

RELATIVITY

By
Peter Craig

Current revisions by
Peter Craig, March 23, 2007

Mark Ross
PARADIGM
(310) 288-8000

INT. RON DODDLING'S OFFICE- AFTERNOON

RON DODDLING, a bookish man with a crooked nose, calmly sits in a scholarly office wallpapered with diplomas.

RON

My second cousin, Clive, was adopted. His parents successfully hid this fact from him for most of his adult life. They felt revealing the truth bore no foreseeable benefit, particularly in his more formative years. It wasn't until he was thirty-four that he discovered it for himself.

FRANKLIN and CLAIRE FERGUSSON, a pair of slightly frazzled fifty-somethings, sit on a corduroy sofa across the room.

CLAIRE

How?

RON

Well, Clive was an unabashed alcoholic and ravenous drug fiend. It was after an evening of heavy drinking and heroin use that he and five friends, who he commonly referred to as The Clive Five, broke into his parents' house while they were vacationing in Beirut.

FRANKLIN

Beirut?

CLAIRE

Please continue.

RON

While The Five were busy rehabbing the downstairs with aluminum baseball bats, Clive, presumably looking to finance his next foray in debauchery, broke into the upstairs safe only to find his adoption papers, preserved like the day they were signed.

CLAIRE

So what happened?

RON

He went completely insane.

Franklin sits forward on the sofa.

FRANKLIN

You're not helping my case here,
Ron.

RON

As your friend and author of two self-published books on familial diplomacy, my goal isn't to persuade your decision one way or another. It's to give you a broader picture on how you two, together, might handle your situation. You can look at Clive's case from two different view points. As a negative, he's now certifiably insane with absolutely no hope of recovery. On the positive side, apart from the highly regimented doses of psychotropic medicines, he's now drug-free.

Franklin and Claire stare blankly at Ron.

RON (cont'd)

I guess I'm saying there isn't a right or wrong answer to this debate. You just have to be content with whatever decision you make and hope that nobody loses their mind.

INT. STATION WAGON - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Franklin and Claire shut the doors to a brown, early-nineties station wagon.

FRANKLIN

And we invited him to our anniversary party?

He starts the engine.

CLAIRE

All right, let's do it.

Franklin looks at her.

FRANKLIN

What?

CLAIRE
As long you promise me one thing.

FRANKLIN
What?

CLAIRE
Promise me that, no matter what,
everything will turn out hunky
dory.

FRANKLIN
Hunky dory?

CLAIRE
Just promise!

Frank thinks about it for a moment.

FRANKLIN
All right...I promise.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - AFTERNOON

Out of nowhere, a yellow compact car fish tails into the driveway of a modest, late-seventies two-story home and comes to an EAR-PIERCING HALT inches from the closed garage door.

CHARLES FERGUSSON (30), with dark unkept hair and a bright green polo, shoves the car door open, jumps onto the driveway and runs towards the house.

INT. FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Charles stumbles through the front door of the eclectically decorated home finished with wood paneling and garage sale furniture. He frantically looks around.

CHARLES
I'm home! Charles is home!
Charles made it first!

He darts into the kitchen.

CHARLES (cont'd)
Is anyone here?

THE HOUSE IS SILENT.

He nervously rushes into the living room and sits on a green flowered sofa. He grabs a book from a side table, flips it open and attempts to catch his breath.

CHARLES (cont'd)
Not right...

He throws the book on the floor, jumps up and scurries out of the room.

INT. TOOL SHED - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Charles thrusts himself into a packed tool shed. He frantically surveys the contents of a cluttered work bench, then freezes on something.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Charles, now in goggles and protective headphones, holds a chain saw in the middle of the backyard. He tugs the start chord. It sputters momentarily. He tries again...nothing.

CHARLES
For the love of all things holy and
cotton-like, please...

He pulls it a third time and the CHAIN SAW ROARS TO LIFE WITH A MENACING MECHANICAL SCREAM.

CHARLES (cont'd)
(over the chain saw)
Yes! YES!

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

A white, four-door pulls into the driveway.

INT. VINCENT'S CAR - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

VINCENT FERGUSSON (30), a nervous sort of a man wearing a horseshoe-shaped travel cushion around his neck, shifts the car in park and nervously exhales.

VINCENT
I feel sick to my stomach.

GWENIVERE (O.S.)
This is something you should've
done two years ago.

GWENIVERE, a fare skinned early-thirty-something, sits on the passenger-side. She also has a horseshoe-shaped travel cushion hugging her neck.

VINCENT

Tell my parents we're married?
They think we just met.

GWENIVERE

Just remember what I said.

VINCENT

Clean the toilet rim after I go?

GWENIVERE

It's their thirty-fifth wedding anniversary this weekend. They've invited a lot of the people. They can't kill you.

Vincent looks at her.

VINCENT

You said that? I don't remember you saying that.

GWENIVERE

That's because you lose your hearing when you're nervous.

Vincent thinks about it for a moment.

VINCENT

I hear a chain saw.

EXT. BACKYARD - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Vincent and Gwenivere step around the rear of the house. Charles is sawing the base of a massive tree standing near the back of the yard.

VINCENT

Charles!

Charles keeps cutting. Wood chips and saw dust explode all around him.

VINCENT (cont'd)

Charles!!!

Charles looks up. The chain saw begins to jerk violently. He holds on awkwardly until it comes to a GRINDING HALT. A puff of black smoke shoots out the exhaust.

CHARLES
Hey, I didn't hear you guys.

VINCENT
What are you doing?

Charles thinks a moment.

CHARLES
Pubusitic sackworm infestation.

VINCENT
What?

CHARLES
The number four killer of maples in
North America. It's carried in the
saliva of diseased squirrels.

He waves his finger around the base of the tree.

CHARLES (cont'd)
You can tell by the pattern in the
bark this one didn't have much time
left. I've been out here for the
past couple of hours negotiating
the placement of its fall.

VINCENT
You just passed us fifteen minutes
ago on the way here.

Charles wipes saw dust from his forehead.

CHARLES
I was out here sawing the...

VINCENT
Mom's going to be a little more
than upset that you're cutting down
the family tree just to give the
appearance that you've been here
longer than you really have.

Charles drops his hand.

CHARLES
I didn't realize we had a family
tree.

VINCENT
They planted it when Conrad was
born. It's an oak.

Charles turns and surveys the damage.

VINCENT (cont'd)
 You should know by now, you're the
 only one racing.

Charles props his goggles on his forehead. He stares at the tree.

CHARLES
 It made sense at the time.

VINCENT
 So did lead paint.

GWENIVERE
 You two are wearing the same
 shirts.

Vincent and Charles look at each other's shirts. They're wearing the exact same green polo.

CHARLES
 Huh...

VINCENT
 Charles, this is Gwenivere.
 Gwenivere, this is my twin brother,
 Charles.

Gwenivere waves.

GWENIVERE
 Hi.

A CAR IS HEARD PULLING IN TO THE DRIVEWAY AROUND THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE. Charles nervously throws off the headphones and goggles.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Franklin and Claire shut the doors to the station wagon and walk towards the house.

FRANKLIN
 You made it!

Vincent and Gwenivere stand on the front step. Charles quickly steps out to join them. He wipes sweat from his forehead.

CHARLES
 Happy anniversary!

CLAIRE
Two more days...

She steps up and hugs Charles. Franklin and Vincent shake.

VINCENT
So, thirty-five years...

FRANKLIN
Not bad, huh?

CHARLES
You guys should get a trophy or something.

CLAIRE
That would have to be one damn big trophy.

She releases Charles and looks him over.

CLAIRE (cont'd)
Why are you covered in saw dust?

He examines himself.

CHARLES
Am I? That's strange.

Gwenivere stands a few feet away waiting an introduction.

VINCENT
Mom and Dad, this is Gwenivere.
Gwen, this is Franklin and Claire.

Claire walks over to Gwenivere and looks her over.

CLAIRE
So this is the mysterious anthropologist our son has been hiding from us for the last three months.

VINCENT
I wouldn't say hiding.

GWENIVERE
I wouldn't say mysterious.

Claire bursts forward and embraces Gwenivere in a meaty hug. Gwenivere stumbles backward to catch her balance.

INT. VINCENT'S ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Claire opens the door to an intensely bright turquoise room.

CLAIRE

And this is Vincent's room, where
you'll be staying.

She sets a stack of towels on the dresser.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Here's a few towels to hold onto
for yourself. The boys have a
history of being openly communal
when it comes to towel usage.
Don't ask me why.

She reaches over, jerks a swimsuit model poster off the wall
and wads it up.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

The party is the day after tomorrow
so you should have enough time to
relax and do whatever. So feel
free to make yourself comfortable.

Gwenivere stands in the doorway studying the room.

GWENIVERE

It's quite an intense color.

CLAIRE

We let the kids choose their own
paint colors when they were
younger. Vincent was going through
a turquoise phase at the time.
Everything was turquoise for some
reason. We almost had him see a
doctor about it.

Gwenivere steps up to a mangled clay sculpture placed on a
desk tucked in the corner of the room.

GWENIVERE

Did Vincent make this?

CLAIRE

Yeah. He took a sculpting class in
college.

Gwenivere picks it up. It's atrocious from every angle.

GWENIVERE

What is it?

CLAIRE

It's what happens when a podiatrist
makes art.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - AFTERNOON

Franklin tugs on the closed garage door.

FRANKLIN

I told Dad we would drive out to
the home tomorrow to see him. It's
been a while since we all had the
chance to get out there together.

Charles and Vincent stand a few feet away watching.

VINCENT

Don't we have to get the house
ready for your party?

CHARLES

How is Grandpa, anyway?

CLICK! The garage door finally gives way and rolls open.
Charles and Vincent stare into the open garage. Franklin
steps back to join them.

FRANKLIN

So? What do you think?

CHARLES

You rebuilt Blue?

A weathered, blue two-seat go-cart with roll bars sits parked
inside the garage.

FRANKLIN

She works as good as new.

VINCENT

I'm surprised Mom finally let you
fix it after what happened to Uncle
Finnegan.

Franklin looks at Vincent.

FRANKLIN

What happened to your Uncle
Finnegan was a freak accident that
could have been avoided with the
proper protective equipment.

(MORE)

FRANKLIN (cont'd)
 Besides, he was an instrumental
 case in the scientific development
 of skin grafting, so it wasn't a
 complete loss.

A red hatchback pulls into the driveway behind them.

JUDITH FERGUSSON (27), sporting auburn hair, glasses and a
 orange scarf, gets out with a small dog carrier stenciled
 with the name, "MASCOT" on the side.

JUDITH
 I said no smoking in my car, it
 provokes Mascot's asthma! Besides
 you know I hate that smell!

CONRAD FERGUSSON (33), wearing a pressed white button-up, tie
 and suit pants, follows out of the passenger's side with a
 pipe hanging out his mouth.

CONRAD
 Don't even get me started on smell!

Judith walks up to him, grabs his pipe and throws it.

CONRAD (cont'd)
 Hey!

JUDITH
 I take garlic supplements for my
 high cholesterol, butt munch!

She slugs him in the shoulder.

CONRAD
 Ouch!

She slugs him again.

CONRAD (cont'd)
 Damn it!

She turns and walks past Franklin, Vincent and Charles.

JUDITH
 Hey guys. Hi Dad.

FRANKLIN
 Hi Judith.

CONRAD
 I was talking about your dog!

She slams the door to the house. Conrad walks towards the garage rubbing his shoulder.

CONRAD (cont'd)
Remind me to fly next time.

FRANKLIN
What was that about?

CONRAD
That was about six hours of living hell. Damn, I hate car pools.

VINCENT
What's with the suit?

CONRAD
I had court this morning. Closing arguments on a tax fraud case.

VINCENT
Did you win?

CONRAD
That's up to the judge.

CHARLES
Do you think your client's guilty?

CONRAD
Guilty?

He looks at Charles.

CONRAD (cont'd)
What are you, in fourth grade?

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - EVENING

MASCOT, a small, scraggly-looking dog, walks on a treadmill tucked in the corner of the room. HE LETS OUT A HUSKY BARK.

JUDITH
Mascot! Silencia!

She turns to Gwenivere sitting across the room.

JUDITH (cont'd)
I'm teaching him Spanish. For an older dog, I think he's picking it up quite well.

MASCOT COUGHS OUT ANOTHER BARK.

JUDITH (cont'd)

So Gwenivere's an interesting name.
Is it in your family?

GWENIVERE

Actually, no. It was my father's
choice. He was heavily involved in
Arthurian legend at the time, so
naturally...

Judith grabs a handful of trail mix from a bowl at her side.

JUDITH

Heavily involved?

GWENIVERE

Actually, destructively obsessed
might better describe it. He was
paralyzed in a jousting match when
I was twelve.

The handful of NUTS CRUNCH IN JUDITH'S MOUTH.

GWENIVERE (cont'd)

So, I've read a few of your short
stories. I have to say, I'm very
impressed. I just finished
"Everyone Dead But Me". Your
attention to detail is so raw and
brutally graphic.

JUDITH

Well...eighteenth century human
castration is a dark topic to
tackle.

GWENIVERE

The images still haunt my dreams.

JUDITH

Thank you.

GWENIVERE

So, are you working on anything
right now?

JUDITH

Actually, I just finished my
first novel.

GWENIVERE

Really?

JUDITH

I've been working on it since I was twelve. I'm giving it to Mom and Dad for their anniversary.

GWENIVERE

What's it about?

JUDITH

It's a science-fiction thriller following one woman's dark journey of self-discovery in a futuristic world riddled with political corruption and social chaos told through an aggressive blend of nonlinear narrative techniques, including flash backs, flash forwards, and something new I'm pioneering, flash presents.

GWENIVERE

Twelve, huh?

JUDITH

At nearly 4,000 pages, it's taken some time to complete.

MASCOT BARKS AGAIN. Judith turns around.

JUDITH (cont'd)

Mascot, ningún ladridos en la casa por favor!

Mascot stops barking and picks up his step. Judith turns back towards Gwenivere.

JUDITH (cont'd)

He has severe outdoor allergies. I can't take him for walks outside.

Mascot stumbles over and rolls off the treadmill.

INT. DINING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - EVENING

Conrad forks a mound of lettuce from a salad bowl.

CHARLES

Pass the grilled asparagus.

Vincent hands a plate of asparagus across the table cluttered with an eclectic mixture of foods. He sits back down in the only metal fold out chair at the table.

Franklin and Claire sit together at the end of the table.

FRANKLIN

First of all, your mom and I would like to thank you for coming home to celebrate our anniversary with us. It really means a lot to have all of you together under the same roof again.

Charles takes a bite of asparagus.

CHARLES

Thanks Dad.

FRANKLIN

We just want to tell you that we love you very much.

CLAIRE

Very much.

FRANKLIN

It's crazy how much we love you.

Vincent stops eating.

VINCENT

What's wrong with you two?

FRANKLIN

What do you mean?

VINCENT

You both seem nervous and neither of you are eating.

CHARLES

(mouthful)

What's wrong with the food?

FRANKLIN

Well, we have something we would like to tell all of you. It's kind of hard to just come out and say.

CHARLES

Are you dying?

CLAIRE

No.

JUDITH

Are you getting a divorce?

Conrad looks at Judith.

CONRAD

Why would they announce their divorce two days before their anniversary?

JUDITH

It's just a question.

CONRAD

It's a stupid question.

VINCENT

You're not getting a divorce are you?

FRANKLIN

You're all adopted.

THE ROOM GOES SILENT. Everyone's attention is frozen on the end of the table.

JUDITH

What's that supposed to mean?

FRANKLIN

You're still our children and we love you more than anything. We don't want this to change the way you view our relationships in any way.

CONRAD

All right, I'm confused.

VINCENT

What are you trying to say, Dad?

FRANKLIN

I'm trying to say that you're adopted.

JUDITH

What's that even mean?

FRANKLIN

It's just like it sounds.

CHARLES

We're adopted?

FRANKLIN

Yes.

JUDITH
Just like Conrad, or...

CONRAD
What's that supposed to mean?

FRANKLIN
All of you.

VINCENT
Dad, you're not making any sense.

FRANKLIN
I don't know a better way to say
it.

Claire takes a deep breath.

CLAIRE
You're father and I couldn't have
children. This was the only way we
could experience the glory of being
parents.

CONRAD
The glory of being parents?

VINCENT
You're not our real parents?

CLAIRE
We ARE your real parents; just not
your birth parents.

CHARLES
I think I'm going to be sick.

He grabs the salad bowl, empties it onto the table and leans
over it.

VINCENT
You just mean Conrad, right?

Conrad drops his fork.

CONRAD
Hey!

FRANKLIN
All of you are adopted.

VINCENT
What, like me and Charles together?

He puts his hand on Charles sitting beside him. They're still wearing the same shirt.

CLAIRE

Sort of.

VINCENT

What do you mean "sort of"? You can't use "sort ofs". Just say it in plain, simple English.

FRANKLIN

You're not really twins.

Charles lifts his head from the bowl.

CHARLES

What?

FRANKLIN

We adopted you two months apart from each other.

CLAIRE

You were so close in age, we thought it was best to package you as twins.

VINCENT

Package us?

CHARLES

We're not twins?

FRANKLIN

Charles, you're three months older than Vincent.

VINCENT

What the hell? He's older than me?

JUDITH

Give me the bowl.

Judith reaches across the table and grabs the bowl from Charles.

VINCENT

October 1st. Whose birthday is that?

FRANKLIN
Actually, neither of yours. We
averaged your birthdays into one
date.

CHARLES
What's mine then?

FRANKLIN
August 20th.

VINCENT
And mine?

CLAIRE
November 17th.

CONRAD
Who gives a damn about birthdays!
Are any of us even related to each
other?

FRANKLIN
By blood, no.

CONRAD
When did you plan on telling us
this?

FRANKLIN
Well...right now.

CLAIRE
Frank thought it was time that you
all knew the truth. It's been such
a long time since we had you all
together, he thought...

FRANKLIN
Wait a second, WE thought.

CLAIRE
Listen, this was your idea!

FRANKLIN
Don't abandon me on this, Claire.
Ron said we have to swim in pairs.

VINCENT
Who's Ron?

CONRAD

Hold on a moment. I remember being at the hospital when Judith was born.

FRANKLIN

That was Dr. Fontaine's office.

CONRAD

Our dentist?

FRANKLIN

We thought there was a slight chance you'd remember, so we staged the delivery with a few community theater performers.

CLAIRE

Judith was already three months old at the time.

Conrad slaps the table.

CONRAD

Damn it!!!

FRANKLIN

We wanted to shield all of you from having to carry the burden of not feeling truly a part of a family.

VINCENT

So you're handing that to us now?

FRANKLIN

We felt it was appropriate now that you're mature enough to handle the truth.

VINCENT

Well, you got that one wrong!

Vincent grabs the bowl from Judith and storms out of the dining room.

GWENIVERE

Well...

She sets her napkin on the table.

GWENIVERE (cont'd)

I should go ahead and just...

She gets up and follows after Vincent.

CHARLES
What about Pop Pop?

CLAIRE
Your great grandpa?

CHARLES
Yeah, what about him? Everyone
says I look exactly like him.

FRANKLIN
Yeah...we kind of got lucky on that
one.

Conrad lifts his head from his hands.

CONRAD
But I remember you being pregnant
for months.

CLAIRE
I duct taped varying sizes of throw
pillows under my clothing.

FRANKLIN
We tried to cover all our bases.

CONRAD
Damn it!!!

CHARLES
What a minute. My real birthday
was just last week.

Franklin and Claire think about it for a moment.

FRANKLIN
I guess that's right, yes.

CLAIRE
Happy birthday, Charles.

Judith stands up and grabs her glass.

JUDITH
I need air...

She leaves the room.

JUDITH (O.S.) (cont'd)
...and alcohol!

INT. VINCENT'S ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Gwenivere opens the door. Vincent furiously paces the room.

VINCENT

I knew this would happen! I knew if I brought you here something completely idiotic would happen! I was actually thinking of something more in the vicinity of you seeing my dad in his underwear, but I had this deep rooted suspicion this whole thing would cave in on itself! Why am I surprised?

He stops and turns to Gwenivere.

VINCENT (cont'd)

Dad once stopped my dance recital and demanded it start over because he was in the restroom!

GWENIVERE

Nothing has changed, Vincent. They're still your parents.

VINCENT

Weren't you down there? Didn't you hear? Everything's changed! Those people aren't my parents. They're not my brothers and sisters. I guess it makes some sort of sense. I'm the only one with webbed toes.

GWENIVERE

You're still family.

VINCENT

Family? What the hell is family? My own twin isn't related to me. Don't you see the implications this has on our lives? For all I know, you and I could be related.

He studies her face.

VINCENT (cont'd)

We kind of look a like, don't we?

GWENIVERE

We're not related.

VINCENT

Stranger things have happened, you know!

He begins pacing again.

VINCENT (cont'd)

In some rare cases, chimpanzees have been known to predict military coups in third world countries!

GWENIVERE

I think you need to just sit down and take a deep breath.

VINCENT

What in the hell is that going to do?

GWENIVERE

Ensure lung aeration and promote relaxation.

Vincent steps up to her.

VINCENT

Did I ever tell you that when I was younger I did everything in even numbers?

GWENIVERE

What are you talking about?

VINCENT

If I turned on the light, I did it twice. If I was chewing food, I ended on an even count. I even blinked in twos.

GWENIVERE

Why?

VINCENT

For some unknown reason I felt that if I didn't something bad would happen.

GWENIVERE

Why are you telling me this?

VINCENT

Because there came a point when I realized I was acting nuts and the only thing that assured me I wasn't actually certifiable was the fact that I was the product of two reasonably sane individuals.

He backs up.

VINCENT (cont'd)

Now, for all I know, I AM crazy. My real parents might be complete lunatics!

Gwenivere thinks about it for a long moment.

GWENIVERE

You were in dance?

VINCENT

I'm sleeping in the car!

He shoots past her and leaves the room.

INT. DINING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Vincent storms down the stairs past the dining room.

VINCENT

I'm sleeping outside and there's nothing anyone can do to stop me!

HE SLAMS THE FRONT DOOR ON EXIT.

CLAIRE

Does he need a blanket or something?

Conrad is the last one sitting at the table.

CONRAD

What about the doctor? I remember the doctor seemed very real.

FRANKLIN

He was Dad's proctologist.

CLAIRE

He owed Wendel a favor for some P.I. work he had done for him.

CONRAD
Grandpa was a private investigator?

CLAIRE
You didn't know that?

Conrad stands up.

CONRAD
Isn't it obvious? There's a whole
hell of a lot I don't know about
this circus-freak-show of a family!

He grabs a piece of pizza off the table, throws it against
the wall and leaves the room.

CONRAD (O.S.) (cont'd)
Damn it!

EXT. BACK PATIO - FERGUSSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Judith takes a swig from her glass and bites her lip as it
goes down.

JUDITH
Are you going to be all right?

Charles sits at Judith's feet staring at the ground. His
hair is a mess and he's drained of color.

CHARLES
I'll be fine...once I get my
equilibrium back.

JUDITH
Do you remember Elliot Bottsworth
who lived down the street?

Charles continues staring at the ground.

CHARLES
The Korean kid with the over-bite?

JUDITH
He had surgery for that, but yeah.

CHARLES
Sure, I remember him.

JUDITH
He was adopted and didn't know
about it for years.

Charles lifts his head.

CHARLES
Weren't his parents black?

JUDITH
Yeah...I don't know how they sold
him that one.

Conrad opens the screen door and steps out onto the patio holding a large box of fireworks. He sets it on the patio table and begins rummaging through it.

JUDITH (cont'd)
What are you doing?

CONRAD
Nothing.

He pulls out a few packages of bottle rockets and sets them on the table.

JUDITH
Where'd you get those?

CONRAD
My closet. I was saving them for a
special occasion.

CHARLES
Like when?

CONRAD
Like now.

CHARLES
You call this a special occasion?

CONRAD
I'm pretty sure, someday, when you
look back on the timeline of your
life, you'll qualify today as a red-
letter date.

He lifts a large toy tank firework out of the box and examines it.

JUDITH
Right now doesn't stand out as an
appropriate time for a fireworks
display, Conrad.

CONRAD

You're probably right, but I don't really care. I've been saving these damn things for over fifteen years and I want to use them.

CHARLES

Don't you want to talk about what happened in there?

CONRAD

What's there to talk about?

CHARLES

I just think we should be here for each other. Stick together, you know...like Voltron.

CONRAD

Voltron?

He sets down the tank and looks at Charles.

CONRAD (cont'd)

Voltron was a team of robotic cats from the distant future. Their parents didn't adopt them or hold community theater at their dentist office.

CHARLES

But they stuck together.

Conrad points at Charles.

CONRAD

Leave Voltron out of this!

CHARLES

I'm just saying, we're still family. We're all going through the same thing.

CONRAD

The same thing? Do you have any clue to what they did to me?

CHARLES

You? I thought I was Vincent's twin my entire life. We wore matching clothes all the way through junior high.

Conrad points towards the house.

CONRAD

I went to Lamaze class with those two every week for four months. I still remember the hard labor breathing technique.

He begins breathing in rapid bursts.

JUDITH

All right...

Conrad stops breathing. He and Charles look at Judith.

JUDITH (cont'd)

If we're going to do this, let's just do it.

She finishes off her drink and tosses it on the ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK PATIO - FERGUSSON HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Judith, Charles and Conrad are now standing side by side unenthusiastically holding lit sparklers.

JUDITH

So what now?

CHARLES

I think we're supposed to wave them around...spell our names and stuff.

Judith lamely waves her sparkler around. Charles stares into the backyard.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Remember that time we all camped out back here? We set up tents, cooked out and everything. That was fun, right? That's kind of like what real families do.

JUDITH

Didn't Vincent fall into the fire?

CONRAD

No...that was me.

JUDITH

Yeah, that was a good time.

Charles takes a deep breath.

CHARLES
Why can't things just stay the way
they used to be?

Charles' sparkler burns out.

He turns to Conrad and steps towards him with open arms.
Conrad backs away.

CONRAD
What are you doing?

CHARLES
Giving you a hug.

CONRAD
Why?

CHARLES
You're my brother. I want to give
you a hug.

He steps forward again. Conrad backs away further holding
his sparkler in front of him.

CONRAD
Don't.

CHARLES
Why not?

CONRAD
Because, I'm not in the mood for a
hug right now.

Charles steps closer. Conrad nervously backs into the table.
His sparkler goes out.

CONRAD (cont'd)
Damn it! Stay away from me,
Charles. If you touch me I'm going
to lose it!

CHARLES
Why?

CONRAD
I just don't want a hug, all right?

He points at Judith.

CONRAD (cont'd)
If you have to hug something, hug
her!

Charles turns to Judith. Judith's sparkler is still cracking away.

JUDITH
I'll pass for now, thanks.

CONRAD
Just give him a hug, Judith!

JUDITH
I'm still sparkling here. Why can't you? He asked you first.

CONRAD
Because I don't like hugs! I never have! They're awkward, invasive and just plain inappropriate! I hope whoever invented the damn idea suffered an agonizing and untimely death!

JUDITH
That's a little harsh, don't you think?

CHARLES
It's only a hug.

He grabs the box of fireworks.

CONRAD
You two can do whatever you want!

He storms towards the house.

CONRAD (cont'd)
As far as I'm concerned, it's every man for himself!

He slams the screen door shut. Judith turns back to her sparkler. She waves it around.

JUDITH
Why won't mine die out?

She shakes it harder.

JUDITH (cont'd)
Die, damn it.

Suddenly, Charles bursts into tears.

CHARLES
(intensely weeping)
Why us! Why now! Why, oh, why!...

He begins stomping on the ground.

CHARLES (cont'd)
Ahhhh!!!

INT. DINING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Franklin and Claire sit silently at the table. CHARLES
WEEPING CAN BE HEARD FROM OUTSIDE.

FRANKLIN
I don't actually think it went that
bad.

Claire looks at him.

CLAIRE
You don't think it went that bad?
Don't you hear that?

FRANKLIN
I didn't get punched. For some
reason I thought I might get
punched.

Claire leans over and slugs Franklin in the shoulder.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)
Ahhh!

CLAIRE
There! How well do you think it
went now?

She pushes her chair out and stands up.

FRANKLIN
Claire?

She grabs her glass and stomps out of the room, leaving
Franklin alone with the MUFFLED SOUND OF CHARLES' OUTDOOR
WEEPING.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLES' ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MORNING

A fatigued Charles sits on the floor watching two small cars chasing each other on a winding electric race track laid out in the middle of his orange room.

A tear sprints down his face.

INT. KITCHEN - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Claire stands over the stove staring at a sizzling pancake. After a long moment, she flips it over. It's burnt.

EXT. FERGUSSON HOME - MORNING

Out of nowhere, A MASSIVE CRACK OF WOOD RIPS THROUGH THE AIR and the large Oak tree, standing along the edge of the backyard, tips over and crashes down onto the house.

INT. JUDITH'S ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

A LARGE BRANCH SMASHES THROUGH JUDITH'S WINDOW, showering glass into her red-painted room. Judith pulls the covers over her head as pieces of glass rain onto her bed.

INT. CHARLES' ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Charles gets up and looks out his window. One of his race cars drops from the track's upside-down loop.

INT. BACKYARD - FERGUSSON HOME - LATER

The massive tree is stretched across the lawn and climbs the house near its peak. Franklin, Claire, Gwenivere and Conrad, in varying degrees of sleepwear, examine the damage.

FRANKLIN

It must've caught a bad breeze.

CLAIRE

I've never heard of a bad breeze taking down a tree this size.

CONRAD

I've never heard of a bad breeze.

CHARLES (O.S.)

Bad things happen, you know.

Everyone turns around. Charles stands a few yards behind them, still in yesterday's clothes. He's pale and clammy.

CHARLES (cont'd)
Trees fall.

CLAIRE
Are you all right?

GWENIVERE
Charles, wasn't this...

CHARLES
One of my most beloved trees? Yes.

GWENIVERE
No, just yesterday, wasn't this the tree...

CHARLES
I claimed I would one day give my marriage vows in its late morning shade? Yes, this is the one. Thank you, Gwenivere. I appreciate you bringing it up.

Gwenivere gets it.

CONRAD
You want to get married in the backyard?

CHARLES
Yes.

CONRAD
Under the family tree?

CHARLES
Why am I being interrogated about one of my most heart-felt wishes in the wake of this horrific natural disaster? And why didn't I know anything about us having a family tree? Does nothing make sense in this filthy, forsaken world?

Judith walks up to Charles' side.

JUDITH
How'd this happen?

CLAIRE
We don't quite know yet. Are you
okay?

JUDITH
I'm fine.

She looks at Charles. He's sweating profusely.

JUDITH (cont'd)
What's wrong with you?

CLAIRE
Charles, why don't you go inside.
I made 'dress your own pancakes'.

CHARLES
Do you have bacon and cheddar
cheese?

CLAIRE
Of course.

CONRAD
You still like bacon and cheddar
cheese on your pancakes?

CHARLES
What, you have a problem with bacon
and cheddar cheese on pancakes?

CONRAD
Yeah...yeah I do.

CHARLES
Then why don't you come over here
and say it to my face!

CLAIRE
Listen, why don't we all go inside
and have pancakes?

CONRAD
Because, maybe we don't want
pancakes.

CLAIRE
Listen, I realize you might still
be upset with us, but don't take it
out on my pancakes. They deserve
to be eaten.

CONRAD

I'm sure if your pancakes had their way they would rather be left alone.

JUDITH

I believe that if any form of food had the capacity of conscious thought, being consumed would be seen as a glorious fate.

CONRAD

Okay, that's officially the dumbest thing I've ever heard.

JUDITH

What's your problem?

CONRAD

Besides having to stomach your theories on the topic of food philosophy? I don't know. It might be the recent revelation my childhood was a complete lie!

FRANKLIN

Conrad...

CONRAD

What if I needed a part? Did either of you think of that?

FRANKLIN

What are you talking about?

CONRAD

A blood transfusion or organ transplant!

CLAIRE

You know we'd give you anything we had.

CONRAD

Parts aren't interchangeable! For all I know, I'm a Bentley and you're all Pintos.

FRANKLIN

I don't think it works that way.

JUDITH

Why are you a Bentley?

CLAIRE
We all might be Bentleys.

CONRAD
I'm just trying to make a point,
Claire!

JUDITH
How's that working out for you?

CONRAD
Shut it, Judith!

CLAIRE
Did you just call me Claire?

Gwenivere looks around the group.

GWENIVERE
Where's Vincent?

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Gwenivere and Claire stand in the driveway staring into
Vincent's car. The backseat looks like a campsite.

CLAIRE
Did you see him this morning?

GWENIVERE
No. I woke up when the tree fell.

CLAIRE
All the cars are here. He probably
just ran away.

GWENIVERE
Ran away?

CLAIRE
He used to run away a lot when he
was younger.

GWENIVERE
How much is a lot?

CLAIRE
I'd say at least once a month.

GWENIVERE
Why?

CLAIRE

I don't know. He never seemed to need a reason. The first couple times had us all completely panicked, but after about the fifth time or so, we learned it was just a waiting game. He always returned when he was ready. Sometimes a few hours. Once, it was a couple of days.

Claire squints into the car.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Is that a bucket of fried chicken on the floor?

THE GARAGE DOOR IS PULLED OPEN. Charles is inside, standing beside Blue, suited in a helmet and motorcycle goggles.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Where are you going?

CHARLES

Out.

CLAIRE

Don't be gone too long. We're going to visit grandpa at the home in a little bit.

Charles adjusts his goggles.

CHARLES

Gwenivere, could I speak with you for a moment?

GWENIVERE

Sure.

She walks over and steps into the garage.

CHARLES

(whispering)

That was the tree from yesterday.

GWENIVERE

I know.

CHARLES

I can trust you, right? You're not a snitch are you?

GWENIVERE

No.

CHARLES

Then let's just keep this between you, me and Vincent. Have you seen him this morning?

GWENIVERE

No. He's missing.

CHARLES

Missing? Did he run away again?

GWENIVERE

I don't know.

CHARLES

You don't, do you?

He puts his hand on her cheek.

CHARLES (cont'd)

I can see that in your eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Charles drives Blue down the middle of a neighborhood street. He grabs the stick and shifts it into high gear.

EXT. DR. EPSTEIN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

CHARLES RINGS THE DOORBELL of a large two-story brick home. MRS. EPSTEIN, a quiet woman in her mid-sixties, answers the door.

MRS. EPSTEIN

Can I help you?

Charles takes off his helmet.

CHARLES

Is Dr. Epstein in? I'm one of his former patients, Charles Fergusson.

MRS. EPSTEIN

He's just finishing up his morning workout in the backyard.

CHARLES

I can wait.

INSERT - DR. EPSTEIN, SIXTY-SOMETHING WEARING A MARTIAL ARTS SPARRING OUTFIT, FLIPS AN UNKNOWN MAN OVER HIS SHOULDER ONTO THE GROUND IN THE BACKYARD. THE MAN SQUEALS IN PAIN.

CUT TO:

INT. DEN - DR. EPSTEIN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Epstein takes a long drag on a half spent Cuban. He's a distinguished older man, tucked confidently behind a large mahogany desk.

DR. EPSTEIN

It's been quite a long time,
Charles.

Charles sits across the room on an alligator skin love seat.

CHARLES

About fifteen years.

DR. EPSTEIN

How have you been?

CHARLES

Well, I just found out I'm adopted.

DR. EPSTEIN

What would you like me to do for
you?

CHARLES

I don't really know, but I thought
you might have experience with this
sort of thing in your line of work.

DR. EPSTEIN

I'm a pediatrician. This isn't
really my area of expertise.

CHARLES

Can you prescribe me something
or...

DR. EPSTEIN

How are you feeling right now?

CHARLES

I have a mixture of emotions.

DR. EPSTEIN
Sadness?

CHARLES
There have been a few
uncontrollable bouts of crying,
yes.

DR. EPSTEIN
Anger?

CHARLES
A little.

DR. EPSTEIN
Constipation?

CHARLES
No...not really.

DR. EPSTEIN
Then there's nothing I can do for
you.

Charles sits forward.

CHARLES
You've known me for nearly thirty
years, isn't there something you
can do that might help?

Dr. Epstein sets down his cigar.

DR. EPSTEIN
My son, Carl, wrecked my car once.
Actually, I should preface this
story by clarifying he's my step-
son and a narcoleptic.

CHARLES
Okay.

DR. EPSTEIN
He completely gutted \$75,000 worth
of German engineering and walked
away without a single scratch. Not
that I wished him bodily harm, but
what's a broken leg or lacerated
jawline if it teaches him to ask
before taking a nap at seventy-
miles-per-hour.

CHARLES
Good point.

DR. EPSTEIN

Needless to say, I was upset. A barrage of feelings swept over me, not unlike your emotional cocktail you're dealing with right now. Then someone gave me a piece of advice that changed everything.

CHARLES

What was it?

DR. EPSTEIN

Kill a pawn.

CHARLES

Kill a pawn?

DR. EPSTEIN

Do you play chess?

CHARLES

I'm more of a checkers kind of guy.

DR. EPSTEIN

Well, try to look at your situation like a game of chess. If there's no chance of eliminating the King and winning the match, then choose one pawn on the board and do everything you can to take it out. In your case, since you can't change the fact you were adopted, select one item from your grocery list of issues that you're dealing with because of it, and attack it with everything you've got.

CHARLES

What about everything else?

DR. EPSTEIN

Forget it. Life's too short to stress the things you can do nothing to service. If there's no check mate, pick a pawn and kill it. It's better to make one small mark than to be completely railroaded by your circumstance.

CHARLES

What was yours? What did you do?

DR. EPSTEIN
 I kicked Carl out. He was thirty-
 five and had a bad habit of
 shoplifting nasal spray. That book
 was way past over due.

Charles takes it all in.

DR. EPSTEIN (cont'd)
 May I ask you a question?

CHARLES
 Okay.

Dr. Epstein sits forward in his chair.

DR. EPSTEIN
 What size of Kevlar jacket do you
 wear?

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - DR. EPSTEIN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Charles is now suited in a full-body, white fencing uniform
 and mask. He holds up his epee (sword).

CHARLES
 These can't penetrate anything, can
 they?

Dr. Epstein, also in full gear, lunges forward with a
 WHISTLING SWING of his EPEE. Charles awkwardly deflects it
 and falls backwards.

EXT. BACKYARD - FERGUSSON HOME - DAY

Franklin stands beside the fallen tree holding the chain saw.
 He pulls the chord, it SPUTTERS then dies. He tries again
 with the same results.

He attempts a third time...nothing.

INT. KITCHEN - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Claire tips back a half empty bottle of Bourbon and cringes
 as it goes down.

Judith walks into the kitchen. Claire quickly whips the
 bottle against the wall. IT SHATTERS WITH LOUD CRASH. She
 acts like nothing happened.

CLAIRE

Hi Judith.

Judith opens a cabinet and pulls a package of garbage bags.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Conrad isn't calling me Mom
anymore.

She opens a drawer and grabs two rolls of duct tape.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

I'm still Mom, you know.

Judith doesn't respond.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Are you not talking to me now?

JUDITH

I'm still talking to you.

CLAIRE

Just saying you're still talking to
me isn't really talking to me.

Judith shuts the drawer.

JUDITH

What do you want me to say?

CLAIRE

Anything. The idle chit-chat of
your average mother and daughter.
You know...how are you? What are
you doing with two rolls of duct
tape and our entire supply of
industrial size garbage bags?

JUDITH

Okay...

She tucks the garbage bags under her arm and addresses
Claire.

JUDITH (cont'd)

To answer the first question,
physically, I'm fine. Emotionally,
I have to say, I'm a little on
edge.

(MORE)

JUDITH (cont'd)

Not only by the news I'm not biologically related to anyone I consider family, but also by the fact that I was awakened by an eight foot tree limb crashing through my bedroom window.

CLAIRE

And the second question?

JUDITH

What am I doing with two rolls of duct tape and your entire supply of industrial size garbage bags? I'm going to take the next hour to clean my room. Then if I still have time, craft a make-shift window before Mascot's throat swells shut from the outside allergens.

Claire waits another moment.

CLAIRE

Are you still calling me Mom?

JUDITH

Sure.

CLAIRE

You're a good daughter, Judith. You always have been. How's your writing coming, by the way?

JUDITH

I didn't know you drank Bourbon.

Claire stares at Judith as liquor pours down the kitchen wall behind her.

CLAIRE

I like a good punch in the gut now and then.

INT. ATTIC - FERGUSSON HOME - DAY

Conrad pulls an old photo album out of a large box in the middle of a packed attic. He thumbs through a few pages and stops.

The album reveals a photo of a much younger Claire and Franklin with two small toddlers and a five year old Conrad.

He turns the page to a collage of pictures of the family at Judith's birth. Claire is in a hospital gown next to the kids. A dentist chair tucked in the background.

Conrad shuts the book and throws it on a stack of framed pictures. He stands up and freezes. He walks forward with his eyes locked on something.

INT. JUDITH'S ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Judith hand saws at the thick limb protruding through her window. Mascot sits in his carrier. HE SNEEZES VIOLENTLY.

Conrad walks past the doorway, then returns, holding a pellet gun and a few framed pictures. He notices a large manuscript sitting on a sticker-covered dresser.

CONRAD

You're still going to give it to them, aren't you?

She stops sawing and looks at him.

JUDITH

Yes, I am.

CONRAD

Would it change anything if I said that I think that's a stupid thing to do?

JUDITH

Where'd you get the pellet gun?

CONRAD

From the attic. I snagged a few family pictures for target practice.

JUDITH

Mom's not going to like that, Conrad.

CONRAD

When you say Mom, do you mean the woman who wore throw pillows to maliciously deceive an innocent five year old into rubbing her supposed pregnant feet every night for six months?

JUDITH

Sure.

CONRAD

Well, she can suck my face.

JUDITH

I'm not sure that means what you think it means.

CONRAD

Whose side are you on anyway?

JUDITH

There are no sides, Conrad.

CONRAD

I don't think you've stopped to consider the consequences of their actions. Emotional distress, pain and suffering, mental anguish, and that's before I get creative. Legally speaking, the monetary damages, alone, would be astounding.

JUDITH

What, so you want to sue Mom and Dad now?

CONRAD

I'm weighing my options.

JUDITH

You're an idiot.

CONRAD

You're rewarding them for a lifetime of deception!

JUDITH

I'm showing my appreciation for years of support and encouragement. Who do you think helped put you through law school?

CONRAD

Call it what you want, but I'm taking my organic soy candle set I bought them back.

He begins to leave.

JUDITH

They just did what they felt they had to do.

He returns.

CONRAD

Listen, I'm happy you're taking this so well, but in my book...in my world, this sucks. This sucks big time!

JUDITH

Conrad...

CONRAD

Big time!!!

He leaves.

INT. HALLWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Conrad walks down the hallway and jerks a family portrait off the wall as he passes by.

EXT. FRONT LAWN - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Conrad puts his pipe in his mouth and squints down the barrel of the pellet gun. He tickles the trigger then fires off a round. A TINNY POP ECHOES THROUGH THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

The family portrait splinters and falls to the ground.

EXT. STREET - NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

Charles shifts Blue into fourth gear. He's still wearing the fencing uniform, now accompanied by a helmet and goggles.

He passes Gwenivere walking down the side of the street and pulls over. She walks up to his side.

CHARLES

What are you doing?

GWENIVERE

Looking for Vincent. I figure he couldn't have gone too far on foot. He left his insoles back at the house. Where have you been?

CHARLES

Fencing Dr. Epstein down the street.

GWENIVERE
Who's Dr. Epstein?

CHARLES
My pediatrician.

GWENIVERE
Shouldn't you be getting back to go
see your grandfather? I think
they're getting ready to leave.

CHARLES
They are?

He thinks about it for a moment.

CHARLES (cont'd)
They'll have to go without me.
I've got a few errands to run.

Gwenivere looks around.

GWENIVERE
Where are you going?

Charles looks up at her.

CHARLES
Do you play chess?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NEIGHBORHOOD - MOMENTS LATER

Charles and Gwenivere are both tucked inside Blue cruising
down the street. Gwenivere is now also suited up in helmet
and goggles.

INT. STATION WAGON - DRIVEWAY - AFTERNOON

Franklin adjusts the rear view mirror.

FRANKLIN
We'll wait three more minutes, then
we're leaving.

He and Claire sit in the front of the station wagon. Judith
and Conrad sit in the back.

CONRAD
Why do we have to go if Charles and
Vincent don't have to?

FRANKLIN

Charles and Vincent do have to go.
They're just not here right now.

CONRAD

I don't want to be here.

JUDITH

What about Gwenivere?

FRANKLIN

She's not even related to Grandpa.

CONRAD

Since when does that matter?

CLAIRE

Maybe we shouldn't go.

FRANKLIN

Listen, I told Dad that we were
coming to see him today and that's
what we're going to do. I'm a man
of my word!

CONRAD

Ha!

JUDITH

Does Grandpa still greet people by
palming their heads?

CLAIRE

Yes.

FRANKLIN

It's his way of sizing people up.
He can't help it.

JUDITH

Why does he need to size people up?

FRANKLIN

I don't know.

CONRAD

What about the one-armed guy?
Georgio or GoGo or...

CLAIRE

Gomez still rooms with him, yes.

CONRAD

Then I really don't want to go. I don't feel comfortable around him.

FRANKLIN

You know he lost that arm jumping on a grenade in Okinawa. He saved eight soldiers' lives. Gomez Stanwalsky's a hero!

CONRAD

That might be true, but I don't like stump people. They scare me!

JUDITH

They're called amputees.

CONRAD

They still have stumps!

Conrad gets up and leans for the door handle.

CONRAD (cont'd)

I'm getting out!

Franklin locks the doors and hits the gas. THE STATION WAGON PEELS OUT OF THE DRIVEWAY.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Charles grabs a carton of ice cream out of a freezer. He walks down an aisle and approaches a fatigued looking attendant standing behind the counter.

CHARLES

Do you have any party hats?

ATTENDANT

Like the cone kind you secure to your head using an attached elastic chin strap?

CHARLES

Yeah.

ATTENDANT

No, we don't carry those.

CHARLES

Do you have any candy cigarettes?

ATTENDANT

You mean the delightfully tasty sugar sticks designed to look like the highly addictive tobacco product?

CHARLES

Yes.

ATTENDANT

No. I think they outlawed those.

CHARLES

For a convenience store, I'm finding my experience pretty inconvenient.

ATTENDANT

If you were looking for windshield washing fluid or an individually sized bag of potato chips, I'm feeling confident to say you'd find yourself extremely inconvenienced.

CHARLES

I suppose I would, wouldn't I?

The attendant looks into the back room.

ATTENDANT

I think we might have a few Uncle Sam hats in the back room if you want.

CHARLES

Okay.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Charles puts a few grocery bags in the back of Blue and sits down in the driver's seat next to Gwenivere.

GWENIVERE

Did you know Vincent used to do everything in even numbers?

CHARLES

Like Even Edward?

GWENIVERE

Who?

CHARLES

It was a children's book Dad used to read to us when we were kids about a boy who was cursed to do everything in twos in order to save his family from being mind raped by a venomous troll.

GWENIVERE

Mind raped?

CHARLES

I might be paraphrasing. Man, I forgot about that book.

He starts Blue, then sits back.

CHARLES (cont'd)

It scared the hell out of me. I used to repeat the last word of every sentence I spoke...spoke. Like that.

GWENIVERE

That's horrible.

CHARLES

I think Dad stopped reading it to us once he noticed the lasting effects.

GWENIVERE

Vincent didn't say anything about this.

CHARLES

He must've somehow blocked it out...

There's a moment.

CHARLES (cont'd)

(under his breath)

...out.

INT. HALLWAY - NURSING HOME - AFTERNOON

Franklin, Claire, Conrad and Judith walk down a long depressingly sterile hallway. Franklin stops outside a room.

FRANKLIN

(whispering)

All right, all I ask is for one hour of your best behavior. This man's been through polio, two wives and countless colonoscopies. He doesn't deserve to wade through the mire of our petty issues right now. You don't do that to family and whether you like it or not, he's family, damn it.

JUDITH

Grandpa was married twice?

CLAIRE

You didn't know that?

FRANKLIN

His first wife died from tuberculosis the year after Aunt Marjorie was born.

JUDITH

Aunt Marjorie's your half sister?

CONRAD

I didn't know he had polio.

FRANKLIN

That's why he's deaf in one ear.

CONRAD

He's deaf in one ear?

FRANKLIN

Holy crap, people!

Franklin pushes Conrad into the room.

INT. WENDEL'S ROOM - NURSING HOME - CONTINUOUS

Conrad awkwardly stumbles into room.

CONRAD

Ahh man!

WENDEL FERGUSSON (80's), boasting a horse-shoe hairline and GOMEZ STANWALSKY, a thicker-boned man missing a left arm, are tucked on opposite sides of a small card table arm-wrestling.

Three old men stand shoulder to shoulder along the back wall observing the competition.

WENDEL

Conrad?

Gomez slams Wendel's arm down on the table. The THREE MEN CLAP. Franklin, Claire and Judith move into the room.

FRANKLIN

Hi Dad.

Wendel stands up and walks over to them.

WENDEL

Franklin! I wasn't sure if you're going to make it or not. I count four. Where's the rest of the crew?

FRANKLIN

Honestly, I don't know.

Wendel reaches up and palms the top of Franklin's head.

WENDEL

How are you kids?

He reaches over and palms Judith's head with a few massage pumps.

JUDITH

Okay.

Conrad makes his way to the rear of the room with his eyes locked on Gomez.

CONRAD

I'm fine...like powdered sugar.

FRANKLIN

You're looking good, Dad. You've trimmed down a little.

WENDEL

A healthy diet of prescription pills and lemon drops will do that to a man. You kids know Gomez, don't you?

JUDITH

Sure.

CLAIRE

How are you, Gomez?

GOMEZ

I'm all right.

RANDOM OLD MAN #3

Literally.

WENDEL

Our entire wing's having an arm wrestling tournament. We were just finishing up the quarter finals. He's up 3-0 in a best of seven. It's just my luck to go up against the man who's lived sixty years refining the art of being all right.

RANDOM OLD MAN #1

The man's a gorilla.

RANDOM OLD MAN #2

Gomez the gorilla.

RANDOM OLD MAN #1

He once killed a silver-back with his bare hand.

WENDEL

I don't know if that's true, but you should see him open a jar of pickles. It's beautiful. They've got him on overtime in the cafeteria.

GOMEZ

I like to open things.

WENDEL

Of course you do.

He claps his hands together.

WENDEL (cont'd)

Who's up for Bingo?

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - NURSING HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Everyone is now propped behind fold-out tables and cardboard Bingo cards. Conrad is uncomfortably sandwiched between Gomez and Judith.

GOMEZ

I love Bingo.

WENDEL

I couldn't agree with you more.

GOMEZ

I love it more than life itself.

WENDEL

Now, that's taking it too far.

An OLD WOMAN sitting next to a table of miscellaneous baked good prizes lifts a Bingo ball and leans into a small microphone.

OLD WOMAN

I-18.

CLAIRE

So Wendel, Franklin told me you're taking a quilting class.

WENDEL

Three times a week. We just finished learning to sew a Bargello. I'm still green yet. And when I say green, I mean I suck duck.

CLAIRE

I'd like to see your work sometime.

WENDEL

No you wouldn't. Trust me.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

G-48.

Gomez marks his card. Conrad scoots further away, crowding Judith.

JUDITH

Would you stop it!

She shoves him back towards Gomez.

CONRAD

Has anyone ever told you that you have aggression issues?

He looks at Franklin and Claire.

CONRAD (cont'd)

Did either of her real parents have
a history of violent tendencies?

WENDEL

What?

FRANKLIN

Conrad...

WENDEL

Real parents? What's he talking
about?

FRANKLIN

Nothing Dad.

WENDEL

You didn't tell them did you?

FRANKLIN

No. Nothing...just play Bingo.

WENDEL

You told them they were adopted?

FRANKLIN

Let's not worry about it.

WENDEL

Not worry about it? Don't you ever
listen to what I say? First the
paint remover, now this!

FRANKLIN

I was thirteen when that happened,
Dad! It looked like soapy water!
Give it a rest!

CLAIRE

I told him Wendel.

FRANKLIN

Claire, not now!

CLAIRE

He said it was their right to
know...that they would want to
know.

WENDEL

That's just it! You think they
want to know, but they don't.

(MORE)

WENDEL (cont'd)

The doctors thought I'd want to know that I might have eight months to live, but do you think that knowledge gave my life anymore purpose or meaning?

JUDITH

Wait a minute. What?

FRANKLIN

Dad, can we not talk about this right now?

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

N-32.

Conrad marks his card.

WENDEL

Do you think I enjoy knowing that in less than a year, while the world goes about its pissy business, I might be rotting in some wooden box? You don't think I wanted to see flying cars?

He slaps the table.

WENDEL (cont'd)

I wanted to see flying cars, damn it!

JUDITH

You're dying?

FRANKLIN

No. He's not dying.

WENDEL

Oh, great! You told them they're not your natural born, but it slipped your mind to mention their grandfather found a lump?

JUDITH

Found a lump? What's a lump?

FRANKLIN

Dad, I was going to tell them...

WENDEL

I've got breast cancer!

FRANKLIN

It's not breast cancer. It's just a lump, completely harmless. The doctors said they can take it out with a simple out-patient procedure.

WENDEL

I guess I'm a little confused, Franklin, because it seems to me it would be a hell of a lot harder to tell your daughter her birth father's doing life in a Moscow prison than to casually mention her grandfather needs a MANstectomy.

Claire puts her head in her hands.

FRANKLIN

You don't have cancer, damn it. And for the last time, Dad, there's no N in mastectomy!

JUDITH

A Moscow prison?

Franklin turns to Judith.

FRANKLIN

Judith, we didn't want to unload everything on you at once.

CLAIRE

(muffled in her hands)
What does it matter now?

She looks up at Judith.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Your real father was a KGB operative recruited by the Russian mafia as a contract assassin.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

I-16.

Conrad marks his card, completely oblivious to the present conversation.

JUDITH

I'm Russian?

FRANKLIN

Ukrainian. You were only in the orphanage for two months before they shipped you over.

JUDITH

Shipped me over! I'm a Communist orphan?

CLAIRE

The wall came down, honey.

JUDITH

Not on my watch!

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

I-24.

CONRAD

Bingo!

GOMEZ SLAPS THE TABLE. Judith turns and punches Conrad in the shoulder.

JUDITH

Are you getting any of this?

Conrad slowly turns towards her.

CONRAD

If you punch me one more time, I'm going to...

Out of nowhere, Gomez slugs him in the other shoulder.

CONRAD (cont'd)

AHHH!

He shrivels in pain.

WENDEL

That's deep rooted tissue work there. Somehow he's able to reach bone.

Suddenly, Conrad kicks his chair out and tackles Gomez. The table and all the Bingo cards tip onto the floor. An ugly fight erupts.

CUT TO:

INT. STATION WAGON - EVENING

Everyone is back in their seats, staring forward expressionless. BESIDES THE LOW RUMBLE OF THE STATION WAGON MOVING DOWN THE HIGHWAY, IT'S COMPLETELY SILENT.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - EVENING

Franklin opens the front door. They all freeze in the entrance.

FRANKLIN

What the hell is this?

The entire living room is decked-out for a ten-year-old's birthday party. An odd assortment of childhood decorations are strewn everywhere.

Charles and Gwenivere, both wearing Uncle Sam hats, stand on an old step ladder hanging a homemade pinata.

CHARLES

It's my birthday party.

FRANKLIN

What?

Charles steps down from the ladder.

CHARLES

For thirty years, I've shared the presents, split the cakes and, if I remember correctly, even swapped blowing out the candles every other year. And, since my actual birthday was last week and Vincent's not around right now, I figure I deserve one good party...just for me.

Claire surveys the room.

CLAIRE

Where'd you get the decorations?

CHARLES

Most of them, from the attic. The rest, Gwen and I made earlier today with construction paper and a few pine cones we found in the backyard.

(MORE)

CHARLES (cont'd)
 I feel they carry the festive
 enthusiasm I was hoping for and I
 would appreciate if everyone would
 participate and do the same.

He slaps his hands together.

CHARLES (cont'd)
 All right, any other questions?

There aren't. Charles notices a tray of Bingo cupcakes in
 Conrad's hands.

CHARLES (cont'd)
 Oh good, you brought cupcakes.

He steps forward and takes the cupcakes.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

The entire family, now in Uncle Sam hats, is huddled around
 Charles sitting in front of a plate of candle-lit cupcakes.
 THEY'RE SINGING SOME PATHETIC VERSION OF HAPPY BIRTHDAY.

He blows out the candles.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Conrad, now blind-folded, viciously swings a whiffle ball bat
 in the direction of the pinata.

CONRAD
 Damn it! Where is it?

Gwenivere, Charles and Judith slowly back away. He swings
 sporadically, again and again...it's ugly.

CONRAD (cont'd)
 Where are you, you freaking butt
 monkey!

He's now on the opposite side of the room. He falls forward
 and smashes a lamp. The room goes dark.

INT. DINING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Franklin and Claire sit at the dining room table. CONRAD'S WHIFFLE BAT ASSAULT IS HEARD THROUGH THE WALLS.

FRANKLIN

All right.

CLAIRE

All right, what?

FRANKLIN

I made a mistake.

She gets up and leaves the room.

INT. FRANKLIN AND CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Franklin opens the door to the bedroom. Claire sits on the edge of the bed.

FRANKLIN

Okay, let's hear it.

Claire stands up and marches towards the closet. She slides the door open and begins throwing shoes out.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

Don't do this.

CLAIRE

Oh, I'm doing this!

FRANKLIN

I said I made a mistake. What else do you want?

Claire turns around.

CLAIRE

Do you know anything about Quantum physics?

FRANKLIN

What?

CLAIRE

Because I would like you to construct a time machine, go back thirty-six hours and stop yourself from single-handedly destroying this once semi-functional family!

FRANKLIN

You know I can't do that...
physically speaking.

CLAIRE

How many times did I say it? How
many times?

FRANKLIN

What?

CLAIRE

Leave it alone! We don't need
fixing!

FRANKLIN

I thought we agreed on this! It's
what's best!

CLAIRE

This whole thing was your idea!
You promised me hunky dory!

FRANKLIN

Listen, these are aftershocks.
Things are bound to settle once
time does its work. The truth
always comes back like ripened
raspberries.

CLAIRE

What's that even mean?

FRANKLIN

It's something I read in a poem
once. Telling the truth is like
planting a seed. That when...

CLAIRE

They hate us, Franklin! We're
their parents and they hate us!

FRANKLIN

They don't hate us.

CLAIRE

Charles is throwing his own belated
birthday party, Judith thinks she's
Communist, Conrad was banned from
your father's nursing home and we
don't even know where Vincent is!
Give me one reason why you see
ripened raspberries in this
family's future!

Franklin has nothing.

CLAIRE (cont'd)
For the past three decades there's
been one thing that I felt I was
truly great at...

Franklin is about to answer.

CLAIRE (cont'd)
...besides foosball.

FRANKLIN
I was going to say...

CLAIRE
It's being a mother to those kids.
Those emotionally disturbed head
cases we took into this house as
our own.

FRANKLIN
Claire...

CLAIRE
And now all I have is foosball.

Claire turns around and throws more shoes out of her closet.

FRANKLIN
So you're going to sleep in the
closet?

She grabs a blanket off the edge of the bed.

CLAIRE
Oh, I'm all over this closet!

She ducks into the closet and SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - NIGHT

A chunk of pinata falls to the floor. Pieces of pine cone,
newspaper and lamp are spread all over the room. Gwenivere,
Judith and Conrad sit in silence.

Charles walks into the room holding a large red suitcase.

JUDITH
Where'd you get that?

CHARLES
In your closet.

JUDITH

I didn't give you permission to get that out. I don't care if it's your make-up birthday or not, we're not playing that.

GWENIVERE

What is it?

JUDITH

It's just a stupid game I made up in eighth grade.

CHARLES

Red Wizard's Reign.

JUDITH

It's a fantasy, role playing, board game.

CHARLES

And you get to dress up.

He pulls a wizard's hat out of the suitcase.

JUDITH

Put Brezifeld's crown back in the suitcase!

CHARLES

This is still a Fergocracy. We'll vote on it.

GWENIVERE

Fergocracy?

CONRAD

Fergusson democracy.

CHARLES

Who wants to play Red Wizard's Reign? Raise your hands.

Charles and Conrad raise their hands. Gwenivere hesitantly trails them with hers.

Charles looks at Judith.

CHARLES (cont'd)

We need four to play.

Judith grabs the suitcase.

JUDITH
I get to be Greygon the Luminary.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Gwenivere is now dressed as a knight. She throws a card down.

GWENIVERE
I summon the power of the Moldavar
Stone.

Charles is a wizard, Judith, an embattled warrior and Conrad is now dressed as a peasant. They each reorganize a handful of cards in their hands.

Gwenivere moves a malformed Monopoly piece across a hand-painted game board laid out on the floor.

JUDITH
I'll use the Bremlin Crystal to
guide me along the Dark Crescent
path.

She throws a card down. Once again, everyone adjusts.

CHARLES
I'm going to use my Dark Fog Potion
as an impenetrable death shield
through the Wan Passage.

He lays a card on the board.

CONRAD
Wait, you can't use Dark Fog Potion
deep in the realm of Gok.

CHARLES
I possess the Aura of Light giving
me a three turn immunity to use
Dark Fog Potion in the realm of
Gok. Now unless you bear the
Moltar Crescent Ring, you're going
to have to surrender you're
Twilight Powder for challenging the
Ancient Wisdom.

CONRAD
Damn it!

He throws down a card. Charles scoops it up.

CONRAD (cont'd)

All right, I guess I'll use the Axe
of Invincibility to open the
entrance to the Mystic Forest.

He moves his piece. Gwenivere jumps back and points at
Conrad.

GWENIVERE

Witches breath! Witches breath!

CONRAD

No! No!

GWENIVERE

He doesn't wield the Vulture's
Spell! He can't use the Axe of
Invincibility without wielding the
Vulture's Spell!

CONRAD

I wield the Vulture's Spell!

GWENIVERE

Witches breath!

CONRAD

Shut up!

JUDITH

Show us your cards.

CONRAD

I've got the Vulture's Spell! I
found it at the peak of Mount
Skull, Judith!

JUDITH

It's Greygon. Show us your cards.

He throws down his cards and points at Gwenivere.

CONRAD

Damn it! If you wouldn't have been
so stingy with your Dragon's Scales
I could've had it.

GWENIVERE

I had to protect my people.

Judith delicately lays down all of her cards.

JUDITH

All right, I'm throwing down the Troll Berry Fire and I Challenge Brezifeld the Great to a Duel of Fate.

The mood quickly shifts.

CHARLES

Are you serious?

JUDITH

I don't play this game any other way.

Gwenivere is confused.

GWENIVERE

What's a Duel of Fate?

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

The game board has been cleared from the floor. Judith and Charles face each other in crouched, attack positions. Gwenivere and Conrad sit on the sofa in silent anticipation.

JUDITH

Greygon surrenders his mortal self if unworthy to approach the Red Wizard.

CHARLES

Brezifeld accepts the challenge and may darkness fall over the one unfit to bear the crown of the Mystic Realm.

There's a tense moment of silence.

JUDITH

My father's a cold-blooded killer. You don't want any of this shit...

CHARLES

What?

Judith bursts forward and tackles Charles. They both crash onto the floor and begin slugging each other.

They roll across the room and smash into a side table. They both scramble to their feet, then throw each other into a glass cabinet. Glass explodes everywhere.

Charles and Judith fall onto the floor with a shower of glass on top of them. Gwenivere is horrified.

GWENIVERE

Are you two all right?

They both lay on their backs, slightly bloodied and totally exhausted.

CHARLES

Not really. I think I might have something penetrating my lower back. Maybe glass or a large wood splinter of some kind.

Conrad gets up.

CONRAD

I'm going to bed.

He leaves the room. Gwenivere quickly scoots around them.

GWENIVERE

I'll get some band-aids.

CHARLES

The big kind.

JUDITH

And a broom, please.

She leaves. Neither of them move. Charles stares at the ceiling and takes a deep breath.

CHARLES

It feels kind of strange.

JUDITH

What does?

CHARLES

Vincent not being here. I've never had a birthday without him.

JUDITH

I thought that's what you wanted.

CHARLES

I know...I did. It just feels kind of strange.

A final piece of glass trickles off the cabinet.

INT. VINCENT'S ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MORNING

Gwenivere opens the closet door and closely examines its contents. She pulls out a framed picture of Vincent posed in a spandex dance outfit.

She sets down the picture and steps into the closet once again. She negotiates a tall stack of books and pulls one out from the bottom.

She turns it over. It's titled, "Even Edward".

INT. FRANKLIN AND CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MORNING

Claire sits up from the floor. She's surrounded by shoes and fallen clothing littered throughout the cramped closet.

She turns and opens the door. Franklin is sitting on the edge of the bed staring at her. He holds a stack of sealed files in his hands.

FRANKLIN

Happy anniversary.

CLAIRE

How long have you been sitting outside the closet like that?

FRANKLIN

About forty-five minutes.

CLAIRE

Why?

FRANKLIN

I was waiting for you to get up. Waking naturally improves your daily productivity levels by 40%.

CLAIRE

Is that true?

FRANKLIN

I don't know. 40% sounds a little high, doesn't it?

CLAIRE

Why are you holding our stack of highly confidential documents?

FRANKLIN

If we're going to do this, I figure
we have to do it right.

Claire grabs the door handle and slams the closet door back
in his face.

EXT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - DAY

Judith, Conrad and Charles sit around the living room, each
holding a file.

CONRAD

So what are these?

Franklin stands at the front of the room alone.

FRANKLIN

It's everything you would ever want
to know about your birth parents
and extended blood relatives.

CHARLES

For real?

Judith examines her file. It's twice as thick as the others.

JUDITH

Why is mine so thick?

FRANKLIN

Your situation was a little more
complicated than the others.

CONRAD

How did you get these?

FRANKLIN

We've got connections.

CONRAD

How do you guys have connections?

FRANKLIN

It doesn't matter. What matters is
that there's nothing left. No more
secrets. No more surprises. No
more lies. You have everything.

JUDITH

What about Mom? Shouldn't she be
here?

FRANKLIN

She's locked herself in the bedroom closet.

They wait for more.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

There's a small fraction of friction between your mother and I right now.

CONRAD

Fraction of friction?

FRANKLIN

Shut up, Conrad.

Conrad's shoulder's slump.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

Now, you can do whatever you want with this information. You can read it, shred it or eat it for all I care, but no matter what, and I know I speak for Claire also, we'll support you all the way.

Charles raises his hand.

CHARLES

Can I ask a question?

FRANKLIN

Sure.

CHARLES

Where was I born?

FRANKLIN

It's all in your file, Charles.

CHARLES

I just want to know.

FRANKLIN

Ohio.

CHARLES

Like Cincinnati or...

FRANKLIN

Columbus.

Charles looks at everyone.

CHARLES

That's kind of cool, I guess. It's the capital...isn't it?

Conrad has already opened his file. He holds a stack of papers in his hands.

CONRAD

Who's Raging Bear?

FRANKLIN

That's your birth name.

He looks at Franklin.

CONRAD

I'm Indian?

FRANKLIN

Half Native American, yes.

CONRAD

What's the other half?

FRANKLIN

Truck driver, I believe.

CHARLES

I cut down the family tree.

The attention of the room turns to Charles.

CHARLES (cont'd)

It was an accident...sort of. It made sense at the time. If I were to attempt to explain it would just spin us all into a deeper web of confusion and turmoil. I just figure since we're getting things off our chests right now, I would throw that on the table.

FRANKLIN

Thank you, Charles.

CHARLES

I also broke Dr. Epstein's nose in a fencing match yesterday. Things just got a little out of hand. There, I'm done.

FRANKLIN

Now that's a little surprising, but again, thank you for the honesty.

CHARLES

Whew...that feels good.

Conrad cautiously raises his hand.

CONRAD

I have one.

Everyone's attention turns to Conrad. He seems nervous.

CONRAD (cont'd)

I take it back. Nothing...just ignore me.

He lowers his hand and sheepishly leans back on the sofa.

FRANKLIN

Now, you can do whatever you'd like, but don't let this reflect on your feelings towards Claire. You have to give her some credit, with my weak gag reflex, she had to change most of your diapers.

Charles and Conrad look at each other.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

And I hope this isn't asking too much, but I would also appreciate it if you could stick around at least until after the party this afternoon. If not for us, then for nothing else than to create the illusion we're a halfway normal family.

JUDITH

You've got to be kidding me!

Everyone's attention turns to Judith. She stands up with her file opened.

JUDITH (cont'd)

My mother was a prostitute?

FRANKLIN

I'm afraid so, Judith.

JUDITH

You're afraid so? You're JUST afraid so? Well, I'm horrified!

She storms out of the room.

CHARLES
 (quietly)
 It could be worse, I guess.

She stomps back in with a bottle of Vodka.

JUDITH
 How? How could it be worse? I'd love to know! In one weekend I've gone from being the daughter of a registered nurse and a high school science teacher to the bastard offspring of a KGB assassin and his Ukrainian prostitute! Only finding out that I'm the descendant of Satan himself, could it be any worse!

CHARLES
 All right, I'll agree with that.

CONRAD
 Vodka, huh?

JUDITH
 Shut up.

She turns to leave, but stops.

JUDITH (cont'd)
 Oh, and just in case it slips their minds to mention it! Grandpa has breast cancer!

She leaves the room, STOMPS UPSTAIRS AND SLAMS HER BEDROOM DOOR. After another moment, IT SLAMS AGAIN, THEN AGAIN.

Charles and Conrad stare at Franklin. THE DOOR SLAMS ONE MORE TIME.

CHARLES
 Breast cancer?

FRANKLIN
 It's just a lump.

EXT. FERGUSON HOME - DAY

Gwenivere sits on the front step reading, "Even Edward". A very Gothic drawing of some sort of troll-like creature blankets the inside page.

The front door opens. Gwenivere closes the book. Franklin steps up to her side putting on a pair of driving gloves.

FRANKLIN

I need go to the store and pick up the veggie trays for the party this afternoon. Do you need anything? Liquor...or a handgun?

She looks up towards him.

GWENIVERE

Would you mind if I come?

EXT. BACK PORCH - FERGUSSON HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Conrad takes a long drag on his pipe then exhales.

CONRAD

I've always had an undeniable attraction to tobacco.

CHARLES (O.S.)

What's your point?

Charles sits on the patio with his unopened file sitting in his lap. He stares at the tree stretched across the backyard.

CONRAD

I'm just saying, it all makes a little more sense now.

Charles picks up his file and stares at it.

CONRAD (cont'd)

Are you going to open it?

After a brief moment, he begins tearing it apart.

CONRAD (cont'd)

What are you doing?

CHARLES

I can barely manage one family. I don't have the emotional capacity to attempt to maintain another.

CONRAD

Don't you want to know who you are?

Charles looks at Conrad.

CHARLES

Who I am? You don't even care, do you?

CONRAD

What?

CHARLES

You've got your career, Vincent has his girlfriend and Judith has her book. What about me? I'm an hourly file clerk, dateless for two years. I don't have the attention span to finish reading a book, let alone the focus or mental stamina to write one. This family is the only thing I've got! Now it's falling apart and you don't even care!

CONRAD

You don't think I care? You don't think this whole thing's taken it's toll on me? This weekend's been hell! First, I find out I'm adopted, the next thing I know I'm wrestling Gomez the Great...

CHARLES

Gorilla.

CONRAD

Whatever...

He pulls his pipe out.

CONRAD (cont'd)

I haven't slept in two days! I've broken out in a rash all over my back! The very sight of which makes me nauseous!

He takes a step closer to Charles.

CONRAD (cont'd)

To be completely honest, I don't even know how I should feel anymore. I've gone from shock, to anger, to Indian in less than 48 hours! You think you're the only one affected by this whole thing? I'm hoping it's the sleep deprivation, but I'm beginning to question my own existence.

(MORE)

CONRAD (cont'd)
So excuse my one moment of clarity,
but the only thing makes sense
right now, with the recent
disclosure of my true ancestry, is
this pipe!

Charles tosses his shredded file to the ground.

CHARLES
Well, I can't do this!

CONRAD
Do what? I thought you wanted to
talk...stick together, like
Voltron.

Charles stands up.

CHARLES
I can't sit here and watch us dance
around the drain like this!

He grabs Conrad's pipe and throws it into the yard.

CONRAD
Damn it! That's my last one!

CHARLES
Are you a part of this family or
not?

Conrad thinks about it for a moment.

CONRAD
I don't know.

CHARLES
Well, I am and it's about time I
started acting like it.

He turns and walks towards the house.

CHARLES (cont'd)
You can do what you want. You
always do anyway.

CONRAD
I care, Charles!

He doesn't respond.

CONRAD (cont'd)
Where are you going?

CHARLES
To kill another pawn!

He opens the screen door and slams it shut.

INT. HALLWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Charles pounds on Judith's door.

CHARLES
Judith! Open the door! I need
your car keys! You're blocking me
in the driveway!

He knocks again. Nothing.

CHARLES (cont'd)
I'm going to count to three!

Charles steps back from the door.

CHARLES (cont'd)
One!...

He kicks it open. The door swings in and smacks the wall.
He stares into the room.

CHARLES (cont'd)
Shoot!

He turns and storms down the hallway.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Charles, in helmet and goggles, sits down in Blue. He hits
the gas and SCREECHES OUT OF THE DRIVEWAY.

INT. JUDITH'S ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

THE HARDWOOD FLOOR CREAKS A FEW TIMES. Conrad slowly steps
into the doorway and surveys Judith's room.

The industrial sized garbage bag window has been torn down.
Judith is nowhere to be seen.

He looks at the dresser. The manuscript is gone.

A SNEEZE BURSTS FROM THE FLOOR. Mascot sticks his head out
of his carrier.

CONRAD

Hola.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Franklin and Gwenivere sit side by side, driving down the highway.

FRANKLIN

I used to take long drives a lot when the kids were younger. Sometimes I just needed to get out of the house and go. Just drive until they went away.

GWENIVERE

They?

FRANKLIN

The near-debilitating, stress-induced migraines...

He takes a deep breath.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

Similar to the one I'm experiencing right now.

GWENIVERE

Are you all right? Do you want me to drive?

FRANKLIN

No. This car is the only thing I feel like I have any control over at this moment. My marriage is slowly disintegrating, my approval rating as a father is at rock bottom and, among other things not listed, there's a sixty foot oak tree laying on my house. So, as long as this tunnel vision doesn't entirely consume me, I feel pretty comfortable behind the wheel.

He looks at Gwenivere.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

Can I ask you a question?

GWENIVERE

Sure.

FRANKLIN

As an anthropologist, you study multiple aspects of societal culture and humanity, right? How people interact with one another and, in some cases, the causes of why certain societies, for one reason or another, have become extinct?

GWENIVERE

There are multiple schools of study, but sure.

FRANKLIN

Well then, in your professional opinion, what's your prognosis for our family?

GWENIVERE

What do you mean?

FRANKLIN

Are we doomed for extinction?

GWENIVERE

I'm not quite sure I'm qualified to objectively handle that question.

FRANKLIN

That's fair. I understand.

GWENIVERE

Vincent and I are married.

Franklin is silent for a long moment.

FRANKLIN

How long? A few months or...

GWENIVERE

Two years.

FRANKLIN

That's about par for the course.

GWENIVERE

The whole thing was spur of the moment. There's was a Romanian missionary visiting our territory so...

FRANKLIN

Romanian missionary?

GWENIVERE

We were married while Vincent was traveling with me on a study of Bakgatla tribal migration in Botswana.

FRANKLIN

Ghanzi?

GWENIVERE

Actually, the southwest district of Kgatleng.

Franklin thinks about it for a moment.

FRANKLIN

Man, is it hot in here?

GWENIVERE

Yeah, it could be a little cooler.

He leans forward and CRANKS UP THE AIR CONDITIONER TO A DEAFENING BLAST. Gwenivere's hair lifts backwards with the wind.

FRANKLIN

Would you mind if I had a moment to myself right now?

GWENIVERE

No, go ahead.

FRANKLIN

All right, thanks. It won't take long.

He stares forward silently for a long moment. Then, out of nowhere, he begins frantically shaking the steering wheel as if to rip it off.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

Ahhhh!!!

Gwenivere stares forward, awkwardly attempting to ignore him.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

This stupid...I! Damn! DAMN IT!

He grips the steering wheel tighter and begins jerking his whole body.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

WHY CAN'T...WE JUST...

He punches the steering wheel and, suddenly, THE AIR BAG EXPLODES OPEN, SMASHING HIM IN THE FACE.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

AHHH!

GWENIVERE

Frank!!!

Gwenivere quickly reaches over and begins fighting for the steering wheel.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - LATER

The living room is now vacant. THE DOORBELL RINGS.

INT. FRANKLIN AND CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Claire stares into the open closet. Her baggy eyes and tangled hair accent the mascara tracks down her face.

THE DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN.

She pushes a few items of clothing out of the way, revealing a wedding gown behind a plastic covering.

INT. HALLWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

THE DOORBELL RINGS A THIRD TIME. The hallway closet door begins to shake. It bursts open.

Vincent slowly crawls out.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Vincent opens the front door still wearing the clothes from day one. He's unshaven, disheveled and visibly fatigued.

MR. PEEDMEYER

Vincent?

MR. AND MRS. PEEDMEYER, two well-groomed middle-agers, stand in the doorway holding a salad bowl and a covered casserole dish.

VINCENT
Hey, Mr. and Mrs. Peedmeyer. How
are you guys doing?

MR. PEEDMEYER
It's been quite sometime. You're
looking...

MRS. PEEDMEYER
Hairy.

VINCENT
Can I help you with something?

MR. PEEDMEYER
We're here for your parents'
anniversary party.

Vincent looks at his watch.

VINCENT
What...day is it?

MRS. PEEDMEYER
It's Saturday.

VINCENT
Okay. Yeah, come on in.

He steps out of the doorway. Mr. and Mrs. Peedmeyer stare
into the wrecked living room. Shreds of pinata and glass
cabinet still decorate the floor from last night's party.

MR. PEEDMEYER
Are we early...or late?

EXT. WOODS - NEAR FERGUSSON NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

Judith sits on a log in the middle of the woods. She sprays
a small canister of lighter fluid onto a her manuscript
stacked neatly on the ground.

She lights a match across the bark of the log and holds it up
to her face. It blows out with a whisper of wind.

CONRAD (O.S.)
What the hell are you doing?

Conrad steps out from behind a tree holding a pellet gun
pointed at Judith.

JUDITH
Where the hell did you come from?

He motions the gun towards the stack of papers.

CONRAD
What the hell is that?

JUDITH
Why the hell are you pointing that
gun at me?

Conrad hesitates.

CONRAD
What's with all the hell talk?

JUDITH
I don't know. You started it.

Conrad repositions the gun on his shoulder.

CONRAD
I'm not going to let you burn your
book if that's what's going on
here.

JUDITH
Just leave me alone, Conrad.

CONRAD
I can't do that.

JUDITH
Are you going to shoot me?

CONRAD
If I have to.

JUDITH
Why do you care all of a sudden?

CONRAD
Is that what I'm doing? Because I
have no clue.

JUDITH
Why do you have a gun?

CONRAD
Why do you want to burn your book?

JUDITH
Because I'm not a writer, all
right! I don't even know who I am
anymore!

(MORE)

JUDITH (cont'd)

I'm only on page two of that file of mine and so far I'm nothing but the near sighted product of a lurid night between a hitman and a hooker! Not necessarily the healthiest ingredients for a positive self-image.

She lights another match. Conrad quickly cocks his gun.

CONRAD

Stop! Damn it!

She freezes. A flame dances on the end of the match.

CONRAD (cont'd)

You've worked on that book for fifteen years and you're just going to throw it away because of one bad weekend?

She tosses the match to the ground.

JUDITH

One bad weekend? What happened to the lifetime of deception you've been ranting about for the past two days?

CONRAD

You should know by now that I'm full of crap, okay. Half the things that come out of my mouth are either gross exaggerations or just blatant lies. Hell, Judith, I'm not even a lawyer anymore. I was disbarred three months ago.

JUDITH

What?

CONRAD

I punched a man in court...kind of in the middle of cross-examination.

JUDITH

Why?

CONRAD

Because I don't know. I'm just an unhappy man with more than a few issues that need to be worked out.

JUDITH

What's this have to do with me?

CONRAD

I guess I'm trying to stop you from making the same mistake. Don't throw your life away on a manic whim.

Judith stares blankly at him.

CONRAD (cont'd)

Can't you see I'm trying to help you here? Do you think I like living out this cliched character arc? It's killing me!

JUDITH

So what, now you're playing the concerned big brother role all of a sudden?

CONRAD

I'll admit, I haven't been the most supportive of siblings. And I'm sure there's a slight element of jealousy to blame. I mean, you were always the good one, you know. The grades, the scholarships, the overseas book tours. You teach your dog Spanish for crying out loud! Hell, law school was halfway just to keep up.

He lowers the gun slightly.

CONRAD (cont'd)

I don't know, maybe this whole thing's just me projecting my repressed, subconscious resentment over the unwarranted prosecution of my people.

JUDITH

You're not an Indian!

CONRAD

I know that! I'm just a guy holding a gun trying to do something right for once!

Judith lights another match. Conrad re-aims the gun.

JUDITH
Put down the gun!

CONRAD
I'm sorry.

CONRAD FIRES THE GUN, clipping Judith in the shoulder.

JUDITH
AHHH!

She twists off the log and falls to the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - FERGUSSON HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

Vincent frantically scrambles around the kitchen arranging incoming covered dishes. The downstairs is packed with nicely dressed people casually moving in and out of rooms.

RANDOLF CHANG, a small, slightly overweight Asian man, stands in between two very normal, unenthusiastic FIFTY SOMETHINGS. All three stare at something in front of them.

RANDOLF CHANG
I attended private boarding schools throughout most of my primary and secondary educations. West Point was a natural fit for me. Needless to say this type of activity was frowned upon. And being the timid, spineless, sorry excuse for a man that I am, I never challenged authority...not even for one sip.

A random man steps up to two kegs sitting on the dining room table in front of them. He fills up a white plastic cup full of beer.

RANDOLF CHANG (cont'd)
But then it hit me. I only have so many years left in this world and I've tucked my tail long enough. The invitation said bring your own drinks, so I thought, what the hell...it's my turn, it's my time. I'm ponying up and bringing the twins.

The three men stare at the two kegs.

FIFTY-SOMETHING #1
You went to West Point?

THE DOORBELL RINGS.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Vincent opens the front door.

Gwenivere and Franklin are standing in the doorway.
Gwenivere balances three veggie trays while Franklin holds an ice pack to his face.

FRANKLIN
Why was the door locked?

VINCENT
Crowd control. Where have you guys been?

GWENIVERE
That's funny. I was wondering the same thing about you.

VINCENT
The party started over an hour ago.

FRANKLIN
We had car trouble.

GWENIVERE
Where were you, Vincent?

VINCENT
I was upstairs in the hallway linen closet.

GWENIVERE
For a day and a half?

VINCENT
That's where I always went when I needed time to think.

Franklin lowers the ice pack. His eye is black and slightly swollen.

FRANKLIN
You mean every time you ran away as a child, you were just in the upstairs linen closet?

VINCENT

What happened to your face?

Gwenivere slaps Vincent in the face.

VINCENT (cont'd)

Ouch!

GWENIVERE

You really scared me, did you know that?

VINCENT

I'm sorry.

GWENIVERE

Don't ever do that again!

VINCENT

Okay...all right.

FRANKLIN

Where's Claire?

VINCENT

She's upstairs in your room. She won't come out. Believe me, I could've used the help. These guys are animals.

WALTER PERCY, a fair skinned character, waddles up behind Vincent.

WALTER PERCY

Great party, Franklin! Happy anniversary, you daft schmuck!

He throws the contents of his plastic cup down his throat.

FRANKLIN

Did somebody bring a keg to our anniversary party?

VINCENT

Yeah, I think it was the Asian guy.

INT. KITCHEN - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Randolf Chang proudly lifts his cup into the air.

RANDOLF CHANG

Here's to damn good times with damn good friends!

Out of nowhere, Conrad crashes through the screen door into the kitchen. He knocks Randolph onto the kitchen floor and pushes through the crowd.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Conrad backs into the living room holding Judith's manuscript tightly to his chest.

CONRAD
STOP! Let's just talk about this!

Judith trails him holding the pellet gun snug against her bleeding shoulder. The crowd quickly forms a circle around the standoff.

CONRAD (cont'd)
All right, I take it back!

JUDITH
You shot me! You can't take that back!

CONRAD
It was for your own good. I was trying to help you, Judith!

JUDITH
Ma'am, I would back away from him if I were you.

A kindly woman in a flower print dress backs away from Conrad.

Franklin scoots through the crowd. Conrad reaches out for him.

CONRAD
Dad, help me, please!

JUDITH
So he's Dad now?

Franklin continues by.

FRANKLIN
I'm sure you two can work it out on your own. Excuse me, Ron.

He scoots around Ron Doddling and disappears into the crowd.
JUDITH COCKS THE GUN.

JUDITH
Put down the book.

Conrad doesn't move.

JUDITH (cont'd)
Let's not make this anymore
difficult than it all ready is.

SHE FIRES A SHOT INTO A PORCELAIN LAMP. It crumbles to the floor.

CONRAD
All right! I'll do it.

He slowly kneels down and puts the manuscript on the floor.

CONRAD (cont'd)
What's happened to grace? I mean,
has forgiveness completely lost its
way in the world?

He notices someone in the crowd.

CONRAD (cont'd)
Hi, Mr. Brinkman.

MR. BRINKMAN, a thicker boned man sporting a thick mustache and tie, nods at Conrad.

Judith waves the gun.

JUDITH
Your right shoulder, please.

CONRAD
Can we do the left. This one's
still sore from yesterday...

JUDITH
Right shoulder!

Conrad turns to his side, exposing his right shoulder. The crowd waits in quiet anticipation.

Conrad closes his eyes and clinches his jaw.

CONRAD
(singing to himself)
Glory, glory hallelujah...

JUDITH FIRES THE GUN. Conrad is hit in the shoulder with A SMALL, BUT FLESHY THUD. THE CROWD GASPS. Conrad stumbles backwards.

CONRAD (cont'd)
AHHH! DAMN IT!

He falls to the floor gripping his shoulder.

INT. FRANKLIN AND CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - FERGUSSON HOME -
CONTINUOUS

Franklin opens the bedroom door and stares into the room.

FRANKLIN
Are you all right?

Claire sits on the edge of the bed wearing a wedding gown.
Her hair is fried and her make-up is one large smear.

CLAIRE
I think I might be having a small
breakdown.

FRANKLIN
Can I come in?

CLAIRE
Okay.

He walks into the room and delicately sits down on the bed at
her side. She picks at her dress.

CLAIRE (cont'd)
I found it in the closet. It still
fits.

FRANKLIN
You look...nice.

CLAIRE
It needs to be taken out a little
in the back, but overall I think it
holds up...fashionably speaking.

Claire notices Franklin's face.

CLAIRE (cont'd)
Did you get punched or something?

FRANKLIN
No. I had a small breakdown of my
own.

CLAIRE
Really?

He nods.

CLAIRE (cont'd)
We're pathetic aren't we?

FRANKLIN
Well, I guess as Ron would say, you can look at our situation from two different view points. As a negative, it's quite obvious that we've lost all control over our children's physical and emotional well-being and, it seems, there's only a slim chance we'll ever get back what we once had as a family. But, on the positive side, after thirty-five years, we still have each other. I wouldn't call that pathetic.

CLAIRE
No. I guess not.

Franklin softly pats his swollen eye.

FRANKLIN
Judith shot Conrad with a pellet gun downstairs.

CLAIRE
Yeah, I heard it.

Franklin looks at Claire.

FRANKLIN
You know, you and I have traveled a lot of miles in this journey together. We've been over a lot of potholes and through a lot of detours. But if we could just take a step back and look where we've come from and what it's taken to get here, I think we'd realize we still have some gas left in the tank.

CLAIRE
What are you talking about?

FRANKLIN
Our marriage. I'm using symbolism...or metaphors...

CLAIRE
Are we the road or...

FRANKLIN
I think we're the car. I don't
know. I'm making it up as I go...

A POLICE SIREN ECHOES IN THE DISTANCE.

CLAIRE
What's that?

Franklin gets up and looks out the window. THE SIRENS GROW
LOUDER.

FRANKLIN
It looks like Charles...being
chased by cops.

Claire leans over and puts her face in her hands.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)
Wait a second. Yeah...Dad's with
him.

Claire gets up.

CLAIRE
I'll get my purse.

EXT. FRONT LAWN - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Charles and Wendel ride Blue to a sliding halt in the middle
of the front lawn. Two cop cars pull up to the curb.

Charles jumps out and holds his hands in the air.

CHARLES
My fault! I made a mistake! I
realize that now!

Two cops viciously tackle Charles to the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - EVENING

Franklin sits in the lobby of a worn down police station. A
stern COP stands behind a counter staring at him.

COP
You know, he could've killed
somebody.

FRANKLIN
Excuse me?

COP
I've dealt with these old people
before. They're fragile...like
those hand-painted eggs with the
yokes sucked out. The slightest
bit of mishandling, then...

HE SLAPS THE DESK HARD.

COP (cont'd)
They're done for, just like that.

FRANKLIN
Well, I'm relieved that didn't
happen.

COP
You know, kidnapping a nursing home
resident is a serious offense.

FRANKLIN
It's his grandfather, so I wouldn't
necessarily call it kidnapping.

COP
Let me explain something to you...

He leans forward on the counter.

COP (cont'd)
You don't have to be a KID to be
KIDnapped.

FRANKLIN
I'll try to keep that in mind next
time, thank you.

COP #2 opens the door to a long hallway.

COP #2
Mr. Fergusson, you can come with
me.

Franklin gets up.

EXT. POLICE STATION PARKING LOT - EVENING

Claire, still in her wedding gown, paces outside the station wagon. Gwenivere, Vincent and Judith stand a few feet away watching.

Charles, Franklin, Conrad and Wendel exit the station. Claire walks up to them.

CLAIRE

So what happened? Are you all right, Wendel?

WENDEL

All right? I feel fantastic! A good old fashioned break out, a car chase...it's one hell of a way to spend a Saturday night.

He smacks Charles on the back.

FRANKLIN

The nursing home isn't going to press charges again, but I think we're wearing out our welcome.

Conrad walks past Gwenivere, Vincent and Judith rubbing his bandaged right shoulder.

CONRAD

Let's just go home.

Franklin turns to Claire.

FRANKLIN

I guess we should get Dad back.

Everyone, but Gwenivere begins walking towards the station wagon.

GWENIVERE

You know, you're all idiots!

They continue walking.

CONRAD

Tell us something we don't know.

GWENIVERE

All right. You're all pathetic, self-absorbed, whiney bastards!

They all stop and turn around.

VINCENT

Gwen?

GWENIVERE

Don't you see what you've got here?
Do you know how many people would
kill for what you have?

CONRAD

What?

GWENIVERE

Family!

They all stare at her blankly.

GWENIVERE (cont'd)

So you're all adopted. And you're
half Indian. And you're half
prostitute. What does it matter?

Vincent looks around.

VINCENT

Wait, what did I miss?

GWENIVERE

You don't know how good you've got
it. You want unfortunate? You
want dysfunctional? My parents are
borderline certifiable! My mom's a
palm reading manicurist; kind of a
two-for-one deal. My dad wears
chainmail and speaks Old English.
They actually wrestle each other
every night to see what side of the
bed they sleep on. And with my dad
having no use of the lower half of
his body, believe me, it's quite a
sight. Apply these facts to the
customary duties inherent in being
parents and see what you've got. I
need this family, all right? This
is the only shot I've got left!

The group is speechless.

GWENIVERE (cont'd)

Look at what you've got! You have
two relatively sane parents who
would do absolutely anything for
you. Sure, they have their quirks,
but who doesn't?

She points to Vincent.

GWENIVERE (cont'd)

Vincent, you're not crazy. It was
Even Edward...

VINCENT

What?

GWENIVERE

It was the book Frank used to read
you. Though it's mildly
questionable why he read you such a
traumatizing bedtime story, you are
partly who you are because of him.
And where do you think your
compulsive tendency to retreat to
closets came from?

She points at Claire. She wipes mascara across her face.

CLAIRE

What?

GWENIVERE

Judith, I'll admit, I don't know
you that well, but yours is pretty
easy. They rescued you from a
Ukrainian orphanage! Listen, I
watch my TV news magazines. Do you
know what type of dark hell goes on
in places like that? And if that's
not enough, I'll give you one word:
Chernobyl. You dodged a big bullet
there, sister, let me tell you.

She looks towards Conrad.

GWENIVERE (cont'd)

Conrad, you need to grow up and get
over yourself. Sure, they lied to
you. Sure, Claire duct taped throw
pillows to herself to convince you
she was pregnant. Sure, they
staged Judith's delivery out of a
dentist office, but that doesn't
prove they were unloving parents.
It proves they were passionately
dedicated to raising you to believe
you were truly a part of this
family.

She turns to Charles.

GWENIVERE (cont'd)

And what can I say about you? Your impulsiveness and complete lack of cause and effect thinking is astonishing. Do you know how much damage you've caused this weekend alone? You were just bailed out of jail, not to mention the fact you cut a tree down onto their house for reasons I still don't quite understand. The fact these two are capable of issuing so much grace to you is inspiring.

She looks towards Franklin and Claire.

GWENIVERE (cont'd)

And to answer your question, Frank. Yes.

FRANKLIN

Yes?

GWENIVERE

Matthew 12:25. A house divided against itself won't stand. You wanted a prognosis? There it is.

VINCENT

Did she just quote scripture?

Gwenivere points towards the siblings.

GWENIVERE

You and Claire can't let these guys take you down. You've made it thirty-five years. Are you going to let their self-absorbed insecurities tear apart what today represents?

Franklin and Claire don't quite know how to answer.

FRANKLIN

No?

GWENIVERE

Good!

She readdresses the whole group.

GWENIVERE (cont'd)

And so here you are! For better or worse, no matter what issues or neuroses it includes, you are who you are because the care and nurturing of these two people, right here. You think you guys have problems? That's what family is...a group of screwed up, problem-ridden individuals chosen by forces greater than themselves to support, encourage and, on occasion, attempt to love one another. So whether you believe it or not, these two are the good guys. You think you have issues? Join the rest of the world. Don't blame them...blame this twisted, circus of an existence called life!

She claps her hands together.

GWENIVERE (cont'd)

So, who needs this family?

She raises her hand.

GWENIVERE (cont'd)

If this is still a Fergocracy, let's take a vote.

They all remain frozen for a moment.

Finally Claire raises her hand, followed by Franklin and Charles. After another moment, Judith raises her hand, as does Vincent.

All eyes turn towards Conrad.

CONRAD

Yes, all right!

His hand shoots into the air.

VINCENT

I need this family. Are we finished?

GWENIVERE

No. I think you should all group hug.

The hands go down.

VINCENT

Group hug?

Gwenivere lowers her hand.

GWENIVERE

Or at least high five or something.

After a brief moment, Charles cautiously steps forward and approaches Franklin and Claire. He slowly raises his hand into the air.

Franklin gives him an awkward high five.

CLAIRE

Come here...

She bursts forward with a massive hug.

CHARLES

Sorry about the tree...and the kidnapping.

Claire pulls Franklin into the hug.

FRANKLIN

All right, okay.

Vincent cautiously walks over and joins them.

Conrad slowly turns to Judith and raises his hand into the air.

CONRAD

Not too hard.

Judith opens her arms and wraps them around him in a awkward embrace. THEY BOTH CRINGE IN PAIN.

CONRAD (cont'd)

It hurts so badly...

She pulls him in closer. HIS BACK POPS.

JUDITH

I know, Conrad. I know.

Claire and Franklin make their way over to Conrad and Judith and they embrace with MORE GRUNTS AND GROANS.

Wendel steps up to Gwenivere's side.

WENDEL

So who are you again?

GWENIVERE
I'm your granddaughter-in-law.

WENDEL
I wasn't aware I had a
granddaughter-in-law.

GWENIVERE
I guess there's still a lot we all
have to learn about each other.

WENDEL
I guess so...

He slowly reaches up, palms the top of Gwenivere's head and begins lightly massaging it.

WENDEL (cont'd)
I guess so...

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - DAY

Conrad shuts the trunk to Judith's car.

CONRAD
That's it.

The front lawn is a complete disaster. Blue, party trash and a few of last night's attendees are laid out across the yard.

Judith stands next to Claire and Franklin holding Mascot's dog carrier. Claire holds the manuscript in her hands.

CLAIRE
Are you sure you want us to have
this?

JUDITH
You two should be the first to read
it. You can let me know what you
think when you're finished in a
month or two...

Claire examines its massive size.

JUDITH (cont'd)
...or three.

CLAIRE
It smells like gas.

JUDITH

I'd keep it away from open flames
for a while.

Franklin, with his eye still dark and swollen, raises his hand into the air. Judith gives him a high five.

Conrad approaches.

CONRAD

We better get going.

CLAIRE

Are you going to be okay?

CONRAD

Why?

Claire and Franklin just stare at him. He looks at Judith.

CONRAD (cont'd)

You told them?

Judith shrugs.

CLAIRE

Do you need any money?

CONRAD

How much is self-worth going for
nowadays?

Franklin steps forward and hugs him.

FRANKLIN

We're here for you, son.

He pats Conrad on the back. Conrad cringes in pain.

CONRAD

Thanks, Dad...thanks.

Judith sets Mascot in the backseat. HE BARKS VICIOUSLY.

JUDITH

Cállese y sube al coche!

Conrad steps around to the passenger side and gets in. Judith gets in the driver's side and starts the car.

JUDITH (cont'd)

We'll see you next time around.

Franklin leans forward and smacks the roof of the car.

FRANKLIN

Next time...fly.

CONRAD

Damn right.

Judith hits the gas in reverse. Conrad is thrown forward. He catches himself on the dash. The car backs into the street, then takes off down the road.

Vincent and Gwenivere walk up to Franklin and Claire.

VINCENT

Do you guys need any help cleaning up the house before we leave?

A limp Randolph Chang drops from a tree onto the front lawn behind them.

CLAIRE

Charles is going to stick around a while and help out.

CUT TO:

Charles is in the backyard with the chain saw pinned to the ground. He pulls the chord back. THE CHAIN SAW SPUTTERS, but dies. He does it again with the same results.

CHARLES

Please...please!

He tries once again...nothing.

BACK TO SCENE:

Gwenivere reaches into her bag, pulls out a photo album and hands it to Claire.

GWENIVERE

We wanted to give this to you before we left.

CLAIRE

What's this?

GWENIVERE

It's a few of our wedding photos. We thought you might want to have them.

Claire thumbs through a few pages. Most of the pictures have a hazy, dirt covered glow to them.

CLAIRE
 They're slightly obscured from the
 sand storm that swept through
 halfway into the ceremony.

Claire steps up to Gwenivere and hugs her.

CLAIRE (cont'd)
 Welcome to our family.

She squeezes tighter.

GWENIVERE
 (cringing)
 Thank you.

Vincent nervously addresses Franklin.

VINCENT
 I'm sorry about the whole, "not
 telling you I was married for two
 years" thing. I don't really have
 a good excuse. I think there's
 actually a word for it...

FRANKLIN
 Selfish?

GWENIVERE
 Spineless?

Claire releases Gwenivere.

CLAIRE
 Inconsiderate?

VINCENT
 We should go.

Vincent gets in the car and starts it up. Gwenivere follows
 and shuts her door.

INT. VINCENT'S CAR - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Vincent latches his seat belt.

GWENIVERE
 (quietly)
 So, I guess we'll wait to tell
 them?

Vincent looks at Gwenivere.

VINCENT
 (quietly)
 That we're having a baby?

She nods.

Vincent turns and looks at Franklin and Claire standing outside the car. They wave.

He looks back to Gwenivere.

VINCENT (cont'd)
 A few more months won't hurt
 anything, right?

He shifts the car into gear and pulls out of the driveway.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Franklin and Claire watch as their car disappears out of sight.

FRANKLIN
 So?

CLAIRE
 So...

FRANKLIN
 Was that hunky dory?

CLAIRE
 I'm not quite sure what that was.

She looks down and picks up the family portrait with pellet holes shot through it.

CLAIRE (cont'd)
 Maybe we should schedule another
 sit down with Ron next week.

FRANKLIN
 I think that might be a good idea.

THE CHAIN SAW ROARS TO LIFE BEHIND THE HOUSE.

CHARLES (O.S.)
 WOOHOO! HERE WE GO!!!

They both look up and stare forward in deep thought.

CLAIRE

Do you think there's anything left
in one of those two kegs?

Franklin thinks about it for a moment. He looks at Claire
with an exhausted, beaten gaze then cracks a labored grin.

CUT TO BLACK