RELATIVITY

By
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INT. RON DODDLING’S OFFICE—AFTERNOON

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

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

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

CLAIRE
How?

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

FRANKLIN
Beirut?

CLAIRE
Please continue.

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

CLAIRE
So what happened?

RON
He went completely insane.
Franklin sits forward on the sofa.

**FRANKLIN**
You’re not helping my case here, Ron.

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

Franklin and Claire stare blankly at Ron.

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

INT. STATION WAGON – PARKING LOT – MOMENTS LATER

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

**FRANKLIN**
And we invited him to our anniversary party?

He starts the engine.

**CLAIRE**
All right, let’s do it.

Franklin looks at her.

**FRANKLIN**
What?
CLAIRE
As long you promise me one thing.

FRANKLIN
What?

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

FRANKLIN
Hunky dory?

CLAIRE
Just promise!

Frank thinks about it for a moment.

FRANKLIN
All right...I promise.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - AFTERNOON

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

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

INT. FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

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

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

He darts into the kitchen.

CHARLES (cont’d)
Is anyone here?

THE HOUSE IS SILENT.

He nervously rushes into the living room and sits on a green flowered sofa. He grabs a book from a side table, flips it open and attempts to catch his breath.
CHARLES (cont’d)
Not right...

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

INT. TOOL SHED – FERGUSSON HOME – CONTINUOUS

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

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD – FERGUSSON HOME – MOMENTS LATER

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

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

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

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

EXT. DRIVEWAY – FERGUSSON HOME – MOMENTS LATER

A white, four-door pulls into the driveway.

INT. VINCENT’S CAR – FERGUSSON HOME – CONTINUOUS

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

VINCENT
I feel sick to my stomach.

GWENIVERE (O.S.)
This is something you should’ve done two years ago.
GWENIVERE, a fare skinned early-thirty-something, sits on the passenger-side. She also has a horseshoe-shaped travel cushion hugging her neck.

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

GWENIVERE
Just remember what I said.

VINCENT
Clean the toilet rim after I go?

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

Vincent looks at her.

VINCENT
You said that? I don’t remember you saying that.

GWENIVERE
That’s because you lose your hearing when you’re nervous.

Vincent thinks about it for a moment.

VINCENT
I hear a chain saw.

EXT. BACKYARD – FERGUSSON HOME – MOMENTS LATER

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

VINCENT
Charles!

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

VINCENT (cont’d)
Charles!!!

Charles looks up. The chain saw begins to jerk violently. He holds on awkwardly until it comes to a GRINDING HALT. A puff of black smoke shoots out the exhaust.
CHARLES
Hey, I didn’t hear you guys.

VINCENT
What are you doing?

Charles thinks a moment.

CHARLES
Pubusitic sackworm infestation.

VINCENT
What?

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

He waves his finger around the base of the tree.

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

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

Charles wipes saw dust from his forehead.

CHARLES
I was out here sawing the...

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

Charles drops his hand.

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

VINCENT
They planted it when Conrad was born. It’s an oak.
Charles turns and surveys the damage.

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

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

CHARLES
It made sense at the time.

VINCENT
So did lead paint.

GWENIVERE
You two are wearing the same shirts.

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

CHARLES
Huh...

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

Gwenivere waves.

GWENIVERE
Hi.

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

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

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

FRANKLIN
You made it!

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

CHARLES
Happy anniversary!
CLAIRE
Two more days...

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

VINCENT
So, thirty-five years...

FRANKLIN
Not bad, huh?

CHARLES
You guys should get a trophy or something.

CLAIRE
That would have to be one damn big trophy.

She releases Charles and looks him over.

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

He examines himself.

CHARLES
Am I? That’s strange.

Gwenivere stands a few feet away waiting an introduction.

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

Claire walks over to Gwenivere and looks her over.

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

VINCENT
I wouldn’t say hiding.

GWENIVERE
I wouldn’t say mysterious.

Claire bursts forward and embraces Gwenivere in a meaty hug. Gwenivere stumbles backward to catch her balance.
INT. VINCENT’S ROOM – FERGUSSON HOME – MOMENTS LATER

Claire opens the door to an intensely bright turquoise room.

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

She sets a stack of towels on the dresser.

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

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

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

Gwenivere stands in the doorway studying the room.

GWENIVERE
It’s quite an intense color.

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

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

GWENIVERE
Did Vincent make this?

CLAIRE
Yeah. He took a sculpting class in college.

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

GWENIVERE
What is it?
CLAIRE
It’s what happens when a podiatrist makes art.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSSON HOME - AFTERNOON

Franklin tugs on the closed garage door.

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

Charles and Vincent stand a few feet away watching.

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

CHARLES
How is Grandpa, anyway?

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

FRANKLIN
So? What do you think?

CHARLES
You rebuilt Blue?

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

FRANKLIN
She works as good as new.

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

Franklin looks at Vincent.

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

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

A red hatchback pulls into the driveway behind them.

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

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

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

CONRAD
Don’t even get me started on smell!

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

CONRAD (cont’d)
Hey!

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

She slugs him in the shoulder.

CONRAD
Ouch!

She slugs him again.

CONRAD (cont’d)
Damn it!

She turns and walks past Franklin, Vincent and Charles.

JUDITH
Hey guys. Hi Dad.

FRANKLIN
Hi Judith.

CONRAD
I was talking about your dog!
She slams the door to the house. Conrad walks towards the garage rubbing his shoulder.

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

FRANKLIN
What was that about?

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

VINCENT
What’s with the suit?

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

VINCENT
Did you win?

CONRAD
That’s up to the judge.

CHARLES
Do you think your client’s guilty?

CONRAD
Guilty?

He looks at Charles.

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

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - EVENING

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

JUDITH
Mascot! Silencia!

She turns to Gwenivere sitting across the room.

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

MASCOT COUGHS OUT ANOTHER BARK.
JUDITH (cont’d)
So Gwenivere’s an interesting name. Is it in your family?

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

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

JUDITH
Heavily involved?

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

The handful of NUTS CRUNCH IN JUDITH’S MOUTH.

GWENIVERE (cont’d)
So, I’ve read a few of your short stories. I have to say, I’m very impressed. I just finished “Everyone Dead But Me”. Your attention to detail is so raw and brutally graphic.

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

GWENIVERE
The images still haunt my dreams.

JUDITH
Thank you.

GWENIVERE
So, are you working on anything right now?

JUDITH
Actually, I just finished my first novel.

GWENIVERE
Really?
JUDITH
I’ve been working on it since I was twelve. I’m giving it to Mom and Dad for their anniversary.

GWENIVERE
What’s it about?

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

GWENIVERE
Twelve, huh?

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

MASCOT BARKS AGAIN. Judith turns around.

JUDITH (cont’d)
Mascot, ningún ladridos en la casa por favor!

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

JUDITH (cont’d)
He has severe outdoor allergies. I can’t take him for walks outside.

Mascot stumbles over and rolls off the treadmill.

INT. DINING ROOM – FERGUSSON HOME – EVENING

Conrad forks a mound of lettuce from a salad bowl.

CHARLES
Pass the grilled asparagus.

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

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

Charles takes a bite of asparagus.

CHARLES
Thanks Dad.

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

CLAIRE
Very much.

FRANKLIN
It’s crazy how much we love you.

Vincent stops eating.

VINCENT
What’s wrong with you two?

FRANKLIN
What do you mean?

VINCENT
You both seem nervous and neither of you are eating.

CHARLES
(mouthful)
What’s wrong with the food?

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

CHARLES
Are you dying?

CLaire
No.

JUDITH
Are you getting a divorce?
Conrad looks at Judith.

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

JUDITH
It’s just a question.

CONRAD
It’s a stupid question.

VINCENT
You’re not getting a divorce are you?

FRANKLIN
You’re all adopted.

The room goes silent. Everyone’s attention is frozen on the end of the table.

JUDITH
What’s that supposed to mean?

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

CONRAD
All right, I’m confused.

VINCENT
What are you trying to say, Dad?

FRANKLIN
I’m trying to say that you’re adopted.

JUDITH
What’s that even mean?

FRANKLIN
It’s just like it sounds.

CHARLES
We’re adopted?

FRANKLIN
Yes.
JUDITH
Just like Conrad, or...

CONRAD
What’s that supposed to mean?

FRANKLIN
All of you.

VINCENT
Dad, you’re not making any sense.

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

Claire takes a deep breath.

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

CONRAD
The glory of being parents?

VINCENT
You’re not our real parents?

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

CHARLES
I think I’m going to be sick.

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

VINCENT
You just mean Conrad, right?

Conrad drops his fork.

CONRAD
Hey!

FRANKLIN
All of you are adopted.

VINCENT
What, like me and Charles together?
He puts his hand on Charles sitting beside him. They’re still wearing the same shirt.

CLAIRE
Sort of.

VINCENT
What do you mean “sort of”? You can’t use “sort of”. Just say it in plain, simple English.

FRANKLIN
You’re not really twins.

Charles lifts his head from the bowl.

CHARLES
What?

FRANKLIN
We adopted you two months apart from each other.

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

VINCENT
Package us?

CHARLES
We’re not twins?

FRANKLIN
Charles, you’re three months older than Vincent.

VINCENT
What the hell? He’s older than me?

JUDITH
Give me the bowl.

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

VINCENT
October 1st. Whose birthday is that?
FRANKLIN
Actually, neither of yours. We averaged your birthdays into one date.

CHARLES
What’s mine then?

FRANKLIN
August 20th.

VINCENT
And mine?

CLAIRE
November 17th.

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

FRANKLIN
By blood, no.

CONRAD
When did you plan on telling us this?

FRANKLIN
Well...right now.

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

FRANKLIN
Wait a second, WE thought.

CLAIRE
Listen, this was your idea!

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

VINCENT
Who’s Ron?
CONRAD
Hold on a moment. I remember being at the hospital when Judith was born.

FRANKLIN
That was Dr. Fontaine’s office.

CONRAD
Our dentist?

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

CLAIRe
Judith was already three months old at the time.

Conrad slaps the table.

CONRAD
Damn it!!!

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

VINCENT
So you’re handing that to us now?

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

VINCENT
Well, you got that one wrong!

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

GWENIVERE
Well...

She sets her napkin on the table.

GWENIVERE (cont’d)
I should go ahead and just...

She gets up and follows after Vincent.
CHARLES
What about Pop Pop?

CLAIRE
Your great grandpa?

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

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

Conrad lifts his head from his hands.

CONRAD
But I remember you being pregnant for months.

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

FRANKLIN
We tried to cover all our bases.

CONRAD
Damn it!!!

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

Franklin and Claire think about it for a moment.

FRANKLIN
I guess that’s right, yes.

CLAIRE
Happy birthday, Charles.

Judith stands up and grabs her glass.

JUDITH
I need air...

She leaves the room.

JUDITH (O.S.) (cont’d)
...and alcohol!
INT. VINCENT’S ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Gwenivere opens the door. Vincent furiously paces the room.

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

He stops and turns to Gwenivere.

VINCENT (cont’d)
Dad once stopped my dance recital and demanded it start over because he was in the restroom!

GWENIVERE
Nothing has changed, Vincent. They’re still your parents.

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

GWENIVERE
You’re still family.

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

He studies her face.

VINCENT (cont’d)
We kind of look a like, don’t we?

GWENIVERE
We’re not related.
VINCENT
Stranger things have happened, you know!

He begins pacing again.

VINCENT (cont’d)
In some rare cases, chimpanzees have been known to predict military coups in third world countries!

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

VINCENT
What in the hell is that going to do?

GWENIVERE
Ensure lung aeration and promote relaxation.

Vincent steps up to her.

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

GWENIVERE
What are you talking about?

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

GWENIVERE
Why?

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

GWENIVERE
Why are you telling me this?
VINCENT
Because there came a point when I realized I was acting nuts and the only thing that assured me I wasn’t actually certifiable was the fact that I was the product of two reasonably sane individuals.

He backs up.

VINCENT (cont’d)
Now, for all I know, I AM crazy. My real parents might be complete lunatics!

Gwenivere thinks about it for a long moment.

GWENIVERE
You were in dance?

VINCENT
I’m sleeping in the car!

He shoots past her and leaves the room.

INT. DINING ROOM – FERGUSSON HOME – CONTINUOUS
Vincent storms down the stairs past the dining room.

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

HE SLAMS THE FRONT DOOR ON EXIT.

CLAIRE
Does he need a blanket or something?

Conrad is the last one sitting at the table.

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

FRANKLIN
He was Dad’s proctologist.

CLAIRE
He owed Wendel a favor for some P.I. work he had done for him.
CONRAD
Grandpa was a private investigator?

CLAIRE
You didn’t know that?

Conrad stands up.

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

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

CONRAD (O.S.) (cont’d)
Damn it!

EXT. BACK PATIO - FERGUSSON HOUSE - NIGHT

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

JUDITH
Are you going to be all right?

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

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

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

Charles continues staring at the ground.

CHARLES
The Korean kid with the over-bite?

JUDITH
He had surgery for that, but yeah.

CHARLES
Sure, I remember him.

JUDITH
He was adopted and didn’t know about it for years.
Charles lifts his head.

CHARLES
Weren’t his parents black?

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

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

JUDITH (cont’d)
What are you doing?

CONRAD
Nothing.

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

JUDITH
Where’d you get those?

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

CHARLES
Like when?

CONRAD
Like now.

CHARLES
You call this a special occasion?

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

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

JUDITH
Right now doesn’t stand out as an appropriate time for a fireworks display, Conrad.
CONRAD
You’re probably right, but I don’t really care. I’ve been saving these damn things for over fifteen years and I want to use them.

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

CONRAD
What’s there to talk about?

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

CONRAD
Voltron?

He sets down the tank and looks at Charles.

CONRAD (cont’d)
Voltron was a team of robotic cats from the distant future. Their parents didn’t adopt them or hold community theater at their dentist office.

CHARLES
But they stuck together.

Conrad points at Charles.

CONRAD
Leave Voltron out of this!

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

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

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

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

He begins breathing in rapid bursts.

JUDITH
All right...

Conrad stops breathing. He and Charles look at Judith.

JUDITH (cont’d)
If we’re going to do this, let’s just do it.

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

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK PATIO - PERGUSSON HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

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

JUDITH
So what now?

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

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

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

JUDITH
Didn’t Vincent fall into the fire?

CONRAD
No...that was me.

JUDITH
Yeah, that was a good time.

Charles takes a deep breath.
CHARLES
Why can’t things just stay the way they used to be?

Charles’ sparkler burns out.

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

CONRAD
What are you doing?

CHARLES
Giving you a hug.

CONRAD
Why?

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

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

CONRAD
Don’t.

CHARLES
Why not?

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

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

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

CHARLES
Why?

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

He points at Judith.

CONRAD (cont’d)
If you have to hug something, hug her!
Charles turns to Judith. Judith’s sparkler is still cracking away.

    JUDITH
    I’ll pass for now, thanks.

    CONRAD
    Just give him a hug, Judith!

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

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

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

    CHARLES
    It’s only a hug.

He grabs the box of fireworks.

    CONRAD
    You two can do whatever you want!

He storms towards the house.

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

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

    JUDITH
    Why won’t mine die out?

She shakes it harder.

    JUDITH (cont’d)
    Die, damn it.

Suddenly, Charles bursts into tears.
CHARLES
(intensely weeping)
Why us! Why now! Why, oh, why!...

He begins stomping on the ground.

CHARLES (cont’d)
Ahhhh!!

INT. DINING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

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

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

Claire looks at him.

CLAIREDON’T think it went that bad?
Don’t you hear that?

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

Claire leans over and slugs Franklin in the shoulder.

FRANKLIN (cont’d)
Ahhh!

CLAIREDon’t think it went that bad?

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

She pushes her chair out and stands up.

FRANKLIN
Claire?

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

CUT TO:
INT. CHARLES’ ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MORNING

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

A tear sprints down his face.

INT. KITCHEN - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

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

EXT. FERGUSSON HOME - MORNING

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

INT. JUDITH’S ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. CHARLES’ ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. BACKYARD - FERGUSSON HOME - LATER

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

   FRANKLIN
   It must’ve caught a bad breeze.

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

   CONRAD
   I’ve never heard of a bad breeze.

   CHARLES (O.S.)
   Bad things happen, you know.
Everyone turns around. Charles stands a few yards behind them, still in yesterday’s clothes. He’s pale and clammy.

CHARLES (cont’d)
Trees fall.

CLAIRE
Are you all right?

GWENIVERE
Charles, wasn’t this...

CHARLES
One of my most beloved trees? Yes.

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

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

Gwenivere gets it.

CONRAD
You want to get married in the backyard?

CHARLES
Yes.

CONRAD
Under the family tree?

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

Judith walks up to Charles’ side.

JUDITH
How’d this happen?
CLAIRE
We don’t quite know yet. Are you okay?

JUDITH
I’m fine.

She looks at Charles. He’s sweating profusely.

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

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

CHARLES
Do you have bacon and cheddar cheese?

CLAIRE
Of course.

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

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

CONRAD
Yeah...yeah I do.

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

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

CONRAD
Because, maybe we don’t want pancakes.

CLAIRE
Listen, I realize you might still be upset with us, but don’t take it out on my pancakes. They deserve to be eaten.
CONRAD
I’m sure if your pancakes had their way they would rather be left alone.

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

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

JUDITH
What’s your problem?

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

FRANKLIN
Conrad...

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

FRANKLIN
What are you talking about?

CONRAD
A blood transfusion or organ transplant!

CLAIRE
You know we’d give you anything we had.

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

FRANKLIN
I don’t think it works that way.

JUDITH
Why are you a Bentley?
CLAIRE
We all might be Bentleys.

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

JUDITH
How’s that working out for you?

CONRAD
Shut it, Judith!

CLAIRE
Did you just call me Claire?

Gwenivere looks around the group.

GWENIVERE
Where’s Vincent?

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

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

CLAIRE
Did you see him this morning?

GWENIVERE
No. I woke up when the tree fell.

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

GWENIVERE
Ran away?

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

GWENIVERE
How much is a lot?

CLAIRE
I’d say at least once a month.

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

Claire squints into the car.

CLAIRE (cont’d)
Is that a bucket of fried chicken on the floor?

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

CLAIRE (cont’d)
Where are you going?

CHARLES
Out.

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

Charles adjusts his goggles.

CHARLES
Gwenivere, could I speak with you for a moment?

GWENIVERE
Sure.

She walks over and steps into the garage.

CHARLES
(whispering)
That was the tree from yesterday.

GWENIVERE
I know.

CHARLES
I can trust you, right? You’re not a snitch are you?
GWENIVERE
No.

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

GWENIVERE
No. He’s missing.

CHARLES
Missing? Did he run away again?

GWENIVERE
I don’t know.

CHARLES
You don’t, do you?

He puts his hand on her cheek.

CHARLES (cont’d)
I can see that in your eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET – NEIGHBORHOOD – DAY

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

EXT. DR. EPSTEIN’S HOUSE – MOMENTS LATER

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

MRS. EPSTEIN
Can I help you?

Charles takes off his helmet.

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

MRS. EPSTEIN
He’s just finishing up his morning workout in the backyard.
CHARLES
I can wait.

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

CUT TO:

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

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

DR. EPSTEIN
It’s been quite a long time, Charles.

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

CHARLES
About fifteen years.

DR. EPSTEIN
How have you been?

CHARLES
Well, I just found out I’m adopted.

DR. EPSTEIN
What would you like me to do for you?

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

DR. EPSTEIN
I’m a pediatrician. This isn’t really my area of expertise.

CHARLES
Can you prescribe me something or...

DR. EPSTEIN
How are you feeling right now?

CHARLES
I have a mixture of emotions.
DR. EPSTEIN
Sadness?

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

DR. EPSTEIN
Anger?

CHARLES
A little.

DR. EPSTEIN
Constipation?

CHARLES
No...not really.

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

Charles sits forward.

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

Dr. Epstein sets down his cigar.

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

CHARLES
Okay.

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

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

CHARLES
What was it?

DR. EPSTEIN
Kill a pawn.

CHARLES
Kill a pawn?

DR. EPSTEIN
Do you play chess?

CHARLES
I’m more of a checkers kind of guy.

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

CHARLES
What about everything else?

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

CHARLES
What was yours? What did you do?
DR. EPSTEIN
I kicked Carl out. He was thirty-five and had a bad habit of shoplifting nasal spray. That book was way past over due.

Charles takes it all in.

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

CHARLES
Okay.

Dr. Epstein sits forward in his chair.

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

CUT TO:

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

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

CHARLES
These can’t penetrate anything, can they?

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

EXT. BACKYARD - FERGUSSON HOME - DAY

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

He attempts a third time...nothing.

INT. KITCHEN - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

CLAIRE (cont’d)
Conrad isn’t calling me Mom anymore.

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

CLAIRE (cont’d)
I’m still Mom, you know.

Judith doesn’t respond.

CLAIRE (cont’d)
Are you not talking to me now?

JUDITH
I’m still talking to you.

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

Judith shuts the drawer.

JUDITH
What do you want me to say?

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

JUDITH
Okay...

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

JUDITH (cont’d)
To answer the first question, physically, I’m fine. Emotionally, I have to say, I’m a little on edge.

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

CLAIRE
And the second question?

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

Claire waits another moment.

CLAIRE
Are you still calling me Mom?

JUDITH
Sure.

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

JUDITH
I didn’t know you drank Bourbon.

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

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

INT. ATTIC – FERGUSSON HOME – DAY

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

The album reveals a photo of a much younger Claire and Franklin with two small toddlers and a five year old Conrad.
He turns the page to a collage of pictures of the family at Judith’s birth. Claire is in a hospital gown next to the kids. A dentist chair tucked in the background.

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

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

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

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

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

She stops sawing and looks at him.

    JUDITH
    Yes, I am.

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

    JUDITH
    Where’d you get the pellet gun?

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

    JUDITH
    Mom’s not going to like that, Conrad.

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

    JUDITH
    Sure.
CONRAD
Well, she can suck my face.

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

CONRAD
Whose side are you on anyway?

JUDITH
There are no sides, Conrad.

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

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

CONRAD
I'm weighing my options.

JUDITH
You're an idiot.

CONRAD
You're rewarding them for a lifetime of deception!

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

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

He begins to leave.

JUDITH
They just did what they felt they had to do.
He returns.

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

JUDITH
Conrad...

CONRAD
Big time!!!

He leaves.

INT. HALLWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

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

EXT. FRONT LAWN - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

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

The family portrait splinters and falls to the ground.

EXT. STREET - NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

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

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

CHARLES
What are you doing?

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

CHARLES
Fencing Dr. Epstein down the street.
GWENIVERE
Who’s Dr. Epstein?

CHARLES
My pediatrician.

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

CHARLES
They are?

He thinks about it for a moment.

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

Gwenivere looks around.

GWENIVERE
Where are you going?

Charles looks up at her.

CHARLES
Do you play chess?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NEIGHBORHOOD - MOMENTS LATER

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

INT. STATION WAGON - DRIVEWAY - AFTERNOON

Franklin adjusts the rear view mirror.

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

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

CONRAD
Why do we have to go if Charles and
Vincent don’t have to?
FRANKLIN
Charles and Vincent do have to go.
They’re just not here right now.

CONRAD
I don’t want to be here.

JUDITH
What about Gwenivere?

FRANKLIN
She’s not even related to Grandpa.

CONRAD
Since when does that matter?

CLAIRE
Maybe we shouldn’t go.

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

CONRAD
Ha!

JUDITH
Does Grandpa still greet people by palming their heads?

CLAIRE
Yes.

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

JUDITH
Why does he need to size people up?

FRANKLIN
I don’t know.

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

CLAIRE
Gomez still rooms with him, yes.
CONRAD
Then I really don’t want to go. I don’t feel comfortable around him.

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

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

JUDITH
They’re called amputees.

CONRAD
They still have stumps!

Conrad gets up and leans for the door handle.

CONRAD (cont’d)
I’m getting out!

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

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

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

CHARLES
Do you have any party hats?

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

CHARLES
Yeah.

ATTENDANT
No, we don’t carry those.

CHARLES
Do you have any candy cigarettes?
ATTENDANT
You mean the delightfully tasty sugar sticks designed to look like the highly addictive tobacco product?

CHARLES
Yes.

ATTENDANT
No. I think they outlawed those.

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

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

CHARLES
I suppose I would, wouldn’t I?

The attendant looks into the back room.

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

CHARLES
Okay.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

CHARLES
Like Even Edward?

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

GWENIVERE
Mind raped?

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

He starts Blue, then sits back.

CHARLES (cont’d)
It scared the hell out of me. I used to repeat the last word of every sentence I spoke...spoke. Like that.

GWENIVERE
That’s horrible.

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

GWENIVERE
Vincent didn’t say anything about this.

CHARLES
He must’ve somehow blocked it out...

There’s a moment.

CHARLES (cont’d)
(under his breath)
...out.

INT. HALLWAY - NURSING HOME - AFTERNOON

Franklin, Claire, Conrad and Judith walk down a long depressingly sterile hallway. Franklin stops outside a room.
FRANKLIN
(whispering)
All right, all I ask is for one
hour of your best behavior. This
man’s been through polio, two wives
and countless colonoscopies. He
doesn’t deserve to wade through the
mire of our petty issues right now.
You don’t do that to family and
whether you like it or not, he’s
family, damn it.

JUDITH
Grandpa was married twice?

CLAIRE
You didn’t know that?

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

JUDITH
Aunt Marjorie’s your half sister?

CONRAD
I didn’t know he had polio.

FRANKLIN
That’s why he’s deaf in one ear.

CONRAD
He’s deaf in one ear?

FRANKLIN
Holy crap, people!

Franklin pushes Conrad into the room.

INT. WENDEL’S ROOM - NURSING HOME - CONTINUOUS
Conrad awkwardly stumbles into room.

CONRAD
Ahh man!

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

Three old men stand shoulder to shoulder along the back wall
observing the competition.
Gomez slams Wendel’s arm down on the table. The THREE MEN CLAP. Franklin, Claire and Judith move into the room.

FRANKLIN
Hi Dad.

Wendel stands up and walks over to them.

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

FRANKLIN
Honestly, I don’t know.

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

WENDEL
How are you kids?

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

JUDITH
Okay.

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

CONRAD
I’m fine...like powdered sugar.

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

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

JUDITH
Sure.

CLaire
How are you, Gomez?
GOMEZ
I’m all right.

RANDOM OLD MAN #3
Literally.

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

RANDOM OLD MAN #1
The man’s a gorilla.

RANDOM OLD MAN #2
Gomez the gorilla.

RANDOM OLD MAN #1
He once killed a silver-back with his bare hand.

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

GOMEZ
I like to open things.

WENDEL
Of course you do.

He claps his hands together.

WENDEL (cont’d)
Who’s up for Bingo?

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - NURSING HOME - MOMENTS LATER

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

WENDEL
I couldn’t agree with you more.

GOMEZ
I love it more than life itself.

WENDEL
Now, that’s taking it too far.

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

OLD WOMAN
I-18.

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

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

CLAIREE
I’d like to see your work sometime.

WENDEL
No you wouldn’t. Trust me.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)
G-48.

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

JUDITH
Would you stop it!

She shoves him back towards Gomez.

CONRAD
Has anyone ever told you that you have aggression issues?

He looks at Franklin and Claire.
CONRAD (cont’d)
Did either of her real parents have a history of violent tendencies?

WENDEL
What?

FRANKLIN
Conrad...

WENDEL
Real parents? What’s he talking about?

FRANKLIN
Nothing Dad.

WENDEL
You didn’t tell them did you?

FRANKLIN
No. Nothing...just play Bingo.

WENDEL
You told them they were adopted?

FRANKLIN
Let’s not worry about it.

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

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

CLAIRE
I told him Wendel.

FRANKLIN
Claire, not now!

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

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

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

JUDITH
Wait a minute. What?

FRANKLIN
Dad, can we not talk about this right now?

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)
N-32.

Conrad marks his card.

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

He slaps the table.

WENDEL (cont’d)
I wanted to see flying cars, damn it!

JUDITH
You’re dying?

FRANKLIN
No. He’s not dying.

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

JUDITH
Found a lump? What’s a lump?

FRANKLIN
Dad, I was going to tell them...

WENDEL
I’ve got breast cancer!
FRANKLIN
It’s not breast cancer. It’s just a lump, completely harmless. The doctors said they can take it out with a simple out-patient procedure.

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

Claire puts her head in her hands.

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

JUDITH
A Moscow prison?

Franklin turns to Judith.

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

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

She looks up at Judith.

CLAIRED (cont’d)
Your real father was a KGB operative recruited by the Russian mafia as a contract assassin.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)
I-16.

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

JUDITH
I’m Russian?
FRANKLIN
Ukrainian. You were only in the
orphanage for two months before
they shipped you over.

JUDITH
Shipped me over! I’m a Communist
orphan?

CLAIRE
The wall came down, honey.

JUDITH
Not on my watch!

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)
I-24.

CONRAD
Bingo!

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

JUDITH
Are you getting any of this?

Conrad slowly turns towards her.

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

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

CONRAD (cont’d)
AHHH!

He shrivels in pain.

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

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

CUT TO:
INT. STATION WAGON - EVENING

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

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - EVENING

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

FRANKLIN
What the hell is this?

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

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

CHARLES
It’s my birthday party.

FRANKLIN
What?

Charles steps down from the ladder.

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

Claire surveys the room.

CLAIREDo you get the decorations?

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

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

He slaps his hands together.

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

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

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

He steps forward and takes the cupcakes.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN – FERGUSSON HOME – MOMENTS LATER

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

He blows out the candles.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM – FERGUSSON HOME – MOMENTS LATER

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

CONRAD
Damn it! Where is it?

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

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

He’s now on the opposite side of the room. He falls forward and smashes a lamp. The room goes dark.
INT. DINING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

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

FRANKLIN
All right.

CLAIRE
All right, what?

FRANKLIN
I made a mistake.

She gets up and leaves the room.

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

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

FRANKLIN
Okay, let’s hear it.

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

FRANKLIN (cont’d)
Don’t do this.

CLAIRE
Oh, I’m doing this!

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

Claire turns around.

CLAIRE
Do you know anything about Quantum physics?

FRANKLIN
What?

CLAIRE
Because I would like you to construct a time machine, go back thirty-six hours and stop yourself from single-handedly destroying this once semi-functional family!
FRANKLIN
You know I can’t do that... physically speaking.

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

FRANKLIN
What?

CLAIRE
Leave it alone! We don’t need fixing!

FRANKLIN
I thought we agreed on this! It’s what’s best!

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

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

CLAIRE
What’s that even mean?

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

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

FRANKLIN
They don’t hate us.

CLAIRE
Charles is throwing his own belated birthday party, Judith thinks she’s Communist, Conrad was banned from your father’s nursing home and we don’t even know where Vincent is! Give me one reason why you see ripened raspberries in this family’s future!
Franklin has nothing.

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

Franklin is about to answer.

CLAIRE (cont’d)
...besides foosball.

FRANKLIN
I was going to say...

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

FRANKLIN
Claire...

CLAIRE
And now all I have is foosball.

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

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

She grabs a blanket off the edge of the bed.

CLAIRE
Oh, I’m all over this closet!

She ducks into the closet and SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - NIGHT

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

Charles walks into the room holding a large red suitcase.

JUDITH
Where’d you get that?

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

GWENIVERE
What is it?

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

CHARLES
Red Wizard’s Reign.

JUDITH
It’s a fantasy, role playing, board game.

CHARLES
And you get to dress up.

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

JUDITH
Put Brezifeld’s crown back in the suitcase!

CHARLES
This is still a Fergocracy. We’ll vote on it.

GWENIVERE
Fergocracy?

CONRAD
Fergusson democracy.

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

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

Charles looks at Judith.

CHARLES (cont’d)
We need four to play.

Judith grabs the suitcase.
JUDITH
I get to be Greygon the Luminary.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

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

GWENIVERE
I summon the power of the Moldavar Stone.

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

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

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

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

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

He lays a card on the board.

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

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

CONRAD
Damn it!

He throws down a card. Charles scoops it up.
CONRAD (cont’d)
All right, I guess I’ll use the Axe of Invincibility to open the entrance to the Mystic Forest.

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

GWENIVERE
Witches breath! Witches breath!

CONRAD
No! No!

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

CONRAD
I wield the Vulture’s Spell!

GWENIVERE
Witches breath!

CONRAD
Shut up!

JUDITH
Show us your cards.

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

JUDITH
It’s Greygon. Show us your cards.

He throws down his cards and points at Gwenivere.

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

GWENIVERE
I had to protect my people.

Judith delicately lays down all of her cards.
JUDITH
All right, I’m throwing down the Troll Berry Fire and I Challenge Brezifeld the Great to a Duel of Fate.

The mood quickly shifts.

CHARLES
Are you serious?

JUDITH
I don’t play this game any other way.

Gwenivere is confused.

GWENIVERE
What’s a Duel of Fate?

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

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

There’s a tense moment of silence.

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

CHARLES
What?

Judith bursts forward and tackles Charles. They both crash onto the floor and begin slugging each other.
They roll across the room and smash into a side table. They both scramble to their feet, then throw each other into a glass cabinet. Glass explodes everywhere.

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

Gwenivere
Are you two all right?

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

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

Conrad gets up.

Conrad
I’m going to bed.

He leaves the room. Gwenivere quickly scoots around them.

Gwenivere
I’ll get some band-aids.

Charles
The big kind.

Judith
And a broom, please.

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

Charles
It feels kind of strange.

Judith
What does?

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

Judith
I thought that’s what you wanted.

Charles
I know...I did. It just feels kind of strange.
A final piece of glass trickles off the cabinet.

INT. VINCENT’S ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MORNING

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

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

She turns it over. It’s titled, “Even Edward”.

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

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

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

    FRANKLIN
    Happy anniversary.

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

    FRANKLIN
    About forty-five minutes.

    CLAIRE
    Why?

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

    CLAIRE
    Is that true?

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

    CLAIRE
    Why are you holding our stack of highly confidential documents?
FRANKLIN
If we’re going to do this, I figure we have to do it right.

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

EXT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - DAY

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

CONRAD
So what are these?

Franklin stands at the front of the room alone.

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

CHARLES
For real?

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

JUDITH
Why is mine so thick?

FRANKLIN
Your situation was a little more complicated than the others.

CONRAD
How did you get these?

FRANKLIN
We’ve got connections.

CONRAD
How do you guys have connections?

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

JUDITH
What about Mom? Shouldn’t she be here?
FRANKLIN
She’s locked herself in the bedroom closet.

They wait for more.

FRANKLIN (cont’d)
There’s a small fraction of friction between your mother and I right now.

CONRAD
Fraction of friction?

FRANKLIN
Shut up, Conrad.

Conrad’s shoulder’s slump.

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

Charles raises his hand.

CHARLES
Can I ask a question?

FRANKLIN
Sure.

CHARLES
Where was I born?

FRANKLIN
It’s all in your file, Charles.

CHARLES
I just want to know.

FRANKLIN
Ohio.

CHARLES
Like Cincinnati or...

FRANKLIN
Columbus.

Charles looks at everyone.
CHARLES
That’s kind of cool, I guess. It’s the capital...isn’t it?

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

CONRAD
Who’s Raging Bear?

FRANKLIN
That’s your birth name.

He looks at Franklin.

CONRAD
I’m Indian?

FRANKLIN
Half Native American, yes.

CONRAD
What’s the other half?

FRANKLIN
Truck driver, I believe.

CHARLES
I cut down the family tree.

The attention of the room turns to Charles.

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

FRANKLIN
Thank you, Charles.

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

FRANKLIN
Now that’s a little surprising, but again, thank you for the honesty.
CHARLES
Whew...that feels good.

Conrad cautiously raises his hand.

CONRAD
I have one.

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

CONRAD (cont’d)
I take it back. Nothing...just ignore me.

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

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

Charles and Conrad look at each other.

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

JUDITH
You’ve got to be kidding me!

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

JUDITH (cont’d)
My mother was a prostitute?

FRANKLIN
I’m afraid so, Judith.

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

She storms out of the room.
CHARLES
(quietly)
It could be worse, I guess.

She stomps back in with a bottle of Vodka.

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

CHARLES
All right, I’ll agree with that.

CONRAD
Vodka, huh?

JUDITH
Shut up.

She turns to leave, but stops.

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

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

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

CHARLES
Breast cancer?

FRANKLIN
It’s just a lump.

EXT. FERGUSSON HOME - DAY

Gwenivere sits on the front step reading, “Even Edward”. A very Gothic drawing of some sort of troll-like creature blankets the inside page.
The front door opens. Gwenivere closes the book. Franklin steps up to her side putting on a pair of driving gloves.

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

She looks up towards him.

    GWENIVERE
    Would you mind if I come?

EXT. BACK PORCH - FERGUSSON HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Conrad takes a long drag on his pipe then exhales.

    CONRAD
    I’ve always had an undeniable
    attraction to tobacco.

    CHARLES (O.S.)
    What’s your point?

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

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

Charles picks up his file and stares at it.

    CONRAD (cont’d)
    Are you going to open it?

After a brief moment, he begins tearing it apart.

    CONRAD (cont’d)
    What are you doing?

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

    CONRAD
    Don’t you want to know who you are?

Charles looks at Conrad.
CHARLES
Who I am? You don’t even care, do you?

CONRAD
What?

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

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

CHARLES
Gorilla.

CONRAD
Whatever...

He pulls his pipe out.

CONRAD (cont’d)
I haven’t slept in two days! I’ve broken out in a rash all over my back! The very sight of which makes me nauseous!

He takes a step closer to Charles.

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

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

Charles tosses his shredded file to the ground.

CHARLES
Well, I can’t do this!

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

Charles stands up.

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

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

CONRAD
Damn it! That’s my last one!

CHARLES
Are you a part of this family or not?

Conrad thinks about it for a moment.

CONRAD
I don’t know.

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

He turns and walks towards the house.

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

CONRAD
I care, Charles!

He doesn’t respond.

CONRAD (cont’d)
Where are you going?
CHARLES
To kill another pawn!

He opens the screen door and slams it shut.

INT. HALLWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Charles pounds on Judith’s door.

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

He knocks again.  Nothing.

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

Charles steps back from the door.

CHARLES (cont’d)
One!...

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

CHARLES (cont’d)
Shoot!

He turns and storms down the hallway.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

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

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

He looks at the dresser.  The manuscript is gone.

A SNEEZE BURSTS FROM THE FLOOR.  Mascot sticks his head out of his carrier.
INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

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

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

GWENIVERE
They?

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

He takes a deep breath.

FRANKLIN (cont’d)
Similar to the one I’m experiencing right now.

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

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

He looks at Gwenivere.

FRANKLIN (cont’d)
Can I ask you a question?

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

GWENIVERE
There are multiple schools of study, but sure.

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

GWENIVERE
What do you mean?

FRANKLIN
Are we doomed for extinction?

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

FRANKLIN
That’s fair. I understand.

GWENIVERE
Vincent and I are married.

Franklin is silent for a long moment.

FRANKLIN
How long? A few months or...

GWENIVERE
Two years.

FRANKLIN
That’s about par for the course.

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

FRANKLIN
Romanian missionary?
GWENIVERE
We were married while Vincent was traveling with me on a study of Bakgatla tribal migration in Botswana.

FRANKLIN
Ghanzi?

GWENIVERE
Actually, the southwest district of Kgatleng.

Franklin thinks about it for a moment.

FRANKLIN
Man, is it hot in here?

GWENIVERE
Yeah, it could be a little cooler.

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

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

GWENIVERE
No, go ahead.

FRANKLIN
All right, thanks. It won’t take long.

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

FRANKLIN (cont’d)
Ahhhh!!

Gwenivere stares forward, awkwardly attempting to ignore him.

FRANKLIN (cont’d)
This stupid...I! Damn! DAMN IT!

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

FRANKLIN (cont’d)
WHY CAN’T...WE JUST...
He punches the steering wheel and, suddenly, THE AIR BAG EXPLODES OPEN, SMASHING HIM IN THE FACE.

FRANKLIN (cont’d)

AHHH!

GWENIVERE

Frank!!!

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

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - LATER

The living room is now vacant. THE DOORBELL RINGS.

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

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

THE DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN.

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

INT. HALLWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

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

Vincent slowly crawls out.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

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

MR. PEEDMEYER

Vincent?

MR. AND MRS. PEEDMEYER, two well-groomed middle-agers, stand in the doorway holding a salad bowl and a covered casserole dish.
VINCENT
Hey, Mr. and Mrs. Peedmeyer. How
are you guys doing?

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

MRS. PEEDMEYER
Hairy.

VINCENT
Can I help you with something?

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

Vincent looks at his watch.

VINCENT
What...day is it?

MRS. PEEDMEYER
It’s Saturday.

VINCENT
Okay. Yeah, come on in.

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

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

EXT. WOODS - NEAR FERGUSSON NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

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

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

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

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

JUDITH
Where the hell did you come from?
He motions the gun towards the stack of papers.

CONRAD
What the hell is that?

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

Conrad hesitates.

CONRAD
What’s with all the hell talk?

JUDITH
I don’t know. You started it.

Conrad repositions the gun on his shoulder.

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

JUDITH
Just leave me alone, Conrad.

CONRAD
I can’t do that.

JUDITH
Are you going to shoot me?

CONRAD
If I have to.

JUDITH
Why do you care all of a sudden?

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

JUDITH
Why do you have a gun?

CONRAD
Why do you want to burn your book?

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

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

She lights another match. Conrad quickly cocks his gun.

CONRAD
Stop! Damn it!

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

CONRAD (cont’d)
You’ve worked on that book for fifteen years and you’re just going to throw it away because of one bad weekend?

She tosses the match to the ground.

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

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

JUDITH
What?

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

JUDITH
Why?

CONRAD
Because I don’t know. I’m just an unhappy man with more than a few issues that need to be worked out.
JUDITH
What’s this have to do with me?

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

Judith stares blankly at him.

CONRAD (cont’d)
Can’t you see I’m trying to help you here? Do you think I like living out this cliched character arc? It’s killing me!

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

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

He lowers the gun slightly.

CONRAD (cont’d)
I don’t know, maybe this whole thing’s just me projecting my repressed, subconscious resentment over the unwarranted prosecution of my people.

JUDITH
You’re not an Indian!

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

Judith lights another match. Conrad re-aims the gun.
JUDITH
Put down the gun!

CONRAD
I’m sorry.

CONRAD FIRES THE GUN, clipping Judith in the shoulder.

JUDITH
AHHH!

She twists off the log and falls to the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - FERGUSSON HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

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

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

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

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

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

The three men stare at the two kegs.
FIFTY-SOMETHING #1
You went to West Point?

THE DOORBELL RINGS.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Vincent opens the front door.

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

FRANKLIN
Why was the door locked?

VINCENT
Crowd control. Where have you guys been?

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

VINCENT
The party started over an hour ago.

FRANKLIN
We had car trouble.

GWENIVERE
Where were you, Vincent?

VINCENT
I was upstairs in the hallway linen closet.

GWENIVERE
For a day and a half?

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

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

FRANKLIN
You mean every time you ran away as a child, you were just in the upstairs linen closet?
VINCENT
What happened to your face?

Gwenivere slaps Vincent in the face.

VINCENT (cont’d)
Ouch!

GWENIVERE
You really scared me, did you know that?

VINCENT
I’m sorry.

GWENIVERE
Don’t ever do that again!

VINCENT
Okay...all right.

FRANKLIN
Where’s Claire?

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

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

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

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

FRANKLIN
Did somebody bring a keg to our anniversary party?

VINCENT
Yeah, I think it was the Asian guy.

INT. KITCHEN - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Randolf Chang proudly lifts his cup into the air.

RANDOLPH CHANG
Here’s to damn good times with damn good friends!
Out of nowhere, Conrad crashes through the screen door into the kitchen. He knocks Randolf onto the kitchen floor and pushes through the crowd.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

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

CONRAD
STOP! Let’s just talk about this!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONRAD
Dad, help me, please!

JUDITH
So he’s Dad now?

Franklin continues by.

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

He scoots around Ron Doddling and disappears into the crowd.

JUDITH COCKS THE GUN.
JUDITH
Put down the book.

Conrad doesn’t move.

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

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

CONRAD
All right! I’ll do it.

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

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

He notices someone in the crowd.

CONRAD (cont’d)
Hi, Mr. Brinkman.

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

Judith waves the gun.

JUDITH
Your right shoulder, please.

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

JUDITH
Right shoulder!

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

Conrad closes his eyes and clinches his jaw.

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

JUDITH FIRES THE GUN. Conrad is hit in the shoulder with A
SMALL, BUT FLESHY THUD. THE CROWD GASPS. Conrad stumbles
backwards.
CONRAD (cont’d)

AHHH!   DAMN IT!

He falls to the floor gripping his shoulder.

INT. FRANKLIN AND CLAIRE’S BEDROOM – PERGUSON HOME –
CONTINUOUS

Franklin opens the bedroom door and stares into the room.

    FRANKLIN
    Are you all right?

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

    CLAIRE
    I think I might be having a small breakdown.

    FRANKLIN
    Can I come in?

    CLAIRE
    Okay.

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

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

    FRANKLIN
    You look...nice.

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

Claire notices Franklin’s face.

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

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

    CLAIRE
    Really?
He nods.

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

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

CLAIRE
No. I guess not.

Franklin softly pats his swollen eye.

FRANKLIN
Judith shot Conrad with a pellet gun downstairs.

CLAIRE
Yeah, I heard it.

Franklin looks at Claire.

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

CLAIRE
What are you talking about?

FRANKLIN
Our marriage. I’m using symbolism...or metaphors...
CLAIRE
Are we the road or...

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

A POLICE SIREN ECHOES IN THE DISTANCE.

CLAIRE
What’s that?

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

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

Claire leans over and puts her face in her hands.

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

Claire gets up.

CLAIRE
I’ll get my purse.

EXT. FRONT LAWN - FERGUSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

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

Charles jumps out and holds his hands in the air.

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

Two cops viciously tackle Charles to the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - EVENING

Franklin sits in the lobby of a worn down police station. A stern COP stands behind a counter staring at him.
COP
You know, he could’ve killed somebody.

FRANKLIN
Excuse me?

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

HE SLAPS THE DESK HARD.

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

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

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

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

COP
Let me explain something to you...

He leans forward on the counter.

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

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

COP #2 opens the door to a long hallway.

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

Franklin gets up.
EXT. POLICE STATION PARKING LOT - EVENING

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

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

CLAIRE
So what happened? Are you all right, Wendel?

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

He smacks Charles on the back.

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

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

CONRAD
Let’s just go home.

Franklin turns to Claire.

FRANKLIN
I guess we should get Dad back.

Everyone, but Gwenivere begins walking towards the station wagon.

GWENIVERE
You know, you’re all idiots!

They continue walking.

CONRAD
Tell us something we don’t know.

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

They all stop and turn around.
VINCENT

Gwen?

GWENIVERE

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

CONRAD

What?

GWENIVERE

Family!

They all stare at her blankly.

GWENIVERE (cont’d)

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

Vincent looks around.

VINCENT

Wait, what did I miss?

GWENIVERE

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

The group is speechless.

GWENIVERE (cont’d)

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

    GWENIVERE (cont’d)
    Vincent, you’re not crazy. It was
    Even Edward...

    VINCENT
What?

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

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

    CLAIRE
What?

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

She looks towards Conrad.

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

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

She looks towards Franklin and Claire.

GWENIVERE (cont’d)
And to answer your question, Frank. Yes.

FRANKLIN
Yes?

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

VINCENT
Did she just quote scripture?

Gwenivere points towards the siblings.

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

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

FRANKLIN
No?

GWENIVERE
Good!

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

She claps her hands together.

GWENIVERE (cont’d)
So, who needs this family?

She raises her hand.

GWENIVERE (cont’d)
If this is still a Fergocracy, let’s take a vote.

They all remain frozen for a moment.

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

All eyes turn towards Conrad.

CONRAD
Yes, all right!

His hand shoots into the air.

VINCENT
I need this family. Are we finished?

GWENIVERE
No. I think you should all group hug.

The hands go down.
VINCENT

Group hug?

Gwenivere lowers her hand.

GWENIVERE

Or at least high five or something.

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

Franklin gives him an awkward high five.

CLaire

Come here...

She bursts forward with a massive hug.

Charles

Sorry about the tree... and the kidnapping.

Claire pulls Franklin into the hug.

FRANKLIN

All right, okay.

Vincent cautiously walks over and joins them.

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

CONRAD

Not too hard.

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

CONRAD (cont’d)

It hurts so badly...

She pulls him in closer. HIS BACK POPS.

Judith

I know, Conrad. I know.

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

Wendel steps up to Gwenivere’s side.

WENDEL

So who are you again?
GWENIVERE
I’m your granddaughter-in-law.

WENDELL
I wasn’t aware I had a granddaughter-in-law.

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

WENDELL
I guess so...

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

WENDELL (cont’d)
I guess so...

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSON HOME - DAY

Conrad shuts the trunk to Judith’s car.

CONRAD
That’s it.

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

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

CLAIRE
Are you sure you want us to have this?

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

Claire examines its massive size.

JUDITH (cont’d)
...or three.

CLAIRE
It smells like gas.
JUDITH
I’d keep it away from open flames
for a while.

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

Conrad approaches.

CONRAD
We better get going.

CLAIRE
Are you going to be okay?

CONRAD
Why?

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

CONRAD (cont’d)
You told them?

Judith shrugs.

CLAIRE
Do you need any money?

CONRAD
How much is self-worth going for
nowadays?

Franklin steps forward and hugs him.

FRANKLIN
We’re here for you, son.

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

CONRAD
Thanks, Dad...thanks.

Judith sets Mascot in the backseat. HE BARKS VICIOUSLY.

JUDITH
Cállese y sube al coche!

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

JUDITH (cont’d)
We’ll see you next time around.

Franklin leans forward and smacks the roof of the car.
FRANKLIN
Next time...fly.

CONRAD
Damn right.

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

Vincent and Gwenivere walk up to Franklin and Claire.

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

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

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

CUT TO:

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

CHARLES
Please...please!

He tries once again...nothing.

BACK TO SCENE:

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

GWENIVERE
We wanted to give this to you before we left.

CLAIRE
What’s this?

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

Claire thumbs through a few pages. Most of the pictures have a hazy, dirt covered glow to them.
CLAIRE
They’re slightly obscured from the sand storm that swept through halfway into the ceremony.

Claire steps up to Gwenivere and hugs her.

CLAIRE (cont’d)
Welcome to our family.

She squeezes tighter.

GWENIVERE
(cringing)
Thank you.

Vincent nervously addresses Franklin.

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

FRANKLIN
Selfish?

GWENIVERE
Spineless?

Claire releases Gwenivere.

CLAIRE
Inconsiderate?

VINCENT
We should go.

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

INT. VINCENT’S CAR – FERGUSSON HOME – CONTINUOUS

Vincent latches his seat belt.

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

Vincent looks at Gwenivere.
VINCENT
(quietly)
That we’re having a baby?

She nods.

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

He looks back to Gwenivere.

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

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

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FERGUSSSON HOME - CONTINUOUS

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

FRANKLIN
So?

CLAIRE
So...

FRANKLIN
Was that hunky dory?

CLAIRE
I’m not quite sure what that was.

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

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

FRANKLIN
I think that might be a good idea.

THE CHAIN SAW ROARS TO LIFE BEHIND THE HOUSE.

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

They both look up and stare forward in deep thought.
CLAIRE
Do you think there’s anything left
in one of those two kegs?

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

CUT TO BLACK