

The Kids Are All Right

by
Lisa Cholodenko & Stuart Blumberg

March 2009

Anonymous Donor LLC., Copyright 2009
c/o Antidote Films, Inc.
200 Varick Street, Room 502
New York, NY 10014

FADE UP ON:

The humming stillness of an American suburb on a summer's day: nannies push strollers, joggers jog, mailmen deliver, dogs are walked, kids shoot hoop in wide open driveways.

A slow moving camera tracks across block after block of charming, evenly spaced houses on wide, shady streets. Here it seems reasonableness and order has prevailed against the forces of entropy and chaos.

This where progressive urbanites have flocked for space and a more family-friendly lifestyle.

CHYRON: SHERMAN OAKS, CA. - JULY

It is on one of these quiet, tree-lined streets that we pick up two young athletic-looking boys riding bikes:

LASER ALLGOOD (15)...long floppy hair covering moody eyes and thoughts and his friend, Clay (15)...bigger, more aggressive.

We follow the young men as they pull up to a more run-down, less gentrified house with a dead front lawn.

INT. CLAY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

They walk inside. The place is decorated in cheap, dated Levitz furniture. A lack of female presence is palpable.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Clay and Laser enter the master bathroom. Clay heads right for the medicine cabinet, opens it up. They rummage through the bottles. Clay opens a bottle of Percocet and hands one to Laser.

LASER

What do these do?

Clay hits Laser in the arm, hard.

LASER (CONT'D)

Ow!

CLAY

Make you not feel that.

LASER

(trying to sound tough)
Fuck you, dude.

CLAY

Dude, quit being a pussy.

Clay pops a pill. Hands one to Laser.

INT. CLAY'S HOUSE - TV ROOM - LATER

Laser and Clay wrestle sloppily on the floor while Clay's DAD watches a baseball game on TV. They bump into the couch. Clay's dad looks back, menacing.

CLAY'S DAD

Hey, ladies! Take it down a notch.

The boys keep wrestling, dopey from the pills. Again, they knock into the couch. Clay's dad spins around, pissed.

CLAY'S DAD (CONT'D)

What did I just say?!

Clay's Dad grabs Clay, pulls him off of Laser and over the couch. Clay tries to fight off his dad but slowly we realize each is having fun rough-housing with the other.

Dad soon manages to get his son in a headlock, forcing the boy's face into his big fat sweaty armpit.

CLAY

Let me go!

CLAY'S DAD

Don't do the crime if you can't do the time.

CLAY

(laughing)

Dad, your pits smell like burnt ass! Get off me!

As Laser observes this male-bonding between father and son, we note a trace of longing on his face.

INT. ROOM - DAY

We're tight on a young WOMAN reclining on a worn day-bed, as a disembodied male voice poses questions.

MALE VOICE

Would you say you're more a) serious or b) easy going?

JONI

Serious.

This is JONI ALLGOOD - 18

Hers is an unexploited beauty. Joni's a girl who cares more about a life of the mind than the cut of her jeans, someone who's felt the need to "ace it" from an early age.

MALE VOICE

In making decisions do you feel more comfortable with a) standards or b) feelings.

JONI

What if it's both?

MALE VOICE

You have to pick one.

JONI

Standards.

MALE VOICE

When the phone rings do you a) hasten to get it first or b) hope someone else will answer?

We hear a knock and an attractive INDIAN WOMAN (40's) enters. There's nothing traditional about her, she's culturally American through and through.

INDIAN WOMAN

Jai, are you almost done?

PULL BACK to reveal JAI DOSAJ, 17, Joni's best friend. Jai's preternaturally mature, an old soul in a young body. His professorial dress, glasses, khakis, white oxford, underscores this. His seriousness covers up a deep sensitivity to others. In particular, Joni.

JAI

Mom, please, we're right in the middle of the Myers/Briggs test.

MRS. DOSAJ

Sorry, luvvie. Joni, would you like to stay for dinner?

JONI

No, thank you, Mrs. Dosaj. My mom's are having a little shindig for me tonight.

MRS. DOSAJ

Oh, right! Of course! It's your birthday! Jai's been so excited--

Jai pops up, cuts her off.

JAI

Mom! I'll be right down.

Mrs. Dosaj disappears and Joni gets up to go.

JAI (CONT'D)

Wait, just a second!

Jai reaches under his bed and pulls out an impeccably-wrapped present. He hands it to Joni.

JAI (CONT'D)

Here. Happy Birthday.

JONI

Jai, you didn't need to do that!

JAI

I know...
(flushed; softly)
I wanted to.

Joni takes off the wrapping and we see that Jai's bought her a pair of high-end Leica binoculars.

JONI

Oh my god! These are so beautiful. That was so nice. Thank you.

JAI

For next time.

Joni gives Jai a thank-you hug. As Joni parts we can tell Jai wishes the hug would last longer.

INT. VOLVO STATION WAGON - DAY

A WOMAN drives in her station wagon. She's listening to a Meditation CD by Eckhardt Tolle, *"The Power of Now"* guru.

ECKHARDT TOLLE (ON CD)
 If we see our so-called limitations
 with clarity, precision,
 gentleness, good-heartedness and
 kindness and, having seen them
 fully, then let go...

This is JULES ALLGOOD (late 40's)

Fair-skinned, attractive and highly sensitive, Jules is one
 of those people forgets the boundaries a little too often.

EXT. STREET - LATINO NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

LUIS RAMIREZ (30's) stands in front of a beat up pick-up
 truck covered in AA slogan stickers. He has a thick barrio
 accent and eats a snow-cone.

Standing next to him is Jules, anxiously writing a check.

JULES
 What about the smog inspection?

LUIS
 It passed with colors. I have the
 paper.
 (then)
 You gonna drive this truck?

Jules hands him the check.

JULES
 Yeah. I'm starting a landscaping
 business.

LUIS
 (angling for job)
 Oh. I do gardening--

JULES
 (sensitive)
 It's not gardening, it's landscape
 design!

LUIS
 Oh. This your first business?

JULES

Yeah, it's my...well, no, actually I had business a few years ago importing Indonesian furniture, but it didn't work out cause I had kids and I wasn't totally focused on it. I mean you have to be totally focused for a business to work and it's just a better time for me now, you know what I mean?

Luis takes a bite of his snow cone.

LUIS

Let me know if you need someone.

INT. GYNECOLOGIST'S OFFICE - EXAM ROOM - DAY

An OB/GYN, DR NIC(OLE) ALLGOOD (late 40's) gives a PREGNANT WOMAN an ultrasound. Nic's kind of a sexy MD. The crisp white shirt, the classic tortoise shell-glasses, it all says driven, focused, detail-obsessed. This almost neurotic put-togetherness only makes her sexier.

Both women look at the screen. Nic takes measurements.

NIC

Everything's looking great.

PREGNANT WOMAN

Really? Her head's not too big?

NIC

Nope. Her head looks perfect.

PREGNANT WOMAN

You think it can get through?

NIC

I know it can get through! Listen, you're gonna do great. You're at the beginning of an incredible journey. And guess what, it's gonna fly by.

PREGNANT WOMAN

That's what everyone tells me...

NIC

Trust me, it's true. My daughter's turning 18 today.

PREGNANT WOMAN
 Congratulations. 18. Wow.

NIC
 Wow and Pow! It feels like just
 last week she was a little squishy
 pink creature I could hold in one
 hand...you know?...
 (getting *vakleempt*)
 ...with that delicious newborn baby
 smell and those teeny tiny toes and
 that fuzzy little peach butt...

Nic catches herself devolving and snaps back into doctor mode, starts wiping the goo off the woman's belly.

NIC (CONT'D)
 Okay, go ahead and get dressed.

Nic throws the gooey towel away, quickly heads to the door.

EXT. HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - MAGIC HOUR

A cheerful well-tended, cornflower-blue two story colonial. Immaculately groomed front lawn. A mail box which reads: "*THE ALLGOODS*" The requisite Volvo station wagon in the driveway which looks oddly paired with Jules' "new" truck.

CARS pulls up to the house, disgorging TEENAGERS. The kids bear gifts as they head up to the front door.

EXT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - BACKYARD - MAGIC HOUR

The backyard is festooned in birthday party mode. Music plays. Kids sitting around talking, laughing, eating.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jules cuts slices from a large chocolate cake. Nic comes over with a tall glass of red and hugs Jules.

NIC
 That cake looks incredible, honey.

JULES
 Yeah, I think it came out good.
 You wanna taste?

NIC
No, I'm gonna wait. Hey, whose
truck is that in the driveway?

JULES
It's mine.

NIC
Yours?!

JULES
(stiffening)
Can we talk about it later? After
the party?

NIC
(curt)
Sure.
(re: cake)
Smaller pieces, hon.

Nic walks off.

BACK OUTSIDE --

Joni sits with a bunch of friends. Jai's there and so is
SASHA, Joni's best girl friend. Saucy, buxom, the yin to
Joni's yang, Sasha stares at a laptop computer, smiling.

SASHA
Oh my God, Joni, there are so many
hotties in your class. You are so
gonna hook up the first week.

JONI
Just cause you're like a 24 hour
drive-thru doesn't mean I have to
be.

This is their running schtick. Joni calls Sasha a tramp.
Sasha calls Joni a prude. They love it.

SASHA
Come on. You worked your ass off.
You got into Stanford. Bust out,
sister! Go get some!

JAI
 You know, Sasha, Freud theorized
 that overtly sexual people are
 usually compensating for deep
 narcissistic injuries.

SASHA
 Jai, do you jerk off to the DSMV?!

JAI
Quod erat demonstrandum...

JONI
 Guys, come on, knock it off.

SASHA
 Whatever. I don't understand why
 you guys don't just do it already
 and get it over with.

Jai and Joni both look off, mortified. Nic busts into this
 tense moment with her glass of red and plum-stained teeth.

NIC
 Hey, grown-ups! Everybody having a
 good time?

The kids respond positively. Joni notices something.

JONI
 Mom...

NIC
 Yes, sweetie?

Joni mimes wiping her teeth. Nic starts boozily licking at
 her stained teeth, then grabs Joni in a big hug.

NIC (CONT'D)
 Look at my baby all grown up...

SASHA
 I know. Barely legal, right?

Nic gives Sasha a dirty look and walks off.

AT THE EDGE OF THE YARD --

Clay and Laser are kung-fu fighting. Laser kicks at Clay.
 Clay grabs his leg and takes him down to the ground. They
 land on top of each other.

Jules watches, concerned. Clay breaks free and stands up.

CLAY

Dude, I gotta drop some friends at the lake. Back in ten.

Clay walks inside. Jules comes over to Laser.

JULES

Honey, can I ask you something?

LASER

What?

Jules puts her hand on Laser's forearm and starts making maternal windshield wiper strokes with her thumb.

JULES

What do you get from your relationship with Clay?

LASER

What do you mean?

JULES

Do you feel like Clay's the kind of person who will help you grow...

LASER

Help me grow?

JULES

I just asking.

Laser looks down at Jules' thumb on his arm.

LASER

Mom, you're windshield wiping me again.

Jules looks down and stops.

JULES

Sorry.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The party's over. The guests have gone. Joni and Jules are washing up by the sink. Nic comes over and puts her arms around Joni.

NIC
Did your friends have a good time?

JONI
Yeah, they did. Thanks so much.

NIC
You're so welcome.
(beat)
You know, I'm thinking, you should probably get a jump on your thank-you notes tonight.

One might expect a teen-ager to eye-roll this kind of suggestion, but not Joni. She's a habitual people-pleaser.

JONI
Yeah, that's a good idea.

JULES
Give her a second, honey. The party just ended.

NIC
I'm just saying it's just easier to knock 'em out when it's fresh...

She also moonlights as the family referee.

JONI
(to Jules)
Mom, it's fine. I can start them tonight.

JULES
(to Nic)
Can't you just let her enjoy her evening?

NIC
Look, if it was up to you, our kids wouldn't even write thank you notes, they'd just send out good vibes.

A typical married couple, Nic and Jules have their menu of pet-peeves, and we've just witnessed one of them.

INT. JONI'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

True to her word, Joni's at her desk cranking out those thank-you notes. Laser knocks and enters.

LASER
Hey. Happy Birthday.

Laser give Joni a one armed hug and hands her a present. She opens it and smirks. It's The Complete Joni Mitchell Songbook.

JONI
Very funny, Laser.

Laser has more business to attend to.

LASER
I was wondering, you know, now that you're 18...
(beat)
You gonna try to find our donor?

JONI
Laser, I already told you...

LASER
I know. I was just wondering if you changed your mind.

JONI
No. I haven't.

LASER
How can you not even be curious?!

JONI
Sorry, I'm just not.
(off his stare)
Look, I'm leaving soon, I don't want to deal with that right now.
(co-dependent leak)
And also, that could really hurt moms' feelings...

LASER
God, why do you worry about them so much? They don't even have to know about it!

JONI

Sorry, Laser, but I'm not doing it.
(consolation prize)
You can do it when you turn 18.

Laser stands there, disappointed and fuming.

LASER

I never ask you for anything.

Laser walks out of the room. Joni feels horrible.

INT. NIC AND JULES BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Nic and Jules lay in bed watching TV, unwinding from the day.

NIC

I just don't understand why you
bought the truck *now*.

JULES

(defensive)
If I'm gonna get this business
going then I'm gonna need something
to haul my equipment in. Right?

NIC

Okay. It just seems a little
cart before the horse.

JULES

What does that mean?

NIC

Well, you don't even have any
clients yet...

JULES

Well you're the one who's always
telling me to "act as if!"

NIC

(back peddling)
No, you're right. I'm sorry. It's
good you bought the truck.

The women settle back. Nic can tell she's made Jules feel
bad. She caresses her arm, wanting to make it better.

NIC (CONT'D)
(gingerly)
Hey.

Jules doesn't look at Nic. She keeps her eyes on the TV

NIC (CONT'D)
Wanna watch a movie?

Jules perks up. Nic immediately regrets her suggestion.

JULES
Really?

NIC
Yeah. We haven't done that in a
while.

SECONDS LATER -- NIC AND JULES

are cozied up side-by-side facing the TV.

ANGLE ON - THE TV

The volume is turned low on TWO NAKED MEN lying on a *chaise long*. One guy fellating the other. Whatever the reason, this man-on-man action usually gets Nic and Jules going.

ANGLE ON - THE BED

We now only see Nic. Jules has slipped under the blanket, and is now between Nic's legs. We see Nic trying to get into it, but having a hard time.

NIC (CONT'D)
(squinching)
I don't like the guys in this one.
They're too shaved.

JULES
(muffled)
Don't focus on it.

NIC
How about the one with the biker
gang?

JULES
We left it in Hawaii.

Jules wrestles with the blankets. Wants them out of her way.

NIC
 (pulling them back up)
 I'm cold, honey.

JULES
 Sorry. I couldn't breathe.

Jules wrangles the blankets, trying cover her partner. The transition is awkward and Jules gets caught in the top sheet.

As Nic repositions herself, she leans on the VOLUME CONTROL BUTTON and suddenly the porn is blasting at full volume.

MAN IN MOVIE
 Suck that fat cock mother-fucker...

NIC
Shit!! Where's the remote?!

MAN IN MOVIE
 I'm gonna fuck that tight ass!...

Jules and Nic both dive for the remote. It's lost under the mass of bedding. Nic finally recovers it and hits mute.

NIC
 Jesus Christ!

Nic flops back, traumatized.

NIC (CONT'D)
 The whole neighborhood heard that!

JULES
 No, they didn't.

NIC
 Well *that* was a vibe kill.

Jules looks ready to resume.

JULES
 Let it go, honey.

NIC
 I don't think I can.

Jules comes out of the blankets and flops back on the pillows. She's clearly disappointed.

JULES

You're the one who wanted to watch
a movie.

NIC

I know. I'm sorry.

Nic hits the light and wraps herself tightly around Jules.

NIC (CONT'D)

I love you, chicken.

JULES

Love you, too.

Jules lays wide awake wondering: "What just happened?"

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - HOME OFFICE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Joni's in Nic's home office, rummaging through a desk drawer. She pulls out a FOLDER and studies the cover. We see the words: "*California Cryobank: When You Succeed, We Succeed.*"

Joni opens the file and looks at the documents within.

CLOSE ON a PHOTO of a 4 YEAR-OLD BOY standing in a sandbox looking straight into a camera with a big, open grin.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. FARM - DAY

We see that boy, 35 years later, holding up a funky-shaped bright yellow TOMATO with that self-same open grin.

This is PAUL HATFIELD, Joni and Laser's biological father.

Dressed in Carhartt work-pants and worn-out vintage T-shirt, Paul has a strange attractiveness that comes from knowing he doesn't need to try so hard.

PAUL

Can anyone tell me what this is?

REVERSE ONTO a group of unbearably cute 6 year-old AFRICAN AMERICAN and LATINO KIDS in matching blue summer program T-shirts staring blankly at the strange looking fruit.

PAUL (CONT'D)

It's a tomato.

ADORABLE KID
That's not a tomato!

PAUL
Yes, it is. It's called an heirloom tomato. But you probably don't recognize it because you're used to tomatoes looking like this.

Paul holds up a generic beefsteak tomato.

ADORABLE KID #2
Why don't you grow normal tomatoes like that?

PAUL
(sincere)
Because we don't want to be normal. We want everything we grow here to be unique and exceptional, just like you are.

The kids are digging Paul. And so is a young crunchy-hot farm volunteer, BROOKE (19) who watches Paul's talk, rapt.

PAUL (CONT'D)
And you know what the coolest part is? I can take a big basket of food from the garden and walk right over there to my restaurant and serve it to people that same day...

We PULL BACK to reveal we're in an URBAN GARDEN in the middle of Echo Park, Los Angeles. And the garden is in fact abutting a renovated commercial space which houses...

INT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT - "WYSIWYG" - DAY

Paul walks in carrying a basket of produce. The place is warm and homey and simple: long oak communal tables, pressed-tin ceiling, plank wood floors, eclectic vintage decor.

Paul approaches TANYA, (30's) the restaurant hostess, sporting an Eryka Badu super-fro and serious sex appeal.

TANYA
How'd it go?

PAUL
Oh my god. You should've come over. Those were some cute-ass kids.

TANYA
Yeah? Get you thinking?

PAUL
What? About having kids?

TANYA
Yeah.

PAUL
Definitely...at some point...

TANYA
This century?

PAUL
Ah, Tanya, always a delight.

TANYA
Seth needs to talk to you.

PAUL
Of course he does.

Paul heads for the kitchen as his cell rings. He answers.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hello.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Hi, is this Paul Hatfield?

PAUL
It is. Who's this?

WOMAN'S VOICE
My name is Wendy Minter. I'm
calling from the California
Cryobank.

PAUL
Okay. What can I do for you?

WENDY (O.S.)
I just need to confirm this is the
same Paul Hatfield who donated
sperm at our facility?

At the mention of the word sperm, Paul goes pale.

PAUL
Yeah...that's me...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Paul enters. The kitchen is humming with COOKS prepping for the dinner rush. He looks around for a quiet spot.

WENDY (O.S.)

As you know the Cryobank has a confidentiality policy which prohibits us from releasing your identity without your consent.

A cook, SETH, approaches Paul to speak with him. Paul nods: "Can't talk." Hands him the basket of produce.

PAUL

Uh-huh.

Paul opens the walk-in FREEZER door and steps inside.

INT. WALK-IN FREEZER - SAME

Paul steps inside.

WENDY (O.S.)

Well we've been contacted by a young woman conceived using your semen, and she's asked if you'd be open to having contact with her.

Paul's speechless. We can almost hear his heart pounding.

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

Mr. Hatfield?

PAUL

Yeah. I'm here...

He exhales, his breath is visible in the freezing locker.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - ECHO PARK - ESTABLISHING

At the top of a hill, perched on a large weedy lot, sits a low-slung craftsman from the 20's. In the driveway we see a car, an old Ford truck and a motorcycle.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul and Tanya, the manager we met earlier, enjoy a hot sweaty fuck.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Tanya gets dressed while Paul lays on his messy bed in his boxers.

TANYA

You must have figured you'd get this call at some point.

PAUL

Not really. I mean, I wasn't thinking too far into the future. You know? I was 19. And truthfully I wasn't sure anyone would actually use my stuff anyway.

Tanya moves in closer, sexy.

TANYA

(flirty)
Why not? I'd use it.

PAUL

(ignoring the innuendo)
God this is so weird.

TANYA

So what are you gonna do?

PAUL

I don't know. A part of me is totally curious. And I sort of feel obligated. I mean, she wants to meet me. It's probably a really big thing for her, you know?

TANYA

Uh huh. So what's the problem?

PAUL

I don't know. What if she's looking for some big relationship?

TANYA

I thought you said you wanted kids
someday.

PAUL

Yeah. My own kids.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - LEO CARRILLO STATE PARK - DAY

Joni and Jai sit in a small BIRD BLIND making a day of it, spotting different birds with high-powered Leica binoculars and checking them off in their Sibley's bird journals. They've brought provisions for the day, thermoses of green tea and plates of roast chicken and cranberry scones.

JAI

Ash-Throated Flycatcher at my two
o'clock.

JONI

Let me see.

JAI

Or is that the Great Crested
Flycatcher? Here. Take a look.

Joni takes the nocs from Jai. Finds the bird.

JONI

It's got a big tuft...

Jai stares at Joni, totally smitten. He leans in and is about to gently rest his head on her shoulder when she turns to him. He snaps back up...

JONI (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

JAI

Yeah, did you see it?!

Joni's cell phone rings in her bag. Joni digs to find it.

JAI (CONT'D)

(re: the loud ringer)

Joni!

JONI

Sorry, I forgot!

She pulls the phone out looks at the incoming number.

JONI (CONT'D)
Who's in 213?

Jai stares at her balefully.

JAI
Just turn it off!

She puts up the "just a second" finger" and quickly exits the back of the blind, answering...

JONI
Hello?

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

Paul anxiously paces his overgrown back-yard on his cell phone. He picks weeds as he talks. Conversation intercut.

PAUL
Hi, I'm looking for Joni Allgood.

JONI
This is she...

PAUL
Hi. This is Paul Hatfield...
(clearing his throat)
Uh, your donor...?

Joni's comes to full attention.

JONI
Oh! Hi...

PAUL
Sorry it took a little bit to call.

JONI
(flustered)
No, it's okay...

PAUL
So...
(doesn't know what to say)
How are you?

JONI
I'm good. How are you?

PAUL
I'm well, thanks.

Banal, awkward pause. Paul jumps in to fill the void.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Yeah, so Wendy at the Cryobank said
you were interested in meeting?

The mention of a meeting snaps Joni back to business. She remembers she'd hoped to keep emotion out of this exchange.

JONI
Yeah, no, well, it's really my
brother who wants to meet you.

PAUL
(thrown)
Your brother?

JONI
Well, technically he's my half-
brother. Each of my moms had a
kid, you know, with your sperm...

PAUL
Right. Both of them?

JONI
Yeah.

PAUL
Like in two?

JONI
Yes, like in gay.

PAUL
Okay. Great.

Joni senses Paul's tripping on the wealth of information she's just laid on him. There's a long pause.

JONI
Kind of a lot to process, huh?

PAUL
(trying to mask how
freaked he is)
Yeah...but no, I mean...it's good.
It's all good...

INT. LASER'S ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Laser's on his lap-top. Joni enters without knocking. Laser quickly shuts his lap-top, pissed at the intrusion.

LASER

What?!

Joni looks like she has big news.

INT. JONI'S CAR - NEXT DAY

Joni and Laser drive to meet their biological father. They're both clearly anxious. After a beat...

JONI

I just don't want you to have big expectations.

LASER

Will you quit saying that? I don't have any expectations. I just want to meet the guy!

JONI

Okay. I'm just saying be prepared.

LASER

Prepared for what?!

JONI

I don't know, Laser! He might be really weird. I mean, he donated sperm. That's like...weird.

LASER

Well if he hadn't done it, you wouldn't be here. So respect, yo!

Joni looks at her brother: "respect, yo?"

INT. "EL CHOLO", MEXICAN RESTAURANT - DAY

Paul sits alone at a table facing the entrance. He nervously checks the door as customers enter.

MINUTES LATER --

Joni and Laser enter the restaurant. They look nervous too.

ANGLE ON PAUL

He studies them for a beat, sees them looking around. Figures they must be "his kids." They look in his direction, spot him. He raises his hand, stands. They walk over.

The moment is rife, as you can imagine. Call him whatever you want, this man is their genetic father. Paul holds out his hand. Shakes Joni's hand first.

PAUL

Joni. Hey. Nice to meet you.

JONI

Nice to meet you too.

Paul holds out a hand to Laser.

PAUL

Laser, right?

LASER

Right.

PAUL

Cool name. I like that.

LASER

Thanks.

No one knows what comes next. Paul turns...

PAUL

I got us a table.

They all sit. The kids can't help but study Paul's face for traces of themselves. Paul does the same.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(ice-breaking)

Okay. So. Here we are...

Joni and Laser smile nervously, nodding: "yeah..."

PAUL (CONT'D)

Listen, feel free and ask me anything you want, okay?

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)
 (off their stares)
 Or we can just hang out. Whatever
 you guys want to do.

LASER/JONI
 Okay.

Joni turns to Laser. He looks star-struck. Paul jumps in.

PAUL
 Anything you want to ask me, Laser?

LASER
 I...uh...I didn't really have any
 specific questions...

PAUL
 (helping him out)
 That's fine, we can just talk. I'd
 love to know about you guys. What
 about you, Laser? What do you like
 to do?

Laser can't get the words out, so Joni jumps in.

JONI
 Laser's an amazing athlete.

PAUL
 Oh yeah? Great. What do you play?

LASER
 I don't know. Soccer. Baseball.
 Basketball.

PAUL
 I love basketball.

LASER
 (excited)
 Yeah? Were you ever on a team?

PAUL
 Yeah, I played in high school.

This news secretly tickles Laser.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 What about you, Joni? You like
 sports too?

JONI
 A little. Not as much as Laser.

LASER
Joni's the brains in the family.

PAUL
Oh yeah?

LASER
Yeah, she like got an 800 on her
verbal SAT...

PAUL
An 800? That's like a perfect
score, right?

LASER
Yeah, she's going to Stanford in
September.

PAUL
Shut the front door!

Joni and Laser laugh at that.

JONI
(tickled)
Did you make that up?

PAUL
No, it's an old expression. You've
never heard that?

JONI
No. It's funny.

PAUL
Use it. It's a freebie.

Joni smiles, warming to Paul.

JONI
So what do you do?

PAUL
Well, a few things. I own a
restaurant in Echo Park.

LASER
What kind?

PAUL
Just good, old-fashioned
organically-grown American food.

JONI
(excited)
I'm totally into organic food.

LASER
(busting her)
You are?

JONI
Uh, yeah Laser! I've been like
trying to get moms to buy organic
for forever.
(back to Paul)
So do you get your food from
farmers' markets?

PAUL
No, actually, I have a community
farm next to the restaurant and we
get most of our food there.

JONI
That's so cool.

PAUL
Yeah, it's pretty great. You
should come check it out some time.

JONI
Yeah. Maybe...

Joni feels guilty. She wanted to get in and get out. But
now she's really enjoying this guy.

LASER
So, do you like raise pigs and
stuff?

PAUL
No, sadly, that's illegal in the
city. But we have some chickens.

Joni and Laser share a look: could their bio-dad be any
cooler?

EXT. "EL CHOLO" - DAY

The answer is...yes he can. The kids find this out when they
exit the restaurant with Paul and he walks over to a bitchin'
classic BMW motorcycle.

LASER
 (in awe)
 Is that yours?

PAUL
 Yeah. You like motorcycles?

LASER
 Yeah, but...our moms are kind of
 anti-motorcycle.

JONI
 And by "kind of" he means they'd
 kill us if we ever rode one.

PAUL
 That's too bad. They're fun.

Time to say goodbye. Again, no one knows the protocol here.
 After an awkward beat, Paul holds out his arms for hugs.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Well, it was great to meet you
 guys.

He and Joni hug.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 I hope this was okay.

JONI
 Yeah...totally...thank you.

Now Paul and Laser share a somewhat awkward man-hug.

PAUL
 Really nice to meet you, Laser.

LASER
 You too.

They disengage. Paul watches as Joni and Laser walk away.
 He looks moved by the meeting.

INT. JONI'S CAR - DAY

Joni and Laser head back to Sherman Oaks. They both look a
 little buzzed from their time with Paul.

LASER
 See? He wasn't weird.

JONI
No. Not at all.

The same thought crosses their minds simultaneously.

JONI (CONT'D)
We're not telling moms.

LASER
Yeah, no way.

EXT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - DINING ROOM - THAT EVENING

The family's at dinner. Joni and Laser share that "I have a secret" look. Nic turns to Laser.

NIC
How was your day, honey?

LASER
Fine.

JULES
What about you, Joni?

JONI
Okay.

Nic raises her wine glass.

NIC
Well, Jules, we really did it.
We've raised two scintillating
conversationalists.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - TV ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Nic and Jules are cuddled up affectionately on the couch watching cable. They see Laser on his way out of the house.

JULES
Hey bug, come here. We're watching
"Locked Up Abroad: Uganda."

LASER
I already saw it. It was gnarly.

NIC
Where are you going?

LASER
Clay's house.

Jules and Nic shoot each other a concerned look.

NIC
Don't be back late, okay?

LASER
I know.

JULES
Can I have a hug before you go?

LASER
Mom...

JULES
Just a quick one. Please!

LASER
(pointing to Nic)
Hug her. That's what she's there
for.

Laser leaves. Nic hits mute on the TV, looks at Jules.

NIC
I don't know what to think.

JULES
Neither do I.

NIC
Maybe we should just sit him down
and ask him.

JULES
What? "Are you and Clay fucking?"

NIC
"Exploring" is the word I'd use...

JULES
And what if he is "exploring?"
This is the age for that. Why
should we care?

NIC
We shouldn't. It's just...
(beat)
I can just hear somebody saying:
(MORE)

NIC (CONT'D)
"Goddamn, there go those gays again
spitting out more gays."

JULES
"Spitting out more gays?"

NIC
(on a roll)
Look, he can explore if he wants
to. I just don't understand why
he's exploring with that loser.

JULES
We don't even know what the deal
is. We're jumping to conclusions.

NIC
I feel like he has so much
potential and he's just wasting it.

Nic's comment hits a nerve in Jules.

JULES
What are you trying to say?

NIC
What do you mean, what am I trying
to say?

JULES
I don't know. It feels like
there's some subtext here.

NIC
What are you talking about?

JULES
I don't know: Like mother like son?
Is that it? Both of us aimless,
wandering in the darkness, "wasting
our potential?"

NIC
What kind of pretzel logic is that?

JULES
Well, maybe it hasn't risen to the
plane of consciousness for you yet.

NIC
Honey, you're on a whole other
tangent and I have no idea how you
got there.

Nic clicks the volume back on, freezing Jules out.

INT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

Paul and Tanya sit at the bar, eating family-meal.

TANYA
What were they like?

PAUL
They were sweet. They were good kids. The boy's this kind of gawky, sensitive jock and the girl's kind of innocent but whip-smart and super-cute...

TANYA
Sounds like you guys connected.

PAUL
You know, we kinda did.

TANYA
So how'd you leave it? Are you gonna see them again?

PAUL
I don't know. We didn't really leave it anywhere.

Brooke, the sexy Wiccan volunteer, comes up to Paul bearing a basket of freshly-picked fruits.

BROOKE
Hey Paul.

Paul leans over the basket.

PAUL
Whatcha got? Oh cool. First strawberries of the season.

BROOKE
Aren't they beautiful? I thought you should have the first taste.

And with that, she smiles, hands him the basket and leaves.

TANYA
(mimicking Brooke)
"I thought you should have the
first taste...
(beat)
...of my pussy."

PAUL
That's not fair.

TANYA
(softly)
Hey, you wanna hook up later?

Paul stiffens a bit.

PAUL
I don't think I can tonight.

TANYA
(sensing a shift)
Alright, when's good?

PAUL
Actually, this whole week's kind of
funky. Can we figure it out later?

TANYA
(hurt; surprised)
Yeah. Alright.

INT. NIC AND JULES BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Clay rummages through the top drawer of Jules' dresser.
Laser stands behind him, uncomfortable.

LASER
Dude, I don't think they smoke pot.

CLAY
Hold up.

Clay turns around holding up one of the mom's DVDs.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Dude, we're watching this.

INT. LASER'S ROOM - DAY

Laser and Clay sit on the bed. They look at each other, giddy. Then Laser hits play.

ON SCREEN

We see a COP giving a young MAN a BLOW-JOB. Laser and Clay sit motionless, shocked, disgusted, riveted.

CLAY

Think the whole thing's like this?

LASER

Want me to fast-forward?

Clay doesn't answer. They just keep watching.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The room is spare, not from any aesthetic choice, but from a life spent mostly out of the house. Books piled up. A few guitars on stands. The vase with fresh cut flowers keeps it from being a complete bachelor pad.

Paul sits on the couch, on his computer. His cell rings.

PAUL

Hello?

JONI'S VOICE (ON PHONE)

Paul?

PAUL

Yes?

JONI VOICE (ON PHONE)

Hey. It's Joni...?

Paul sits right up.

PAUL

Yeah, hey! Of course. How you doing?

EXT. AROMA CAFE - CONVERSATION INTERCUT

Joni's sitting at a wrought-iron table in the outdoor courtyard, her salad and Arnold Palmer untouched.

JONI

Good. I just wanted to say thanks again for the other day.

PAUL

Absolutely. I really enjoyed it.

JONI

Is it an okay time to talk?

PAUL

It's great. What are you up to?

EXT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Jules pulls her truck into the driveway, almost running over Laser's bike.

INT. LASER'S ROOM - DAY

Laser and Clay are still watching the porn...

As Jules walks in the room.

JULES

Laser, you left your bike out...

Laser reflexively flinches and grabs for the remote. As he fumbles for it, Jules turns and sees what they're watching. She looks mortified.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - THAT EVENING

We enter a family conference already in progress. Nic and Jules sit in chairs facing Laser, who sits on the couch.

Both act calm but are inwardly mortified that their 15 year-old son found their porn.

NIC

Laser, your mom and I accept you and love you unconditionally? You know that, right?

LASER

Yeah.

NIC
And you know you can be open with
us about anything.

LASER
Yeah, I know.

Jules steels herself for a frank discussion.

JULES
Laser, is there anything you want
to talk about?

LASER
Like what?

NIC
Anything. Anything on your mind.

Laser cracks his knuckles.

LASER
Well there is something.

Nic and Jules share a look. "Here we go."

LASER (CONT'D)
It's more of a question, really.

NIC
That's okay.

JULES
We won't judge you.

Laser looks at his moms. Nic and Jules brace themselves.

LASER
Why do you guys watch gay man porn?

Nic and Jules look at each other, thrown.

NIC
Well, first I have to say we rarely
watch that movie--

Jules touches Nic's arm.

JULES
Honey...

NIC

And secondly, I really don't appreciate you snooping around our room. Was that Clay's idea? I have to say again, I don't like him. He seems unstable...!

JULES

Honey, that's not what he asked--

NIC

(snapping)

Fine. Do you want to answer his question?!

Jules turns to Laser. There's no book for this "birds-and-the-bees" talk.

JULES

Well, sweetie, human sexuality is complicated. And sometimes, people's desires can be...counter-intuitive...

(soldiering on)

For instance, since women's sexual responsiveness is mostly internal, sometimes it's exciting for us to see sexual responsiveness more, you know...

(beat)

...externalized.

Laser looks at them, still baffled.

JULES (CONT'D)

Like with a penis.

LASER

But like, wouldn't you rather watch two women doing it?

JULES

You would think that. But in most of those movies, they've hired two straight women to pretend and the inauthenticity is just unbeara--

Nic cuts her off, wants to get down to brass tacks.

NIC

Okay, that's enough! Laser, your mom and I have a sense there's some other stuff going on in your life and we just want to be let in.

LASER

What do you mean?

JULES

Are you having a relationship with someone?

NIC

You could tell us, honey. We'd understand and support you.

Laser looks confused. How did they find out about Paul?

LASER

I just met him once.

Nic and Jules share a worried look.

NIC

What do you mean once?

JULES

Are you cruising?!

LASER

What's cruising?

NIC

Who did you meet once?

LASER

Paul! I met him with Joni.

NIC

Who's Paul?!

JULES

Why was Joni there?!

LASER

She set it up.

NIC

Forget the set-up! Who's Paul?!

LASER
Paul Hatfield...

NIC
Who the fuck is Paul Hatfield?!

LASER
Our sperm donor.

Jules and Nic go white.

LASER (CONT'D)
Who'd you *think* I was talking
about?

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Joni has been pulled into the family conference. Nic and Jules are trying to remain as calm as possible.

JULES
Look, guys, we understand why you'd be curious about your biological father. That's totally natural.

NIC
But why didn't you tell us?

JONI
Because we knew you'd be upset.

NIC
WE'RE NOT UPSET!!

Jules calms her riled-up partner.

JULES
Honey...
(to Joni; expressing her
upset more calmly)
We just wish you'd have included us in your thinking. But what's done is done. You met him, and now you guys can move on--

JONI
(sheepish)
Actually...
(beat)
I might see him again.

JULES

What?!

LASER

You are?! When did you talk to him?

JONI

(ignoring Nic, to Laser)
Yesterday. I was gonna tell you.

NIC

Whoa! Whoa! No. No way.
(regaining dominance)
Nobody is going anywhere until we meet him!

Joni looks at Laser. They knew this would happen.

INT. NIC AND JULES' BATHROOM - NIGHT

As Nic and Jules Sonicare their teeth, they post-mortem the day's revelation.

NIC

Yeah, I get it. He's their biological father and all that crap but it still feels really shitty. Like we're not enough or something, you know?

JULES

Of course I know. I don't want to time-share our kids with someone. Not when it's our last few months with Joni at home.

Nic pulls a clump of long, wet red hair out of the sink.

NIC

Jules, look at this. The plumber was just here!

JULES

It's not all me!

NIC

It's a big clump of red hair.

JULES
(caught)
I'm sorry.

Nic throws the clump of hair in the trash.

INT. NIC AND JULES BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nic and Jules get into bed.

NIC
(getting tactical)
Okay, look, let's be smart about
this. If we act like grubby
bitches, we're just gonna make it
worse. So let's just kill him with
kindness and put it to bed.

JULES
You're right. You're absolutely
right. And you know what? We're
gonna get through this. Okay?

Nic smiles. She loves when Jules shows confidence.

NIC
I love you, chicken.

The women bump fists. They have a plan.

EXT. VENTURA BLVD. - EVENING

Paul rides through their little hamlet, taking in the prosaic
serenity of it all.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Paul slows down, checking addresses, then cuts his engine in
front of

THE ALLGOOD'S

MINUTES LATER - PAUL

is at the door. He rings. Takes a breath. We can tell he's
a little nervous.

NIC AND JULES --

Open the door and greet Paul with their best "kill him with kindness" faces.

NIC
Paul! It is so great to meet you.
I'm Nic. This is Jules.

Paul shakes their hands.

PAUL
Hi, great to meet you too.

JULES
I hope the traffic wasn't too bad.

PAUL
No, I've got my bike so...
(nodding to his BMW on the
street)
...I just sort of weave through.

Nic clocks the motorcycle, stifles the impulse to judge.

NIC
(clenched)
Great. Well, come on in.

As they enter, Paul holds out a bottle of wine.

PAUL
This is for you. I don't know if
you guys like wine...

Nic takes it.

NIC
Are you kidding? We love it.
(checking the label)
And a petit syrah. What a treat!
Let me get some glasses.

Nic leaves Paul by the stairs with Jules. Little silence.
Jules steals a look at him, unable to contain her curiosity.

PAUL
(looking around)
Beautiful house. How long you guys
lived here?

JULES
 (nervous energy)
 Almost ten years.
 (sotto)
 Wait, has it been that long?
 (rambling nervously)
 We moved right after Laser broke
 his leg, I remember that because we
 had a ramp for a while, so that
 would have been...ten, no, nine?
 No, ten years this fall.

Paul nods, smiling at her nervousness.

PAUL
 Okay.

Laser and Joni walk down the stairs and light up when they see Paul. Jules watches as Paul greets her kids with hugs. It makes her uncomfortable, so she turns and heads for

THE KITCHEN --

Jules finds Nic's pouring herself a sizable glass of wine.

JULES
 You okay?

NIC
 (not okay)
 Yeah. Fine.

Jules feels her inner co-dependent swelling in her chest.

JULES
 Go easy on the wine tonight, okay?

NIC
 Okay. And same for the micro-
 managing.

This is going to be fun.

INT. ALLGOOD DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone sits at the family dinner table. There's a nervous "Meet the Parents" energy to the proceedings.

JULES
 I hope the food's okay. Joni told
 us you own a restaurant.

PAUL

The food's great. Can't go wrong
with grilled salmon and sweet corn.

Nic finishes a glass of wine as Jules takes note.

NIC

So Paul, did you always know you
wanted to be in food services
industry?

Paul smiles at Nic, trying to disarm her.

PAUL

No, I came to it in sort of a
roundabout way. I started off in
grad school studying philosophy.

JULES

Really, that's so interesting.

PAUL

Actually, it was mind-numbingly
boring and had nothing to do with
real life, so I left and joined the
Peace Corps.

JONI

Really? That's so cool! Where'd
they send you?

PAUL

To Burundi. In East Africa.

JONI

(loving her bio-dad)
Wow. How was that?

PAUL

Really incredible. I lived in a
little village for two years. I
helped them set up an irrigation
system that kept them from losing
their farms to soil erosion.
That's how I got into sustainable
farming. And how I ultimately got
into...

(smiling; for Nic's
benefit)

...the food services industry.

LASER

(smart-ass)

See what he did there, mom? You said "food services industry," then he said "food services industry..."

NIC

Yeah, I got it, Laser. Thanks.

(apropos of nothing)

So, Paul, what about your social life?

PAUL

My social life?

NIC

You know, are you married, divorced, seeing anyone?

JONI

(mortified)

Mom!

NIC

What? We're getting to know Paul.

PAUL

No, never been married or divorced. I'm kind of dating, but honestly I've been kind of focussed on my work for the last couple years.

NIC

Well, you're a successful, attractive guy. You won't have any trouble starting a family of your own when you're ready.

Paul gets Nic's subtext. Momma Bear is protecting her cubs.

PAUL

No, I'm sure it will all work out.
(to Jules and Nic)
So how did you two meet?

Jules smiles at Nic.

JULES

It's not a particularly romantic story. We met at a Dunkin Donuts.

PAUL

Really?

JULES

Believe it or not, they have amazing coffee.

PAUL

I've heard that. So when was this?

JULES

When was that, honey? It's over twenty years ago...

NIC

Well, we were both in Boston. I was doing my residency and you were working for that architect.

JULES

Right. So every morning at 7 we'd both go to the same Dunkin Donuts.

NIC

I don't know if she was aware of me, but I was highly aware of her.

JULES

Of course I was aware of you. I'd go there on my days off...

You can tell the ladies love telling this story.

NIC

She always ordered the same thing. A medium coffee, room for cream, and a bearclaw.

JULES

God, I could never get away with that now.

NIC

Anyway, after weeks of this coy coffee flirtation, I finally said screw it. I bought a medium coffee and a bear claw, went up to her and said, "You get the next one."

Nic puts her hand on Jules' and strokes it.

JULES

And we've been together ever since.

THUD! We turn to see Laser, head on the table, bored.

JULES (CONT'D)

Hey, that's not nice.

LASER

What's not nice is subjecting your kids to the same story 1000 times!

Jules pulls him up by the hair and kisses him.

PAUL

(moving on)

So Nic, I know you're a doctor.
Jules, you still in architecture?

JULES

No, I never became an architect. I mean, I never finished my program. I've basically just been a full-time mom.

PAUL

Well, I wouldn't say "just". You raised some great kids.

JULES

Thanks...

(then)

Actually, I'm in the process of starting a new business.

PAUL

Oh, yeah. What kind?

JULES

Landscape design...

(before he can respond)

But not like a gardener! I mean, yes, there is a gardening component to it, but the real work is creating unique, eco-friendly outdoor spaces that harmonize with the surrounding environment. Do you know what I mean?

PAUL

Absolutely.

In Nic's mind, Jules is drowning in verbiage. So she jumps in to save her.

NIC
Hey Paul, did Joni tell you about
the speech she gave at her
graduation?

PAUL
No, she didn't.

NIC
It was incredible. So full of
wisdom and hope...
(turning to her Joni)
Hon, go upstairs and get it. I'm
sure he'd love to hear it...

JONI
(blushing)
No, mom, I'm sure he wouldn't...

NIC
Sure he would. Come on. Go get
it...

JONI
(getting upset)
No, it's okay...

NIC
Why are you so embarrassed?

JONI
I'm not embarrassed! Just give it
a rest already! God!

This outburst stuns Nic into silence. Her daughter has never spoken to her like this. Laser stands up.

LASER
I'll get the ice-cream.

JONI
(standing up)
I'll help you.

Joni and Laser leave the room. Nic pours herself the last of Paul's petit syrah. Jules smiles, covering her anxiety.

JULES
(softly)
Sweetie, that's your forth glass.

NIC
Actually, it's my third. But
thanks for counting.

Things are turning gnarly at the Allgood house. Paul turns to Jules.

PAUL
Hey, I was just thinking. You know, I bought this place last year and the back yard's a wreck. I was planning on doing something with it myself but I've just been so busy with everything...I don't know, would you be interested in working on it?

JULES
Seriously?

PAUL
Yeah. Absolutely.

JULES
Okay...
(suddenly excited)
Yeah! That sounds great.

Jules smiles at Nic: "Isn't this great? My first client."
Nic looks less than pleased.

EXT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - NIGHT

Laser and Joni walk Paul out to his bike.

JONI
Sorry about my moms. They can be kind of intense.

PAUL
They were probably a little anxious.
(beat)
You think I passed?

LASER
Dude, you just hired my mom. Of course you passed.

PAUL
(to Laser)
So, we're on for Saturday?

LASER
(beaming)
Yeah.

JONI
(marking her territory)
And I'm coming on Sunday, remember?

PAUL
I didn't forget.

Paul touches Joni's arm, then reaches for Laser's hand...

PAUL (CONT'D)
Well, thanks for having me out, guys. It was great to meet the parents...

Laser takes his hand and starts doing the hand-shake routine his friends are doing at school. Paul does his best to go with it. It ends with a snap and a point.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Okay. See you guys later.

INT. HOME DEPOT - DAY

Nic and Jules walk through the fertilizer section. Jules puts a couple BAGS in a CART.

NIC
We had a plan, Jules. Remember?

JULES
You're unbelievable. You're all over me about getting clients, and when I finally get one, you're all over me about that.

NIC
He's not just a *client*, Jules.
He's our kids' sperm donor!

(MORE)

NIC (CONT'D)
 Have you ever heard the phrase
 "Don't Shit Where You Eat?"

JULES
 Yes, and I think it's disgusting.

NIC
 Well, what if he's not happy with
 your work? That could be really
 uncomfortable for the kids.

JULES
 Why would you assume he'd hate my
 work?!

NIC
 I didn't say "hate."
 (looking at the bag)
 Jesus, when did fertilizer get so
 expensive?

JULES
 Look, I'm sorry. He seems like a
 good person to me...

NIC
 Yeah well, he seems a little
 polished, if you ask me.

JULES
 So what's wrong with polish?

NIC
 In my experience, people polish
 themselves to conceal dirt.

JULES
 Why do you have to assume the worst
 in people?

Standing up for herself, Jules takes another bag of expensive fertilizer, throws it in the cart and takes off ahead of Nic.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

Jules stands with Paul, leafing through a LOOK-BOOK of design concepts. Jules is dressed in her work garb, a tad geeky, ready to dig in.

To the side, Luis, the man she bought the truck from earlier (and whom she's hired as her assistant) is taking a weed-whacker to the overgrown back-yard.

JULES

(to Paul)

...this is interesting, kind of a Secret Garden thing with trellises and topiary...

(clocking his face)

...or we could do something more like this, which has a more Asian, minimal, rock garden feel. It's up to you...

PAUL

What do you think?

JULES

Personally, I'm tired of less is more. I think you should go for more is more. Let's not try to tame the space. I think it would look great all lush and overgrown and fecund...

PAUL

Did you just say *fecund*?

JULES

I'm sorry, you know, fertile...

PAUL

No, I love that word. You just don't hear it that often.

(thinking)

More is more. I like it. Let's go for it.

Jules is staring at Paul.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What?

JULES

Sorry, I'm just seeing my kids in your expressions...

Jules looks more intensely at Paul's face.

JULES (CONT'D)

You and Laser have the same mouth.

The observation strikes Paul. Suddenly, he's feeling a kind of fast-tracked intimacy with Jules he hadn't expected.

PAUL
You think so?

JULES
Yeah.

They keep looking at each other. Until they realize Luis is standing two feet away. Jules turns to Luis.

JULES (CONT'D)
What's up?

LUIS
It's lunch time.

JULES
Okay.

Luis sneezes repeatedly into a hankie, then looks up at Jules.

LUIS
I'm going to McDonald's.

JULES
Okay.

LUIS
You want any?

JULES
No. Thanks. I'm fine.

EXT. BACKYARD - ALLGOOD HOUSE - NIGHT

Jules and Laser are in the midst of a Ping-Pong match as Nic, home from work, still in scrubs, approaches.

NIC
What's the score?

JULES
Pretty close.

Laser cranks a forehand that whizzes past Jules.

LASER
19-3...

NIC
So how'd it go today?

JULES

Great. We settled on a concept.

NIC

What is it?

JULES

It's hard to explain. You have to kind of see the space to get it.

NIC

(to Laser)

Laser, did you write Pup-pup a Get Well card?

(off his silence)

Laser! What do I have to do?! I bought you a card. I left it on your desk. All you had to do was--

LASER

Mom, settle! I will...

Laser cracks another winner.

NIC

Don't tell me to settle, mister. And if it's not in the mail by tomorrow morning, we're not going to the Dodger game Saturday.

LASER

Whatever, I have other plans anyway.

(to Jules)

Game point.

NIC

What other plans?

(off his silence)

I'm asking you a quest--

LASER

I'm doing something with Paul!

Laser serves a rocket, whizzing past a flailing Jules. He tosses the racquet on the table and leaves. Nic yells:

NIC

You used to be so cute!

EXT. CLAY'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

We cut onto Paul and Laser, looking up at something. Laser is holding a DIGITAL VIDEO CAMERA.

PAUL
This may not be a good idea.

LASER
You may be right.

CLAY (O.S.)
Dude, are you filming?!

We cut to Clay, standing in the crotch of a tall OAK TREE, twenty feet up.

CLAY (CONT'D)
I'm only doing this once. You
better keep my shit in frame!

We cut back to Paul and Laser standing below.

PAUL
(to Laser)
He's not gonna make it.
(calling up to Clay)
Clay, seriously, you're not gonna
make it!

LASER
He's right, man. Don't do it.

CLAY
Dude, when did you become such a
Man-gina?

Laser sighs, then holds up the camera. Paul looks at Laser, wondering why he puts up with this guy.

VIDEO CAMERA'S POV: We watch as Clay psychs himself up with an assortment of deep breaths and head-slaps.

Finally, he swings his arms and LEAPS from the tree, aiming for another one ten feet away. Mid-air, he reaches for the other tree's branches, but falls a couple feet short. He lands with a nauseating THUD. The camera drops as we see Laser's feet rushing over to a howling Clay.

EXT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

Paul and Laser walk to the front of the house.

PAUL
Maybe next time we can hang out
just you and me.

LASER
Clay's cool. He's just gets a
little amped sometimes.

PAUL
Most cool people I know aren't
jerks to their friends.

Paul's observation hits Laser. Laser looks down.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I just didn't like the
way he was talking to you.

LASER
Yeah, no, I get it...

PAUL
Hey, you hungry?

LASER
Yeah. Kind of.

PAUL
You want some Fatburger?

Laser looks back up, smiling.

LASER
Alright.

Paul puts his hands on Laser's shoulders. Just as we think
it's gonna turn into a hug, Paul sticks his leg behind Laser
and trips him. Laser laughs.

LASER (CONT'D)
Dude!

Paul takes off and Laser chases after him.

INT. NIC AND JULES' BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jules walks in to find Nic in sexy satin Pj's, sitting at the rim of a RUNNING BATH. There are candles burning. Roberta Flack's "Where is the Love" plays in the background.

JULES
Wow. What's this?

NIC
Come here. Sit down.

Jules takes a seat beside her. Nic holds her hand.

NIC (CONT'D)
I'm sorry I've been such a bitch lately. I know I haven't been my highest self.

JULES
Yeah, well...

NIC
You've been really patient with me. And I just want you to know that hasn't gone unrecognized.

Nic gives her a long, sweet kiss. Jules is warming up.

NIC (CONT'D)
Get in.

CUT TO - JULES

In the tub, revelling in the warm bubbly water. Nic is sitting on the ledge, gently massaging her shoulders.

JULES
Oh god, baby. This feels great. Come in with me.

NIC
I will, but I want you to enjoy it first. How's the water?

JULES
Perfect.

NIC
Not too hot?

JULES
No, it's great. But you know what
would be perfect? Those lavender
bath salts.

NIC
Yeah! Good idea.

Nic checks in the compartment under the sink.

NIC (CONT'D)
I don't see them.

JULES
They may be in the hallway closet.

Nic walks to the door, gives her a little vamp treatment.

NIC
Wait...right...there.

Nic exits. Jules sinks into the tub, luxuriating in the
decadence of it all.

TIME CUT TO:

JULES

still waiting for Nic. To pass the time, she's listening to
some Eckhardt Tolle on her Ipod.

ECKHARDT TOLLE
Seeking security or perfection,
rejoicing in feeling confirmed and
whole, self-contained and
comfortable, is some kind of death.

TIME CUT TO:

JULES

Still waiting. She's getting cold. And impatient.

JULES
Nic?!

Jules is getting pissed.

TIME CUT TO:

IN THE KITCHEN

Nic is on her cell with a patient.

NIC
Well you just had a C-section.
That's major surgery...

Jules enters in a robe, wondering what the hell happened.
Nic turns and sees her, raises a finger: "so sorry, wait..."

NIC (CONT'D)
Can't dad hold the baby? Don't
feel guilty. It's half his...

Jules can't believe Nic is indulging a non-emergency work
call at this moment. She leaves.

BACK IN THE BATHROOM - JULES

Re-enters. Walks over to the tub. Smacks the drain open.
She sits down on the edge and starts crying.

INT./EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

Paul watches Jules at work in his back-yard. He studies her
face, intently bent on its task. Luis hauls shrubs away.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Paul and Jules stand at the kitchen table, looking over her
meticulously rendered sketch for the yard. Her eyes are
puffy from last night's cry.

PAUL
Are you okay? Your eyes look kind
of...

JULES
Like shit, right?

PAUL
I was gonna say puffy.

JULES
I'm fine, I just had a little
meltdown last night.

PAUL
About what?

JULES
(realizing she's divulged
too much)
Nothing. It was stupid. Look, I'm
gonna go to the nursery in the
morning so we should probably make
sure you're signed off on the wood
for the trellis...

Jules looks over at a pan of something delicious-looking on
the kitchen counter.

JULES (CONT'D)
What's that?

PAUL
Strawberry rhubarb pie. Fresh from
my garden.

Paul hands her a fork and she takes a big bite. Her eyes
roll back in her head.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Good, huh?

JULES
Oh my god. That is criminal.

PAUL
Have more.

JULES
No, please, just take it away...

PAUL
You had one bite.

JULES
I have another you may as well just
tape it to my ass cause that's
where it'll end up.

PAUL
Hey now, don't go negative on your
ass.

Jules blushes at all this talk of her ass.

JULES
So...you're good with the trellis?
(off his silence)
Look, we don't have to do that.
(MORE)

JULES (CONT'D)
We could do go in a totally
different direction if you--

PAUL
No, I'm just thinking. Hang on.
(covers his eyes)
Yeah, I'm good with the trellis.

JULES
Sorry. Sometimes I mistake silence
for criticism.

PAUL
I wasn't criticizing you.

JULES
No, I know you weren't...
(beat)
I'm just not used to positive
feedback.

PAUL
Really? What are you used to?

JULES
I don't know. Sometimes Nic can be
a little judgmental, you know.
She's a perfectionist.

PAUL
That doesn't mean you have to be
negative.

Jules looks away. Paul's hitting nerves left and right. We
HEAR a knock from the glass door in the living room.

LUIS (O.S.)
Excuse me, señora Hello?

Jules turns.

JULES
Yes?!

Luis stands at the glass door, pointing at his watch.

LUIS
It 6 o'clock. I gotta go.

JULES
Yeah. Okay.

Jules wants Luis to leave her alone. But he's not going.

JULES (CONT'D)

What?

LUIS

Same time tomorrow?

JULES

Yes! Same time!

Jules turns back to Paul, laughs nervously.

JULES (CONT'D)

Okay. Guess I'm gonna take off too?

PAUL

Cool...

(in Luis's accent)

Same time tomorrow?

Jules pushes Paul, laughing.

JULES

That's terrible!

PAUL

I'm sorry. Here, take this...

Paul hands her a Tupperware with some of the pie in it.

JULES

No!

PAUL

Just give it to the kids.

JULES

(laughing)

Okay! God, you're such a pusher!

Jules grabs the pie from him and gives him a kiss on the mouth, almost as a mistake. Before they know it, they're making out.

Jules snaps back, freaked.

JULES (CONT'D)

Whoa. I'm sorry. That was...I don't know where that came from...

PAUL
(freaked himself)
It's okay...

JULES
Okay. I'm gonna go now...

Jules starts backing away, acting as if nothing happened.

PAUL
Jules...?

JULES
(overcompensating)
...but I shall return!

Jules bolts for the door, clutching her pie. Paul watches her go, stunned by what just happened.

INT. NIC AND JULES BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nic's in bed reading a magazine. Jules gets in bed. Nic puts her magazine down.

NIC
So how was your day at Paul's?

JULES
(paranoid)
What do you mean?

NIC
I don't know. Did you break
ground? Did you dig in? I don't
know the terms. How's it going?

JULES
Well. It's going well.

NIC
Good.

Nic picks up her magazine and resumes reading. Jules looks anxious. Guilty.

INT. JONI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jai and Joni and Sasha play Scrabble. While Jai arranges a the word "zither" on the board, Sasha checks out a photo of Paul on Joni's laptop.

SASHA
Hello? Donor Dad? Stone cold fox.

JONI
Eww, Sasha...

JAI
Seriously, must you take everything
beautiful and make it dirty?

SASHA
Yes, I know, he's an *earth-feeler*
and a *restaurateur* and all that
good stuff, I'm just saying...
(beat)
Spermster's a hottie.

JONI
Yeah well he's also a good person
and I'd prefer it if you didn't
taint him with your whore juice.

Sasha hops up, energized by the banter.

SASHA
And on that tasty note, I'm outta
here. You can split my letters...

Jai looks at her. She mouths to him, "Do it!" He nods "I
know." Sasha leaves Jai alone with Joni.

JONI
You want to keep playing?

JAI
Sure.

JONI
Whose turn was--

JAI
I love you.

Joni is taken aback.

JONI
(minimizing)
I love you, too.

JAI
No. You know what I mean.

Jai leans in and kisses her. It's sweet and intense. But it only lasts a few moments before Joni pulls away.

JONI
Jai, I can't...

JAI
Yes, you can...

JONI
No, it's too weird, you're like my brother.

JAI
Well you don't feel like my sister.

JONI
No, it's just, Jai, I have so much going on right now. I mean, we're both leaving soon and I just met my biological father...

JAI
Okay, whatever...

Deflated, Jai stands up and starts to go.

JONI
Oh, come on, Jai. Don't leave.

JAI
I'll see you later.

Jai takes his leave, devastated and embarrassed.

EXT. URBAN FARM - ECHO PARK - DAY - MOS

We move through a series of MOS sequences:

Joni picks snap peas. Paul comes up and gives her a big FARMER HAT to wear for sun protection. She puts it on.

Joni watching Paul talk with a group of VOLUNTEERS.

Joni weighing produce on a scale for an older woman as Paul rings her up.

Joni carrying a bunch of watermelons to a table. Drops them down. Paul whacks one in half with a machete like cleaver.

Joni and Paul sitting on fold-out chairs under a covered stand, eating, talking.

We see Tanya watching this scene from a distance. It's clear to her and anyone else watching that they're bonding hard.

Paul and Joni leave the farm and start heading to the restaurant. The MOS is punctured by a cell phone call. Joni looks to see who's calling. Rolls her eyes.

JONI

Ugh. Ignore.

Joni hits a button on her cell. Puts it away.

PAUL

Who you ignoring?

JONI

My mom. Nic. She's driving me crazy. I think she's menopausal.

PAUL

Why, what's she doing?

JONI

She's treating me like I'm 12. It's like she doesn't want to admit that I'm an adult.

PAUL

That's what parents do sometimes. They try to hold on. But you gotta push back. Draw the line.

JONI

I know. I'm just not good at pushing back.

PAUL

I don't know about that. You were pretty good that night with your graduation speech.

JONI

I was, wasn't I?

Paul has another field of questioning he wants to get to...

PAUL

How about Jules? Is she bugging you too?

JONI
Not like Nic. But she can be
annoying in her own way.

PAUL
(interest piqued)
Oh, yeah? How so?

JONI
She's just way too into "processing
everyone's feelings" and making
sure everyone's "speaking their
truth."

PAUL
(defending her)
Well, that's not a bad thing.

JONI
Yeah, no, it's not. But at a
certain point, it's like, turn off
the *Power of Now* and get on with
it, you know?

PAUL
Hey, cut your parents a break.
They did the worst they could.

Joni smiles.

JONI
Funny.

PAUL
What can I say? Your biological
father's a funny man.

JONI
Which means I'm 50% funny.

PAUL
Maybe.

JONI
What do you mean, "maybe?"

PAUL
It's a recessive gene.

Joni gives him a playful push. They're getting closer, more comfortable with each other.

EXT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT - MAGIC HOUR

Paul walks Joni to his motorcycle parked out front. He gets on and holds out a helmet.

PAUL

Put this on. I'll take you home.

JONI

You said you were bringing your truck today.

PAUL

Come on. This'll be way more fun.
(off Joni's hesitation)
Is the hesitation because you don't want to or because of what your moms said?

Off her look, we cut to...

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MAGIC HOUR

Laser walks with Clay, who sports a PLASTER ARM CAST from the tree mishap we witnessed earlier.

CLAY

Yo, Justin and I tried to hit you on your cell last night. We were macking on these girls from Birmingham. Where were you?

LASER

I was at Paul's house.

CLAY

I don't know, dude. That guy's kind of a tool. He was trying to act all like your dad and shit.

Laser doesn't know how to respond so he ignores the comment. A stray DOG comes up to them. Laser stops to pet it.

LASER

Hey there, fella. Good boy.

Laser sees the dog has no tags. He looks around for an owner. The dog nuzzles Laser for affection.

LASER (CONT'D)
I've seen this dog around. I
wonder if he's lost.

CLAY
Let's pee on his head.

LASER
What?

Clay unzips his fly. It's difficult with the plaster cast.

LASER (CONT'D)
Dude, don't do that.

CLAY
Come on. Hold him...

LASER
No, that's totally fucked up.

Clay yanks the dog by his scruff.

LASER (CONT'D)
Dude, knock it off!

CLAY
Knock it off!

Suddenly, Laser gets it. His friend is the tool. He SMACKS
the dog hard.

LASER
Go! Run! Get out of here!

The dog TAKES OFF. Clay shoves Laser.

CLAY
Why are you such a fag?!

Laser shoves Clay back hard.

LASER
Why are you such a dick?!

Clay HITS Laser in the mouth. Laser touches his lip. Sees
blood, and walks away. Friendship over.

EXT. ECHO PARK/HOLLYWOOD/VALLEY STREETS - MAGIC HOUR

Paul takes Joni home on his motorcycle. We follow them through the winding hills of Echo Park to the flat, seedy boulevards of Hollywood, up Cahuenga Pass and onto the quiet, leafy streets of The Valley. Joni holds tight onto Paul the whole way, partly out of fear, and partly out of the pleasure of being close to him.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The ladies sit in the living room watching TV. Nic keeps looking out the window, waiting for Joni to return.

JULES

Relax. She's not that late.

NIC

Quit telling me to relax!

They go back to watching TV. After a beat, we hear a sound. Nic turns to look out the window and WE SEE her eyes go wide.

NIC (CONT'D)

I don't believe this...!

...as Paul and Joni pull up on his motorcycle.

EXT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Paul and Joni climb off the bike. Nic storms out of the house to intercept them by the sidewalk.

NIC

Funny how someone *conveniently* forgot to tell me they were driving home on a motorcycle!

JONI

Mom...

NIC

You know how many kids I see come into the hospital paralyzed from motorcycle accidents?!

PAUL

I'm a very safe rider...

NIC
That is so not the point I'm making! Joni knows this is something I'd never allow.

JONI
Mom, I'm 18 years old! I won't even be living here in like two weeks!

NIC
Yeah, well, you're living here now!

JONI
Yeah, well why don't you get a jump on it and pretend like I'm not!

Joni storms off. Nic glowers at Paul.

NIC
She's never talked to me like that.

PAUL
(trying to soften it)
You know, Nic. If you eased up on the restrictions, maybe there'd be less tension...

NIC
(marinated in sarcasm)
Really? You think so, Paul? Is that how it works?

Jules walks up to intervene.

JULES
What's going on?

NIC
Oh, nothing. Paul's just giving me child-rearing lessons.

PAUL
I was just saying--

NIC
Listen, when you've been a parent for 18 years, come talk to me!

PAUL
I was just making an observation.

NIC
Yeah, and I need your observations
like I need a dick in my ass!

JULES
Nic!

NIC
Way to stick up for me, hon.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - JONI'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Nic knocks on the door. Gets no response.

NIC
Joni?
(silence)
I was just upset. You know how I
feel about motorcycles.

Joni opens the door.

JONI
I know how you feel about them.
But I'm an adult now. And you have
to respect that. Good night.

Joni closes the door on her. She picks up her cell and
dials.

INT. JAI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jai's on his computer. Hears the cell ring. Looks at the
number. His face tightens. He answers.

JAI
(cold)
Hey.

Conversation Intercut

JONI
(fake nonchalant)
Hey, Jaipur, what's up? Did you
get my message yesterday?

JAI
Yeah, I got it.

JONI
Were you gonna call me back?

JAI
I just can't be your friend
anymore. It's too hard.

JONI
Jai...

JAI
Have fun hanging out with your bio-
dad.

Click. Joni looks miserable.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

From his house, Paul watches Jules working on her knees in
the garden.

CLOSE ON -- Jules' thong peaking out of her jeans.

Luis walks across Paul's field of vision, interrupting his
reverie.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - LATER

Jules steps tentatively into Paul's house.

JULES
Paul?

Jules walks further into the house. She looks anxious. Paul
opens his office door and sees Jules in the hall.

PAUL
Hey. What's up?

JULES
Look, I'm sorry about last night.
I'm really embarrassed.

PAUL
Don't be. She's the one who wiggled
out.

JULES

I know, she's just going through a lot of stuff right now...it's her usual--

PAUL

Jules, it's okay. You don't have to defend her.

They stare at each other, unsure how to act.

JULES

And look, I just want you to know, about the other day, the kiss, that's not something I...do.

PAUL

Yeah, I sensed that.

She takes a step toward him, feverish.

JULES

I've never cheated on Nic.

PAUL

Okay.

JULES

I just wanted to clear the air.

They stare at each other. It's like watching two magnets.

PAUL

The air is clear.

Jules grabs Paul and starts smothering him with kisses.

It takes a second for Paul to get his bearings, but when he does, he starts kissing her back with equal fervor, pushing her up against the wall, wedging his hand between her legs.

JULES

Paul, I can't!

PAUL

You don't want to?!

JULES

No, I do! It's just...
(urgent whisper)
I have a guy outside!

Overcome with lust, Jules wraps her legs around his waist and Paul walks her into

HIS BEDROOM

Quick cuts of their awkward ravenous gropings. Somewhere between slapstick and animal. He pulls her hair back hard. She loves it. She pulls his hair back harder. He yelps. She pulls down his underwear. Her eyes widen. It's been decades since she's seen a hard cock in the flesh.

JULES

Oh. Well. Hel-lo!

Cut to them fucking. It's gawky and passionate. Somewhere in the middle of it, Jules starts laughing.

PAUL

What?

JULES

Nothing.

Paul flips her on her hands and knees and they go at it some more.

She keeps laughing. Paul goes harder to make her stop. The paces grows quicker. They're getting closer. And then...

LUIS (O.S.)

Hello, excuse me, señora Allgood?!

They stop mid-thrust.

JULES

You gotta be fucking kidding me!

She dislodges from Paul and starts dressing furiously.

INT./EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

Jules runs out to meet Luis, waiting patiently at the door.

JULES

What's up?

LUIS

Where do you want the stones?

JULES
(catching her breath)
The stones? Over by the fence.

Luis stares at his employer. She looks totally disheveled.
Jules starts feeling her hair, smoothing it into shape.

JULES (CONT'D)
(defensive)
What? I was using the bathroom.

LUIS
Okay.

JULES
Do you need to use the bathroom?

LUIS
No.

Luis stares at her feet. She looks down. She's barefoot.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - LASER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nic knocks, waits.

LASER (O.S.)
What?

Nic walks into Laser's room holding a ratty pair of shoes.

NIC
These aren't yours, are they?

LASER
No. They're Clay's.

NIC
Well, can you please return them to
him?

LASER
No, I can't.

NIC
Why not?

LASER
We're not hanging out anymore.

NIC
(intrigued)
Why not? What happened?

LASER
I don't know. I had a conversation
with Paul about him. He said some
things that made sense. So we're
not hanging out anymore.

Nic takes a breath.

NIC
Let me get this straight. You're
not hanging out with Clay...
(incredulous)
Because of what *Paul* said.

LASER
Pretty much. Yeah.

Nic looks like she's losing her mind.

INT. NIC AND JULES BATHROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Nic and Jules Sonicare it up.

NIC
For months we've been telling him
to stop hanging out with Clay.
Nothing. Paul has one conversation
with him and boom...no more Clay.

JULES
Sometimes kids have to hear truth
from the outside--

Nic holds up her hand.

NIC
Sweetie, let me be pissed, okay?!
Just let me be pissed!

Nic spits a huge mouthful of toothpaste saliva into the sink.

CUT TO:

JULES AND PAUL

Fucking again in his bedroom. This time there's no laughter. They're just taking care of business.

CUT TO:

POST - COITUS

Jules and Paul are lie naked in the bed. Jules writhes around the covers, stoned on post-coital endorphins.

JULES

God, I feel so drugular right now.
(sitting up quickly)
I really want a cigarette! Do you have any? I haven't had a cigarette since Laser was born. Do you smoke?

PAUL

Sometimes. But I don't have any here. Want me to run to the store?

JULES

(bouncing off the walls)
Yeah. Wait, no. Don't. Sorry.

Jules pops up on her knees, getting in his face.

JULES (CONT'D)

Do you think I'm just some sad-sack middle-aged lesbian?

PAUL

God, that's it. I was trying to figure out how to describe you to my friends. Thank you.

Jules pushes him away, mock hurt.

JULES

No, I'm serious. Am I like some pathetic suburban Madame Bovary?

PAUL

No, come on. You're gorgeous and funny and smart and I'm wildly attracted to you.

JULES
Honestly?

PAUL
Yeah. I wish I wasn't.

The specter of reality drifts in.

JULES
I know. This isn't...ideal.

PAUL
I mean, I'm starting a relationship
with your kids...

JULES
I know...

PAUL
I don't want to mess that up.

JULES
I don't either. They're really
enjoying you.

PAUL
And then there's the small fact
that you're married.

Jules buries her face in her hands.

JULES
Oh god, you sure you don't have any
cigarettes?

Paul touches her back.

PAUL
Look, let's not crucify ourselves,
okay? I mean, we kind of have a
kid together. You know? I mean,
that's a pretty major connection.

JULES
I know. It is, right?

PAUL
(struggling to justify)
So it's not like this is completely
off the wall...

JULES
(joining in the struggle)
No, it's not...

PAUL
I mean, it makes sense...

JULES
We would be attracted...

Reality sets in again.

JULES (CONT'D)
It's probably just something we
shouldn't ever do again.

PAUL
Right.

They stare at each other, neither one looks convinced they're going to be able to follow through on this decision.

MINUTES LATER - JULES

walks outside and is stunned to find Luis already back from Home Depot, sneezing and wiping his nose.

JULES
Did you go to Home Depot?

LUIS
Yeah. I just got back.

JULES
(pissed off)
That was really fast!

Luis looks at her, confused.

LUIS
Yeah, no lines.

His look of confusion trips off her paranoia. She's convinced he knows everything.

JULES
What's that look?

LUIS
What look?

JULES

The look you're giving me right now!

LUIS

I got no look. That just my face!

JULES

Hey, I'm not gonna play this game with you! You need to keep your judgements to yourself!

LUIS

No, I didn't look at you!

JULES

I don't ask you why you keep blowing your nose constantly, do I?! I mean, if you have a drug problem that's your business...

LUIS

I don't have a drug problem! I have allergies!

JULES

Then why are you a gardener?!

Luis stares at Jules, innocent.

LUIS

Cause I love flowers.

JULES

Look, this isn't gonna work. I'll pay you though the end of the day and then we're done.

Jules walks past a totally confused Luis.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Nic and Jules sit across from their friends, JOEL and STELLA LARSON (40's). Everyone seems pretty cozy, except for Nic, who drinking like a fish to take the edge off.

STELLA

Oh god, the burrata with the heirloom tomatoes are out of this world.

JULES

They're in season. Joni brought some home from Paul's farm the other day, They were spectacular.

Nic tightens at the mention of Paul.

JOEL

Oh, so the kids have been spending some time with him?

NIC

(interrupted; acid)

Oh, yeah, they're spending all kinds of quality time together.

STELLA

(senses the sarcasm)

Well it's great that they get along. You know, you hear these stories about kids meeting their sperm donors and the guys end up being nothing like they were on paper.

NIC

No, everyone's getting along famously. Apparently Paul can do no wrong...

Nic grabs a passing waiter by the arm.

NIC (CONT'D)

Can we get another bottle of the Seavey Cabernet?

Jules gives Nic a look. Nic ignores her. Joel and Stella feel the tension.

STELLA

Hey, have you guys tried those Açai fruit packs?

JULES

I haven't but they're pushing them like crack at Whole Foods.

STELLA

They're incredible. Joel's addicted to them.

JOEL

What I do is I throw one in the blender and mix it with some bananas, frozen strawberries and some hemp milk and I'll tell you, it's sensational.

Nic slaps her forehead.

NIC

Oh, just fucking kill me...

Everyone stiffens. Jules is embarrassed.

JULES

Honey...

NIC

I'm sorry guys, but I just can't, with the fucking hemp milk and the organic farming and all the yuppie bullshit...

(yuppie-voice)

"I'm so happy Henry's learning Mandarin, I just wish it didn't sound like two rats screwing" or "I know I shouldn't drink bottled water but it just tastes better than tap" or "Why don't women have hair on their vaginas anymore?" I just can't do it...

(beat)

I Can't. Fucking. Do It.

Nic takes a big swallow from her glass. Jules windshield wipes Nic's forearm.

JULES

(sotto)

How about some green tea, sweetie..

Nic slams her glass on the table. Explodes.

NIC

You know what, Jules?! I like my wine! Okay? So fucking sue me! And FYI, red wine has a chemical called Resveratrol in it, which has been proven to significantly extend human lifespan!

JULES
Yeah, if you drink five cases a
day!

NIC
Fuck you.

Nic storms off. Jules turns to Joel and Stella, ashen.

INT. VOLVO STATION WAGON - NIGHT

Nic and Jules drive home.

JULES
What the hell is going on with you?

NIC
This whole Paul thing is driving me
crazy! I feel like he's taking
over my family!

JULES
Well he's not!

NIC
(nerves fraying)
I'm sorry. I'm just exhausted.

JULES
Maybe you should take some time
off. Re-charge.

NIC
Yeah, and who's gonna pay for that?

Jules looks pissed off, and hurt.

NIC (CONT'D)
Look, I'm sorry, I just feel like
I'm carrying the whole load here.

JULES
Because that's the way you like it!
That's the way you keep control!

This is Jules' break-point.

NIC
What are you talking about?

JULES

Oh come on! You hated it when I worked! You wanted me at home, taking care of the kids. You wanted a wife!

NIC

That is just not true!

JULES

You didn't trust any of those nannies! And you sure as hell didn't back my career!

NIC

What are you talking about? I just helped you start another business!

JULES

Yeah, so you can feel better about yourself!

NIC

No, so you can feel better about *yourself!*

All the air leaves the car in one big whoosh.

JULES

Are you even attracted to me anymore?

Nic looks ahead, not sure what to say.

INT. NIC AND JULES BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jules lies on her side. Nic shuffles to get to close to her. Jules moves away, still pissed at her. Nic realizes she needs to make amends.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

The family sits in silence, having breakfast. Nic looks around the table, feeling like a pariah.

NIC

Look, I know you've all been enjoying your time with Paul.

(MORE)

NIC (CONT'D)

And I know I haven't been as open to him as everyone else and this has caused some...friction...between us. But I'd like to try and change that...

Everyone keeps eating, uncommitted. "And...?"

NIC (CONT'D)

So I was thinking. Maybe it would be nice if we all had dinner at his house sometime. That way, I could get to know him a little better, and I could see all the good work mom's been doing with his backyard.

Nic looks at Jules and smiles. Everyone nods. They recognize this is a big step for Nic.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - STATE PARK - DAY

Joni and Paul sit in the same bird blind we saw her in with Jai earlier. She's showing him a little bit of her world. Paul stares out the small window through binoculars.

JONI

You're looking for a scarlet red bird with black flecked wings. It's called a Summer Tanager.

PAUL

You're not even looking, how do you know that?

JONI

Because I know its call. Can you hear that?

(mimicking the tanager)

Brrrl...brrll...brrllll?

Paul's got his binoculars up, searching for the bird.

PAUL

How'd you get into this again?

JONI

My friend Jai. He's been birding since he was like ten.

PAUL

Really? That's kind of a refined past-time for a young kid.

JONI

Yeah, Jai's pretty unique. He comes from this traditional family of Indian doctors. They want him to become a surgeon but he wants to be a psychiatrist.

PAUL

Good for him. So is he your friend-friend or your boyfriend?

JONI

Just my friend.

(beat)

Although we're not really talking right now...cause he kind of wants it to be more.

PAUL

And you don't?

Joni gets shy. She's not used to explaining her feelings.

JONI

I don't know. Maybe I do. The whole thing just kind of scares me.

PAUL

What are you scared of?

JONI

I don't know. It's kind of lame.

PAUL

Try me.

JONI

I guess I'm scared if I'll let myself like him like that, then he'll stop liking me, and then I'll be really hurt.

PAUL

That shouldn't stop you from taking the risk. I mean, I'm sure you were scared to call me, but you did, and look what happened?

JONI

You know what the funny thing is? At the beginning, I didn't even want to meet you.

PAUL
Aren't you glad you did?

JONI
Yeah.

It's a sweet moment, but the intimacy makes Joni nervous.

JONI (CONT'D)
So what about you? Why aren't you
with anyone?

The truth, that he's sleeping with her mom, flummoxes him.

PAUL
I don't know. I'm a weird one.

JONI
I thought you wanted to have a
family?

PAUL
Yeah. I do.

JONI
So what's the problem?

PAUL
I don't know. I date a lot of
women. I just can't seem to get to
the next stage with anyone.

JONI
Well maybe you should quit dating a
lot of women and get your eyes on
the prize.
(patting him on the
shoulder sweetly)
No offense, Paul, but you're kind
of getting up there.

PAUL
Thanks for the reminder.

Paul pokes Joni affectionately. She giggles.

INT. PAUL'S RESTAURANT - LATER

Paul walks over to Tanya who's standing by the bar.

TANYA
Joni's pretty. She's definitely
got some of your genes.

PAUL
I think she looks more like her mom
actually. But thank you.

TANYA
It was cute seeing you in dad mode.

PAUL
Yeah?

TANYA
Yeah.
(lowering voice)
It made me want to fuck you.

PAUL
(uncomfortable)
Oh yeah?...

TANYA
Yeah...

Tanya moves imperceptibly closer.

TANYA (CONT'D)
I've been missing our sleep-overs.

PAUL
Yeah, it's been a while.

TANYA
You want to meet up later?

Joni's sage words fresh on his mind:

PAUL
Tanya, you're gorgeous and you're
tempting, but I don't think we
should do that anymore.

Tanya's face drops.

TANYA
What happened?

PAUL
I just feel like I'm being unfair
to you. Like I'm being lazy.

TANYA

What do you mean?

PAUL

If I really want a family then I have to stop getting in these situations that don't go anywhere. I mean, our thing is totally fun and easy, but...I just don't want to be 50 and still "hanging out."

TANYA

Okay, so what are you saying? I mean, I'm all for going to that next step.

Paul realizes he's gonna have to spell it out. But Tanya catches on before he has to.

TANYA (CONT'D)

Oh.

(welling up)

You just don't want to go there with me.

Paul knows enough to say nothing. Tanya walks off, leaving Paul to feel like an asshole for finally calling it.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Paul walks out to check on Jules. She's sweating her ass off, shlepping stacks of heavy sod across the yard.

PAUL

How's it going?

JULES

Wish I hadn't fired Luis.

PAUL

Here, let me help.

Paul takes some of her load and together they transport the sod to the other side of the yard.

PAUL (CONT'D)

So how are you with, you know, everything between us.

JULES
Okay. Good. I feel like we made
the right choice.

PAUL
Yeah, no, definitely. It could've
ended in tears.

JULES
Yeah.

PAUL
I mean, it's not like I don't still
think about it...

JULES
No, me too...

PAUL
But I'm glad we took the high road.

JULES
Absolutely.

They stare at each other and we cut to...

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - LATER

Paul and Jules lie in bed, naked. Both gaze off in their own
worlds, dazed.

INT. PAUL'S BATHROOM - LATER

Jules takes a shower, washing off the evidence. She looks
nauseated by her lack of willpower.

EXT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - EVENING

The family packs into the Volvo to head to Paul's.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MAGIC HOUR

Paul gets dinner ready with Joni and Laser as his sous-chefs.
Both kids seem really psyched to be cooking with him.

IN THE BACKYARD --

Jules tours Nic around the back yard, looking a little insecure as she shows her the work she's been doing.

JULES

(defensive)

I'm gonna do some planting over so it won't look so bare and the trellis is gonna look a lot better when the vines comes in...

NIC

Honey. It looks great. It all feels really organically put together. I'm really proud of you.

JULES

Thanks.

Nic pulls her into a hug. Jules is so unaccustomed to this kind of unadulterated positivity from Nic that it throws her.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

We enter mid-meal. Joni Mitchell playing on the stereo. Everyone seems to be enjoying themselves. Especially Nic, who's committed to redeeming herself. Paul walks up to Nic with a bottle of opened red.

PAUL

Hey Nic, you're gonna love this '98 Screaming Eagle.

Nic puts her hand on her glass.

NIC

I think I'm gonna stick with water tonight. But thank you so much.

The Allgoods look at Nic: this is a first.

NIC (CONT'D)

(moving on)

God, Paul, this steak is delicious. What's the seasoning?

PAUL

I just mist it with a little truffle oil.

Nic looks at Jules and smiles in full overcompensation mode.

NIC
What a good idea. We should try
that. Right, honey?

JULES
(taken aback by Nic's
cheerfulness)
Mmm-hmmm.

NIC
And it's done to perfection.

PAUL
Good, so it's not too rare?

NIC
No, it's perfect. Juicy. Tender.
Exactly what rare's supposed to be.

PAUL
Good. A lot of people in the
restaurant order a steak rare and
they freak out at the slightest
sight of red.

NIC
Ugh, isn't that annoying? That
happens to me all the time when I'm
grilling.

PAUL
Don't people know that rare means
red?

NIC
Right?! It means bloody!

PAUL
Exactly! They should see what rare
looks like in Argentina. The cow's
practically still mooing.

Laser laughs at Paul's joke. Joni tries to insert herself in
the conversation.

JONI
I really want to go to Argentina.
Buenos Aires is supposed to be
amazi--

NIC
(interrupting)
Good pick for music, Paul.

Joni glares at Nic: stop being such a Paul hog.

PAUL
Yeah, you a Joni Mitchell fan?

NIC
(smug)
Not really. We just named our
daughter after her.

PAUL
Really?

NIC
What's your favorite Joni album?

PAUL
Hmm. Well, "Hejira" and "Court and
Spark" are definitely up there, but
if I had to give you one it would
probably be "Blue."

Nic testifies with a raised hand and a bowed head.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Yeah? You too?

NIC
God, I probably spent half of high
school in my room crying over that
album. That record kills me.

PAUL
I know, it never lets up, you got
"River," "California..."

NIC
"A Case of you..."

PAUL
"All I want..."

NIC
Mmm!!

Nic pulls her hands to her chest, shuts her eyes...and starts
to sing.

NIC (CONT'D)

*All I really, really want our love
to do/Is to bring out the best in
me and in you...*

Jules and the kids watch, open-mouthed. They're even more surprised when Paul joins in for some call and response.

PAUL
I want to talk to you...

NIC
I want to shampoo you...

PAUL
*I want to renew you again and
again...*

NIC
*Applause, applause/life is
our cause...*

PAUL
*When I think of your
kisses...*

NIC
My mind see-saws...

Paul stops and Nic goes off on a solo, mimicking Joni Mitchell's haunting falsetto. Unfortunately for the table, nobody sounds like Joni except Joni. So Nic just ends up sounding like an over-emotional reject from American Idol.

NIC (CONT'D)

*Do you see...do you see...do you
see how you hu-urt me baby...so I
hurt you too...then we both
get...soo-ooo-ooo blue...*

Nic stops, eyes still closed. She's connected to a part of herself she rarely lets herself visit. The moment is punctured by her smart-ass 15 year-old son.

LASER

Don't quit your day job, mom.

Nic's hurt by the jab. Paul notices.

PAUL

Hey. It hard enough to open your heart in this world. Don't make it harder.

LASER

You're right.
(to Nic; contrite)
I'm sorry, mom.

Nic looks at Paul. Stunned. Then she looks at Jules and points to Paul.

NIC
I like this guy.

Paul looks at Joni.

PAUL
You didn't tell me you were named
after Joni Mitchell.

JONI
It's just so dorky. I don't really
like to bring it up.

PAUL
I think it's cool.

Nic gets up.

NIC
I need to use the loo.

She leaves.

JULES
Hey, it could've been worse. You
could've been Gladys...or Roberta.

INT. PAUL'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nic washes her hands at the sink. Something catches her eye.
She lifts Paul's hairbrush from the shelf in front of her and
examines it. She reaches into the bristles and pulls out..

A few strands of long red hair.

Nic pales.

CUT TO

Nic on her knees in Paul's shower, pulling a clump of tell-
tale red hair from the drain.

CUT TO

Nic pulling pillows off Paul's bed. Her look tells us she's
found hair here as well.

THEN WE CUT TO

Nic sitting back down at the table. She looks drained.
Nobody notices. The sound drops out.

NIC'S POV:

Paul and Jules talking comfortably.

Joni and Laser chiming in, smiling, one big happy family.

REVERSE ONTO NIC:

Totally disconnected. Shell-shocked. She wants to scream but it feels like she's trapped in cement.

INT. VOLVO STATION WAGON - NIGHT

The Allgoods drive home. Nic is driving. Silent. Alone in her dread.

JULES (O.S.)
Are you okay?

Nic snaps out of her fugue state. Turns to Jules.

NIC
Yeah. Just tired.

Nic turns back to face the road.

INT. NIC AND JULES' BATHROOM - THAT NIGHT

Nic and Jules perform their nightly ablutions. Jules is sonic-caring her teeth.

JULES
(through the sonic buzz)
Well, you and Paul seemed to get on like gangbusters...

NIC
You're sleeping with him, aren't you.

JULES
(freaked)
What?

Nic turns to her, eyes red with anger.

NIC
Just be honest with me. Don't make me feel crazier than I feel right now!

JULES
Where is this coming from?!

NIC
I found your hair in his drain!

JULES
(scrambling)
What? I was working. I got dirty
so I took a shower.

NIC
Oh yeah? You take a nap, too?

Jules pauses a second too long. The jig is up.

INT. NIC AND JULES' BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

The truth has come out. Nic is so angry she's calm.

NIC
Are you in love with him?!

JULES
No!

NIC
What, are you straight now?!

JULES
No. It has nothing to do with
that!
(beat)
I've just felt so cut off from you
lately...

NIC
Oh, right, so it's my fault!

JULES
No! Who said anything about fault?
Just listen to me!

NIC
I'm listening! What?!

JULES
I don't know, there's something
missing with us. I just needed
something.

NIC
What? To be fucked?

JULES
No! I just needed to feel like I was exciting to someone.

NIC
It's always what I'm not doing for you, isn't it? Well here's what I don't *to* you. I don't work out my issues by fucking other people!

Nic starts heading for the door. Jules follows.

JULES
He's not just "other people!"

NIC
No, you had to go fuck our *sperm donor*! You couldn't have picked a more painful way to hurt me...

JULES
Where are you going?!

NIC
I need water! My mouth is dry!

Nic opens the door. There's Joni and Laser, looking devastated. They've been listening to the whole thing.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Jules wakes up looking crusty from a rough night on the couch. She looks like she hasn't slept at all.

INT. LASER'S ROOM - DAWN

Jules enters and walks over to her sleeping son. She gently nudges him awake.

JULES
Hey Laser. Honey?

Laser turns over, semi-conscious.

LASER
What?

She sits down on his bed.

JULES

Listen, I know you and Joni heard what's going on. I just want you to know how sorry I feel. And I also want you to know that what happened with Paul and I is over. There's nothing going on now.

LASER

Okay.

JULES

I know you might have some strong feelings about this but I just want you to know that I'm here for you if you want to process.

(beat)

Is there anything you want to talk about?

LASER

(leave my room)

Not really.

JULES

(fighting the impulse to push it)

Okay then. Go back to sleep.

Jules pats her son and leaves.

INT. JONI'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Jules enters and touches Joni's shoulder.

JULES

Joni?

JONI

I don't want to talk to you.

JULES

Can we just--

JONI

I said I don't want to talk to you!!

JULES
Okay. I'm sorry.

Jules slowly retreats to the door.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Jules drinks coffee at the table. Nic walks in, dressed for work. She tightens at the sight of Jules. Jules looks at her, wanting to "process." But Nic isn't in the mood. She grabs a banana from a bowl and walks out.

Jules feels like a leper.

INT. NIC AND JULES BEDROOM - MID-MORNING

Everyone's gone except Jules. Jules lies on her bed, traumatized, listening to Eckhardt on her Ipod sound-dock.

ECKHARDT TOLLE
We can't let other people's
expectations control us.

The calming words of Eckhardt are having an unintended effect on Jules. Instead of easing her pain, they're just making her feel like more of a phony.

ECKHARDT TOLLE (CONT'D)
We must learn that, sometimes, it
is okay to disappoint people...

Jules bolts up, grabs the Ipod from the doc...

JULES
Shut the fuck up!!

...and hurls it against the wall.

EXT. PAUL'S FARM - AFTERNOON

Paul's walking through rows of swiss chard, cell phone to his ear, listening to it ring.

INT. SASHA'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

We can tell Joni's been crying and downloading the whole thing to Sasha. Joni's cell rings. She looks at the number.

SASHA
Oh god, is it...?

Joni nods gravely, answers.

JONI
(cold)
Hello.

Conversation Intercut.

PAUL
Hey Joni, how you doing?

JONI
You're such a phony.

Beat.

PAUL
Excuse me?

JONI
You act like you're so groovy and
together but you're not. You're a
shitty person!

PAUL
What happened?

JONI
You know what happened.

Paul's stomach drops as he realizes she's found out about him
and Jules.

JONI (CONT'D)
Oh look, Mr. Wisdom has nothing to
say.

PAUL
Joni, I'm so sorry it happened.
But it's over.
(beat)
I can only imagine how you feel
right now...

JONI
Believe me, you can't.

PAUL
Look, can I see you, can we talk?

JONI

No. We can't. Don't call me anymore.

She hangs up and start crying. Sasha hugs her.

We cut back to Paul at the farm, sweaty, nauseous with remorse. He turns around to find fetching young Brooke, waiting for him with a wicker basket of huge cucumbers.

BROOKE

Hey Paul, you have to take a look at these cukes. They're...

Paul holds up his hand at her. This girl symbolizes every bad choice he's ever made.

PAUL

Stop it.

BROOKE

Stop what?

PAUL

Just stop it.

Paul walks away. Brooke looks embarrassed.

EXT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

Jules sits on a lawn chair smoking a cigarette. Her cell rings. She answers.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

Paul walks down the street, wiggling out.

PAUL

Hey, it's me. I just got off with Joni.

Conversation intercut.

JULES

Oh my god, I'm so sorry. I should have called you.

PAUL

What happened?

JULES
Nic saw my hair in your bathroom.

PAUL
Oh, fuck...

JULES
Yeah.

PAUL
Did you tell her it was over?

JULES
Yeah, that didn't make too much
difference.

PAUL
Can I come over and just talk to
the kids?

Jules takes a big drag on her smoke.

JULES
That's probably not a good idea.
Things are pretty tense right now.

EXT. HOUSE PARTY - FRONT LAWN - NIGHT

Joni and Sasha walk up to a house party in progress.

SASHA
You sure you're up for this?

JONI
Yeah, I need to see him.

They enter the house.

INT. HOUSE PARTY - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joni and Sasha enter to find a party in progress. A group of twenty or so kids hanging out, listening to music, talking, drinking, the usual.

Across the room, Joni spots Jai chatting with a WAIFY GIRL in a sundress. The kind of girl whose sentences always seem to end with a question-mark. The kind of girl Joni detests.

Joni walks up to Jai and Waify girl, interrupting them.

JAI

Hey.

JONI

Can I talk to you?

Waify girl juts out her hip territorially.

WAIFY GIRL

Umm, 'scuse mayy? We're kinda in the middle of a conversayyy-shun?

JONI

(mimicking)

'scuse mayyy? I'll just be a second?

(to Jai; desperate)

I really need to talk to you.

Jai turns to Waify Girl, who looks pissed.

JAI

I'll be right back.

Joni and Jai walk outside into the

BACKYARD

They walk to a corner and stop.

JAI (CONT'D)

What's up?

She reaches to touch his three-day old boy-beard.

JONI

I like the scruff. It's sexy.

Jai pulls back.

JAI

What do you want to talk about?

JONI

My mom Jules is sleeping with my donor dad.

JAI

Fuck. That's deep. Are you okay?

JONI

No, it's been kind of a disaster at my house. I've wanted to call you so many times in the last few days. It's just made me think about you and how much I miss talking to you. How much I miss you.

Jai is back to being a bowl of jelly for Joni.

JAI

I miss you too.

Joni looks at her friend. Who she now realizes is more than a friend. She takes his face and kisses him. After a moment, Jai pulls back.

JAI (CONT'D)

You're just doing this cause you're upset. Which is a perfectly natural reaction to what you're--

She puts her hand to his mouth.

JONI

Stop analyzing me and kiss me.

Her wish is his command. Jai mans up and lays a big fat passionate kiss on her.

HOURLATER --

We're still at the party. We see MOS shots of Joni and Jai hanging out, arm-in-arm, a couple at last. They do a shot of tequila with Sasha (as Waify girl looks on, pissed). They dance. They kiss some more. They do another shot. Joni looks like she's letting go for the first time.

INT. NIC AND JULES BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jules walks in to find Nic, awake, in bed.

JULES

Just getting another pillow. The couch is kind of saggy.

NIC

Is your back okay?

Jules perks up: is this an invitation to share the bed again?

JULES
It's a little ache-y.

NIC
You should take some Advil.

Guess not.

Suddenly, they hear bumping and loud footsteps in the hall.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

They walk out into the hall to find Joni, a drinking lightweight, stumbling toward her bedroom.

Nic stops her in the hallway.

NIC
Hey. How was the party?

Joni tries to avert her mom's piercing gaze.

JONI
It was okay.

Nic takes in the glassy look in her daughter's eyes.

NIC
(surprised)
Were you drinking?

JONI
Just a little.

NIC
I hope you didn't drive home like this.

JONI
Why? I'm not drunk. I just had two couple tequila shots.

NIC
Well, you seem drunk to me.

JONI
Yeah, well, you should know.

NIC
(furious; incredulous)
What did you just say to me?!

JONI
I'm going to bed.

Joni starts to leave. Nic grabs her.

NIC
No, you're not! I'm not done
talking to you!

Laser opens his door and watches the scene progress.

JONI
What do you want from me?! I did
everything you wanted! I got all
As! I got into Stanford. Now you
can show everybody what a perfect
lesbian family you have!

JULES
Don't talk to your mom like that!

Joni spins to face Jules.

JONI
You're really gonna tell me how to
act? Now?!

JULES
Hey, I'm still your mother.

JONI
Whatever...

Jules reaches out and Joni backs away, sickened.

JONI (CONT'D)
Don't touch me!

Joni walks toward her room.

JONI (CONT'D)
I'm so sick of both of you!

MONTAGE BEGINS:

EXT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - DAWN

The sun also rises on this formerly happy home.

INT. ALLGOOD LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Jules wakes up on the couch. She sits up and rubs her aching back.

INT. MATERNITY WARD - HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Nic helps deliver a baby. We see it's the same woman Nic was giving the ultrasound at the beginning of the film. Cut to a NURSE placing the newborn baby in the mother's arms, the FATHER standing beside her. Nic watches the scene.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - JONI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joni packs for college. The room is littered with half-filled packing boxes. She picks up a pile of clothes from the corner and sees the farmer's hat Paul gave her. She puts it aside, not sure what to do with it.

EXT. PAUL'S BACKYARD - DAY

Paul looks out at his back yard. It looks less like a project in progress than a project abandoned.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

A high school football summer practice is in progress. We see Laser in helmet and shoulder-pads standing out at wide receiver. The quarterback calls hike. Laser runs a quick slant route. The quarterback throws and before the ball reaches Laser a CORNERBACK nails him hard and illegally.

As Laser lies on the ground in pain, the cornerback takes off his helmet. It's Clay.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - NIGHT

The family has their last supper - before Joni leaves.

NIC

Did you pack that lamp I gave you?

JONI

Yeah.

NIC
(anxious)
Well, we can always get stuff up
there, too, if you need it, I mean
if the room's dark or you need
extra bedding...

JONI
I'm not going to Siberia, mom.

Jules looks at the family unit, misty.

JULES
I can't believe this is our last
dinner together.

LASER
Oh God, are you gonna cry?

Jules looks at her son, fed up.

JULES
You know, I wish you were gay.
You'd be so much more sensitive.

The doorbell rings.

NIC
Oh shit, who is that?

JONI
I'll get it, it's probably Sasha.

Joni runs to the door. Opens it. It's not Sasha...

It's Paul.

JONI (CONT'D)
(shocked)
What are you doing here?

PAUL
I needed to talk to you before you
left.

JONI
Why? There's nothing to talk
about.

PAUL

I just want to apologize again for what happened. I can't tell you how much I regret it.

JONI

(losing control)
So like, everything that happened between us. What was that? Was that just bullshit?!

PAUL

No, it wasn't bullshit at all. I know I don't seem credible right now but I really care about you...

Both Joni and Paul are struggling to keep their emotions in check.

PAUL (CONT'D)

...and I hope someday we'll be able to maybe see each other again.

JONI

You really hurt me.

PAUL

I know I did.

(beat)

I'm not saying now. I'm saying, in the future, do you think that could maybe happen?

JONI

I don't know...

Joni looks at her shoes, overwhelmed.

JONI (CONT'D)

I just wish you could have been...

PAUL

What?

Joni looks up, tears in her eyes.

JONI

Better.

We hear a rumbling - Nic is storming her way to the door. With Jules and Laser trailing behind.

NIC
You've got some balls, mister!

PAUL
Nic, hold on...

NIC
No, you hold on! Let me tell you something, man! This is *not* your family. This is *my* family!

PAUL
I know that...

NIC
No, you don't know! You know why?! Because you're a fucking interloper! If you want a family so much, go out and make your own!!

Nic slams the door in his face and walks back into the house.

EXT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jules follows Paul and catches up to him.

JULES
Hey Paul, wait up.

PAUL
This was a bad idea. I'm sorry.

Jules grabs him and turns him to face her.

JULES
Listen to me.
(beat)
You're not the villain here.

PAUL
(choking up)
Well I feel like one.

Jules pulls him into a hug.

JULES
You're not.

INT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - TV ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Laser, Joni and Nic watch "Locked Up Abroad: Nepal." Jules walks in front of them, picks up the remote and turns off the TV.

JULES

I need to say something.

Everyone sits up. Jules has a look of strength and resolution we've yet to see before.

JULES (CONT'D)

Look, it's no secret your mom and I have been going through a rough patch lately. That's happens in marriages, especially ones that have lasted as long as ours. But instead of looking at our problems and trying to deal with them head-on, I went and did something really stupid. It may be shocking to you, but adults aren't exempt from making mistakes. Anyway, I know you're all really furious with me. I can take that. I'm a big girl. But what I can't take is the thought that my bad decisions have ruined your relationship with a good man...

(preempting Nic)

Call him what you want, Nic, but Paul's a good guy. No, he isn't blameless, he was there too. But if I'm gonna be honest about it, the person who really pushed it was me.

(beat; to the kids)

I know this whole thing's confusing. I wish it wasn't. But life's just like that sometimes.

And with that, Jules hands the remote back to Laser and departs the field. Everyone's shocked by Jules' show of strength, especially Nic.

INT. ALLGOOD LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jules puffs up her pillows, preparing for another night on the couch. Just as she's about to lie down, Nic comes over and picks up the pillows.

NIC

Come on.

Nic heads upstairs to their room. Jules follows.

INT. NIC AND JULES BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nic leads Jules by the hand to the edge of the bed. They both sit down. Nic caresses Jules' face. Leans in and kisses her gently. Jules wells up. She reaches out and cups Nic's face. It's a long, passionate Dunkin Donuts, "Why I First Fell in Love With You" kind of kiss.

Nic gently pushes Jules onto the bed, lays on top of her and starts kissing her neck. Jules is loving it. But then she gets an impulse.

Jules flips Nic onto her back, lays on top of her and starts kissing her neck in the exact same way.

Nic starts laughing. Her bottom's now a top.

Jules sits up. Looks her lover in the eye.

JULES

We're gonna get through this.

Nic returns her gaze.

NIC

I know.

(beat)

I love you, chicken.

And for the first time in a long time, we actually believe them.

INT. JONI'S ROOM - MORNING

Joni wakes up. She looks around her room. There's nothing on the walls. The floor is covered with boxes taped and labeled. It's time to go.

EXT. ALLGOOD HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Nic and Jules stuff the last of Joni's things in the back of their station wagon. Laser and Joni bring the last of the boxes out of the house.

INT. VOLVO STATION WAGON - DAY

The Allgoods are on the road, heading to Palo Alto.

Nic and Jules ride in front. They look happier. Nic reaches over and takes Jules' hand. Laser and Joni both see this.

MINUTES LATER

Joni looks down.

ANGLE ON: the hat Paul gave her the day she visited his farm. She stares at it. Then looks up...

JONI

Mom?

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

Paul opens his door. There's Joni. Paul can't believe it.

PAUL

Hey! I thought you were--

Joni hugs him. This makes Paul's decade.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

JONI

It's okay.

(beat)

You did the worst you could.

PAUL

You're funny.

JONI

I know....

(beat)

I get that from my dad.

IN THE VOLVO

The rest of the Allgoods watch Paul and Joni. Jules is so relieved to see this reconciliation. Nic is taking it.

CUT TO:

INT. VOLVO STATION WAGON - DAY

Now they're on I-5. Driving through scenic Bakersfield. Laser looks uncomfortable.

LASER
Can we pull off? I gotta pee.

EXT. MARIE CALLENDER'S OFF I-5 - DAY

Establishing.

INT. MARIE CALLENDER'S - DAY

The Allgoods share a last meal. Nic and Jules seem wired as separation anxiety kicks in. Joni looks at her watch.

NIC
It's okay, we're fine on time.

Joni seems distant, her mind already at college. Nic sees this. Wants to connect with her daughter one more time.

NIC (CONT'D)
It's gonna be really hectic when we get there so your mom and I wanted to take this time to tell you how much we've loved being your parents and how proud we are of you.

Joni looks away, skirting what she fears is a prelude to a maternal melt-down. Nic soldiers on.

NIC (CONT'D)
I've been thinking about what you said to me, about my wanting to show everybody what a perfect lesbian family I have.

JONI
Mom, forget about that--

NIC

No, you were right. Part of it was vanity. But the bigger part was just wanting the best for you. I know we weren't perfect parents. But we've loved you so much and we hope you felt that...at least some of the time.

JONI

Yeah, I did.
 (looking at her watch)
 We should go.

Nic sags.

EXT. PALO ALTO - DAY - ESTABLISHING

The station wagon passes through the town.

INT. STATION WAGON - STANFORD CAMPUS - DAY

As they drive into Stanford, Joni sees STUDENTS swarming the campus. She takes it all in, nervous, excited. Nic and Jules steal looks back at Joni, feeling her nervousness, wishing they could take it away.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The Allgoods pull up to the curb, get out.

EXT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Laser pulls a dolly with Joni's boxes. Joni and the moms follow behind.

INT. JONI'S DORM ROOM - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nic and Jules help Joni unload her boxes. Jules drops a box on Nic's toe. Nic yelps.

JONI

(impatient)
 Guys, it's okay. I got it.

Nic and Jules get the hint. They leave the room.

INT. JONI'S DORM ROOM - BEDROOM - LATER

Quick shots of Joni moving stuff into her room. When she finally looks up, she realizes her parents aren't there.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Joni exits quickly, looking around to find her family. She sees the station wagon is gone. She looks panicked, like a kindergartner dropped off at school for the first time.

NIC (O.S.)

Joni...

Joni turns to see her family heading towards her from behind.

JONI

Where'd you go?!

NIC

We had to move the car.

JONI

(covering her fear)

I thought you left.

JULES

We wouldn't leave without saying
goodbye.

NIC

Give us *some* credit.

And suddenly, everyone realizes...this is it. It's time to say goodbye. First Laser comes up and hugs Joni.

LASER

It's gonna be weird not having you
at home.

JONI

Sorry to leave you alone with them.

LASER

It's okay. I can handle it.

Laser backs up. Then the moms both come up and hug Joni, tears streaming down their faces.

JONI

Guys, come on...

(beat)

Look, I'll talk to you soon.

Joni tries to detach from the hug. But her moms won't let go. They keep holding her and crying.

Slowly, their tears begin to break Joni down.

Trapped in their loving embrace, Joni's feelings rise up, unbidden, overpowering her. She starts crying.

The moms hold her tighter, which makes her cry even harder.

Soon she's sobbing in her mothers' arms, as all the pressure, resentment and anger she's felt starts seeping out of her.

Nic and Jules feel their daughter letting go. They hold her tight to comfort her.

They keep holding her until a calm sets in.

The hug breaks apart. Nic pushes the hair from Joni's face. Joni gives her moms one last smile, then turns and walks away. We stay on Nic and Jules, watching their daughter set off on her new life.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

The family drives home. Jules is at the wheel. Nic's in the passenger seat, eyes red and puffy. Laser's in the back listening to his Ipod. Jules looks at Nic, then looks back at Laser.

JULES

Hey Laser.

Laser takes out his earpiece.

LASER

Yeah?

JULES

How about sharing your tunes.

Laser grudgingly hands Jules the Ipod. She plugs it in and chooses a song.

After a beat, Joni Mitchell's "All I Want" comes on.

JONI MITCHELL

*I am on a lonely road and I am
travelling, travelling, travelling.
Looking for something what can it
be. Oh I hate you some, I hate you
some. I love you some. Oh I love
you, when I forget about me..."*

Jules and Nic share a look, then turn to face the front. As the music plays, Jules reaches over and grabs Nic's hand.

No one speaks. They just drive, listening to the song.

Nic smiles...

Nothing's better than Joni.

FADE OUT

THE END