

THE ICE STORM (1997)

by James Schamus.

Based on the novel by Rick Moody.

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More info about this movie on [imdb.com](http://imdb.com)

EXT. TRAIN - DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN

Suburban Connecticut, outside of New York City, 1973. The still after a terrible storm. Trees dripping, their branches torn, the air warming just before the break of a new day. The train lies dark and motionless, a few flashing yellow emergency lights up front, as a work crew removes debris from the track.

INT. TRAIN. PRE-DAWN

Various passengers, huddled uncomfortably, cold, asleep.

On Paul Hood, 15-and-a-half, stoner-preppie look, hunched up in his seat under the faint emergency exit light. He reads his Fantastic Four comic book by the pale light of the emergency exit sign.

Suddenly, the lights begin to flicker on and the hum of the train's engines returns.

The conductor enters the car, blasting forth in his classic nasal voice.

CONDUCTOR

Good morning ladies and gentlemen --

He sounds like a baseball announcer.

PASSENGERS

(mumbling, ad lib)

What ladies?

CONDUCTOR

-- this train originating at New York's Grand Central Station is back in service - next stop will be New Canaan, Connecticut. New Canaan, Connecticut, next stop!

He moves on to the next car.

The train begins to move.

Paul rubs his elbow against the window and looks out into the still-dark early morning.

He looks back down at his comic book.

On the comic book: Reed Richards (also known as Stretch) has zapped his young son with a cosmic ray gun to neutralize the destructive energy that Annihilus has implanted in him.

The Thing, Medusa, Flame, and Richards' wife Sue Storm look on, stunned.

"THEN YOU'VE TURNED HIM INTO A  
VEGETABLE. YOUR OWN SON." "DON'T  
YOU SEE, SUE? HE WAS TOO  
POWERFUL... IF HIS ENERGY HAD  
CONTINUED TO BUILD, HE WOULD HAVE  
DESTROYED THE WORLD!"

Paul looks up again, thinking.

PAUL (V.O.)  
In issue number 141 of The  
Fantastic Four, published in  
November 1973, Reed Richards has to  
use his anti-matter weapon on his  
own son, who Annihilus has turned  
into a human atom bomb. His son is  
the result of Richards' coupling  
with the earthling Sue Storm, and  
the problem is that the cosmic rays  
that infused Richards and the rest  
of the Fantastic Four on their  
aborted moon mission have made  
young Franklin a volatile mixture  
of matter and anti-matter.

EXT. TRAIN BRIDGE. PRE-DAWN

The train moves slowly through a suburban, semi-forested landscape.

PAUL (V.O.)  
And that's what it is to come from  
a family, if you analyze it  
closely. Each of them is negative  
matter for the other ones. And  
that's what dying is -- dying is  
when your family, which is in fact  
your personal negative matter from  
which you emerge -- it's when the  
family takes you back, thus hurling  
you back into negative space...

INT. TRAIN. CONT'D.

On Paul, as the sun breaks over the horizon. His face glows warmly in the yellow light. He looks down idly at the comic book.

PAUL (V.O.)  
So it's a paradox -- the closer  
you're drawn back in, the further

into the void you're thrown.

EXT. CONRAIL STATION. EARLY MORNING

The train slowly pulls in.

The train doors open, and Paul, weary from the long night, emerges. He sees his family gathered at the other end of the platform -- Ben, 40, a bit worse for wear but still retaining traces of his boyish looks; Elena, 37, distant and elegant even in her oversized sweater; and Wendy, 14, a sullen suburban Lolita.

He pauses, regarding them.

They stand, silent, even dignified, awaiting him.

EXT. ST. PETER'S SCHOOL. MORNING

To establish. A typical New England prep school.

INT. PAUL AND FRANCIS'S DORM ROOM. MORNING

Cramped, a mess, but quaint. Paul shares the room with Francis Davenport IV, a dissolute, smart-ass son of money.

Paul's alarm clock rings. He slams his hand down on it and jumps out of bed, fully clothed in his rumpled preppie uniform of frayed khakis, loose tie, shirt with one tail untucked in, etc. Across the room, Francis beckons from his desk, as he finishes loading up a four-foot-high bong.

FRANCIS

Arise and shine, young Hood.

PAUL

I hope you changed the water in  
that bong from last night.

FRANCIS

(finishing a hit)

The water, as you call it, is a  
special mixture of amaretto and  
Ben&Ben blended for just the exact  
chemical interaction with the last  
of our precious Thai stick.

Paul reluctantly walks over and takes a hit. He coughs,  
spewing uninhaled smoke.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Waste not Master Hood -- that was  
\$20 for the bag.

PAUL

(gathering books, papers,  
almost talking to

himself)

Man, Francis, you are one drug addled elitist freak, and when the revolution comes I do not want to be lined up with you and shot, 'cause you're fucking ripe for political reeducation, you know, like in the fields.

FRANCIS

Paul, cancel your mental appointments, baby. What are you, like still stoned from last night?

PAUL

(spraying some chloroform mouth spray)  
I gotta get to English class.

INT. ST PETERS' CLASSROOM. DAY

An English class in progress.

Paul Hood sits blankly, hardly listening, until he hears the teacher call out.

TEACHER

Libbets?

LIBBETS

What Dostoyevsky is saying here is that to be a Christian is to choose, because you have to choose of your own choice, but since you can't choose to be good because that would be too rational you have to choose to be bad -- it's existential.

TEACHER

Thank you Libbets, that's a very compelling summary, but --

Paul looks at her, smitten. Marge, Paul's friend, notices his look.

INT. ST. PETER'S HALLWAY. DAY

As class lets out, Paul accosts Libbets.

PAUL

Um, Libbets. Hey, Dostoyevsky, I'm also really a fan, and what you were saying, you know, have you ever read The Idiot?

LIBBETS

The Idiot?

PAUL  
If you liked Notes from  
Underground, you'll love The Idiot.

LIBBETS  
(turning to go)  
Great, thanks for the tip.

PAUL  
(after her)  
The Idiot.

INT. ST. PETER'S HALLWAY. DAY

Paul walks with Marge.

PAUL  
I'm in love with Libbets Casey.

MARGE  
Yeah, well, you've been in love  
with like every other girl here, I  
was wondering when you'd get around  
to Libbets.

PAUL  
It's beyond mere physical  
attraction.

MARGE  
That's good, because I don't think  
Libbets is capable of the sex act.

PAUL  
Truly? Do speak.

MARGE  
My diagnosis is messed in the head.  
A poor little rich girl -- I mean  
check out the jeans and fur look.  
And lend your ears to this  
brutality. Like her mom and step  
dad and her step-sisters are going  
to Switzerland to ski over  
Thanksgiving break -- and like they  
didn't invite her!

PAUL  
How do you know this shit?

MARGE  
They did it last year too. It's  
like traditional or something.  
They've got this humongoid Park Ave  
apartment and she just holes up

there with a wad of cash.

(beat)

Aren't the hugely wealthy sad?

PAUL

(pause)

You think Francis is going to beat  
me to the punch here?

MARGE

Since he sleeps with every girl you  
ever show an interest in, why don't  
you just keep your Libbets thing a  
secret from him?

PAUL

Good thinking Marge.

INT. SCHOOL PARTY. NIGHT

Paul, Francis and friends enter the dark, crowded room.  
Various kids are awkwardly dancing to some progressive fm  
style undanceable rock (Jethro Tull, etc.) Francis hands Paul  
the tail end of a joint, but Paul waves it away.

PAUL

No more man. I'm about to drop as  
it is.

FRANCIS

See ya.

PAUL

Where you going?

FRANCIS

Paul, let me enlighten you about  
something.  
You and I exist on two opposite  
sides of a great existential  
divide, that being your pathetic  
virginity on the one hand and my  
astonishing number of sexual  
conquests on the other. I'm off to  
get laid. See you.

PAUL

Flame on, asshole.

FRANCIS

And remember, with your erogenous  
zones lubricated as such with the  
mighty herb, do not attempt  
terrestrial contact with members of  
the opposite sex -- because you  
drone on like a motherfucker when  
you're stoned.

He waves his fingers toward Paul's eyes, in the classic "stoned" gesture, then wanders off.

Paul looks on at the gathering. Marge waves to him from the dance floor.

LATER:

INT. SCHOOL PARTY. CONT'D

Paul wanders, stoned, through the party. He sees Libbets from across the room. She seems to be surrounded by friends.

INT. PARTY. CONT'D

Paul has cornered Libbets and is talking over the music. There are just a few people left, most of them making out with each other.

PAUL

(stoned)

-- because I've been reading Kerouac and Ginsberg and those guys were creating beat culture and traveling and sleeping wherever, and, of course, with all kinds of people, but when you read carefully the various contemporary accounts of their lives, and, uh, these guys didn't bathe much, I mean they were really filthy, with like genital crabs, lice, exceptionally strong body odor...

Libbets smiles through her yawn.

EXT. SCHOOL BENCH. NIGHT

Paul sits alone on the bench, freezing cold, eating a donut. Some kids from across the lawn yell good-night to him.

INT. DORM ROOM. EVENING.

Paul is at his desk. Francis enters, wrapped in a towel, fresh from the shower.

PAUL

How can you do that man?

FRANCIS

Do what?

PAUL

Sleep all day. I mean, look, it's already getting dark outside, and you're just getting up.

FRANCIS  
(beat)  
Um, Libbets Casey.

PAUL  
What?

FRANCIS  
Aha! I could sense the vibe.

PAUL  
What do you mean?

FRANCIS  
Am I right or am I right?

PAUL  
Shit. You're not planning --

FRANCIS  
My man, I speak to you solely as a comrade in arms offering unconditional aid. I've been giving this one a lot of thought, and I believe that the two of you together might just reach that higher ground that --

A knock at the door.

STUDENT (O.S.)  
Hood, telephone.

Paul rolls off his bed, opens the door.

PAUL  
Don't mess with Libbets. I mean it!

INT. DORM HALLWAY. NIGHT

Paul walks to the pay phone at the end of the hall.

PAUL  
Hello?

INTERCUT - HOOD HOUSEHOLD. NIGHT

It's a modern (shag carpet, geometric-patterned wallpaper, etc.) suburban house.

Ben Hood talks on the phone, a drink in his hand.

BEN  
Paul?

In the background, we can see Wendy watching Richard Nixon on

TV.

PAUL

Hi dad.

BEN

Hey guy. Things ok up there? You all right?

PAUL

I'm fine dad.

BEN

Well good. Just confirming. You'll be on the 3:50 Wednesday afternoon.

PAUL

Well dad, actually I thought I'd take the morning train on Thanksgiving -- got a lot of studying, papers, you know, lab experiments --

BEN

Lab experiments? Right smart guy -- Paul, you know your mother's gonna be disappointed not to see more of you -- In fact, let me make this more than a simple request guy, I think you should...

IN THE BACKGROUND:

NIXON

(on TV, from San Clemente press conference)

Well, with regard to the questions as to why Americans feel we were wrong to make the tapes, that is not particularly surprising. I think that most Americans do not like the idea of taping conversations and, frankly, it is not something that particularly appeals to me...

BEN

Hold on for a second.

(turning)

Wendy, you want-to say hi to your brother?

She frowns.

BEN (CONT'D)

Come on!

She gets up sullenly and goes to the phone.

WENDY  
Charles.

PAUL  
Charles. Have you been keeping out  
of my shit? Have you refrained from  
entering the sacred precincts of my  
room?

WENDY  
I have not touched your sh--  
(looks at father)  
Stuff. You watching this?

PAUL  
Watching what?

WENDY  
Nixon, doofus! It's incredible. He  
should be shot.

BEN  
(overhearing)  
Hey, that's the president of the  
goddam United States you're talking  
about, Wendy!

From the kitchen, Elena overhears. She's dressed to go out,  
but in the process of making a Kraft macaroni and cheese  
dinner for Wendy.

WENDY  
He's a liar!  
(still talking more to her  
father than into the  
phone)  
Dean told him on March 21st about  
Kalmbach and Hunt, all about the  
payoffs to the Watergate burglars,  
so you tell me where the so-called  
"Dean Report" is, but you can't  
because it doesn't exist, because  
he lied about Haldeman and  
Erlichman and the April 17 tape,  
that's why! Liar!

Ben retreats, going to the wet bar to pour another drink.

BEN  
(muttering)  
OK, OK, the defense rests.  
(to Elena in the kitchen)  
Want another?

ELENA (O.S.)

No thank you. We should be off.

BEN

Gotcha.

He puts the bottle back down without pouring.

INTERCUT BACK TO PAUL:

PAUL

(on the phone)

Hey Charles. Charles, calm down --  
I wasn't in on it.

Elena, putting on her coat, comes into the den and gives Wendy a kiss on the forehead as Wendy mumbles her good-byes to Paul on the phone.

ELENA

Dinner's on the counter. We'll be at the Williams's -- you know the number.

(takes the phone from  
Wendy)

Paul. Hi. Is there anything you'll want, any particular kind of food or snack or anything we can stock up on?... You're all right? ... OK. See you next week. I love you.

Back to Nixon on the TV.

NIXON

We must recognize that one excess begets another, and that the extremes of violence in the 1960s contributed to the extremes of Watergate...

On Wendy as she regards the TV, hearing her parents' farewells as they leave through the front door.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. NIGHT

A large New England Colonial, with a few modern additions and touches. We hear the sound of dinner chatter.

INT. WILLIAMS DINING ROOM. NIGHT

The kitchen door swings open into the dining room, and Mikey and Sandy Williams emerge, each holding platters of food. Mikey, 15-and-a-half, lost in space, and Sandy, 14, a sullen and barely pubescent boy, each have towels draped over their forearms -- they are the evening's "waiters".

They move unsteadily to the table, at which sit their parents Janey (38, a hard-edged, sharp-witted beauty) and Jim (43,

large and a bit goofy, a genius inventor), together with their guests, Ben and Elena Hood, and neighbors Dorothy and Ted Franklin.

We jump cut through the evening's conversations, seen mostly from the furtive POV's of the boys.

BEN

His brother came back --

DOROTHY

From where?

BEN

Vietnam.

DOROTHY

Oh. Are we going to talk about this, about...?

ELENA

You should hear. It's very sad, he was --

JUMP CUT:

Janey is whispering something into Mikey's ear, who returns to the kitchen.

JIM

It was a benefit for the ACLU or something, and Harry Reems himself was there --

DOROTHY

The man with the -- from Deep Throat?

JIM

The very one -- something about a first amendment defense fund -- well I believe in it --

DOROTHY

Ted took me to see it.

JANEY

Ted, how romantic.

DOROTHY

I have to say, the movie didn't do much for me. But being in that theater, surrounded by all those horny young college boys and perverts, there was something in the air that --

JUMP CUT:

The boys are pouring wine.

JIM

-- pulls right up to the pump,  
jumps out like there's no gas  
shortage, oblivious, and by this  
point everybody in line's piling  
out of their cars ready to kill the  
guy, when they notice it's that  
Reverend Edwards --

BEN

The Unitarian? The new one?

JIM

Yeah -- claims he pulled off Creek  
Road and didn't notice the line  
going back Mill Street for half a  
mile.

BEN

He's either got his head in the  
clouds or up his --

DOROTHY

I hear he's slept with half the  
women in his congregation --

TED

Lucky bastard!

As this is said, Mikey accidentally spills some wine on Ben.

BEN

Hell! -- I mean, no problemo there  
Mikey. Here, I --

Janey leans over with her napkin and attempts a cursory wipe  
of Ben's pants. Is there a just barely noticeable frisson  
between Ben and Janey as she removes the napkin? If there is,  
Elena doesn't -- or pretends not to -- notice.

CUT TO:

The boys, now in pajamas (Sandy's with padded feet, Mikey's a  
combination of t-shirt and pj bottoms) are bringing out  
coffee and dessert. The adults eye Mikey's handling of the  
coffee pot with some nervousness.

DOROTHY

(unconvincing)

So fascinating. Do you get free  
tickets to the movies, that kind of  
thing?

BEN

No, my job is just to analyze the entertainment stocks and advise our institutional investors on where to put their money. It's --

ELENA

Don't be so modest, Ben. It's a job that requires a certain prescience with regards to entertainment trends. You were the first to predict that *Billy Jack* would be a hit --

BEN

(with a bit too much conviction)

And as usual no one believed me...

Silence.

CUT TO:

The dinner party has moved to the living room for after dinner drinks. Elena remains behind to help Janey pick up the table. She stacks a plate on top of another.

JANEY

Please don't.

ELENA

It's not a bother.

JANEY

I insist.

(beat)

Don't touch them.

Elena realizes that there's an edge to Janey's voice.

ELENA

Oh.

JANEY

(realizing she's gone too far)

It's really quite all right.

ELENA

Of course.

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

The party progresses. Mikey and Sandy are lying on their stomachs at the top of the stairs, out of sight.

DOROTHY

And to think -- they met at a key  
party of all things.

ELENA

A key party?

DOROTHY

You know, it's a California thing.  
That scuzzy husband of hers dragged  
her kicking and screaming to one  
when they were out in L.A. you  
know, the men put their car keys in  
a bowl, and then at the end of the  
evening the women line up and fish  
them out and go home with whoever's  
keys they've got. Anyhow that's how  
she met this Rod person or whatever  
his name is and he's left his wife  
and she's packing for California.  
Irwin is devastated. It's so  
ironic.

JANEY

Ironic?

DOROTHY

(caught out)

Well, um, yes. Ironic. His name is  
Rod.

INT. WILLIAMS FRONT HALLWAY. NIGHT

The guests are leaving. The men shake hands, the women kiss,  
and the men and women awkwardly peck each others' cheeks.

ELENA

Thank you Janey.

DOROTHY

It was lovely!

BEN

Hey Jim, next time you've got to  
fill me in on whatever it is you're  
up to these days.

JIM

Will do.

INT. STAIRWAY. NIGHT

At the top of the stairs, a rather dejected Sandy and Mikey  
finish spying on the leave-takings below. Mikey nudges Sandy,  
and they silently head back the upstairs hall.

INT. MIKE'S ROOM. NIGHT

They enter Mike's room -- the door has a "nuclear waste positively no admittance" sign on it.

As Mikey reaches his bed, he doubles over, groaning, and starts to make retching noises. He then throws himself onto the bed, his head leaning over the far side.

Sandy walks over and sees a pile of vomit next to the bed. Taken aback for a moment, he then reaches forward and picks it up -- it's fake plastic vomit. He throws it on top of Mike's back, but Mikey doesn't take notice.

SANDY

Stupid!

(pause, looking sullenly  
at Mike's back)

Is Wendy Hood your girlfriend?

MIKEY

(not looking up, but  
alarmed)

Who said so?

SANDY

No one.

MIKEY

I don't have a girlfriend.

Mikey returns to his reading -- a copy of The Sensuous Woman, obviously well pawed over. He absentmindedly picks his nose. As he flips the pages, a beautiful, almost electrical HUMMING SOUND begins to fill his ears. He frowns and pauses to listen to it.

Sandy, who has picked up a balsa wood miniature plane, obviously doesn't hear it.

Mikey focuses on the plane as Sandy waves it through the air. Perhaps the hum is the sound of its engines as it soars through the sky...

INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

There is a large poster of a cartoon version of Richard Nixon "Tricky Dick" -- on her wall. Wendy is on the phone to her friend Beth.

WENDY

-- he knows that when the March  
24th tape -- you know with Dean,  
where Dean tells him that there's a  
cancer growing on the presidency --

She pauses as Beth asks a question.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Who? No way. He's like a big infected whitehead wearing jeans. I wouldn't --

She hears the downstairs door open.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
-- shit, it's my parents.

She turns her light out.

INT. HOOD UPSTAIRS HALLWAY. NIGHT

Ben and Elena walking past Wendy's room to their bedroom.

BEN  
You'd think she'd learn how to cook a chicken, eh? My drumstick was still frozen when you cut inside there. I'm probably going to get whatever that disease -- and Jim, how that guy ever became a millionaire --

He pauses before a hall table, and, with his eyes, traces the telephone cord under Wendy's room.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Hmm. I knew she'd still be up.  
Watch this --

But Elena simply continues into the master bedroom.

He starts to pull gently on the cord. And continues pulling. No response for a few seconds. Then:

CONTINUED: 25

WENDY (O.S.)  
(yelling behind her door)  
Dad stop it!

BEN  
Get to sleep young lady -- and I mean it.

Wendy opens the door to her room.

WENDY  
Fascist!

BEN  
If I were a fascist I would have sent you to one of those Southern military academies a long time ago. Now get to bed.

She slams the door.

He opens it.

INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

Ben enters the room, angry.

BEN

Hey!

Wendy jumps into bed and under the covers, pulling them up over her head. He stands over her, looking down at the crumpled pile of sheet and blanket.

BEN (CONT'D)

(softening)

Hey, kiddo. Sleep well, huh.

He places his hand where her cheek should be, and caresses the sheet.

WENDY

(without pulling the sheet  
down, but nicely)

Good-night dad.

BEN

Good night kiddo.

Ben turns to the door, where he sees a silent Elena standing in her nightgown, a slight smile on her face.

INT. HOOD BEDROOM. NIGHT

Elena is sitting cross-legged, eyes closed, on her side of the bed. We hear the toilet flush from the master bath, and see Ben emerge in his boxers. He pauses in front of the bed, looking at Elena.

ELENA

(without opening her eyes)

You're staring at me.

BEN

I wasn't star--

ELENA

I've been thinking, Ben, about Wendy. I was going to ask if she'd come with me sometime to meet Dr. Woolens.

BEN

That shrink -- the one you always wanted me to see? I thought you

dropped him.

ELENA

I did, but -- somebody should  
probably see her, talk to her...  
You think she's ok?

BEN

Why shouldn't she be?

Elena just gives him a look, more sad than angry.

BEN (CONT'D)

(pause)

Then again, why should she be? I  
mean with us, with our...

ELENA

So maybe you'll come too?

BEN

Oh not again Elena! If we've got  
problems, why can't you just come  
out and talk about them.

ELENA

It's you Ben who needs to talk.  
I've had my say, and I'm waiting to  
hear back from you.

BEN

Yeah but Elena, even you don't  
believe all that "I'm OK. You're  
OK" stuff you keep babbling about --  
you say so yourself. I've been all  
ears for about ten years now on his  
subject, and --

ELENA

-- And you haven't moved out yet.  
It's because you're too lazy, Ben.  
Too scared or lazy to either deal  
with us or simply make a decision --

BEN

Elena.

Silence.

ELENA

(sighing)  
Sleep in the study? Please.

Ben picks up a pillow and walks out, pausing wistfully at the door.

BEN

Good night.

ELENA  
Good night.

INT. WENDY'S ROOM. NIGHT

Wendy hears her parents' door close and sees a strip of light illuminate under her door as the hall light goes on, then off.

EXT. MANHATTAN OFFICE BUILDING. DAY

A nondescript, cleanly "modern" building. Engraved on the doors: "Shackley and Schwimmer, Securities Brokerage - Established 1964"

INT. SHACKLEY AND SCHWIMMER CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY

Ben, seated, is finishing a brief presentation to a small group of men, which includes George Clair, mid-thirties, unctuously handsome.

BEN

But what, exactly, is stagflation, this mixture of inflation and stagnation, and how should we in the securities industry understand and accommodate it? Well -- and I hope I'm not out of bounds here -- think of the money supply as a large male organ, continuously inflating, and yet, the societal vaginal cavity simply wants more. As the vicious circle of higher returns without real satisfaction continues, the money-organ may seem to be in demand, but in fact even the most inflated capital is unwanted. This is why I suggest that while we engage this mawing abyss for the highest returns, we at the same time fantasize, so to speak, of the safe harbor of capital appreciation.

The aging boss nods agreement.

SHACKLEY  
(more or less mumbling)  
Brilliant, brilliant.

George Clair just grins.

INT. BEN HOOD'S OFFICE. DAY

Ben is gathering papers, readying to leave. He looks up to

see George Clair in his doorway.

GEORGE

Hey there Benjie, you're becoming  
quite the in-house philosopher.  
When do you have time to think up  
all that stuff -- Shackley sure  
eats it up.

INTERCUT HALL IN FRONT OF BEN HOOD'S OFFICE

As we see that Clair is deftly fondling Hood's attractive  
secretary as she is seated in the cubicle beside the door to  
his office. She looks up coyly at Clair, hidden for the  
moment from Ben's view.

Ben comes out of his office, pulling his coat on. Clair and  
the secretary pull back, but it's clear that Ben has some  
sense of what's transpiring between them.

BEN

George, I'm just trying to get a  
global view of things -- can't just  
look at the small picture.

There's an obvious rivalry between the two of them.

GEORGE

And speaking of which, you have  
those market share charts Mr.  
Shackley was asking about?

BEN

Gotcha George, not a problem.  
Tomorrow. Hey, you want to start  
covering the old filmed  
entertainment sector yourself?

GEORGE

Ben you know that's your territory  
- and I wouldn't dream to trespass  
- you're the expert. Hey, how do  
you think Paramount's gonna do with  
that Blatty novel, what's it  
called? The Exorcist?

BEN

Overpriced bomb, cost over \$6  
million -- no stars, and no one's  
into the horror genre these days  
anyway. I'm advising the company  
recommend reducing positions there.  
It's disaster films that are gonna  
stay at the top.

GEORGE

Brilliant. Hey, you heading out a

little early today?

BEN  
Got a meeting uptown.

GEORGE  
(already moving off)  
Right o'.

BEN  
Up the organization!  
(then, to himself)  
Bastard.

The secretary pretends not to hear.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CLUB. DAY

An august New York institution. To establish.

INT. CLUB RESTAURANT. DAY

A stuffy, Ivy League atmosphere. A decades-old tradition of serving overcooked American food. Ben is seated across from his father, Harold Hood, a retired curmudgeon. There is a walker parked by Harold's chair.

HAROLD  
(waylaying a passing  
waiter)  
I'd asked for that double martini  
about three hours ago!

WAITER  
Coming right up, sir.

HAROLD  
So asking me out for lunch -- what  
prompted this exceptional event? --  
Of course I'm paying.

BEN  
We don't have to always go to your  
club, dad.

HAROLD  
And why are you still calling me  
dad? You're forty years old  
already, and --

BEN  
-- Well what am I supposed to call  
you?

HAROLD  
That's besides the point.

The martini arrives, along with Ben's beer.

BEN

I was actually trying to see about  
getting a little advice, you know --

HAROLD

Advice? I'm supposed to be getting  
the stock tips from you, Ben.  
Unless - have you quit your job?  
They fired you?

BEN

You know, dah--

He looks up and sees his father slurping his martini, not  
paying attention.

BEN (CONT'D)

Actually it's not about work, it's  
advice about --

HAROLD

Oh for crying out loud Ben, you  
don't mean to tell me that your  
marriage is going down the drain  
now --

BEN

Well, Elena and I have kind of been  
talking, not really talking, but --

HAROLD

-- Your mother, God bless her,  
stood by me for forty-two years --  
we never once contemplated divorce  
- I assume you're talking here  
about divorce? The very thought --

BEN

But dad, you guys truly hated each  
other, I mean really hated each --

HAROLD

-- Waiter! Where's my cobb salad?  
(back to Ben)  
You want advice Ben? If your big  
brother were still alive I'd have  
him go out into the back yard and  
beat some sense into your head.  
Look kid, you married that woman  
against my advice --

BEN

-- What advice? You never --

HAROLD

That's besides the point. The point  
is if I'd had any sense in me I'd  
have divorced your mother 40 years  
ago, and that's the truth, and here  
it is, 1972 --

BEN

-- 73

HAROLD

-- 73, and divorce is as easy as  
paying off a traffic ticket, and  
for crying out loud, Ben, be a man  
and just get it over with. I would  
have if I'd had the chance.

Ben ponders, as the food arrives.

BEN

(weakly)

But...

HAROLD

But what?

BEN

But I -- well maybe I love her.  
Elena.

His father rolls his eyes and stabs his salad with a fork.

HAROLD

Christ Ben! Make up your mind and  
eat your lunch.

INT. BOOK STORE. DAY

Elena browses the self-help section. A longish-haired,  
slightly gone-to-seed, but still handsome clergyman pauses  
next to her. He's wearing an ecclesiastical collar and bell  
bottoms.

He pulls out a copy of *Me, Myself and I*, glancing again at  
Elena.

PHILIP

Elena. Elena Hood, am I right?

ELENA

Yes.

PHILIP

Reverend Edwards. Philip Edwards.  
You came by and checked out the  
congregation a couple of times last  
year.

ELENA  
Yes, it was -- I ended up --

PHILIP  
(smiling)  
No need to make excuses --

EXT. NEW CANAAN HIGH SCHOOL FIELD. DAY

A cool gray afternoon. A group of boys are playing flag football on the field, while two groups of girls are gathered underneath the bleachers at either end, warily smoking cigarettes.

Wendy, Beth, and a couple of other girls are gathered in one group.

BETH  
(referring to one of the  
girls gathered in the  
other group)  
She said you licked Dave Brewster's  
weenie in the third floor bathroom.

WENDY  
She's a liar. I wouldn't touch Dave  
Brewster's dick if you paid me.  
It's probably crawling with v.d.  
after he put it in her, which he  
did.

The conversation peters out at this point, as the two groups of girls give each other the hairy eyeball from afar.

Wendy looks through from beneath the bleacher seats onto the field where the boys are playing.

A group of boys break from a huddle, Mikey among them.

The quarterback takes the hike and Mikey runs out for a pass. As he runs, his breathing increases in volume, filling his ears, and transforming into the humming sound he'd heard before.

The quarterback spots him and throws a long one.

He runs in an oblivion of beautiful white sound.

The ball drops next to him as he continues, in a world of his own, to run.

Suddenly, the humming ends and he stops and turns around, to see all the other kids just standing there looking at him. One of them makes a pot-smoking gesture, as if that's the explanation.

MIKEY

(as he returns to the  
group, ball in hand)  
Did anybody hear that?

The other kids snicker. Wendy looks on, and catches Mikey's eye for a fleeting moment.

WENDY  
I gotta go.

She takes hold of her bicycle and pushes off.

INT. COFFEE SHOP. DAY

Elena and Philip are seated at a booth.

PHILIP  
It's been a tremendously  
transformative year -- maybe a  
little controversial of course, but  
we're breaking down the old  
Unitarian barriers --

ELENA  
I suppose my reluctance was the  
group aspect of it -- I've never  
been much of a joiner, although I  
still consider myself a somewhat  
religious person --

PHILIP  
Well I of course flatter myself  
that our church is not exactly what  
most people would call organized  
religion -- at times it's the  
disorganization that's liberating --  
and of course I've begun to  
minister much more in what one  
might call therapeutic  
environments, in small groups, and  
one on one, couples --

Elena looks outside the window, and sees Wendy speed past on her bicycle.

ELENA  
(cutting him off)  
My daughter. I haven't been on a  
bike for years.  
(still not really looking  
at him)  
When was the last time you rode a  
bike?

PHILIP  
(a bit taken aback by the  
abrupt topic change)

They say you never forget.

ELENA  
(jarred back to his  
presence)  
Forget what?

PHILIP  
Forget how to ride a bike.

Silence.

ELENA  
No, of course you don't, you're  
right.

EXT. FIVE AND DIME STORE. DAY

Wendy pulls her bike up to the back, locks it, and walks in.

INT. FIVE AND DIME STORE. DAY

Wendy moves with a certain amount of stealth through the aisles, arriving at the candy selection.

She looks around.

She takes a package of twinkies and slips them into the oversized pockets of her painter's pants.

She turns around, and her breath goes out of her -- an OLD WOMAN has been watching her shoplift. The woman looks sadly at her, but says nothing. Wendy slowly walks past her and out the back door of the store. The woman looks on.

EXT. FIVE AND DIME STORE. DAY

As she walks her bike onto the sidewalk, Wendy comes across Sandy.

SANDY  
Hey Wendy.

WENDY  
Hey Sandy.

SANDY  
Mikey was looking for you.

WENDY  
Yeah? See ya.

She pushes off on her bike.

Sandy gazes after her. He takes his G.I. Joe out of his coat pocket, and points it at her.

SANDY

Bam.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS. DAY

Wendy flies along on her bike. It's a desolately beautiful fall day.

EXT. SILVER MEADOWS PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE. DAY

Wendy rides by the front gates of the posh grounds of the private psychiatric clinic. A security guard leans against a booth.

Once a bit past the gate, she gets off her bike and walks it into a grove of trees near the front drive.

EXT. SILVER MEADOWS. DAY

Mikey is waiting amid the trees next to his bike as Wendy arrives.

MIKEY

Want some gum?

WENDY

Sure.

(pulling them out of her pocket)

Twinkie?

MIKEY

(opens his mouth,  
displaying the gum on his  
tongue)

I'm chewing.

She puts the Twinkies back, and pops the gum in her mouth.

They stand together chewing.

WENDY

(after a pause)

Did you tell Sandy?

MIKEY

Tell Sandy? What?

Wendy doesn't say anything.

MIKEY (CONT'D)

You didn't tell him either, did you?

EXT. SILVER MEADOWS SWIMMING POOL. DAY

The wind is picking up and the light is fading. Mikey and

Wendy climb the fence around the pool, which is empty and half-covered in dead leaves and twigs.

They climb down into the concrete recess and walk into the deep end, leaning against the far wall of the pool.

They each matter-of-factly take their gum out and put it behind their ears.

They begin not so much to kiss as to place their tongues in each others' mouths.

We see them from high above the pool, as the dead leaves swirl lightly around them, Mikey groping under Wendy's poncho.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. DAY

To establish.

INT. WILLIAMS GUEST ROOM. DAY

A couple are in the final throes of lovemaking. We see Janey Williams's face, more or less enjoying the proceedings. The man gives a final heave and groan, and rolls off to reveal himself to be -- Ben Hood.

JUMP CUT TO:

Janey smokes a cigarette. Ben is babbling.

BEN

We were golfing, and you know, golfing to me is something I'm supposed to enjoy, and I was on the goddam golf team in college, so it's something one would assume I do well -- I used to do well -- but basically these days golfing for me is like hoeing, or plowing.

Janey smiles briefly at this.

BEN (CONT'D)

It's like farming. I am basically chewing up large tracts of expensively landscaped scenery with overpriced sticks, and George Clair has obviously, in the mere two years since he joined the firm, he has obviously been taking secret lessons with a golf pro, and I assume the entirety of his disposable income has been devoted to humiliating me on the golf course. And the guy talks - incessantly -- throughout the

entirety of the miserable 18 holes  
- on topics that are the supposed  
domain of my department --

JANEY  
Ben--

BEN  
Yeah?

JANEY  
(gently)  
You're boring me. I have a husband.  
I don't particularly feel the need  
for another.

BEN  
You have a point there. That's a  
very good point. We're having an  
affair. Right. An explicitly sexual  
relationship. Your needs. My needs.  
You're absolutely right.

JANEY  
You should probably get dressed.  
The boys will be home soon.

BEN  
Gotcha.

She wraps a blanket around herself and gets up.

EXT. BACK OF WILLIAMS HOUSE. EVENING

Ben cautiously walks out he back door and heads for the side gate.

INT. HOOD KITCHEN. EVENING

Wendy enters the house as Elena is finishing supper preparations.

WENDY  
Hi mom.

ELENA  
Hi Wendy.

Without waiting for instructions, Wendy starts pulling out plates and silverware and setting the table.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
I saw you on your bike today.

WENDY  
With Mikey?

ELENA

Who?

WENDY

Nobody.

ELENA

Mikey Williams?

WENDY

We were just riding around.

Elena takes this in.

ELENA

Well, you looked very -- free --  
when I saw you.

Wendy continues setting the table.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Weightless almost -- as if I were  
seeing my own memories of being a  
girl. There was something internal  
about it.

WENDY

Mom. Are you ok?

ELENA

Wendy, of course. I'm sorry. You  
must think I'm ripe to be checked  
into Silver Meadows.

WENDY

You're not a psycho!

ELENA

The people at Silver Meadows aren't  
psychos.

WENDY

I know. They're rich drug addicts  
and celebrities. When I saw James  
Taylor there, and --

ELENA

We've been through this Wendy  
James Taylor was actually at that  
clinic up near Boston.

WENDY

Well, I saw what I saw, and if you  
don't want to believe me --

ELENA

Oh Wendy.

Wendy frowns.

WENDY

They need the money for my band uniform at school.

ELENA

I thought you quit the band - I never hear you practice anymore.

WENDY

I don't really need to practice. I just play a few notes, you know, so I thought maybe I'd stay in.

ELENA

Well, I'm sure your father and I would love to hear what you're playing these days. Maybe after dinner.

INT. HOOD LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Ben and Elena take their seats on the sofa. Wendy stands before them holding an enormous trombone, with a music stand and sheet music in front of her.

She puffs a series of seemingly disconnected notes in waltz time.

When she's done, she looks up from the sheet music to her parents.

They applaud.

BEN

Can't wait to see how it fits in with all the other instruments.

Elena gives him a look.

INT. HOOD KITCHEN. NIGHT

Elena is sorting through bills and writing checks at the kitchen table. Ben comes in and fills a glass with ice.

ELENA

The Halfords have invited us again this year.

BEN

You want to go?

ELENA

What do you think?

BEN  
Well, it is a neighborhood tradition.

He comes up behind her, looks down at the checkbook.

BEN (CONT'D)  
I'm, uh, going to bed.

ELENA  
So early?

BEN  
Rough day. Good night.

He leans over and kisses her on the cheek. She sniffs.

ELENA  
Is that a new aftershave?

He recoils a bit.

BEN  
Oh yeah. Musk, or something. You like it?

ELENA  
Hmm. Good night.

He walks uncertainly from the room. Does she suspect?

INT. MIKE'S ROOM. NIGHT

Mikey is painfully at work writing an English essay. Sandy comes to the door with a geometry textbook.

SANDY  
Mikey?

MIKEY  
Yeah?

SANDY  
Geometry?

MIKEY  
Sure, anything but this English.

Sandy puts the open textbook in front of him.

SANDY  
Why are you so good at math but not in English?

MIKEY  
I'm not good at math. Just geometry.

He looks at the book.

MIKEY (CONT'D)  
(drawing out his examples  
on a piece of paper)  
It's like, you know when they say  
"two squared"? And you think it  
means 2 times 2, equals 4? But  
really they really mean a square. A  
square with a side of two. And the  
area of the square is four. Like  
every time you use the word, like  
squared, or cubed, it's really  
space, it's not numbers, it's  
space.  
And it's perfect space, but only in  
your head, because you can't draw a  
perfect square, like in the  
material world, but in your mind,  
you can have perfect space.  
(pause)

You know?

As Mikey goes on, we see his geometric doodles, and hear  
faintly the HUMMING SOUND under his voice.

SANDY  
Yeah. But I just need some help  
with my homework.

A knock at the door. Jim stands in the doorway with a  
suitcase in his hand.

JIM  
Hey guys, I'm back.

MIKEY  
(honestly confused)  
You were gone?

Sandy looks at Mikey as if pondering a lost cause.

JIM  
(a look of  
disappointment)  
Yeah Mikey. Yep, I was in Houston,  
working on some great new ideas  
about silicon, which comes from  
sand, very conductive. How you guys  
doing? How's school?

Mikey's still flustered.

MIKEY  
Uh, I dunno. OK I guess.

JIM  
Hmm. Alright!

He walks off.

SANDY  
You really didn't notice? Man, he's been gone for three days.

INT. WILLIAMS BEDROOM. NIGHT

Janey is reading, still dressed, on the bed. She nods to Jim as he enters with his suitcase.

JANEY  
Good trip?

He nods and puts his suitcase down, then sits heavily on the side of the bed.

JIM  
(as he sits)  
You bet.

It turns out it's a water bed, and his weight creates a wave that nearly pushes Janey off her edge of the bed.

JANEY  
Jesus, Jim!

JIM  
(jumping up, which only creates another wave)  
Sorry honey. Hell, we've got to trade this thing in for a normal bed.

JANEY  
Just be careful.

JIM  
(as he begins to unpack)  
You notice anything with Mikey lately? The kid seemed a little out of it tonight, eh?

JANEY  
Tonight? Jim, he's been out of it since he was born.

JIM  
Hell, I guess he takes after me, huh?

He laughs to himself.

She gives him a look.

INT. COFFEE SHOP. DAY

Elena and Philip Edwards are having coffee again.

PHILIP

In many ways, the church-bound tradition of the father, son, and holy ghost is simply a version of the parent-child-adult triad within us all. It's a primitive set of symbols for our inner psychology.

ELENA

You're saying that Christ is the child, and --

PHILIP

-- And God the angry parent, and the Spirit the hope of an integrated adult self.

ELENA

All well and good -- But tell me again what is it exactly that you believe in?

PHILIP

You ask what the point is?

ELENA

That's right.

PHILIP

Self-realization. Ministering to help people reach their fullest potential. Would you believe me if I told you I want you to see yourself reach your fullest potential and self-realization?

ELENA

I would say it sounds like you're trying to get me into bed.

PHILIP

If that's a potential you see yourself fulfilling... I mean...

(flustered)

My, I sound a bit --

ELENA

I'm sorry. That was stupid of me. I didn't mean to be so rude.

PHILIP

You weren't. You actually, for some

reason, you have the effect on me  
of making me feel just a tiny bit  
ashamed of myself.

ELENA  
But not too ashamed.

PHILIP  
(smiling)  
Now you are being rude.

ELENA  
And you're still trying to get me  
into bed.

PHILIP  
Ouch.

Just then, Dorothy Franklin passes by their table, a smirk  
firmly implanted on her face.

DOROTHY  
Hello you two. Am I barging in on  
some kind of religious study group?  
Elena, you look marvelous. Will I  
see you and Ben at the Halford's?

ELENA  
I suppose we'll make an appearance.

DOROTHY  
And Reverend Edwards? Did you make  
the list?

PHILIP  
(laughing)  
I believe so Mrs. Franklin.

DOROTHY  
With the two of you there it will  
be positively a revival! I'm off!

She scurries out of the coffee shop.

PHILIP  
I'm afraid she's something of a  
gossip, isn't she?

ELENA  
(gathering her things to  
go)  
I'm afraid people around here  
provide her with quite a bit to  
gossip about.  
(getting up)  
Take care.

PHILIP  
That I will indeed.

INT. CLASSROOM. DAY

Mikey is reading his English paper before the class.

MIKEY

Because of molecules we are connected to the outside world from our bodies. Like when you smell things, because when you smell a smell it's not really a smell, it's a part of the object that has come off of it -- molecules. So when you smell something bad, it's like in a way you're eating it. This is why you should not really smell things, in the same way that you don't eat everything in the world around you - because as a smell, it gets inside of you. So the next time you go into the bathroom after someone else has been there, remember what kinds of molecules you are in fact eating.

An embarrassed silence.

INT. SCHOOL MUSIC ROOM. DAY

Band practice. The New Canaan High School band is doing a wind version of a popular rock tune.

In front, there's Wendy, in halter top and hip-hugging bell bottoms, incongruously blowing away on her trombone -- this being her one stab at extracurricular activities.

In the flute section directly behind her is Sandy, piping away on a tiny piccolo. He sits on a riser slightly elevated above her.

He directs downward at Wendy a protracted regard, a look of intense concentration on his face.

SANDY'S POV:

Wendy's backside, her pants pushed outward in the back, affording Sandy a libido-charged view of the top of her bum crack.

Push in on a close-up of this cherished abstract landscape, then back to Sandy's furrowed face.

INT. CLUB RESTAURANT. DAY

Ben and Harold are at their table again. Lunch is being

cleared.

HAROLD

It's not the taxes I object to.  
It's all the fines and penalties.

BEN

Alright dad. But you sold the  
house, you didn't tell anyone,  
including the IRS, and I'd of  
certainly liked to have seen if  
there was any old stuff --

HAROLD

It was all junk!

Another pause. Ben decides not to pursue an overworked topic.

BEN

Oh. Elena wanted to know when we  
could expect you on Thanksgiving.  
It's just going to be you this  
year.

HAROLD

Ben, I'm going to Florida. I hate  
Thanksgiving and I hate the cold. I  
have a new nurse. She's a negro,  
she weighs three hundred pounds,  
and I've decided to leave my entire  
estate to her.

Ben spits his drink out.

BEN

What?

HAROLD

Jesus, Benjamin, you're still as  
gullible as ever.

BEN

That was a joke? You don't tell  
jokes.

HAROLD

I thought I'd start trying. If you  
don't mind. But I am going to  
Florida and I do have a new nurse.

INT. TRAIN. EVENING

Ben sits in the moving train, commuting home. He puts down  
his paper to look at this fellow passengers. [NOTE: He is in  
the same seat as was Paul at the beginning of the film.]

INT. HOOD DEN. DAY

Elena sits in a yoga pose.

INT. HOOD GARAGE. DAY

Elena enters the garage from the kitchen and turns the light on.

She finds an old bicycle and pulls it out.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS. DAY

Elena rides her bike into town, infused with the girlish sense of freedom she imagined for her daughter.

Suddenly, there's a pop -- a tire is blown out. She slows down and gets off the bike. As she bends to look at the wheel, a station wagon slows near her. The driver's side window rolls open. It's Janey Williams.

JANEY

Need a lift?

INT. JANEY'S CAR. DAY

Elena sits in the passenger seat. The two women are obviously uncomfortable with each other.

Silence.

ELENA

Thanks again. For the dinner.

JANEY

Thanks for eating it. I don't know why I even pretend I can cook.

ELENA

I used to know how to cook.

JANEY

It's not like we're too busy.

They smile, barely.

ELENA

I'm thinking of going back to school.

JANEY

Social work?

ELENA

How'd you know?

JANEY

Educated guess.

ELENA

I'm that predictable? No, you don't have to answer that. It's just that with the kids almost grown --

JANEY

You don't have to apologize. I'm too much of a cynic. You actually seem to be trying to figure things out -- don't mind me.

She pulls the car over.

EXT. FIVE AND DIME STORE. DAY

Janey's car pulls to the curb.

INT. CAR. CONT'D

JANEY

Here you are.

ELENA

(opening her door)  
Thanks for the lift. If the bike's any bother--

JANEY

None at all. I'll leave it in front of your garage. Happy Thanksgiving.

EXT. FIVE AND DIME. CONT'D

Elena watches the car pull away. She turns and walks into the store.

INT. FIVE AND DIME. DAY

Elena moves through the aisles, putting various sundries into a basket.

She pauses in front of the lipsticks.

She picks up a lipstick, looks at it, then quietly places it in her pocket.

We see her reflection in the security mirror above the aisle, as she quickly exits the store.

The middle-aged lady behind the counter watches her leave.

EXT. FIVE AND DIME. DAY

In a wide shot, from across the street, we see Elena leave the store, followed by the shopkeeper who runs behind her and taps her on the shoulder. They converse for a minute, and

Elena is accompanied back into the store.

Through the store windows we see her take the lipstick out of her purse. She's obviously distraught -- offering to pay, talking quickly, etc. The shopkeeper is holding a telephone, not yet decided on whether to call her in.

PAUL (V.O.)

To find yourself in the Negative Zone, as the Fantastic Four often do, means that all everyday assumptions are inverted -- even the invisible girl herself becomes visible, and so she loses the last semblance of her power.

INT. TRAIN. DAY

Close on images from The Fantastic Four.

"HERE IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE, HIS POWERS ARE HALVED. WE CAN DO NOTHING BUT WAIT... AND PRAY" "BUT WHAT ABOUT FRANKLIN? HE'LL BE KILLED!"

Paul sits reading on his way home.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. DAY

Janey pulls up in the driveway. As she gets out of the car, she hears a small explosion from the back of the house.

EXT. HOOD BACKYARD. DAY

Janey comes around the back to discover Sandy stuffing a model airplane with m-80 firecrackers. He lights them and runs back a safe distance. The plane explodes, its wreckage joining the debris from a few other dolls, models, and toys.

JANEY

Sandy!

Sandy looks up -- busted.

Janey marches over to him.

JANEY (CONT'D)

You little idiotic prick, you could blow yourself fucking sky high with all this demented crap.

Sandy looks on the verge of tears. She softens and bends down to him.

JANEY (CONT'D)

(sighing)

Hey.

(picking up the  
firecrackers)  
I'll take this stuff.

SANDY  
You going to tell dad?

JANEY  
Would it matter?  
(sees something else lying  
on the ground)  
And what's that?

SANDY  
(sniffling)  
You know, it's the whip -- the one  
uncle Frank got me from Mexico.

JANEY  
It's not packed with explosives, is  
it?

SANDY  
No!

JANEY  
(going into the house)  
Play with the whip.

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM. DAY

Mikey and Wendy are in front of the TV, watching a rerun of Divorce Court.

JANEY  
Oh. Hi Wendy.

WENDY  
Hi Mrs. Williams.

JANEY  
Mikey, have you heard the  
explosions coming from the  
backyard?  
(he stares blankly at her)  
Do you know what Sandy's been up  
to?

MIKEY  
(honestly oblivious, as  
usual)  
I dunno.

She pauses, then walks into the kitchen.

EXT. WILLIAMS BACKYARD. DAY

Sandy flicks his enormous whip in the direction of a small bush.

One by one, he snaps off its leaves.

INT. WILLIAM KITCHEN. DAY

Janey hauls a turkey out of a bag and into the fridge.

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM. DAY

Mikey and Wendy are still in front of the TV.

Janey comes in again and looks at them.

JANEY

Don't you kids have homework?

MIKEY AND WENDY

(without looking up, in  
unison)

Thanksgiving break.

She walks out of the room again.

Sandy comes in, whip in hand, looks over at Mikey and Wendy, then walks over to them, and, without a word, slumps down beside them and watches the TV.

EXT. TOWN STREET. DAY

Elena walks unsteadily, pausing to rest against a brick wall. She takes a deep breath, then walks to a corner where a local taxi station wagon sits idling. She gestures to the driver, who beckons her in.

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM. DAY

Later, still mentally devolving in front of the TV, but with various junk food detritus surrounding them and a different show, a rerun of the original Highway Patrol.

Sandy wanders off.

CUT TO:

Later.

Wendy gets up, goes upstairs, and wanders down the hall to the bathroom.

She gets to the door just as Sandy gets there from the opposite direction.

WENDY

After you.

Sandy hesitantly opens the door, as Wendy still hovers by it.

SANDY  
Well, you can...

WENDY  
Hey Sandy, what were you blowing up  
out there? Your mom was pretty  
p.o.'d.

SANDY  
All my model planes.

WENDY  
The ones you built?

SANDY  
They were old. And they couldn't  
fly anyhow. I'm going to get a  
radio-controlled airplane at  
Christmas, and then I'll stuff it  
full of m-80s and then fly it into  
Mrs. Burgess's English class and  
blow it up.

WENDY  
I have to go to the bathroom.

SANDY  
Yeah.

But he stays put, unaware it seems that he's blocking the doorway.

Wendy looks around -- no one in sight.

WENDY  
I'll show you mine if you show me  
yours.

Sandy goes wide eyed, and almost against his will backs into the bathroom like a feather.

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM. DAY

Mikey looks up from the TV, wondering where Wendy is. He eats another Pringle.

INT. WILLIAMS BATHROOM. DAY

Wendy flips up her dress for Sandy.

He slowly unzips, his hand unsteady. We can tell from the look on Wendy's face that she's feeling a bit sorry for the little guy.

Suddenly Sandy turns beet red, and bursts into tears.

SANDY

What do you want?! What do you  
want? Get out! Get out of here!

The door flips open -- and Janey Williams appears.

JANEY

(sizing up the situation)  
Shit.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. DAY

Janey is giving Wendy a lecture

JANEY

A person's body is his temple,  
Wendy. This body is your first and  
last possession. Now as your own  
parents have probably told you, in  
adolescence our bodies tend to  
betray us. That's why, in Samoa and  
in other developing nations,  
adolescents are sent out into the  
woods, unarmed, and they don't come  
back until they've learned a thing  
or two.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE DOORWAY. DAY

Wendy is led to the door by Mrs. Williams.

Wendy trades a glance with a sullen Mikey, who sits in the living room pretending to ignore her.

EXT. STREET. DAY

Wendy walks her bike with the wind in her face.

From behind her, Mikey rides up on his bike and rides alongside her.

She doesn't look at him.

Trying to stay on his bike, but moving slowly, he wobbles, nearly falling off.

MIKEY

I don't ever want to see you.

WENDY

Then why'd you come after me?

EXT. HOOD HOUSE. DAY

The taxi pulls up. Elena gets out and pays the driver.

INT. HOOD KITCHEN. DAY

Ben is in front of the open freezer, trying to get something out. He hears Elena come in the front door.

BEN

Elena. I need some help here if  
this thing's gonna defrost by  
tomorrow.

She comes up and together they tug and pull until they succeed in extracting a large, frozen turkey. As they pull it out, it slips from their hands and, after a dull thump, slides along the floor.

They smile.

Elena bends over to pick it up. Ben observes her. She notices his look.

BEN (CONT'D)

Here.

He goes over and picks up the turkey, placing it in the sink. He looks back at her and notices her vaguely distraught look.

BEN (CONT'D)

You all right there?

ELENA

Oh. Sure, I -- Did you remember to  
pick up the cranberry sauce?

BEN

Um, yes.

They stand together, his concern and her vulnerability forming an awkward attraction between them.

ELENA

Because you like it on your turkey  
sandwiches.

BEN

I do. I'm -- are you...?

ELENA

I... I think I am...

BEN

(pause)

You know Elena, I've been thinking--

ELENA

Ben, maybe no talking right now? If  
you start talking, you're going to--

She kisses him as if she needed him.

INT. HOOD HALLWAY. DAY

Ben and Elena enter their bedroom. Elena closes the door quietly behind her.

INT. HOOD BEDROOM. DAY

Ben and Elena undress shyly.

They make love. Elena's face is almost fearful.

CUT TO:

Elena and Ben lie in bed side by side in the pale afternoon light. Neither speaks. Ben turns on his side, and notices a small tear forming in Elena's eyes.

BEN

You crying?

ELENA

I'm just sad Ben -- I mean it  
was... you were, but, you know. I  
just don't know...

BEN

(gently making light)

Whatever that means Elena -- And  
you complain about me not  
communicating... I thought it was --

ELENA

No, I didn't mean to sound  
negative. It was -- But Ben.

(beat)

What is going to happen with us?  
Have you --

BEN

You have to bring this up now?  
What? Did I do something here? Is  
that it? Is it something I did?

ELENA

I wasn't accusing you, Ben. It's  
just that we've got to be honest.  
Not just with ourselves, but with  
the children.

BEN

(pause, sitting up)

Hell, I know. I -- I guess if you  
want to accuse me, you've got --

(looks at watch)

Oh hell! I've got to pick up Paul.

I almost forgot.

He gets up and starts to get dressed.

ELENA  
You were saying?

He smells the armpits of the shirt he's putting on.

BEN  
Yikes -- I was hoping to wear this  
thing to the Halford's Friday.

ELENA  
That shirt?

BEN  
What?

ELENA  
Leave it -- I'll wash it for you.

He looks at her ruefully.

EXT. HOOD STREET. DAY

Wendy walks and Mikey rides along.

WENDY  
You have to follow me?

MIKEY  
I dunno. I --

They're now in front of the Hood's house.

EXT. HOOD HOUSE. DAY

Ben exits the house in a rush, and sees Wendy and Mikey on  
the street in front.

BEN  
Hey there Mikey, how's business?

CONTINUED: 85

MIKEY  
(tripping off of his bike)  
Business? Uh, I dunno.

Ben grimaces, fiddles for his car keys.

As Mikey remounts and rides off, Wendy passes her father on  
the driveway.

BEN  
I'm picking up Paul at the station

- want to come?

WENDY

Nah.

BEN

What you been up to?

WENDY

Nothing.

INT. HOOD LIVING ROOM. DAY

Wendy enters the house and climbs the stairs.

She sees the crumpled bed sheets in her parents' room and hears Elena in the shower.

EXT. NEW CANAAN STATION. DAY

Paul walks to the parking lot with his father, who carries his duffel bag.

EXT. STREETS. DAY

Ben's car heading back to the house with Paul.

INT. HOOD CAR. DAY

BEN

So how's school treating you?

PAUL

All right.

BEN

Classes?

PAUL

Good.

BEN

Grades?

PAUL

Fine.

BEN

Anyone special? You know...

PAUL

Hnnn.

BEN

Well it's good to see you -- we miss you around the house and all, but this St. Peter's, it's top of

the line, eh?

PAUL

Yeah.

BEN

You know Paul, I've been thinking,  
maybe this is as good a time as any  
to have a little talk, you know,  
about -- well --

He makes a sharp turn. Paul puts his arms up on the dashboard  
to steady himself.

PAUL

(nervous)

About?

BEN

Well, the whole gamut. Facts of  
life and all. Some fatherly advice,  
because, I tell you, there's things  
happening that you're probably old  
enough... well...

(pause)

For example, on the self-abuse  
front -- now this is important -  
it's not advisable to do it in the  
shower -- it wastes water and  
electricity and because we all  
expect you to be doing it there in  
any case -- and, um, not onto the  
linen, and not on your sister's  
underwear or any clothing belonging  
to your mother --

He pauses to gauge the effect of his monologue on his son,  
then continues.

PAUL

Uh, Dad --

Just then Ben runs a stop sign and almost slams into another  
car.

BEN

Holy! Well. If you're worried about  
anything, just feel free to ask,  
and, uh, we can look it up.

PAUL

Uh, dad, you know I'm 16.

BEN

All the more reason for this little  
heart to heart... great.

EXT. HOOD HOUSE. DAY

The car pulls up. Paul gets out, looking shell-shocked. He sees Wendy waving to him from a second floor window. He nods back.

BEN

Um, Paul. On second thought, can you do me a favor and pretend I never said any of that.

PAUL

Sure dad.

BEN

Thanks.

In the doorway, Elena waits.

INT. HOOD HALLWAY. DAY

Paul knocks on Wendy's bedroom door. She opens it.

PAUL

Hello, Charles.

WENDY

Greetings, Charles.

INT. WENDY'S ROOM. DAY

Paul and Wendy sit on the floor.

PAUL

How are the parental units functioning these days?

WENDY

Dad's like doing his Up With People routine, mom hasn't been saying much.

PAUL

I don't know. Dad seems a little weird.

WENDY

Yeah well wait till mom opens her mouth.

They both ponder silently. Then:

PAUL

May I operate your telephonic apparatus?

WENDY

Why don't you use the phone  
downstairs?

PAUL

Calling an individual, Charles, in  
New York. Confirming a social  
outing for Friday night.

WENDY

Can I come?

PAUL

It's a one-on-one kind of date  
thing.

WENDY

With who?

PAUL

Her name's Libbets.

WENDY

Libbets? What kind of a name is  
Libbets?

EXT. HOOD HOUSE. DAY

Morning. To establish.

INT. HOOD BEDROOM. DAY

Elena is coming out of the master bathroom in a robe, a towel  
wrapped around her head.

ELENA

The turkey in?

BEN

Stuffed and baking.

INT. HOOD HALLWAY. DAY

Ben Hood pads down the hall in his bathrobe, tries the  
bathroom door. It's locked.

BEN

Anyone home?

INT. HOOD BATHROOM. DAY

The shower is running, but Paul is standing by the open  
window, puffing on a joint and trying to blow the smoke  
outside.

PAUL

I'll be out in a second.

Ben walks back to the bedroom, smirking.

BEN  
Sure you will.

INT. HOOD DINING ROOM. DAY

One by one, each member of the Hood carried in a final item to place on the overstuffed Thanksgiving table. Then, one by one, they each silently take their seats.

They look over the table. No one moves.

BEN  
Well, it's great we can all be together. And this Thanksgiving, no hysteria, no yelling, especially with grandpa not here, although we miss him. So let's do it right and actually, Wendy, why don't you say grace. You used to love to say grace, remember.

Wendy grimaces, as they all bow their heads slightly.

WENDY  
Dear Lord, thank you for Thanksgiving, and for letting us white people kill all the Indians...

Everyone looks up.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
... and steal their tribal lands and stuff ourselves like pigs

Mutterings and groans: "Wendy!" "For Christ's sake" etc.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
... while children in Africa and Asia are napalmed and --

BEN  
Jesus all right enough!

They all unceremoniously start to dig in.

FADE OUT:

INT. WILLIAMS GUEST ROOM. DAY

Janey Williams is pouring Benjamin Hood a drink from a bottle of vodka. Benjamin is already unbuttoned and shoeless; Janey still fully dressed.

JANEY

Here.

BEN

After the Thanksgiving I had, I  
need it. You having one?

JANEY

In a bit.

She sits next to him, he kisses the back of her neck.

BEN

You know, I think Elena might  
suspect something.

Janey gives him a rather contemptuous look.

BEN (CONT'D)

(thinking aloud)

Maybe it's all for the better, you  
know?

Yesterday, at dinner, well, she  
hasn't said anything... has she  
acted funny to you, I mean, have  
you noticed anything?

JANEY

(almost ironic)

Have I noticed anything? I'm not  
married to her Benjamin, you are. I  
think you've probably a better  
vantage point from which to observe  
her.

BEN

Yeah, but, I -- I've been working a  
lot lately, and -- No, that's not  
it. I guess we've just been on the  
verge of saying something, whatever  
it is, just saying something to  
each other. On the verge.

Janey gets up.

JANEY

I'll be back.

Benjamin looks at her quizzically.

BEN

Huh?

JANEY

Birth control.

BEN

Right. Gotcha.

She leaves the room.

He leans back onto the bed. Sits back up. Takes a sip of vodka. Puts the glass down. Takes his socks off. He's now in just his jockey shorts and shirt.

Faintly, he hears a door close. The front door?

He takes another sip.

He hears another sound.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Janey?

Nothing.

He goes to the door and carefully opens it.

BEN (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
Janey?

He hears, quite audibly, a car door open, close, Janey's car start and pull out.

He runs to a front window just in time to catch a glimpse of her driving off.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Shit.

INT. GUEST ROOM. LATER

Benjamin sits on the guest bed, still in his underwear, drinking from the bottle.

He gets up and starts to wander around the house, still holding the bottle.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. CONT'D

Benjamin saunters through. He presses on the king-sized bed -- it undulates.

BEN  
Water bed! Dig it!

He wiggles comically, making more waves.

JUMP CUT:

Ben idly goes through Janey's drawers.

INT. WILLIAMS MASTER BATHROOM. CONT'D

He rifles through the bathroom cabinet, checking out the medicines.

INT. WILLIAMS BEDROOM. CONT'D

He notices a garter belt hanging from the walk-in closet door. He picks it up and twirls it.

INT. MIKEY'S ROOM. CONT'D

Benjamin walks in, an obvious look of distaste.

He sorts through a few of Mike's things -- monster eyes that glow in the dark, The Sensuous Woman, etc.

He twirls the garter belt absentmindedly, then tosses it into the back of Mike's closet.

INT. GUEST ROOM. CONT'D

He finishes putting his clothes back on. As he reaches for the door, he hears voices and quickly steps back in again.

Teenage voices. Mikey and Wendy.

MIKEY (O.S.)

See, no one's here. Maybe you want to go to the basement?

WENDY (O.S.)

Maybe we can just watch some TV.

MIKEY (O.S.)

There's a TV in the basement.

Hood hears their steps down into the basement.

INT. BASEMENT. DAY

Wendy and Mikey stand in the middle of the semi-lit basement.

MIKEY

Maybe we can mess around. You know, only if you want to...

WENDY

I don't know.

MIKEY

Why did you -- with Sandy?

WENDY

I don't know.

MIKEY

You like him? He worships you.

But Wendy doesn't seem to hear -- she's drawn to an object lying next to a bean bag chair off to one side.

WENDY

Hey, what's this?

With a look of utter fascination, she picks up a Nixon mask, looking at it as though it were an archeological find.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Wow!

MIKEY

Wendy!

She puts the mask on.

WENDY

(from behind the mask)

I won't take my pants off. But I'll touch it. That's as far as it goes.

Mikey looks totally confused.

Remaining fully clothed, Wendy loosens Mike's belt, showing no excitement from behind her mask, and lets him climb on top of her for a dry hump.

Just then, a shaft of light hits them from the top of the stairs -- Ben towers above them, looking down.

Mikey flips over immediately and pulls his clothes together, grabbing a TV Guide as Wendy stands up, the mask still on.

As Ben descends Mikey, still stuffing his shirt-tail into his pants, pretends to flip through the TV Guide.

MIKEY

(muttering)

When worlds collide.

WENDY

Huh?

MIKEY

4:30 movie. When Worlds Collide.

Ben arrives, folds his arms.

BEN

What the hell are you kids doing down here?

WENDY

What do you think we're doing, dad?

BEN

What do I think? I think you're probably touching each other. I think you're touching that reckless jerk-off, for god's sake, and I think he's trying to get into your slacks. I think, at fourteen years of age, that you're getting ready to give up your girlhood --

MIKEY

Hey, hang on there, Mr. Hood --

BEN

Don't you direct a single word at me, Mikey. I don't want to hear it. I'll be speaking with your parents about this situation very soon. Bet your ass on that, son. Young lady?

WENDY

Talking to me, dad?

BEN

Who else would I be talking to? And take that thing off!

WENDY

(pulling off the mask)  
Well, then forget all this stern dad stuff.

BEN

I'm not interested in your smart ass remarks now, lady. Let's go. Right now. You and I can discuss it on the walk home.

She stands next to Mikey for a moment, both on the verge of tears.

EXT. STREET. EVENING

Hood and Wendy walk through a cold drizzling rain.

He looks at her from time to time, then takes her arm.

BEN

Look, kiddo, don't worry about it. I really don't care that much. I'm just not sure he's good enough, that's all.

WENDY

Huh?

BEN

I mean, he's not serious, he'll end

up living off Janey and Jim, you  
watch.  
It's just that you develop a sense  
when you get older, if things are  
going to work out or if they won't,  
and sometimes it's not worth the  
mess....

She looks at him. They keep walking. She walks through a  
puddle.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Your toes cold?

WENDY  
Yeah.

He stops and lifts her in his arms.

BEN  
I'll carry you up the drive.

She puts her arms around his neck and he lifts her up.

On her face, as he carries her -- a look of blank but real  
intimacy.

INT. HOOD FRONT HALL. EVENING

Hood and Wendy enter, wet and cold, muttering hellos.

ELENA (O.S.)  
(from the kitchen)  
Dinner in ten minutes.

BEN  
You go dry off now.

Wendy heads for the stairs, Hood following.

INT. HOOD BEDROOM. EVENING

Hood finishes taking off his wet clothes as Elena enters and  
turns on a light. She stands watching him.

BEN  
Never guess where I found her.

Not much response from Elena.

BEN (CONT'D)  
In the basement over at Janey and  
Jim's. With that weirdo Mikey. Not  
even a TV on.  
And they're on the floor and he's  
got his trousers down though thank  
goodness she's still dressed. Well,

I really let him have it!  
(a nervous laugh)  
... and Wendy came home  
peacefully... Hey, should I dress  
for the Halford's now, or - give me  
your -

ELENA  
Up to you. I'd like to go early and  
leave pretty soon after that.

BEN  
I get you loud and clear... hey,  
you look nice.

ELENA  
So what were you doing in the  
Williams' basement anyway?

BEN  
Oh, just dropping off a coffee cup.  
Jim left it, last time he was over.  
It was on the dash of the car. You  
were, you know, reading, thought  
I'd just catch some air. Let's eat.

ELENA  
Oh right. The mustache coffee cup.  
The one that was sitting on the  
dash.

BEN  
Yeah, that one.

ELENA  
That one.

She walks down to the kitchen, Benjamin following her.

INT. KITCHEN. EVENING

Wendy is already in the kitchen, fishing through the drawers  
for silverware and napkins.

Paul enters.

PAUL  
See you.

BEN  
Stay out of trouble.

ELENA  
You'll be on the 10:30 train?

PAUL  
11:30?

ELENA

Paul --

BEN

Ah let the guy have his fun. What's  
the name of this girl with the Park  
Avenue address?

PAUL

Libbets. Libbets Casey.

BEN

Libbets? What kind of name is  
Libbets?

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT

A silent dinner of turkey sandwiches with Elena, Benjamin,  
and Wendy. The turkey carcass sits, embarrassed, in the  
middle of the table.

Wendy, finished, gets up from the table. Opens the fridge,  
but finds nothing. Then goes to the candy shelf and grabs  
some Hot Tamales, leaving the room without a word and going  
into the den.

INT. DEN. NIGHT

Wendy turns the TV on.

TV

... and that ends today's highlight  
coverage of the Watergate affair.

WENDY

Shoot.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT

Hood and Elena rise from the table with their dishes.

BEN

What's for dessert?

ELENA

See for yourself.

BEN

No advice from the experts, huh?

His plate slips out of his hands into the trash. He fishes it  
out and sets it on the counter.

ELENA

Don't start.

BEN  
You think I --

ELENA  
I have no idea.

BEN  
What's on your mind? Don't --

ELENA  
It wouldn't make a pleasant  
evening, if that's what you're  
after. I don't want to talk about  
it. Stupid mustache cup.

BEN  
What do you mean?

ELENA  
Don't be dim.

BEN  
Elena, what are you're talking  
about?

ELENA  
I'm not surprised.

BEN  
Listen, Elena, if you're gonna pull  
that passive aggressive stuff on me  
again --

ELENA  
Your unfaithfulness -- that's what  
I'm trying to talk about. Your  
unfaithfulness. Your betrayal. Your  
dalliance. And you won't do me the  
dignity of being up front about it.

BEN  
(quieter)  
Am I unfaithful? Is that what  
you're trying to say?

ELENA  
It's a starting place.

BEN  
Well, what kind of faithfulness are  
you after?

ELENA  
If you're going to insult me --

BEN  
What else could I be? What else

could I be? We're not living in the real world here. You're living out some fantasy land from the past, or some advice or something from those psychoanalysts... there are some hard facts here.

Silence.

BEN (CONT'D)  
It's the law of the land... the government, the world, those two guys on the Yankees... And I'm not having any fun at it, I can tell you that. I'm not...

INT. DEN. NIGHT

Wendy puts the volume of the TV up, to drown out a conversation she can almost overhear but doesn't want to.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT. CONT'D

ELENA  
Oh lord. You think I'm so dense. And now you want to be seen with your dense wife at the cocktail party. You want to wear that ridiculous shirt which doesn't go with those pants at all. You want to wear that, and you want me to shake hands with your friends and make conversation and dress up in an outfit that shows a lot of cleavage and you're not going to accord me the respect of talking honestly about this... You don't really know what this feels like.

BEN  
(whispering)  
Sure I do. Do I know what loneliness feels like? Sure I do. I know a lot about it, if that's what you mean.

ELENA  
Benjamin. That's supposed to explain it?

Seemingly tired, he stands before her. Silence. Elena sighs, then walks into the den.

INT. DEN. NIGHT

ELENA  
We're going to the Halford's. The

number's on the calendar in the kitchen. We should be home around 11.

WENDY  
(eyes still glued to the TV)  
Is it a big party? A big neighborhood party?

ELENA  
I suppose. Why?

WENDY  
Just curious. If there's a problem, I guess I'll just call you there to interrupt.

ELENA  
What sort of problems are you planning exactly?

Elena kisses the top of her head.

WENDY  
(still watching the TV)  
Oh I thought I'd steal the station wagon, drive up to a commune. Or set the house on fire. You know.

ELENA  
Just bundle up. It's supposed to freeze tonight. We'll see you in the morning.

EXT. HOOD HOUSE. NIGHT

Elena and Ben emerge from the house, and look up at a darkening, foreboding sky. A light rain falls. They jog toward their car.

INT/EXT. HOOD CAR. NIGHT

The car moves slowly through the rainy suburban streets.

Inside, Elena and Ben don't speak.

EXT. HALFORD HOUSE. NIGHT

Their Firebird pulls up. There are already many other cars parked on the lawn and driveway.

INT. HALFORD FOYER. NIGHT

Hood and Elena enter. Dot Halford accosts them.

DOT

Ben, Elena. Wonderful! Wonderful!  
So wonderful to see you.

Finishing the last of a celery canoe, she kisses the air next to Ben's ear and gives Elena a manic hug.

Then, picking up a white salad bowl from the hall table:

DOT (CONT'D)  
Would you care to play? New this year.

Close on: the bowl full of keys.

DOT (CONT'D)  
Strictly volunteer, of course. You can put your coats in the library if you like.

ELENA  
Oh, damn. Uh, I've left the --

BEN  
You've...

ELENA  
In the car.

BEN  
Oh, yeah. Yeah, we'll be right back, Dot.

INT./EXT. CAR. CONT'D

Ben and Elena climb back in the car and close the doors, shivering.

ELENA  
This just isn't the best moment for this.

BEN  
I know, I know. I had no idea --

ELENA  
That this was going to be a key party?

BEN  
Yeah, well, if we'd understood we could have invented some kind of excuse. A key party -- did you see how stuffed that bowl was already?

ELENA  
Well?

BEN

I think we're here and we don't have to stay -- we ought simply to put in an appearance and then we can head home.

ELENA

Damn it, Ben --

BEN

I'm not staying at this party so we can go home with someone else's wife. That's not why we're here, right? We're simply being neighbors here, and I think we should do just that --

ELENA

You're not going to --

BEN

I'm not.

ELENA

You have some marker, that's what I think, if you want to know the truth.

You have some marker and you're going to put it on the house keys so that Janey can find them and then when I get back to the house I'll find the two of you in there and Wendy'll be able to hear you and Paul will be back and he'll hear you and I'll catch you, that's what I think. She'll be swearing and banging against the wall and I'll catch --

BEN

Elena.

She rubs her eyes.

BEN (CONT'D)

Elena, it's not what you think. It's not a big plot. Honestly. Honestly. I don't know if you want to go over this now, but it's just something that comes over me. I don't feel good about it. I know I've done what I didn't want to do. I don't know --

ELENA

Well, I'm really pleased to hear a confession.

BEN

Elena, you're just getting wound up  
to get wound up.

ELENA

Thanks for the diagnosis, Ben.  
Thank you. So let's just go to this  
fiasco if that's what you want to  
do. Let's just go on in. I'd rather  
talk to anyone else but you.

She pulls the keys out of the ignition, gets out of the car,  
and slams the door. He follows her.

INT. HALFORD FOYER. NIGHT

ELENA

Oh, Dot!

Elena, entering the house again, tosses the keys at Dot  
Halford, who looks surprised.

Hood slides in behind his wife.

Dot drops the keys into the bowl.

Slow-motion, close up: the keys, on their equine chain, fall  
in with a THUNDEROUS CRASH.

INT. HALFORD LIVING ROOM. CONT'D

The room is crowded with nervous, expectant couples and  
various groupings.

Elena slips into a side room.

Benjamin heads over immediately to the drink table and pours  
a stiff one, turning around to find at his elbow none other  
than George Clair.

GEORGE

Benjie!

BEN

Clair, George Clair! What the hell  
brings you to New Canaan?

GEORGE

Well, it's the funniest thing. I've  
been talking to some investors -- a  
little outside venture, you  
understand, between you and me --  
about a scheme to manufacture a new  
Styrofoam packaging. Little peanut  
like pieces that can really keep an  
item free from trauma during

shipping. Miraculous. Anyway, it turns out the genius behind the whole project is your neighbor, Jim Williams. How about that!

BEN

Well, hey, isn't that a one-in-a million coincidence. A real dreamer, Jim Williams, eh?

GEORGE

Darned right. Look here, Benj, whaddya make of this sequel to The Godfather? You think it's gonna work?

BEN

Don't see how. I think the public's had its fill of this gangster stuff. No, trust me -- disaster pics. And air hockey.

GEORGE

Yeah, good.

Benjamin catches a glimpse of Janey, voluptuously attired, across the room.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Well, gonna make a break for the hors d'oeuvres guy.

BEN

Yeah, see you bright and early Monday am.

(beat)

Say, where's the wife?

GEORGE

(winking as he goes)

In Rhode Island with the folks. I'm a free agent tonight.

At this, they both notice Elena slowly gliding across the other side of the room. Clair gives Ben a sideways glance, then moves on.

Ben makes straight for Janey, who pretends to be preoccupied with a plant.

JANEY

Oh jeez, Benjie. Well, here you are.

BEN

Damn right, but where the hell were you?

JANEY  
(looking around)  
What are you talking about?

BEN  
(whispering, but too  
loudly)  
Don't bullshit me around, Janey.  
Jesus Christ, I waited around for  
more than half an hour, in nothing  
but my boxer shorts, and -- and  
what's all that about? What the  
hell happened?

Janey takes a sip of her drink.

JANEY  
A prior engagement overcame me.

BEN  
What?

JANEY  
Listen, Benjamin Hood. I have  
obligations that precede your...  
from before you showed up. One or  
two, you know, good-natured  
encounters, that doesn't mean  
I'm... I'm not just some toy for  
you. When I remembered some chores  
I wanted to get done before the  
party, I just did them, that's all,  
because I wanted to do them before  
I saw Jimmy.

BEN  
Jimmy? Jimmy? I don't know how to  
take this. And what do you mean,  
Jimmy? I thought you said you and  
your husband --

JANEY  
How you take it isn't all that  
interesting to me, Benjamin. I'm  
sorry --

BEN  
I just can't believe you could be  
so --

Stalling, he watches her take another sip of her drink and  
wander off.

The air is filled with talk of Watergate, Billie Jean King,  
the Oil Crisis, the Mets.

Benjamin goes over to the couch, where Dave Gorman is chatting up an attractive younger woman.

GORMAN

(lighting up a joint)  
Welcome to the Monkey House has  
been a seminal influence on me --  
hey Benjamin -- give it a try? This  
stuff will make some sense out of  
those larger questions.

BEN

(waving it away)  
Thanks for the advice Dave.

But then, Benjamin changes his mind.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Uh, well, what the hey...

Taking the joint, he tugs on it, holding the smoke in his lungs.

BEN (CONT'D)  
(coughing)  
Good shit.

GORMAN

Sure is good shit. It's opiated. I  
had it in my chamber for a while. I  
was smoking this other --

BEN  
It's what?

GORMAN  
Don't fret, Benjie, it's --

BEN  
Darn it, Dave.

He rises unsteadily, weaving through the room's conversations.

JACK MOELLERING  
Take California. They've got their own airline in-state that's not subject to the fare controls. Compare Sacramento to L.A. on the controlled airlines and you'll see what Friedman is saying -- supply and demand, less restriction.

Benjamin walks over to a window. The outdoor lamps illuminate a new and heavy downpour of frozen sleet.

INT. CONRAIL TRAIN. NIGHT

Paul is seated, reading the latest number of The Fantastic Four comic book. The cover displays a lurid, atomically glowing baby.

The conductor walks through the cabin.

CONDUCTOR  
Approaching our final stop, Grand Central Station.

Paul looks out the window at the tenements of Harlem, barely visible through the walls of sleet. Soon the train enters the tunnel toward the station.

EXT. PARK AVENUE APARTMENT BUILDING. NIGHT

Paul gets out of a cab and heads inside. He's met by the doorman.

PAUL  
Libbets Casey, please.

DOORMAN  
Your name?

PAUL  
Paul Hood.

DOORMAN  
(a smirk)  
Elevator on the right. Eighth floor  
-- she's waiting for you.

INT. HALL IN FRONT OF LIBBETS' APARTMENT DOOR. NIGHT

Paul rings the bell.

LIBBETS (O.S.)  
(from the other side of  
the door)  
Open it Paul!

Paul opens the door, and enters the apartment.

INT. LIBBETS' APARTMENT. NIGHT

It's half dark, has an air of old wealth.

Libbets skids across the parquet floor to him.

LIBBETS  
Excellent. We were waiting!

She turns and runs into the den.

PAUL

(under his breath)  
We?

And there, in the den, cleaning an ounce of dope on an open copy of Nixon's Six Crises, is -- Francis.

FRANCIS  
(lifting the book up)  
You oughtta read this Hood, Nixon,  
our leader, all ye need know about  
the travails of life. Check out the  
Checkers speech stuff.

PAUL  
(all hope drained from  
him)  
Francis. You gonna leave the seeds  
in there? In the binding like that?

FRANCIS  
All will be revealed, baby.

The television is turned on to a weather report about the coming ice storm.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)  
Awesome sleet and rain.

LIBBETS  
Major.

FRANCIS  
Howdy there. You, young knight. Can  
you check on the mead? Can you  
sally forth and secure us some more  
mead?

PAUL  
Huh?

FRANCIS  
(nasal voice,  
impersonating a TV  
character)  
Moisture! Moisture!

LIBBETS  
(pointing)  
Beer. In the pantry.

Paul trudges disconsolately out of the room.

INT. LIBBETS KITCHEN. NIGHT

Paul, after wandering a maze of halls, enters the kitchen, where he takes a six-pack out of the fridge and returns to the living room.

INT. LIBBETS LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

He enters the room with the beer.

LIBBETS

Frankie opens them with his teeth.

PAUL

(handing him a beer)

Hey, it's a sellable skill.

Francis licks closed a second joint, then takes the beer and opens it with his rear molars.

FRANCIS

Hell on the fillings.

Paul opens the other two beers and hands one to Libbets. They light up a joint.

FRANCIS

Everything's gonna freeze, the big freeze.

LIBBETS

Yeah, Paul, are you gonna get home okay?

Paul and Francis exchange a look.

She puts an Allman Brothers tape on the 8-track and turns the TV down.

INT. HOOD BATHROOM. DAY

Wendy enters the bathroom.

She fills the sink with water, then turns off the tap. She takes a razor blade from the counter, and slowly, determinedly, holds it to her wrist.

She presses it into her skin, drawing a small drop of blood.

WENDY

Ouch!

She drops the blade and splashes water on her wrist, grabbing some toilet paper and holding it against the tiny wound.

WENDY

Stupid.

She hears the phone ring and walks downstairs.

INT. HOOD DEN. NIGHT

Wendy picks up the phone.

WENDY  
Hood residence.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN. NIGHT

Mikey is on the other end of the line.

MIKEY  
You're parents at that party?

INTERCUT:

WENDY  
Yeah. Yours?

MIKEY  
You get in trouble?

WENDY  
Maybe. Can't really tell yet.

MIKEY  
I'm sorry if I got you into  
trouble. Maybe we don't have to,  
you know... unless you really want  
to.

WENDY  
Yeah.

MIKE  
I'm going to Silver Meadow, check  
out the ice storm... You wanna  
come.

WENDY  
Maybe.

MIKE  
Yeah. OK.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. NIGHT

Mikey, bundled up in a huge orange ski parka and cap, heads  
for the door.

SANDY  
Where you going?

MIKEY  
Out.

SANDY  
It's freezing.

MIKEY  
(pausing)  
Yeah. When it freezes, I guess that means the molecules are not moving. So when you breathe, there's nothing in the air, you know, to breathe in to your body. The molecules have stopped. So it's clean.

Sandy just looks at him. He walks out into the night.

INT. HALFORD'S. NIGHT

Elena sits on a couch, talking to no one, barely looking up, when someone stands in front of her.

ELENA  
Reverend Edwards.

PHILIP  
Perhaps you might find it in your heart to call me Philip?

He sits beside her.

ELENA  
You're here... I'm a bit surprised.

PHILIP  
Sometimes the shepherd needs the company of the sheep.

ELENA  
I'm going to try hard not to understand the implications of that simile.

Philip's about to reply, but thinks better of it.

They sit glumly next to each other for a minute. Then Philip rises.

PHILIP  
Forgive me.

He walks swiftly to the hall and hurriedly fishes his keys out of the bowl, then heads for the door.

TED FRANKLIN  
(passing by)  
I hope those weren't my keys.

He laughs at his own joke as Philip rushes out the front door.

Back to Elena, even more forlorn than before.

INT. LIBBETS APARTMENT BATHROOM. NIGHT

Paul enters the bathroom. We hear Francis' and Libbets' voices from the other room, laughing.

He pees.

At the sink, he pauses in front of the medicine cabinet, then opens it.

PAUL  
Eureka.

He pulls out some bottles.

PAUL  
Valium. Seconal. Uh,  
(can't quite pronounce  
this one)  
Par-er-goric?  
(a beat, looking into the  
mirror for effect)  
Francis Chamberlain Davenport the  
Fourth -- tonight you sleep the  
sleep of the just.

He pockets the Seconal and turns out the light.

INT. LIBBETS APARTMENT DEN. NIGHT

Paul re-enters the den to find Francis alone.

PAUL  
And whence has yon virginal maiden  
absconded?

FRANCIS  
Like into one of the other 20 or so  
bathrooms they've got in this  
place.

Paul takes out the bottle and opens it.

PAUL  
Check it out. Not for the faint of  
heart.

FRANCIS  
Pharmaceutical! You are a god.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
(picking up beer, trying  
to hurry before Libbets  
returns)  
One for you and one for me.

He hands a pill to Francis, then pretends to pop one into his mouth and takes a swig of his beer. As Francis downs his own, Paul pockets his unswallowed pill.

LIBBETS  
(in the doorway)  
No candy for me?

FRANCIS  
Groovy.  
(to Paul)  
Young master of the revels, a treat  
for our hostess?

PAUL  
Well, uh, I don't, it's really --

LIBBETS  
What is it?

FRANCIS  
Come on Paulie, share the wealth.  
You copped 'em from her mom's stash  
anyway.

LIBBETS  
Let's see!

PAUL  
(hand in pocket)  
Libbets, you really shouldn't mix  
and match, you know with the beer.  
I'll put 'em back.

Libbets reaches into his pocket and pulls out the bottle.

LIBBETS  
Oh far out, Paulie. Hey look, these  
expired like five months ago. You  
think they're better aged?

She opens up the bottle and takes one out.

PAUL  
Maybe you should have just a half.

LIBBETS  
Thanks for the advice dad.

She takes the pill.

Paul looks on, thwarted.

INT. HALFORD'S. NIGHT

Ben is back at the bar, pouring another tall one. Mark Boland sidles up next to him.

BOLAND  
Benjie, feeling no pain.

BEN  
As the Indian saying goes, pain is  
merely an opinion.

BOLAND  
(nodding across the room)  
Hey -- check it out. Maria Conrad's  
brought her son.  
(walking off)  
I wish some of the gang had brought  
their daughters!

Ben feels a wave of distaste at the joke.

He looks across the room as Maria and her son Neil (stringy hair, acne, tie-dyed turtleneck, patched jeans) are engaging Janey and Philip Edwards in conversation.

INT. LIBBETS' APARTMENT. NIGHT

Paul, Francis, and Libbets sit on the floor, listening to the music blasting at full strength.

Libbets and Francis are obviously on the verge of unconsciousness. Paul regards them with a look of apprehension on his face.

INT. HALFORD'S. NIGHT

Neil has now cornered Janey.

NEIL  
As Werner says, there is nothing to get. That's It. When you get that there's nothing to get. That's the training, when you ask yourself, the question, "What is is?"

JANEY  
Wait, this is the training, where they don't let you go to the bathroom?

NEIL  
That was the hardest part. But I did it. And you get into some far out shit.

INT. LIBBETS' APARTMENT. NIGHT

Libbets puts a blanket over a sleeping Francis, who's crashed out on the floor in a corner. Francis alternates between snores and various mumbled delirious ravings.

FRANCIS  
The foot... the foot... toeclipper  
man...

Paul is sitting on the couch, and Libbets comes back and sits at his feet, facing up to him.

PAUL  
I guess he's just real exhausted  
from, you know, tests and stuff.

Libbets is herself somewhat in dreamland.

LIBBETS  
Yeah.

PAUL  
You know Libbets, I really feel,  
you know, like a real connection to  
you --

LIBBETS  
Yeah but you don't even know me  
really.

PAUL  
Sure I do, you know, like your  
aura. That you give off.

LIBBETS  
My what?

PAUL  
It's like very positive, and I feel  
a real special feeling, because you  
really --

LIBBETS  
And I have a special feeling too,  
because I do. It's special.

PAUL  
You do? I'm glad. Because I feel  
for you --

LIBBETS  
And I have a feeling for you too,  
because you're just like -- I feel  
for you like you're -- you're just  
like --

PAUL AND LIBBETS  
(simultaneously)  
-- like a brother.

PAUL

Yeah, you're not alone with that line.

LIBBETS

I do.

PAUL

Right. Cool. So, how about we take a bath together?

LIBBETS

(consciousness fading fast)

Hah hah you're funny. A bath. Like a brother and sister. Oh man, I'm so wasted.

Her head bobs and weaves, her eyes close, and suddenly her head falls forward with a whoosh toward the couch -- smack dab between Paul's legs.

She begins to snore instantly, her open mouth nuzzling into his crotch.

Paul doesn't move, doesn't even breathe. Then, slowly, he leans his back into the couch, without shifting the rest of his body.

He looks as though he has simultaneously won the lottery and received a lobotomy.

INT. HALFORD'S. NIGHT

The crowd's a bit thinner than before.

As Dot Halford begins calling out for everyone's attention, a few couples make their last-minute way to the door.

DOT

OK everyone. We have a little business to attend to now. So everyone who'd like to stay, please gather in the living room.

She scoops up the bowl and places it on a high end table which has been put in the middle of the room.

BEN

(walking up to Elena)

Ready to go?

ELENA

We're not going anywhere.

Elena waves at Janey Williams, who is standing across the living room.

Janey looks back without expression.

INT. LIBBETS' APARTMENT. NIGHT

Libbets and Paul in the same position whence last we saw them.

Paul delicately leans to one side of the couch and picks up a phone. He dials a number.

INTERCUT:

INT. HOOD LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

The phone rings. Wendy picks it up.

WENDY  
Hood residence.

PAUL  
(whispering)  
Charles, what time is it?

WENDY  
Is this Charles?

PAUL  
What time is it?

WENDY  
Um, ten-o-five. Why? Where are you?

PAUL  
I'm, uh, in the midst of a moral  
dilemma. And I was wondering,  
because I know you're a very moral  
person, and --

WENDY  
And?

PAUL  
Shit. I can't really talk about it.  
I guess I better get to the train.

WENDY  
Right.

PAUL  
What are you doing at home on a  
Friday night?

WENDY  
I have plans.

Paul hangs up the phone and looks down at Libbets.

Libbets' Allman Brothers tape has run out. The machine makes a repeated clicking sound as the take up reel continues to circle. The only other sound is the noise of the wind and rain lashing against the apartment's windows.

EXT. HOOD HOUSE. NIGHT

Wendy emerges from the house and gets on her bike, but the ice makes it too slippery. The storm is now in full swing. She gets off and walks.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

Wendy walks, barely keeping her balance in the wind.

INT. HALFORD'S NIGHT

All the couples are now gathered for the key selection process, men on one side of the room, women on the other. The storm can be heard outside.

DOT

Well, what shall the order be,  
alphabetical? In order of  
appearance?

PIERCE SAWYER

Golf handicap! Lowest handicap does  
the honors.

Nervous laughter.

DOT

Golf handicap? Ladies, isn't it up  
to you?

MARIA CONRAD

Oh I'll go first, damn it. Let's  
just line up and get it over with.

Maria chooses Stephen Earle. Hands the keys to him. A smattering of applause as she takes his arm and they leave.

MARIE EARLE

Good luck!

Neil watches his mother's exit.

JUMP CUT TO:

A few more couplings.

JUMP CUT TO:

Helen Worthington approaches the bowl. Helen Worthington has the size and shape of a sumo wrestler.

There is a nervous shifting of weight on the male side of the room.

Helen delicately reaches into the bowl. Her hands emerge with a key chain.

George Clair steps forward, obviously depressed, as a collective sigh of relief goes up from behind him. Ben looks on, momentarily triumphant.

Elena smiles to herself.

JUMP CUT TO:

The Gadds choose each other.

MRS. GADD

Oh, my own husband. Isn't that against the rules?

DOT

Try again?

MRS. GADD

(relieved)

Oh, I think not.

Mr. Gadd smiles as they leave, obviously happy to go.

Finally, only Mark Boland, Neil Conrad, Janey and Jim Williams, Rob and Dot Halford, Sari Steele, Benjamin and Elena.

DOT

Getting down to the wire!

Elena steps forward. Benjamin is obviously agitated.

Close on Janey's hands selecting -- away from Ben's equine key ring.

She lifts up another key ring -- Neil Conrad, the teenager.

She hands the self-important-looking Neil his keys and they turn to go.

Jim Williams smiles mysteriously to himself.

Ben suddenly lurches forward, semi-drunkenly, trying to separate Neil from Janey.

THE GROUP

(ad lib)

Hey hey Ben, hang on there a sec.

He backs off, ashamed, and, taking a step backwards, trips over the coffee table.

Mark Boland helps lift him up.

BEN

Sorry... maybe I should... the  
bathroom?

DOT

Right down the hall, Ben.

BEN

(muttering)  
Sorry, I'm sorry. Uh, I'll be back.

Dot follows Mark Boland down the hall behind Ben.

Suddenly, it's just Elena and Jim Williams, and Sari Steele and Rob Halford.

ROB HALFORD

(taking Sari's arm)  
Actually, we didn't put our keys in  
at all. But you won't spread it  
around? It's my party, and Dot  
isn't... hey, we're just going to  
slip upstairs for a while. You  
folks like a cup of coffee or  
something before we go?

Elena and Jim look at each other.

ELENA

Rob, we'll fix it for ourselves.  
You two go and get acquainted.  
We'll let ourselves out the front  
door.

Jim and Elena stand there alone.

JIM

Well, I have to say I don't have  
much faith that my car keys are  
still in that bowl. Doesn't seem  
entirely safe, leaving your car  
keys around?

ELENA

Let me.

She takes the bowl and dips her hand in. Two sets are left.  
One, her own, she avoids. She takes out Jim's keys and walks  
across the room, handing them to him.

JIM

Thanks, but -- oh, I don't think  
so. It's been kind of a  
discouraging evening.

ELENA

You couldn't have hoped for much better when you came up the walk.

JIM

Somehow it was different in my imagination when I thought about it. Actually, I didn't think about it at all, really.

They sit down on the sofa.

JIM

You want coffee or something?

ELENA

Well, maybe they have one of those filter jobs in the kitchen --

JIM

Look, Elena, the fact that we're neighbors... you know, close friends, well it sort of makes this a little strange, don't you think?

ELENA

My husband is probably passed out in the bathroom, or at least he wishes he were. I've been married to him for 17 years and I don't have any intention of going in there to get him... so what I'm proposing is that since your wife has gone off with a boy, and since you are standing here alone, I'm proposing that you and I do what makes sense. Stay warm. Pass some time. That's all.

They both look at their hands.

ELENA

Now don't make me feel as if I'm being too forward, OK? If you don't --

JIM

What the hey. Let's go for a drive.

ELENA

Okay. Shall we clean up around here first? Do you think it's all right--

JIM

Nah, that wasn't in the contract.

But they still walk around turning off lights.

In the hallway, Elena looks a bit mournfully at the light seeping from underneath the bathroom door. She hears the sound of running water from inside.

Then she goes into a sideroom and joins Jim. They pick up their coats.

EXT. HALFORD HOUSE. NIGHT

Elena and Jim walk outside into the freezing, pelting rain.

Covering their faces, they jog to his car, an oversized Cadillac. A thick glaze of ice forms on his windshield.

INT. JIM'S CADILLAC. NIGHT

They climb in.

JIM

We're going to have to defrost this thing for a while.

He turns on the ignition, and the vents start to blow cold air at them.

He leans over and kisses her.

ELENA

Do these seats go back?

That starts it. He jumps at her, unbuckling her and unzipping himself.

They tangle uncomfortably for a few seconds. And then, comically, he's in her.

With a groan, it's over in a flash.

Jim pulls himself off, readjusting his pants.

JIM

That was awful, really awful. I'm so sorry, Elena.

Elena has somehow worked herself into the cavity of the glove compartment, and is trying to figure out how to extricate herself.

JIM

Things are really rotten at home.  
You wouldn't believe how rotten.  
Janey's sick. She's unstable, I  
guess... it's not the right time to  
tell you... but that's it -- it's  
like I can't make her happy, the

boys can't make her happy, she just  
doesn't --

ELENA

Jim, maybe we should just go. I've  
got to look in on the kids. Paul is  
supposed to be coming back in from  
the city.

JIM

Jesus, let me make it up to you --  
I can do better than that, honestly  
--

ELENA

Well, we can talk about it.

JIM

That's fine. I wouldn't expect you  
to see it any other way.

ELENA

Maybe you just need -- look, can  
you wait here a sec, I need to tidy  
up -- just a minute, I'll be right  
back. You'll wait?

JIM

Of course.

She opens the door and walks back to the house.

INT. HALFORD'S. CONT'D

Elena hesitantly walks to the bathroom.

She opens the door. Ben's sitting on the floor, next to the  
toilet, woozily flipping through the pages of a magazine.

BEN

Elena.

ELENA

Ben, I've got a ride home. Maybe  
you should sleep this one off on  
the couch here?

BEN

I'll drive you --

ELENA

Ben.

She sits on the toilet next to him, stroking his hair.

ELENA (CONT'D)

You're in no condition to drive.

We'll talk in the morning, OK?

He sits, accepting and quiet.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
You'll get some sleep on the couch  
out there?

BEN  
(looking up at her, with  
gratitude)  
Sure. I'll try. And we'll talk in  
the morning?

ELENA  
We'll talk in the morning.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. NIGHT

Wendy walks up the drive in the rain, pauses, then goes to  
the front door and knocks lightly. The door swings ajar. She  
pushes on it, and lets herself in.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. NIGHT

WENDY  
Anyone home? Hello.

Wendy wanders into the living room, then climbs the steps.  
The sound of the wind and the darkness begin to scare her.

She goes into Mikey's room -- it's even more of a disaster  
zone than usual.

She sees on the wall his dark-light poster of the 12 (sexual)  
positions of the zodiac.

She notices the black garter belt on the floor, and picks it  
up, absentmindedly swinging it in her hand as she walks out  
of the room.

She walks back down the stairs and into the kitchen, leaving  
the garter belt on the counter.

She opens the refrigerator, grabs a jar of peanut butter, and  
scoops some up in her finger. As she puts her finger in her  
mouth --

SANDY  
Wendy.

She gives out a little yelp.

WENDY  
Sandy, you scared the shit out of  
me.

SANDY  
What are you doing?

WENDY  
Just thought I'd stop by.

SANDY  
Mike's out -- I think he went to  
Silver Meadow to see if you were  
hanging around there.

WENDY  
Yeah.

SANDY  
(pause)  
Are you his girlfriend?

WENDY  
No.

INT. JIM'S CADILLAC. NIGHT

Elena gets in. They drive off silently.

EXT. STREETS. NIGHT

The car moves haltingly through the sleet and ice, inches up  
a hill, then falters and slides back silently, circling a  
couple of times before crashing into an embankment.

INT. CAR. NIGHT

As the car slides and crashes amid Jim's and Elena's screams.

Silence.

JIM  
You okay?

ELENA  
Yeah. You?

JIM  
Yes. Well, I guess we can walk from  
here.

EXT. CAR. NIGHT

Jim and Elena get out, shaky, from the car.

They pause for a moment.

The street lamp above them sizzles, but stays on.

They start to walk.

INT. LIBBETS' APARTMENT. NIGHT

Paul and Libbets, still frozen in the same position. Finally, Paul gently pushes Libbets' head back.

It slides off his leg and, as Paul lurches forward in a failed attempt to grab it, Libbets flops backwards, her head hitting the carpet with a dull but decidedly loud thump.

PAUL

Oh shit!

Paul gets up, looks down at her.

She snores.

He runs over to a side table and sees the clock: 11:10.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Oh shit oh shit.

He grabs his comic books and runs for the door.

INT. TAXI. NIGHT

The driver impassively inches down Park Avenue.

PAUL

Oh shit oh shit. C'mon!

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION PLATFORM. NIGHT

Paul sprints down the platform just as the doors are closing. He barely makes it into the train.

INT. TRAIN. NIGHT

Paul walks through the nearly empty train car and finds a seat. He pulls his Fantastic Four comic book out of his coat pocket.

INT. HALFORD KITCHEN. NIGHT

Ben makes his way to the kitchen, pours himself a cup of coffee.

He sees himself reflected in the black glass of the cabinets.

INT. SANDY'S ROOM. NIGHT

Sandy and Wendy are sitting on the floor. He grabs his G.I. Joe.

SANDY

Check this out. He's supposed to talk all kinds of stuff, but he's like malfunctioned.

He pulls the dog tag on the doll, and G.I. Joe emits a plastic macho voice.

G.I. JOE  
Mayday! Mayday! Get this message  
back to base!

SANDY  
Same thing. Again and again.

Wendy takes the doll and yanks the cord.

G.I. JOE  
Mayday! Mayday! Get this message  
back to base!

SANDY  
It's gonna get a lot colder  
tonight, I predict. Probably a  
blackout. Do you have candles in  
your house?  
I know where the candles are, and I  
have my own flashlight. Over there.  
Also, I know where every emergency  
exit is on this floor.

During the course of his monologue, as Wendy looks on, Sandy calmly ties a noose for his doll.

SANDY  
This knot's called a bowline.

He puts the noose over the doll's head, as Wendy holds him.

G.I. JOE  
Mayday! Mayday!

SANDY  
Let's hang him.

Sandy drapes the noose over the edge of a dresser drawer.  
G.I. Joe dangles. They both look at him in silence.

The silence continues.

WENDY  
He's dead.

SANDY  
If it wasn't raining we could take  
him outside and blow him up.

WENDY  
He wouldn't blow up. He'd just get  
all mangled or twisted.

She takes him down and lays him flat on the bed. And then begins to remove his clothes.

Sandy looks on, desirous.

WENDY

Well.

(noticing his lack of  
anatomy)

It looks like someone got to his  
private parts before us.

SANDY

Communist Viet Cong.

WENDY

They left it in the jungle.

They speak with high seriousness.

Wendy slides up on the bed where Sandy sits, a pillow on his lap, and one by one, with exaggerated slowness, she removes her snowboots, as if they were stiletto heels.

WENDY

Can I get into your bed?

(pause)

With you?

Sandy begins to shake.

SANDY

We -- we have to go to the guest room. We can't stay in here. What if Mikey? My parents?

WENDY

Don't worry about them. They're at that party, getting drunk and falling all over each other and making jokes about McGovern and stuff.

Sandy begins to cry.

SANDY

It's just -- it's just --

She takes his hand, and they walk out of the room and down the hall, into the guest room.

INT. GUEST ROOM. NIGHT

Wendy and Sandy enter. She sees the vodka bottle on the dresser.

WENDY

Want a drink?

SANDY  
Vodka?

WENDY  
You never tasted the stuff?

She fills the glass to the brim and hands the bottle to Sandy.

They clink and each toss back a sip -- Wendy almost the entire glass.

Sandy coughs and gags, but swallows.

WENDY  
Try again.

He does.

SANDY  
It feels warm.

WENDY  
One more shot?

SANDY  
Okay.

They drink.

WENDY  
Under the covers.

Under they go, and soon every layer of clothing emerges.

WENDY  
(feeling her way)  
Get 'em off.

Sandy begins to laugh, and soon Wendy joins him.

They roll around on top of each other for a while.

WENDY  
Have you ever had a nocturnal emission?

SANDY  
Huh?

WENDY  
That's the name for when you wake up and find this little pool of sticky stuff, like after a sexy dream.

Sandy shakes his head.

WENDY

They didn't tell you this stuff  
yet? What planet do you live on?

Sandy doesn't answer, but climbs back on top of her and kisses her neck.

SANDY

I love you.

WENDY

That's nice. Are you drunk?

SANDY

I don't know. How do I know?

WENDY

I don't know either. You spin  
around, when you lie down.

Sandy rolls off her and lies on his back.

SANDY (CONT'D)

I don't think I'm spinning.

They cuddle up together.

He yawns. She yawns.

EXT. SILVER MEADOW. NIGHT

Mikey walks along the edge of the empty pool in the rain. He climbs up on the diving board and bounces lightly on it, but then gets off and stands, looking down at the pool again.

EXT. SILVER MEADOW. NIGHT

Mikey walks across the field.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

The storm has let up. Mikey walks along. With a running start, he slides on the ice down a hill.

He walks back up and slides again, hollering with joy. He is an image of a tiny yet absolute and positive freedom.

The streetlights sputter on, then off.

INT. WILLIAMS GUEST ROOM. NIGHT

Sandy and Wendy lie asleep.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

A power line is down. It hisses and HUMS -- a humming very much like the humming Mikey has been hearing earlier.

The humming takes on the same transcendent tonality to which Mikey has become so accustomed at such moments.

Mikey sits down on a metal street guardrail, to ponder the sound and the snaking coil of electricity.

A strange look of almost religious wonder overcomes his face, as the power line connects to the guardrail.

MIKEY

Oh shit.

Glued by an electrical pulse to the rail, he shakes as the current flows through him.

After a minute, his body slumps and slides down the road.

INT. TRAIN. NIGHT

As Paul sits reading on he moving train, the lights inside begin to sputter, and the train begins to slow. After a few moments, the train grinds to a halt, and Paul and his few fellow late night passengers are left in near total dark, with only the light of an emergency exit sign above Paul's head to light the scene.

The train is eerily silent.

EXT. HOOD CAR. NIGHT

Ben drives home.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

An emergency vehicle, lights flashing, crawls by Ben's car. He drives on slowly.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF WILLIAMS HOUSE. PRE-DAWN

Jim and Elena arrive on foot.

JIM

You want to come in, get a cup of coffee -- warm up? I can either walk you home, or you could crash in the guest room.

ELENA

Sure. Maybe coffee.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN. PRE-DAWN

JIM

Phone's out. I hope the pipe's --

He walks into the kitchen. The pipes have begun to burst. There's a water leak running down the walls, forming a puddle on the floor.

Elena has walked into the kitchen behind him. She leans against the counter, picking up the garter belt without thinking for a second, then putting it back down.

JIM

Oh well. Why don't you put on some dry socks -- and we've got some rain boots in the guest closet back there. Last room upstairs -- back of the hall.

Elena climbs the stairs in her bare feet.

INT. WILLIAMS GUEST ROOM. CONT'D

Elena opens the door, and discovers Wendy and Sandy asleep. She stands before the bed, and gazes down on them.

They look almost angelic.

Wendy, sensing her presence in the room, opens her eyes, slowly coming out of sleep.

ELENA

(heartbroken, softly)  
Get dressed.

Elena walks out of the room, back to the kitchen.

Wendy gets out of bed quietly, leaving Sandy sleeping peacefully.

She looks at him lovingly, and tucks the blanket back up around him.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN. DAWN

Elena and Jim are drinking coffee.

ELENA

You should let him sleep.

Wendy enters. She looks inquisitively at the two adults.

WENDY

Where's dad?

INT. HOOD CAR. DAWN

Ben continues to drive slowly. He looks out his side window, and sees something. He puts on his brakes.

EXT. STREET. DAWN

Ben gets out of the car, and stands on the top of an icy embankment. In a clump of bushes is the orange glow of a parka.

He walks hesitantly toward it. Mike's body lies face down in the wet ice.

Ben leans down and turns the body over, then stands back in amazement and saddened shock.

He stands there for a moment, then picks Mike's body up, carrying him over the hill and onto the street. We see now that he is parked just a short block from the Williams's house.

He bypasses his car and walks directly down the street toward the house. The effort is obviously enormous. He falls from time to time, then gets back up.

INT. TRAIN. PRE-DAWN

Various passengers asleep.

Paul, hunched up in his seat under the faint emergency exit light, cold. He reads his comic book by the light of the emergency exit.

"DON'T YOU SEE, SUE? HE WAS TOO  
POWERFUL... IF HIS ENERGY HAD  
CONTINUED TO BUILD, HE WOULD HAVE  
DESTROYED THE WORLD!"

Suddenly, the lights begin to flicker on and the hum of the train's engines returns.

The conductor enters the car, blasting forth in his classic nasal train conductor voice.

CONDUCTOR  
Good morning ladies and gentlemen --

On Paul, squinting in the harsh light.

EXT. TRAIN BRIDGE. PRE-DAWN

The train moves slowly through a suburban, semi-forested landscape. On the street below the bridge, an emergency highway crew is removing a fallen tree, their trucks aglow in flashing yellow lights.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN. DAWN

Elena pours Wendy a cup of coffee. They're both in their coats.

WENDY  
I don't like coffee.

ELENA  
It'll warm you up.

Elena sits next to her. They both raise their cups and sip the coffee, not noticing the simultaneity of their movements.

INT. GUEST ROOM. DAWN

Jim watches the sleeping Sandy, picks up the half-empty bottle of vodka, pours himself a drink. The noise wakes Sandy up. Jim sits down on the bed at his feet and takes a sip.

SANDY  
Dad?

Jim looks at him.

INT. KITCHEN. DAWN

Elena and Wendy hear a hollering from outside, get up to see what it is.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. DAWN

Elena and Wendy come out the front door, as Ben lays Mikey's body onto the ground before the front steps.

ELENA  
Ben?

He's too breathless to speak.

They stand there, looking down at Mikey.

Behind Elena and Wendy, Jim appears.

He pushes softly by them toward the body of his son.

BEN  
Jim -- he was just up -- in Silver  
Lane -- I think maybe -- a power  
line --

Jim picks up his son.

He carries him silently into the house.

Sandy, now standing inside the foyer, pushes himself back against the wall as they pass, without expression.

After a moment, from outside, the Hoods can hear Jim's wailing.

BEN

Do you think? Maybe we should call  
someone --

ELENA  
The phone's out.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Yeah. Well, we can just --

ELENA  
Ben, I don't think he wants us  
here.

Wendy has been watching Sandy through the screen door.

WENDY  
Wait, I --

She turns back up the front steps and gently goes in --

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM. CONT'D

on the living room floor, Jim is hugging Mike's body, his  
shoulders shaking uncontrollably, sobbing.

Wendy walks and stands next to Sandy, who is filled  
momentarily with a brief inexplicable rush of anger toward  
her -- but she takes him and gives him an awkward, childlike  
hug, then turns and runs out the door, joining Ben and Elena  
on the driveway. Sandy watches her go, his face wet with  
tears.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE. CONT'D

ELENA  
Oh you know, for a minute I thought  
it was --

BEN  
Paul? Yeah. You think --

WENDY  
He's probably been waiting all  
night at the station.

BEN  
C'mon.

EXT. STREET. DAWN

Elena, Wendy, and Ben reach the car and get in. The car  
starts and drives off.

There are more crews out cleaning up the storm's debris and  
fixing the power lines as they drive.

EXT. CONRAIL STATION. EARLY MORNING

The train slowly pulls in. The Hood family walks down to the end of the platform.

The train doors open, and Paul, tired and a bit cramped, emerges. He sees his family gathered at the other end of the platform, and walks to them.

They stand, silent, even dignified, awaiting him.

When he joins them they all walk silently to the car and get in.

INT. HOOD CAR. EARLY MORNING

Sunlight floods in and temporarily blinds Ben as he starts the engine.

He squints, his eyes tearing a bit from the light.

He looks around, first at his wife, then at his two children sitting in the back seat.

He turns off the engine. Quietly, he begins to cry.

He turns to the back seat.

BEN

There's something -- your mother  
and I -- have to tell you two --

Elena puts her hand out, almost touching him.

ELENA

(softly)

Ben.

Paul looks at Wendy, silently asking her what's happening.

She casts her eyes downward, as does he.

ELENA (CONT'D)

(her hand still not yet  
touching him)

Ben.

EXT. STATION PARKING LOT. MORNING

From above:

The car, the first morning light shining upon it.

THE ENDAnd you get into some far