



22 Birthdays

“Money. Sex. Power. Cake.”

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DIRECTORY OF PARENTS - FIRST GRADE

THE McCALLS

VIRGIL (55) and **QUINN** (37). Virgil is a charming, avuncular, and utterly ruthless media titan. Quinn is his strikingly attractive second wife, dressed, coiffed, and toned to a level of "Bel Air Casual" that only unlimited time and money can produce. Like her husband, Quinn is driven to succeed at all costs -- within the microcosm of her daughter's private school.

THE VERMAAKS

DESMOND (40) and **CATRIONA** (38). The class's "fun couple", Des and Cat are from South Africa; Desmond is the South African Consul in L.A. Their convivial, carefree exteriors mask some dark secrets.

THE THURBERS

JERRY (52) and **PAM** (36). Jerry is a distinguished, greying Fortune 500 executive. Pam is a former UCLA cheerleader and all-American beauty whose upbeat enthusiasm, wholesome good looks, and handsome husband seem to provide her with a storybook existence. Simply put, she is the "Betty" to Quinn's "Veronica".

THE MARKSES

CARL (45) and **DAVINA** (39). The city's most feared lawyer, Carl is best friend to Virgil and worst enemy to anyone who crosses him. Davina is his very pregnant wife.

TOM GILLARD (39)

The class's newest addition, **TOM** is a handsome, rugged, self-effacing pediatrician who children (and their mothers) find very appealing. Dr. Tom Gillard could easily be the most successful pediatrician in the city. If only he had the right connections...

LIZZIE SHARPE (35)

In any other town in America, **LIZZIE** would be considered beautiful. But in L.A., she hardly gets a second look -- which is a shame, because Lizzie is smart, funny, and down-to-earth. Lizzie was once married to a movie star and went through a painful divorce which left her a little wiser and a lot poorer. She is the more Bohemian sister of the all-American Pam Thurber (above).

CLARENCE "BIGFOOT" ODELL (42)

BIGFOOT, a jovial, outspoken African-American, is L.A.'s #1 morning radio personality. He commands an enormous army of listeners -- none of whom go to the Coldwater School.

AND AT THE McCALL HOUSE:

JAMES McCALL (25) is Virgil's erudite, cosmopolitan son from his first marriage and the heir-apparent to his media empire.

INES (50) is Virgil's longtime housekeeper and James's closest confidante.

22 BIRTHDAYS

"MONEY. SEX. POWER. CAKE." (PILOT)

TEASER

FADE IN:

CHYRON: "Based on 22 True Stories"

EXT. MALIBU - LATE SUMMER - AFTERNOON

A HELICOPTER SHOT takes us over a stunning BEACHFRONT COMPOUND. There's a party in progress below.

From the grandeur of it -- white tents, catering trucks, uniformed WAITERS -- we assume this must be a celebrity wedding or the equivalent.

EXT. COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

At ground level, though, we hear:

GUESTS (O.S.)
Happy Birthday to you
Happy Birthday to you...

We PUSH THROUGH the throngs of WAITERS and COSTUMED ENTERTAINERS, past the DEEJAY, past the PHOTOGRAPHER, the VIDEOGRAPHER, and the PARTY PLANNERS on headsets to reveal the guest of honor:

A SEVEN YEAR-OLD GIRL. Pretty much like any little girl -- apart from her salon-styled hair and Fred Segal clothes.

GUESTS (CONT'D)
Happy Birthday, dear Clio...

Surrounding the girl are her CLASSMATES and their PARENTS -- a selection of the wealthiest and most powerful people in Los Angeles. Furthermore, most of them are great-looking.

Gathered near the center are QUINN McCALL, DESMOND and CATRIONA VERMAAK, PAM and JERRY THURBER, and LIZZIE SHARPE.

GUESTS (CONT'D)
Happy Birthday to yooooou!

The candles are blown out to APPLAUSE and flash photography.

Watching to one side are VIRGIL and CARL. Even amongst this elite crowd, Virgil radiates power and wealth. Carl is a squat, bald, bulldog with over-compensatingly great taste in clothes. The birthday candle-smoke wafts their way.

VIRGIL
(inhales)
Imperial Majesty.
(off Carl's look)
Clive Christian perfume, over two
thousand dollars an ounce. Must've
soaked the candles in it.

CARL
Unbelievable.

VIRGIL
Be grateful. Whenever I start to
feel the vulgarian I console myself
with the certain knowledge someone
in our circle's being even more
ludicrously excessive.

CARL
(re: the host, dismissive)
Dot-commoner. Caught a wave.

VIRGIL
Doesn't know, you don't spend de
Kooning money on a Koons.

INT. SAV-ON - SIMULTANEOUS

TOM GILLARD, shopping for school supplies with seven-year-old
daughter, MOLLY. Handsome, overwhelmed -- his arms currently
filled with a backpack, binders, pencils, erasers, etc.

MOLLY
(spotting them)
And markers. I need markers.

She takes down a package of what looks like thirty.

TOM
You need that many?

MOLLY
Mom always got that size.

A clincher.

TOM
Pile it on.

MOLLY
I told you we need one of those
baskets.

TOM
I'm fine, sweetie.

He bends down, she adds it to his pile. It balances precariously. He straightens, they continue.

MOLLY
(stopping short)
And dividers!

Tom swerves to avoid running her over, the pile tumbles to the floor. They regard it.

TOM
I'll get a basket.
(re: pile, mock earnestly)
Guard that with your life.

He crosses off. Molly, all business, stands astride her fallen bounty, arms out, warding off plunderers.

EXT. PARTY - SIMULTANEOUS

The helicopter passes over with a DEAFENING ROAR.

QUINN
Those awful paparazzi.

JERRY
What are they hoping to get?

LIZZIE
Well, with three movie stars, a Pro Bowl quarterback, a billionaire, and a Nobel Prize-winning physicist here today, I'm going to guess...

DESMOND
Anything that's in focus.

CATRIONA
But probably not the physicist.

QUINN
There's another one.

Quinn points out toward the ocean. Two hundred yards from shore are two MEN ON A BOAT, one watching with binoculars, directing another wielding a camera with a telephoto lens the size of a bazooka.

BINOCULAR P.O.V. - FROM THE BOAT

Scanning the party, the camera CLICKING away.

BACK TO SCENE

The helicopter circles. Quinn marches over to Virgil.

QUINN
Virgil, can't you call someone?

VIRGIL
Freedom of the press.

QUINN
It's disgusting.

VIRGIL
The new pornography of celebrity voyeurism sells magazines, which makes me money, which keeps whatever designer you're currently propping up -- in that lovely outfit no doubt obscenely overpaid for -- in Petrus. Dear.

He's the sole person in the world to talk this way to Quinn. More to the point, the only one from whom she'd take it.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
(checking his watch)
We should hit the road. Traffic on PCH is going to be murder.

QUINN
I'll get Fiona.

She CROSSES AWAY. The men finish up their drinks.

CARL
L.A. traffic. The great equalizer.

VIRGIL
Friday, it took me an hour and a half to get home from the studio.

CARL
You can always move to the Valley.

VIRGIL
I'd rather move the whole studio over here.
(then)
Ever drive around the V.A.?

CARL
The Veteran's Home in Brentwood?

VIRGIL

Biggest piece of undeveloped land
on the westside.

CARL

Sure, but it's federally protected.
Owned by the U.S. Government.

VIRGIL

So was the Presidio -- until George
Lucas bought it.

INT. SAV-ON - SIMULTANEOUS

Tom, with the basket of school supplies, and Molly, in line
at the register. DINA, a 30-something suburban mom stops by.

DINA

Tom!

TOM

Dina. You ever meet my daughter,
Molly?

DINA

I don't think so.
(to Molly)
So nice to meet you.

Nothing from the girl.

TOM

(prompts)
Moll...

MOLLY

Nice to meet you too.

DINA

(solicitously)
How are you two..?

TOM

(bit over-brightly)
We're doing fine.

Clearly they don't want to say too much in front of Molly.

DINA

(to Molly)
You know your daddy's the best
doctor in the city?

MOLLY
The line's moving.

TOM
No man's a hero to his valet, or
his seven-year-old daughter.

MOLLY
(re: line)
Dad..!

TOM
(to Dina)
Good to see you.

He and Molly move up in the line.

DINA
I'll bring Jonah by for his flu
shot.

Tom nods. Dina watches after them sympathetically.

EXT. PARTY - SIMULTANEOUS

Guests are starting to leave. Pam and Lizzie carry their
childrens' gift bags.

LIZZIE
Can you believe these goodie bags?

PAM
(looks inside)
Godiva chocolates. A Paul Frank
watch. And an iPhone.

LIZZIE
For a bunch of first graders!
Promise you're not going to do
something like this for Emma.

Pam declines to answer.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
You know the kids would rather go
to Chuck E. Cheese.

PAM
Since when have the parties at this
school been about the kids?

ON THE BACK LAWN - THE SAME TIME

Amidst the parked cars, Desmond chats casually with fellow parent DOUG ROSENBLUM. Doug leans on his green Jaguar.

DOUG
So, we do this again on Saturday?

DESMOND
I wouldn't miss these parties for the world.

Desmond CROSSES AWAY just as Doug's WIFE and CHILD arrive.

DOUG
Okays, let's get a move on! School starts tomorrow!

EXT. COMPOUND - A MINUTE LATER

The compound gates slowly swing open as the first cars line up to head out onto PCH.

INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Circling over the highway, the passenger points out to the pilot one car in particular.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The instant the Rosenblums pull out of the gate, their Jaguar is cut off by SIX LAPD CRUISERS!

More official vehicles screech up. A dozen armed FBI AND DEA AGENTS swarm out and surround the car.

FBI TEAM LEADER
Step out of the vehicle, sir!

AT THE GATES

Parents climb out of their cars to get a glimpse.

JERRY
Is that... the Rosenblums?

PAM
What on God's green Earth would the FBI want with Doug Rosenblum?

ON THE HIGHWAY

An agent with a crowbar pries open the trunk of the Jaguar. It is completely filled with BUNDLES OF WHITE POWDER.

AT THE GATES

Parents watch, stunned beyond words.

SMASH CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES - "22 BIRTHDAYS"

Expensive CUSTOM-MADE PARTY INVITATIONS flash by, all with addresses in Beverly Hills, Bel Air, Brentwood, and Malibu. 22 of them -- ending on the invitation for today's party.

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - FIVE MINUTES LATER

CHP cars, DEA vans, flashing lights -- a lot of hubbub.

VARIOUS PARENTS

watch, wide-eyed, as Doug is lead away in handcuffs. The whispered gossip is already underway.

ACROSS THE HIGHWAY

An "ACTION NEWS" van slows to a stop on the shoulder.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

A NEWSCASTER and his CAMERAMAN look out at the excitement.

CAMERAMAN

What the hell..?

NEWSCASTER

I don't know, but it beats covering the sewage spill in Oxnard. Come on!

EXT. PCH - TWO MINUTES LATER

The van's satellite pole is extending skyward as the cameraman plugs the last cables into his Betacam.

The newscaster trots back over with some scribbled notes.

NEWSCASTER

Major drug bust. And you won't *believe* who these people are.

A MERCEDES LIMOUSINE slowly pulls up behind the camera. The back window rolls down to reveal...

VIRGIL

VIRGIL

Howard.

NEWSCASTER

(surprised)
Mr. McCall..!

VIRGIL

How's your wife like Encino?

NEWSCASTER

Pool, palm trees -- Jersey girl
living the dream.

VIRGIL

Our local station in Bismarck needs
a new weatherman. Know anyone?

NEWSCASTER

I'll give it some thought.

VIRGIL

Good to see you.

The window rolls up, the limo pulls away. The newscaster
yanks out his earpiece, heads back to the van.

CAMERAMAN

What are you doing?!

NEWSCASTER

He owns the network.

(beat)

And I used to do weather.

INT. LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

Virgil and Quinn talk while daughter FIONA watches a DVD.

QUINN

Doug Rosenblum. Who'd have thought
he was involved with d-r-u-g--

FIONA

I can spell, Mom.

QUINN

Watch your movie, sweetie.

FIONA

It's boring.

VIRGIL

That movie cost a lot of money. I
need you to watch, then tell me
what you don't like about it. So
daddy can give the right people a
time out.

Fiona turns back to the video screen.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

That man has been in our *home*.

QUINN

Not to mention all those playdates
Fiona's had over there.

Virgil takes out his cell phone, dials.

VIRGIL

All these parents -- what do we
really know about them?

INTERCUT:

INT. PORSCHE CAYENNE - THAT MOMENT

Carl and DAVINA Marks are in bumper-to-bumper traffic on PCH.
Carl's CELL RINGS just as an LAPD car speeds by on the
shoulder with Doug in the back.

Carl checks the caller I.D. and answers:

CARL

Looks like Doug found a way to beat
the traffic.

VIRGIL

I want to run a full background
check on every single parent in
this class.

A beat as Carl realizes Virgil isn't joking. Then...

CARL

Okay...

VIRGIL

Set it up. Meet me at the office
first thing Monday.

He hangs up. Carl, still processing this request, follows
suit.

DAVINA

Poor Winnie. Imagine having to
explain all this to the kids!
(worse yet)
You realize, they'll almost
certainly have to leave the school.

CARL

I know some people who are gonna be
happy.

DAVINA

Who?

CARL

The next ones on the waiting list.

CUT TO:

INT. OCEAN PARK PEDIATRICS - MONDAY MORNING

A small medical office on the "wrong side" of Santa Monica. The waiting room is crowded with SICK KIDS and their PARENTS. Some ethnic, some low-income -- a fairly diverse mix.

The receptionist (MONICA) tries to keep order.

MONICA

I'm sorry, the doctor is running late this morning--

Tom enters, harried...

TOM

My apologies, everyone. How are you do-- obviously, you're here, so-- er, be right with you.

(to Monica)

First day of school. Half hour to drop Molly off. No parking, cars backed up around the block...

MONICA

That's the problem with public school. The public.

(hands him coffee)

First patient's in Exam One.

INT. OCEAN PARK PEDIATRICS - EXAM ROOM ONE - MOMENTS LATER

Tom ENTERS to find Lizzie waiting with her son ZACHARY. Zachary is dressed in his "Coldwater" school polo shirt.

TOM

Sorry for the wait--

(sees them)

Hey, Lizzie! Zack, buddy, what's the problem?

LIZZIE

Just a clerical visit. School starts today, and daffy Mom forgot to get the medical forms signed.

TOM

I'll have you out of here in no time. I'll even still throw in the lollipop, even though...

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)
(mock whisper)
...you're not really sick.

Zack smiles.

LIZZIE
He shows up at Coldwater with a lollipop, he'll get suspended for a month. They're a little SS about nutrition.
(to Zack)
Mommy will smuggle it home in her purse for you.

Tom flips through the forms, signing them.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
Thought maybe they'd let those slide. But this school doesn't let anything slide.

TOM
I can tell.
(reads from form)
"Should your child have more than one therapist, please have each--"
Zack, do you have a therapist?

LIZZIE
No, but if he's good, maybe Santa will bring him one.

TOM
(chuckles)
Well, it's a great school. In fact, we--

MONICA (V.O. ON INTERCOM)
Call on line one. They said it was an emergency.

He nods apologetically to Lizzie, picks up the phone.

TOM
This is Dr. Gillard.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
I'm calling from the Admissions Office at Coldwater School. A spot has suddenly opened up in our first grade class...

Tom turns to look at Lizzie.

EXT. COLDWATER SCHOOL - FRONT - THAT MORNING

Drop-off here runs like clockwork. STAFF and PARENT VOLUNTEERS with walkie-talkies make sure kids get out of the cars quickly and safely.

The next car up is an Aston-Martin with diplomatic plates.

INT. ASTON-MARTIN - CONTINUOUS

Desmond is at the wheel, still dashing even at 8:30 a.m. Monday morning. Catriona -- styled to runway perfection -- helps their cute-as-a-button TWINS out of their car seats.

The whole bunch is windblown, laughing, carefree -- as always.

(Note: The Vermaaks have SOUTH AFRICAN ACCENTS.)

DESMOND

Hate to dash, but I've got business.

CATRIONA

You should volunteer sometime. You're missing out.

DESMOND

Why, is there gossip you don't tell me?

CATRIONA

Never.

They share a sexy goodbye kiss.

INT. COLDWATER SCHOOL - ART ROOM - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Davina Marks and LENORE FEINGOLD chat as they set out paint pots, restock construction paper, etc.

DAVINA

How do you tell the Headmaster your husband's a drug dealer?

Catriona ENTERS, sets down her bag, joins in.

CATRIONA

I take it the Rosenblums are --

DAVINA

Gone.

LENORE

By mutual agreement with the school.

DAVINA

Meaning, no refund.

CATRIONA

Pity. They could probably use that money for bail.

LENORE

I heard Winnie's leaving town, taking the kids.

CATRIONA

Forget the kids, is she taking the nanny?

DAVINA

Omigod! That nanny, what's her name?

CATRIONA

Isabella. From Argentina, who speaks perfect English, has a spotless driving record and cooks gourmet meals.

DAVINA

Carl and I have been looking for a good nanny for months.

Catriona stares daggers at Davina.

CATRIONA

I thought of her first.

DAVINA

I was busy feeling sympathy for Winnie's tragic situation!

CATRIONA

A miscalculation on your part.

DAVINA

I'm pregnant.

CATRIONA

I have twins.

LENORE

(changing subjects)
Who wants to wash paintbrushes?

INT. COLDWATER SCHOOL - HALLWAY - THE SAME TIME

The "Admissions Office" door opens. Tom WALKS OUT, with the ADMISSIONS OFFICER.

TOM

My wife sent in the application
three years ago.

OFFICER

You're lucky. These days, it's up
to *five* just for the chance to land
a spot in our Pre-K.

TOM

So people are applying before they
even conceive their child?

OFFICER

Concurrent with.

(then)

I'm going to hand you off to the
President of our Parents Club, Pam
Thurber for a quick tour.

He turns to Pam, who has been waiting nearby. Pam -- sunny,
sociable, and outgoing -- is the perfect tour guide.

PAM

Dr. Gillard, welcome! We are so
delighted that you and your wife
will be joining our school family.

TOM

Actually, it'll just be me. And my
daughter.

Tom does not elaborate. Even though Pam would like him to.

PAM

Well, if you'll please follow me...

EXT. COLDWATER SCHOOL - FRONT - THAT MOMENT

A Range Rover pulls up and parks. Quinn GETS OUT, talking on
her cell phone. A TRACKING SHOT FOLLOWS her into the school.

QUINN (ON PHONE)

(indignant)

...I know, Winnie, but you did make
a commitment... The Winter Auction
is a "big deal", too. There's no
reason you can't still help out...

INT. COLDWATER SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

QUINN (ON PHONE)

...I feel like you're not hearing me, Winnie. Arraignment or no, you cannot just leave me hanging like this!

PAM & TOM

are coming down the adjoining hallway.

TOM

...my practice keeps me pretty busy, but I'd be happy to pitch in when I've got time.

PAM

It'll mean so much to your daughter. Parent volunteers are the lifeblood of this school.
(sees Quinn up ahead)
And here's one right now!

Pam motions for Quinn to come over.

QUINN (ON PHONE)

I have to go. Good luck with the D.A.

(hangs up, then friendly)
Hi, I'm Quinn McCall.

TOM

Tom Gillard.

PAM

Tom is a new dad. He was just saying how he'd like to volunteer.

Quinn perks up. Someone fresh off the street, with no clue about her reputation? She turns up the charm.

QUINN

(very appreciative)
Really truly? Oh, that is wonderful, Tom! You're a lifesaver. I'm short-handed on the Winter Auction Committee, and if you could spare any time I would be so, so grateful.

She touches Tom's arm and smiles a truly bewitching smile.

TOM

Sure. Happy to do what I can.

QUINN

We'll have fun. I promise.

EXT. CONTINENTAL STUDIOS - MORNING

A slightly ominous glass tower looms over the studio lot.

INT. CTI TOWER - THAT MOMENT

We MOVE THROUGH a sleek, modern outer office. An enormous "CTI" logo. A display case of Oscars and Emmys. A U.S. map showing the many holdings of Continental Telemedia, Inc.

Two stylishly-dressed ASSISTANTS work noiselessly. We move toward a door marked "VIRGIL McCALL - CHAIRMAN" and into...

INT. VIRGIL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

...where Virgil and Carl are talking.

VIRGIL

Never heard of him.

(beat)

Perfect.

CARL

Fifteen years my firm's used this guy, not one peep to the press. He's so far below the radar, you'd need sonar to detect him.

Virgil hands Carl a thick MANILA ENVELOPE.

VIRGIL

I just want to keep my family safe, Carl.

CARL

You're doing us all a favor.

EXT. SAN VICENTE BLVD. - LATER

Carl, in a jogging suit, leans against the window of a black BMW, talking to the driver.

INT. BMW - CONTINUOUS

A GRIM MAN, the PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR, in an expensive suit is opening the envelope. He pulls out the "COLDWATER SCHOOL DIRECTORY". The colorful balloons on the cover are in comical contrast to the serious tone of this rendezvous.

The P.I. leafs through the Directory.

P.I.

Some pretty big names in here.

CARL

They could fill an entire issue of "Vanity Fair". So absolute discretion.

P.I.

That's why you called me. Tell your guy, there's anyone in here, poses a threat, we'll know very soon.

CUT TO:

PORT OF LOS ANGELES - THAT MORNING

CLOSE on a car trunk. The CLICK of a remote opens it, revealing a pink Barbie bicycle inside. A hand reaches in and removes it. It's replaced by clear packets of drugs.

HEAD THUG (O.S.)

(in Afrikaans, subtitled)

So, the kingpin himself is driving shipments now?

VOICE IN AFRIKAANS

My courier ran into some trouble yesterday.

CUT WIDE to see the voice belongs to Desmond. It's his Aston-Martin that's being loaded by automatic weapons-toting THUGS.

DESMOND

But I'll find another soon enough.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. TOM'S CAR - MORNING

Tom and Molly in the efficient Coldwater dropoff queue.

MOLLY

I liked my old school.

TOM

You're going to love it here,
sweetie.

MOLLY

Why?

Good question.

TOM

It's more special.

MOLLY

Special like Charlie Cantwell who
kept hitting his head against the
wall?

TOM

No. Special better. Better
teachers. Better extra stuff they
don't have at your last school.

MOLLY

Like what.

TOM

(no idea, really)
...You'll see.

She remains unconvinced. They reach the dropoff spot.

MOLLY

You're only a kids doctor, right?

TOM

That's right, sweetie. Why?

The door is YANKED OPEN by an over-cheery Coldwater greeter.

GREETER

Good morning!

Molly flinches.

TOM
 It's okay, honey.
 (to greeter)
 We're not used to such a...
 (LOUD!)
 ...enthusiastic welcome.

GREETER
 You must be Molly!

Molly's not at all sure about this.

TOM
 Go on, sweetie.

Molly sucks it up, gets out of the car.

GREETER
 Welcome to Coldwater!

Molly gives one last look back at her father: "You're really leaving me with these people..?"

TOM
 Have a great day. Love --

The car door's SLAMMED in his face.

TOM (CONT'D)
 ...you.

Has he made some colossal, expensive mistake..? The hybrid behind him impatiently HONKS. He acknowledges, drives off.

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - DINING ROOM - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Quinn, Pam, Catriona, Lenore, and TWO OTHER MOTHERS are gathered at the table for the Auction meeting.

Housekeeper/nanny INES tends to an elegant buffet of fruit, muffins, etc., at the end of the table.

The other mothers have cups of coffee, plates of food. Quinn has only a tiny cappuccino cup and three immaculate binders.

QUINN
 With 500 lots, last year's Auction raised nearly two million dollars for the school--

Tom ENTERS, a little out of breath, and takes a seat.

QUINN (CONT'D)
(coolly polite)
We decided to start without you.

TOM
Went to the house across the street
by mistake. Turns out Nancy Reagan
lives there, which you, of course,
know, and-- well, I set off the
alarm and-- Sorry to interrupt.
Please, go ahead.

Tom looks around. He's the only man there. Though used to
dealing with moms in his practice, this is a whole new world.

PAM
Has everyone here met Tom?
(for his benefit)
Catriona chairs the Dinner
Committee. Lenore heads up
Entertainment. Quinn, of course,
runs the Auction itself. And I--

LENORE
Pam runs everything.

PAM
(modest)
Not really. As Parents Club
President, I--

QUINN
Ines, see if Dr. Gillard would like
anything.

From her tone, Quinn clearly has some issue with Pam.

TOM
No, thank you. I'm fine.

Meanwhile, JAMES McCALL (25) enters, looking particularly
handsome, sweaty in his tennis whites. James has all of
Virgil's charm, but years at Exeter and Harvard have shaped
his midwestern McCall manner into a more worldly, preppie
demeanor.

JAMES
Ladies.
(noting Tom)
Sorry.

Tom nods, it's okay.

QUINN

You've all met Virgil's son James?

Quinn seems to have issues with James as well -- Quinn having many issues with many people.

PAM

James, where have you been hiding?

JAMES

Spent the summer in Beijing. Dad's dipping his toes in there, sent me over to meet the right people. And bribe them.

He grabs a bagel.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Don't let me interrupt.

With an almost imperceptible bow to the ladies, he EXITS.

QUINN

Getting back to business, this year I hope to line up one thousand lots -- and with the help of volunteers like Tom -- raise more than three million dollars. I think we can meet this goal if...

As Quinn continues, Catriona Vermaak quietly stands up...

CATRIONA

Pardon me. Be right back.

...and EXITS.

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - A MINUTE LATER

James is showering. He finishes, reaches out to grab a towel, and discovers...

CATRIONA

waiting for him with a grin and holding his towel. He's surprised, but not astonished; clearly, they have a history.

CATRIONA

I came to give you a "Welcome Home" present. Guess what it is.

JAMES

Let me unwrap it and find out...

He unzips the back of Cat's dress, kissing her neck.

CATRIONA
Shall we adjourn to the bedroom?

JAMES
Better stay in here. The only room
where there aren't security
cameras.

CATRIONA
Pity. Would make for nice private
viewing later.

They kiss passionately...

MEANWHILE:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

A few miles away in Brentwood, a black BMW slows to a stop, parking across the street from a large (but cheerful) house with a swingset in the yard.

INT. BMW - CONTINUOUS

The P.I. consults the Coldwater School directory, checks the address. He is beginning to work his way through the class.

INT. LIZZIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

A funky, homey Craftsman bungalow in Venice. Lizzie's putting away groceries while Zachary plays in the living room just beyond. The phone RINGS, she answers.

LIZZIE
Hello?

INT. TOM'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

Tom on the phone amid a general HUBBUB of PATIENTS, PARENTS, NURSES. During the following, one MOTHER-AND-CHILD pair leaves; forms, prescriptions are put in front of him to sign; charts are handed over for him to peruse; another MOTHER-AND-CHILD twosome are ushered in.

TOM
Hey.

INTERCUT the phone call.

LIZZIE
Hey. So what do you think of the
school?

TOM

Like I got run over by the Welcome Wagon.

LIZZIE

And it'll back up and run you down again. Over and over for the next six years. Not to mention the Alumni Outreach Program. It's your basic lifetime commitment. Like joining the Mafia.

TOM

Quinn's got me spinning with this Auction. As a matter of fact---

LIZZIE

Here it comes.

TOM

She wanted me to ask you if Steve--

Lizzie's smile evaporates. But it's not Tom she's mad at.

LIZZIE

Quinn knows I haven't talked to Steve in two years.

TOM

I'm so sorry--

LIZZIE

Steve may make \$20 million a movie, but I barely make the rent. Because "America's Funniest Comedian" hired "America's Nastiest Divorce Lawyer" -- Stan Marks, you'll meet him, he's in our class.
(pause)

Sorry, I don't mean to take it out on you. Quinn should be ashamed, sending you to hit me up for-- what, an autographed movie poster?

TOM

Two tickets to his next premiere.

LIZZIE

Yeah, that's not gonna happen.

TOM

Forget I asked.

LIZZIE

This is how Quinn operates. Watch yourself.

TOM

I should get back to work.

LIZZIE

Welcome to our world.

They hang up. Each contemplates the phone call...resumes their activity

INT. ART ROOM - COLDWATER SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Catriona and Davina are closing up, washing brushes. Outside in the hall, a STRIKING ARGENTINE WOMAN (20) walks past.

DAVINA

Oh. My. God.

Davina quickly dries her hands and WADDLES OUT after her.

INT. COLDWATER SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

DAVINA

Isabella! Wait!

The woman, we realize, is the Rosenblum's nanny. Davina slowly catches up to her, breathless from exertion.

DAVINA (CONT'D)

...Davina Marks. ...How are Doug and Winnie doing?

ISABELLA

Not good, I'm afraid. He is in County Jail until the trial. And she is moving up to her mother's in Sausalito, taking the children. I just came to pick up their things.

She indicates her armload of books and clothing.

DAVINA

Where does all this leave you?

ISABELLA

I am helping her pack up the house. After that... Looking for work, I suppose.

DAVINA

You know...

Just as she's about to make her offer, Isabella's cell RINGS.

ISABELLA

Excuse me.

(answers it)

Yes. I understand, Mrs. I'll be right back.

(hangs up)

Mrs. Rosenblum needs me. I'll tell her you said 'hi'.

Isabella EXITS.

Davina turns to see that Catriona has emerged from the Art Room and has been watching this conversation intently.

CATRIONA

Subtlety will get you nowhere in this town. Watch and learn.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLDWATER SCHOOL - FRONT - THIRTY SECONDS LATER

Catriona LEAPS IN FRONT OF a car leaving the parking lot. It screeches to a halt.

CATRIONA

Stop! I want you to be my nanny!

The window rolls down. It's a completely different Latina.

DRIVER

(sarcastic, "excited")

Really?! What did it? The fact that I'm Mexican, or my six years on the State Supreme Court?

CATRIONA

Oh. My apologies, your honor...

INT. McCALL HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Daughter Fiona jumps up and down on the bed while Virgil looks on from the bathroom, flossing his teeth.

VIRGIL

Bet you can't touch the ceiling.

FIONA

Can so!

Quinn ENTERS from her dressing area, in a nightgown.

QUINN

Fiona! That is a very expensive mattress--

(Fiona jumps)

--with custom-made coils--

(and jumps again)

--from the Savoy Hotel--

(and again)

--in London! England! Virgil!

VIRGIL

All right, honey, time for bed.

QUINN

Ines will read you a story.

Virgil gives Fiona a hug and sets her down. She runs over to Ines, who is waiting at the door for her, and EXITS.

Quinn and Virgil settle into bed. She leafs through a copy of "Vanity Fair"; he picks up a large envelope, which is marked "PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL".

He rips it open, slides out FIVE THICK MANILA FOLDERS, and settles in for his nighttime reading.

Quinn can't help but notice. She glances over.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Is that a photo of the Lamberts' house?

VIRGIL

(nose in folder)

Um-hmm...

QUINN

Virg, these people are our friends...

Virgil tosses her a file. She grabs it and eagerly dives in.

DISSOLVE TO:

ONE HOUR LATER

Quinn is practically bursting with *schaudenfreude*. The contents of the files are spread out around her.

QUINN

David Egdeaware? That pompous snob was a high-school dropout! Stacy Sutcliffe? She's been in rehab...

(turns a page)

(MORE)

QUINN (CONT'D)

Six times! And Maurice Kalb was
convicted of bigamy in New Mexico!
God, that even one woman would
marry that troll.

(in heaven)

Oh, this is too wonderful. Take a
gander at this.

She passes him a file which contains an old copy of
"Penthouse" magazine. There's a Post-It marking one page.

VIRGIL

"Sexy Soapy Fun. Taking a Bubble
Bath with Porsche Rayne"? Is that
Lenore Feingold?

QUINN

"Pet of the Month" for July 1987!

VIRGIL

Beneath his glasses, Paul Feingold
must be an *animal!*

QUINN

Don't be envious, dear.

(giddy)

This is fun. Who's next?

VIRGIL

Within a week, we should have...

(checks slip)

...the Fitzpatricks, the Dietzes,
and... the Thurbers.

QUINN

Barbie and Ken in their Beverly
Hills Dream House? I'd be shocked
if you could find even one speck of
dirt on Jerry and Pam...

INT. THURBER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - THAT MOMENT

Jerry Thurber lies on the couch, unshaven, joylessly watching
reality TV. Pam ENTERS with a carry-out pizza, sits down.

PAM

Dinner. Pepperoni and onion.

JERRY

Hope you paid for it with VISA.
Actually, I hope you stole it.

PAM

Any luck in the job search?

Jerry sits up, contemplates the pizza.

JERRY

We used to eat at Campanile.
(she wants an answer)
No, Pam. No luck. I haven't
landed an *interview* since May. No
one wants to hire a 52 year-old
downsized airline C.F.O.

Pam's sunny exterior is fading fast. She is worried.

PAM

How much longer can we go on like
this?

JERRY

Another couple of months, maybe.
Then we're going to have to move.
Find someplace a lot cheaper.

PAM

Cheaper, as in... Pasadena?

JERRY

Cheaper, as in Bakersfield.
(beat)
I'm sorry, Pam. I know this isn't
what you signed on for. This is
humiliating. How am I going to
face all those people at Emma's
party Saturday? All those damn
rich people?

PAM

Jerry, listen, honey, please.
You're going to find something,
soon, I know it. This is just a
"setback". And nobody has to know
about it. No one but you and me.

INT. BLACK BMW - THAT MOMENT

The P.I. is parked across the street from the Thurbers',
watching them through the telephoto lens of his camera.

On his passenger seat is a file containing their credit
reports, "PAST DUE" notices, etc. The P.I. puts down his
camera and DRIVES OFF. His work is done here.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES SKYLINE - DAWN

BIGFOOT (V.O.)
It's 7:19 and you're listening to
L.A.'s #1 morning show!

INT. RADIO STATION - BROADCAST BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Basically, it's a wild party. FAMOUS RAPPERS pass a joint around. STRIPPERS cavort with whipped cream covering their nipples. BIGFOOT, a bald, heavy black guy, mans the mic.

Outside the glass wall, looking nervous, is Tom.

RECORDED PROMO (V.O.)
(montage of radio callers)
*I saw Bigfoot pumping gas on
Crenshaw Blvd.! / I spotted Bigfoot
in the Fox Hills Mall! / I listen
to Bigfoot every morning on 93.9
The Beat! / THE BIGFOOT SHOW!*

As the show goes to commercial, Bigfoot yanks off his headphones and waves Tom inside.

BIGFOOT
You're from the school, right?

TOM
From the Auction Committee, yes.
Tom Gillard.

BIGFOOT
Good to meet you, I'm Clarence.
Most folks call me "Bigfoot".
(re: rappers & strippers)
This is Dee-Yo from Mob 42. This
is Stinkeye.
(re: strippers)
And this is --

TOM
Nice to meet everyone, but my
daughter's waiting in the lobby --

BIGFOOT
(re: scene)
My boy Ronald's in first grade too,
I don't let him in here either.

TOM

Yeah...and I have to get her to school...

BIGFOOT

Where's that gift basket at?

All commence looking for it.

BIGFOOT (CONT'D)

It's around here somewhere.

Unearthed are: a bottle of Jack Daniels, numerous forties, various female undergarments, a box of condoms...

STRIPPER

(tipsily)

This it..?

Holds it up. Indeed.

BIGFOOT

Thanks, baby.

Bigfoot hands it to Tom.

BIGFOOT (CONT'D)

Got autographed CD's, t-shirts....

(to rapper)

Stink, yo, need your autograph on this.

He passes the rapper a CD to sign.

BIGFOOT (CONT'D)

Last year's auction, this thing went for over \$2500.

PRODUCER (V.O. ON INTERCOM)

Back in twenty.

Bigfoot reads what the rapper wrote on the CD:

BIGFOOT

Man, you can't write that! This is for *little kids*!

PRODUCER (V.O.)

Five seconds.

BIGFOOT

(to Tom)

I'll get you a clean one at the next break.

TOM

That's okay, I've gotta --

The "ON AIR" light comes on. Then MUSIC. It's SHOWTIME!

BIGFOOT

Yo YO YO! This half-hour of the
Bigfoot show brought to you by
Cerritos Nissan...

Carrying the basket, Tom slinks out.

INT. COLDWATER SCHOOL - HALLWAY - THAT MORNING

Pam ENTERS and walks toward the Art Room. Davina passes.

PAM

'Morning.

DAVINA

(concerned)

Pam. How are you?

PAM

Great, as always.

DAVINA

Good for you, honey.

That was a little odd. Pam CONTINUES on, passing Lenore.

PAM

Hi.

LENORE

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Lenore HURRIES AWAY. The second mom in a row to address Pam as if she were a widow or something. Pam watches her go.

INT. COLDWATER SCHOOL - ART ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pam ENTERS. Lizzie, washing brushes at the sink, drops them, walks over to Pam -- and hugs her.

LIZZIE

Pammy. Honey, you could've told
me. I'm your sister.

PAM

Told you what? What is--

LIZZIE
 (realizes)
 You don't know.

PAM
 What is going on?! Did someone
 die?!

Lizzie takes a crumpled piece of paper out of her pocket.
 Pam scans it; her eyes widen.

PAM (CONT'D)
 Our *credit report*? Where did you
 get this?

LIZZIE
 It was on the bulletin board this
 morning.

EXT. COLDWATER SCHOOL - FRONT - THAT MOMENT

Quinn hops in her Range Rover and drops her tote bag on the
 seat.

Protruding from the bag is a manila folder marked "THURBER".

INT. SOUTH AFRICAN CONSULATE - AFTERNOON

The Vermaaks' mansion is framed by tall palms and an iron
 fence -- colonial grandeur in the heart of Hancock Park.

The seal of "The Republic of South Africa" warns all visitors
 that this is, indeed, foreign soil.

INT. CONSULATE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Surrounded by stuffed springbok and cheetah heads, Desmond
 works at his desk while Catriona sips a glass of wine.

CATRIONA
 I saw their credit report. They
 are destitute.

DESMOND
 Ach, now I've lost count.

He is measuring drugs, packing them into small bundles.

DESMOND (CONT'D)
 Doug was good at handling all these
 tedious details.

They're interrupted when a toy helicopter flies into the
 room. Desmond, alarmed, sweeps the drugs into a drawer.

A moment later, the twins RUN IN, fighting over the remote control. They are followed by JONAS, a hulking blonde brute.

JONAS
(South African accent)
Children! Leave Mummy and Dad be!
(to Des)
Apologies, sir.

Jonas CORRALS THEM OUT. Catriona locks the door.

CATRIONA
That is why we need a nanny.

DESMOND
We have Jonas.

CATRIONA
Jonas is a *major* in South African Special Forces. He is not a nanny. Have you ever watched him try to give the twins a bath?

DESMOND
You want Jonas or a nanny protecting the kids from Colombian hit squads?

He goes back to measuring the drugs.

INT. THURBER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - THE SAME TIME

Pam ENTERS with Lizzie. Lizzie immediately notices how sparsely furnished the room is.

LIZZIE
Guess I understand why you haven't had me over for so long.

PAM
Sold the Oriental rugs, the Biedermeyer cabinets. At least we paid Emma's tuition in advance.

LIZZIE
So you've scaled back her party.

PAM
Don't start, okay? My daughter is not going to be "the poor kid". The party Saturday will be just like her friends have.

LIZZIE

How can you and Jerry afford that?

PAM

I took care of it. Myself.

Lizzie is confused -- until she sees Pam's left hand.

LIZZIE

Your *engagement ring*?

PAM

Beverly Hills pawnbrokers have surprisingly reasonable rates.

Pam does her best to keep it together. But her sister knows.

LIZZIE

Oh, Pam, honey...

PAM

I'll get it back when Jerry's up on his feet again.

(beat)

Which had better be soon.

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - FRONT STEPS - THAT EVENING

Tom, carrying Bigfoot's gift basket, stands there with Molly. He rings the DOORBELL.

MOLLY

Daddy, I'm tired.

TOM

I know, honey, this'll just take a minute--

Ines opens the door. Quinn COMES OVER to greet them.

QUINN

Welcome, welcome! Oh, and Molly's here, too! Want to run in and say hi to Fiona? She's in the kitchen with her Dad.

Quinn indicates the kitchen down the hall, and Molly RUNS OFF. Quinn inspects the CD's in the basket.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Well done.

(then, to Ines)

Store this in the sunroom with the other auction items until December.

TOM

I thought you absolutely had to have it *tonight*?

QUINN

Oh, I do! I need to guilt the volunteers who aren't as diligent as you!

Tom's annoyed.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Come meet my husband.

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Virgil is reading a book to Fiona and Molly.

VIRGIL

"...but not even 1,000 dirty diapers can stop the indomitable Captain Unnnnderpants!"

The girls LAUGH. Quinn ENTERS with Tom.

QUINN

Virg, this is Molly's dad, Tom. He's on my Auction Committee.

VIRGIL

God help you.

QUINN

Now, darling...

As they shake hands, a flash of recognition.

VIRGIL

Have we met?

TOM

You look familiar. But I think that's because, oh yeah -- you're famous.

QUINN

I was thinking, maybe Tom would like to join you and the other dads for basketball?

TOM

I love to play.

VIRGIL

Hope you won't be disappointed
then.

(reaching into his pocket)
You're only going to be watching.

He gives Tom two Lakers tickets. Not just any tickets --
"PRIVATE SKYBOX" tickets with gleaming gold holograms.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

Molly, hope you'll come, too. I
promise you won't have to watch a
minute of the boring old game.

Tom is delighted. Quinn smiles, as if to say: "See? Working
for me has its privileges..."

INT. COLDWATER SCHOOL - LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

Pam, Cat, and Lenore shelve books in the school library.

LENORE

So you and Jerry are okay.

PAM

(lying)

Oh, we've got plenty socked away.
Jerry just wanted to take a
sabbatical before jumping back into
the rat race. That credit report
was a mixup -- some identity theft
thing. Jerry had people fired.

CATRIONA

Someone dug it up and posted it.

LENORE

You think it was another parent?

Pam arches her eyebrow -- *could be*.

CATRIONA

Well, whoever did it will become
total and permanent social outcasts
if we ever find out who they are.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SHELF

Quinn has been putting books away -- and listening intently.
She begins to look very worried.

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - GARAGE - THAT NIGHT

A Bentley PULLS INTO the immaculate ten-car garage. Virgil and Quinn are returning from a black tie affair.

They are in the midst of an argument:

QUINN

Just for a few weeks. Please.

VIRGIL

I'm not calling off the background checks. It's for your daughter's safety.

QUINN

People are starting to suspect.

VIRGIL

I'm not the one who posted that credit check on the school bulletin board.

Virgil GETS OUT of the car. So does Quinn.

QUINN

I'm running for Parents' Club President this year and I can't have my reputation be--

VIRGIL

I'm not concerned with your "reputation".

Quinn decides to stop playing nice.

QUINN

Well, you should be. Because I spend quite a bit of time concerned about yours. God knows the fireworks we'd see if anyone ever started going through your dirty laundry.

Next to Quinn is a car under a tarp. She whips back the tarp to reveal a 2004 Lamborghini Murcielago, a rare million-dollar import with very distinctive lines.

The hood is dented. The windshield is shattered. It has not been driven in some time.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Because what you're hiding just about takes all.

Quinn EXITS into the house. Virgil stares at the car.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. STAPLE CENTER - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Tom and Molly walking, the Skybox tickets in Tom's hand.

MOLLY

What's a Skybox?

TOM

It's like... I'm not sure,
actually, I've never been in one.

MOLLY

Fiona's dad's rich, huh.

TOM

Oh, well, honey... I mean, I
don't...

(oh, screw it)

Yeah, sweetie. He's pretty rich.

(changing subject)

Hey, so, the other day? Why'd you
ask if I was just a kid's doctor?

MOLLY

'Cause I guess that's why you
couldn't save Mommy.

They reach the open Skybox door. Fiona spots Molly.

FIONA

(excitedly)

They're here!

Molly smiles, rushes in, the two girls sail off. Tom remains
rooted in the doorway, processing what Molly just said.

VIRGIL

Tom! The view's actually a little
better inside.

Tom rouses himself, musters a smile, enters.

INT. SKYBOX SUITE - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATERA top-of-the-line skybox with a huge CTI logo on the wall.
Inside, MOLLY, FIONA, and SEVERAL OTHER KIDS bounce on the
leather couches while "SpongeBob SquarePants" plays on TV.A BARTENDER and BUFFET HOST stand stiffly at their stations,
watching the mayhem.

INT. SKYBOX BALCONY - SIMULTANEOUS

Tom, Virgil, Desmond, Carl, and A FEW OTHER MEN drink, laugh, and schmooze in the balcony overlooking the court.

Down below, LAKER GIRLS are doing the pre-game warm-up.

TOM

Quite a view. Like looking down from Mount Olympus.

CARL

I used to own a house up there.
(off Tom's look)
The development off Laurel?

VIRGIL

He meant the home of the gods in Greek mythology.
(beat)
Where I live.

Laughs from the other men.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

Molly having fun?

Inside, Molly is LAUGHING with Fiona while making hot fudge sundaes. Both are smeared with chocolate.

TOM

The operative word would appear to be oodles.
(re: the mess)
Think I'll go spoil it and suggest napkins.
(adds)
Can I bring anybody anything?

VIRGIL

There are people for that.

Tom nods. It's good to be Virgil. Tom exits.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

(to Carl)
Good guy.

CARL

I'll get a full background check.

VIRGIL

(eyeing the court)
Do.

INT. THURBER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

Jerry, in t-shirt and sweatpants, lies on the couch watching the Lakers game on TV. Pam ENTERS and looks at him.

PAM
Why aren't you at Staples Center?

JERRY
I'm not feeling too social.

Sweet and sunny Pam knows it's time to kick some ass. She turns off the TV.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Hey!

PAM
Get up.

JERRY
What?

PAM
Put on real clothes. Take Emma and drive down there. Now.

JERRY
Why keep up this charade, Pam?
Going to these "events", paying for this school? There's a perfectly good public school right down the street.

PAM
Because you need this school.

JERRY
I need--?

PAM
What are the fathers at that public school going to do for you, Jerry? Pull some strings to land you a job at the dry cleaners? Put you up for a top management position at Quizno's? Everything you need to rebuild our lives is in that luxury box at Staples! Get down there, network, and make something happen.

INT. SKYBOX BALCONY - LATER

Bigfoot is introducing Virgil to an Al-Sharpton-esque AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAN.

BIGFOOT

Here he is, Virg. This man knew me back when my hair was Jheri-curled.

VIRGIL

You mean Bigfoot had a big 'do?

They all LAUGH. Virgil shakes the man's hand.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

An honor to meet you, Congressman. You've done wonders for your district.

BEHIND THEM

Through the glass wall, we can see Jerry Thurber ENTERING the suite with daughter EMMA in tow. Meanwhile:

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

Is it too soon to congratulate you on your appointment?

CONGRESSMAN

(surprised)

It hasn't even been leaked -- how'd you hear about that?

VIRGIL

The Speaker of the House was a recent speaker at *my* house.

CONGRESSMAN

Well, I won't call the Speaker a liar.

VIRGIL

(to others)

The new Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

AD LIB impressed congratulations.

BIGFOOT

Helping vets, man, noble cause.

VIRGIL

It's actually a subject I've
developed a recent interest in.
The V.A. here in --

Jerry inserts himself at just the wrong time.

JERRY

Hey hey! Great to see you guys!

BIGFOOT

(beat)
Yo, dawg.

An awkward moment.

JERRY

I'm... I'm just gonna get a drink
and I'll be right back.

VIRGIL

Sounds good.

Jerry smiles tightly and retreats from the group.

INT. SKYBOX SUITE - CONTINUOUS

He HURRIES UP to the bartender.

JERRY

Rum and Coke. Make it a double.

While waiting for his drink, Jerry silently frets about his
faux pas. Desmond, at the nearby buffet, gives him a nod.

DESMOND

Hey, mate, *howzit?*

JERRY

It's been better, frankly.

DESMOND

Ups and downs, eh? Story of life.

He pats Jerry on the back.

DESMOND (CONT'D)

If a man was looking for
opportunity, I might have one that
could prove quite fruitful.

Jerry regards him, distinctly intrigued...

INT. SOUTH AFRICAN CONSULATE - BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Catriona and James are in bed, nude, in a post-coital glow.

When James runs his hand over Cat's stomach, we see that most of his little finger is missing.

CATRIONA

You've never told me what became of that finger.

JAMES

Happened when I was younger. It's not particularly sexy.

CATRIONA

You sure..?

She starts to suck on the finger. Then she notices the time on the bedside clock.

CATRIONA (CONT'D)

Drat. You'd better go.

JAMES

Things were just getting interesting.

CATRIONA

I didn't hold your interest earlier..?

JAMES

Bad short-term memory. Remind me.

He kisses her deeply... She breaks off the kiss.

CATRIONA

You do not want to be here when Desmond gets home. And he hates basketball, so that could be soon.

JAMES

Come on. I'll tell you about the finger. It's quite dramatic -- a ransom note for \$15 million, a father who said he'd only pay five...

CATRIONA

If Desmond finds you here, he might well slice off something dearer to you than your little finger.

James reluctantly gets up and pulls on his shirt. Cat buttons it for him, kissing his chest.

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET - THAT INSTANT

The P.I., parked in his BMW, watches the two of them through the telephoto lens of his camera. He snaps a photo.

INT. SKYBOX BALCONY - LATER

The game is cooking. The men are standing, CHEERING. At the height of the action, Tom realizes his pager is going off.

The display reads: "EMERGENCY. 310-474-9016."

TOM

Sorry. Need to take this.
Emergency.

BIGFOOT

It's an *emergency* down on the court!
(yells courtward)
Make a free throw!

Tom works his way past the others into the suite.

INT. SKYBOX SUITE - A MOMENT LATER

Tom has called back the number on the pager.

TOM

This is Dr. Gillard returning--
(beat, then annoyed)
Quinn? I'm at the Lakers game.

INTERCUT:

QUINN - AT THE MCCALL HOUSE

QUINN

That's why I called. Just got off the phone with Vanessa Bryant...

TOM

You called Kobe Bryant's wife?
During a game?

QUINN

They have an application in for next year's kindergarten. I told her that a generous donation to the school auction has been known to work wonders.

(MORE)

QUINN (CONT'D)

So, after the game, you'll meet her husband's assistant's assistant to pick up one autographed basketball and four sets of season tickets. Make sure they're Floor Seats! Ta.

She hangs up. Tom looks peeved.

EXT. STAPLES CENTER - PARKING LOT - MUCH LATER

The big digital clock reads "12:25 A.M." Tom, carrying an autographed basketball under one arm and a sleeping Molly under the other, trudges wearily toward his car.

It is the only one still left in the lot.

INT. OCEAN PARK PEDIATRICS - THE NEXT MORNING

Tom, sleepy and haggard, ENTERS to find the waiting room crowded with SICK KIDS and CRYING BABIES.

MONICA

Looks like flu season started early this year.

TOM

Great. Let me just coffee up.

INT. OCEAN PARK PEDIATRICS - TOM'S OFFICE - A MOMENT LATER

Tom listens to his voicemail while getting coffee.

VOICEMAIL (ON SPEAKER)

6:59 A.M. 'Hi, it's Quinn. Could you call me back ASAP?'

He presses "Delete".

VOICEMAIL (ON SPEAKER) (CONT'D)

7:14 A.M. 'Quinn McCall. We've got a little crisis. Call me.'

"Delete".

VOICEMAIL (ON SPEAKER) (CONT'D)

7:31 A.M. 'Hi, it's Quinn. About that contribution to meet Howie Mandel? He won't shake anyone's hand. People don't want to pay good money to be made to feel like a leper. Line up someone less nuts.'

Tom rolls his eyes and hits "Delete".

VOICEMAIL (ON SPEAKER) (CONT'D)
8:05 A.M. 'Hi, this is Sylvia Tan --

Finally, a real call.

VOICEMAIL (ON SPEAKER) (CONT'D)
--and I work with Quinn on the
Committee. She didn't have time to
call you herself, so--

Tom hangs up the phone.

EXT. SOUTH AFRICAN CONSULATE - STREET - DAY

The P.I. is parked across from the consulate, talking on his cell phone.

P.I.
Get that material over to McCall's
office, he'll want to see it. I'm
doing follow-up now and--

Suddenly, the toy helicopter comes flying into the car,
through the open passenger window! It crashes to the floor.

The P.I. sees Desmond APPROACHING and puts the phone away.

DESMOND
So sorry. My boy's helicopter
seems to have flown right into your
car, blasted thing. Could I
trouble you to pass it back?

P.I.
Of course.

He bends down to retrieve it. When he sits back up, we see
Jonas LOOMING BEHIND HIM, outside the driver-side window!

Jonas grabs him and drags him out of the car. Desmond
dispassionately observes, holding the toy chopper.

EST. GILLARD RESIDENCE - THAT NIGHT

A modest Santa Monica house not too far from the lights of
Ocean Ave.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - MOLLY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tom is putting Molly to bed.

MOLLY
Daddy, did you ever go to a new
school?

TOM

Sure. When my family moved here from Washington State, I went to a new school and didn't know anybody. But I met a girl named Debra. And we became really good friends.

MOLLY

You mean Mommy?

Tom nods. He hesitates, then delicately broaches...

TOM

Sweetie, last night, before we went into the Skybox, you --

The doorbell BUZZES. And BUZZES AGAIN. Urgently.

TOM (CONT'D)

Who could that be? Be right back.

He starts for the door.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Tom opens the door. It's Quinn -- and she's not happy.

QUINN

Where have you been all day?

TOM

I'm a doctor. At my practice.

QUINN

I don't know what type of practice it could be where you don't even answer the phone. Is my car safe down there? This neighborhood seems a bit sketchy.

Tom tries to maintain his composure.

TOM

Why are you here, Quinn?

QUINN

If you'd heard my messages, you'd know there is a very urgent--

TOM

What? What could possibly be so urgent that you would drive all the way out here and interrupt my private time with my daughter?

QUINN

(indignant)

Well, we can't very well have a Winter Auction if people don't get the invitations!

She gives him three large boxes.

QUINN (CONT'D)

These need to be in the mail by Monday morning. And they must be hand-addressed -- we don't use pre-printed labels at Coldwater School.

The last straw. Tom steams for a moment, then...

TOM

Sorry, Quinn, I quit.

QUINN

You can't quit! You're a *volunteer!*

TOM

Just did. Have a good night.

Tom returns the boxes and, as politely as possible, closes the door in Quinn's face.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - MOLLY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tom enters to resume his conversation with Molly...to find her asleep. He contemplates his peaceful, lovely, motherless child...adjusts her covers and turns out the light.

INT. CONSULATE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

The P.I. is tied to a chair in the dimly-lit basement.

He is bruised and bloodied, the victim of beatings by Jonas.

Desmond, however, looks as dapper as always -- except for the spot of blood on his Prada sports shirt. His manner is coolly malevolent.

DESMOND

Let's try again. Who are you working for.

The P.I. -- a professional -- has been holding out, but now he's reached the end of his rope.

P.I.
(barely conscious)
...Virgil McCall.

That certainly wasn't the answer Desmond was expecting. He and Jonas exchange puzzled looks. Then, from upstairs:

DESMOND'S SON (O.S.)
Daddy, Mommy said it's your turn to
read the bedtime stories!

DESMOND
Be right there, Liam!

Desmond grabs an "AYSO Soccer Coach" t-shirt from the dryer and HEADS UPSTAIRS. He takes off the bloodied Prada shirt and tosses it to Jonas.

DESMOND (CONT'D)
(in Afrikaans)
Clean this up.
(regards the P.I.)
All of this.

Jonas nods. Desmond exits.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - DINING ROOM - SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Quinn fumes as she sits at the table stuffing envelopes.
Ines writes addresses on them.

QUINN

Closed the door right in my face!
I've never seen such rude--

She glances over at the envelopes Ines just addressed.

QUINN (CONT'D)

For God's sake, you stuff and I'll
address! Don't they teach
penmanship in Mexico?

INES

I wouldn't know, Mrs. Quinn. I am
from El Salvador.

QUINN

Whatever. Give me those.

INT. THURBER HOUSE - EMMA'S BEDROOM - THE SAME TIME

Pam brushes Emma's hair. Both are dressed to the nines.

EMMA

I'm so excited about my party!

PAM

It's going to be a magical,
wonderful night everyone will talk
about for years!

Pam adds a ribbon to Emma's hair.

PAM (CONT'D)

(calling downstairs)

Jer! We're almost ready! Better
get that cake loaded into the car!

INT. THURBER HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

JERRY

Yeah...

He contemplates the massive birthday cake -- ornate beyond
belief. This is going to fit how..?

He then notices the receipt taped to the box -- \$1,150.00. A look of baffled despair crosses his face.

EXT. SANTA MONICA BLVD. - SUNSET

A Ford Explorer passes the famous sign welcoming us to Beverly Hills.

INT. EXPLORER - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Lizzie is driving Tom, Molly, and her son Zack to the party.

LIZZIE
You kids have your sleeping bags,
right?

The kids nod. Lizzie turns to Tom with a wry smile.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
You might want to brace yourself.

TOM
It's a birthday party.

LIZZIE
The same way a Rolls-Royce is just
a ride or a diamond is just a rock.
This is a Coldwater School birthday
party.

They pull up to a building and are met by VALETS. Tom gets out and we see he's standing in front of...

"BARNEY'S NEW YORK" DEPARTMENT STORE. The entire facade is decorated in honor of Emma's birthday.

TOM
Ah.

LIZZIE
Yeah.

INT. BARNEY'S - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Arriving PARENTS are met by WAITERS offering flutes of champagne. A CONCIERGE greets the new arrivals:

CONCIERGE
Good evening. Welcome to Emma's
Birthday Celebration. Young ladies
will please proceed to the
cosmetics area for makeovers and
hairstyling...

Tom's queasy at the excess. Molly, on the other hand, delightedly RUNS OFF and never looks back.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)
Everyone else, please follow me.

INT. BARNEY'S - ELEVATOR - A MOMENT LATER

Tom and Lizzie stand with Zachary and some OTHER GUESTS.

ELEVATOR ATTENDANT
Third floor, boys' activities.

The doors open to reveal a mass laser-tag game in progress, two dozen BOY COMBATANTS IN PARTY HATS darting and weaving among the clothing displays.

LIZZIE
(to Zachary)
Go nuts.

Zack CHARGES out with the other boys. The elevator MOVES ON.

ELEVATOR ATTENDANT
Top floor, parents' festivities...

EXT. BARNEY GREENGRASS - ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

The elevator doors open. Lizzie ESCORTS TOM OUT into the Barney Greengrass rooftop patio restaurant, where fabulously-dressed PARENTS drink and mingle in splendor amid tray-passed hors d'oeuvres.

TOM
At Molly's last party I served
corn chips and Fresca.

LIZZIE
You're not in Kansas anymore.

As she escorts him in, the camera MOVES THROUGH THE PARTY, taking us into other conversations...

Virgil is standing with Carl.

CARL
How was golf with the Congressman?

VIRGIL
You give a man enough mulligans...
Said it wasn't impossible the land
could become available.

CARL

Congressmen. Always running for re-election.

(then)

Guess I'm getting the number of his campaign finance chair.

VIRGIL

Guess you are.

Desmond joins them.

DESMOND

Virgil, Carl. *Howzit?*

Desmond scans Virgil's eyes -- does he know?

CARL

No complaints.

VIRGIL

Other than confiscatory tax rates.

CARL

Over-regulation.

VIRGIL

Crushing employee health benefit costs.

DESMOND

So, the usual.

(then)

Any news on the Rosenblum front?
Nasty business, narcotics.

VIRGIL

Know nothing, care less.

Apparently, Desmond silenced the P.I. in time. He works to mask his relief.

DESMOND

Good riddance to bad rubbish, eh?
Cheers.

ANGLE ON Pam, Quinn, Cat, and Lenore near the buffet table.

CATRIONA

You have really outdone yourself,
Pam. So creative!

PAM

Thank you, Cat. I just wanted Emma to have a special night.

LENORE

(indicating buffet)
What a an amazing spread!

QUINN

Yes, I haven't seen a spread that impressive since July of 1987.

Lenore blanches. Quinn takes a casual, coy sip of her drink.

INT. VIRGIL'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

Empty. James enters, saunters over to his father's antique humidor, extracts a sizable Cohiba. Poking around for matches on his dad's desk he unearths an envelope marked "Personal & Confidential".

Curiosity piqued, he considers, then tears open the envelope and takes out a file. In it are several PHOTOS, taken by the P.I., of him and Catriona embracing in the consulate window. He reacts with surprise and alarm.

Then, beneath the photos, he discovers DOCUMENTS linking Desmond to the drug operation, including some sort of corporate tree.

JAMES

"Trans-African Drug Cartel"...
Desmond, you...entrepreneur.

He folds the drug documents, stuffs them in his pocket.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Best save these for a rainy day.

He finds a remote control, clicks it, causing a ROARING FIRE to ignite in the large office fireplace. One by one, he tosses the photos into the fire, watches them burn...

High atop a cabinet, a lipstick SURVEILLANCE CAMERA records his every move.

INT. BARNEY'S MEN'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Alone, Virgil finishes up at a urinal. Carl enters.

VIRGIL

You want to tell me how Jerry's affording this?

CARL

(checking the stalls)
Selling a kidney on eBAY..? No
idea.
(satisfied they're alone)
Didn't hear from our guy today.

VIRGIL

Shame. Great bedtime reading. You
wouldn't believe what it does for
Quinn's libido.

CARL

Yeah? Then keep 'em away from
Davina.
(beat)
Did hear from a friend in the
D.A.'s office...

He takes a couple of faxed pages from his pocket.

CARL (CONT'D)

Turns out Dr. Tom Gillard has a
criminal record.

Virgil peruses the faxes.

CARL (CONT'D)

Sentenced to 5,000 hours of
community service at South Bay
Hospital.

VIRGIL

Tax protester.

CARL

Didn't want his puny IRS bill
financing the war in Iraq.

VIRGIL

Doesn't, actually. They pay for
that out of a separate off-budget
draw. If only the Feds'd let us
bookkeep that way.

CARL

There was something else in his
file. Apparently, he was a witness
to a hit-and-run a couple years
back. Still unsolved.

Virgil looks at the next page: a sketch of the unidentified
car from the hit-and-run ("Unknown Make and Model")...

It is clearly a 2004 Lamborghini Murcielago -- the same car parked in Virgil's garage.

Virgil is thunderstruck. At last he understands why he recognized Tom. He wills back his composure.

VIRGIL
Nothing terribly interesting, all told.

As they cross to the door, Virgil discreetly folds the faxes into his pocket.

INT. BARNEY'S - ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Virgil and Quinn ride down alone.

VIRGIL
You will patch up your little tiff with Tom Gillard.

QUINN
But he-- the Auction--

VIRGIL
(icily)
Perhaps you didn't hear me.

QUINN
You cannot issue me a command like that without good reason!

VIRGIL
I can, have, and will again. But suffice to say Tom Gillard holds the power to destroy our family.

Quinn is shocked into silence. The elevator doors open and Virgil strides out. Quinn composes herself, follows.

INT. BARNEY'S - THIRD FLOOR - A LITTLE LATER

The lights are dimmed. The children are settling into their sleeping bags. Off to one side, Tom assists Molly.

TOM
All set, sweetie?

She nods.

TOM (CONT'D)
I'll be back to get you in the morning.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)
(kisses her)
Love you.

MOLLY
Love you, too.

He starts to go.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
Daddy?

TOM
Yeah, sweetie?

MOLLY
What Mommy died of...

TOM
Leukemia?

MOLLY
Is it contagious?

TOM
Oh, sweetie, no. You don't have to worry about that. You couldn't catch it.

MOLLY
I wasn't thinking about that. You could fix me. You're the best kid doctor in the city.

Tom smiles over how sweet that is...

MOLLY (CONT'D)
I was thinking about you.

...and now his heart melts.

TOM
Oh, angel. You have nothing to worry about. I won't get it.

MOLLY
Promise?

He regards her. What promises are there to a girl who's lost her mother. He then does what any parent of a young child would do. Lies.

TOM
I promise.

It satisfies her.

MOLLY

'Night.

TOM

"Night, honey. Have fun.

Tom crosses off.

Virgil and Quinn suddenly materialize, fall in step with him.

VIRGIL

Tom. Tell me, do you ski?

TOM

Love it.

VIRGIL

We take the company jet up to the house in Vail every year for Christmas. We'd love you and Molly to be our guests.

TOM

That's incredibly generous. You sure?

Quinn sucks it up...

QUINN

We insist. What's Christmas without snow?

TOM

We'd love to. Thank you so much.

VIRGIL

What are friends for.

Tom's a bit dazzled at all this largesse. As they walk out, Virgil and Quinn share a surreptitious look...

INT. BARNEY'S - UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE - SIMULTANEOUS

CLOSE on a visibly nervous Jerry Thurber...

As Desmond loads the last of four dozen bundles of drugs into the trunk of Jerry's Lexus.

JERRY

When do I get the money?

DESMOND

When you return from Barstow.
Round trip should take about six
hours. You'll be back before the
kids wake up.

JERRY

If everything goes according to
plan.

DESMOND

Why wouldn't it?

JERRY

I'm sure that's what Doug Rosenblum
would like to know.

Desmond smiles and SLAMS the trunk shut.

DESMOND

Time is money.

Jerry nods...takes a deep breath...climbs into his car.

INT. BARNEY'S - THIRD FLOOR - AFTER MIDNIGHT

The children are all sleeping peacefully. Meanwhile:

EXT. INTERSTATE 10 - JUST THEN

The Lexus speeds past a sign reading "BARSTOW - 75 MILES".

INT. LEXUS

Jerry, dripping with sweat, clutches the steering wheel while
constantly checking the rear-view mirror for cops. On the
radio is "Rock'n Me" by the Steve Miller band:

RADIO

*Workin' real hard / Just to try and
find a job / But it just keeps on
gettin' tougher every day...*

The camera MOVES OUT of the car, tracking past the wheels, to
arrive at the rear bumper. On it is a bumper sticker:

"MY CHILD WAS STUDENT OF THE MONTH AT COLDWATER SCHOOL."

FADE OUT.

THE END