mean *who* he is. Who I am. We say, I love you, but it should really be, I *know* you. That's all that means anything.

Meryl's eyes have filled with tears.

MERYL

John and I are getting married. With your permission, I would like to include what you just said in my wedding goals.

EMMA

(distracted)

Goals?

MERYL

You know, instead of vows. It's something I learned selling cosmetics. Goals recognize effort as well as accomplishment. Goals wait for you. They don't ask to be broken.

EMMA

What's the goal of sexual intercourse?

MERYL

(without hesitation)

It changes as we change.

She turns as someone TAPS on the window. It's Sweater-Set, the administrator we saw talking to John. She has a clipboard and she beckons to Emma.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

John and Ned, in the elevator, going up. Ned is still grappling.

NED

Suppose it's not a table. Suppose marriage is a rocket to the moon. Would you shove a matchbook under a *10 billion dollar launch pad*?

John is ignoring him.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Emma stands outside the ICU, alone, stunned, like a woman who's just been slapped too hard to react. Abruptly, John and Ned are on either side of her.

JOHN

Emma?

NED

Is Will--is he--

JOHN

Dead?

EMMA

What? No, no. Not yet.

JOHN

Are you all right?

EMMA

I'm going to puke.

Ned immediately backs off--

JOHN

Take a deep breath. Get her a drink.

EMMA

I don't want anything.

JOHN
When's the last time you ate?

NED
(from a distance)
Are you going to spew or not?

EMMA
You should all go home.

JOHN
Forget it.

EMMA
I'm going to sleep in his room, they
said I could. I really just want to
sleep. Okay?

INT. ICU - NIGHT

Alone, Emma sits in the chair. Ned comes in with a can of
Coke and some junk food from the machines--he puts it next
to Emma like a temple offering.

NED
(uncomfortable)
Okay, we're going.

EMMA
Where's John?

NED
He's tipping the staff. I'm not
kidding. He's giving every single
nurse twenty bucks, every orderly
ten, and telling them to take care
of you.

EMMA
Neddy?

NED
What?

EMMA
I need a favor. And don't tell
anybody. Not even John. Will's car.

NED
(oh shit)
Will's car?

EMMA
(not looking at him)
You'll find it at the Travelodge,
off I5. Could you take a cab there,
then drive it home?

Ned opens his mouth to speak--not sure what to say--she jumps in as she digs in her bag--

EMMA (CONT'D)

Will must have been on the I5 when he started to feel bad. He pulled off into the motel parking lot. And he checked into a room, so he could rest. He got into the room, he took off all his clothes, lay down in bed and dialed 911.

She holds out a set of keys, daring him not to buy it.

NED

(taking the keys)
Sounds right to me.

Emma doesn't say anything. He knows she knows. She knows he knows she knows. Enough said.

EMMA

One more favor. Tell Mom and Dad I won't be at Sunday dinner because Will's in the hospital.
(looks up)
Call it a procedure. Don't say emergency.

NED

Procedure.

EMMA

Leave out the part about the paramedics.

NED

No details.

EMMA

Don't upset them.

He nods, pats her on the shoulder.

NED

(to unconscious Will)
Good-night, Will, feel better.

Behind her back, he gives Will the finger.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ned, preoccupied, heads down the corridor, takes a wrong turn, finds himself in another wing, realizes, turns to retrace his steps and HEARS:

ROBBIE (O.S.)

Ned?

Ned turns, HIS POV: elegant, elderly Jamaican musician--
ROBBIE LEWIS, bearded, fit. He's holding a large logo printed
(BLAKE'S) restaurant shopping bag, bulging with take out.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

(off Ned's clueless
face)

Robbie Lewis-

(miming)

Keyboard, Maroon Town--what are you
doing here?

(stricken with the
thought)

Lord, don't say it's my beautiful
Alice.

NED

(quickly)

No, no--Mom's fine. She's great.
It's my brother-in-law. Heart attack.
You?

ROBBIE

(indicates a closed
door)

Drummer's ex-wife--

(lowers his voice)

Prognosis negative.

(indicating bag)

Her bucket list.

Ned can see the logo of BLAKE'S, a five star eatery, think
Trotters.

NED

(impressed, peering
in)

What'd you get?

ROBBIE

Bacon wrapped meatloaf--

NED

May I?

Robbie lets Ned take the bag--

ROBBIE

Greek shrimp salad, chicken satay,
coconut lentils with curried root
caramel flan cheesecake and a whiskey
fudge tart.

As Robbie recites, Ned lifts out a plastic box, inhales the aroma.

NED
(bitterly, envious)
Adventurous.

Robbie's not listening to this. He's looking at his watch, looking at the closed door--

ROBBIE
(favor?)
Tell Lulu I waited as long as I could.
I've got a gig, she'll understand.

He moves Ned aside, clapping him on the shoulder--

NED
(no fucking way)
Whoa, hey--Robbie--

ROBBIE
(overriding)
Just give her the food, yeah? Kiss
your mother for me--

As he's gone. Ned stands there, holding the bag, trapped. The door to the room opens and two MALE TECHS come out, wheeling some kind of monitor--one glances at Ned--

TECH
Okay to go in now.

Hesitantly, Ned takes a slight step to the right so he can see inside the room of doom.

HIS POV: There's someone in the bed, her back is to us.

On Ned, hating it. Resigned, he enters the room. We go with him--

INT. LULU'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

NED
(awkwardly)
Robbie got you dinner from the
Blake's.
(no response)
He had a gig.
(no response)
Leave it on the tray table?

LULU rolls over and now we see her. Hot girl in a hospital gown. 20-something. She must have old Hollywood disease--she looks great, eyelashes, hair, good color, no trace of chick channel cancer. Whatever is killing this woman, it's strictly stealth.

LULU
Bacon wrapped meatloaf?

REVERSE: Close on Ned as cupid's arrow hits him right between the eyes--

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN'S VOLVO - NIGHT

John and Meryl. Again, Meryl driving, John slumped in the front, head back, exhausted. He looks at her.

JOHN
You don't seem very surprised.

MERYL
(reassuring)
I'm sure it's only a fling.

He doesn't find this comforting--quite the opposite. He suddenly feels quite righteous.

JOHN
(with an edge)
Fling. That's very light-hearted.
Fling. Spring fling. I see ladies
dancing with scarves around a ficus.

MERYL
I'm trying to think positively. A
fling isn't serious.

JOHN
Not when you call it a fling. Try
saying, "I'm sure it's only adultery."
You can't, can you?

MERYL
Why are you angry at me?

JOHN
Did I sound angry? I'm sorry. I'm
just surprised. I guess I didn't
know you had such a positive spin on
infidelity.

MERYL
I'm not condoning what he did.

JOHN
No, you're camouflaging it. Fling.

MERYL
Everyone has the capacity for
betrayal.

JOHN

Are you setting me up? You want me to sign off on your fling capacity? Should we include that in our quote wedding *goals* unquote?

She pulls the car over and stops.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

MERYL

We don't have to get married. We can just go on living together, it's fine.

JOHN

Meryl, stop it.

MERYL

Married didn't work for you. I know you're scared. You don't have to start a fight. Here.

She gives him the ring. He looks at it. Looks at her.

MERYL (CONT'D)

I know you, John.

JOHN

Do you?

Dare to believe. He takes her hand and puts the ring back on. She never takes her eyes off him. He pulls her to him, kissing her, reaching under her coat, pushing up her sweaters, cupping her breasts, eating her up alive.

CHICAGO - DAWN

CHURCH BELLS. The sun comes up over Lake Michigan on a cold fall morning. A man is running around the lake with his dog, the dog runs in front of the man, tripping him, the man falls.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - DAY (SUNDAY)

THE BABETTE'S FEAST SEQUENCE. CLOSE ON batter being poured into individual souffle dishes. Len, chef among chefs, is intense, frying, dipping, folding, wrapping, blending.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The restaurant is closed, chairs are on top of tables, Alice is checking the bar stock, SINGING/HUMMING Laura Nyro's "Save The Country"--she's still got voice. Come on people, come on children, come on down to the glory river--Alice turns--

HER POV: Len is there with a dish and spoon. She opens her mouth, he inserts the spoon of sauce. She swallows, kisses him. He tastes her and the food--both good.

INT. ICU - SAME TIME

CLOSE ON EMMA, wide awake, bleary, grim. She watches as the NURSE checks Will's vitals, IV, etc.

EMMA

(watching the nurse)

Suppose one of those things came loose or disconnected. Would his heart stop?

NURSE

Oh, don't you worry, those are just monitors.

EMMA

Oh.

(then, hopefully)

He's in pain, though, isn't he?

NURSE

(soothing)

We're giving him morphine.

EMMA

Will tolerates pain. A lot of pain. He really can. You could just--is that the morphine? He doesn't need it. I mean, could we stop it and just see how that goes?

NURSE

That's a question for Dr. Sandler.

EMMA

What's the goal of sexual intercourse?

NURSE

(without hesitation)

To free ourselves from the burden of self-awareness and embrace the nameless passion of life.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND CARROLL'S - DAY (AFTERNOON)

CLOSE ON A COIN SPINNING IN THE AIR. John and Ned.

NED

Heads.

John catches the coin--slaps it on the back of his hand. He and Ned both look. Tails.

JOHN

You get Len and the saga of the bad
ticker. I'll take Alice and Will's
wandering willie.

NED

Emma said tell them about his heart.

JOHN

(weary)

I say we put all the organs on the
table, get it over with.

NED

Toss you again. Two out of three.

JOHN

(surprised)

You want the willie?

NED

I want Alice and I want the heart.

JOHN

In your dreams.

NED

I'll give you anything.

JOHN

You always say that. You don't have
anything I want. You *never* had
anything I wanted.

NED

Sometimes I did.

JOHN

(no)

I always had what you wanted, I was
older, I had the cool stuff .

NED

You remember the mouse and the lion?
The lion lets the mouse live and
then years later the lion is trapped
in a net? I'm the mouse, John.

JOHN

Yeah, well, great. I'm not the lion.
And I hate when my father cries.

NED

(he won't cry)

Len?

JOHN
You want Mom, you get the weiner.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Alice is behind the bar, checking liquor, making a list--
John enters.

JOHN
Mom, sit down. I've got something to
tell you.

ALICE
(calmly)
Meryl's pregnant.
(patting her own hips)
I knew it the minute I saw her. Five
months?

JOHN
Meryl's not pregnant.

ALICE
(cheerfully)
Oh my. Well, more of her to love.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Len thrusts a pile of linen napkins at Ned.

NED
Will's not coming to Sunday dinner,
Pop. Can I give it to you straight,
gloves off? He's in recovery.

LEN
I'm in recovery, you're in recovery.
This whole damn country's in recovery.
(re napkins)
No fans, give me tulips.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

JOHN
It's about Emma.

ALICE
Emma's pregnant?

JOHN
(curious)
Why does somebody have to be pregnant?

ALICE
I don't know, Jackie, but they are.
A baby is born every two and a half
seconds.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

NED
Will had a heart attack.

LEN
(aghast)
Will? He's what, forty-three?

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

ALICE
She's a little old to be starting up
again, but let's pretend we think
it's great.

JOHN
Emma's not pregnant. Will had a fling
with some girl in a motel.

ALICE
Well, we can't pretend to think that's
great.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Len has to sit down.

NED
They replaced a valve or something,
he's doing fine.

LEN
Thank god. He has two little boys.

He turns away, bowing his head.

NED
(fearfully)
Len? Oh, Jeeze--Dad? Dad are you
crying? Will's going to be okay.
Come on. Don't. Hey. Come on. His
boys are in college.

Awkwardly, he puts his arms around Len, pats his back like a
child.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Alice has worked herself up into a maternal fury, slamming
plates down.

ALICE
Emma better get tested, and I mean
for everything. If he's given her
AIDS or warts I will get Mannie
(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

Schultz to break his kneecaps and I will personally blind him with a hot poker.

JOHN

Okay, but for now, act like you don't know.

ALICE

(snorts)

You think she won't tell me? Did you see what that girl did to Yves Montand? Dug him up out of his grave for a DNA sample. He was dead, but he wasn't finished being a father. She pulled him out of his final resting place, how about that? It's never over.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

LEN

Don't tell your mother until he's home from the hospital. She cries at the obits. She can't handle stress. She's a very fragile lady.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

ALICE

Not a word to your father about this. He'll have a stroke. He's becoming very religious. He wants me to convert so we can be buried together.

(bitterly)

You can dig us both up at the same time.

She heads for the kitchen, passing Ned as he comes into the dining room. He sits down at the table with John.

NED

Fifty-eight seconds. Wager?

JOHN

Thirty-three. Go.

NED

She says--

(falsetto)

Sit down, it's about Will.

JOHN

He says, I know, I know, the boy told me, feel my pulse, I'm going to outlive Dick Cheney.

NED

She says--
 (falsetto)
 Will Parrish better change his ways,
 or he's a dead man.

JOHN

He says, you're right, no more fat.

NED

(falsetto)
 Fat? You've seen her?

JOHN

He says--

He's cut off by a the SOUND OF TWO PEOPLE SUDDENLY SHOUTING UNINTELLIGIBLY "OH MY GOD" and "SON OF A BITCH"--John looks at his watch--

JOHN (CONT'D)

A record twenty-six.

He holds out his hand--pay up.

INT. ICU - CONTINUOUS

Will, still unconscious. Now we see Emma, she has her coat on, ready to leave. She takes a Sharpie out of her purse, uncaps it--moves his hospital gown and starts to write on his chest.

INT. CORRIDOR, ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Emma buttons her coat, waits for the elevator. It arrives with a soft "ping"--she gets ready to board but the doors open, disgorging her inescapable DNA: Alice, Len, Ned, John, Meryl and John's two kids, MOLLY and GWEN. They come bearing food containers. Emma is speechless, swept back by a tsunami wave of "Chicken Velasco, double peppers--" "What does the doctor say?" "Where can we sit?" "You don't think you're hungry, but you'll eat--" "I got the name of Clinton's cardiologist--" "Careful, Molly--don't let it spill"--"You thought we'd Sunday without you?" --"Have you called the boys?"--"Did you forget the bread?"--

SMASH CUT TO

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

The family has taken over the waiting area, a make-shift Sunday dinner, talking, passing plates, kids making a mess, etc. they are on dessert as MUSIC slowly FADES--and we HEAR several conversations, but we pay attention to:

ALICE
Stenosis? Why didn't it show up on
his CT scan? Give her more rice--

JOHN
Not everyone gets a scan.

GWEN
I don't want rice--

EMMA
Insurance doesn't cover it.

GWEN
There's dirt in it--

MERYL
Those are chocolate sprinkles.

LEN
(a little too vehement)
Step on a dollar to pick up a nickel,
look what it cost him.

Emma glances at him--

ALICE
He should have been thinking of you
and the boys.

NED
(to Gwen)
They're truffles, Gwen.

LEN
Cheap son of a bitch!

Len bangs a fist on the arm of the chair and Emma stares
hard at Ned--did you tell him? Ned quickly puts all his
attention on his food--Emma PINCHES his arm, really really
hard--he reacts, it hurts--(CONVERSATION goes on under this--
talk about the food, about other people who have had heart
attacks--girls clamoring for soda, there's no soda, yes there
is, there was a soda machine, etc.)

EMMA
(sotto)
The motel--you told Dad!

NED
(rubbing his arm,
honestly)
Did not.

ALICE
Does he need a heart transplant?
(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

He should get on the list. Remember when they first came out with the Prius?

EMMA

(answering Alice)

It's just a valve. They replaced it.

LEN

(dark)

Give him one from a *pig*, there's no difference.

Furious, Emma PINCHES Ned's arm again--

NED

(defensive, sotto)

John's plan, not mine!

INT. ICU - CONTINUOUS

SILENCE. A NURSE checks on Will, vitals, etc. notices something, moves his gown, looks at his chest. HER POV: written in Sharpie black ink "**do NOT resuscitate**"--a machine starts to BEEP--the nurse looks up at it--

BACK TO

INT. WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE: John is giving his girls change to buy soda and junk

JOHN

One soda each--no running--listen to Meryl--

As they go off, Emma accosts him, her voice low, she's pissed--

EMMA

(hurt)

You were going to lie to me? "*Cover his tuchas?*"

JOHN

You believe everything Ned tells you? Did he also mention he refused to tinkle on Will's grave?

EMMA

You're my lawyer. Get a jump on dividing the assets.

JOHN

(appalled)

Cold, Em. Will's not even conscious.
Don't you want to hear his version?
Mid life crisis?

EMMA

No excuse.

JOHN

Sexual addiction?

EMMA

(oh come on)

Tooth fairy?

JOHN

He could die.

EMMA

Death isn't a get out of jail card,
Jackie.

JOHN

Actually. It is.

(offering comfort)

Think of ladies dancing around a
ficus with scarves.

EMMA

What?

JOHN

Will had a fling, that's all.

DOC (O.S.)

Mrs. Parrish?

They both turn--everyone turns--there's Will's doctor--

DOC (CONT'D)

Good news.

INT. ICU - CONTINUOUS

SILENCE Will, alone. He moves, his eyes open. He tries to
focus. He moves his arm--reaching. His voice is barely a
croak--

WILL

Emma.

ANGLE: She is standing in the corner, behind his field of
vision. As he speaks her name, she closes her eyes. She goes
to him, takes his hand, holding it to her face, tears filling
her eyes, spilling over. She doesn't speak.

INT. WILL'S OFFICE, MARCO POLO SHIPPING WAREHOUSE - DAY

TITLE: ONE MONTH EARLIER.

Will's wildly disorganized office where somehow he keeps track of importing and exporting, buying and selling--his window overlooks the warehouse, crates and crates, packing foam, etc. A VOICE comes over his intercom.

INTERCOM VOICE

The new buyer from Seven Seas.

WILL

Okay.

He looks out the window and sees a young woman (JULIE) being told where to find him--she looks up as the worker points and he sees her face--HIS POV: Julie, gloriously beautiful.

AND WE BURST INTO PAUL THORN'S (Virgin Back Porch Records) spit and vinegar rendition of his song: "Everybody Looks Good At the Starting Line" as we

BEGIN END CREDITS OVER BLACK. ONE END CREDIT and then, as if we suddenly remembered, we CUT BACK TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ELEVATOR - SUNDAY NIGHT (NO MUSIC)

The entire family, minus Emma, crammed into the elevator, wearing their winter coats, Alice carrying bags of empty catering vessels, sharing space with two tattooed, corn chip sharing orderlies, and a lab tech having an angry, whispered conversation on his mobile phone. Meryl demonstrates her potential maternal strength by carrying Molly--not an easy task, the kid's feet dangle inches from the floor. Gwen clings to John's hand and appears to be practicing a tap dance that involves random kicks to John's shin. The ensuing conversations between Carrolls is a signature moment, a beautifully orchestrated polychoral motet, typical of how this family weaves itself together in celebration and in crisis--simultaneous cross talk.

Alice, distracted, swivels between Ned and Len--Len swearing under his breath as he tries to type into his iphone without his glasses, his gloves in his mouth--

ALICE

(to Ned)

What girl? Here in the hospital? A doctor?

NED

(to Alice)

A patient. Her name's Lulu.

ALICE
 (alarmed, to Ned)
 Did you wash your hands?

JOHN
 (to Alice, dryly)
 She's not contagious, she's terminal.

MERYL
 (to John)
 Shouldn't one of us stay here with
 Emma?

Behind Alice, John shakes his head at Meryl, making eyes, no
 no no--

ALICE
 (relieved, to Ned)
 That's good. Wash them anyway.
 (to Meryl)
 Emma's going home, isn't she, Jackie?

Before John has to answer, Len is showing Alice his phone--

LEN
 Global ischemia--it was on Will's
 chart--they cut off the blood to his
 brain--odds are, the boy's got pump
 head--

ALICE
 Pump head?

MERYL
 (reassuring)
 Really, its too soon to tell.

NED
 (to John, troubled)
 I'm very drawn to Lulu.

ALICE
 (upset, to Len)
 Go back up. Ask him who's president.

LEN
 Not my table. Let his whore quiz
 him--

JOHN
 (dryly, to Ned)
 You're drawn to the expiration date
 on her ass.

LEN
 --let her take him to the can--

JOHN

(off Ned)

Don't be offended. I'm not implying
you're a ghoul.

ALICE

You don't know she's a whore. It
could be love. It could be the
cashier at Food Smart.

(regretfully)

Emma will never abandon him. Not if
he's a pump head.

MERYL

(confiding)

She told John to divide their assets.

LEN

(to Alice)

Hear that?

ALICE

(simultaneous with
John)

He's the father of her boys, she
won't let him sit in his own filth.
Don't you think I know my own
daughter?

JOHN

(to Ned, simultaneous
with Alice)

Sustaining passion and intimacy is a
25K, mostly uphill. I know you for
a sprinter. Good four point stance,
just the right proportion of fast
twitch muscles for the 100 yard dash.

ALICE

(turning to John)

Jackie, when Emma told you to divide
the assets, did she know Will was a
pump head?

JOHN

(to Ned)

Now that I think about it, Terminal
Girl is perfect for you--

(to Alice, what the
fuck)

Pump head?

SMASH TO BLACK AS WE BURST BACK INTO PAUL THORN'S "Everybody
Looks Good At the Starting Line"

CONTINUE END CREDITS OVER BLACK.