

The Details

by

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Second Draft

IN A SUNNY BACKYARD, RIMMED WITH TALL SUCCULENTS AND MANICURED BOULDERS, LOOKING OUT AT AN ENDLESS DESERT

ROLL CREDITS as a group of LATINOS lay down some lush green sod; a carpet of grass like an oasis in the surrounding desert. A handsome man, JEFF, walks into frame and surveys the scene, happy, then walks away.

A new angle reveals the nearly finished yard. A lone LATINO steps out of the way for THE SPRINKLERS TO COME ON. It's heaven.

IN A FESTIVE MEXICAN RESTAURANT

MARIACHIS PLAY as a dinner party swings. Half are doctors, half are married to them. Half have a Margarita-spirited argument about the incompetence of the hospital's nursing staff (ad lib), the other half tries to change the subject when MERIDETH stands...

MERIDETH

Okay enough nonsense...

The party comes to attention as A LATINO WAIT STAFF enters with a cart of entrees...

MERIDETH (CONT'D)

I want to talk about the man and woman we've come here to honor tonight on their *fifteenth* wedding anniversary. That's a long time but as long as Ron and I've known Jeff and Nealy they've always been not just great friends but a model. They've really taught us what love is.

Jeff and NEALY LANG, beautiful, share a sober look. Jeff is bouncing their two and a half year old boy LUKE on his knee...

MERIDETH (CONT'D)

They've taught us also about perseverance though hard times. They're great parents. What else?

As she looks to her husband RON to keep up the toast, CAMERA PUSHES to a claustrophobic frame of Jeff & Nealy & Luke...

RON

The way you've always supported each other. Jeff, helping Nealy finally open her store and emailing us all about it *repeatedly* that we should come spend our fortunes.

(MORE)

RON (CONT'D)

And Nealy, supporting Jeff though med school, working nine to five--I know this stuff has inspired all of us who know you. So happy anniversary, we love you, and look forward to one day sharing the same nursing home with you. To Jeff and Nealy.

Everyone raises a glass and says TO JEFF AND NEALY. They all say CHEERS. A moment, later, Luke raises his glass too...

LUKE

Cheers.

Everyone laughs at this and adores Luke. Nealy kisses him.

AT HOME, IN THEIR BEDROOM

Jeff and Nealy get undressed and get into bed. They regard each other. She kisses him, a peck on the mouth.

JEFF

I drank way too many Margaritas for a Monday night.

NEALY

And I ate way too much queso fundido. Happy anniversary.

JEFF

Happy anniversary.

She rolls over and turns off her light. Tonight is obviously not going to be a romantic night.

NEALY

What do you think if Friday we have a nice romantic dinner by ourselves?

JEFF

That sounds great.

Cut to black for the MAIN TITLE:

THE DETAILS

THAT NIGHT, IN THE BACKYARD

Some colorful plastic toys lay about and low voltage lights artfully illuminate the landscaping.

And then, from out of a tree by the fence, a FAMILY OF THREE RACCOONS make their way down into the light and descend upon the lawn, sniffing the grass...

AT DAWN, THE FRENCH DOORS THAT LOOK OUT AT THE LAWN OPEN

Jeff steps out in his sweatpants to check the weather, dismayed to find... His new sod has been flipped over in multiple places and little holes have been dug in the dirt. Also, a few stepping stones have been overturned.

JEFF

Nealy. Come look out here.

Half dressed, Nealy comes out behind him...

NEALY

Whoa. What did this?

MOMENTS LATER, JEFF IS ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES

He puts each piece of grass back into its rightful place. He's very patient, moving methodically. After a few moments of this, the Lang's Latina Nanny ALMA comes out with Luke in her arms...

JEFF

Morning Alma. Hey Luke.

LUKE

Oh hi dad!

ALMA

(South American accent)

What happened out here?

THE RACOONS

AT AN UPSCALE HAIR SALON

Nealy's regular STYLIST puts a smock over her chest...

NEALY

Can you make me look ten years younger?

The two women smile at each other warmly.

NEW HAIRCUT, NEALY COMES TO THE STOREFRONT OF HER STORE

A bouquet of roses waits for her by the door. She picks it up and reads the card: *I lust for your hot body.*

No addressee, no signature. She laughs then grows sober as she unlocks the door and removes a hand drawn sign:
Store will reopen at 2pm...

INSIDE HER CHIC STORE

She walks through her showroom of furniture, mirrors, candlestick holders, bowls made of abalone shell...

SHE SITS AT HER DESK, REGARDS THE ROSES. WRITES AN EMAIL:

Jeff, Meet you at home before dinner tonight? :) Nealy.

THAT NIGHT, IN THE YMCA GYMNASIUM, JEFF PLAYS BASEKETBALL

An intense five on five game. A 6'6" black man, LINCOLN, with a terribly scarred arm, indented as if missing some muscle, encourages Jeff after he misses a shot...

LINCOLN

Yo Doc, that's a good shot--keep shooting that.

RETURN TO THE LANG HOME, LATER THAT NIGHT

Jeff enters, drenched with sweat. HOME DEPOT bag with him. Nealy's on the couch, REALITY TV on, nice shoes discarded on the floor. They say hi, then...

JEFF

I got some Mountain Lion urine to scare off the raccoons.

He pulls a plastic jug of it from his HOME DEPOT bag...

NEALY

Didn't you already try Mountain Lion urine?

JEFF

That was Coyote urine.

NEALY

What's the difference?

JEFF

Mountain Lions are higher on the food chain than Coyotes.

Never noticing her haircut or nice clothes, he goes...

IN THE BEDROOM

He discards his wet clothes. She appears in the door...
Naked, he smiles at her and then...

HE ENTERS THE BATHROOM AND TURNS ON THE SHOWER

Nealy sits on the bed and looks at the jug of GRANULATED
MOUNTAIN LION URINE...

NEALY

You didn't happen to pick up any toilet
paper on your way home, did you?

JEFF (O.C.)

What? I can't hear you.

She enters THE BATHROOM and says loudly this time...

NEALY

You didn't happen to pick up any toilet
paper on your way home, did you?

JEFF

(pulls back shower curtain)
No, are we out?

NEALY

Yah.

JEFF

Sorry babe.

NEALY

You know it's Friday night, don't you?

Her disappointment is palpable. He looks at her dumbly...

NEALY (CONT'D)

Well, I'm going to have to have a bowel
movement at some point, so I guess I'll
go to the store.

She leaves... Ducking back into the shower, he puzzles
over what important day today could possibly be.

IN THE PERSONAL HYGIENE AISLE AT THE LOCAL DRUGSTORE

She comes to a stop before a shelf of toilet paper.

A FEW MOMENTS LATER, SHE WAITS IN LINE WITH THE TP

As she waits, she notices...In the adjacent queue, an ODD INDIAN MAN smiles at her...about the 12 pack of butt wipes she hugs. Realizing this, she tries to ignore him.

OUTSIDE THE DRUGSTORE, SHE GETS BACK IN HER PRIUS

Puts the toilet paper in the passenger's seat. Regards it, eyes glazing over. PRELAP:

JEFF (V.O.)

Nealy, I totally spaced out about our plans tonight...

RETURN TO THEIR HOUSE...

As Nealy shuts the door and strides to their bedroom and into bathroom to place the toilet paper, Jeff follows...

JEFF (CONT'D)

I was doing an emergency C-section all afternoon, I went to the gym to unwind and it just totally slipped my mind.

She discards her clothes and gets into bed...

NEALY

I had Alma lined up to baby sit and she had to turn down a date to do it.

JEFF

I'm really sorry.

NEALY

Don't be, it's just the way it is.

She turns off her bedside lamp and rolls over. He turns off his bedside lamp and...after a moment, scoots to her.

He runs his hands over her back, trying to get a rise. But from where he lays, she seems to be playing dead.

Her eyes are open however, and she's waiting to see how hard he's going to try to make up for his blunder.

JEFF

Hey.

He kisses her on the shoulder. She cracks a faint smile but stays still.

He waits for her to roll over. To acknowledge she wants him to keep kissing her.

But she does not. She's still waiting for more effort from him.

However he's not willing to try as hard as she would like, and finally...

He exhales a breath of defeat and faces away from her, getting comfortable with his pillow.

Then she rolls over and faces *his* back. Runs *her* hands over him a little. And now it is he who is playing dead.

And now it is he who is upset. Who waits for *her* effort.

And then she gives up. Rolls away. Her eyes searching.

He remains facing away from her, eyes searching also. He then gets up and goes...

IN THEIR SHARED HOME OFFICE, HE LOCKS THE DOOR

He sits before the computer and... navigates to the erotic section of CRAIGSLIST.COM; W4M. Types 'erotic massage'. Scans the list of titles that pop up. One that reads EBONY HANDS MAKE PEARLS gets his attention.

He then CLICKS on EBONY HANDS and a sexy picture of a BLACK WOMAN WITH HER SHIRT OFF fills frame. He clicks on the email link. His work email pops up. He signs on with his password. Then he types:

Dear Ebony Hands,

He pauses to think what to write next. Looks at himself in a nearby mirror. Unbuttons his shirt a notch. Looks back at the screen. Begins to type the rest of his email.

A FEW MOMENTS LATER HE'S JACKING OFF.

NEXT MORNING, JEFF LOOKS OUT ONTO HIS BACKYARD TO FIND...

His sod is all flipped over again. Crap.

A BIT LATER, AS HE EXITS HIS HOUSE...

He has a cardboard tube tucked under his arm...

As he strides through his front yard, we see it's overgrown with flowering shrubs and plants but no sod--so in perfect order.

As he goes to his Prius, parked by Nealy's matching Prius, he sees...

In an empty lot across the street, by a weathered FOR SALE sign, overgrown with bramble, TWO TEENAGE BOYS practice archery on a big target semi-permanently placed there. Their dirt bikes are laid by a big old hedge.

AS JEFF DRIVES, AFTER PASSING THE ARCHERS

LILA, his neighbor, early 40s, hair mussed up, in her robe and sandals, walks a little teacup TERRIER and carries a WHITE CAT. Lila lights up with big smiles when she sees Jeff and waves...

LILA
Morning Doctor Lang!

Polite, Jeff waves at her as he drives by...

THE PRIUS DRIVES OFF, DOWN THEIR SPARSELY POPULATED STREET

A desert suburb marked by cacti and patches of lawn...

AS NEALY UNLOCKS HER STORE THAT MORNING

A BOY with a UNICEF box walks up to her...

BOY
Excuse me, Ma'am?

NEALY
Yes?

BOY
I go to Phoenix Christian Middle School and as part of our eighth grade civics project everybody's raising money for their favorite charity and I picked Unicef because every year nearly ten million children who live in poverty in other countries die from preventable diseases.

He hands her a UNICEF pamphlet with a smiling, heart-melting AFRICAN BOY on the cover...

A MOMENT LATER, IN HER STORE

She writes UNICEF a thousand dollar check and hands it to the boy for his box. He looks at it and is astonished. Looks up at Nealy who looks preternaturally emotional.

A TECHNICALITY

AN UGLY MUNICIPAL BUILDING STANDS IN A SUBURB OF PHOENIX
INSIDE, AT THE WINDOW OF PERMITS & PLANNING...

PLANS INSPECTOR

So according to these drawings you want to expand your house here towards your neighbor's property here.

JEFF

Right. And raise the roof here in front for a 2nd story loft with a skylight.

PLANS INSPECTOR

Why?

JEFF

Why? Okay, because my wife and I are thinking about a second child, and this tiny room would make a great nursery if we could push it out a few more feet.

PLANS INSPECTOR

You do know you need to leave a five foot pathway for the fire department, don't you?

JEFF

If you'll notice where my neighbor's house is--see here--even with the expansion, we leave eleven feet which is more than five feet on either side.

PLANS INSPECTOR

Did an architect draw these for you?

JEFF

No, I did them.

PLANS INSPECTOR

If you want to proceed with your current plans, you'll have to file for a variance hearing...

(searches file cabinet, hands him a paper)

Here's the form.

AT THE GOOD SAMARITAN HOSPITAL, JEFF PARKS HIS PRIUS

As he strides to the entrance, he puts on his lab coat...

IN THE NEO NATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

Jeff walks to a NEWBORN in an incubator. As he checks the baby's heart rate and temperature, he ad libs some sweet talk then makes a note in the baby's chart...

IN THE BACKYARD, AT DUSK, JEFF COMES OUT THE FRENCH DOORS

He carries a box labeled *HAV-A-HEART*--a humane animal trap--and a bag from Kentucky Fried Chicken.

He opens the box and pulls out a big wire cage. Sets it somewhere strategic near the kitchen door and glances at the instruction manual...

SAME LOCATION, HOURS LATER, IN THE DARK

A Raccoon comes and looks at the trap door, considers going inside for a piece of KFC chicken set inside... The raccoon thinks a moment then walks away.

SAME LOCATION, AT DAWN

The chicken leg is still there. Jeff reaches into the trap and pulls the bait out. Examines it. It's pristine.

He HUFFS as he sits on his butt and looks at his lawn.

It's as if the raccoons were somehow antagonized by the trap. Worse than before. Muddy paw prints are all over the steps of the French doors...where Nealy stands.

NEALY

We should just get rid of the grass and put down some flagstone or something.

JEFF

I don't want to put down flagstone.

NEALY

Why not?

JEFF

Why not, okay. How about because I spent my childhood playing in my mom's stairwell and my dad's parking lot and I'd really like it if Luke grew up with a beautiful green lawn to play on.

NEALY

If Luke has to play on flagstone instead of sod, it's not going to scar him for life.

MOMENTS LATER, JEFF FIXES THE SOD

He goes slow, cares deeply for each little piece to make sure it's tucked back in place properly.

ON ANOTHER DAY, THE SOD LOOKS EVEN WORSE AND

Jeff gets sloppy and muddy as he starts to work more furiously, his beard grown out. Wipes mud on his brow. Luke follows him around in his pajamas.

LUKE

What're you doing dad?

JEFF

Fixing the grass my love.

SOMETIME LATER, SAME LOCATION

The trees have dropped leaves and the cacti has flowered. Now Jeff sprinkles handfuls of red hot Indian pepper from an industrial size satchel on a patch of dirt before he replaces the area with a fresh square of sod. Nealy stands by watching him work with a beer...

JEFF

This stuff's so hot it's burning my skin just touching it. I doubt a raccoon's going to come back after he snorts up a nose-full.

NEALY

Assuming the pepper doesn't work, what do you think of the idea of doing a series of pocket gardens with pathways like we have in front? The raccoons never mess around in front.

JEFF

Let's just give this a chance, okay?

IN BED, SOME TIME LATER...

Jeff searches for "Raccoon Extermination" on his laptop while Nealy reads WHAT TO EXPECT: THE TODDLER YEARS.

JEFF

Here's a guy who said he bought a Pit Bull and left him outside at night to get rid of his raccoons.

NEALY

This is getting beyond boring.

JEFF

I know, we live in a desert, there's not supposed to be grass. I know.

NEALY

I don't feel like arguing about this five times a week.

JEFF

We just have to keep the raccoons away long enough to let it root. Once it roots, they won't be able to turn it over.

NEALY

It'll never root if the raccoons keep disturbing the new roots, will it?

JEFF

Three thousand square feet of sod and a new irrigation system was expensive and you don't just throw it away.

NEALY

Don't use that tone of voice with me.

JEFF

I didn't use any tone of voice with you.

NEALY

Don't deny using a tone of voice when you used a tone of voice, I'm not crazy, I know what I heard.

JEFF

I never called you crazy.

NEALY

You implied it though, didn't you?
As if I'm not sane enough to judge
a tone of voice.

JEFF

Maybe you are crazy.

NEALY

Right, now the truth comes out. But you
wanna know the truth, you're the crazy
one Jeff...

JEFF

Right, of course I am...

NEALY

...with your God damn racoons.

JEFF

Glad we finally got to the bottom of it.

NEALY

You're so full of shit.

JEFF

Am I full of shit or crazy?

NEALY

Keep your fucking voice down, Jeff-

JEFF

My fucking voice is down.

NEALY

(overlap)

Don't you dare wake up Luke!

JEFF

You're the one who's screaming.

NEALY

I'm not screaming.

JEFF

Fine, just spewing venom and being a
royal bitch.

NEALY

Don't stop now, Jeff, get it all out.

JEFF

That's just what you want, isn't it...

NEALY
 (overlap)
 Yah, that's what I want...

JEFF
 You want me to say all kinds of awful things so you can remind me of all the awful things I said to you when you try to force me to apologize at the end of all this like I'm the crazy one so you can abdicate every ounce of responsibility you have in this fight.

NEALY
 (overlap)
 Go fuck one of your raccoons!

JEFF
 More likely than fucking you.

NEALY
 FUCK YOU...

SHE SCREAMS as she DECKS him in the eye.

NEALY (CONT'D)
 Oh God.

He stumbles as he clutches his eye. After a brief moment of shock, she races out of the room.

Eye swelling badly, he sits in a nearby chair...

A few moments later, Nealy reappears with a bag of ice...

NEALY (CONT'D)
 Jeff, I didn't mean to do that.

JEFF
 You just slugged me in the eye.

NEALY
 I know. I totally lost my mind.
 You can hit me back if you want to.

JEFF
 I'm not going to hit you back.

NEALY
 Go on, hit me--I deserve it.

JEFF
 I'm not going to hit you, Nealy.

He goes to the bathroom and shuts the door, leaving her.
She goes to the door.

NEALY

Maybe we should talk about why that just
happened.

IN THE BATHROOM, JEFF SITS ON THE RIM OF THE TUB, STEWS

JEFF

We had a ridiculous fight about raccoons--
that's why it happened.

NEALY

I mean why it really happened.

JEFF

It happened because you got totally out
of control.

(perfunctorily)

And I got out of control too.

NEALY

All right.
(but clearly it's not)

Jeff's eyes search the bathroom ceiling as he
contemplates the nature of what just happened.

AT THE OFFICE OF PLANS AND PERMITS

Jeff--terrible BLACK EYE now--waits in line to talk to
the PLANS INSPECTOR when his cell rings. He sees it's
Nealy calling and answers...

JEFF

Hey.

SPLIT TO NEALY IN THE KITCHEN WITH LUKE EATING BREAKFAST

NEALY

When I got up this morning and looked for
you on the couch you were already gone.

JEFF

I wasn't trying to be dramatic leaving so
early. I had to stop by city hall this
morning before rounds to see what's going
on with our variance request.

NEALY

Okay.

JEFF

I was thinking we could have a family dinner tonight. Talk then.

NEALY

Sounds good.

They both linger there in a brief silence for a moment.

AND NOW HE ENTERS HIS MEDICAL SUITE'S PRIVATE OFFICE...

He sits and starts up his computer. He's framed by his Arizona College of Medicine diploma, Mexican yarn paintings depicting women in labor, and an award from The Board of Natural Childbirth...

He enters his computer's password and a photo of Luke and Nealy is displayed as the desktop image. He studies this.

A BIT LATER, HE ENTERS THE SHARED SINGLE OFFICE BATHROOMS

He washes his face, examines his eye, then gets a cold compress from a little refrigerator which has several labeled cups of urine in it. He sits on the closed toilet and ices his eye. Fishes his sports coat for his cell and dials a number from his address book...

SPLIT SCREEN TO: AN UPSCALE PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE WHERE

A very attractive woman, REBECCA MAZONNI, checks the screen of her vibrating cell... then answers...

REBECCA

Jeffery Lang--I thought you might have abandoned me.

JEFF

Not yet. Hey Rebecca.

REBECCA

You and Nealy never invite us over anymore.

JEFF

Yah, we're not very social these days.

REBECCA

Liar. Nealy doesn't like me very much.

JEFF

We have a two year old, remember?

REBECCA

Yes, I remember.

JEFF

How's Pete?

REBECCA

The same. You sound sad, what's going on?

JEFF

Nealy and I had a huge fight last night.

REBECCA

So what's new?

JEFF

Ha ha.

REBECCA

(delicately)

Was it about your sex life again?

JEFF

No, well, sort of, I guess, but this was something else.

REBECCA

What?

JEFF

It ended with her punching me in the eye.

REBECCA

Jesus, Jeff.

(after a beat)

Has this happened before?

JEFF

No. I'm not a battered husband if that's what you mean.

REBECCA

God, Jeff, I'm sorry.

JEFF

I don't know what's wrong with us--it's a mess--the bad's outweighing the good, you know what I mean?--it's all fucked up.

REBECCA

Tell me how it started.

As he thinks where to begin, we cut to...

JEFF AND NEALY AND LUKE AT A SALAD BAR, THAT NIGHT

As they pile up salad items, Luke is in Nealy's arms...

NEALY

So I want you to know I thought about it all day and I decided to start seeing a therapist again.

JEFF

You don't have to do that.

NEALY

I hit you. I need to talk to somebody about this.

JEFF

Why not talk to your friends?

NEALY

Aren't there things you're too ashamed to talk about with your friends?

JEFF

If you feel therapy would help, don't let my opinion about it stand in your way. Anyway, I know how awful I must've sounded when I said the thing about sex with you versus the raccoons--so I know I have my share of blame in the fight.

NEALY

Thanks for saying that, but I think we both know this is deeper than one fight.

They continue piling on salad items. Not knowing how to have this conversation.

JEFF

Look, obviously there're a lot of pressures on both of us, but I think the best thing we could do at this point is put a moratorium on raising our voices, you know, especially when Luke's around-- I don't want him growing up in the kind of chaos I had to grow up in.

NEALY

Neither do I.

He gives her a forgiving squeeze. She's partially relieved but only partially.

AS THEY WAIT IN LINE TO HAVE THEIR SALADS WEIGHED

JEFF

So it turns out The Judge wouldn't even consider our variance request. Apparently it's a bright red line, no building in the five foot zone.

NEALY

Does that mean all our planning is down the toilet?

JEFF

Not necessarily--we can just go ahead without a permit. We live at the end of a cul du sac --inspectors aren't likely to drive by. I'd think the only way we could get in trouble is if our neighbor complained.

NEALY

Our *crazy* neighbor you mean?

JEFF

Right.

Luke grabs tofu off Jeff's plate and throws it...

NEALY

Hey Luke, no...

JEFF

Food's for your mouth not the floor...

Demonstrating, Jeff puts a tomato into his mouth...

NEALY

I don't know, maybe we should put a pin in the remodel plan for a while. It's too expensive for us anyway, isn't it?

JEFF

If we're really going to have a second baby, we're going to want that space.

NEALY

I know.

JEFF

So we should do it before you get pregnant--we won't want the stress of the construction to compound with the stress of your pregnancy.

(MORE)

JEFF (CONT'D)

We'll want to enjoy that time, not manage a construction crisis--maybe go on a trip somewhere with Luke and relax before the new storm comes in--know what I mean?

NEALY

Yeah. So what's the worst case scenario if our neighbor complains?

JEFF

The city could send a demo crew and put a lien on us for the bill.

NEALY

That doesn't sound so good.

JEFF

Yah, but it's extremely unlikely. They'd only do it if we were building something dangerous or if a neighbor called the city about it repeatedly and wouldn't drop it.

NEALY

I've got to admit, the neighbor thing makes me pretty nervous.

JEFF

Let me deal with her.

NEALY

How are you going to deal with her?

JEFF

I haven't formulated a plan on that yet.

As their salads are weighed by the CASHIER, Nealy cracks a devilish smile.

NEALY

I have an idea...

JEFF

What?

She whispers something crude into his ear and he laughs. Luke laughs too. The vestiges of tension from last night's fight being mended here a bit more.

THEY SIT IN A BOOTH AND START TO EAT THEIR SALADS

Nealy raises her Diet Coke...

NEALY

Well here's to a wild Friday night at Souplantation.

Luke raises his sippy cup, Jeff his Heinekin...

JEFF
Cheers.

NEALY
Cheers.

LUKE
Cheers.

AT AN OUTDOOR NURSERY, THE NEXT DAY

Jeff and Nealy browse some flowering cacti in fancy pots.

NEALY
This one's nice but it's kind of
expensive.

JEFF
Maybe we should accidentally leave on
the price tag.

They smile at each other conspiratorially.

IN THE INDOOR SUPPLY CENTER

Jeff walks to a display of wind chimes, considering something. Then he starts picking off a dozen of them...

AT THE REGISTER, A FEW MOMENTS LATER

As Jeff sets the cactus and chimes before the CASHIER...

JEFF
Can I ask you a question about raccoons?

CASHIER
It's one of my specialties actually.

Nealy approaches with a houseplant she's picked...

JEFF
I've tried trapping them but they won't
go in, I've tried predator urine but
that just smelled bad and I even tried
putting hot pepper under the sod but
that did nothing.

CASHIER
Do you have an automatic sprinkler
system?

JEFF

Sure.

CASHIER

What time does it come on and for how long?

JEFF

Around 3am for ten minutes.

CASHIER

Well that right there is the most common mistake people make with raccoons.

A: You're way over watering the lawn making it very hospitable for worms.

INSERT JEFF'S POV ON HIS HAND PULLING BACK A PATCH OF SOD TO REVEAL A BUNCH OF WORMS IN THE WET SOIL BENEATH....

CASHIER (V.O.)

B: Raccoons love to eat worms but if they can't find any, they'll stop coming.

C: Worms like to drink water so if you stop watering *they'll* stop coming...

AS JEFF & NEALY DRIVE DOWNTOWN, ESTABLISHING THE AREA...

CASHIER (V.O.)

Now I'm not saying you should let your grass dry out and die, I'm saying you've got to change your watering cycle to more like 7am and reduce the duration to say three minutes. That'll give the water'll get a chance to evaporate during the day and in theory the worms'll have to dive deeper for their drink, out of reach of your pesty nocturnal friends. But don't expect instant results --the worms may stick around for a while, while your soil desaturates. I know it sounds really simple, but things usually are.

IN THE BACKYARD, A BIT LATER, SLOWLY PULL WIDE AS

Jeff stands on a ladder hanging the wind-chimes all over the tree where the raccoons like to enter the yard...

JEFF

The raccoons come in this tree every night. Now we'll hear them coming.

Nealy sits on the steps outside their bedroom, watching Luke play, replacing the price tag on the cactus, putting it somewhere where it might have been easily forgotten.

JEFF (CONT'D)

And I can run outside and scare the living s-h-i-t out of them upon arrival.

Trying to be generous, Nealy nods...

NEALY

I guess I'll buy some earplugs.

LILA

JEFF, WITH THE CACTUS, RINGS HIS NEIGHBOR'S BELL

When the door opens, Lila, very disheveled, weirdly attractive, has her white PUSSY CAT in her arms...

LILA

Oh hi Doctor Lang, how are you?

Her little TERRIER growls in the distance...

JEFF

I'm fine. I just wanted to stop by-

LILA

(to the Terrier)

QUIET STEVEN!

(back to Jeff)

Sorry?

JEFF

So the reason I stopped by is we're thinking of doing a little home improvement and I wanted to apologize in advance for any inconvenience it might cause you and to give you this as a token of our appreciation.

LILA

Wow, what a beautiful plant, such a lovely stem, and the flower. Is this an Arizona native?

JEFF

I think so, probably.

LILA

Wonderful. I'll put it right next to my bed. Or, no, they say you're not supposed to put a cactus in the bedroom, don't they?

JEFF

Who's they?

LILA

It's Feng Shui. Cactus in the bedroom is supposed to be bad for the love life but on the other side, they say a bright red flower is a good thing.

JEFF

It's a conundrum.

LILA

(admires him a moment)

So what happened to your eye?

JEFF

My eye, oh, I was at a Sports bar and this drunk guy just decided he didn't like me, I guess.

LILA

You poor man.

JEFF

Anyway, I really hope we won't disturb you with our little project. I know we had a few issues in the past...

LILA

(overlap)

Oh I'm sure I blew it out of proportion.

She smiles at him reassuringly. Admires his features.

AFTER HE'S GONE, SHE PUTS SOME HAPPY MUSIC ON THE STEREO

And she takes her plant around the house looking for the perfect spot. She's obviously very high on the interaction she just had with Jeff.

SHE PLACES THE PLANT IN HER BEDROOM AND SMILES ABOUT IT

Then she goes to her vanity mirror above her dresser and looks herself over. That's when her high starts to dip. And her eyes shift to see her cat Matthew on the bed. She goes to the bed and cuddles up to the cat, stroking him lovingly. Obviously lonely as hell.

IN THE LANG'S TINY FRONT BEDROOM

A BEEFY LATINO in plastic goggles rips the cord of a chain saw. The saw REVS.

IN THE LANG'S PRISTINE LIVING ROOM

That saw comes through the wall and cuts a swath through the existing plaster between two sconces.

SAME LOCATION, DAYS LATER

A gaping hole in the wall where a door will go reveals a construction site beyond. A LATINO CREW re-frames everything with heavy beams to support the soon to be 2nd story. The far exterior wall is missing. A saw BUZZES...

JOSE (the beefy Latino) and Jeff (dressed for basketball, black eye healed) stand by watching...

JOSE

You had a lot of termites in the old beams we took out. I think we should call an exterminator before we close up the new wall.

JEFF

Why don't we deal with that after. The faster this's done, the less likely it is an inspector will stumble by and stop us.

JOSE

You're the boss.

A BIT LATER, JEFF ENTERS THE YMCA GYMNASIUM...

Only one other player, Lincoln (the one with the grotesquely scarred right arm), is on the court...

LINCOLN

Doc!

JEFF

Hey Lincoln.

Importantly, Lincoln also has a little white bandage taped to his left arm today and he's wearing an Office Depot work shirt with the name LEONARD embroidered.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Where is everyone?

LINCOLN

Don't know. No one showed up yet.

At the opposite end of the court, a LATINO YMCA EMPLOYEE stands on a ladder and fixes a new net onto an old rim.

JEFF

Mind if I shoot around with you?

LINCOLN

Heck no, Doc.

Lincoln is incredibly affable. He passes Jeff the ball. Jeff shoots and it CLANKS out.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

I see your jump shot's as pretty as ever.

JEFF

You're a sweetheart.

LINCOLN

Why don't we play some one on one.

JEFF

If you need affirmation that badly.

LINCOLN

You can start, Doc.

After Jeff misses the first shot, Lincoln gets the rebound, steps back and drains his first jump shot.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

So how's the baby business?

JEFF

It's good. How are things with you?
Still working at that nightclub?

LINCOLN

No, I quit that a while back, too much strife. I got a new job at Office Depot and that's been cool.

Lincoln hits another shot. Jeff brings him back the ball.

JEFF

I was going to ask about your shirt but I figured it was just a new style.

LINCOLN

Nope, I just forgot my workout shirt today.

JEFF

How come it says Leonard?

LINCOLN

Because that's my real name.

Lincoln swishes another shot right through the net...

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Lincoln's just a nick name my teammates in college gave to me.

JEFF

Why'd they name you Lincoln?

LINCOLN

At first they called me Link, actually, because when I joined the team they said they no longer had a weak link in their lineup and later on that became Lincoln because they said I led them out of the slavery of being a third place team.

(another shot, another swish)

Five to Zero, Doc.

JEFF

I guess it shouldn't surprise me. I've always thought you played well enough to be a Pro.

LINCOLN

Used to, but it wasn't in the cards.

Lincoln indicates his wounded arm as the reason.

JEFF

What did happen to your arm, I always wondered?

He shoots another shot and, again, nothing but net...

LINCOLN

Well I'll tell you, when I was a freshman we had a real good team--real good--three guys on our squad eventually played in the NBA.

JEFF

Would I have heard of any of them?

LINCOLN

Nope, they all ended up being scrubs.

(seems to enjoy that fact)

Anyway, we'd just won a real big game;

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

clinched our conference and I was the high scorer. It was a thing of beauty. On National TV and everything.

JEFF

Amazing.

LINCOLN

Pro scouts were all over me afterwards, it was like a real dream. So me and my boys were out celebrating that night and we got a little stupid, Doc, stupid *drunk*. And guess what? We got into a car wreck.

JEFF

Shit.

LINCOLN

I nearly lost my arm that night. But as you see, God was kind and let me keep it.

JEFF

And you couldn't play competitively after that?

LINCOLN

It took a year just to learn how to use a fork, and, truth be told, it was just too hard on me to even try to compete after that, you know. On the glass full side, that turned out to be the very last time I ever tipped back a drink.

Lincoln backs up and takes a long arcing shot and *finally* one CLANKS out. Jeff doesn't bother to get the rebound...

JEFF

That's the saddest story I think I've ever heard, Lincoln.

LINCOLN

Shoot Doc, you must've not heard a lot of stories then.

Lincoln smiles his big, improbable, toothless smile. Jeff's eyes linger there on his cracked teeth.

JEFF

Lincoln, how come every other time I see you here, you have a bandage on your arm?

AS JEFF USES HIS ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH AND NEALY FLOSSES...

NEALY

That is a sad story, you're right.

JEFF

It gets sadder. He's always got these pieces of gauze taped to his arm. Turns out the poor guy has kidney failure.

NEALY

Jesus.

JEFF

It's funny how you can know a guy in a certain context for so long--I mean I've played ball with him for probably six years now--but never really know him.

JEFF (CONT'D)

He has these terrible, cracked teeth. I was thinking maybe I should pay for him to go to the dentist but I don't know how I'd ever broach the subject.

NEALY

Maybe you could do something more important for him than that.

JEFF

More important like what?

NEALY

Well, if his passion is basketball, maybe you could talk to Ron's sister about that school she runs--maybe they have a coaching job open or something.

JEFF

You know that's not a bad idea at all.

AS SEEN FROM ACROSS THE STREET, OUTSIDE NEALY'S SHOP

Some LATINOS unload a TRUCK and cart furniture inside. Nealy directs traffic. When everyone is inside...

A WELL-DRESSED MAN EXITS HIS BMW AND CROSSES THE STREET

And he enters Nealy's store...

NEALY

Yes, turn it a little...

IN NEALY'S STORE, A BELL RINGS AS THE DOOR SWINGS...

LATINO WORKER

Here?

NEALY

Yes, right there is fine.

She takes pause on the MAN now before her--middle aged, big nose, effeminate--as he flashes a warm, secure smile.

MAN

Hello Nealy. You look gorgeous, as usual.

He has a British accent.

NEALY

Hi Chris.

CHRIS (MAN)

I came straight from the airport--what's this very important thing you emailed me about?

NEALY

Come in back?

SHE ENTERS HER SMALL OFFICE AND HE FOLLOWS...

NEALY (CONT'D)

Chris, look.

CHRIS

Wait, before you say anything, there's something I've got to show you.

He sets down his briefcase and puts his hands all over her and kisses her passionately--which she melts into for a moment until she backs away. After a beat.

NEALY

This can't keep happening.

CHRIS

So how are things here at the store?

NEALY

Fine.

CHRIS

What if I told you I'm in love with you and I don't know how to go on without you.

NEALY

I'd say I'm in love with my husband.

CHRIS

Last I heard he was a raccoon crazy moron.

NEALY

I'm ashamed I said that to you.

Chris steps closer; puts his hands on her again, trying hard to maintain eye-contact with her...

CHRIS

Hey, I understand why you'd be ashamed-- but you were just being honest.

NEALY

No. I was venting.

He notices those roses she received a while back in her vase--totally dry now...

CHRIS

If this has to end so urgently, why haven't you thrown those out?

NEALY

(conflicted)
It was an oversight.

A FEW MOMENTS LATER, CHRIS EXITS THE STORE

She follows him to the window and watches him go as the LATINOS bring a chest of drawers inside and ask her where to put it...

IN LABOR & DELIVERY, JEFF SCRUBS UP WITH RON, CO-HOST OF HIS ANNIVERSARY PARTY

JEFF

Is your sister still a Principal of that Catholic school in the city?

RON

St. Augustine's, yeah.

JEFF

They have a basketball team, don't they?

RON

I think so. Why?

JEFF

I play ball with this guy--black guy, would've gone Pro if he hadn't hurt himself in a car accident in college--probably one of the nicest people I ever met--sadly wasting away, working at The Office Depot.

RON

Why is that so sad?

JEFF

I just thought he might make a tremendous assistant coach or something if he was given an opportunity.

RON

There're reasons guys like that don't find jobs like that on their own, Jeff. How well do you really know him?

JEFF

I've been shooting hoops with him for nearly a decade--I'm telling you, he's a great guy.

RON

Okay...

As Ron goes off to wherever he's going, he says...

RON (CONT'D)

I'll text you my sister's number.

JEFF

Great, thanks.

THERAPY

IN NEALY'S STORE

Nealy sits at the register reading VOGUE when the bell RINGS and she looks up to see...

NEALY

Mer--what are you doing here?

MERIDETH

I just came to see how my lady was doing and see if you want to grab lunch.

NEALY

Lunch sounds nice. Store's dead anyway.

As Nealy writes a *be back soon* note...

Meredith notices the story Nealy's been reading in VOGUE;
TEN WAYS TO KNOW IF YOU'RE DEPRESSED

She looks up at Nealy's eyes and sees something's wrong.

MERIDETH

Are you reading that for a reason?

NEALY

You don't have a therapist to recommend
do you, because I've met two so far and
I hated them both.

MERIDETH

I thought you had a woman a few years back.

NEALY

I did, but she moved away.

MERIDETH

What's wrong?

Nealy pauses, ashamed. Merideth waits.

NEALY

If I tell you, you won't be able to talk
about it with Ron.

WAITING IN LINE AT A TACO STAND, THEY SPEAK QUIETLY

MERIDETH

When did you cut it off?

NEALY

Well, I guess I decided to the day after
the big hit--I was just so shocked with
myself, I thought I'd better do something
right. But he travels for business so
I didn't actually do it till yesterday.

AS THEY EAT THEIR TACOS AT A TABLE

MERIDETH

So was it just a sex thing or was it more?

NEALY

I think it was just a sex thing.

MERIDETH

You think?

NEALY

I guess also the way he made me feel
before and after.

These two old friends share a level look--Merideth knows
exactly what she means.

NEALY (CONT'D)

By the way, it's the only time in our
marriage I ever did anything like this.
Not that that makes it any better.

MERIDETH

Are you planning to tell Jeff?

NEALY

Honestly, I'm afraid if I did, it would
end our marriage. He works so hard to
make everything perfect. I don't know if
he could tolerate me screwing it all up.

(after a beat)

You know what I'm afraid of the most? If
Luke ever found out what a fuck up I was,
I'd be so sick.

MERIDETH

We're not talking about telling Luke,
he's two years old, we're talking about
telling Jeff.

NEALY

What about when he's thirteen and he asks
his dad why he left his mom and Jeff
decides he has to be honest about it or
worse is honest about it because he hates
me?

(after a beat)

This kid came by the store the other day
collecting money for Unicef and I gave
him a thousand dollars.

MERIDETH

What does that have to do with anything?

NEALY

I don't know--I guess my guilt.
I really need to find a good therapist.

MERIDETH

If you ask me, I think you and Jeff
should go into therapy *together*.

NEALY

Wanna hear something sad that I never told anyone?

(off her look)

About three years ago, Jeff and I got into a huge fight...

AS JEFF PARKS OUTSIDE OFFICE DEPOT AND ENTERS THE STORE

NEALY (V.O.)

I can't even remember about what. Anyway, afterwards, I asked him to go into therapy with me--and then we got into another fight about that because he associates therapy with being weak...

AS JEFF SEARCHES THE AISLES OF OFFICE DEPOT...

NEALY (V.O.)

He thinks therapists are all just whack-jobs with degrees. Then after that fight we had make-up sex. Sometimes we joke Luke is our make-up sex child.

JEFF FINALLY FINDS...

Lincoln puts price tags on a box of new items...

JEFF

Hey Link.

LINCOLN

Doc! No way, what're you doing here?

JEFF

Looking for you actually.

LINCOLN

Seriously?

JEFF

Seriously.

LINCOLN

What's up?

JEFF

Look, I hope you won't be offended about what I'm about to say.

LINCOLN

I don't know, what're you about to say?

JEFF

I took the liberty of contacting a friend of a friend who runs a middle school--a good school with a serious athletic program. Turns out, a Coach over there needs an assistant and the PE department could use another staffer and they'd love to interview you if you're interested.

Lincoln reels... Jeff suddenly looks worried. Then...

LINCOLN

Doc, I'm touched, you didn't have to do that.

JEFF

Does that mean you'll do the interview?

LINCOLN

I'd love to do the interview. Thank you.

JEFF

One question--I'm embarrassed to ask...

LINCOLN

Shoot.

JEFF

You don't have any kind of criminal record, do you Link?

LINCOLN

No, the law never caught up with me on anything yet, Doc.

JEFF

Great. Here, here's the coaches' name and number. He's expecting your call.

LINCOLN

Thank you.

(after a beat)

Doc, you need anything from Office Depot? I can get you a real good deal.

JEFF

No, I don't need anything.

THE CONSTRUCTION ON THE LANG HOUSE IS IN FULL SWING

Jeff passes his Prius and waves at Jose who straddles a beam on the 2nd story framing, shouting to another WORKER in Spanish for more screws.

As Jeff enters his house he does not notice...IN LILA'S HOUSE, she watches from a window, wincing every time someone fires a nail gun. BAM. BAM. BAM.

THAT NIGHT, IN THE BACKYARD

Lit up by the low voltage lights, THREE RACCOONS navigate down the trunk through the obstacle course of chimes making noise...

JUST THEN, JEFF FLIES OUTSIDE

HISSING like a mad cat, he throws his basketball shoes and the raccoons run back up the tree, out of sight. He waits a moment to see if they'll return...

Then he goes to retrieve his shoes--out of sight, fallen behind a shrub... He looks through the shrub and sees...

A stray RACCOON hides near his Nikes lit up by the low volts. Staring at Jeff, not making a move.

JEFF
(keeping his voice down)
Go away. GO.

The Raccoon doesn't budge. So Jeff goes and gets his hose and turns it on full blast. Then he marches back toward the bushes, spraying until...

That Raccoon runs off...with one of his Nikes.

Jeff can hardly believe his eyes.

THE NEXT MORNING, AS THE FRENCH DOORS OPEN AGAIN

Jeff finds his sod torn up like never before. And the basketball shoe the raccoon ran off with last night has been returned, shredded in anger and left in the middle of the lawn as a gift for him. He picks it up. Regards it.

JEFF
Jesus.

TEN MINUTES LATER, JEFF IS ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES

His yard is beginning to look more like The Monster of Dr. Frankenstein than a lawn from Better Homes & Gardens. To make matters worse, his sprinklers come on & soak him.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Shit. FUCK! FUUUUUCK!

A BIT LATER, AS JEFF WALKS TO HIS PRIUS, HE NOTICES...

Those two TEENAGE ARCHERS ride their BMXs through the lot where their target is; racing across the desert field toward the next street over--about a quarter mile away...

IN HIS PRIUS

Jeff STARTS the car, then is shocked by a KNOCK on the window...It's Lila and her precious white cat MATTHEW...

LILA

(after he rolls down window)
Sorry to bother you Dr. Lang, but when your guys were sandblasting yesterday, a bunch of dust got into my house.

JEFF

I told them to put up plastic over your windows like you asked.

LILA

They did, but it must've gotten in through the vents and now there's dust everywhere.

JEFF

Jeeze, I'm really sorry about that.

LILA

I noticed you're expanding your front room a little bit towards our house.

JEFF

Right, that room was a little small so we're moving it out a couple feet to make the new nursery.

LILA

I looked it up on the PCHD website--the code is you have to leave a five foot passage for the Fire Department.

JEFF

We talked about this, didn't we? Your house is set back eight feet so even after we're finished, we'll have well over ten feet--so it's really just a technicality, not an actual safety issue.

LILA

I guess. Anyway, the dust from the sandblasting was really terrible, it got all over my windowsills...

IN LILA'S HOUSE, SHE TAKES HIM AROUND ON A DUST-TOUR

She's a pack-rat, the place is a mess...

LILA

You can't see the dust on the windowsills because I spent hours cleaning them with Windex and rags. But you can see how there's all this on the TV here...

She shows him the dust on the screen--it looks like normal household dust attracted to the static cling of the old screen. She draws a line in it with her finger.

LILA (CONT'D)

I don't know if you know this but I have a condition that makes me very sensitive to toxins and this is just very hard on me with all this dust floating around...

She eyes the sunlight where "the dust" rides the rays...

LILA (CONT'D)

I mean it's everywhere. See it?
(after a beat)
You're a doctor, you've heard of environmental illnesses.

JEFF

Sure.

LILA

That's why I keep this basil leaf pinned to my lapel...
(wafting scent towards her)
It helps purify the air. My Naprapath recommended it--it's really been a life-saver.

JEFF

Makes sense to me.
(off her smile)
Well, look, I'm very happy to pay for a cleaning service if you need it.

LILA

That's nice, yeah, but I called around and one company said they'd charge like three hundred dollars to send a crew and it just seems so expensive.

JEFF

I don't care about the money. Just give me the bill and I'll write you a check.

LILA

That's very kind of you.

JEFF

Not at all. Well, I'll see you later...

As he heads to her front door...

LILA

So how's your wife doing?

JEFF

She's good.

LILA

And how's your little boy?

JEFF

He's doing really well, thanks.

LILA

That's good. I wish I had a little one.

JEFF

Alright. I've got to get to work.

Jeff is halfway gone when...

LILA

By the way, I heard you trying to scare away your raccoons last night.

JEFF

Sorry about that.

LILA

It's okay. I don't really sleep anyway.

JEFF

You don't sleep?

LILA

A few times a week I get a little. But I'm basically a night creature.

JEFF

I could prescribe you something for that.

LILA

Really?

JEFF

Sure. I'll drop a prescription in your mailbox tomorrow if you like.

LILA

Yes, thank you.

JEFF

Okay, Bye.

LILA

Jeff, I was going to mention, the raccoons don't bother me because I poured cement in my back area.

JEFF

Yah, they can't dig up cement, can they?

LILA

It's nice too, because it's easy to clean. The worst I ever get is a few gopher holes in the side yard by the vegetable garden.

SOMETIME LATER, IN HIS PRIUS, HE MAKES HIS GET AWAY

And he calls Jose on his cell phone...

INTERCUT JOSE'S APARTMENT, AT THE BREAKFAST TABLE

His TWO GIRLS eat Cheerios and his wife MARIA reads a Spanish language newspaper. Jose checks his RINGING cell.

JOSE

Hey Jefe, como estas?

JEFF

Bien, listen, the pinche raccoons weren't scared off by the wind chimes-

JOSE

Yah, I didn't think they would be. Has the watering thing done anything yet?

JEFF

Nope, nothing yet...

At a red light, Jeff stops. Eyes wandering to...

A BILLBOARD FOR A STRIP CLUB; A TEMPTING BUSTY BLONDE

JEFF (CONT'D)

...so I may want to try some of that
poison you were telling me about.

He fixates on the strip club sign and doesn't notice the
light turn green. The driver behind HONKS...

JOSE

Okay, you got it.

Jose hangs up, then says to his wife MARIA...

JOSE (CONT'D)

(in Spanish with SUBTITLES)

We're going to poison Dr. Lang's raccoons.

MARIA

(in Spanish with SUBTITLES)

*Why can't they just try to coexist with
them?*

IN THE HOSPITAL, THAT NIGHT, JEFF STRIDES THROUGH THE
HALLWAYS OF LABOR AND DELIVERY, STILL ON HIS CELL...

JEFF

So she's finally ready to deliver but
it's going to be a late night. Nothing
serious, the mother has some meconium.
Okay. Tell Luke I love him. Thanks. Bye.

AS HE COMES HOME THAT NIGHT

He finds a bottle of blue fluid and a can of tuna on the
doorstep with a note from Jose...

HE POPS IN THE BEDROOM TO FIND

Nealy is awake, reading. After they say their hellos...

JEFF

(re, the poison in his hands)
You know what this is?

NEALY

No idea.

JEFF

The raccoon final solution. One little
taste of this and it's lights out for our
furry adversaries.

NEALY

Don't you think that's a little cruel?

JEFF

You realize we won't have to discuss this anymore when they're dead.

NEALY

There're probably a thousand raccoons in our neighborhood--what're you going to do, slaughter them all?

JEFF

There are only three raccoons that come to our yard--they're territorial--take care of them and by the time any others discover our property, the sod will have rooted.

NEALY

Okay fine. Kill them.

She goes back to her book. Though her words have been acquiescent, her tone has not. This is not lost of Jeff.

JEFF

Look, I'll try to control myself for now and give the sprinkler idea more of a chance to work. Okay?

NEALY

Okay. That's okay too.

IN THE KITCHEN, LATER, HE MAKES HIMSELF SOME MINT TEA

And he puts the bottle of blue poison in a child proof drawer filled with random junk.

HE TAKES THE TEA INTO THE OFFICE & TURNS ON THE COMPUTER

As the computer comes to life, he notices, on the desk, a few of Nealy's furniture-trade magazines (like some we've seen in her office at work). On the cover of one is a very sexy picture of a SUPER MODEL straddling a sexy couch...

MOMENTS LATER

He surfs CRAIGSLIST.ORG again. Scrolls down A LIST. Stops on: 22 YEAR OLD HOTTIE WITH GREAT HANDS. CLICKS on this.

In the window that pops up there's an image of a 22 YEAR OLD HOTTIE--'CLICK TO SEE ME IN ACTION' Jeff CLICKS and...

A VIDEO OF THE 22 YEAR OLD HOTTIE STREAMS:

22 YEAR OLD HOTTIE

Hi, I'm certified in topless massage
and I will cum to you wherever you are.
Sorry I can't host, but I have roommates.
One hour sessions are three hundred
roses. Email me if you're serious. FYI,
I'm 420 friendly and I prefer mature men.
Hope to hear from you soon! Honey.

Jeff stares at the screen. Turned on. Then clicks on the
email link. His work email pops up. He types his password.

Then he writes. And, as he does, he whispers:

JEFF

Hi, I too am 420 friendly (: but I can't
host either. So what do you think of the
idea of meeting in a bar for a drink,
then me receiving my massage from you in
the bathroom? Sincerely, Big Jeff.

He pauses on his letter, enjoying it. And just then his
cell phone on the desk RINGS. He checks the number. He
doesn't look pleased. He has no choice but to answer.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Hey Roxanne, what's up?...Ugh. How many
centimeters is she? Bleeding *profusely*?

He gets up and leaves the office, still on the phone.

WALKING TOWARD THE FRONT DOOR, GRABBING HIS KEYS...

JEFF (CONT'D)

How *profusely*? Okay...

He grabs his briefcase and leaves the house...

JEFF (CONT'D)

Tell them I'll be there in 20 minutes...

IN THE HOSPITAL, LABOR & DELIVERY PREP AREA

Jeff scrubs his hands and puts on latex gloves. PRELAP
his cell phone RINGING again...

IN THE HOSPITAL HALL, A LABOR & DELIVERY DOOR SWINGS OPEN

Jeff strides out, on his cell, blood on his latex gloves.
A WOMAN inside SCREAMS through a contraction.

JEFF

So what's the emergency?

ON THE FRONT STEPS OF THE LANG HOUSE, AT DAWN, INTERCUT:

NEALY

(very calm)

When I woke up this morning to make
coffee and check my email, I had a bit of
a shock. I guess you forgot to close your
work account before you left, "Big Jeff".

A DEAD MAN is carted past Jeff just at this very moment.

JEFF

(after a beat)

Nealy, I know how this looks but I need
you to believe me when I tell you that
I was just fooling around on line,
I wasn't actually planning to meet her.

NEALY

Please don't lie to me.

JEFF

I'm not. But I'm here at the hospital
delivering a baby so it's the worst
possible time to talk about this.

NEALY

Are you sure you're not at a bar?

JEFF

Look, as soon as I wrap things up here at
the hospital I'll be home.

NEALY

Okay.

JEFF

Just until then please I want you to know
I was just bored in front of the computer.

NEALY

Alright, bye.

LATER THAT AFTERNOON, NEALY LAYS ON BED, STARING OUT THE FRENCH DOORS, BACK TO US...

Opposite, in the doorway, is Jeff. Watching.

JEFF

I guess you didn't hear me come in.

NEALY

(turns)

No, I did.

JEFF

Where's Luke?

NEALY

I dropped him off at your mother's house.

JEFF

Nealy, I swear. This emailing thing with this girl was just a fantasy.

NEALY

So you're saying you didn't actually plan to meet her?

JEFF

Yes, that's what I'm saying.

NEALY

What about the other women you've been emailing?

JEFF

(momentarily speechless)

So you read all my email.

NEALY

Yeah, I did a search by the words massage and pussy and found a virtual library.

(can hardly stop from laughing)

JEFF

Okay, well then, did you read my email thoroughly?

NEALY

Of course--I couldn't take my eyes off it.

JEFF

Then you never read any emails where the woman said "It was great finally meeting you" or anything like that, right?

NEALY

True.

JEFF

It's like porn to me, that's all.

NEALY

I wouldn't care if I found a bunch of porn in your closet, I like porn, but this seems a little more advanced than that.

JEFF

It's just like interactive porn. It's pen-pal bull-shit, I'm telling you.

NEALY

Tell me how it works.

JEFF

How it works?

NEALY

Describe the process of this pen-pal bull-shit, I want to know.

JEFF

What, you mean *the details*?

NEALY

Yes, the details.

JEFF

Well, I'm ashamed to say... I'd be bored. You'd be nowhere to be found or asleep. And I'm a man, you know, I get horny. So I'd sit down at the computer and start writing emails to whores dot com and pretty soon I'd have a hard on.

NEALY

And then what, you'd jack off?

JEFF

Yes.

NEALY

And you never went to see them?

JEFF

No. Email then bail--that's all I ever did.

NEALY

You wrote some very creative emails.

JEFF

You seem very entertained about all this.

NEALY

My favorite was to The Chinese girl about
The Grapes.

JEFF

Jesus.

NEALY

You want me to do that to you?

JEFF

God, no-

NEALY

(generic Asian accent)

You sure Big Jeff-san, I have grapes in
frigerator?

They laugh out the tension, then it returns. She goes...

IN THE KITCHEN, SHE POURS HERSELF SOME WINE

Jeff enters. Pours himself a glass too.

IN THEIR BACKYARD, LATER, AT DUSK

They drink. Bottle between them. Quiet for a moment, then:

NEALY

Maybe this is a good thing.

JEFF

You think?

NEALY

Maybe it's a chance for us to be honest.
Me included.

JEFF

Okay.

NEALY

I think about going out and having sex
with other people too, you know.

JEFF

Of course you do, you're human.

NEALY

I mean, I'm 37 years old and I'm still semi-attractive...

JEFF

Don't put yourself down, you're gorgeous.

NEALY

I'm not putting myself down, I'm just trying to talk.

JEFF

Sorry, go on.

NEALY

I've been thinking a lot about why we've been so disconnected. The truth is, a lot of it is my fault, Jeff.

JEFF

Of course it is. It's both our faults. We haven't been connecting--it takes two to Tango--we're lazy.

NEALY

This is bigger than that. That's what I'm trying to say.

JEFF

It's not like I had an affair or something.

She reels. She takes a moment.

NEALY

Maybe this isn't working, Jeff. Maybe we should get divorced.

JEFF

We're in the middle of building a nursery.

NEALY

Maybe it's a mistake.

JEFF

Please don't say that.

NEALY

Why not?

JEFF

Because we can work this out.

NEALY

How?

JEFF

We could try having sex again, for a start.

NEALY

You don't seriously think it's that simple?

JEFF

Maybe it is.

NEALY

That's naive.

She stands, goes back inside...

IN THE BATHROOM, SHE STARES AT HER REFLECTION UNTIL

He steps up behind her. Very serious look on his face.

NEALY (CONT'D)

What?

He cups her breasts and kisses her on the neck.

NEALY (CONT'D)

This is how you try to save our marriage?

JEFF

Maybe I just want to fuck you.

He pulls her pants down. Squeezes her ass.

She rolls away from him, but he rolls to her. They get caught in the shower curtain.

He kisses the back of her neck. Tries to hug her close and she slips away from him again, back to the mirror and sink where she washes her face.

He comes up behind her again and drops his pants.

He reaches between her legs. And this time she doesn't stop him.

She starts to get into it. Soon, she reaches behind herself and helps put him inside her.

They're looking at each other in the mirror for a moment, but then this eye contact gets too intense and they go into their own worlds as they continue...

AFTERWARDS, THEY SEPARATE AND PUT THEIR CLOTHES BACK ON

Not talking about what just happened. Hardly in the same room together...

OUTSIDE THE LANG HOUSE, THAT NIGHT

Lila walks into frame in a brown nightgown and furry slippers. She looks a bit like a raccoon as she bends over and injects an envelope into The Lang's mail slot.

THE NEXT DAY, JEFF KNOCKS ON LILA'S DOOR

She opens up, smiling brightly. Put together much more attractively than he's ever seen her before.

LILA

Hey Jeff. Fancy meeting you here.

JEFF

I got your receipt from the cleaning crew. I came with a check.

He hands it to her as an old fashioned TIMER BUZZES...

LILA

Well your timing's impeccable.

JEFF

What do you mean?

LILA

I have a surprise for you, come on in...

JEFF

Oh no, I've got to get to work.

LILA

It'll only take a minute, I insist.

As she continues toward the kitchen, he stops just inside the door. He notices all of her thousands of things are now each in their rightful place...

LILA (CONT'D)

I was so inspired by how nice the house looked, I decided to do some baking...

As she turns the corner into the kitchen, Jeff notices that she seems to unbutton her blouse one notch...

LILA (O.C.) (CONT'D)
 There were these really great looking
 blueberries at the Farmer's Market...

Jeff notices her Terrier sunbathing by the window.

Lila returns with a pie for Jeff.

LILA (CONT'D)
 And I baked you a pie.

With her blouse one notch unbuttoned, her cleavage is prominent--more eye catching than the pie.

JEFF
 You didn't have to do that.

LILA
 It was my pleasure. Cooking for someone
 makes me feel really good. And these
 blueberries, they were so beautiful--
 I had to do something with them.
 Did you know that they're a Super-food?

JEFF
 No, I had no idea.

LILA
 Lots of antioxidants. Anyway, I hope you
 like it. The crust is gluten free which
 means I didn't use flour, I used spelt.

She looks into his eyes longingly. And then he ad libs
 his *thanks and goodbye* and lets himself out.

LILA (CONT'D)
 By the way I'm sleeping much better
 thanks to your mothers' little helpers.

JEFF
 Great, good to hear!

LINCOLN WALKS THROUGH A SCHOOL HALL TO A COACH'S OFFICE

He stops and looks through a glass window on an old COACH
 at his desk. Lincoln knocks and takes a step backwards.
 Waits for the Coach to come open the door and greet him
 (ad lib their hellos, nice to meet yous, etcetera).

IN A DELIVERY ROOM

JEFF
Push, that's it.

THE SOON TO BE MOTHER bangs on the side of the bed...

ANGLE ON THE LANG HOUSE, IN THE MORNING

And the construction has moved along a bit. Jose and his crew are working as Nealy comes out, goes to her car...

SAME LOCATION, A FEW NIGHTS LATER

The framing is finished on the 2nd story addition. A window has been installed. A raccoon scurries across the edge of the roof as Jeff drives up in his Prius.

JEFF PEERS INTO HIS BEDROOM, TO FIND NEALY SPRAWLED IN BED, THE LIGHT ON...

JEFF
You awake?

NEALY
No.

She sleepily reaches for the lamp and darkens the room. Just then he hears WIND CHIMES.

OUT IN HIS BACKYARD, MOMENTS LATER

He comes out the kitchen door with a flashlight and surveys the damage. The racoons have already departed--leaving a wave of mutilation. Same old story.

JEFF
Dirty little fucks.

IN THE KITCHEN, LATER

He washes the mud off his hands. Then he opens that can of tuna Jose dropped off and mixes it up with the poison.

THE NEXT MORNING, THE LAWN IS IN PERFECT ORDER

And the can of tuna is... empty.

Jeff looks around for a dead raccoon. Spots none.

IN HIS OFFICE AT THE HOSPITAL, SOMETIME LATER

He swivels. Stares out his window at the desert...
A coyote trots by as he hears a DING from his computer.

He swivels again. Looks at his screen. Sees...

A new email from Honey69@Yahoo: NEVER HEARD BACK FROM U!

He pauses on this a moment. Then CLICKS on it, reads it.

ADVICE

IN A DARK DIVE BAR, AFTER WORK

Jeff sits and has a drink when...a sexy woman enters wearing sunglasses. Taking the glasses off we realize it's Rebecca--Jeff's friend he called when Nealy hit him.

JEFF

Hey Rebecca. Thanks for meeting me.

REBECCA

Of course sweetie.

They hug.

A FEW MOMENTS LATER, AS THEY BOTH DRINK

REBECCA (CONT'D)

So you said in your email you were in trouble again.

JEFF

Yes.

REBECCA

What's the subject?

JEFF

Fidelity.

REBECCA

Fidelity. Aren't I the wrong person to ask?

JEFF

You've had a lot of experience with the subject.

REBECCA

True.

JEFF

So how do you and Pete manage given...

REBECCA

Given my little problem?

(off his nod)

He tries to make me behave by being bigger and better than the others.

JEFF

What do you mean?

REBECCA

He takes human growth hormone to look ripped. He thinks if he looks sexy enough, I'll love him again.

JEFF

Creepy.

REBECCA

Last month I found a penis pump in the mailbox.

JEFF

A penis pump!?

REBECCA

Strange but true. So tell me what's going on.

JEFF

I've been emailing with girls on the internet.

REBECCA

You have seen 'To Catch a Predator' with Stone Phillips, haven't you?

JEFF

I'm not talking about teenage girls. I'm talking about sensual massage therapists.

REBECCA

Whores, you mean.

JEFF

Whores, yah.

REBECCA

Don't screw with prostitutes, Jeff, you don't want to bring STDs into the picture.

JEFF

Presumably I'd use a condom. Anyway, I don't do it--I just get off on flirting with them--though truthfully sometimes I do think about meeting them.

REBECCA

When was the last time you and Nealy had sex?

JEFF

Well, we had make-up sex after she caught me flirting on line with one of my internet girls--hey don't laugh--

REBECCA

Why not, it's funny, isn't it?

JEFF

To you maybe!

REBECCA

Sorry, go on.

JEFF

Anyway, the sex started out great but then after it was kind of disturbing--we just lay in bed in silence. And now two weeks've passed and it's just been the same old story.

REBECCA

Well, two weeks is a millisecond compared to the last time Peter and I did it.

OUTSIDE THE BAR, THEY COME OUT LAUGHING ABOUT SOMETHING

Each has stolen a tumbler of Whiskey...

JEFF

Cheers!

REBECCA

Do you think the bartender is on to us?

JEFF

(opening his car)
Maybe we should make a quick getaway.

REBECCA

You're too buzzed to drive, let's just walk around a while. It's nice out.

Jeff nods and they keep going, sipping their drinks...

REBECCA (CONT'D)

So what about your raccoons--still driving you crazy?

JEFF

I decided to poison them. Do you think that's cruel?

REBECCA

Not at all, they'd just as soon poison you if they could.

JEFF

I wonder if that's ever happened?
Man, killed by raccoon.

REBECCA

Maybe you'll be the first.

JEFF

I was thinking about buying a gun and camping out on my roof to shoot them.

REBECCA

Sounds like a blast. Pete has gun if you want to borrow it.

JEFF

Are you serious, he has a gun?

REBECCA

Yah, swear to God, you could blow your varmints to Smithereens with it!

JEFF

I'll drink to that!

A BIT LATER, THEY ENTER REBECCA AND PETER'S HOUSE

JEFF

(setting down empty tumbler)
He's at work?

REBECCA

Until 2am every night.

Jeff regards a framed photo of PETER--Rebecca's husband -- giving a speech at a podium; a MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING banner behind him.

JEFF

What's this?

REBECCA

That's Peter's redemption speech for the kid he ran over when he was drunk.

JEFF

So let's see this gun of his.

REBECCA

Come on, through here...

THEY ENTER THE GARAGE AND...

Jeff is drawn to a mint condition, mint colored Alfa...

JEFF

Mind if I get inside?

REBECCA

Just don't tell Pete. It's his precious.

JEFF

Of course it is.

IN THE ALFA

Jeff sits. Feels the leather. Notices the keys are in the ignition. Turns the key so the battery comes on.

As Rebecca opens a lock-box in front of the car, Jeff flashes her with the brights mischievously.

He then turns on the radio to find a THIS AMERICAN LIFE about MEGAN KERRY, *a devout Catholic who donated her kidney to save the life of a friend of hers--now lobbying congress to legalize officially sanctioned organ sales...*

Jeff finds himself fascinated by this program as Rebecca returns with a shiny silver gun and gets in next to him.

REBECCA

Here it is.

JEFF

Is it loaded?

REBECCA

No. I double checked.

She hands it to him--he feels the weight of it.

JEFF

You know, I never held a gun before.

REBECCA

Sure you have. We shot guns together when we were kids.

JEFF

You're making this up.

REBECCA

No, I'm not, summer camp, seventh grade. We all went to some farmer's ranch.

JEFF

It's foggy.

REBECCA

Speaking of foggy, you want to smoke a joint, for old times sake?

JEFF

Life of a psychotherapist. So lucky.

REBECCA

Am I lucky?

JEFF

If you get called into the office for an emergency, all you have to do is talk to your patient. I get called in, I might have to operate.

REBECCA

You could do a Cesarean stoned.

JEFF

With one hand tied behind my back, sure.

She's got the joint out of her purse by now. Shows him.

REBECCA

Smell it.

She hands it to him. He smells it. Hands it back. She lights it. Has a drag. Offers it back to him.

JEFF
 (after a moment)
 Screw it, I'm 420 friendly...

REBECCA
 420 friendly?

JEFF
 (takes the joint)
 420's the hip slang these days for smoking
 pot. I'm surprised you don't know about it.

REBECCA
 No one's accused me of being hip for well
 over a decade.

JEFF
 Honey said she was 420 friendly in her ad.

REBECCA
 Honey's the erotic massage therapist your
 wife caught you flirting with?

JEFF
 Yah--when they say they're 420 friendly--
 that's when they really break my heart.

REBECCA
 Yah?

JEFF
 When I was a young man, I used to love
 screwing while stoned--I found it to be
 very *freeing*. Never happens anymore.

Rebecca studies him, admiring his features...

Jeff's attention floats back to the interview of Megan
 Kerry on THIS AMERICAN LIFE.

*Megan's currently talking about how any of us could
 donate a kidney and save someone's life and be a hero...*

JEFF (CONT'D)
 There's this guy I play basketball with
 who needs a kidney. Maybe I should give
 him one of mine.

REBECCA
 Don't be weird.

JEFF
 I guess that is a pretty weird thought.

REBECCA

So howcome you never smoke pot and screw anymore?

JEFF

It makes Nealy paranoid--she's been that way since college ended.

REBECCA

Right--I think I knew that. Oh, I have an idea.

(off his look)

Why don't you take this bag home...

She gets a bag from her purse and puts it in his jacket.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

...smoke pot in the bathroom, crawl into bed and seduce her.

JEFF

She doesn't like the smell of it in the house--just that can make her uptight.

REBECCA

Smoke it outside, don't even tell her.

JEFF

She'd smell it on my breath.

REBECCA

Haven't you ever heard of Listerene?

JEFF

Smoking weed and drinking Listerene before sneaking into bed. I don't know. It sounds a little childish.

REBECCA

So does flirting with a 420 friendly sensual masseuse on line.

JEFF

Guess so.

REBECCA

You know, maybe you *should* go see this masseuse, shake things up a little--I think sometimes we get stuck in patterns--trying to make our marriages work but they don't. And you want to know why--because underneath our nylons and our Sportscoats we're animals who don't want to be trapped.

JEFF
Sounds pretty hopeless.

REBECCA
Not if you feed the beast.

JEFF
Not sure I follow.

REBECCA
Maybe if you fucked this 420 friendly bimbo it'd put you back in touch with your inner animal and therefore your inner animal feelings for Nealy.

JEFF
Think so?

REBECCA
(joint dangling)
Or you could start seeing some other 420 friendly woman. See how *that* feels.

She spreads her legs and her skirt rides up. He notices.

JEFF
Don't fuck with me.

REBECCA
I'm not.

He looks at her, now realizing she's serious. She then leans to and kisses him on the mouth.

He gives in a minute. It's frenetic, passionate. His jacket comes off. And then he breaks free--

JEFF
Hang on, no.

And he gets out of the Alfa. She follows him...

She takes off her shirt to reveal her tits--she's hot.

JEFF (CONT'D)
What is this?

REBECCA
Raccoon bait.

He laughs. She edges closer to him.

JEFF

I tried to kiss you in tenth grade and you rejected me. Why the sudden turn around?

REBECCA

It has nothing to do with any rational process. I just suddenly feel like it.

And then he goes for it. They hit the tool shelf.

SOMETIME LATER

They're fucking on the hood of the Alfa punctuated by the segue music of THIS AMERICAN LIFE...

MEANWHILE, IN LILA'S HOUSE

Tears stream down Lila's face as she pages through the phone book for the ASPCA. Her terrier Steven lays in her lap, idle. She calls and gets a RECORDING...

ASPCA VOICEMAIL

Hello, you have reached The ASPCA, Phoenix office after normal business hours. Para oír este mensaje en español, ahora marque 9. If you are calling to report a dangerous stray in your area, please hang up and dial your area's local police station immediately. If you are calling to report a found or a missing pet, please press one and wait for-

She presses ONE; BEEP.

LILA

(quivering)

Hello, my name is Lilith Wasserman and I'm calling about my cat Matthew.

Eye's searching, she takes a brief pause...

OUTSIDE REBECCA'S HOUSE, JEFF EMERGES, HEAD SPINNING

REBECCA

You want me to walk you back to your car?

JEFF

No, I'll manage--thanks.

REBECCA

Are we okay?

JEFF

Of course we're okay, it's my marriage
that's in trouble.

REBECCA

Don't tell her--whatever you do.
What's done is done, you can't make it
better by being honest, you can only make
it better by being better.

This strikes him. There is a long pause.

JEFF

Alright...
(he starts away)

REBECCA

Jeff, wait...

She hugs him goodbye. They share a level look. Then he
strides away in his white button down.

Walking back to his car, he is deep in thought, staring at
the cracks of the cement...

IN HIS PRIUS, HE HANGS HIS HEAD A MOMENT

He looks up at his GPS and hits the ENTER DESTINATION
button. He types in: H-E-L-L and hits ENTER.

HELL

As the GPS searches for HELL, Jeff's cell rings...

JEFF

Hello?

SPLIT TO LINCOLN, OUTSIDE OFFICE DEPOT, DRINKING A SODA

LINCOLN

Hey Doc.

JEFF

Hey Link, how's it going?

LINCOLN

I just called to let you know, I did the
interview yesterday and I think it went
great.

JEFF

That's good news. Really great.

IN THE SHOWER, THAT NIGHT...

Jeff lets the water wash off his stink.

GETTING OUT OF THE SHOWER

He looks at himself in the foggy mirror, then finds a bottle of Listerene and gargles. Prelap WIND CHIMES...

HE OPENS HIS EYES, AND HE GETS OUT OF BED...

Nealy is asleep. He looks out the French Doors...

The backyard is quiet. No raccoons. Just some wind.

THEN HE GOES TO THE BATHROOM AND OPENS THE DOOR TO FIND

Scores of RACCOONS are inside, all turning to face him.

One is bathing in the sink water, and above, in the mirror, Jeff sees HIS FACE IS TURNING INTO THE FACE OF A RACCOON, MID-METAMORPHOSIS.

AS HE HEADS TO HIS PRIUS, THE NEXT MORNING...

He's obviously still tripped out. He gets in his car...

IN HIS CAR, AS HE STARTS AWAY, HE HEARS...

LILA (O.S.)

Dr. Lang!

He looks in his rearview mirror to see...

Lila, dressed in all black, eye liner running, handkerchief in her hand, trying to wave him down.

He pretends he hasn't seen her--keeps driving.

LILA STANDS WATCHING THE PRIUS DRIVE AWAY A MOMENT

Then she circles back to her own car--a side scraped Honda--and she gets in and follows him...

HE PARKS HIS PRIUS IN THE HOSPITAL LOT AND STRIDES IN

As he enters, Lila's Honda parks and she follows him...

SHE WALKS FAST TO THE ELEVATOR AS JEFF GETS IN IT

But she misses it. She hits the UP button and waits.
Wiping her tearful eyes, she smears her mascara.

UPSTAIRS, AS JEFF WALKS TO HIS OFFICE, HE SLOWS, SEEING:

PETER MAZZONI--heavy bags under his innocent, big blue eyes, wearing an almost-convincing hairpiece, stocky--stands by the door to Jeff's office.

Pete holds Jeff's jacket--the one that came off in Peter's Alfa. The one Jeff forgot.

PETE

I think you left this in my car.

A horrible silence comes over them.

PETE (CONT'D)

I found a receipt inside...
(shows him)

Behind Jeff, the elevator down the hall opens again and Lila comes out--walks towards him. Jeff none the wiser.

PETE (CONT'D)

Your name on it.

As he hands the jacket to Jeff, Lila grows within earshot.

PETE (CONT'D)

I knew my wife was a slut. I just didn't know with who.

JEFF

(opens mouth, nothing comes)

PETE

Don't say anything. And please don't bother to lie.

A few random people come walking down the hall toward Jeff's eye-line, making him self conscious.

JEFF

You want to go in my office and keep talking about this?

PETE

There is no *this*. Fuck you.

He shoves Jeff with great ferocity. Lila GASPS.

Jeff hears her gasp and sees her there from where he lands.

He's way too shocked to know how to address her presence.

PETE (CONT'D)
(to Lila)
Sorry, Ma'am.

And with that, Pete strides away to the elevators.

Lila glances back at Jeff, then mysteriously, she follows Peter. They both catch the next elevator...

IN THE ELEVATOR, GOING DOWN

Lila and Peter ride in silence. Both afraid to look at the other. The elevator is CROWDED.

OUTSIDE THE HOSPITAL

Lila and Peter go their separate ways.

BACK IN THE HOSPITAL HALLWAY

Jeff paces a moment. He calls Rebecca but gets her VOICEMAIL as a PREGNANT COUPLE comes down the hall, waving politely. Jeff does his best not to alarm them with his anxiety. He leaves no message for Rebecca.

HE THEN ENTERS HIS MEDICAL SUITE AND...

He strides past PREGNANT PEOPLE in his waiting room...

IN HIS LAB, HE FINDS SOME SAMPLES OF VALIUM AND...

He laps down the pills from the faucet like an animal.

HE ENTERS AN EXAM ROOM AND LOCKS THE DOOR

He lays down on an exam table and thinks.

OUTSIDE LILA'S HOUSE, AT DUSK, JEFF RINGS THE BELL

A few moments later, she opens up, now wearing a dark robe, eyes terribly bloodshot. They say hello, then...

JEFF

So I'm sorry you had to see that at my office today. I'm not sure really what you actually overheard...

(off her look)

Anyway, can I ask, what were you doing there?

LILA

There's something I need to show you.

She turns on her heels and leads him...

INSIDE HER HOUSE

He follows her to the kitchen, her little Terrier, Steven, trailing. He notices the place is in disarray worse than ever.

IN THE KITCHEN, SHE STOPS BY THE REFRIGERATOR

She looks like she's having a nervous breakdown.

JEFF

What is it?

LILA

Just look.

She opens the refrigerator and he approaches to see...

Her white cat, Matthew, in a shoe box by her tofu. Dead.

Jeff looks to Lila--not *sure* of his role in this yet.

LILA (CONT'D)

I brought his poor little dead body into the 24-hour Pet Hospital and they did all kinds of tests to see how he'd died...

The horror hangs in the air a minute. Lila starts to cry hysterically and walks out of the kitchen.

LILA (CONT'D)

Oh God...

He follows her as she WEEPS her way into her bedroom...

LILA (CONT'D)

It's just so unfair, he was so sweet...

IN HER BEDROOM

She continues to cry. He stands watching her, helpless...

LILA (CONT'D)

He had this glow around him--he'd bring me things. Catch little lizards and snakes and share them with me...

Jeff's eyes drift to the red flower on the cactus he gave her, now the centerpiece of the bedroom...

LILA (CONT'D)

He'd sleep in my bed at night and we'd cuddle. He was my baby.

By now she's sitting on her bed...

LILA (CONT'D)

I feel like killing myself, you have no idea. Oh God. I could really use a hug...

Jeff falters, then forces his body to span the gulf. Sits next to her, embraces her, and she cries on his shoulder.

LILA (CONT'D)

(after some sobbing)

Do you know Sonya Fitzpatrick?

JEFF

No.

LILA

She's a pet medium, on TV, but she has a private practice too. We've been in touch on and off over the years. When my first Yorkie Max died, she gave me a lot of comfort. So when I finally found Matthew's body wedged like some kind of debris caught between the garbage can and the recycle bin, I called her, and do you know what she said?

(he waits)

He suffered for hours before he died and all the time wondered where I was. Twitching and vomiting in terrible pain, stomach cramping violently.

JEFF

I feel horrible that this happened.

LILA

Of course you do because you poisoned him trying to kill your raccoons.

She looks in his ashamed eyes. His momentary pause is all she needs to know his absolute guilt.

LILA (CONT'D)

It's okay, I know you weren't trying to hurt him. You were just thinking of your family, trying to make it nice and pretty for them in your backyard, you're a good man, I know, so generous, so...

She runs her hands over his shoulders, craving his comforts.

LILA (CONT'D)

Can I tell you a secret?

Jeff nods perfunctorily, wishing like hell he hadn't entered her house.

She then leans to his ear and whispers something to him.

He freezes in abject horror.

Then she starts to unbutton his shirt. He's like a deer caught in headlights...

LILA (CONT'D)

Mrs. Lang must've been very upset about her sod getting messed up, she probably put a lot of pressure on you to fix the problem...

His shirt half unbuttoned, she takes his hand and moves it inside her robe, onto her breast.

She leans back and sighs, a mixture of rapture and grief.

JEFF

Lila, I'm very sorry for your loss.

(stands and gets space)

But no. No, I'm your neighbor for God's sake...

Her face darkens, fingers digging into an ornamental pillow with some odd truism stitched into it...

JEFF (CONT'D)

I'm married to a woman you live next door to.

LILA

You forgot to mention that I disgust you.

JEFF

No.

LILA

Don't lie to me, just say it.

JEFF

That's not it.

LILA

YOU'RE A FUCKING LIAR AND A CHEATER!

She says as she suddenly flails about the room with her pillow and knocks over the cactus he gave her.

LILA (CONT'D)

HOW DARE YOU GET ALL HIGH AND MIGHTY ON ME -- YOU'RE A DIRTY PHILANDERER! AND STUPID TOO! LEAVING CLUES AROUND LIKE YOU WANT TO GET CAUGHT. CARELESS CARELESS CARELESS! DO YOU WANT TO GET CAUGHT?!

(takes it down a notch)

MAYBE YOU SHOULD GET CAUGHT, MAYBE I SHOULD JUST RUN INTO THE STREET AND SCREAM IT OUT FOR ALL THE WORLD TO HEAR ABOUT HOW YOU'RE A CHEATING CAT KILLING LIAR.

She bashes a few more things and then calms for a moment.

LILA (CONT'D)

You know it's a crime to poison wildlife in this state, statute 13-2910. You could go to jail for up to six months.

(a moment passes)

I don't know what to do here.
I'm feeling very... Swimmy...
Swimmy with death and saw dust and power hammers in the middle of the night.

JEFF

Lila, we haven't been doing construction at night.

LILA

How would I know when you gave me those fucking sleeping pills to dope me.

She catches sight of her crazy face in the mirror and it gives her pause.

LILA (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

She goes. He stays. Then decides to leave her bedroom.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

He finds her pouring herself some water from a pitcher...

LILA (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry Doctor Lang, I didn't mean to shout at you back there, I think I'm just so upset about my Matthew, it's really put me through the ringer.

JEFF

I completely understand.

LILA

I'm just such a mess. Do you think you could ever forgive me?

JEFF

Consider it done.

LILA

You're such a kind man. I really don't deserve your kindness.

JEFF

Everyone deserves some kindness.

She turns and faces him.

LILA

Jeff, do you believe in past lives?

JEFF

Not really.

LILA

I don't really either. I mean it doesn't really make sense that somehow the soul migrates from one time to another.

JEFF

Right.

LILA

But then again, I had a funny dream a few nights ago that you and I lived nearby each other in the countryside in England-- there were no cars, we rode horses around everywhere. Mine was a white Stallion, he loved to gallop.

(MORE)

LILA (CONT'D)

Anyway, even though we were only neighbors, let's just say, our destinies were *intertwined*. Funny thing is, in this dream I had, you made me really angry about something and I screamed at you like I did just now. But then, the way I made it up to you...

She blushes. By now she is very close to him again and he is getting really nervous...

LILA (CONT'D)

That was really something.

(off his look)

If you'd like me to show you what I did, you don't even have to agree for me to do it, just don't disagree, and it'll be like you didn't do anything at all. I'll do everything and you'll just be here.

He's so frightened to engender her anger again, he freezes as she slides her hands down his torso...

LILA (CONT'D)

I don't want to get you in trouble...

She then unbuckles his belt as she looks at his eyes...

And then she starts to try to get him hard with her hand.

She continues to look into his eyes but can not see just how insanely uncomfortable he is.

LILA (CONT'D)

(overlap)

Come on, come on...

And then--despite the awkwardness of all this--he can't help himself--he starts to get hard...

LILA (CONT'D)

(smiles)

Yah, here you are...

And then she drops down onto her knees and begins to suck his cock.

Though his pleasure is mixed with revulsion, his revulsion is outweighed by what's happening to his cock. It feels good. Too good.

And he lets loose a SIGH of pleasure.

Hearing this, she looks up at him and giggles like a child.

She then gets up and pushes him into a chair, opens her robe, and gets on top of him. Robe draped over his legs, she helps him inside her and...

She starts fucking him with lots of EXCITED VOCALIZATIONS. After a bunch of intense thrusts, Jeff loses control...

JEFF

Lila, hang on...

LILA

No, I want you inside me.

JEFF

But I'm going to-

LILA

COME INSIDE ME. DO IT. (ad lib)

He has no choice save for throwing her off of him. She presses even harder. Then HE COMES & she laughs crazily.

Then she hops off of him and pulls her dress back down. He pulls up his pants and buckles his belt as...

She finds some clove cigarettes and lights one...

LILA (CONT'D)

Want one, they're cloves?

He takes one and lights it. Smokes it with her in a thick, strangely intimate silence.

WALKING BACK TO HIS HOUSE, MOMENTS LATER, IN THE DARK

He calls Rebecca again. Gets her VOICE MAIL again as he passes his Prius parked behind Nealy's in the driveway.

JEFF

Rebecca, it's Jeff trying again.
Please call me back.

AT HOME, AS HE ENTERS, HE PUTS ON A HAPPY FACE

He finds Nealy in the living room eating Chinese. THE WONDERPETS are on TV and Luke holds the remote...

JEFF

Hey guys.

LUKE

Oh hi dad.

NEALY

Hey. I heard you pull up then where did you go?

JEFF

Just dealing with our crazy neighbor-- she's upset about the construction.

NEALY

Did you calm her down?

JEFF

Yes. Oh, I love this show...

Jeff tickles Luke until he LAUGHS...

JEFF (CONT'D)

I love, love, love this show...

Jeff then walks into the kitchen, expression darkening as Luke aims the remote to turn up the TV...

IN THE KICHTHEN

Jeff makes himself a plate of food. Nealy comes in with her dirty dish as the VOLUME OF THE WONDERPETS goes up.

NEALY

Peter Mazzoni stopped by the house today.

JEFF

He did?

NEALY

Yah, he said he'd like you to come by the restaurant tomorrow to discuss some business deal you two are working on.

JEFF

Oh.

NEALY

What was he talking about?

JEFF

Right. He's trying to get me to invest in his new restaurant but I don't know.

NEALY

Hmm. He's wildly successful at it--maybe we should.

The Wonderpets show is very loud now-

NEALY (CONT'D)
LUKE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THERE?

THAT NIGHT, JEFF COMES OUT OF HIS FRENCH DOORS

Alone, in sweatpants and a t-shirt, he shuts the French doors on the darkened bedroom and sits on the steps that look down on his patchwork of sod. He broods.

THE NEXT DAY, JEFF ENTERS MAZZONI'S POPULAR RESTAURANT

HE FOLLOWS A HOSTESS TO THE BACK...

...past all the well to do CUSTOMERS...

THROUGH THE BUSY KITCHEN...

...past all the LATINO COOKS AND DISHWASHERS...

INTO PETE'S OFFICE...

...where Pete is on a phone call...

HOSTESS
Friend of yours to see you.

Pete nods and The Hostess leaves. Pete indicates Jeff should sit as he finishes his call. He takes his time with the call (ad lib) as if to draw out the tension for Jeff. Then he hangs up.

PETE
Afternoon Jeffery.

JEFF
So you stopped by my house last night.

PETE
That's right, there's no restraining order on me yet is there?

JEFF
No. So what do you want?

PETE
What do I want? Well. I want to fuck *your* wife up the ass while your two year old watches me hack you into little bits, but I've decided not to do it.

JEFF
Very decent of you.

PETE

Instead, I'm going to offer you a choice predicated on the fact that you'd prefer me not to tell the world what you did so as to preserve your reputation and your marriage which I am told you do value. I want two hundred thousand dollars in cash for my silence.

Jeff lets slip an anxious laugh and rubs his face.

JEFF

You're rich--you don't need my money.

PETE

No, but you do.

LATER, REBECCA OPENS HER OFFICE DOOR

She's smoking a cigarette, looking wrecked...

JEFF

I've been calling and calling-

REBECCA

I'm sorry. I've been here--I'm sorry--
(reentering)
I haven't been answering...

A BIT LATER, INSIDE, SHE POURS THEM BOTH A DRINK...

JEFF

So what do you think?

REBECCA

I think he's a mean spirited Italian who grew up in the projects in New Jersey and he takes a lot of pride in backing up his threats but if I were you I'd call his bluff. If he's not bluffing, your wife finds out you cheated on her once. End of story.

JEFF

She'd leave me if she knew what happened.

REBECCA

If she leaves you over this, then you weren't meant to be together.

JEFF

I think I just figured out where my aversion to therapists comes from.

REBECCA

Well then maybe you should just get divorced, that way Peter won't have any leverage over you.

JEFF

Don't be so glib.

REBECCA

Sorry.

JEFF

Maybe you can't understand this because you and Pete decided not to have a child together, thank God, but I don't want to only be allowed to see my son on weekends and I sure as hell don't want Luke to wake up one morning when he's sixteen to realize he hardly even knows his father.

REBECCA

You hardly knew your father because he was a remote person who moved to another city. That's not going to ever happen between you and Luke because you're not going to let it.

JEFF

Yes, that's right, and that starts with me not ruining my marriage with my wife.

REBECCA

Okay so then you have all the answers and you know what to do--pay him the money--why come to see me?

JEFF

For a cigarette, I guess.

She gives him one and they smoke together in silence...

Until he gets frustrated and suddenly, with his fist, he pounds the coffee table.

CUT TO:

JEFF TAKING A VIOLENT ELBOW IN THE FOREHEAD

WIDEN ON THE YMCA BASKETBALL COURT, DURING A 5 ON 5 GAME

JEFF

Keep your damn elbows down, would you?

Lincoln and Jeff on the same team. Jeff chases THE GUY who just threw his elbow to play defense against him.

As the shot comes off the rim, Jeff gets boxed out hard on a rebound by THE GUY who just threw his elbow. Lincoln gets the rebound....

Jeff runs to the offensive end and tries to post up. But as he receives the ball from Link, The Guy swats him across the forearms. Then Jeff snaps and pushes The Guy.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Try going for the fucking ball!

The Guy pushes Jeff back.

THE GUY

You don't know me, so don't fuck with me.

LINCOLN

Whoa, cool out. Both of you.

Lincoln separates them...

WALKING TO THE BENCH AFTER THE GAME...

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Doc, you can't let a guy like that get in your head. That's what he wants.

JEFF

I don't know what got into me.

LINCOLN

There ain't no sense in making basketball a screaming match, even if your life makes you want to scream. Basketball's supposed to be fun, know what I'm saying?

JEFF

You have a really good attitude. I really hope they give you the coaching job--you'll be a great coach.

LINCOLN

Fingers crossed.

Jeff looks at Lincoln, his head-space altered a moment, then Lincoln's digital watch BEEPS. He turns it off.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Welp, I gotta go get the blood filtered.

(stands)

You have a good one.

Lincoln offers Jeff a fist bump and Jeff gives him one...

Jeff watches him walk off, lost in Link's world a moment.

After he's gone, the anxiety of his own world rushes back. He sits there a few more moments. Freaked out.

IN HIS HOME OFFICE, IN FRONT OF HIS COMPUTER

He enters the password for his ONLINE BANK. He looks at the total balance: 189,063.41

LATER, NEALY COOKS DINNER WHILE JEFF LEANS AGAINST THE COUNTER DRINKING A BEER

Luke plays on the floor with some toys...

NEALY

How was basketball tonight?

JEFF

Fine.

NEALY

Did you end up meeting with Peter today?

JEFF

Yah.

NEALY

Just yah?

He looks at her, in her eyes, searching for courage...

JEFF

Nealy?

NEALY

What?

He looks back at Luke. Pauses.

NEALY (CONT'D)

Did you want to say something?

JEFF

I was just thinking about how lucky we are to have such a sweet natured child together.

NEALY

I know. I think that every day.

WALKING OUT OF HIS BANK, JEFF MAKES A CELL PHONE CALL...

JEFF

(carrying a briefcase)

Hi, it's Jeff. I've got the money but only a hundred grand. I'll explain when I meet you. Okay, okay... *Where?*
Why there?

ON A REMOTE SUSPENSION BRIDGE THAT SPANS OVER A RIVER

Jeff waits with his briefcase. He checks his watch. A lone TRUCK drives by but otherwise there's absolutely no traffic out here on this two lane desert highway. His Prius is parked on the shoulder.

Then he hears a WHISTLE behind him. He turns, sees...

Pete walks into view at the end of the bridge--waving. Alone. Dark sunglasses. In a black suit.

Jeff waits for him to arrive. Peter walks slowly, as if purposefully trying to draw out the tension.

And finally...he's there.

He's sweating profusely. He takes off his sunglasses and we see he's badly sunburned except where his glasses were. This has made him look a bit like a raccoon.

JEFF

Where's your car?

PETE

I walked.

JEFF

You walked?

PETE

Yah. So...

JEFF

So I'm sorry I couldn't get it all--my wife uses our bank account regularly, but she never pays any attention to our investment portfolio, so I liquidated everything we had in that.

PETE

It's okay. What you brought'll work.

Jeff passes him the briefcase. Pete opens it and looks at all the hundreds--loose, not in bundles.

PETE (CONT'D)

You ever see a beaver dam made of hundred dollar bills?

JEFF

I don't know what you're talking about.

PETE

Or maybe an eddy of Benjamin Franklins swirling by the shore??

Pete observes Jeff's puzzled look and then shakes out Jeff's briefcase over the bridge and--as Jeff gasps and looks over the rail...

All the money flutters down like a thousand green leafs into the slow current below.

JEFF

(after a beat)

What'd you do that for?

Pete enjoys Jeff's shock. Hands back his empty briefcase.

PETE

I did it to show you what kind of man I am. See, unlike you, I'm not the kind of man who runs around fucking other peoples' wives and ruining their marriages. By the way, Becca and I are done and I'm taking everything she's got with our prenup. I'm sure she'll be pretty desperate for a shoulder to cry on so feel free to go take advantage and poke around in that cum hole all you want, I don't care anymore.

Pete takes a step away, full of rage, trying to contain himself. Then...

PETE (CONT'D)

I gave you a choice Jeffrey--you coulda just told your wife the truth instead of meeting me here--you coulda been a good guy but no, you're a rat, just like my wife. But you see Jeffery, I'm not a fucking rat piece of shit like you and her. I don't deserve what I've been dealt. But you, you deserve a lot worse than losing some petty cash to the Colorado river. Truthfully, a rat shit like you deserves to be shot full of holes and dumped over the bridge with your money. I could do that, I have a gun.

He shows him--wants to use it so badly. Decides not to.

PETE (CONT'D)

But that's not what I'm going to do. No.

He chucks the gun over the bridge into the water.

PETE (CONT'D)

No, I'm no murderer. I'm the kind of man who makes a mistake and makes amends with my past. I'm the kind of man who got into a drunk driving accident and nearly killed a kid but did I hire a fancy lawyer to get me off Scott-free because I was just under the legal limit? No. I went to Church and prayed for forgiveness and pled guilty and after the Judge ordered me to pay the kid's family a million dollars in damages and sent me to prison for a month --did I stop there? No. I started volunteering. *Philanthropy*, Jeffery. That's the kind of man I am. You wish you were that kind of man. But you're not, you're just a home-wrecker scum-bag. But don't worry baby, I won't wreck your home. No doubt you'll do that all on your own.

He starts away in the opposite direction he came from.

Jeff stays exactly where he is, paralyzed. Then his cell RINGS. He looks at the screen. Answers.

JEFF

Hey babe.

NEALY

You haven't seen my keys around have you?

SCREEN SPLITS TO NEALY MOVING ABOUT THEIR HOUSE

Looking under every pillow of the couch, etc...

JEFF

No, I have no idea...

She's frantic, lifting up a rug as if they could have made it under there somehow...

NEALY

Shit, I don't know what I'm going to do.

JEFF

Have you looked in the diaper bag?

As he talks with her, totally shell-shocked, he looks downstream at the river gorge below...

The money floats away, far away down below in the river gorge, irretrievable...

NEALY

Of course I looked in the diaper bag.
Are you sure you didn't take them?

JEFF

Yes. What about Luke's toy box, remember when he hid the remote in there?

NEALY

Good idea. Hang on.
(beat)
No, not here.

JEFF

Wish I could help you babe.

NEALY

It's alright, I'll keep looking.

She hangs up and...

HER SIDE OF THE SPLIT GOES AWAY AND

He stands there alone on the bridge for a few more moments. His ears still ringing with Peter's words.

He hits himself in the head multiple times. Looks back out at the expansive river twisting into the distance.

THAT NIGHT, WHILE NEALY GIVES LUKE A BATH

Jeff stands in the doorway and watches, very emotional...

Nealy turns and looks at him, unsure what he's doing.

ALSO THAT NIGHT, IN THE DARKENED BEDROOM

Jeff sits in a chair near the bed, wide awake as Nealy sleeps. It's 3:12 am.

He regards Nealy--she looks peaceful in the dim light.

THE NEXT DAY, JEFF IS SITTING IN HIS TORN UP BACKYARD

His eyes are bloodshot with worry when his phone RINGS. He checks to see who's calling. RESTRICTED. He answers.

JEFF

Hello?

SPLIT TO: LINCOLN IS HOOKED TO A DIALYSIS MACHINE

He's calling Jeff from a house phone in the hospital...

LINCOLN

Doc, it's Link.

JEFF

Hey Lincoln.

LINCOLN

What're you up to?

JEFF

I have the day off. I was just kind of sitting around.

LINCOLN

So guess what.

JEFF

What?

LINCOLN

I got the job.

JEFF

No kidding, that's wonderful.

LINCOLN

You're telling me. We need to celebrate.

Something starts BEEPING loudly on the dialysis machine.

JEFF

What's that?

LINCOLN

Oh, I'm all tied up to my dialysis machine for the next couple hours. Damn thing just starts beeping for no reason sometimes.

JEFF

What hospital are you at?

LINCOLN

Phoenix Memorial, why?

JEFF PARKS IN THE VISITOR LOT OF PHOENIX MEMORIAL

INSIDE, HE ENTERS THE DIALYSIS TREATMENT WING

And he spots... Lincoln is down the hall, one of about TWENTY PATIENTS of varying degrees of health getting their treatments across from one another.

JEFF

(as he approaches)

Hey.

LINCOLN

Doc, pull up a chair.

Jeff sits by his side. Lincoln mutes the small TV attached to his dialysis machine...

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Thanks for visiting. I never get visitors here and that old man across the way ain't very entertaining.

ON A DIALYSIS MACHINE ACROSS THE WAY

A BLACK MAN about his own age, but sick as could be--skin & bones--sends up a middle finger with a wry smile...

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

He knows I'm just playing. Jeff, meet Horace. My basketball buddy, my dialysis buddy.

Jeff goes and shakes HORACE'S hand...

HORACE
Pleased to meet you.

JEFF
Nice meeting you too.

Jeff sits back down and looks at Lincoln--at all the tubes going in and out of his veins...

JEFF (CONT'D)
So who's your doctor here?

LINCOLN
William Budge, ever hear of him?

JEFF
No.

LINCOLN
Seems like a good enough guy.

JEFF
What does he say in terms of how long before your kidneys fail?

LINCOLN
I've been in end stage renal disease for over four years and the fact is average life expectancy of a forty year old black man once he has ESRD is about six years. But the way I see it, if God could create the earth in seven days, why can't I get lucky and find me a kidney in two years?

Jeff thinks it over.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)
Hey Doc, I hope I didn't just depress the hell out of you with that. This is a good day, you know?

JEFF
I know.

To Lincoln, Jeff looks overly effected by all the suffering here, by Horace across the way...

LINCOLN
Anyway, I believe the old saying it's always darkest before the dawn.

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

It's a saying because it turns out to be true all the time and that's why it gets said so much, you know what I mean? Ah, come on now, Doc. Your eyes are all glassy like you're gonna cry on me. Don't you dare cry on me.

THE KIND OF MAN WHO MAKES A MISTAKE AND MAKES AMENDS

STARING AT HIS COMPUTER SCREEN, AT WORK

Jeff's eyes continue to glaze over with water as he fixates on a cheery web-site about kidney donation.

IN A THERAPIST'S WAITING ROOM

Nealy sits reading GLAMOR magazine. A story titled TEN WAYS TO FIX A BROKEN MARRIAGE. 1. PLAN A FANTASY VACATION TOGETHER 2. DO SOMETHING IDEALISTIC TOGETHER...

She looks up as another FEMALE PATIENT emerges from the inner office and walks out the front door...

IN A THERAPIST'S OFFICE, A BIT LATER

Nealy sits opposite a middle aged woman, REGINE ROSSEAU.

NEALY

In the Glamor magazine in your waiting room there's a story about how to fix a broken marriage--one of the ideas was for the couple to do something idealistic together. Is that crazy?

REGINE

Not crazy at all. I suggest doing things like that to my patients in marital crises all the time. Doing good external things can lead to internal changes, there's no doubt about it. But you need to be clear about what you desire those internal changes to be.

NEALY

What do you mean?

REGINE

I mean you and your husband probably need to address the internal-emotional frustrations that brought you to the point you're at now or else in all probability the cycle you're in will just go on and on.

(after a beat)

Can you tell me what you love about your husband?

She searches herself for her thoughts...

REGINE (CONT'D)

Or maybe it's easier to tell me why you fell in love with him in the first place?

NEALY

We met in college. I'd seen him around for about a year before we ever spoke. I always thought he was incredibly cute and then we finally met at a party. We talked for about an hour about everything under the sun and the next night we went on a date--we saw a movie--he picked--a chick flick to make me happy, I'm sure--and anyway, afterwards it was late and we were hungry and the only place that was open was Denny's. But when we sat down and looked at the pictures on the menu we lost our appetite and we decided we didn't really want to eat there. But the waitress had already brought us ice water. So he left her a two dollar tip just for that. He didn't have to, and I don't know, maybe he was just trying to impress me with staged generosity, but still, I just fell in love with him on the spot, hook line and sinker.

IN LINCOLN'S BEDROOM, ONE MORNING, A FEW DAYS LATER

Link puts on his new St. Augustine Athletics shirt. Looks in the mirror. Proud. His big wife ANGELA then steps up behind and wraps her arms around him.

ANGELA

I want to take a picture of you.

She goes and gets her camera. He turns and faces her; folds his arms in front of him and smiles big. CLICK.

THAT WEEKEND, JEFF AND NEALY GO FOR A HIKE IN THE DESERT

Luke is in a backpack, looking at the birds...

JEFF

This was a really good idea.
Thanks for getting me out to do it.

NEALY

It's funny, we live so close to all this beauty and we never see it.

(after a beat)

So I got an email about a big peace march in the city coming up. I was thinking maybe we should walk in it together-- might be good for our souls--what do you think?

JEFF

Sure, I'd love to.

(after a beat)

Hey, I almost forgot to tell you, we've been invited to go to dinner at Lincoln's house next Saturday night to celebrate him getting the coaching job.

NEALY

He got the job?

JEFF

Yah, isn't that fantastic?

NEALY

Yah.

AT DINNER IN LINCOLN'S SMALL APARTMENT

Angela serves Jeff and Nealy. Angela's two boys, COREY and CALVIN, 6 and 8, quietly wait for their share...

NEALY

This is really nice of you, thank you for cooking.

ANGELA

It's the least we could do after all what your husband's done for us.

LINCOLN

(raises water glass)

Here's to Doc. A saint.

JEFF

Not a saint.

LINCOLN

In my book you are. Not only that,
one heck of a basketball player.

NEALY

Is he really a good basketball player or
are you just being nice to make him feel
good about himself?

LINCOLN

I'm telling you Mrs. Lang, if Jeff were
6'9", understood how to play defense and
had a better jump shot, he'd be killin'
'em right now in the NBA.

They all laugh. Lincoln's boys especially...

Jeff looks at Lincoln's boys and admires them; they seem
like great, happy kids.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Anyone mind if I say a prayer?

JEFF

Of course not.

LINCOLN

Dear All Mighty Heavenly Father above,
we thank you for the blessings you have
bestowed upon us...

Jeff looks at Nealy... gives him an approving smile...

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Thank you for the love you have blessed
this family with and the peacefulness of
our household.

Lincoln opens his eyes and his two boys say AMEN...

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Alright. Ya'all can eat now.

Nealy is disarmed and charmed by Lincoln. They all eat.

NEALY

Yum, these potatoes are delicious.
What's the secret?

ANGELA

Lots of butter.

JEFF

Do you know, I've known you all this time
and I never realized you had kids?

LINCOLN

I never mentioned my boys?

JEFF

I don't think so. How old are you guys?

COREY

I'm eight and Calvin's six.

As the dinner continues in a warm silence, cut away to:

LILA WALKS THROUGH THE AISLES OF A LOCAL DRUGSTORE

Passing lots of feminine hygiene products on the way,
she comes to a stop to regard EARLY PREGNANCY TEST KITS.
She selects one and reads the back of the box.

AFTER DINNER, AS LINCOLN & JEFF DO THE DISHES...

JEFF

So you haven't told me how the team is
yet--are they any good?

LINCOLN

Man, these girls hustle like you wouldn't
believe, I'm telling you Doc...

JEFF

That's great.

LINCOLN

But I've got to say, the best thing about
all of it is the fact that my boys can be
proud of what their daddy does, you know.

Jeff looks at Lincoln, admiring him.

AS THEY EXIT LINCOLN'S LOW RISE BUILDING

JEFF

That was nice, wasn't it?

NEALY

Yeah, it was.

THEY GET INTO THEIR PRIUS AND DRIVE AWAY

JEFF

I'm really glad you came.

She puts her hand on the back of his neck. He basks in her warm gesture for a moment. Then...

JEFF (CONT'D)

Nealy, you know that radio show,
This American Life?

NEALY

Of course.

JEFF

Well I was listening to it a while back and this woman they interviewed--her story is she donated her kidney to a friend and saved her friend's life.

(after a beat)

Anyway, when I first heard the interview, the idea of donating my kidney to save Lincoln popped into my head but it seemed absurd at the time. But then, as I've gotten to know him more, I mean, I've realized he could really die and now I see he's got those two sweet boys who depend on him and I thought maybe I should.

NEALY

You mean donate your kidney to him?

He looks at her and nods. Her expression is hard to read.

NEALY (CONT'D)

(after a beat)

Don't you need your kidney Jeff?

JEFF

People have two kidneys but they only need one. And when people get kidney failure it effects both kidneys--so it's not like one is a backup for the other. Plus, it's a very safe operation for a man in my condition and I'd be up on my feet in a week or less. Here, I've been doing some research...

He grabs his briefcase from the backseat and gives her some printouts on ORGAN DONATION....

JEFF (CONT'D)

He's way down the waiting list--he could die before his number's ever called--and he's waiting for a kidney from a dead person. Medically speaking, it's much better to get tissue from a living donor. Plus, the longer he goes without getting a new kidney, the more damage will be done to the rest of his body and eventually he'll deteriorate and die.

NEALY

Why doesn't his wife donate to him?

JEFF

According to Lincoln, she had herself tested and she wasn't the best match in terms of blood type, which by itself wouldn't be a big problem with the new kinds of anti-rejection meds we have on the market today, but unfortunately, when you're as overweight as she is, the operation poses a fairly serious health risk. So they decided against it.

NEALY

Why do you want to do this?

JEFF

I just feel like doing something right for a change. Make myself a better person, I guess. Do you think that's stupid?

She looks at him. In actuality she feels the same way about herself--though for vastly different reasons.

NEALY

You're a doctor, when I look at you I think you do the right thing every day. I'm the one selling overpriced candlesticks to rich people.

JEFF

Well then fine, support me in this--it's a chance for us to both do some good.

NEALY

(after a beat)

I have to think about it some more but honestly...I think it might be a great idea.

He looks at her, incredibly surprised.

NEALY (CONT'D)

I guess you were expecting me to put up a big fight.

JEFF

Yes, actually.

NEALY

No. It's a wonderful thought.
To do something really selfless.

JEFF

Well, it's not really selfless if my aim is to make myself a better person. But no matter how I feel about myself afterwards, it *will* save Lincoln's life and I think that's the point.

NEALY

(after a beat)

What would you have to do, to determine if you'd be able to do this?

JEFF

I'd have to show a staff psychologist at Lincoln's hospital I'm mentally stable and have thought through the decision. Other than that, get tested, cross my fingers and hope I'm a suitable donor.

THE NEXT DAY, AT HER STORE

Nealy sits by the register reading the research papers Jeff gave her on kidney donation as a COUPLE in the store discuss which coffee table they like (ad lib). Nealy looks up from her computer, and studies the continuing coffee table discussion--inane compared to what she's contemplating...

THEN ENTER A MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM TO FIND...

Lincoln drills the EIGHTH GRADE GIRLS TEAM. One of the GIRLS blows a jump shot and looks upset about it...

LINCOLN

That's good form Megan--don't worry if it doesn't go in for now!

Lincoln catches Jeff's eye, blows his WHISTLE and then instructs his players to keep doing the drill (ad lib). Then he jogs over to meet Jeff by the gym entrance.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Doc, what're you doing here?

JEFF

I come bearing some good news.

LINCOLN

I like good news.

JEFF

After having dinner at your house,
my wife and I decided on something and
I gave your doctor a call. Nice guy.

(off his puzzled look)

I had myself tested to see if my kidney
might be compatible with you.

Lincoln is stunned. The girls keep doing the drill...

LINCOLN

I'm sorry Doc, are you saying what
I think you're saying?

Jeff nods. The two men stand there looking into one
another's eyes for a moment...

JEFF

I'm a match, Link.

LINCOLN

I don't know what to say, I mean...
Is this for real?

JEFF

It's for real.

LINCOLN

Do things like this really happen?

JEFF

I guess they do.

LINCOLN

Am I looking at an angel or a man?

IN A HOSPITAL, SURGICAL PREP CENTER

Surrounded by drapes and the sounds of various TVs and
CHATTER, a NURSE carefully shaves Jeff's side in the area
of his upcoming surgery. Nealy sits by him, watching.
She reaches out and takes his hand. They look at each
other warmly as the nurse finishes her business.

IN SURGERY, JEFF'S EYES FLUTTER CLOSED AND THEN

His surgeon--DR. BUDGE--removes a drape from Jeff's lower back, shaven and dotted where the incision will occur.

The Surgeon then begins to cut him open and his skin separates like the petals of a Magnolia to reveal an incredibly graphic image of his innards.

GLOVED HANDS PLACE A KIDNEY ON ICE IN A MEDICAL COOLER

LATER, IN THE POST OP RECOVERY ROOM

Jeff awakens to find Nealy and Luke with flowers...

JEFF

Hey baby.

NEALY

Hey.

JEFF

Hey little man.

LUKE

Hey Dada.

THE NEXT MORNING, LILA WATERS PLANTS IN FRONT HER HOUSE

And a NEWSPAPER BOY rides his BMX up the driveway and tosses a paper onto her porch. She turns off her hose and picks up the paper. Sits on her stoop and opens it.

LATER, ROLL INTO A PRIVATE RECOVERY ROOM WHERE...

Lincoln watches TV, eating pudding, turning to find...

LINCOLN

Hey Doc.

Jeff has been pushed into his room by a Nurse.

JEFF

I can take it from here, thanks.

She nods and leaves. The two men regard each other...

JEFF (CONT'D)

How do you feel?

LINCOLN

My heart is warm. I have so much love for you right now. Give me your hand.

Jeff rolls closer. Lincoln takes Jeff's hand and he kisses it. Lincoln does not let go anytime soon, neither does Jeff want him to.

THE HOSPITAL ELEVATOR DOORS OPEN TO REVEAL

Lila with a small potted basil plant.

IN JEFF'S PRIVATE RECOVERY ROOM, MOMENTS LATER...

Jeff lays reading Sports Illustrated when there's a knock on the door and it opens and he sees Lila with her basil.

LILA

I brought you this basil plant. These hospitals are so toxic--so many germs.

She sets the plant on the bedside table.

JEFF

How did you know to find me here?

LILA

You were in the paper, didn't you know?

JEFF

No.

She fishes the paper from her bag, folded to the headline: SAVING A LIFE with a smiling color photo of Lincoln prominently displayed. It's the photo Angela took of him before his first day of work. Arms folded in front of him, his forearm scar prominent...

LILA

What a wonderful thing you did for him, saving his life, getting him the job, everything. I almost cried when I read the part about how he hurt his arm. No doubt you'll be reaping the positive Karma of this for a long time.

JEFF

I hope so.

LILA
 Speaking of Karma, there's something
 I need to tell you that I think may slam
 the Karmic wheel of fate down on me hard.

JEFF
 (afraid to ask)
 What?

LILA
 Well, I know I shouldn't've done it,
 but after I found out Matthew was
 poisoned, I was seeing red and I called
 the city about your construction before I
 ever even spoke with you about it...

She gets another paper from the city from her bag...

LILA (CONT'D)
 ...and anyway they finally stopped by
 yesterday and put this stop-work notice
 on your door...

Jeff regards this paper form the city. Scrawled in pencil
 in the notes area is: STOP ALL WORK AND OBTAIN PERMITS!

LILA (CONT'D)
 I'm really sorry, Jeffery. I should've
 told you sooner.

JEFF
 It's okay. I probably would've done the
 same thing if you'd killed my cat.

She smiles at him appreciatively, then her eyes shift
 away and she starts to look nervous.

LILA
 There's something else I have to tell
 you.

JEFF
 Okay.

She's flustered, can't look in Jeff's eyes.

LILA
 Oh well, here it goes...
 (searches for courage)
 I'm pregnant. With your baby.

She looks him in the eye. He looks as if he just found
 out he's going to die. Pause.

JEFF
(opens mouth but no words)

LILA
I know what you're thinking. But it's perfect if you think about it. We're neighbors, you can just come by and visit, like an uncle or something. No one has to know the whole truth.

JEFF
(after a beat)
That wouldn't work out Lila.

LILA
(after a beat)
You want me to kill it, don't you?

JEFF
(after a beat)
I wouldn't say *kill* it.

Her eyes well up with tears and she slaps him in the face as hard as she can. As she strides out, she turns and...

SHRIEKS AT THE TOP OF HER LUNGS!

And then she goes. A long awful moment passes, then a NURSE runs into the room...

NURSE
Dr. Lang??

JEFF
I'm okay.

NURSE
What happened?

JEFF
Private matter. You can go. Please.

She nods and leaves. Jeff then does whatever a man as distressed as he is right now would do in these moments.

OUTSIDE PHOENIX MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, THE NEXT MORNING

A NURSE wheels Jeff to the curb where Nealy and the Prius wait. Nealy has a hand carved wooden cane with a bow on it...

NEALY
A present to help you walk.

JEFF

Thank you.

NEALY

Ready?

He nods and then Nealy and the Nurse help get Jeff get up onto his feet and into the passenger seat--which is painful (ad lib any dialog).

IN THE PRIUS, AS THEY DRIVE AWAY

NEALY

I had a funny thought--now that you're missing one of your kidneys, your other organs have more elbow room now.

JEFF

That is a funny thought.

She sees something's wrong but decides not to pursue it.

NEALY

So Doctor Budge told me he was planning to present you some kind of Humanitarian Award at some upcoming Arizona Medical Association banquet.

JEFF

Yah, he mentioned that to me too.

NEALY

That's pretty flattering, isn't it?

JEFF

Do you really think it's such a good idea to make such a big deal about all this?

NEALY

I think you did something pretty out of the ordinary, and if people want to hold you up as an example that's great.

JEFF

Why's it so great?

NEALY

Because people seeing you honored for what you've done could inspire more people to do what you did and that would make it all the more important.

AS NEALY HELPS JEFF WALK UP THE STEPS OF THEIR HOUSE

They find a note from Lila pinned to the door:
Jeff- We need to talk ASAP. -Lila

NEALY
What's that about?

JEFF
About the construction again, I guess.

JEFF HOBBLER OUT OF HIS FRENCH DOORS TO SURVEY THE BACK
It's ten times worse than ever. Nealy steps beside him...

NEALY
I thought about fixing it myself
but it just didn't seem worth it.

He nods and turns back inside, walking with his cane.

AT A LOCAL STARBUCKS

Walking fairly well with his cane, Jeff finds Lila with a
coffee, wearing dark sunglasses...

LILA
Thanks for meeting me.

JEFF
Sure.

He eyes the coffee swirl on her foamy drink...

LILA
Don't worry, it's Decaf. I wouldn't
poison our baby with a double shot of
real Espresso. They say that can cause
Autism but you're the baby doctor.

JEFF
So what did you want to talk about?

LILA
I just wanted to talk, you know.
I don't want to go through this alone.

JEFF
Understandable.

LILA

I want you to know I don't expect child support or something. I just want our baby to grow up knowing his father. Nealy never has to find out as long as we have an understanding.

He tamps down the hatred seething inside him enough to fake a pleasant expression.

PEACENIKS (V.O.)

What do we want? PEACE!

ON A STREET, A CROWD HAS GATHERED TO CHEER ON...

A parade of PEACENIKS march with anti-war signs, chanting:

PEACENIKS

When do we want it? NOW!

Jeff & Nealy march, in very different head spaces. Jeff walks semi-normally now but still with his cane. Some of the FRIENDS from the anniversary party march with them.

NEALY & JEFF & PEACENIKS

What do we want? PEACE!

THE ARCHER

LINCOLN & JEFF SIT IN THE RAFTERS OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM, ALONE, QUIET A MOMENT, AS SOME HEAVINESS SETS IN...

LINCOLN

Dang, Doc, that's a real tight spot this woman's put you in.

JEFF

I'm sorry to lay it all on you--all my friends are friends with my wife and I feel like it would be really shitty of me to make them keep secrets from her.

LINCOLN

Makes sense to me.

JEFF

There's a psychiatrist at my hospital--I could talk to him I guess--but he knows a lot of people I know and I guess I don't really trust him with these facts.

LINCOLN
Loose lips sink ships.

JEFF
Exactly. And just because it says
psychiatrist on his door doesn't mean he
has any self control not to gossip.

Jeff quiets as an 8th grade GIRL passes through from the
Locker Room to the exit, all the way across the gym...

LINCOLN
(blows his WHISTLE)
Good going today Molly!

MOLLY smiles and waves and exits...

LINCOLN (CONT'D)
Doc, my mother used to say "It's
impossible to reason with an unreasonable
person." I think that's what you're
dealing with, with this woman here.

JEFF
I know this is sick, but I keep wishing
she would meet an untimely end.

LINCOLN
It's understandable.

JEFF
You wouldn't believe how many ways I've
imagined her getting done in--some are
pretty funny, actually.

LINCOLN
Like what?

JEFF
I'll tell you my favorite. There're these
neighborhood kids, two brothers who
practice archery in the empty lot across
the street from us. I was imagining her
walking her little rat terrier one day
when one of their arrows flies off target
and just splits her head wide open.

LINCOLN
Ouch.

JEFF
Pretty sick, ha?

LINCOLN

Yeah, but you know, she's threatening to ruin your life.

JEFF

Yah.

(a long beat passes)

Well, thanks again for listening. I've been wanting to confess to someone for so long but you know we don't go to church.

LINCOLN

Shoot Doc, I'll be your priest and your soldier. Whatever you need. I'm yours.

Jeff and Lincoln share a level look.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

You know Leviticus teaches us that adulteresses should be put to death so if an arrow were to go off course it would kind of be like God's work. Of course according to Leviticus, the adulterer should be put to death too, so that's no good for you, Doc.

JEFF

No, it isn't, is it.
(after a beat)
So how're you healing up?

LINCOLN

I feel good. You?

JEFF

I don't know. I can walk normally now but afterwards I still get sore. I think the stress of this thing with my neighbor is making me heal slower or something.

Lincoln looks upset to hear this. A quiet moment passes.

LATER, IN THE BOY'S LOCKER ROOM, LINCOLN TAKES A SHOWER

On his back is an old, crude tattoo of two guns crossing one another and the letters WEST SIDE C.C. intertwined-- an unsettling detail to make us realize we might not know Lincoln like we think we do. THE SCORE DARKENS as CAMERA ZOOMS to this image.

MEANWHILE, JEFF IS IN HIS OWN SHOWER, AT HOME, WHEN...

The curtain opens to reveal Nealy, just home from work.

NEALY

Why didn't you tell me about Peter and Rebecca?

JEFF

Tell you what?

NEALY

Merideth just called me and said they filed for divorce. She said you knew.

JEFF

She did?

NEALY

She told me Peter told you all about it.

JEFF

Well, I knew they were having problems-- I guess Pete told me that much last time I saw him.

By now Nealy's at the sink taking off her make-up...

NEALY

Well everyone knew they were having problems. I mean, they hated each other but still somehow it's shocking.

JEFF

Why's it so shocking?

NEALY

When two people hate each other as much as they do but somehow manage to stay married for as long as they have, I guess you just assume it's going to last forever.

IN BED THAT NIGHT, LINCOLN LOOKS PREOCCUPIED

ANGELA

You seem worried about something.

LINCOLN

Do I look worried, I'm sorry.

ANGELA

Allow me to unworry you.

She kisses him on the chest. He rolls on top. He grabs a hold of her big tits and she smiles.

AT HIS OFFICE, JEFF EXITS AN EXAM ROOM TAKING NOTES WHEN

A NURSE PASSES

Dr. Lang, you have a new patient in room six when you're ready.

JEFF PULLS THE NEW PATIENT'S CHART OUT OF THE INBOX OF #6

He enters, opening the chart...

AND THEN, IN EXAM ROOM #6

Before his eyes leave the page, his face goes still. He looks up at... Lila, in a paper gown, on the exam table.

LILA

I don't have medical insurance so I thought maybe you could help me out.

JUMP TO A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Jeff puts on gloves and lubricates a metal wand attached to an electronic box with a speaker on it...

JEFF

This might be a little cold.

He tells her as he inserts the wand into her pelvis...

LILA

You wouldn't put anything up there to hurt the baby, would you?

JEFF

I'd be thrown in jail if I was caught doing something like that, wouldn't I?

She accepts this and then...he finds THE HEARTBEAT broadcast from the blue box: THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP...

LILA

Does that mean?

JEFF

It's alive.

SOMETIME LATER, LINCOLN DRIVES HIS NOVA

Listening to some R&B on the radio, smoking a Menthol.

HIS NOVA GOES ACROSS THE STATE LINE INTO NEVADA

IN JEFF'S OFFICE, LATER

Jeff is in terrible anxiety. Eyes bloodshot, he looks to the ceiling, as if looking for help from above.

AT A GIGANTIC SPORTING AND HUNTING STORE, LINCOLN PARKS

IN A DRESSING ROOM, A BIT LATER

Lincoln tries on some oversized Army fatigues and looks at himself in the mirror.

IN THE AISLES OF THE STORE, A BIT LATER

Army fatigues in his cart, Lincoln rolls up to a few standard archery bows in a glass case.

AT A CONVENIENCE STORE

Link buys a bag of Jerky and a King Cobra Malt Liquor.

AS SEEN THROUGH THE LEAVES OF SOME THICKET, AT DUSK

Lila walks down her driveway with Steven. At first she walks in the opposite direction of her voyeur; of:

LINCOLN SQUATS BEHIND THE THICKET

He's wearing a black cap, a short sleeve camouflage shirt and he clutches a cross-bow that looks like it was made by the production designer of Star Trek for a Klingon; laser eye-scope, power assist crank, trigger release...

LILA

Come on Steven, this way...

Lila turns her dog around and starts walking back toward the empty lot with the archery target; toward...

Lincoln pulls his black hat down so it's a ski-mask, readies his bow and looks through the scope. With the ski mask on, Lincoln looks a bit like a raccoon.

As Lila walks toward him, a little red laser beam crawls across the cement and starts dancing around her chest, her neck and her forehead. Just then Steven catches the scent of a treat and yanks at his leash.

LILA (CONT'D)

Steven!

And now Steven is chewing up a piece of Beef Jerky.

LILA (CONT'D)

Oh Steven, you shouldn't eat that.

Then Steven gets the scent of an entire bag of Beef Jerky --the one Lincoln bought--spilled on the dirt in front of the archery target. Steven yanks Lila towards it.

LILA (CONT'D)

Oh, yuk, Steven, no.

Lila picks up the bag of Jerky to keep it away from her dog who begs like crazy. Just then she hears a CRACKLE OF BRUSH and she's startled to see...

A large black man with a bow stands from the thicket and takes a step towards her. Black ski mask.

Lila gasps, terrified. Red dot landing on her forehead.

LILA (CONT'D)

What do you want?

Lincoln takes a step forward and readies himself.

Lila takes a step backward. Steven eats Jerky.

LILA (CONT'D)

Please, don't hurt me...

Lincoln's eyes look terribly ambivalent...

LILA (CONT'D)

Please, I have a baby in my belly.

And his arm is beginning to shake...

LILA (CONT'D)

Please, you're scaring me badly.

She takes another step backward.

LINCOLN

Stop.

He takes another step forward; jabs the bow forward.

She covers her face, tears streaming out.

LILA

No, no, no, oh God no...

When she has the courage to look again, she can see...

Lincoln's eyes, visible between his ski mask, are glazed over with tears too.

Their eyes are locked for a long moment and then...

He can't... He lowers the bow... She gasps in relief.

He looks at the ground, ashamed of himself.

Then she notices...

From where she stands, she can see the scar on his arm.

LILA (CONT'D)

You're the-

(decides to stay quiet)

Lincoln looks up. Catches her eyes hanging on his arm.

He looks at his own arm, realizing she has noted an identifying detail.

She knows her eye-line has betrayed her and now terror returns.

LINCOLN

I'm the what?

Lincoln raises the bow again...

LILA

No.

LINCOLN

I'm the what??

She suddenly turns to run and...

He squeezes the trigger release on the bow and...

THWACK, the arrow shoots right through her back, and she drops to the dirt, twitching and bleeding. And now Steven, still tethered to the leash which Lila continues to clutch in her hand, starts barking.

Lincoln looks Lila over a moment, satisfied because there's so much blood loss and so little movement, then he breaks into a run, picking up a leather bag by the bramble he was hidden in...

Pulling off his ski mask, putting his bow into the leather bag, he cuts across the desert field between Jeff's cul du sac and the next street over.

En route, he falls over a rock, picks himself back up, then continues "casually" to a rental car...

IN THEIR BATHROOM, THAT NIGHT

Jeff uses his electric toothbrush. Studies Nealy in the mirror as she takes off her makeup with a cotton pad.

ACROSS THE STREET, THE NEXT MORNING, LILA IS CLEARLY DEAD

Steven lays by her side. The Lang house frames the scene. Jeff and Nealy emerge from their house together. Alma follows with Luke in her arms so he can wave goodbye. After everyone says their good-byes, Jeff and Nealy get into their respective Priuses and drive away, never noticing the dead woman in the brush.

As the Priuses drive past, those two NERDY TEENAGE ARCHERS emerge from their house with their backpacks and get on their dirt-bikes to pedal back up the street toward the deserted lot they like to cut through on their way to school...but now they stop short.

AND THEY TAKE PAUSE ON LILA AND HER TERRIER

They look at each other in abject horror. A phone RINGS.

IN HIS PRIUS, DRIVING TO WORK, JEFF PICKS UP HIS PHONE...

JEFF

Hey Lincoln.

SPLIT TO LINCOLN, DRIVING IN HIS NOVA, OPPOSITE DIRECTION

Lincoln's dressed for work in his St. Augustine's shirt.

LINCOLN

Hey Doc.

JEFF

What's going on?

LINCOLN
You hear anything?

JEFF
Anything about what?

LINCOLN
Your neighbor.

JEFF
No, she's been leaving me alone lately.
Maybe it'll stick.

LINCOLN
Okay. I got to go.

Lincoln hangs up. Jeff looks confused.

IN JEFF'S OFFICE, HE EATS SUSHI WHEN HIS CELL RINGS AGAIN

JEFF
Hey Honey.

SPLIT SCREEN TO: NEALY, STANDING OUTSIDE THEIR HOUSE

As a Police INVESTIGATION goes on across the street...

NEALY
I came home for lunch and... something
awful happened.

JEFF
Something awful?

NEALY
Our neighbor Lila was shot with an arrow
and she's dead.

JEFF
I'm sorry--did you just say she was shot
with an arrow?

NEALY
Across the street, sometime last night.

JEFF
You mean where those teenagers do target
practice?

NEALY
It wasn't them. They were at a birthday
party when it happened.

JEFF

Jesus, do the Police have any idea who did it?

NEALY

I don't know. They asked me if she had any enemies.

JEFF

And you said?

NEALY

I said no. Why, did she?

JEFF

How would I know?

NEALY

They asked you to come to the station when you can to do an interview.

JEFF

Why?

NEALY

They said they were interviewing all the neighbors.

(after a beat)

Kind of puts a damper on tonight, ha?

MID CONVERSATION, NEALY'S SIDE IS REPLACED BY LINCOLN...

As he answers his cell, in his Nova, driving. He now wears an ill-fitting second hand suit...

LINCOLN

Hey Doc.

JEFF'S SIDE OF THE SPLIT SCREEN JUMPS TO HIM IN HIS PRIUS

Jeff now wears a fancy suit; on his cell.

JEFF

I'm not sure what to say to you.

LINCOLN

I guess you heard.

(silence for a beat)

She can't hurt you no more, Doc.

You're home free, mission accomplished.

JEFF

You realize I didn't actually want you to shoot her with an arrow. You realize I was just venting.

LINCOLN

You may have been venting, but you *wanted* it.

JEFF

I sometimes have rape fantasies too, but I don't go out and do it.

(after a beat)

The woman was carrying my baby, Lincoln. My own flesh and blood.

LINCOLN

You told me you wished she would just get an abortion.

JEFF

I didn't mean for you to perform it.

(after a beat)

What if they do a DNA test on the fetus?

LINCOLN

I'm guessing you don't have any DNA samples in the national crime lab's database.

JEFF

What if the Police ask me for a sample?

LINCOLN

Why would they?

JEFF

What if she kept a diary, Lincoln? Did you ever consider that?

LINCOLN

No.

JEFF

Yah, well, maybe I'll get lucky and she didn't. Jesus.

LINCOLN

If you want me to turn myself in, Doc, I will. I'll tell them just how it happened and that you didn't actually mean for me to do it.

JEFF

I don't know, Lincoln. I can hardly form a thought right now much less make a decision like that.

LINCOLN

I'll just go along with whatever you decide.
(beat)
Are you still on your way to the thing?

JEFF

Yah, I'll see you soon I guess.

And with that, Jeff hangs up. Eyes red with worry.

LINCOLN'S SIDE OF THE SPLIT IS CANCELLED BY NEALY

She waits outside her store for Jeff to pick her up. She's wearing a fancy dress. She waves as...

JEFF'S SIDE OF THE SPLIT DRIVES UP BESIDE HER...

And Nealy gets inside the car.

NEW ANGLE ON THE WINDSHIELD, A TWO SHOT, AS...

They pull forward in silence for a moment...

Then SUDDEN APPLAUSE...

IN A HOTEL BALLROOM

Jeff and Nealy sit at a table in the center of a dinner organized in their honor. Their friends Merideth and Ron sit beside them. Lincoln is there too, in his ill-fitting suit. A STANDING OVATION now begins for Jeff. Jeff looks to be barely buttoning down a panic attack.

DR. BUDGE

(amplified)

Come on, come on up!

Dr. Budge is on stage where a banner reads AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION ARIZONA. He waves Jeff up.

Jeff resists standing for far too long, which makes Nealy nervous, and then he finally gets up and walks to the stage and Dr. Budge gives him a gold placard.

The APPLAUSE doesn't end anytime soon. Jeff looks like he might collapse under the weight of his hypocrisy. Fights back the urge to cry.

CONFESSION

IN HIS PRIUS, DRIVING HOME

NEALY
Really weird day, ha?

JEFF
You can say that again.

NEALY
(re: the gold placard)
Well, on the upside this will look really great in your office. It'll make your patients feel like they've got a really great doctor.

JEFF
Yah, really pull the wool over their eyes.

NEALY
Why would you say that Jeff?

He doesn't say anything, he's sweating spontaneously, his panic attack unbuttoned now.

NEALY (CONT'D)
What's going on Jeff--you're shaking.

THE PRIUS PULLS OVER ON A TWO LANE WOODED ROAD...

It's very dark save for the Prius' head-lamps.

INSIDE THE IDLING CAR

She stares at him as he stares at the road ahead, gripping the wheel too tightly, unnecessarily.

JEFF
I never told you this before because I was too ashamed, but I cheated my way through medical school.

NEALY
You did what?

JEFF
Cheat sheets. Very elaborate, written on little pieces of paper in every pocket. Tiny writing. And I've cheated on every medical board exam I ever had to take.

She doesn't know what to make of this or what to say.

JEFF (CONT'D)

When I was a kid, I had this doctor who misdiagnosed my Chickenpox as Dermatitis, I came down with a 106 degree fever and I almost died. Did I ever tell you that?

NEALY

No.

JEFF

When I was in the hospital recovering, my Mother and Grandmother were sitting around and I overheard my Grandmother say, "Well, I guess not all Doctors made As". That always stuck with me. Turns out I became one of those doctors; a C+ doctor.

NEALY

Why are you telling me this now? Jeff?

The tension mounts as they sit there in silence. Then something catches Jeff's eye.

JEFF

(whispers)

Nealy, look.

In the head lamps in front of them, a HUGE RACCOON wanders into the road to feed on some debris.

The car sits idly for a moment as they both regard the animal before them. Then...

Jeff suddenly guns the Prius and Nealy SCREAMS in protest-

As the animal stands, looking into the light--

NEALY

OH GOD JEFF! WHAT ARE YOU-

THUD--

The Prius runs the raccoon over...

And then Jeff backs up-- Nealy now mortified & silent--

--and The Prius runs over the animal again--THUD--

Nealy and Jeff then regard...

The raccoon twitches in front of them in the head lamps.

JEFF

(after a long beat)

I don't want to lose our marriage,
I believe in our marriage, I believe that
we can have a good life together,
but it has to start now. No more lies,
no more omissions.

She's petrified.

JEFF (CONT'D)

I guess I just have to hope maybe...
Maybe there's a chance that even the most
dismal problems can be overcome. Somehow.

NEALY

What are we talking about here Jeff?

JEFF

The reason Peter Mazzone and Rebecca are
getting divorced is because he found out
I had sex with her. He called a meeting
with me and extorted a hundred thousand
dollars from me as my punishment.

A long, nightmarish beat passes.

NEALY

Peter Mazzone extorted you for a hundred
thousand dollars because you fucked
Rebecca?

JEFF

Yes. Only once. I mean, obviously
he only extorted me once. What I mean is
I only had sex with Rebecca once. I'm
sorry for not coming clean while it was
happening, but I didn't think it would be
very helpful to burden you with it.

NEALY

Wow.

JEFF

It gets worse...
(off her look)
A lot worse.
(beat)

The thing is... I was joking around with
Lincoln about how I wished our crazy
neighbor Lila would die and...

He doesn't know how to continue the story...

NEALY

You mean?

JEFF

I didn't think he was taking me literally
Nealy, I swear, but...

NEALY

You're telling me Lincoln killed Lila
with a bow and arrow?

Jeff nods.

NEALY (CONT'D)

Why? Why would he do that??

JEFF

Well, this is the kicker.
(long pause)
She was pregnant. With my child.

NEALY

You fucked Lila too?

JEFF

Yes, to stop her from telling you about
my thing with Rebecca. She was so
volitile--I was afraid and then...

Nealy leans back, shocked, trying hard to process this...

NEALY

How in the world did Lila know about you
having sex with Rebecca?

JEFF

Because I accidentally poisoned her cat.
And so she followed me to work one day to
confront me about it and there was Peter
shoving me in the hallway. And then she
came on to me and when I tried to resist
she went absolutely ballistic--practically
apoplectic--and threatened to tell you
what I'd done. She's obviously mentally
ill or bipolar or who knows...anyway,
I know it's a terrible excuse.

(after a moment)

The chances she would get pregnant from
that one time, it's so fucking slim, but
it really happened didn't it and now...

His eyes search...

NEALY

What about Honey, the erotic massage therapist?

JEFF

What about her?

NEALY

Now that you're baring all, did you fuck her too?

JEFF

Believe it or not, that actually happened just the way I told you originally.

A few moments pass and then Nealy laughs.

NEALY

I don't know why I'm laughing, I'm sorry.

She gets out of the Prius.

Jeff watches from inside as... She paces the shoulder.

Then suddenly runs to the car and pounds on the hood three times screaming...

NEALY (CONT'D)

JESUS. FUCKING. CHRIST.

Then she turns away and grows very still in the lights.

HE GETS OUT OF THE CAR AND WALKS AROUND TO SEE HER FACE

She looks at him. She's ghost white. She returns to the car. Gets back in.

LIT BY THE GLOW OF THE DASH

She looks up to see...

Jeff staring back at her in the bright white light.

She rolls down the window, looks at the empty road.

He then gets back in the car, in the driver's seat.

They sit in silence a moment--he in the suspense of what her final reaction to all this is going to be.

NEALY (CONT'D)

As long as we're coming clean, before that big fight we had, when I hit you...

(MORE)

NEALY (CONT'D)

I'd been having an affair for over a year. I never loved him... it's just, in a nutshell, I think, after Luke was born I missed feeling attractive so badly and he gave that back to me.

JEFF

Do I know the guy?

NEALY

No, I met him when he came into the store looking for a new couch.

JEFF

How did it start?

NEALY

He didn't see anything he liked so he asked me to help him design an original. We picked out some blue corduroy fabric. Then he had me measure the length from his waist to his knee so we could get the exact right depth for the seat cushions and when I put the tape on him we had a little moment and it went on from there.

After a long beat... Jeff gets out of the car again...

HE STEPS INTO THE HEAD LAMPS AND SQUATS BY THE ANIMAL

It's hurt badly and its breaths are labored. One of its legs has been completely flattened and is bleeding. Its fur on its back has been partially torn away.

Nealy walks into the light to see the carnage up-close too. Jeff then picks up a stick and pokes at the animal and suddenly...

The raccoon pushes itself up on three legs and gets into a broken, defensive pose...

Jeff and Nealy take a step back as...

The Raccoon looks right into Jeff's eyes. Then right into Nealy's. Everyone shares a look of pure agony.

The Raccoon then drags its body off the road into the dark woods and vanishes...

JEFF

Nealy. I know in the past I've resisted going into therapy with you but now...

(he starts laughing)

...if you'll still have me...

And now she cracks up too. They both start laughing hysterically. It's belly splitting madness. They laugh until the laughter ends of its own volition.

They regard each other for a long moment, then...

NEALY

You know what, I didn't really get to it before when I said I had my affair to feel attractive again. There's more too it I think.

(beat)

When we first got to know each other, we used to really talk about things, you know, we used to be idealistic, we used to look forward to all the things we'd do together, didn't we?

JEFF

Sure, yes.

NEALY

I feel like now, now we both have totally separate lives, aside from when we lay in bed together with Luke. I feel connected with you then. But I don't know, I just feel really alone in the world lately, and I think, to be totally honest, that's the real reason I had an affair with Chris.

JEFF

Okay. I get it.

NEALY

(after a beat)

Is there anything more you want to say to me?

JEFF

What do you want to know?

NEALY

I want to know what you think of our marriage. I want to know why you think we should stay married--I mean, other than for Luke's sake. I want to know if you love me.

JEFF

Okay. Just a second.

(gathers his thoughts)

The short answer is yes, I think we should stay married.

(MORE)

JEFF (CONT'D)

But why we should, that's I guess a long answer and...

And I guess I agree with you we've been disconnected for a long time, living in separate universes for a long time. Honestly I think about it a lot--all the time really. And if you're asking me to be brutally honest...

NEALY

I am.

JEFF

Sometimes I've thought we made a mistake getting married--we got married so young. When we fight sometimes I think it's obvious. Are you sure you want to do this?

She nods.

JEFF (CONT'D)

The truth is, sometimes I don't think I love you anymore, Nealy. I'm not even sure that love exists and I think it's just some kind of neurotic projection of my ego that I want but can never really have. Like we're just stuck in some kind of weird gum being chewed up by circumstance and we don't know how to get out. But then that moment of hell and uncertainty always seems to pass. And every now and again it gets replaced by something so much better than that--something light and nice and familiar--like when we laugh together--something that reminds me of the way I used to feel when I was a kid before the whole shitstorm happened between my parents that blew them apart and made me a God damn cynic...

AS THEY DRIVE HOME TOGETHER, TOGETHER, WE CONT' TO HEAR:

JEFF (V.O.)

But when I feel that way, I mean when I feel light and happy with you, it always seems to outweigh the other stuff. It dwarfs it--as if the other stuff isn't even really real. Like it's resentment and anger that's the illusion, not love. And even if that feeling lasts for only

(MORE)

JEFF (V.O.) (CONT'D)

a couple moments, somehow it feels like that's the real way I feel all the time-- as if I had just forgotten or something. And I weigh the pluses and minuses of all that, you know, like a scientist, a C+ scientist maybe, but the solution to the equation I always seem to come to is that I do love you, and I do know what love is, and I never want to lose you, no matter how fucked or ambivalent I feel...

AS JEFF AND NEALY RETURN HOME AND WALK INSIDE TOGETHER...

JEFF (V.O.)

And that's the solution that I always remind myself of in the hard times, when I get silent and don't want to talk after a big fight--I mean, after I cool down-- I replay all the pluses and minuses in my head and I always come to the same conclusion: we should stay married, as complicated as it is.

IN BED THAT NIGHT, THEY LAY TOGETHER, FACING EACH OTHER

JEFF

(after a long beat)

What will we do about Lincoln?

NEALY

You mean, should we turn him in?

He nods. She goes inward.

JEFF

We have to, don't we?

NEALY

He's not going to come murder us to cover his tracks, is he?

JEFF

I don't think so Nealy.

NEALY

Then what threat is he to us?

JEFF

None.

NEALY

And is he a threat to anyone else--his family, his friends, the girls he coaches?

JEFF

I wouldn't have thought so two days ago. But I wouldn't have thought he would kill a pregnant woman with a bow and arrow either. Anyway, why are you asking this?

NEALY

Because if he's not a threat to anyone, why should he go to prison?

JEFF

Well, I think, to be really simple about it, because what he did is unconscionable.

NEALY

This has nothing to do with anyone's conscience--this is the real world.

She pauses, thinks... He waits for her to complete her thought.

NEALY (CONT'D)

If we turn him in, his two boys grow up without a father. His wife gets to be a single mother. On top of that, the press would run like crazy with the story and at best Luke would grow up with a cloud of murder and weirdness hovering over his head. All so a man trying to pay you back for saving his life can be punished for a lonely woman's death who tricked you into getting her pregnant.

They both contemplate the scenario.

JEFF

Nealy?

She faces him. He touches her tenderly.

JEFF (CONT'D)

I don't want that for us but...

They look into each other's eyes. Bonded intimately by this bizarre problem.

She scoots closer. Then he scoots closer to her. They kiss on the mouth for the first time in years.

Even when they were fucking in the mirror it was not close to this intimate. They look into one another's eyes...

JEFF (CONT'D)

I want to do the right thing, Nealy.

NEALY

For who?

AT A LOCAL POLICE STATION, THE NEXT DAY

A DETECTIVE sits at his desk across from Jeff as the rest of the station bustles around...

DETECTIVE

Did you ever see her entertaining any men, dating, whatnot?

JEFF

No, she kept to herself. I don't think she even had a job.

DETECTIVE

Her elderly parents supported her.

JEFF

I see. I never saw them visit.

DETECTIVE

They live in a retirement home. She visited them sometimes.

JEFF

Did she stand to inherit their money?

DETECTIVE

Yes, why?

JEFF

Maybe she had a jealous brother or sister?

DETECTIVE

No, she was an only child. So you never saw any men coming and going from her house?

JEFF

No.

DETECTIVE

Did she ever mention any past boyfriends to you or your wife?

JEFF

No, not that I remember. But I guess you're asking that because she was pregnant?

The Detective looks at him curiously.

DETECTIVE

Yah, how did you know?

JEFF

I know because she came to me to be her obstetrician. Maybe you knew that already from an appointment book she kept or something?

DETECTIVE

No, it's news to me.

JEFF

Right, well, anyway, I asked her who the father was when she first came in but she didn't want to say for some reason. It was kind of strange to tell the truth. I never had a patient do that before.

The Detective appears to take Jeff at face value. Writes some notes on his pad.

AT THE YMCA, IN THE GYMNASIUM

A five on five basketball game is going on with some intensity framing Jeff sitting on the bench with some OTHER MEN waiting to play. SLOWLY PUSH to Jeff and then Lincoln shows up and sits next to him.

LINCOLN

I think I'm getting an ulcer, Doc.

JEFF

I can prescribe you something for that.

Lincoln wears a tank top today and as he leans forward Jeff notices his gang tattoo for the first time ever.

Regarding the worried look on Link's face, Jeff takes stock of his moral inventory for a moment. Then...

JEFF (CONT'D)

The Police still haven't contacted you?

LINCOLN

No.

THE FLOWERING GARDEN

AS A PHONE RINGS, SLOWLY PUSH TO THE LANG HOUSE

The 2nd story construction remains unfinished. In the living room window, we see Jeff pick up a cordless phone.

JEFF

Hello?

INTERCUT JOSE IN HIS TRUCK EATING LUNCH AS NEEDED

JOSE

Jefe, it's Jose, did you file the new plans yet?

JEFF

Yes, so all we can do is cross our fingers and hope the city approves them.

JOSE

I'm sure it's going to work out.

JEFF

Hope so.

JOSE

Listen, on not exactly the same note but similar, I think I have a better idea than the flagstone for the backyard.

JEFF

I'm listening.

JOSE

Well, it's so obvious, but in the front of your house where you have no sod but you have a lot of flowers and shrubs, the raccoons never mess around out there, do they?

By now this front garden is prominent in frame beneath the window. And Jeff stands looking out at it.

JEFF

No, they leave it alone. Are you going to tell me we should do something out back like we have in front?

LATER, LATINOS REMOVE THE SOD IN THE BACK PIECE BY PIECE

JOSE (V.O.)

I'm thinking the reason the garden alone
in front is because without the sod,
moisture isn't trapped in the topsoil.
So no worms or grubs or racoons.

IN BED, AT NIGHT, JEFF AND NEALY LAY LOST IN THOUGHT

(a jump back in time to conclude previous bedroom scene)

JEFF

Nealy?

NEALY

Yah?

JEFF

What do you think's going to happen to
us?

There is a pause in the conversation, but...

AFTER THE SOD HAS BEEN STRIPPED IN THE BACKYARD...

We hear Nealy's answer as LATINOS replant the backyard
with scores of colorful shrubs, flowering trees, etc...

NEALY (V.O.)

I think we're going to stay up all night
thinking about how monstrous it is to
agree to make the decision we're making.
I think we're going to talk about it
night after night until one day we decide
not to, and for a long time we'll
probably worry that somehow you'll get
implicated and the truth will be exposed.

A bit later, Jose places a new, beautiful stone fountain
down. It's a glorious, sunny day. Lots of work being done.

NEALY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That anxiety will stay with us for a long
time. Maybe we won't make it. Maybe
we'll implode with guilt. I don't know.
Maybe that's what should happen to us--or
something worse. Or maybe we'll make it
through.

(MORE)

NEALY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Obviously not exactly how we pictured it when we went on our first date, but who says we need to be punished for this-- what did either of us really do that was so wrong beyond betraying each other, which is obviously awful, but...

JUMP CUT TO THE NEARLY FINISHED PRODUCT

Stone pathways have now been laid, surrounded by a jungle of plant-life. No sod for the raccoons to flip over. The fountain now springs water. A few plants are still in their black plastic pots, a few holes have yet to be filled, a few Latinos are still hard at work...

NEALY (V.O.)

You didn't ask Lincoln to do what he did. He just misunderstood you and...

JUMP TO A SHOT OF THE BACKYARD BUT AT NIGHT

A bunch of new low voltage lights artfully illuminate all the new plants.

NEALY (V.O.)

Nothing like this will ever happen again. That's the main thing.

As Nealy completes her thought, we PUSH to the tree where the wind-chimes once were. No raccoon comes tonight.

SOMETIME LATER, OUTSIDE LILA'S HOUSE

A REALTOR plants a FOR SALE sign in the front yard and the construction on the Lang house is complete. Inside the living room window we see what appears to be a very pregnant Nealy cross by.

IN THE NOW WILD, OVERGROWN, FLOWERING GARDEN

Luke, Jeff and Nealy, belly protruding with their second child, eat lunch on a flagstone patio in the middle of all the plant life. Bees and hummingbirds buzz around them. The garden is so colorful and bright it's surreal. Beside Jeff is a new vegetable garden. As we PUSH TO the family, a gopher pops up from the vegetable garden and looks at the tomatoes above. Sensing something, Jeff turns toward the gopher and it ducks out of sight. Jeff then continues to eat his sandwich.

THE END