

THE SAVAGES

WRITTEN BY

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THE SAVAGES

by

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WHITE SHOOTING SCRIPT - March 17, 2006
BLUE REVISION - April 6, 2006
PINK REVISION - April 10, 2006

1.

1 **EXT. DESERT SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT - DAY** 1

In dreamy SLOW MOTION, we TRACK down ominously unpeopled streets: ONE-STORY HOUSES in matching pastels float by, ECCENTRIC CACTI shoot up out of GRAVEL LAWNS. TOPIARY GARDENS enhance the unrealness of this place, as do lollipop trees and circular hedges.

Finally, a sign of life as A WOMAN IN A MOTORIZED WHEELCHAIR appears, cheerfully navigating her way along one of the spotless sidewalks.

SUPERTITLE: SUN CITY, ARIZONA

We are floating through America's premiere master-planned retirement community -- a geriatric Eden. As this living brochure continues, we catch glimpses of:

2 -- THE GOLF COURSE 2
where a FEMALE SENIOR tees off as TWO GOLFERS stand by. THWACK!

3 -- THE FIRING RANGE 3
OLD MEN hold rifles and shoot at targets.

4 -- THE POOL 4
A GROUP OF ELDERLY WOMEN in bathing caps rehearse a SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING ROUTINE a la Esther Williams.

5 -- ON A RESIDENTIAL STREET 5
A handsome ELDERLY COUPLE on A BICYCLE BUILT FOR TWO.

As soon as the bicycle has cleared frame, the CAMERA PICKS OUT A HOUSE and begins to MOVE SLOWLY toward the drawn curtains of the front window. This is one of Sun City's more humble model-home offerings. Eventually we are transported into --

6 **INT. HOUSE - DAY** 6

It's dark in here, but bright sunlight peeks in around the closed drapes making dust particles visible.

Still on the move, the CAMERA locates --

LENNY SAVAGE, 80, sitting at one end of a dining room table, hunched over a bowl of cereal. He is shirtless and moves slowly. Lenny has the labored chewing style of a man who wears dentures, but that does not deter him from indulging in his favorite crunchy cereal: Wheat Chex.

It might be "fun in the sun" for others in this retirement community, but here, where Lenny lives, life ain't so grand.

From another room, A MAN'S VOICE wafts in:

MALE VOICE (OS)
 Upsy daisy, thatta girl. We're gonna get
 you out in the nice warm sunshine. Get
 you some vitamin D. D for Doris, right?

THE CAMERA, following the sound of the voice, PANS AWAY
 from Lenny and LOOKS DOWN A HALLWAY INTO --

7

A BEDROOM

7

Through the door we see an obstructed view of DORIS METZGER,
 80, a frail woman sitting on the side of her hospital-style
 bed, staring into space. She is being attended to by a home-
 health-care worker, EDUARDO, 45, in green surgical scrubs
 and a hair-net. He WALKS IN AND OUT of VIEW as he prepares
 Doris for her day.

EDUARDO
 We're gonna get you all fixed up nice and
 take some pictures for your daughter --

He exits the room HUMMING CHEERFULLY then disappears into
 the adjoining doorway of an OFF-SCREEN BATHROOM. His
 HUMMING STOPS.

EDUARDO (OS) (CONT'D)
 Somebody forgot something in the
 bathroom!

Then, the DISTINCT SOUND OF A TOILET SEAT BANGING against
 its porcelain base. Eduardo re-emerges from the bathroom
 and marches down the hall and into --

8

THE DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

8

He stops in front of Lenny.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)
 Lenny, you forgot to flush.

There's a tremor in Lenny's voice, but it's aggressive
 just the same.

LENNY
 I'm eating my cereal, don't ya see?

EDUARDO
 I need to use the restroom.

LENNY
 So flush it.

Lenny turns his attention back to his bowl.

EDUARDO

I'm not a housekeeper, remember? I'm a home-health care professional.

LENNY

Not mine. You're hers. Go bother her. I'm eating.

EDUARDO

Take care of your business in the bathroom, Mr. Savage.

LENNY

You do it.

EDUARDO

As you already pointed out, you are not under my jurisdiction. I am not paid to take care of your shit!

Eduardo marches over to Lenny, SNATCHES THE BOWL OF CEREAL and takes it into the ADJOINING KITCHEN.

LENNY

What the hell are you doing?

Eduardo puts the BOWL inside the REFRIGERATOR.

EDUARDO

Take care of your business in the bathroom and then I'll return you your Wheat Chex.

Eduardo FLINGS the REFRIGERATOR DOOR SHUT and exits.

THE CAMERA PUSHES IN ON THE REFRIGERATOR where we see --

A MAGNET HOLDING A PHOTO OF DORIS AND LENNY -- on a cruise, in happier and healthier times. They hold glasses of champagne, frozen in a festive toast.

AT THE DINING TABLE --

Lenny is humiliated and bereft, with only his spoon to comfort him. He gets up and shuffles out of the room, revealing that he's not wearing pants, just high-waisted JOCKEY BRIEFS and a pair of BLACK NYLON KNEE SOCKS.

Through A BUREAU MIRROR, Eduardo opens a jewelry box and slides rings on Doris's fingers.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)
Are you cleaning up after yourself, Mr.
Savage?

11 **IN THE BATHROOM --**

11

Lenny stands in front of the toilet. He stares into the open bowl and contemplates its contents.

EDUARDO (OS)
Don't play deaf with me now.

Lenny glances toward the door with disgust and then looks back in the bowl.

CLOSE ON LENNY'S FACE --
frozen in an expression of doom. This confrontation with his own excrement seems to confirm what Leonard Savage already knows to be true -- that his life is shit and it's almost over. But then -- What's this? Lenny has an idea. A SNEAKY SMILE creeps over his face.

FROM THE HALLWAY, LOOKING INTO THE BATHROOM --
Lenny shuffles toward camera and SLAMS the bathroom door in our face.

12 **IN THE BEDROOM --**

12

Eduardo reacts to the sound of the slam.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)
Lenny?

13 **IN THE HALLWAY --**

13

Eduardo approaches the bathroom door.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)
I didn't hear any flush, Lenny.
(knocking)
Leonard?

Eduardo waits for a response, then cracks open the door.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)
Leonard?

EDUARDO'S POV --
as he swings the door wide open, revealing --

14 **IN THE HALLWAY/BATHROOM --**

14

LENNY --
his hands SMEARED IN BROWN. On the tile wall, in an angry fecal scrawl, he has written the word: *Prick*. Frightened by his own actions, Lenny stands there captured and trembling -- staring in disbelief at what he has done and BREATHING HARD.

RING! RING! RING!

15

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - NIGHT

15

CLOSE ON A RINGING TELEPHONE. The ANSWERING MACHINE CLICKS ON. The OUTGOING MESSAGE is the voice of --

BETTE DAVIS (ON MACHINE)
Fasten your seatbelts, it's going to be a bumpy night.

Then the voice of WENDY SAVAGE comes on.

WENDY (ON MACHINE)
Hello. That was Bette Davis as Margo Channing and this is Wendy Savage as herself. Leave me a message after the --

BEEP! As the incoming message is recorded, the CAMERA PANS to reveal a tenement apartment. We see FLEA MARKET FURNISHINGS, a HISSING RADIATOR and a LARGE, LONELY CAT.

SUPERTITLE: NEW YORK CITY

The camera comes to rest on A PARTIALLY OPEN WINDOW with blowing sheer curtains that looks out over the streets of New York City's East Valley on a wintry night.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Aloha, Wendy? This is Nancy Lachman. Doris Metzger's daughter. Calling from Honolulu... It's been quite a while since we've spoken. I'm calling because... well... I just got a very disturbing call from Arizona. There's been some trouble with your Dad --

16

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - BULLPEN AREA - NIGHT

16

A large sparsely populated room with many desks and cubicles. It's after hours. A CLEANING PERSON vacuums.

WENDY SAVAGE, 39, sits at a desk with a scribbled upon FOLDER before her. On the tab it reads: *FELLOWSHIP AND GRANT APPLICATIONS*. After a furtive glance around the room, Wendy types.

WENDY (VO)

Dear Selection Committee. If awarded your prestigious fellowship for artistic creation, I would use the money to complete the writing and research of my new, semi-autobiographical play... No, wait...

(backing up the cursor)

...my new...

(re-typing)

...subversive, semi-autobiographical play about my childhood entitled... WAKE ME WHEN IT'S OVER.

Wendy glances over the top of her cubicle and SEES the disembodied HEAD OF MATT, her manager, fast approaching. With a quick click of her mouse, she brings a SPREADSHEET up on the computer then covers her FOLDER with AN ACCOUNTING FILE.

MATT

Hey, Wen.

WENDY

(hard working employee act)

Hey, Matt.

MATT

How's it going? You getting anywhere?

WENDY

Just trying to power through.

MATT

Do what you can. Don't kill yourself.

As soon as Matt is gone, A NEIGHBORING FEMALE CO-WORKER with a pierced lower-lip smirks conspiratorially at Wendy. Wendy acknowledges the look, but as she returns to writing her letter it's clear that she wants to believe she has a higher calling than the other temps.

WENDY (VO)

Inspired by the work of Jean Genet, the cartoons of Lynda Barry and the family dramas of Eugene O'Neill, WAKE ME WHEN IT'S OVER, tells the story of a brother and sister who -- after being abandoned by their abusive father -- are forced to fend for themselves when their depressive mother goes out on a date... from which she never returns...

Accompanying the voice-over is A QUICK MONTAGE:

17 -- AT THE XEROX MACHINE - Wendy makes copies of her 17
 applications.

-- AT THE SUPPLY CABINET - She helps herself to PLASTIC BINDERS, MANILA ENVELOPES and some NICE PENS.

-- AT THE POSTAGE MACHINE - She runs her mailings through and the names of the recipients flash by: The Guggenheim Foundation, New Dramatists, The Playwrights Foundation...

18 EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT 18

Wendy exits, bundled up in a vintage coat and scarf. She crosses the deserted street and arrives at --

A MAILBOX --
where she removes SEVERAL MANILA ENVELOPES from her satchel.
In a private little ritual, she presses them against her
chest and makes a wish before she drops them inside.

19 EXT. EAST VALLEY STREET - NIGHT 19

Wendy walks down the street with a BAG OF TAKE-OUT and arrives at her APARTMENT BUILDING.

She is about to unlock the front door when it swings open and a YOUNG EAST VALLEY COUPLE emerge, followed by a group of their care-free friends. Wendy finds herself stuck holding the door open as they pass, painfully aware that they are all at least ten years younger.

As the last friend exits, he thanks Wendy as though she were a doorman.

20 INT. WENDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 20

Wendy enters carrying her TAKE-OUT BAG, KEYS and a SMALL PILE OF MAIL in her teeth.

GENGHIS KHAN, Wendy's cat, jumps off the couch and greets her with MEOWS. Wendy unloads her stuff, clicks on lights and pulls off her coat. On her way to feed Genghis, she wanders over to --

THE TELEPHONE TABLE where the answering machine BLINKS. Wendy pushes a button. As it plays, she opens a can of cat food.

MACHINE'S DIGITAL VOICE
Mailbox One, there are two new messages.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Ms. Savage, this is Donna from Dr. Reisman's office. I'm just calling to let you know that your Pap smear results came back today and it's normal, everything is fine. You've got nothing to worry about. If you have any questions, please call the --

A LOUD BUZZER BUZZES.

Wendy, slightly startled, clicks the machine off and, still holding the can of cat food, heads to the door.

THE CAMERA stays behind, PANNING OFF of Wendy and PUSHING INTO A CLOSE UP OF THE ANSWERING MACHINE still blinking ominously.

AT THE DOOR --

Wendy presses her eye to the peephole.

THROUGH THE PEEPHOLE --

LARRY, an attractive middle-aged guy, stands in the hall.

With a quick fluff of her hair, Wendy opens the door.

WENDY

Hi.

LARRY

Hi.

A strange pause as they stand in the doorway.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Is this a bad time? I saw your lights come on.

WENDY

No. I'm just...you know...

LARRY

Oh, okay, then I don't want to disturb...

WENDY

No. Do. I mean, if you can. Can you?

Larry nods yes and smiles -- a naughty gleam in his eye.

LARRY

I got Marley.

Wendy looks down to see Marley, AN OLD GOLDEN LAB with a greying muzzle. Wendy smiles at Marley and opens the door to let them in.

A MOMENT LATER --

THE CAMERA PUSHES IN FAST -- Larry has Wendy up against a wall and is kissing her hungrily, undoing her pants and pulling at her clothes.

WENDY
(coming up for air)
Let's go to the bed.

He continues to devour her.

LARRY
I like it here. Let's do it on the floor.
He slides to the floor and tries to pull her down with him.

WENDY
No, come on Larry.

LARRY
I need you. Feel how hard my cock is.
Wendy is disgusted. She pulls away from him.

WENDY
I don't want to. The floor is gross.
Wendy turns and begins to toss pillows off the nearby FUTON COUCH.

LARRY
You used to like it on the floor -- when you first moved in, remember?

WENDY
Yeah, well, not any more.

In a well practiced maneuver, she yanks at the base of the couch, pulling it forward -- FLUMP! -- transforming it into a bed.

WENDY (CONT'D)
It's middle-aged and depressing. It makes me want to cry.

Without a trace of romance, Wendy begins to remove her shirt.

LARRY
What's the matter?

Wendy shakes her head, dismissing the question. Marley wants to climb up onto the bed but is too arthritic to manage so Wendy hoists her up by her haunches. She plops down next to Marley and Larry sits down beside her.

LARRY (CONT'D)

What?

WENDY

I've got things going on.

LARRY

What things?

WENDY

Just things, Larry. Things. It's personal.

LARRY

(kissing her neck)

I thought this was personal.

WENDY

It's personal medical, okay? It's cervical.

Larry stops kissing her neck and gives Wendy his full attention.

WENDY (CONT'D)

I had a Pap Smear. Something was irregular. And then I had to have another Pap Smear. They just called with the results --

LARRY

And -- ?

Wendy wants special attention -- even if it means fabricating tragedy.

WENDY

And it's... not, you know, for sure yet, but they might have to go in and take something out to test and see if it's... you know, God forbid...

Larry presses his head against her chest and rubs her belly protectively.

LARRY

I'm sorry, Wen.

Wendy basks in the affection, UNTIL --

LARRY (CONT'D)
Annie had that.

WENDY
What?

LARRY
A cervical thing. Some kind of
procedure.

Wendy looks at him, her disbelief mounting.

LARRY (CONT'D)
I went with her to the appointment. She
said it was pretty painless. A little
sore afterwards, but basically--

WENDY
I really don't need to hear about your
wife's cervix, right now.

LARRY
I'm trying to be comforting.

WENDY
Yeah, well it's not. It's upsetting.

LARRY
Okay. Sorry.

WENDY
God.

A silent moment as they just sit there side-by-side.

LARRY
Do you want me to go?

Wendy shakes her head no.

CUT TO:

OVERHEAD CLOSE-UP of Wendy with Larry on top, moving
rhythmically. She tries to get lost in the sex but can't.
She opens her eyes and looks at the ceiling. After a few
moments, she turns her head and finds herself staring into
the sad eyes of Marley. She reaches for a paw. Wendy and
Marley stay like that gazing into each other's eyes while
Larry fucks her.

LATER --

Larry pulls his clothes on in semi-darkness. Wendy and
Marley spoon in bed.

LARRY (CONT'D)

C'mon Marley.

Marley licks Wendy's face, hobbles off the bed and joins Larry.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Goodnight.

Wendy watches from the bed as Larry and Marley leave.

25 STILL LATER --

25

Wendy shuffles out of the kitchen eating her take-out. She PASSES the TELEPHONE TABLE and notices --

THE RED BLINKING LIGHT of the answering machine. Then, AN E.C.U. of the red blinking light fills the screen.

26 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

26

A modest clapboard home with a sagging porch and mounds of dirty snow surrounding it. Somewhere inside a phone is RINGING.

SUPERTITLE: BUFFALO

27 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

27

JONATHAN SAVAGE, 42, is in bed, half-asleep, trying to ignore the ringing phone. Next to him, where a lover might be, there is a pile of work: LAP-TOP, PAPERS, EYE GLASSES, BOOKS. With a groan, he finally gives in and answers.

JON

Hello?

WENDY (ON PHONE)

Jon, it's me.

Jon looks at THE CLOCK on his nightstand. It's 1:10 am.

JON

What's going on?

WENDY (ON PHONE)

Dad is writing on the walls with his shit!

JON
What?

INT. WENDY'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Wendy paces as she talks, a cigarette clenched between her fingers. During their conversation, WE INTERCUT.

WENDY
He's writing with his shit, Jon. Words on the bathroom wall and he's leaving them there for this guy Eduardo to find like messages.

Jon snaps on a light.

JON
Wendy, what the fuck are you talking about?

WENDY
I am talking about Dad!

JON
Okay.

WENDY
There's something wrong with him. I got a phone call. He's losing his mind or something. He's acting out with his shit. It's all he's got left and he's using it to piss this guy off.

JON
What guy?

WENDY
Doris's caregiver guy. Here, listen.

JON
No.

Wendy fumbles with the ANSWERING MACHINE. She CLICKS IT ON and holds the PHONE to the SPEAKER.

ANSWERING MACHINE
Aloha, Wendy? This is Nancy --

Wendy pushes the FAST FORWARD BUTTON. We HEAR the HIGH PITCHED CHIPMUNK SOUND.

Jon holds his head in his hand like it's going to explode.

Wendy releases the button --

ANSWERING MACHINE (CONT'D)

I know you haven't communicated with your father for quite some time. He's not the same anymore. He forgets things and... I'm sorry to leave this on a machine, but Eduardo found Lenny this morning... handling his...
(grasping for propriety)
...fecal matter.

JON

Wendy!

ANSWERING MACHINE

We hired Eduardo to care for our mother, not your father --

JON

Wendy!!

WENDY

(phone back to ear)
What?

JON

Turn it off!

Wendy CLICKS IT OFF.

WENDY

What is your problem?

JON

It's the middle of the night. I've got to teach in the morning and I'm on a deadline.

WENDY

He's writing with his shit, Jon! Our father! Don't leave me alone with this.

JON

I'm not leaving you alone, I'm just hanging up. We'll talk tomorrow.

WENDY

We don't even know where the man lives anymore. You want to know where he lives? Sun City. Have you ever heard of that? In the middle of the desert somewhere. We're gonna have to go out there and find him.

JON

Wendy, we are not going to have to go out there and find him. We are not in a Sam Shepard play!

WENDY

We have to do something. This is a crisis.

JON

Look, I'm not sure if this actually qualifies as a crisis. It's an alarm, okay. But it's not a crisis. Not yet.

WENDY

(after a reflective pause)
You mean it's like we're in orange?

JON

What--? Yeah, right. Exactly. But we're only in yellow, okay. So we should just... be aware and be...cautious. When it hits red, then we're in trouble.

29

INT. SYLVIA'S NAIL SALON - DAY

29

CLOSE ON A BOTTLE OF RED NAIL POLISH as it is held up by a KOREAN MANICURIST. She speaks in broken English.

MANICURIST

Your color? Right, Miss Metzger?

Across from the manicurist, Doris stares at the bottle, but says nothing.

MANICURIST (CONT'D)

Ravishing Red, right?

The manicurist sighs, and begins shaking the bottle of nail polish. She turns and speaks to her CO-WORKER in Korean.

The manicurist takes one of Doris's hands, quickly paints a nail and holds it up in front of Doris's face.

MANICURIST (CONT'D)

See. You like? Sexy, right?

Doris stares at her painted nail. Finally, she manages to squeeze out the smallest of nods. The manicurist is pleased.

MANICURIST (CONT'D)

Ah, good. See. Good color.

WIDE --

A PLATOON OF KOREAN MANICURISTS in matching aprons attend to the nails of female customers. A LOUD T.V. plays JUDGE JUDY.

AT THE PEDICURE AREA --

Eduardo sleeps in a LARGE VIBRATING MASSAGE CHAIR. His feet soak in a low sink of swirling water.

BACK TO THE MANICURE AREA --

The manicurist is still speaking to her friend as she works. The CAMERA watches the action from a position level with the table and Doris's hands when suddenly -- like a medicine ball from outer space --

DORIS'S HEAD drops INTO FRAME --

landing on the table with a THUMP! She arrives FACING THE CAMERA, EYES OPEN, MOTIONLESS and DEAD.

The SOUND OF A JET grows louder and louder, transporting us to --

30

INT. PHOENIX SKY HARBOR AIRPORT - DAY

30

Jon, pulling his CARRY-ON, paces back and forth at an ARRIVAL GATE, talking into his CELLPHONE. A flight has just arrived and PASSENGERS are streaming out the jetway door.

JON

Andy. It's me, Jon. Good. Good. I'm still plugging away on that Brecht book. Yeah, well, he's a complex man. And you?

Wendy emerges from the jetway, spots her brother and hurries over.

WENDY

Hi Jon.

Wendy tries to kiss him hello, but Jon holds up an index finger.

JON

(into phone)
Yeah, I heard Stanford is playing footsie with you. Great. Great.

Jon beckons Wendy to follow him as he walks away from the gate into the terminal. Wendy obeys, annoyed.

JON (CONT'D)

(into phone)
Look, I need a favor.
(MORE)

JON (CONT'D)
It's kind of last minute. I'm out of town, actually... Arizona. Yeah. It's a family thing. No, nothing serious.

Wendy raises her eyebrows at Jon. He ignores her.

JON (CONT'D)
(into phone)
It's my father... No, he's just... His girlfriend died. Yeah. And he's getting pretty old himself, I guess, like everybody. Yeah, well, that's what I was going to ask you. It's my nine A.M. on Monday -- Oedipal Rage in Beckett of all things.

WENDY
(tugging on Jon's arm)
I've got to go to baggage claim.

JON
(into phone)
Hold on a sec.
(to Wendy, covering phone)
You checked luggage? We're only here for a day.

WENDY
Two days and one night. Excuse me if I plan on changing my clothes.

Wendy scans Jon's sloppy outfit with her eyes. Jon returns his attention to the phone.

JON
Sorry about that... My sister...

31

EXT. RENTAL CAR PARKING LOT - DAY

31

Jon loads the trunk of a rented MALIBU while Wendy examines his outfit.

WENDY
Is that what you're going to wear?

Jon looks at his clothes -- a long-john T-shirt and cargo pants -- then back at Wendy, confused.

WENDY (CONT'D)
To pay *respect*?

Irritated, he yanks off his shirt, unzips his bag and digs around for something more appropriate.

JON
I gained some weight.

WENDY
I didn't say anything.
(looking in his suitcase)
Kasia didn't have you pack a button-down?

JON
What is this, a goddamn fashion show?

WENDY
No, it's just that when someone dies
people dress up.

Jon pulls a shirt from deep inside his bag and puts it on.

JON
She's moving back to Poland.

WENDY
You and Kasia broke up?

JON
(buttoning up his shirt)
Her visa expired.

He presents himself to Wendy. She nods in vague approval.
Jon SLAMS the trunk CLOSED.

WENDY
So that's it. Her visa expires and
it's over?

They walk to the front of the car, Jon to the driver's side.

JON
We'll it's either that or we get married
and nobody is ready for that.

They climb into the car.

As they buckle in --

WENDY
You've been going out for three years.
You're forty-two years old. Don't you
think --

JON
Wendy! I really don't need romantic advice from my little sister at the moment. Let's just take care of this situation and stay out of each other's shit. Okay?

WENDY
I'm just trying to talk about it.

JON
Well, we're not in therapy right now. We're in real life.

WENDY
Okay. Geez.

Jon starts the engine and pulls away.

33 **EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY** 33
The rental car whizzes by.

34 **INT./EXT. CAR - DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY (MOVING)** 34
Jon drives, Wendy shotgun. Ahead is the OPEN ROAD. Above, THE HUGE DESERT SKY. AN EXIT SIGN reads: Sun City. Jon takes the exit.

35 **INT./EXT. CAR - ROAD - DAY (MOVING)** 35
Wendy and Jon watch the surreal sights of Sun City sail past.

36 **INT./EXT. DORIS METZGER'S STREET - RENTAL CAR** 36
They round a corner and park in front of DORIS METZGER'S HOUSE. The siblings stare at the house with trepidation.

JON
This is going to be weird.

WENDY
Yeah. I wonder what he looks like.
(remembering something)
Oh shoot! I almost forgot.

Wendy digs through her purse and pulls out a HALLMARK SYMPATHY CARD.

WENDY (CONT'D)

We have to sign this. They didn't have a very big selection. Do you think this is okay?

(reading the message)

*These words we hope may ease your loss.
Our prayers are with you. Our love. Our thoughts.*

Jon stares at his sister in disbelief.

WENDY (CONT'D)

So this is sent in sympathy...

Jon impatiently grabs the card, leans it against the steering wheel and signs it.

37

EXT. DORIS'S HOUSE - DAY

37

The siblings walk up the path toward the house with sad gift shop offerings: Jon with the string of A FOIL BALLOON that reads, "We Love Dad," Wendy with CELLOPHANE WRAPPED FLOWERS. They arrive at --

THE SCREEN DOOR

Jon pushes the DOORBELL. No response.

Wendy presses her face up to the screen and looks inside.

WENDY'S POV of THE FOYER --

Her eyes land on an ALUMINUM WALKER.

Jon KNOCKS lightly on the screen.

JON

Hello. Dad?

EDUARDO (O.S.)

Coming!

Eduardo appears on the other side of the screen door. It's obvious from his surprised expression and the fact that he doesn't open the door right away that something is amiss.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

You must be Leonard's kids.

WENDY

Uh-huh.

EDUARDO

Didn't you get my message?

38

INT. METZGER LIVING ROOM - DAY

38

Jon and Wendy sit side-by-side on the couch with uncertain expressions on their faces. The pathetic balloon floats above them. FLOWERS and SYMPATHY CARDS abound.

Across from them -- NANCY LACHMAN, 47, sits with her husband, BILL, 48, who nurses a Heineken. Their children, HOPE and FAITH are nearby watching "SpongeBob SquarePants" on the T.V. Eduardo hovers.

NANCY

The hospital is just five minutes away. And don't worry. It's nothing serious. He'd been feeling kind of faint and what with the toileting incident and all, the doctor thought a few tests were in order.

EDUARDO

I told him I didn't think there was anything wrong with that man's mind. That it was just Lenny being Lenny. But he insisted on taking a look for himself.

JON

(to Nancy)

So when did he go there?

NANCY

Um --

EDUARDO

Just last night. I'm sorry you didn't get my message.

JON

Well, I guess we should be going then.

Jon and Wendy rise, awkwardly gathering their things. Wendy remembers their card and hands it to Nancy.

WENDY

We're really sorry about your mom.

NANCY

Thank you.

Bill gives Nancy a look, encouraging her to speak up.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Uh, Jon, Wendy... One more thing. Before you go. Please, sit. I just want to say...

(MORE)

NANCY (CONT'D)
(getting choked up)
You know, we love Lenny. He's been like
family to us...

Wendy and Jon sit again, smiling gratefully.

NANCY (CONT'D)
But he's not *really* our family. He's yours.

Jon and Wendy's smiles evaporate.

NANCY (CONT'D)
So, I hope you'll be able to find some
place nice for him.

JON
What do you mean?

BILL
She means a place where he can live.

JON
He lives here.

BILL
That's correct. Your father has been
living off the charity of our family for
quite some time.

NANCY
Bill --

Uh-oh. Jon instantly understands what's happening, but
Wendy is baffled.

JON
Why would you say charity, Bill? Doris
asked my father to come live with her as
a boyfriend not a boarder. They were a
couple. They were together for over
twenty years.

Nancy starts to cry. Twelve-year-old Hope drifts over and
protectively attaches herself to her mother's leg. She stares
suspiciously at Wendy and Jon. Wendy smiles nervously at the
glaring child.

JON (CONT'D)
You can't just throw the man out on the
street. He has a right to live here.
Legally speaking. It's a common law
marriage at this point.

BILL
Well, not exactly...

NANCY
 (glancing at her husband)
 Not in front of the kids, Bill.

Bill rises, hitches up his pants and picks up his VALISE.

BILL
 (to Jon)
 Why don't we step outside.

Jon gets up warily and hands off the balloon to Wendy. Bill leads Jon across the room, rolls open a GLASS DOOR and the two men step out into a PATIO AREA. Bill slides the door closed behind them.

Wendy and Nancy sit silently watching them. After a moment, Nancy turns and smiles at Wendy. Wendy smiles back. It is excruciatingly awkward.

39 THROUGH THE CLOSED SLIDING GLASS DOORS - 39
 Bill and Jon talk animatedly. Bill pulls a DOCUMENT from his valise and hands it to Jon. Jon puts on a PAIR OF GLASSES. Bill takes a swig from a bottle of Heineken and watches him read.

JON (PRE-LAP)
 It's called a Non-marital Agreement. It's something Doris had drafted up years ago.

40 **EXT. DORIS' HOUSE - DAY** 40

AGITATED HAND-HELD as Wendy and Jon march down the path, their balloon in tow. Jon grips a copy of the document.

JON
 It's like a pre-nup without the nup. It says that even though they live together they have no legal obligation to each other. That everything is separate. And basically that Dad has no right to any of her property. I bet they've already got the place listed.

WENDY
 Did you notice that there wasn't one picture of us anywhere? It's like we don't even exist.

41 **INT. HOSPITAL THIRD FLOOR - DAY** 41

Wendy and Jon hustle down a long hall, VISITOR STICKERS affixed to their shirts. They each carry a cup from Starbucks. Their foil balloon bounces overhead.

Checking the room numbers, they slow down as they approach the one they seek. Jon makes sure Wendy is ready before he reaches for the knob.

42 **INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY** 42

A T.V. suspended from the ceiling plays a LOUD GAME SHOW. Jon and Wendy quietly enter and step around a curtain to find --

LENNY, asleep, with an IV in his arm.

They stand there a moment, haggardly staring at their estranged and ailing father. Then --

JON

Wen?

WENDY

What?

Jon nods at something on the other side of the bed. Wendy looks and SEES A BAG WITH DARK YELLOW LIQUID hanging from a stand.

JON

Dad's taking a piss.

Wendy and Jon stare blankly as the liquid level RISES. A strange pause. Then A BURST OF APPLAUSE from the T.V.

Wendy and Jon look up at the T.V. It's JEOPARDY. They watch for a long spaced out moment. In unison, they take a sip from their Starbucks. Then--

LENNY (O.S)

Where the hell have you been?

Wendy and Jon turn to face Lenny.

WENDY & JON

Hi Dad. Hi. How are you doing?

LENNY

They've had me hog-tied for two days.
Can't you see?

Lenny becomes agitated and starts to thrash around. His sheet slides off to reveal RESTRAINTS holding his wrists and ankles. Wendy and Jon look at each other, horrified.

WENDY

We just got here. We came pretty much straight from the airport. It's Wendy and Jon.

Lenny eyes his children.

LENNY

I know who you are. You're the late ones. You're late! You weren't here! And this is what they do, see.

Lenny pulls violently against his restraints.

JON

Dad! Dad! Stop.

Lenny doesn't stop. He's wild.

WENDY

(shrinking away from the bed)
Jon, go get somebody.

LENNY

You weren't here, I said! Nobody!

JON

(grabbing his father's arm)
Dad!

Lenny stops momentarily and stares up at his son. A tiny flicker of fear in his eyes.

JON (CONT'D)

We weren't here because we live on the east coast. Remember? We haven't seen you in a long time. We came here to help you.

LENNY

So do something. You're the doctor.

WENDY

He's not that kind of doctor, Dad. He's a professor.

JON
(to Wendy)
I'm gonna go get somebody.

Jon goes to the door and exits.

LENNY
I thought my boy was a doctor.

WENDY
Doctor of Philosophy. PhD. Jon teaches
college.

LENNY
Medicine?

WENDY
No. Drama. He teaches theater.

LENNY
Like Broad-way? Zasu Pitts?

WENDY
No, like... "Theater of Social Unrest."
Stuff like that. He's doing a book on
Bertolt Brecht.

The door swings open. In walks Jon with a NURSE.

NURSE
I'll untie him only if he promises to be
good. He can't be trying to get out of bed
by himself. You gonna be good, Mr. Savage?

JON
Dad, are you gonna be good? If you're
not good they won't untie you.

Lenny stays still and stares at his son like an obedient
dog who wants his reward.

NURSE
You can't go pulling on everything, now.
(re: IV tube)
This here is for your own good. This is
your food.
(untying his hands and feet)
We can't have him climbing out on his
own. He's unsteady and he can fall.

JON
We'll keep an eye on him.

The nurse exits the room. Now untied, Lenny looks up at Wendy and Jon suspiciously. Everyone just stands there, unsure what's supposed to happen next.

DOCTOR (PRE-LAP)
Vascular dementia or multi-infarct,
usually follow one or more strokes. But
I don't see any signs of a stroke here.
No tumor.

43

INT. HOSPITAL FILM VIEWING ROOM

43

DARKNESS. Then, A DOOR OPENS allowing some light into A ROOM. A DOCTOR, Wendy and Jon enter.

DOCTOR
But the disinhibition; the aggression,
the "masked face" with the blank stare we
talked about; slowness of speech, memory
loss. These are all fairly good
indicators.

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK. Lights stutter on and --

A SERIES OF MRI PICTURES OF LENNY'S BRAIN --
appear one at a time as wall-mounted light boxes are
switched on. We are in --

WENDY
Is it like Alzheimer's?

DOCTOR
There are lots of different illnesses
that cause dementia and I'm not prepared
to make a diagnosis yet, but to my mind
your father's symptoms seem more
characteristic of Parkinson's Disease.

JON
So what do we have to look forward to?

DOCTOR
If I'm right, then tremors -- when the
limb is at rest. A shuffling walk.
Freezing up, unable to initiate
movement...

As the doctor speaks, Wendy and Jon look around at the dark mysterious images of their father's brain. The HUMMING OF THE LIGHT BOXES increases, eventually drowning out the doctor's voice.

44 **EXT. BEST WESTERN INN OF SUN CITY - DUSK** 44

The BLUE AND YELLOW SIGN glows against the desert sky, accompanied by a DUET, sung by an older man and woman.

 DUET
 *You make me feel so young. You make me
 feel that spring is sprung...*

The SONG continues over --

45 **EXT. CORRIDOR BEST WESTERN - NIGHT** 45

Wendy and Jon roll their bags toward their room. PALM TREES silhouetted against the sky sway in the desert breeze.

 DUET
 *Every time I see you grin, I'm such a
 happy individual...*

46 **INT. BEST WESTERN LOUNGE - NIGHT** 46

BURT & LIZZY -- a low-rent Steve and Eydie Gormet are singing the duet we've been hearing. The AUDIENCE OF RETIREES love them.

AT THE BAR --
 Wendy and Jon are drinking sodas and eating nuts. Wendy leafs through a pamphlet called "Dementia" while Jon peruses "Parkinson's Disease."

 WENDY
 Maybe Dad didn't abandon us. Maybe he
 just forgot who we were.

 JON
 I'm going to give Brian Deener a call.

 WENDY
 Who's that?

 JON
 A friend of mine. Teaches in the English
 Department. He just put his mother in a
 nursing home near campus...
 (to bartender)
 Can we get some more nuts?

Wendy looks at Jon, stunned.

WENDY
A nursing home?

JON
Yeah. What?

WENDY
I don't know. I wasn't thinking about putting him in a nursing home.

JON
Well, what were you thinking?

WENDY
I don't know, but I wasn't thinking that.

JON
Well, what then?

WENDY
I don't know, Jon! I just said. It's just not what I was picturing is all.

JON
Where else is he going to live, Wen? I mean really -- what's the alternative? You want to change Dad's diapers and wipe his ass? I don't.

An OLDER COUPLE at a neighboring table look over. Wendy smiles at them and lowers her voice.

WENDY
He doesn't need diapers, Jon.

JON
Well what do you think that catheter was?

WENDY
That's just because he's in the hospital.

JON
Look, even if they did let Dad stay here, he'd still need somebody to take care of him. And you know we can't afford that. And you heard the nurse, Dad falls. He's disoriented --

WENDY
Dad hasn't fallen since we've been here.

JON
That's 'cause he's lying down in a hospital!

(MORE)

JON (CONT'D)

Don't make me out to be the evil brother who is putting our father away against your will. We're doing this together, right?

Wendy pokes her ice with a cocktail straw.

WENDY

What about those places?

JON

What places?

WENDY

Like Aunt Gertie.

JON

That's assisted living. I'm not sure Dad'll get into one of them. Gertie was pretty independent, remember? She was also rich.

(pause)

Look, there's no one else here to help us with this. It's just us. We have to do this thing together, right?

(no response)

Wendy?

WENDY

No, yeah, you're right, of course.

JON

Okay. So, I'm going to call United and try to get the first flight out of here tomorrow morning so I can get back and start looking for a place that'll take him.

WENDY

What am I going to do?

JON

You're going to have to stay here and hold down the fort until I find something.

WENDY

By myself?

JON

Wendy, this is not the time to regress.

PRE-LAP

"Whhhaaaaa!!!"

47 INT. BEST WESTERN - ROOM - NIGHT

47

LUCILLE BALL bawls like a baby in an episode of I LOVE LUCY. Across from the TV, Wendy is in bed, sleeping. Mixed in with the sound of the television, we hear Jon talking -- upset mumbling coming from the bathroom. Wendy's eyes flutter open.

WENDY'S POV --

A sliver of Jon through the bathroom door. He's on the phone. We can't make out all the words, but it's clear that he's having some kind of disagreement with his girlfriend. After a moment, he hangs up. HOLD ON him standing silent and still over the sink. Then, a spasm of short little breaths and he starts to cry.

Wendy is moved by this vision of her brother's vulnerability. She closes her eyes again, as we --

FADE TO BLACK.

48 UNDER BLACK --

48

JON
(hushed)
Hey, Wendy. Wen.

FADE IN TO SEE WENDY'S POV --
of Jon, standing over the bed, all dressed with his luggage hanging off him. It's still dark outside.

ANGLE ON BLEARY-EYED WENDY --
twisted up in bedclothes looking up at Jon.

WENDY
What?

JON
I'm going.

Wendy sleepily watches as Jon pulls out some cash and places it on the bureau.

JON (CONT'D)
That should take care of the hotel.

WENDY
Thanks.

Jon nods and heads for the door.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Jon?

JON
Yeah?

WENDY
Are you okay?

JON
Yeah, I'm fine. I'll call you.

Jon leaves, pulling the door closed behind him, leaving Wendy in the dark, her anxious face barely visible.

49 **INT. BEST WESTERN ROOM - MORNING** 49

MUSIC PUMPS. ON THE T.V. an exercise program plays. Wendy is in her underwear, struggling to follow along. She feels pathetic, but pushes herself to do it anyway.

50 **INT. LARRY'S APARTMENT - DAY** 50

CLOSE ON A RINGING PHONE. In the background, Larry looks up from his spot at the kitchen table. Before he can get up, his wife ANNIE answers.

ANNIE
Hello?

51 **INT. BEST WESTERN ROOM - DAY** 51

Wendy, sweaty from her work-out, holds the phone, but doesn't speak.

ANNIE (ON PHONE)
Hello? Who is it? Hello? Hello?

The CLICKING SOUND OF HANGING UP. Wendy stares into space, hating her life.

52 **EXT. DORIS' HOUSE - DAY** 52

A SMALL BANNER that says "OPEN HOUSE" hangs out front flapping in the dry breeze.

53 **INT. DORIS' HOUSE - DAY** 53

SEVERAL ELDERLY COUPLES ARE being shown around by a REAL ESTATE AGENT who does her pitch. The CAMERA LOCATES an open doorway and peeks into --

54 **THE GUEST ROOM --**

54

where Wendy can be seen unzipping a large, cheap SUITCASE. She props it open on a couch.

We MOVE INSIDE the room as Wendy pushes open the accordion doors of a large closet to reveal a sad assortment of MEN'S CLOTHES. After a moment reflecting upon the sorry state of her father's life, Wendy removes an armful of clothes, hangers and all, and dumps them into the suitcase.

55 **IN THE BATHROOM --**

55

A DRAWER OPENS, LINED WITH FLORAL CONTACT PAPER -- Miscellaneous toiletries slide around inside. Wendy's hand rifles through the items, removing anything "Male".

A MEDICINE CABINET OPENS, PACKED WITH PHARMACEUTICALS -- Wendy's hand quickly extracts all the vials on which Leonard Savage's name appears. The cabinet CLOSES.

Suddenly Wendy re-opens the cabinet. Her fingers drift over the pill bottles until they locate one that says: *Doris Metzger* -- and below that: *Percocet*. Wendy takes the bottle and shuts the cabinet again.

IN THE MIRROR, we see her remove a pill, pop it in her mouth and wash it back with a handful of water.

56 **IN THE LIVING ROOM --**

56

Wendy drags suitcases toward the front door, passing the REAL ESTATE AGENT who, having released the group of buyers, rattles around the house by herself, talking on her cell phone. She sees Wendy, covers her phone and whispers --

REAL ESTATE AGENT
I'm sorry about your loss.

57 **EXT./INT. CAB - MOVING**

57

Wendy, feeling the narcotic effects of the Percocet, leans against the window and looks out at the strange desert landscape blurring by.

58 **INT. BEST WESTERN - DAY**

58

SUITCASES filled with Lenny's belongings are parked around the room.

Wendy sits on the bed looking through the contents of an OLD BRIEFCASE -- bundles of LETTERS, yellowed children's DRAWINGS and an assortment of WALLET-SIZED SCHOOL PORTRAITS of Wendy and Jon. The PHONE RINGS and Wendy answers.

WENDY

Hello?

59 **EXT. BUFFALO STREET - DAY**

59

It's bitterly cold. Jon wears a MASSIVE PARKA and paces with his cell phone pressed to his ear. His breath is visible and rushes out of his mouth as he speaks.

JON

Hi.

INTERCUT between Wendy and Jon.

WENDY

Oh my god, Jon, you're not going to believe it. I just found this stash of pictures of us from Dewey Elementary. I can't believe he kept them all this time.

She fishes out a goofy photo of Jon.

WENDY (CONT'D)

I am looking at the funniest picture of you, right now...

JON

(shivering, but amused)

Oh yeah?

WENDY

With a big mouth full of metal. How come you got braces, they never gave me braces?

JON

Have you ever looked at my teeth? They're still crooked.

WENDY

Yeah. How come?

JON
 'Cause Dad never paid the bills and the
 orthodontist was so pissed, he pulled the
 braces out of my mouth before my teeth
 were fixed.

Wendy snort-laughs.

JON (CONT'D)
 So, I think I found something.

WENDY
 What?

JON
 A place with an opening that can take him
 right away.

WENDY
 What kind of place?

JON
 (sarcastic)
 A facility for older people. In this
 country we call them nursing homes.

WENDY
 I thought we were gonna try assisted
 living.

JON
 They're not going to take him in assisted
 living, Wendy! Let's be real. He's got
 dementia.

WENDY
 Well don't lead with that.

JON
 Look, if it's any consolation -- this
 place -- they don't call it a nursing
 home.

WENDY
 What do they call it?

JON
 A Rehabilitation Center. It's called The
 Valley View.

The CAMERA PANS AWAY to reveal that Jon is standing near
 the very place he speaks of. It is a grim institutional
 building with a sign out front, *The Valley View
 Rehabilitation Center.*

WENDY
That sounds nice. Is it?

JON
It's a nursing home, Wendy!

WENDY
Does it smell?

JON
Yes, Wendy it smells. They all smell.
Look, this place has an empty bed, they
take Medicaid and it's close to my house.
Believe me, once you get inside these
places, they're all the same.

Wendy holds the phone unable to speak for a long moment.

JON (CONT'D)
Wendy?

WENDY
Make sure to have a coat for him when we
get there. He doesn't have any warm
clothes.

60 **INT. HOSPITAL - DAWN**

60

Viewed from behind, Wendy hustles down an empty corridor.

61 **INT. LENNY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAWN**

61

Wendy enters and sees the empty hospital bed and no sign
of anything else at first. Then she steps deeper into
the room and turns to find --

Lenny, sitting in a wheelchair, all ready to go. He's been
dressed by the nurses and it shows. He wears a FLANNEL SHIRT
with SUSPENDERS, TROUSERS and a BASEBALL CAP, like a kid
dressed for school by somebody else's mother.

Wendy is struck by the poignancy of this but moves on
with the business at hand.

WENDY
Hi Dad.

After a little delay, Lenny pulls his attention away from
the wall he's been staring at and stiffly twists his head
to look at his daughter.

LENNY

Hi ya.

There is a glimmer in his eye, a tiny smile on his face. Lenny seems to have some vague feeling of hope, not unlike the way a dog senses that his beloved family is planning a vacation and he might be taken along. Wendy removes Lenny's baseball cap and gives him a kiss on the forehead.

WENDY

How're you feeling?

LENNY

Not bad.

She tosses the cap on the bed and begins unclipping his suspenders. Lenny does not resist.

WENDY

You don't need these, right, Dad? Not your style. They're like Grandpa Walton.

62

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

62

THE NURSES' STATION --

Wendy finishes signing the HOSPITAL RELEASE FORMS, folds the papers in half and shoves them into one of the plastic bags that hang off the back of Lenny's wheelchair.

A NURSE in her 50's hands over Lenny's medical records, medications and instructions. Wendy dumps the pill bottles into her purse.

NURSE

Here. Lemme give you some of these.

The nurse looks over her shoulder to make sure she is unobserved, then pulls out a half a dozen ADULT DIAPERS. Wendy's eyes widen.

NURSE (CONT'D)

They don't like us to give this stuff away, but you might need it.

She hands the diapers to Wendy.

WENDY

Thanks.

She stuffs the diapers in her bag.

WENDY (CONT'D)
(rousing herself)

Okay.

Wendy turns the wheelchair, pointing it toward the exit.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Ready, Dad?

LENNY
Yep.

NURSE
Have a good trip, Mr. Savage.
(whispering to Wendy)
Good luck.

Lenny waves with a small wiggle of his fingers. Wendy rolls him away.

63

INT. JETWAY - DAY

63

We MOVE toward the aircraft. TWO FLIGHT ATTENDANTS stand at the far end by the cabin door.

REVERSE ANGLE --
Wendy pushes Lenny's wheelchair. TWO AIRLINE EMPLOYEES march behind her in matching uniforms. They arrive at the CABIN DOOR, where the flight attendants greet them.

Out of nowhere, the two airline employees produce A FOLDED METAL CONTRAPTION and pull open a series of METAL FLAPS, transforming it into A BOARDING CHAIR. Unlike a wheelchair, it's narrow enough to fit down the aisle of an airplane.

Wendy stands by and watches as they transfer Lenny to the boarding chair. Lenny's beseeching eyes are fixed on Wendy as he is handled by these human furniture movers. They arrange his arms across his chest, straight-jacket style, and strap him in.

Wendy looks on helplessly as Lenny, not unlike a crate on a supermarket dolly, is TILTED BACK, SPUN AROUND and WHEELED onto the aircraft, BACKWARDS.

64

INT. AIRPLANE - CONTINUOUS

64

Wendy lumbers down the aisle following behind Lenny, banging passengers with her bags.

WENDY
Sorry. Excuse me...

WENDY'S POV of the SEATED PASSENGERS stealing looks at her and her father as they make their humiliating pilgrimage to COACH.

AT THEIR ASSIGNED SEATS --

Lenny is helped into the aisle seat while Wendy shoves their bags into the overhead compartment. She squeezes past her father and collapses into the WINDOW SEAT.

CUT TO:

65 AN ENDLESS LANDSCAPE OF CLOUDS.

65

ON WENDY --
staring out the window. Suddenly --

THWACK! Lenny slams his hand down on his tray. He's agitated, scattering what remains of his SNACK BOX. He begins to tug and fumble with his SEATBELT.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Dad, what are you doing?

Lenny turns stiffly and looks at Wendy.

LENNY

(flat)

Bath-room.

WENDY

What?

LENNY

(agitated and loud)

BATH-ROOM!

WENDY

Okay, Dad. Calm down. Let's just wait for the lady to come and take our stuff away so we can --

LENNY

NOW!

Lenny pulls violently on his seatbelt. Wendy glances over her shoulder and sees the CONCERNED FACES of neighboring passengers.

WENDY

(mortified)

Okay. Okay, Dad we'll take care of it.

She frantically clears off his tray table and latches it to the seatback. Lenny tries to lift himself up.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Not yet, Dad. Just wait a second.

Wendy climbs over her father and stumbles into the aisle. She tucks her hair behind each ear and readies herself.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Okay, Dad --

Wendy takes Lenny's hands and helps him shimmy into the aisle. They stand there, facing each other and holding hands like mismatched dance partners. Wendy starts inching backwards, slowly leading Lenny toward the bathroom.

WENDY (CONT'D)

That's good, Dad.

Suddenly, Lenny stops. His face distressed.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Dad, what?

Wendy looks down and lets out a TINY GASP.

A WIDE SHOT reveals that Lenny's pants have collapsed around his ankles -- he's standing in the middle of the airplane in his diapers. As word spreads, passengers throughout the cabin crane their necks to get a look.

WENDY (CONT'D)

It's okay, Dad. Don't worry. We're fine.

Seems like Lenny needed those suspenders after all.

Jon's ten year-old TOYOTA CORROLA idles in front of the arrival area. The windows are frosted and steamed up.

Jon sits behind the wheel listening to ALL THINGS CONSIDERED on NPR. Very civilized. Then --

THWAK! SPLAT!

ON THE DRIVER'S SIDE WINDOW --

A HAND APPEARS, wiping away the snow and frost to reveal a frantic Wendy.

Jon!
WENDY

JON
(rolling down the window)
Hey, Wen.

Wendy hands some PATENT LEATHER LOAFERS through the window.

JON (CONT'D)
What's this?

WENDY
They're Dad's. I can't get them back on
his feet. They swelled up.
(moving toward the trunk)
Pop the trunk.

Wendy tosses the bags in, slams it shut and returns to Jon's window.

JON
Where is he?

WENDY
Inside.
(holding out her hand)
The coat.

Jon pulls a MASSIVE PARKA from the back seat and shoves it through the window.

JON
I can't leave the car unattended.

WENDY
Fine.

JON
Is everything alright?

Wendy looks at Jon with a flat expression, then pivots around and leaves with the parka. Jon looks out the window.

THROUGH THE MASSIVE PLATE GLASS WINDOW OF THE TERMINAL -- He sees Lenny sitting in an airport wheelchair, parked by the luggage. Lenny seems to be the only person in the whole terminal that isn't moving.

ON JON -- watching, the image sinking in -- his father is a helpless old man.

68

INT. TOYOTA COROLLA - NIGHT (MOVING)

68

They're all packed in, Wendy in the back with their carry-ons. Lenny's face is barely visible inside the fur-lined hood of the parka. The windshield wipers squeak and push wet snow from the glass. After a few moments of uncomfortable silence, Jon steals a glance at his father.

JON

Been a while since you've seen this, huh
Dad? Snow. What d'you think?

Lenny stares ahead. After a moment --

LENNY

Lousy.

JON

Yeah, it's always like this this time of
year.

LENNY

Not the weather. Your driving. It's
lousy. Never could drive.

Wendy starts cracking up in the backseat. Then Jon joins in.

LENNY (CONT'D)

(amused)

What're you a bunch a dummies? The hell
you laughing at?

This only makes Jon and Wendy laugh louder. Now Lenny starts laughing. Everybody is laughing like crazy. Eventually, the laughter dies down and trails off. A brief silence, then --

LENNY (CONT'D)

Did anyone of you remember to tell Doris
I'm outta town for a while? She gets
worried.

Wendy and Jon nervously glance at each other in the rear
view mirror.

JON

Uh, yeah, Dad, I took care of that.
Nothing to worry about.

69 **EXT. BUFFALO STREETS - NIGHT (MOVING)** 69

A commercial strip: Low buildings, out-dated stores, fast food restaurants.

70 **INT./EXT. CAR - NIGHT** 70

As they pull up in front of the VALLEY VIEW, the ILLUMINATED SIGN flickers. Wendy takes in the building and its surroundings.

 WENDY
 (under her breath)
 Where's the view?

71 **INT. VALLEY VIEW NURSING HOME - NIGHT** 71

Wendy, Jon and Lenny (once again in a borrowed wheelchair) are being lead through the facility by a heavy-hipped African-American nurse, MS. ROBINSON. She's tired but not unkind. Wendy and Jon carry suitcases and plastic bags with Lenny's things. Lenny cradles a bag in his lap.

 MS. ROBINSON
We don't usually admit new residents after five o'clock, but I understand you came a long way. Isn't that right Mr. Savage?

 LENNY
What'd ya say?

 MS. ROBINSON
 (louder)
You came a long way.

 LENNY
Not too bad.

WENDY'S MOVING POV --
The staff is scarce at this down-at-the-heels facility. Residents are lightly scattered about the communal spaces. Some are parked in hallways. Others wander.

As they pass A LAUNDRY CART filled with dirty sheets, Wendy takes a whiff. Her nostrils flare.

Lenny seems unaware of what exactly is happening. His expression is peaceful, almost dreamy.

A CAT darts across the hall.

MS. ROBINSON
That's Winston, we call him the Mayor.

72

ANOTHER HALLWAY --

72

Ms. Robinson leads Lenny, Wendy and Jon to --

ROOM B-26 --

She knocks lightly. No response. She turns the knob and looks back at the Savages --

MS. ROBINSON (CONT'D)
Here we are.

She pushes open the door.

73

INT. ROOM B-26 - CONTINUOUS

73

As they pass through the small entranceway --

MS. ROBINSON
(pointing things out)
The bathroom and the closet here you'll share with Mr. Sperry.

Ms. Robinson ushers everyone past A CURTAINED-OFF BED SPACE and into the back half of the room. Lenny, Wendy and Jon stop and look around.

THEIR POV --

The CAMERA PANS ACROSS a hospital-style bed, an orange vinyl chair and a window where among sloping telephone wires, the top branches of a bare tree can be seen.

MS. ROBINSON (CONT'D)
These are just the bare essentials, of course. Once you move in, you can dress it up anyway you want.
(poking her head through the courtesy curtain)
Mr. Sperry? You want to meet your new neighbor? Mr. Savage?

After a moment, she pulls the curtain open to expose MR. SPERRY, 80, in a hospital gown reading a large print Agatha Christie mystery. He greets the family with a stiff wave and a crooked smile.

MR. SPERRY
Hi there.

An odd suspended moment as everyone looks at the old man in the bed. And then, just like that, Ms. Robinson closes the curtain. Show's over.

MS. ROBINSON

I'll leave you alone to look around and get yourselves together.

(low to Jon)

I need you to sign some papers. I'll send someone in to get him ready for bed.

74

LATER --

74

Wendy is putting Lenny's clothes into a bureau. An aide enters -- JIMMY, 30, a skinny, handsome Nigerian guy with dreadlocks.

JIMMY

(Nigerian accent)

Hi.

WENDY

Hi.

JIMMY

You're gonna need to write down his name on all his things so nothing gets lost. You like red or green?

Jimmy produces TWO LAUNDRY MARKERS. She reaches for the red one.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

(to Lenny)

Good evening sir, I'm Jimmy.

LENNY

Leonard Savage.

JIMMY

Good to meet you.

LENNY

Ditto.

JIMMY

(to Wendy)

Make sure to include B-26, the room number. Lemme show you.

Jimmy steps up to the bureau, takes one of Lenny's t-shirts and writes on the inside collar: *L. Savage. B-26*. Then, with a flourish he draws a silly smiley face. Wendy is charmed. IN THE MIRROR ABOVE THE BUREAU she watches

Jimmy talk to Lenny as she begins to mark Lenny's shirts.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
 You ready for a good night's sleep?
 Gimme your arms up in the air. Come on.
 Up. Up like you're under arrest.

Lenny lifts his arms stiffly.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
 Good man. You ever done time, Mr.
 Savage?

Lenny laughs. Jimmy pulls his shirt off over his head.

75

THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE LENNY'S ROOM - LATER

75

Mrs. Robinson is giving Jon and Wendy final words of advice.

MS. ROBINSON
 (hushed voice)
 It's a good idea not to make too big of a
 thing when you leave for the first time.
 Just go real casual. No big good-byes.
 You don't want to get him agitated before
 he adjusts and settles into his new home.

76

BACK IN THE ROOM --

76

Wendy and Jon pull on their coats. Lenny watches them
 from bed.

JON
 So everything okay, Dad?

LENNY
 Not bad.

JON
 Okay then we'll see you tomorrow.

WENDY
 Good night Dad.

Jon stands by as Wendy bends down and kisses her father
 good night. They head toward the door.

LENNY
 Hey --

Wendy and Jon stop and turn around, expecting the worst.

JON
 What, Dad?

LENNY

Don't forget to tip the girl on the way out.
They expect it in a nice hotel like this.

77 **INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

77

Jon and Wendy walk quickly and silently toward the exit.

78 **EXT. NURSING HOME PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

78

The heavy door flies open and Wendy and Jon hurl themselves from the building and crunch across the parking lot. Breath plumes out of their mouths like smoke. It's freezing cold.

Halfway across the lot, Wendy stumbles to a halt and ERUPTS into a fit of tears.

JON

What, Wen?

Through heaving sobs --

WENDY

He didn't even -- know -- where -- we
were taking him.

JON

He still doesn't know. He doesn't know
where he is.

WENDY

We're horrible, horrible, horrible --
people, Jon. Horrible, horrible.

79 **EXT. JON'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

79

The car pulls up.

80 **INT. FOYER/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

80

The door opens and Jon and Wendy shuffle into the darkened foyer. Jon flips on the LIGHTS. Wendy looks around.

HER POV OF THE LIVING ROOM --

PILES of BOOKS, NEWSPAPERS and MAGAZINES. Heaps of hand
labeled VIDEO AND AUDIO TAPES stacked all around the TV.

WENDY

It looks like the Unibomber lives here.

JON

Yeah, well I've been doing a lot of research for the book. The couch is actually pretty comfortable.

WENDY

Great... Where is it?

Wendy watches as Jon removes stacks of books that nearly bury the couch. She joins him and starts to move books as well.

JON

Those need to go over here, actually.

Jon takes the books from Wendy and puts them in a specific place. When Jon turns around, he discovers that Wendy is lifting more books from the couch.

JON (CONT'D)

(taking books from her)

It doesn't look like it, I know, but there's actually a system to all of this.

WENDY

(with raised hands)

Oooh-kay.

Wendy moves out of the way and watches as her brother obsessively re-organizing the books.

81

INT. JON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

81

Wendy flips on a light and enters. She takes A PILLOW from Jon's unmade bed, then notices a PRESCRIPTION PILL BOTTLE on his nightstand. She picks up the bottle, yelling downstairs --

WENDY

Jon, what's Zocor?

JON (O.S.)

Get out of my room, Wendy.

WENDY

Is that for depression?

JON (O.S.)

It's for cholesterol.

WENDY
You have high cholesterol?

JON (O.S.)
Yes!

Now Wendy notices A SHOPPING BAG full of MAIL AND BROCHURES. She kneels down to take a closer look.

WENDY
Is this all your nursing home research?

JON
Wendy!

82 INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

82

The couch has been made, but Jon is still organizing his books, apparently unable to stop. Wendy shuffles in, carrying the pillow and the shopping bag she found upstairs. She tosses the pillow on the couch and sits down to dig through the bag.

WENDY
Most of these aren't even open.

JON
I got on some list, they just keep coming.

Wendy pulls out a large, full-color brochure and begins to leaf through it.

WENDY
Hill Haven. This looks nice.

JON
It's in Vermont. I really wish you hadn't brought that down.

Wendy stuffs the brochure back into the bag and climbs under the blanket. She squirms around uncomfortably, then digs under the cushions and pulls out a A CRUSHED PAPERBACK.

WENDY
Jon.

Jon looks up. Wendy holds the book out to him.

JON
What is it?

WENDY
(pointedly)
"Theater of the Absurd."

Jon retrieves the book, puts it in its proper place and continues to hover over his piles.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Are you going to stop?

JON
Yeah, yeah, sorry.

Jon begins SWITCHING OFF the lights. As he does, he notices his sister's troubled expression.

JON (CONT'D)
We're doing the right thing, Wen. We're taking better care of the old man than he ever did of us.

WENDY
(not sure)
I know.

JON
(climbing the stairs)
Goodnight.

WENDY
'night.

A RADIATOR HISSES as Wendy lies in the dark with her eyes wide open. A note of MUSIC, then --

NARRATOR (PRE-LAP)
We know that this is one of the toughest decisions of your life...

DISSOLVE TO:

IMAGES OF CRASHING SURF on a TV.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
What to do when the parent who took care of you can no longer take care of
themselves.

REVERSE ANGLE --

Wendy sits in the dark watching a PROMOTIONAL VIDEOTAPE for GREENHILL MANOR -- a luxury nursing home. She's eating a bowl of cereal and the floor around her is covered in nursing home brochures.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

We know how hard this can be, that's why here at Greenhill Manor we are committed to providing the highest quality of care to our residents...

The CAMERA MOVES IN ON WENDY as she watches, transfixed.

ON T.V.: images of A BEAUTIFULLY LANDSCAPED ESTATE that looks more like a New England Prep school than a nursing home. Words appear and disappear over the images. Words like: *Commitment. Community. Compassion.* SENTIMENTAL MUSIC plays over gauzy photos of HAPPY SENIORS being attended to by a caring STAFF.

83 **EXT. JON'S HOUSE - DAY**

83

From inside the car -- AN ICE AND SNOW PACKED WINDSHIELD. A SCRAPER appears and pushes the snow away to reveal Jon on the other side. His breath is visible as he scrapes. Wendy sits inside and watches.

The camera MOVES TOWARD the windshield, past Wendy, through the hole Jon has created, past Jon, past the tops of the trees and into --

83A **THE WINTER SKY --**

83A

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC SWELLS, a ghostly black and white FRED ASTAIRE appears and begins to SING, as though performing for us from the great beyond.

FRED ASTAIRE

*Heaven. I'm in heaven. And my heart
beats so that I can hardly speak...*

TILT DOWN to reveal --

84 **EXT. VALLEY VIEW - DAY**

84

It looks particularly bleak on this snowy winter day.

85 **OMITTED**

85

86 **INT. VALLEY VIEW - DAY**

86

The music continues, but now it emanates from a BOOMBOX, suddenly sounding thin and tinny.

A ROOMFUL OF RESIDENTS with their arms over their heads move in SLOW MOTION in rhythm to the song.

They're taking part in an exercise class overseen by A PHYSICAL THERAPIST. Lenny is among them, skeptical, but playing along.

87

INT. VALLEY VIEW - OFFICE - DAY

87

Wendy and Jon sit across from an ADMINISTRATOR. Fred Astaire can be heard in the distance.

ADMINISTRATOR
(referring to a file)
Well, it looks like all his Medicaid is squared away. And as far as his advance directive --

The Administrator pops a pen in her mouth, holding it between her teeth as she leafs through some papers.

WENDY
Hey, I take that.

The administrator looks up.

WENDY (CONT'D)
(pointing)
On your pen.

The administrator looks at her pen. It is imprinted with an ad for Xanax.

WENDY (CONT'D)
For anxiety. Not all the time. Just when I need it.

The administrator smiles vaguely and returns to her work. Jon looks at his sister sideways.

ADMINISTRATOR
So here's the Health Care Proxy we talked about and the Living Will material. We'll need these signed both by you and your father.

She holds the papers over the desk. Jon and Wendy both reach for them, but the administrator hands them to Jon. Wendy feels slighted.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)
The only other thing missing is the paperwork regarding funeral arrangements. We'll need to know about your father's burial or cremation plans.

Wendy and Jon stare at her, taken aback.

88 OMITTED

88

89 INT. DINER - DAY

89

The Savages sit in a booth. Jon is holding A HEARING AID between two fingers showing it to his father like it's an exotic bug.

JON

You see Dad, if you switch this little thing here you can change the volume and you can turn it off.

Jon hands the hearing aid to Lenny. Lenny puts it in his ear.

JON (CONT'D)

How's that? Is it a good level?

LENNY

Yeah.

An awkward pause. Wendy and Jon exchange nervous looks.

JON

Uh, Dad we need to talk about a couple of things.

LENNY

Okay.

WENDY

We don't want you to take it in the wrong way.

JON

It's just some questions that'll make everything easier in the long run.

Lenny nods reasonably. Wendy nervously begins --

WENDY

Okay, if um, in the event that something happens, how would you, um, you know, want us to, uh--

JON

Dad, suppose you were in a coma?

WENDY

Jon!

JON
Would you want a breathing machine to
keep you alive?

LENNY
What kind of question is that?

JON
It's a question that we should know the
answer to -- in case.

LENNY
In case what?

JON
In case something happens.

WENDY
(to Lenny)
But nothing's happening right now.
Nothing new.

JON
It's just procedure. Something they want
for their records.

LENNY
Who?

WENDY
The people that run the place. The
Valley View.

LENNY
What the hell kind of hotel is it?

JON
It's not a hotel, Dad. It's a nursing
home.

A stunned silence. Lenny's eyes drift to a spot on the
ground and stay focused there. Jon immediately regrets
having been so direct. Wendy glares at him. After a
long pause --

LENNY
(mumbling)
Unplug me.

JON
What?

LENNY
(loud and clear)
Pull the plug.

Nearby CUSTOMERS look in their direction. Jon and Wendy lower their voices.

JON
Okay, Dad. So, now, once we unplug you...

LENNY
I'm dead.

JON
Right. And then we...

LENNY
What?

JON
What do we do with you?

Lenny looks at both his children and then he breaks into a fit of wheezing laughter.

LENNY
(talking through laughter)
You bury me. What're you a bunch of idiots? You bury me.

Lenny continues laughing. Unnerved by his outburst, Wendy and Jon stare silently at their father, unsure whether to laugh or cry.

90

INT. JON'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

90

The front door opens. Wendy steps into the darkened house and switches on a LIGHT. She turns around, startled to discover --

A WOMAN IN A BATHROBE, sitting in the dimly lit living room, holding a glass of whiskey.

WENDY
Jesus!

KASIA
(Eastern European accent)
Sorry to scare you.

WENDY
That's okay.

KASIA
Jon didn't tell you?

WENDY
What?

KASIA
That I was coming. Typical.

Just then, Jon appears at the front door, carrying a BIG LAUNDRY BAG.

KASIA (CONT'D)
(to Jon)
You just gave your sister heart attack.
She didn't expect to find Polish woman in
her brother's home.

JON
(to Wendy)
I told you.

WENDY
No you didn't.

JON
Yes I did. I'm taking Kash to the
airport in the morning. Early flight.

Jon hoists the bag over his shoulder and heads upstairs.

KASIA
Very early. We should leave by 6:30 at
latest.

JON (OS)
Okay.

Kasia looks at Wendy, shrugs sadly and gets up.

KASIA
It's back to Krakow for Kasia.

WENDY
Yeah, Jon told me. I'm sorry.

Kasia walks to the stairs, pausing at the bottom.

KASIA
Your brother won't marry me, but when I
cook him eggs, he cries.
(a big sigh)
I should take cab to airport like self-
respecting feminist woman, but here I am.

Kasia climbs the stairs.

91 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING 91

Eggs fry on the stove. Kasia tends to them with a spatula.

LATER -- Wendy, Jon and Kasia eat silently. After a moment, the sound of SNIFFLES. Wendy looks up from her plate and sees -- Jon tearing up with appreciation as he chews. Wendy and Kasia exchange a look.

92 EXT. JON'S HOUSE - DAY 92

The COROLLA IDLES out front. Kasia climbs in as Jon loads the trunk with suitcases. Wendy stands in the doorway wearing a coat over her pajamas as she waves goodbye.

93 INT. UNIVERSITY GYM - TENNIS COURT - NIGHT 93

Wendy and Jon, dressed in old T-shirts and Converse sneakers, chase the ball with their rackets.

WENDY
How'd it go at the airport?

Fine. JON

WENDY
Was it emotional?

No. Not really.

WENDY
She loves you.

JON
Yeah, well... there are practical
considerations that love has nothing to
do with.

Wendy races after the ball and lobs it over the net.

WENDY
Like what?

Her return goes way out of bounds. Jon shuffles across the court to retrieve the wayward ball.

JON
Wendy, do you have any idea how many
Comp-Lit-Critical Theory PhDs there are
running around this country looking for work?
Even if Kasia and I did get married and she
stayed, she could end up teaching at some
university that's farther away from here than
Poland... and then we wouldn't be together
either. See what I'm saying?

Wendy makes a comically confused face.

WENDY
You're an idiot.

JON
Can we just play the game?

WENDY
Fine.

Jon hits the ball to Wendy. She returns it.

WENDY (CONT'D)
I got us an interview.

JON
For what?

WENDY
A really nice alternative to the Valley
View.

JON
(irritated)
We just got him in there!

WENDY
Can you hold your judgements until you
see this place. It's beautiful. It's
called Greenhill Manor.

JON
Sounds like an insane asylum.

With a loud grunt, Jon hits an angry back-handed return,
then suddenly drops his racket, grips the side of his
neck and grimaces in pain...

JON (CONT'D)
Oww!

WENDY
Are you okay?

JON
(writhing)
No, I am not okay!

WENDY
Are you having a heart attack?

JON
No, Wendy I am not having a heart attack!
(more pain)
Fuck!

94

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

94

Wendy stands at the sink filling up a medical-looking
VINYL BAG with water.

WENDY
(calling off-screen)
How much do I fill it up?

JON (OS)
Twenty pounds.

Wendy looks at the bag and sees MEASURING MARKS with
numbers indicating poundage. She fills it to TWENTY.

95

THE FOYER --

95

Wendy enters carrying the unwieldy bag of water. She arrives
before Jon who stands against the front door shirtless and
wearing a strange HARNESS CONTRAPTION wrapped underneath his
chin and around his head. Cords and pulleys attached to it
lead to a bracket that is hooked over the top of the door.
The overall effect is not unlike that of a man preparing to
hang himself.

WENDY
What do I do with it?

JON
(holding a rod)
Hook it to this.

Wendy attaches the water bag to the apparatus and then steps
back to observe the fully assembled contraption. The sight
of Jon hanging there makes Wendy laugh. This makes Jon
start to laugh, but the laughing pains him further.

JON (CONT'D)
Ow! Don't laugh.
(Wendy laughs more)
It's not funny.

WENDY
What's it supposed to do?

JON
Relieve pressure. I have to stay like
this for thirty minutes.

Wendy looks at her brother and, unable to contain
herself, she lets out another round of laughter.

JON (CONT'D)
Wendy! Give me my mail.

Wendy hands him a pile of mail from a nearby table. He sifts
through it and stops when he comes to A BUBBLE ENVELOPE.

JON (CONT'D)
This is for you.
(re: the return address)
Who's Larry Mendelsohn?

Wendy grabs it from him.

WENDY
(defensive)
A friend... forwarding me my mail.

Jon narrows his eyes.

JON
Is that the married guy?

Wendy heads toward the kitchen, leaving her brother
pinned to the door.

WENDY
I'm starving. You want something to eat?

JON
I thought you stopped seeing that creep.

WENDY (OS)
How about tuna melts?

TWO OPEN FACED TUNA MELTS glow in an ANCIENT TOASTER OVEN.
Wendy stands at the counter quickly sorting through her mail
and stops when she gets to A CERTAIN ENVELOPE. Turning it
over in her hands, she carefully opens it and pulls out the
letter.

CLOSE ON WENDY reading with great concentration. She is deeply engrossed and still for a long moment, then her eyes widen and her hand flutters to her mouth. She can't believe what she is reading. It's good news, but there seems to be a little hesitation as well. Then -- DING!!! -- the toaster oven bell startles her.

97

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

97

Wendy enters, carrying her mail along with the TUNA
MELTS.

WENDY
(handing one to Jon)
Here you go.

JON
Mmm. Thanks.

Jon takes the tuna melt and cautiously nibbles a corner.
Wendy perches on the arm of a chair.

JON (CONT'D)
I need you to spend Thanksgiving with Dad.

WENDY
We're not going to do it together?

JON
It's my only time to get away for research.

WENDY
Well, I have things I have to do, too.

JON
(with a mouth full of tuna)
Like what?

WENDY
Like my life for instance in New York City.

JON
Well, maybe it's time to stop being so
self involved and think about somebody
else's life for a change.

WENDY
Oh, like you who can't put his book aside
for one minute while dad dies.

JON

I have got to get this thing finished,
Wendy. My editor thinks it's a good time
for it.

WENDY

Yeah, I heard everyone's really itching
for a book about Bertolt Brecht this
holiday season.

JON

Wendy I'm working!

Wendy is hurt. Tears well up against her will.

WENDY

(tiny)
I'm working.

JON

I know you are. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.
I'm sorry. It's just -- I got a lot
riding on this book. And your life is
much more portable than mine.

WENDY

What's that supposed to mean? Like a
toilet? Like a Porta-Potty?

JON

No. I'm just saying, you don't have a
job job. I do. I have obligations.
You're... freelance. Couldn't you just
hook up with a temp agency down here?

Wendy is shaky. There is a warble in her voice.

WENDY

Um -- actually -- Jon, I am being funded,
right now... to work on my plays. And
maybe that sounds a little -- self-
involved -- but I also have an obligation
to a prestigious foundation that has put
a lot of faith in me -- and frankly, has
given me a hell of a lot more support
than he ever has.

A pause. Jon is quietly stunned.

JON

You got it?

WENDY

What?

JON
The Guggenheim?

Wendy sniffs back her tears and gets control of herself,
but there is something measured about her response.

WENDY
Yeah.

JON
Really?

WENDY
Yeah, really. Why do you sound so
surprised?

JON
I'm not. It's just a really hard thing
to get is all. I've applied a half a
dozen times and I never got one.

WENDY
Well, I did. And so did two hundred-
something other people who are considered
-- promising in their field or whatever.
Why can't you just be happy for me?

JON
I am. I am. It's great.
(bewildered)
They must have like a whole different set
of criteria for playwrights.

WENDY
They like my work, Jon. They think I'm
good. Is that so hard for you to believe?

Jon
I believe it. I just can't believe
you've been keeping it a secret.

WENDY
I just found out.

JON
Just now?

Wendy nods yes and gestures to the mail in her hand.

JON (CONT'D)
Oh my god, that's amazing. It's really
great, Wen. I'm really proud of you...

WENDY

You are?

JON

Yeah. It's amazing. It's major. Maybe this is your time, Wen. Your year. Look, how about we both work here and ride out the holidays together and get lots of writing done. It'll be fun. We can inspire each other. Our own little writers' colony.

After a moment, Wendy nods yes.

JON (CONT'D)

I'm really proud of you, Wen.

98

INT. FOYER - MORNING

98

Jon walks down the stairs wearing a FOAM NECK BRACE. Once in the foyer, he stiffly pulls on his coat, grabs his satchel and turns around to find --

A BULGING ENVELOPE Scotch-taped to the front door. A note on it says: *Jon, these might help. Love, Wen.*

Jon removes a prescription pill bottle from the envelope. The label reads: *Doris Metzger -- Percocet.*

99

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

99

Wendy sleeps on the couch. Jon appears over her as he examines the vial.

JON

Do they work?

Wendy peels open her eyes and nods yes. Jon opens the vial, spills a pill in his hand, considers it for a moment and swigs back with a nearby bottle of water. He places the vial on the coffee table.

WENDY

Don't forget that thing tonight.

Jon gives her a pained look.

WENDY (CONT'D)

You promised.

Jon nods in agreement and leaves. Upon hearing the SOUND OF THE FRONT DOOR CLOSING, Wendy notices the bottle of Percocet Jon left behind and thinks, "Why not?" She smiles dreamily and reaches for the bottle.

A99

LATER --

A99

A NEEDLE IS PLACED ON AN ALBUM. The Kinks play from the turntable. Wendy does a sexy, utterly private Percocet-induced dance in the living room.

100

INT./EXT. JON'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

100

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD, Jon watches -- Traffic lights that hang from wires floating overhead against the dark winter sky.

As Jon drives, he begins to appreciate the understated beauty of Buffalo as it blurs by. Boy, that Percocet works fast!

After a while, Jon digs around in his GLOVE COMPARTMENT. He produces an ANCIENT CASSETTE and inserts it into his TAPE DECK. It's a scratchy old recording of "3 Penny Opera." His foam collar does not prevent him from singing along vigorously in German.

101

INT. JON'S BATHROOM - DAY

101

Wendy is in the tub, talking on the phone. ANOTHER ALBUM plays on the stereo downstairs. She holds her legs in the air, admiring her chipped nail-polished toes.

WENDY
(intimate)
You're in my apartment?

102

INT. WENDY'S APARTMENT - DAY

102

Larry lounges on the bed. INTERCUT.

LARRY (ON PHONE)
I'm on your bed with Marley. She's got one of your t-shirts.
(a deep inhale)
Mmmmm. It smells like you. Like lavender and sweat. Genghis is here, too. I'm totally getting a hard-on.

WENDY
Will you please --

LARRY
Sorry.

WENDY
How's Genghis?

LARRY
She's good. You wanna hear her?

WENDY
Yeah.

LARRY
C'mere honey. C'mon...

Larry holds the phone up to Genghis. She MEOWS.

WENDY
(into phone, to cat)
Hello beast. Hello Bunny.

LARRY
See, she misses you.

WENDY
Are you giving her her medication?

LARRY
(he can't remember)
Yep.

WENDY
Did you water my plant?

Larry suddenly glances over at the visibly DEHYDRATED FICUS.

LARRY
Yep. It's doing good.
(pause)
When are you coming back?

WENDY
After the holidays. Thanks for sending
me my mail.

LARRY
No problem... Wen?

WENDY
Yeah?

LARRY

I'm leaving town next week for a week.
I won't be able to take care of Genghis.

WENDY

Where are you going?

LARRY

Toronto... To visit Annie's family.

Wendy slides her legs into the tub and is silent.

LARRY (CONT'D)

It's her parents' twenty-fifth
anniversary.

Wendy's eyes suddenly well-up with tears as she stares at
the ceiling.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Wendy?... Wendy?

WENDY

Didya lose your hard-on?

LARRY

Wendy, c'mon. How about I drive up and
bring Genghis? We can spend the
afternoon together. It'll be fun.

(Wendy doesn't answer)

I know it's not the greatest offer in the
world, but it's something. I'd love to
be more of a support, but you know my
situation...

Wendy continues to stare up at the ceiling.

103

INT. YMCA - FUNCTION ROOM - NIGHT

103

A female VOLUNTEER COUNSELOR in a colorful sweater
conducts a support group. On a blackboard behind her it
says: "Healing Through Reminiscence."

COUNSELOR

Now if we could all look at the second
page of the blue handouts, you'll see a
section called "Creating Special
Moments."

Twenty middle-aged FAMILY CARE-GIVERS, sit on folding
chairs flipping through PHOTO-COPIED HANDOUTS.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
If you're ever at a loss for what to do
on a visiting day with your elder, this
list will come in very handy.

The DOOR in the back opens to reveal Wendy and Jon.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
(to Wendy and Jon)
Hello.

The entire room turns to look at them. They smile
awkwardly.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Are you here for the support group?
(Wendy and Jon vaguely nod)
You have a family member with dementia?
(they nod again)
Well, you're in the right place. Come on
in.

The audience begins to APPLAUD for them.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Jeanine, could you get them a couple of
packets.

JEANINE, another volunteer, setting out COOKIES and JUICE
hands Wendy and Jon a packet.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
There's plenty of room up front.

Wendy and Jon move a few steps inside the room but remain
standing near the door.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
We're not gonna hurt you. You've
probably been hurt enough already.

The audience CLAPS and CHUCKLES in agreement. Wendy and
Jon are unnerved by the cultish group dynamic.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
(addressing the group again)
We're talking about activities you can
share with your confused elder on
visiting days. Now, I culled this list
from a terrific book--

She reaches into a BIG CANVAS BAG, pulls out "Eldercare
for Dummies." The audience giggles.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
 You laugh, but I love this series.
 (thumbing through pages)
 When my mother was diagnosed with
 Parkinson's, this was my bible. Consider
 it assigned reading.

Wendy notices that the table next to them is laid out
 with sweets. She takes a couple of napkins and helps
 herself to cookies, offering some to Jon.

COUNSELOR
 Okay, so.
 (reading from book)
 "Creating Special Moments." Number One:
 Ask your elder about the old days.
 (in her own words)
 Now, that may seem a little obvious, but
 when you're dealing with dementia you
 gotta work extra hard at this. You can't
 just sit on the side of the bed asking
 questions. You've got to bring things in
 to help stimulate their memories. Old
 movies can be a terrific --

Distracted, she looks toward the back of the room.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
 Excuse me --

Wendy and Jon turn around, their mouths stuffed with
 food.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
 We haven't served refreshments yet.
 The whole room looks at them, indignant.

104 **OMITTED** 104

105 **INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT** 105

Jon and Wendy have "signed out" the room for the evening
 to show a movie. A hand-lettered sign is on display:

CLASSIC MOVIE NIGHT
 PRESENTED BY LEONARD SAVAGE
 7:30 PM
 COME ONE, COME ALL!

SCHMALTZY MELODRAMATIC MUSIC PLAYS. A DOZEN OR SO RESIDENTS are watching BLACK AND WHITE IMAGES flicker on the screen.

Jon and Wendy sit on either side of Lenny, who is transfixed by what he sees.

Images of Manhattan's Lower East Side in the 1920's are reflected in Lenny's EYEGLASSES.

JON
(whispering)
Is that your neighborhood, Dad?

LENNY
(mumbling)
Yep. They got that right.

Some STAFF stand in the back of the room -- KITCHEN WORKERS and a couple of NURSES.

ON SCREEN -- a MOTHER cooks in a tenement kitchen.

LENNY (CONT'D)
There she is.

JON & WENDY
Who?

LENNY
(irritated, but quiet)
You see her. She's cooking dinner for me.

ON SCREEN -- A FATHER FIGURE enters.

LENNY (CONT'D)
There's the bastard.

JON
That's the father.

LENNY
(yelling at the screen)
Bastard!

MR. MCGILL, a perpetually disgruntled resident, asserts himself.

MR. MCGILL
Shut up up there.

LENNY
You shut yourself up. It's my night.

Lenny pushes himself up and gestures at the screen.

LENNY (CONT'D)
(yelling)
He smacks me around!

JON
Dad. It's okay. Sit down.

Lenny remains standing, staring at the screen. MADELINE, another resident, speaks up.

MADELINE
You're in the way of the program.

More PROTESTS from other residents follow, but Lenny is oblivious.

MR. MCGILL
Down in front!

NURSE
Mr. Savage --

WENDY
Jon, he's got to sit down.

Lenny, suddenly realizing that he's creating a scene, calms down. Jon helps him back in his chair.

JON
Come on, Dad.

LATER --

It's quieter now. The audience is under the spell of the movie.

ON SCREEN -- A DANCE PRODUCTION is underway. A WHITE ENTERTAINER begins to apply BLACK MAKE-UP to his face.

JON watches with academic interest.

WHISPERING comes from the back of the room. Wendy twists around in her chair to see what's going on.

HER POV -- The STAFF (Haitian, Jamaican, Dominican) are mumbling to each other.

Wendy sinks low in her seat. She nudges her brother and gestures for him to take a look. He twists around.

JON'S POV -- More whispering and head shaking from the staff. Snippets of various dialects can be heard.

ON SCREEN -- Finished with the application of his makeup, the entertainer gives a big white showbiz smile.

106

INT. VALLEY VIEW - HALLWAY - NIGHT

106

Wendy and Jon walk down the corridor wearing their coats. Jon holds THE VIDEOTAPE RENTAL in his hands.

JON

You can't judge it by today's standards. You have to look at it in a historical context. I just thought Dad would enjoy an old movie.

Wendy and Jon arrive at the ELEVATOR DOORS situated across from THE NURSES STATION, where a small group of NURSES AND AIDES are gathered.

WENDY & JON

(aggressively cheerful)

Goodnight.

As Wendy and Jon wait for the elevator, the group at the nurses station regards them with flat stares.

WENDY

(quietly to Jon)

Thank God we've got that interview tomorrow.

Jon punches the "down" button a few more times.

JON

Let's take the stairs.

Jon exits and Wendy follows.

107

EXT. GREENHILL MANOR NURSING HOME - DAY

107

We recognize the BEAUTIFULLY LANDSCAPED ESTATE from the video brochure, only now it's live. Under a bright blue winter sky, Wendy pushes Lenny up a path. Jon trails behind.

WENDY

They're going to ask you a bunch of questions and you're really going to have to concentrate, Dad. It's important.

LENNY

Oh-kay.

The family disappears inside the imposing MAIN BUILDING.

108

INT. WAITING AREA - DAY

108

In a strange variation on the college admissions process, Lenny, Wendy and Jon sit among other ELDERLY PEOPLE and their ADULT CHILDREN, also waiting to be interviewed.

Jon reads a brochure while Wendy surreptitiously sizes up the competition. She digs a SMALL PACKET from her purse, and shakes a few PILLS into the palm of her hand.

WENDY

Dad, open your mouth.

Wendy puts the pills in Lenny's mouth and holds a water bottle to his lips.

JON

What is that?

WENDY

Ginkoa-Biloba. Boosts brain functions.

(offering him a packet)

You want some?

(off his dismissive look)

It's ancient, Jon. I'm not making it up.

(he's still skeptical)

Fine. Do what you want.

Jon watches as she tosses the packet back into her purse and digs around for something else. She uncovers an PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE and dispenses two pills into her hand.

JON

It's like a drugstore in there.

Wendy ignores him and pops the pills into her mouth.

JON (CONT'D)

What're those?

WENDY

(pills on tongue)

Anthidaprethens. You thoud thry them.

JON

I'm not depressed.

WENDY

Oh, pleethe.

Wendy swigs back the pills.

WOMAN (O.S.)
You must be the Savages.

Wendy and Jon turn to see ROZ LANDRESS (50) an ADMISSIONS
COUNSELOR with a FILE tucked under her arm.

109

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

109

Wendy, Jon and Roz sit around a Formica table.

ROZ
Mr. Savage, I'm going to ask you a few
questions --

Loudly proclaiming in a stiff formal style --

LENNY
MY NAME IS LEONARD MICHAEL JOSEPH SAVAGE.

Roz smiles kindly.

ROZ
Okay...

Lenny glances over his shoulder to Wendy and Jon as if to
say, "This test is gonna be a cinch."

ROZ (CONT'D)
Lenny can you tell me what season we're
in?

LENNY
Cold!

Everyone laughs lightly.

ROZ
And the season is?

LENNY
Winter. What d'ya think?

ROZ
And what is the date today?

LENNY
November. I don't know the day...

ROZ
Okay. Can you tell me where we are?
(pause)
What city are we in?

Lenny thinks for a moment. He looks lost. And then, like a boss dictating to his secretary, he gestures to her paper.

LENNY
Put down 'East Coast.'

Roz smiles and writes something down. While her head is lowered, Wendy taps her father's elbow and mouths -- "Buffalo."

Lenny takes a moment, then confidently announces --

LENNY (CONT'D)
Boston!

Roz looks up.

LENNY (CONT'D)
(loud, with conviction)
Boston, Mass.

Jon widens his eyes and looks at his sister in disbelief. Roz sees this exchange.

ROZ
You can't help him, Ms. Savage. He has to be able to answer the questions himself.

WENDY
It's just I know he knows where we are --

JON
Wendy!

WENDY
What? He does.

JON
She's conducting a test!

WENDY
I know. I'm not an idiot, Jon --

LENNY
(loud, quavering)
LET HER ASK ME THE GODDAMN QUESTIONS!

Lenny's whole body seems to shake and bob from the exertion. Everyone is silenced.

110

EXT. GREENHILL MANOR NURSING HOME - DAY

110

Jon pushes Lenny away from the building. Wendy follows. From their tense expressions and sideways glances, it's clear they have a lot to say to each other, but are somehow managing to hold it. The march to Jon's car is painfully silent. Then --

CLUNK! Jon closes the passenger door on Lenny and immediately lays into Wendy.

JON

What did you say to them?

WENDY

(guilty and fast)

I said he was pretty good except
sometimes he goes in and out.

JON

In and out? Wendy, the man has dementia!

WENDY

I know, but... they only had beds for
people that were more independent... and
I thought if we could just get him in
there....

Jon notices Lenny peering out from the car and urgently gestures for Wendy to follow him. He marches several yards away from the car. Wendy catches up with him.

JON

You're wasting our time on fantasies.

WENDY

She said she'd put him on one of the
waiting lists. I mean, Jesus, I'm just
doing it for Dad.

JON

Wendy, Dad is not the one that has a
problem with the Valley View.

WENDY

I just want to improve Dad's situation.
Is that a crime?

JON

There is nothing wrong with Dad's
situation. Dad's situation is fine. But
he's never going to adjust to it if we
keep yanking him out of there.

(MORE)

JON (CONT'D)
 Actually, this whole upward mobility
 fixation of yours is counter productive
 and frankly pretty selfish.

WENDY
 Selfish?

JON
 This thing isn't about Dad, it's about
 you. You and your guilt. That's what
 these places prey upon.

WENDY
 I just think it's nicer here.

JON
 Of course you do. You're the consumer that
 they want to target. You're the guilty
 demographic. The landscaping, the
 "neighborhoods of care." They're not for
 the residents. They're for the relatives,
 like you and me who don't want to admit
 what is really going on here.

WENDY
 Which is...?

He bellows.

JON
 People are DYING, Wendy! Right inside
 that beautiful building -- right now!
 It's a fucking HORROR show! And all this
 wellness propaganda and landscaping is
 just trying to obscure the miserable fact
 that people die and death is gaseous and
 gruesome and filled with piss and shit
 and rot and stink!

The FAINT SOUND OF SQUEAKING. Jon and Wendy turn to see --

A WOMAN WHEELING HER FRAIL GRANDMOTHER across the lot.
 She is clearly upset by Jon's ranting.

WOMAN
 (protectively)
 C'mon Nana.

Wendy and Jon watch the women pass, deeply ashamed of
 their display. To make things worse, they notice that
 Lenny is peering out at them from the car, bewildered by
 what's going on.

FADE OUT

YOUNG AIDE (OS)
How you doing Mr. Savage?

LENNY
Hi ya Jimmy.

Wendy whips around, eager to see Jimmy, but discovers
ANOTHER YOUNG BLACK AIDE entering the room instead.
She's deeply embarrassed by her father's mistake.

WENDY
That's not Jimmy, Dad.

LENNY
The hell are you talking about?

WENDY
It's someone else.
(to the aide)
Sorry, he's kind of...

AIDE
(unfazed)
That's alright.
(to Lenny)
It's Howard, Mr. Savage. I'm here to put
you in bed. Thursday is Jimmy's night
off.

As Howard begins helping Lenny get ready for bed, Wendy
puts her coat on.

WENDY
I better get going.
(kissing him)
Good night. Dad.

LENNY
Good night.

On her way out, through the curtain --

WENDY
Goodnight, Mr. Sperry.

MR. SPERRY (O.S.)
Goodnight.

Howard tucks Lenny in and SNAPS the bed-rail up. A
MECHANICAL HUM can be heard as Howard lowers the bed into
the sleeping position. Howard SHUTS OFF the new bedside
lamp, then goes to the lava lamp and CLICKS IT OFF as
well. The room is dark.

LENNY
(mumbling)
Leave it on.

HOWARD
Are you sure? Won't keep you up?

LENNY
Yeah, I'm sure.

HOWARD
(turning the lava lamp on)
Alright. There you go. Good night Mr.
Savage.

LENNY
Good night.

Howard leaves. Like a child who is scared of the dark, Lenny pulls the blankets up to his face, leaving only his eyes exposed. He looks at the lava lamp for comfort. The red liquid globs move about hypnotically.

116 **INT. JON'S STUDY - DAY**

116

In his second floor office, Jon types at his computer. Interrupted by A HONKING HORN, he looks out the window.

JON'S POV --
A CAR idles in the street. Wendy appears, pulling on her coat as she hurries toward the car.

117 **EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS**

117

Wendy arrives at the open window of the car. Larry is inside with Marley, who is overjoyed to see Wendy.

LARRY
Hey, Wen.

WENDY
Hi.

They exchange a simple, unromantic kiss. Marley tries to climb over Larry and get her share of attention.

LARRY
Whoa, Marley. Take it easy.

WENDY
(rubbing Marley's head)
Yes, honey. You, too. You, too.
(MORE)

WENDY (CONT'D)
 (to Larry)
 Where's the beast?

Larry reaches into the foot-well behind the passenger seat and lifts up a CAT CARRIER. Through the little caged opening, Genghis can be seen, MEOWING. Wendy pokes a finger in and wiggles it around.

WENDY (CONT'D)
 Hello bundle. Hello beast.
 (to Larry)
 Did you remember her papers?

He holds up an OLD MANILA FILE, which Wendy takes.

WENDY (CONT'D)
 Thanks.
 (re: Marley)
 How's she doing?

LARRY
 She's... you know, hanging in there.
 Her hind legs are really bothering her.
 But I found this great vet at The
 Animal Hospital. That place on the
 east side. They have her in physical
 therapy. Do you believe it? She hangs
 out in a whirlpool twice a week.

Wendy lets out a tiny laugh.

LARRY (CONT'D)
 Get in. We'll take a ride. I've never
 been to Buffalo.

Wendy hesitates.

LARRY (CONT'D)
 Let's have some fun. I've missed you.

Wendy thinks for a moment, then turns and yells up to Jon's second story office window.

WENDY
 Jon! Jon!
 (no response)
 JON!

Jon is at the computer again, trying to concentrate, when BEEP, BEEP! That horn again! He stops working, looks out the window, then opens it.

JON
What?

WENDY
I'm gonna go out for a minute.

JON
Okay.

WENDY
Um -- This is my friend, Larry.
(to Larry)
This is Jon.

LARRY
(waving)
Hi, Jon.

JON
(unenthused)
Hi, Larry.

LARRY
Wendy's told me a lot about you.

Jon nods.

LARRY (CONT'D)
I loved your essay on "Mother Courage,"
by the way. Wendy showed it to me. I
did a production of it and it was a huge
help.

Jon smiles stiffly -- he's not buying this flattery.
Wendy takes the hint.

WENDY
I'll see you later.

JON
Okay.

Jon pulls the window closed and disappears from view. As
Wendy walks around to get in the car --

LARRY
He seems really nice.

Wendy climbs in and notices an unhealthy PLANT poking out
of a box in the backseat.

WENDY
Is that my ficus?

The car takes off.

119 **INT.CAR/EXT. BUFFALO - DAY** 119

A quick sight-seeing MONTAGE. Wendy and Larry try to have fun at various sights. It's not easy. There's not much to see in Buffalo.

They drive to NIAGARA FALLS. They take pictures with a DISPOSABLE CAMERA. Marley hobbles along with them, trying the best she can to be a part of things. They play in the snow and throw snowballs at each other. Larry accidentally hits Wendy in the eye and she becomes angry at him.

122 **EXT. NIAGARA FALLS DAYS INN - NIGHT** 122

Larry's car is parked out front.

123 **INT. NIAGARA FALLS DAYS INN - NIGHT** 123

Larry and Wendy are making out. Genghis and Marley have found spots for themselves, far from the action. Wendy suddenly pulls away from Larry.

LARRY

What?

WENDY

I don't know... You killed my plant.

LARRY

No, I didn't.

WENDY

Well, it's not thriving. It was thriving when I left.

LARRY

I'm sorry.

She heaves an agitated sigh.

WENDY

It's not the plant. The plant is symbolic.

LARRY

Of what?

Wendy looks at him squarely.

WENDY
What do you think?

LARRY
I know this isn't perfect.

WENDY
Not perfect?! Larry, come on. I have an M.F.A., for christsakes! I mean, look at this. We're in a motel room in Buffalo. It's embarrassing. We're a cliché.

LARRY
What cliché?

WENDY
The mid-life crisis cliché.

LARRY
Whose?

WENDY
(is he that clueless?)
Yours. You're married. You're cheating. You're sleeping with a younger woman. Classic.

Trying to be gentle, but not entirely successful --

LARRY
Uh, Wendy. You're not exactly a younger woman.

WENDY
What's that supposed to mean?

LARRY
You're thirty-nine.

WENDY
You're fifty-two.

LARRY
So?

WENDY
So, that makes you older.

LARRY
Yeah, technically. But this is not exactly the paradigm of a prototypical winter/spring romance. Annie's forty-six.

Wendy looks at him.

LARRY (CONT'D)

I mean, you're not my little student.
It's not like we've got "The Blue Angel"
going on here.

The comment just lands there oddly. Wendy cocks her head to the side and makes an exaggerated expression of confusion.

LARRY (CONT'D)

(impatient)

The professor character in
"The Blue Angel," the film.

WENDY

I know the movie, Larry.

LARRY

Yeah so, the poor slob has an affair with his student and his life is destroyed by it. Von Stroheim.

WENDY

Von Sternberg.

LARRY

Whatever. You know what I mean. Marlene Dietrich.

WENDY

She's not a student. She's a nightclub singer. But there is a Francine Prose novel by the same name that is about a professor-student relationship --

LARRY

Why do you do this?

WENDY

What?

LARRY

You do it all the time. And on top of it, you insult me by telling me I'm the one having a mid-life crisis here, when you're the one having an affair with a married guy instead of seeking real intimacy with someone who is available for a real commitment. And you know it's all about your father.

Wendy is stunned, but keeps going.

WENDY

Hey, I'm just having a normal, healthy sex life here. I'm not betraying anyone.

LARRY

Only yourself.

Socked in the stomach and winded --

WENDY

You know, I can't even believe I put up with it actually. That I'm even participating is so...

LARRY

Sad?

WENDY

What?

LARRY

Nothing.

Wendy stares at Larry, her face tight. A far off RUMBLE can be heard getting louder and louder. It is the sound of Wendy's resentment growing.

124

EXT. VALLEY VIEW - NIGHT

124

The RUMBLE continues as Larry's car pulls up and the passenger door swings open. Angry and tear-streaked, Wendy removes her CAT CARRIER, LITTER BOX and FICUS TREE from his car.

Larry stands by helplessly as she collects everything into an awkward bundle and storms off into the facility.

LARRY

(feebly)

Wendy.

125

INT. LENNY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

125

Wendy enters. Lenny watches a Jimmy Cagney movie, WHITE HEAT, on T.V. Jon sits in a chair using his laptop. The first thing Wendy notices is that the dreaded FLUORESCENT LIGHT above Lenny's bed is on. The lamp she bought sits on the night table, unlit.

WENDY

Can we not use this horrible light, please? It's depressing.

She puts down her load, crosses the room and SWITCHES OFF the fluorescent light.

WENDY (CONT'D)
I bought you this one, remember?
(switching on lamp by bed)
See how nice it is. It's homey.

No response from Lenny. He concentrates on Jimmy Cagney. Wendy goes to get the cat carrier.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Dad, I want to show you something.

LENNY
I'm watching a picture.

WENDY
Fine.

Wendy flops down in a chair and thumbs through an old AARP Magazine called "Modern Maturity."

JON
Wendy?

She turns to her brother who gestures to the cat carrier.

JON (CONT'D)
What's going on with that?

WENDY
It's not going to effect you in any way, okay? They said it was perfectly fine to have her stay here as long as I can prove she's had her shots.

JON
I still don't think it's a good idea.

WENDY
They like animals here, Jon. Apparently, they're good for the residents' well-being. They reduce stress. So, would you please fucking calm down about it!

ON T.V.: The final scene of WHITE HEAT. Cagney on top of the gas tanks, shoots wildly into a tank and immolates himself. The End." Wendy switches off the T.V.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Dad, I want you to meet someone.

She lifts up the cat carrier, holding it in front of him.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Look inside.

Lenny tries to lean forward with difficulty.

LENNY

I don't see anything.

WENDY

Here, lemme prop you up.

Wendy puts down the cat carrier and glances around the room looking for something.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Where's Dad's pillow?

JON

What pillow?

WENDY

The big red one. From Urban Outfitter's.

(Jon looks blank)

You saw it. I bought it for him.

(Jon shrugs)

Jesus, Jon!

She storms out of the room.

126

THE NURSE'S STATION DESK - CONTINUOUS

126

A few NURSING HOME STAFFERS are watching the local news on a small T.V.

WENDY

Excuse me?

An ATTENDANT looks up. But her attention is split between Wendy and her program.

WENDY (CONT'D)

My father has a big red pillow I bought for him and it's missing from his room.

ATTENDANT

I just started my shift. Try Simone in the lounge.

127

IN THE LOUNGE --

127

Wendy marches in. Several residents are parked in wheelchairs staring up at a large T.V.

suspended from the ceiling. An ATTENDANT stands among them with the remote control flipping through channels looking for a particular program.

WENDY

Are you Simone?

ATTENDANT

I am.

WENDY

I'm Lenny Savage's daughter in B-26.
He has a big red pillow I bought for
him. It's missing.

SIMONE

Did it have his name on it?

WENDY

And his room number.

SIMONE

What's it look like?

WENDY

(flat, sarcastic)

Big. Red. Pillow.

Simone shakes her head no.

128

INT. VALLEY VIEW - HALLWAY - NIGHT

128

An angry Wendy storms back toward her father's room, stopping in her tracks to turn and look down the opposite length of the corridor.

WENDY'S POV --

A cluster of residents. Among them -- an OLD WOMAN IN A WHEELCHAIR, who holds Lenny's RED PILLOW in her lap.

Wendy marches towards the old woman.

WENDY

Excuse me?

No response. The woman is in her own private world. The CAMERA TILTS down to THE WOMAN'S KNOTTY HANDS, stroking the pillow like it's a pet.

WENDY (CONT'D)

(louder)

Excuse me. Ma'am?

The Woman flickers to some vague sense of consciousness and regards Wendy.

WENDY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. That belongs to my father.

Unclear what Wendy is referring to, the woman looks at her with a quizzical expression.

WENDY (CONT'D)

(nice, but loud)

The pillow!

The woman now looks concerned. Maybe even quietly panicked.

WENDY (CONT'D)

It doesn't belong to you. It belongs to my father.

Wendy tries to pull the pillow from the Old Lady, but she won't release her grip.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Please let go. It doesn't belong to you.

Wendy pulls again and this time succeeds in removing it from the old woman's hands.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Then, a bellowing, unearthly MOAN.

OLD WOMAN

Noooooh!

Wendy, terrified, pivots around into a CLOSE UP and the CAMERA TRACKS with her as she walks down the corridor toward her father's room. In the background, an ATTENDANT hurries over to comfort the woman.

ATTENDANT

Mrs. Friedman, what happened, honey?

Wendy flinches at the sound of the attendant's voice, but like someone escaping from the scene of a crime, she does not look back.

Wendy enters and hands the pillow to Lenny.

WENDY

Here you go, Dad.

He pushes it away.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Dad I thought you might like this to prop yourself up. Here, lean forward.

She sandwiches the pillow between her father's back and the headboard.

WENDY (CONT'D)

There.

She stands back to observe her caretaking accomplishment, but Lenny wiggles the pillow out from behind his back and pushes it away. It lands on the floor.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Dad.

She picks up the pillow and brushes it off.

JON

Wendy, forget it.

LENNY

I don't wannit.

WENDY

Are you sure? I think you'd be more comfortable.

Again, she tries to prop it behind Lenny.

LENNY

(sharp)

I don't want it! Can't ya hear?!

Lenny violently pushes the pillow back at Wendy. Wendy just stands there with it, humiliated and stunned.

LENNY (CONT'D)

(to Jon)

What the hell does she think I'm payin' her for, to bother me?

Wendy's eyes immediately well up. Jon sees this.

JON

Wendy, he doesn't know what he's talking about.

She throws the pillow on the floor, picks up the cat carrier and rushes out of the room in tears.

130

EXT. NURSING HOME PARKING LOT - NIGHT

130

The door opens and Wendy stumbles out, holding her cat carrier. She wipes her nose with the top of her hand and then just stands there leaning against the wall and sniffing.

Slowly she turns to her left to discover that she is not alone out there.

Leaning against the wall a few feet away is a GROUP OF STAFFERS on a break, among them, Jimmy, who smokes a cigarette and nods to her.

Wendy produces a weak smile, then turns back to stare at her shoes. She's wearing a pair of unattractive flats with thick socks. She hates what she sees.

JIMMY

You want one?

Wendy looks up to see Jimmy offering her a cigarette. She shrugs in the affirmative. Jimmy slides over and hands her one.

WENDY

Thanks.

JIMMY

(lighting it for her)
Nobody smokes anymore, right? We're stupid to smoke. Especially after spending time here and still doing it, that makes us extra stupid.

Wendy smiles politely and takes a drag.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

What's in the box?

WENDY

My cat.

JIMMY

Takin' it out for a walk?

Wendy smiles a little. There is a long awkward silence as Jimmy and Wendy stand there smoking among the frozen cars. Genghis MEOWS from the Carrier.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Your cat is cold.

WENDY
Yeah.

JIMMY
You want to sit in my van? I'll turn on the heat.

WENDY
No, it's okay. I'm going to go back in in a minute.

They stand there for another moment. Jimmy sees Wendy shiver a little.

JIMMY
C'mon. This is nuts. I'm right over here.

Jimmy chivalrously picks up the cat carrier and ushers Wendy over to --

HIS BEAT UP VAN

He opens the passenger side door and quickly clears off the seat by tossing some of the junk into the back. He helps Wendy in and hands her the cat carrier.

131 INT. VAN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

131

He gets in on the driver's side and immediately TURNS THE IGNITION and THE HEAT. He digs around and offers a crushed box of Kleenex to a snotty Wendy. She accepts.

JIMMY
This place is crazy, right?

Wendy lets out a quick breath of air in agreement. Jimmy takes a drag from his cigarette. They sit there. It's too intimate.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
(looking inside carrier)
You mind if I introduce myself?

Jimmy opens the little metal door and takes the cat out.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
What's his name?

WENDY

Genghis. As in Genghis Khan. It's a she.

Jimmy plays expertly with the cat. He immediately makes her purr.

JIMMY

She's a lover, not a fighter. Yes she is. How's he doing?

Wendy looks at him.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

My friend in B-26.

WENDY

He's good. Well, I mean, you know, not good, but fine. Okay.

JIMMY

He likes Tater-tots.

Wendy looks at him. Huh?

JIMMY (CONT'D)

It's the only thing he touches sometimes. I slip him extras when I can. Double serving.

Wendy smiles.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

You married?

WENDY

No... but my boyfriend is.

Jimmy laughs.

JIMMY

Does your mother know you're doing that?

WENDY

She's not really in the picture.

JIMMY

She dead? That's why she never comes around?

WENDY

No, just kind of obsolete in the parent department. She was never very good at it. Neither was my father actually.

JIMMY

So that's why a pretty woman doesn't have
a husband and a family of her own.

Wendy blushes at the attention.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

What do you do when you're not here?

WENDY

Oh, stuff.

JIMMY

I mean, I'm an aide in a nursing home,
what are you?

WENDY

Oh, I'm...a...a theater person. I mean,
I temp too, for money...but that's not my
main thing. I write plays.

JIMMY

Like Shakespeare?

WENDY

Yeah, well, not as good.

JIMMY

What're yours about?

WENDY

My plays?

JIMMY

Can I read one?

WENDY

Are you kidding?

JIMMY

No.

WENDY

You actually want to read one of my plays?

JIMMY

What's so strange about that?

WENDY

In my world nobody really wants to read
somebody's unproduced play.

(off Jimmy's look)

I just printed out a copy of the draft
I'm working on. I've got it in my bag.

JIMMY

Great. I've got a long shift. I'm doing graveyard.

(awkward silence, then --)

Your father is doing okay, by the way. He's got some time left.

WENDY

How do you know?

JIMMY

I keep an eye on him. I noticed.

WENDY

Noticed what?

JIMMY

His toes. They haven't started to curl under yet.

(off Wendy's look)

The toes curl under a few days before they go.

WENDY

Is that like a Jamaican folklore thing or something?

JIMMY

It's something I learned from being here. We all talk about it. It's always the same.

WENDY

The toes curl?

JIMMY

(nodding)

Like the witch in "The Wizard of Oz." A couple of days before.

WENDY

Why, do you think?

JIMMY

They say it's the air leaving the body.

A strange silence. Then Jimmy blows a smoke ring. It floats in the air. They both stare at it.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I'm from Nigeria, by the way.

132

INT. LENNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

132

Lenny is asleep. The bed is in the upright position. It suddenly begins to HUM as it is lowered by Jimmy.

Wendy quietly sets up SMALL BOWLS for Genghis's food and water. Genghis sits on top of the red pillow.

Wendy pulls A COPY OF HER PLAY from her bag and hands it to Jimmy.

CLOSE ON THE TITLE PAGE --

"Wake Me When It's Over," a play by Wendy Savage.

Jimmy smiles. Wendy smiles back. Jimmy quietly heads out the door. They wave goodbye to each other. Once Jimmy leaves, Wendy goes to the end of the bed and gently lifts the sheet.

HER POV OF LENNY'S FEET --

a little crooked from a lifetime of use, but basically intact.

JON (OS)

(whispering)

Wendy.

Wendy turns to see her brother waiting for her outside the door with his coat on. He lifts up his hands to say, "what're you doing?" She covers Lenny's feet, shuts off a light and tip toes out of the room. The lava lamp glows.

FADE TO BLACK.

UNDER BLACK --

THE SICKENING SOUND OF CHEERY SLEIGH BELLS.

FADE IN:

133

INT. NURSING HOME HALLWAY - DAY

133

A LARGE CHRISTMAS TREE is being carried down the hall. The person who carries it is totally obscured by the bulk of the branches. It looks like the tree is walking by itself.

SONG

Just hear those sleigh bells jingle-ing
Ring ting tingle-ing too,
Come on, it's lovely weather for a sleigh
ride together with you....

134 **OMITTED** 134

135 **EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - DAY** 135

It's decorated for Christmas. Over a P.A. system the song continues to play --

SONG

Giddy-yap giddy-yap giddy-yap let's go
Let's look at the snow
We're riding in a wonderland of snow...

Lenny has a shopping bag on his lap as Jon pushes him toward the car. Wendy also carries shopping bags.

AT THE CAR --

Lenny is already inside. With Wendy's help, Jon places the folded-up wheelchair into the trunk. As Jon closes the trunk, Wendy goes to open the door on the driver's side but she can't.

WENDY

Jon, it's locked.

Jon stands there for a moment looking at Wendy over the roof of the car. He has something on his mind.

WENDY (CONT'D)

C'mon Jon. Open it.

JON

They published the list in the paper and your name wasn't on it.

WENDY

What?

JON

The Guggenheim Foundation took out an ad in the New York Times announcing their fellows for the year and your name wasn't on it.

WENDY

That's weird. I guess it was an oversight. Can we get in? I'm freezing.

JON

It wasn't.

WENDY
What?

JON
An oversight.

WENDY
How do you know?

JON
Because I called the Guggenheim
Foundation.

WENDY
(through clenched teeth)
Will you let me in the car.

Jon unlocks the door.

137 **INT. JON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS**

137

Wendy angrily pushes the driver's seat forward and climbs
past it into the backseat.

WENDY
Hi Dad.

LENNY
Hi.

Jon gets in but doesn't start the car. He's not letting
this go.

JON
I called them to find out why your name
wasn't on the list.

WENDY
Why would you do that?

JON
I was looking out for you.

WENDY
You were policing me. You're sick.
That's sick, Jon.

Jon starts the car and puts it into REVERSE.

JON
You're the sick one, Wendy --

He backs out of the parking space and in his agitated state almost hits a FAMILY OF SHOPPERS.

THROUGH THE REAR WINDOW -- the FATHER of the family BANGS his open palm on the trunk.

FATHER

Hey! Idiot! Look where you're going.

138

INT./EXT. JON'S CAR - HIGHWAY - DAY

138

Jon drives, glancing in the rear view mirror at Wendy, who sits arms crossed. Lenny wearily endures the ride.

JON

A friend of mine does some consulting for The Guggenheim Foundation and he looked you up in the computer. You've been rejected eight times.

WENDY

So -- how many times have you been rejected?

JON

That's not the point. Six.

WENDY

The point is that you don't think I have any talent. The point is that you called them because you just couldn't believe your little sister was good enough to get one of them.

Sick of the bickering, Lenny pulls his wool hat low and sinks into his seat. His HAND drifts up to his ear.

ECU LENNY'S EAR --

as his trembling finger reaches behind it and PUSHES THE SWITCH on the HEARING AID. All SOUND DROPS into an AURAL MUTED HAZE.

A small expression of relief comes over Lenny's face as he drifts into what looks like a state of content resignation. His eyelids get heavy. He looks at Jon and Wendy. They continue to argue, but THE WORDS ARE MURKY. They might be saying something like this:

JON

That's not true.

WENDY

Yes, it is. You wanted your suspicions confirmed. You're just like him. He never thought I was good at anything either.

Lenny leans his head against the window and looks out.

HIS POV --

of the highway passing by. It's all slightly blurry and dreamy.

139

EXT. THE VALLEY VIEW - DUSK

139

The Corolla pulls into a parking space. Jon climbs out, then Wendy. Jon opens the trunk, hoists the wheelchair out and sets it on the ground.

JON

Where did the money come from, Wen?

WENDY

I got a grant.

JON

Cut the crap, Wendy.

Jon SLAMS the trunk shut.

WENDY

I got a grant, Jon! I did! Okay, fine, I didn't win a Guggenheim. Big fucking deal. It was a different kind of grant.

JON

What kind?

WENDY

What?

JON

You said you got a different kind of grant. What did you get?

An agonized pause from Wendy. She squirms around and then finally surrenders.

WENDY

(weakly)

Feema.

JON

What? I've never heard of that.

WENDY
(repeating flatly)
Feema.

JON
(to himself, confused)
Feema? Feema...
(getting it)
FEMA. Federal Emergency Management?

Wendy nods her head yes.

JON (CONT'D)
You took money from FEMA...

WENDY
I was granted the money.

JON
What was the federal emergency?

WENDY
Nine-eleven.

JON
What's that got to do with you?

WENDY
I work downtown. I was affected.

JON
Everyone was affected. The whole world
was affected. But they're not going
around taking money away from people who
really need it.

WENDY
There was no work for months. All the
temps applied. I didn't do it at
first... Look, I'm trying to get my life
together.

JON
By stealing money from the federal
government?

WENDY
I didn't steal it, Jon. There was a
thing where you could apply if you lost
twenty-five percent of your income or
something like that. I can't remember the
details. Call FEMA. Ask them.
Apparently they care about me more than
you do.

Wendy grabs the wheelchair and rolls it around to the passenger side of the car. She swings the car door open. Inside, Lenny sits with his eyes closed.

140 **INT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT**

140

CLOSE ON THE LAVA LAMP glowing. CLOSE ON LENNY in bed staring at it.

The CAMERA drifts down the side of his body which is covered in a white sheet and finally stops at the bottom of his bed where his feet pointing upright create a TENT.

After a moment, the tent begins to cave in. His toes are curling under. Genghis sits on the windowsill staring at him. She MEOWS, then jumps down and runs out of the room.

FADE TO BLACK.

UNDER BLACK --

RING! RING! RING!

140A

140A

141 **INT. JON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

141

A PHONE IS RINGING. Jon asleep in bed reaches for it.

JON

Hello?... Yes... It's okay, what's wrong? Is he alright?...

Jon snaps on a light and sits up. Wendy appears in the doorway and drifts into the room.

JON (CONT'D)

What?... Really? When? Okay. I understand. We'll be right over.

Jon hangs up the phone.

WENDY

Is he okay?

JON

It's not Dad. It's Genghis.

Wendy stares at Jon.

JON (CONT'D)
 She got in a fight with that other cat.
 They want us to get her now.

Wendy rushes to get ready. Jon lumbers out of bed,
 irritated.

JON (CONT'D)
 (yelling O.S.)
 I told you that cat was a bad idea!

142 **INT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT** 142

A SECURITY GUARD leads Wendy down a hall to a CLOSED DOOR
 with a small window. He opens the door for her.

143 **INT. FAMILY SITTING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS** 143

Wendy enters to find Jimmy on his knees looking under A
 COUCH. The room is designed for coziness. There are TWO
 STUFFED CHAIRS, AN AREA RUG and a FAKE FIREPLACE.

WENDY
 Hi.

JIMMY
 Hi. She's under here. She won't come out.

Wendy bends down beside Jimmy, they both look under the
 couch at Genghis who stares back at them.

WENDY
 What happened?

JIMMY
 I don't know. They were getting along
 fine before.

WENDY
 She's totally freaked out.

JIMMY
 You should see Winston.

WENDY
 (trying to coax Genghis out)
 C'mere bunny. C'mon, it's okay. C'mere.
 (to Jimmy)
 Sometimes if you just ignore her, she comes.

Wendy and Jimmy pull their heads out from under the couch
 and sit on the floor next to each other.

Jimmy crawls over to the nearby FAKE FIREPLACE and SWITCHES IT ON. The logs glow red.

Jimmy returns to his place beside Wendy. They stare at the illuminated rotating lights inside the plastic logs.

JIMMY

I read your play.

WENDY

You did?

JIMMY

Uh huh. I liked it.

WENDY

No way, really? You didn't think it was a bunch of middle-class whining?

JIMMY

No.

WENDY

I was scared that you'd think that I was just some spoiled American brat moaning about her difficult childhood.

JIMMY

Not at all. I thought it was sad.

WENDY

But you're from Haiti.

Wendy's odd comment lands there. Jimmy raises his eyebrows and looks at her with amusement.

WENDY (CONT'D)

That's probably a really hard place to be from.

JIMMY

Yeah, but my parents didn't scream at each other or hit each other or scream at us. They weren't... What do you call it in the play?

WENDY

Pathologically narcissistic.

JIMMY

Right. They weren't crazy people. It sounds like your family wasn't very good.

The bluntness of Jimmy's observation hits Wendy. Her throat suddenly tightens.

WENDY

It wasn't.
(choking up)
It. Was. Bad.

Unable to control herself, she begins to cry.

WENDY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

JIMMY

It's okay.

She lowers her head, covers her face with her hands and sobs.

WENDY

Oh god, what's my problem? I'm always
crying in front of you.

JIMMY

It's good to cry.

Jimmy puts an arm around Wendy to comfort her. After a moment of this, Wendy raises her head and looks at him. He smiles warmly. And then, overwhelmed by his kindness, Wendy lunges toward him and kisses him on the lips, he kisses back and then gently pulls away.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I should probably get back to work.

WENDY

Oh, okay. Um... I'm sorry.

JIMMY

Don't be sorry.

WENDY

I thought that...um...you were being so
nice...that I...

(suddenly writhing)
Oh god, I'm so gross.

JIMMY

No. You're great...you're funny and I
like your play...

Wendy stops writhing and looks at Jimmy and smiles.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

It's just that... I'm in love with my
girlfriend. That probably sounds like corn.

Wendy is shot in the heart, but tries to rally herself.

WENDY

Corny. No. It's great. I'm really happy for you...

And with that, Wendy bursts into tears. Jimmy puts his arm around her. Genghis crawls out from under the couch.

JIMMY

Look who it is.

144

EXT. VALLEY VIEW - NIGHT

144

The Corolla is parked out front, with Jon asleep at the wheel. Wendy exits the nursing home, holding Genghis. Jimmy walks beside her and carries the LARGE HOODED LITTER box. She opens the door and climbs in.

INSIDE CAR --

Wendy pulls the door shut. Jon comes to and looks at Genghis.

WENDY

Pop the trunk.

JON

Huh?

WENDY

The trunk.

Jon groggily twists around to see --

JIMMY, through the rear window, holding the BIG HOODED LITTER BOX.

The trunk lid pops open, momentarily hiding Jimmy. And then it's slammed shut and Jimmy reappears. He waves. Wendy waves back as the car pulls away.

145

INT. JON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

145

Wendy sits on the windowsill with her beat up LAP-TOP typing. Genghis is nearby, exploring her new surroundings. An album PLAYS.

146

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

146

His back to a room full of undergrads, Jon writes on a chalkboard where he has drawn some sort of chart. "Dramatic Theater" is written on one side and "Epic Theater" on the other.

JON
 (pointing to the chart)
 Here there is emotion, an interest in
 what people are feeling. Whereas Brecht
 wants people to think.

Jon crosses out the word "emotion" and underlines the
 word "thinking" over and over again.

JON (CONT'D)
 In "Dramatic Theater" we have suggestion,
 but Brecht wants an argument.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. Jon's cellphone rings. He pulls
 it out and looks at the caller id.

JON (CONT'D)
 (to class)
 Excuse me for one minute.

Jon turns his back to the class and mumbles into the
 phone. His students watch him. After a few moments, Jon
 clicks the phone shut and just stands there with his back
 to the room.

STUDENT
 Mr. Savage?

Jon turns around. He seems dazed.

JON
 Yes?

STUDENT
 What's the difference between "plot" and
 "narrative?"

Jon looks bewildered.

STUDENT (CONT'D)
 You wrote it on the board.

He glances over his shoulder to the chalkboard and sees
 that he has written the words "Narrative" and "Plot" in
 opposite categories.

JON
 Oh. Uh. That's a good question.

STUDENT
 They're both just story, right?

Jon is stumped and distracted. He just stands there,
 unable to form any more words.

147 **INT. JON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY** 147

Wendy still sits on the windowsill typing. The phone begins to RING. She gets up, walks out of FRAME and answers it.

 WENDY (O.S.)
Hello?

148 **INT. BUFFALO HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY** 148

Wendy and Jon walk quickly toward the NURSES STATION.

149 **INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY/NIGHT** 149

Wendy and Jon enter to find --

LENNY IN A HOSPITAL BED--
his eyes closed, an IV in his arm. He doesn't look good.
Monitors beep.

Wendy and Jon just stand there looking.

LATER --

It's NIGHT NOW. Wendy and Jon are camped out in chairs facing Lenny.

 WENDY
Do you want some coffee?

Wendy looks over at Jon and realizes he's asleep. She stands and approaches Lenny, reaching out to touch his hand.

 WENDY (CONT'D)
Jon?

 JON
(groggy)
What?

Jon looks at Wendy first, then at Lenny. He rises from his chair and goes to stand next to his sister. They stare at Lenny in silence. He's dead.

 WENDY
That's it?

 JON
Yeah.

A long still pause.

151 **INT. NURSES STATION - NIGHT** 151

A HOSPITAL NURSE sits behind the desk writing a report.

 WENDY (OS)
Excuse me?

The nurse looks up to see Wendy looking hollow and spent and Jon, behind her in his coat, shivering.

152 **INT. HOSPITAL HALL - NIGHT** 152

From behind we see the Hospital Nurse walking briskly down the hall toward Lenny's room. Her rubber soled shoes squeak.

153 **INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT** 153

The privacy curtain is pulled around the bed. Lenny's clothes and things are put in a plastic bag by the nurse.

154 **EXT. HOSPITAL - DAWN** 154

Wendy and Jon stumble out of the hospital onto the empty streets. Wendy carries the plastic bag with Lenny's clothes.

155 **INT./EXT. CAR - DAWN** 155

POV FROM CAR of the empty city of Buffalo passing by.

Jon sits in the passenger seat looking out the window. He turns to his left to SEE --

WENDY BEHIND THE WHEEL --

Jon watches her for a long time as she drives. He's struck by this vision of his little sister as a capable person, as if seeing her for the first time.

 JON
You're not a bad driver.

Wendy looks at him with a tiny smile.

 WENDY
Really?

Really. JON

156 INT. HOUSE - MORNING 156

HIGH ANGLE of Jon and Wendy asleep in their clothes on Jon's bed. Genghis sleeps beside them.

FADE OUT.

157 INT. LENNY'S ROOM/HALL/LOUNGE - LATE AFTERNOON 157

Wendy and Jon pack up Lenny's belongings. Wendy empties drawers. Jon hoists the T.V. and VCR off the bureau and heads for the door.

JON
I'll be right back.

WENDY
Okay.

Wendy listlessly sits on the side of the bed, clearing off the night stand, when she comes upon LENNY'S GLASSES. She picks them up and puts them on. They are over-sized and odd looking on her, and her eyes are hugely magnified. She goes to the mirror over the dresser and looks at herself.

Suddenly, something catches her attention. She removes the glasses and looks up in the air, listening to the music wafting down the hall. It's a slow RHYTHM track. Then, the ETHEREAL SOUND OF A FEMALE VOICE begins singing "The Look of Love." Wendy drifts out of the room into --

THE HALL --

No one seems to be around. The halls are empty. She walks towards the sound of the music and finds herself outside.

THE LOUNGE --
where an entertainment is occurring, crowded with residents and staff.

WENDY'S OBSTRUCTED POV -
of a MALE and FEMALE musical act.

Wendy turns to discover a METAL STAND with A BLACK AND WHITE publicity shot of "Burt & Lizzie," the same act she and Jon saw singing in the Best Western Oasis Room. They finish the song and the audience applauds.

LIZZIE

Thank you. Thank you. I'm Lizzie --

BURT

And I'm Burt.

LIZZIE

And we're thrilled to be here at the Valley View. We're in town for a week playing the Roof Room at the Hyatt and decided to come here because this place has special meaning for Burt and me. Burt's mother was a resident here, Nettie Adelson and well, this is for her.

Lizzie launches into a soulful rendition of "Weeping Willow Tree." It plays over the following scenes --

160 INT. HALLWAY 160

Jon and Wendy walk down the hall carrying an odd assortment of Lenny's belongings and some boxes.

161 OMITTED 161

162 INT. TRAIN - DAY 162

The urban outskirts of Buffalo rush by. Wendy sits and looks out the window.

DISSOLVE TO:

163 INT./EXT. CAB - NIGHT 163

The sights heading downtown on Second Avenue blur by.
Wendy sits in the back of the cab looking out the window.

164 INT. WENDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 164

Wendy is unpacking. She sets up the Lava Lamp on her bureau, turns it on and stares at it.

THE SOUND OF LIGHT KNOCKING. Wendy goes to the door and opens it a little ways. On the other side is Larry.

LARRY

Hi.

WENDY

Hi.

LARRY

I saw you come in.

Wendy sees that Larry is holding some flowers.

LARRY (CONT'D)

These are for you.

WENDY

Thanks.

She takes them and brings them to her nose to smell them.

LARRY

They don't have a scent. They're from the deli. I never understand why that is with flowers from there. I guess you have to go to a real florist and pay extra if you want the nice smell.

Wendy smiles and stands there. It's awkward.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Can I come in a minute?

Wendy opens the door and Larry enters.

WENDY

Where's Marley?

Larry immediately mists up.

LARRY

I wasn't going to tell you about it. I mean, it must seem ridiculous compared to what you've been going through. You had a human being die on you --

WENDY

(soft and sad)

Oh no.

LARRY

A significant human being. Your father.

WENDY

He's dead?

LARRY

We're going to do it tomorrow.

Wendy looks at him, upset.

LARRY (CONT'D)

His legs. He can't get around anymore. He can't get up on the bed. He's so depressed.

WENDY

He's always been kind of mopey.

LARRY

It's not the same. She stopped eating. There's a surgery, but the vet says there's no guarantees. And the rehabilitation is brutal. She's old, Wen. She's in pain.

Larry breaks down crying. Wendy tries to comfort him. They hug. Larry tries to kiss her, but she doesn't kiss him back. Her arms hang limply by her side. When he realizes he can't inspire her lust, he stops and steps back.

LARRY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about your Dad.

WENDY

I'm sorry about Marley.

LARRY

If you ever want to re-indulge in unhealthy compromising behavior, you know who to call, right?

Wendy smiles. Larry steps outside the door, walks down the hall and heads for the stairs. Wendy stands at the door, watching him go. After a moment --

WENDY

Larry...

He turns back.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Can I ask you something?

Larry looks at Wendy, hope brimming in his eyes.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Not about us, about Marley...

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

165

INT. KITCHEN SET - DAY (LATE 1960'S DECOR)

165

GRAINY BLACK AND WHITE IMAGES OF THE THREE STOOGES slapping each other around.

A YOUNG BOY, sits on a counter between two cabinets as his FATHER yells at him and smacks him.

The Boy doesn't react to the slaps, instead he looks over his father's shoulder to a small TV playing THE THREE STOOGES. Larry, Curly and Joe are going at it. The CHAOTIC SOUNDTRACK is amplified. As the father continues the beating, the boy magically BEGINS TO FLOAT UP IN THE AIR. *What is this we're watching?* A memory? A dream? The boy drifts up and hovers above his father. After a moment, the father "breaks character," shades his eyes and speaks to someone offscreen.

FATHER

Do I react once he goes up?

ANOTHER ANGLE reveals that we are in --

A THEATER

The kitchen is a set in a little downtown space. The boy and the father are actors in a play. We are witnessing some kind of TECHNICAL REHEARSAL.

A LIGHTING DESIGNER is programming cues. Wendy is there in the nearly empty house. She, responds not to the actor on stage, but to the DIRECTOR who is seated beside her.

WENDY

No. He doesn't know it's happening.
It's a manifestation of the boy's
internal state.

DIRECTOR

Uh huh.
(calling out to the stage)
Paul, just keep up the beating like the
boy is still there...

ON STAGE --

The father pummels the now empty space where the boy had once sat. The lights on stage go out so now the only thing visible is the boy, suspended in mid-air.

IN THE AUDIENCE --

Wendy speaks over her shoulder to someone behind her.

WENDY

Do you think it's too much?

REVERSE ANGLE reveals --

JON --

He's been watching the rehearsal and despite his best efforts to control himself, his face is streaked with tears. He wipes them away with his fingers as he speaks.

JON

No. The, uh, naturalism with the magic-realism... together. It's, uh, effective.

Wendy twists her head around.

WENDY

Are you crying?

JON

No... I'm... I'm... impressed.

Wendy smiles.

166

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

166

Jon and Wendy walk toward an avenue. Jon has a suitcase.

WENDY

Thanks for coming.

JON

Thanks for inviting me. I'll see the real thing when I come back through.

WENDY

Okay.

Jon raises a hand to flag a cab.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Do you hate me for using stuff from your life in the play?

Jon thinks about it and then shakes his head no.

WENDY (CONT'D)

You don't think it's self-indulgent and bourgeois?

JON

It's good, Wendy.

A cab pulls up, Jon opens the door. They hug awkwardly.

JON (CONT'D)
Wish me luck on my paper.

WENDY
What's it called?

JON
"No Laughing Matter: Black Comedy in the
Plays of Bertolt Brecht."

Wendy smiles and nods. Jon becomes insecure.

JON (CONT'D)
Bad title?

WENDY
No, it's good. I like it. Where's the
conference?

JON
Poland.

Wendy's jaw drops open.

WENDY
You didn't tell me that.

JON
You didn't ask.

Jon smiles and shrugs as he climbs into the cab.

WENDY
You're going to Krakow?

JON
Warsaw. Then Krakow...

Wendy grins widely.

JON (CONT'D)
We're just gonna check in... play it by
ear. You know, see how we feel about
each other... as people.

Wendy and Jon smile at each other, amused by his familiar habit of emotional back-peddling. They kiss goodbye. The cab takes off. Wendy watches it go.

167 **INT. WENDY'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING** 167
 ON THE T.V. an exercise program plays. Wendy follows along.
 Suddenly fed-up with the inane instructor, she snaps it off.

168 **EXT. EAST RIVER PARK - DAY** 168
 Wendy jogs along the East River Esplanade. The CAMERA
 TRACKS alongside her. It's still early in the morning and
 the sun is rising over Brooklyn. The water glistens. In
 the cold air we see and hear her breath as she goes.
 Wendy is not an experienced runner, but she's giving it a
 try. She runs for a while and then turns around, so now
 she's JOGGING BACKWARDS. She calls to someone who is O.S.

WENDY
 (breathless, cheerful)
 Come on, honey! Come on! Let's go!

She turns back around so now she's running forward again.

A LOW TRACKING SHOT --
 of WENDY'S CONVERSE SNEAKERS slapping the cement. The
 CAMERA SLOWS a little and Wendy's feet run out of frame.
 Now, just the vertical posts of the iron fence pass by
 and then we hear the SOUND OF PANTING GETTING CLOSER as --

MARLEY ENTERS THE FRAME. Her lame hind legs are affixed
 to a WHEELCHAIR CONTRAPTION -- a cart with pneumatic
 wheels that ROLL behind her -- but this doesn't deter her
 from her favorite outdoor activity.

The CAMERA TRACKS alongside Marley as she defies all
 expectations and runs gloriously forward. Her front legs
 pump vigorously. The sun flares behind her.

We stay with her for an extended amount of time -- a full
 minute -- or until the FLASH FRAME appears and the FILM
 ROLLS OUT of the camera.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END