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The Dolly

a screenplay
by Robert Locke

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TITLES BEGIN IN BLACK over the MUSIC of "Silent Night".

FADE IN:

INT. TOY STORE — AFTERNOON

CAMERA PANS along a row of dolls on a mirror-backed shelf, draped with Christmas ornaments. The smiling, wistful face of DEBORAH O'HARE is revealed in the mirror between the dolls as she moves down the row. Her hand touches the dresses and faces and hair gently, tidying each of the dolls. Deborah is in her late 20s, pretty, but plainly done, no makeup, severe hairstyle. As she comes to a simple rag doll at the end of the row with a sad, clownish expression, stitched Xs for eyes, nose and mouth, Deborah stops, flinches as she remembers...

FLASHBACK: INT. VICTORIAN HOUSE BEDROOM — NIGHT

SUDDEN SILENCE in POV OF YOUNG DEBORAH AS a little girl's hand reaches into the shot for a home-made rag doll very like the one in the toy store. CAMERA walks unsteadily out of the bedroom and up a hall to a high door leading into a very black room.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Mommy ...

INT. TOY STORE — AFTERNOON

Deborah's hand smacks the ragdoll with the back of her hand; it tumbles to the floor.

Deborah looks around to see if anyone has noticed, then grabs the rag doll from the floor and stuffs it roughly into a lower shelf among other toys. She grabs a firetruck from across the aisle and heads quickly toward checkout.

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT — AFTERNOON

Deborah's car zooms into the lot and into a parking place. Deborah jumps out and dashes into the market.

INT. SUPERMARKET — AFTERNOON

"Joy to the World" is playing in the store as Deborah enters. Titles continue over montage of several items being grabbed and tossed into the cart which is wheeled swiftly through the store: pre-roasted chicken, carton of potato salad, carton of fish sticks, cube of beer, two gallons of milk.

Deborah turns her cart into the liquor aisle just in time to see BYRON O'HARE in the act of shoplifting a bottle of Jim Beam bourbon. Byron is 55-65 years old, never quite drunk but certainly never sober, a happy-go-lucky sort that everybody immediately likes, but no one admires. And he's smooth; so that now, surprised, instead of slipping the bottle into his jacket as intended, he lifts it as though to toast the intruder, turning to her as he does so.

BYRON

Merry Christmas, my darlin', and to you a happy— Why, Debbie, what a coinkydinky!

DEBORAH

(as smooth as Byron in the cover-up)

Byron, what are you doing buying your own liquor? Laird would be so mad at me if he found out. Give me that bottle.

Deborah takes the bottle from Byron and puts it in her cart.

BYRON

No, now, Debbie, I just wanna contribute, now, to my keep and to— Here, I'll just get the whole damn cart, why don't I?

DEBORAH

Oh, sure! And what would I tell Laird? Now, Byron, let me go, I've got to run, school's out in—

(checks wristwatch)

Oh god!

She turns the cart quickly and heads out the end of the aisle, rolling her eyes in annoyance when her back is to Byron.

BYRON

Give her a peck from her grandpa, and tell her I'll see her at home.

Byron looks around, then stuffs a different bottle of Jim Beam under his jacket.

EXT. PARKING LOT — AFTERNOON

Deborah finishes loading the bags of groceries into the car, gets in and turns the ignition. The engine grinds.

A MAN nearby who has been watching her lasciviously starts forward with a grin and manly swagger to give the little lady a helping hand.

Deborah pops the hood of the car, gets out, props open the hood, jiggles something on the carburetor and gets back into the car as the man approaches. The engine roars to life, and the man gives her a feeble okay sign through the windshield at her .

DEBORAH

Could you get the hood thingee, please? Thanks.

The man releases the prop with an attempt at flair, and drops the hood in place. Deborah gives a wave and drives off. The man looks around to see if anyone has seen.

At the driveway, Deborah pulls into heavy traffic like a race-track pro, shifting, changing lanes, blaring the horn, zooming through the yellow light, leaving the other cars to stop on the red.

CREDITS continue as Deborah maneuvers deftly through the streets of Sacramento. Coming to a stop at an intersection in a downtown neighborhood of Victorian residences, she pauses, re-thinks, checks her wristwatch, then turns left with sudden decision.

In the next block Deborah slows down in front of a handsome Victorian, with an ornate paint job.

INT. CAR — AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON DEBORAH as she ducks her head to look at the house through the passenger window and smiles as she slows to a stop at the curb. But her eyes are drawn to the house next door, against her will, and the smile hardens: this Victorian is smaller than its neighbor, shabbier, dismal, nightmarish.

Deborah forces herself back to her goal, feels under the seat and brings out a flat, wrapped present. She looks again up the stairs of the pretty house, smiles.

DEBORAH

No, thanks, I'm just running out and back right— running in and back right out — running in and ... right back out. No thanks, I'm just running in and back right, right back out again. Oh, just do it!

She puts her hand on the key to turn off the ignition, but sees some smudges on the wrapping paper. She gives a couple of rubs, licks her finger and rubs some more, grimaces, tosses the gift into the passenger seat, puts the car in gear, looks over her left

shoulder for traffic, starts to pull out fast, but lurches to a stop, stalling the engine, at Jim's yell.

JIM

Hey! Watch it!

JIM RUTLEDGE is as attractive as anybody ever could be, about 30, smart, understanding and warm. He's dressed in a sport coat and tie and carrying a bag of groceries. He has just crossed the street to be almost run down by Deborah.

CLOSE ON DEBORAH, electrified.

JIM

Deborah? Deborah Larsen? I mean O'Hare? Deborah O'Hare?

Deborah rolls down the window.

JIM (CONT.)

It is you, isn't it?

DEBORAH

Hi, Jim.

JIM

It IS you! Deborah, you look wonderful!

DEBORAH

Who are you, Jim? *(laughs)* I mean HOW are you, HOW are you, how stupid! But you look so wonderful, you look so good, so, so strong, so old! no, I mean...

JIM

(meanwhile, laughing, overlapping)

No, not stupid, just funny. Just funny, like always. But look at you. It's been so long.

DEBORAH (CONT.)

...good old, old like your father, and just as handsome, so clean like your father, well like a doctor, well you ARE a doctor, so why shouldn't you look like your father's son, just like...

JIM

(laughing, overlapping after her "doctor")

I'm a dermatologist, Deborah, it's not like brain surgery.

DEBORAH (CONT.)

...I pictured you. Jim, I'm so stupid, this is the wrong time, I've got to run, Susan's getting out of school, I don't want her waiting.

She tries the ignition, but the engine grinds.

JIM

But can't you come up? Mother would love to—

But she has already popped the hood and is getting out of the car, speaking throughout as she jiggles the carburetor.

DEBORAH

No, just running and, right back— damn this old heap!

JIM

It sounds like the—

DEBORAH (CONT.)

No, I know what it is. It's that little thingee, you jiggle it, and I knew I shouldn't come by, but Laird told me you were back in town, but you didn't call, Jim, and I had this ... this ...

(back in the car, retries the ignition but it still grinds.)

Damn! I didn't do it right, you made me nervous.

(out of the car and to the hood again to rejiggle the carburetor)

No, I know very well how to do it, I do it all the time.

JIM

Deborah, just take it slow and easy. The teachers will take care of Susan until you get there.

DEBORAH

No, I know that, of course I know that, but it's not just Susan, it's bowling league tonight and we're—

JIM

You and Laird are still bowling?

DEBORAH

Yeah, can you believe that, and we're defending the damn title, and if I don't have dinner on the table when Laird gets home, he'll—

JIM

How is Laird?

DEBORAH

(getting back into the car)

Well, he's been expecting you to call, Jim, we've both been expecting you to call.

She turns the key, the engine roars, but otherwise there is silence now, only the idle.

CLOSE ON DEBORAH who looks straight ahead through the windshield into the upraised hood.

CLOSE ON JIM who watches her, embarrassed.

JIM

You're right. I should have been the one to call.

DEBORAH

Well, but now it's Christmas and ... here.

As she gets out of the car to go let down the hood, she snatches up the gift from the passenger seat and thrusts it into his hand.

JIM

I'll get the hood.

DEBORAH

I'll get it. Open it.

JIM

Is this for me?

DEBORAH

Duh. *(laughs nervously)*

Deborah is slow and careful putting down the hood, watching Jim with a growing smile of intense anticipation. Jim is awkward trying to open the gift with the bag of groceries in his arms.

DEBORAH

Here.

(takes the bag of groceries from him)

Just tear it, the paper was really special but it got all grundgy under the seat there, I didn't want Laird to see it.

JIM

(laughs) Why not?

DEBORAH

Well— Oh, here, let me do it.

She gives him back the groceries, takes the gift from him, and tears it open.

JIM

Deborah, why didn't you want Laird to see it?

DEBORAH

Here.

Very tenderly she hands him a little book and takes the bag of groceries again.

JIM

Oh, it's a little picture book.

DEBORAH

(breathlessly) Uh huh.

JIM

Deborah! Is this one of your picture books?

DEBORAH

Uh huh.

JIM

Did you do this just for me?

DEBORAH

Uh huh, well no, not really, I mean I wrote it when we were kids, but I kind of redid it, and I redid all the pictures. See, some of them are— I don't—

(breaks off, overwhelmed)

JIM

(reading the title)

"The Legend of Nothing."

DEBORAH

Yeah! It's about this beautiful princess named Leola, but everyone calls her "Nothing" because, see, that's what she'll get when the king dies, nothing, because the kingdom goes to her brother, Prince Brae, and—

JIM

(flipping through the pages)

This artwork is beautiful, Deborah! You should get these published.

DEBORAH

Oh, sure.

JIM

(reading the last page)

"And so to this day, if you hear a baby cry, and ask its mother why, the mother will reply, 'Oh, that baby is just crying for Nothing.'" Cute.

DEBORAH

(stunned) You read the last page. It's ruined now.

JIM

No, it's not, I'm going to love reading this. I'm going to cherish—

DEBORAH

I've got to go, Jim. Everyone's waiting for me, I've got to go.

She shoves the bag of groceries back into his arms and escapes quickly in the car.

Jim is left standing in the quiet street, stunned.

CLOSE ON DEBORAH as she wheels around the corner, breathing hard, eyes filling with tears. She beats her fist on the steering wheel.

DEBORAH

You ... stupid!

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — EVENING

The O'Hare apartment is a simple two-bedroom on the second floor of a multi-unit complex. It is distinguished only by the fact that there are innumerable children's drawings pinned on the walls at child eye-level, and a Christmas tree with ornaments as a child would set them.

CU – A little hand places a jack of hearts on a pile of cards on the dining room table, and then quickly returns to slap the jack, accompanied by a gale of giggles.

ANGLE – SUSAN O'HARE (aged six) and Byron at the table.

SUSAN

(collecting the cards beneath the jack)

They're mine, mine, do you hear, all mine.

BYRON

Well, we'll just see about that, missy, and this little piggy went whee whee whee.

(tickles Susan into fits of laughter and steals her cards from her)

And now they're mine, mine, do you hear, all mine.

SUSAN

No, mine!

DEBORAH

(bringing dishes of food from the kitchen to the table)

Byron, don't encourage her, you'll get her going.

The front door opens and LAIRD O'HARE enters, followed by JUNIOR JOHNSON, both in working clothes. Laird is 30, rough, but genuinely good. Junior is just dumb and fun.

LAIRD

Junior, get yourself a beer and get one for Pip.

BYRON

Nope, I got my Beamer here.

Junior heads for the kitchen.

LAIRD

Well, get me one, Junior. Hey, babe.

(gives Deborah a kiss, sees food on the table)

Hey, how's that dinky little chicken gonna feed us all?

DEBORAH

(frustrated, angry)

I'll have fish sticks with Susan. *(quieter)* Laird, I wish you'd let me know when you're going to invite someone home to dinner.

LAIRD

(under his breath)

Any bowling night, Deb, Junior's gonna eat with us, for Chrissake. Thanks, Junior, you're a gentleman and a schooner.

Laird takes his beer from Junior, now coming back from kitchen, and heads up the hall, stripping off his work shirt as he goes.

Byron and Susan, meanwhile, are laying down more cards and now come to a jack. Byron goes to slap it but deliberately holds back until Susan can notice and slap it first.

SUSAN

Mine!

BYRON

Well, goldern the luck. You're just too quick for me, Susie.

DEBORAH

(starting back into the kitchen)

Byron, I don't like that game, you're ruining the cards, and Susan's going to hurt her hands slapping the table like that.

SUSAN

It's fun!

JUNIOR

Hey, move over, Pip, let me play.

Phone RINGS. Deborah starts back out from the kitchen for it, but notices she has grease on her hands, and goes back for a paper towel.

SUSAN

I'll get it!

DEBORAH

No, I'll get it.

BYRON

(whispering) Susie, remember what I told you.

Susan nods conspiratorially and giggles as she picks up the phone just as Laird comes in from the hallway with a clean shirt in his hand and Deborah comes in from kitchen, wiping her hands on a paper towel.

SUSAN

Dial-a-Prayer.

Laird, Byron and Junior all burst into laughter and Susan is consumed by giggles.

DEBORAH

Byron!

INT. INEZ AND BYRON'S HOUSE — EVENING

Inez has the phone to her ear, disbelieving.

INEZ

Susie? Oh, your Grandpa taught you that, did he?

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — EVENING

SUSAN

(squealing) It's Grandma!

Deborah starts for the phone, but Byron intercepts her.

BYRON

Oh, lemme talk to her a sec, Debbie. Hi, honey, miss me?

Deborah shares a glance with Laird.

BYRON (CONT.)

Yeah, she's here, but don't you have even one kind word for me? Here I am missin' you and ain't you at all missin' me back?

It's a phone on a cord, so there's no privacy here. Laird drifts resentfully off up the hallway and Deborah drifts politely into the kitchen. Junior picks up Byron's cards, and Susan comes back to the game.

JUNIOR

So, I get it, you slap the jacks but nothin' else?

SUSAN

And there are four of them, so watch out!

BYRON

(moving away from others, his back to them)

Well, I was just thinkin' you could tide me over here a little bit.

INT. INEZ AND BYRON'S HOUSE — EVENING

INEZ

What happened to what I gave you?

INT. O'HARE BATHROOM — EVENING

Laird, furious, is soaping up his armpits, watching himself in the mirror as he listens to his father's voice.

BYRON (O.S.)

Well, I spent it. Come on, honey, it's just till the first when my check comes in.

INT. O'HARE KITCHEN — EVENING

Deborah is quietly taking plates from cabinet, silverware from drawer, listening.

BYRON (O.S.)

Oh, for cryin' out loud! *(pause)* No, you may not be deaf but you certainly are dumb! Debbie, she wants to talk to you.

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — EVENING

Deborah comes in and Byron gives the phone to her then heads up the hall to Susan's room.

Deborah has brought the plates and silverware with her and, putting the phone between her neck and shoulder, sets the table as she converses with Inez. Her next few lines will play mostly O.S. during next several shots.

DEBORAH (MOSTLY O.S.)

Merry Christmas, Inez. *(pause)* Oh, sure, that's fine. *(pause)* No, I'll be here all day, just give a call before you come.

Junior, seeing Deborah intends to set the table and sensing a family squabble, is just smart enough to nod to Susan to move the game down to the floor in the corner by the Christmas tree.

Laird, putting on the clean shirt, comes out of the bathroom and down the hall to look into Susan's room.

INT. SUSAN'S ROOM — EVENING

OVER LAIRD'S SHOULDER — Byron is sitting on Susan's bed, the room in disorder with his clothes and Susan's dolls and toys lying about. There are artful murals on the walls, but all else is chaos.

BYRON

She's makin' it awful hard on me, son.

LAIRD

Hey, that's okay, Pip.

BYRON

Not a kind, not a happy word from her. I remember her when she was just a little girl on the ranch, hardly no bigger'n Susie. She'd go ridin' those crazy, wild horses, little tiny slip of a thing up there on those big animals, and here she is now ridin' me. It's a sad season this year. Who'd'a thought?

LAIRD

You need money, Pip, you don't have to go to her for it. What do you need, fifty, a hundred?

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — EVENING

CLOSE ON DEBORAH still on the phone, but overhearing Laird's offer, she turns to him with frustration.

ANGLE over Deborah's shoulder as she watches Laird, up the hallway, pull out his wallet. Byron comes to the doorway, protesting, but taking the money anyway.

DEBORAH

(into phone)

No, well, Christmas is for kids anyway.

(cups hand over mouthpiece for next, moves away)

LAIRD

You got a home here as long as you want it. And you don't have to get down on your knees to that bitch or anyone else.

BYRON

(backs Laird against the hallway wall)

Don't you talk about your mother that way, you hear me? All your life that woman's worked for you, and worked hard, give up everything she had for me, and for you and Lucy, and worked herself sick. And not so's you can be standin' here tonight trashin' her. Not in front of me. Not while I'm alive.

LAIRD

Okay, Pip, okay. Let's don't ... think about it. It can make you crazy.

DEBORAH

(uncovers mouthpiece)

Okay, I'll be here, bye.

(hangs up)

Come and eat, you guys.

As they come to the table, the doorbell rings. Deborah opens the door to find DARLENE BELL, a bombshell. Darlene leans her lovely head and a large part of the rest of her loveliness—barely concealed in a black leotard that reveals cleavage of dreams—through the doorway.

DARLENE

Hi, I was looking for Junior. Next door? He said he might be over here. Junior! You're not even changed!

JUNIOR

Oh, yeah, Laird, I forgot to tell you. Darlene's taking Bambi's place tonight, that's cool, right? Deb, you got enough for Darlene, don't you?

DEBORAH

(containing, returning to kitchen)

Of course. And there are fish sticks.

INT. O'HARE BATHROOM — EVENING

Deborah is combing and braiding Susan's hair for bed. There are two dolls in the bathroom, and Susan is braiding the hair on one.

JUNIOR (O.S.)

Darlene!

DARLENE (O.S.)

Junior! Now, Pip, you just stop that! Pippy!!! You're as bad as these young guys, only worse!

SUSAN

Ouch! Mommy, that's too tight.

DEBORAH

Well, I've got to make it tight, or it'll come out while you sleep, and then you won't be neat and pretty anymore.

DARLENE (O.S.)

Laird! Oh, honestly! Debbie!

DEBORAH

Little princesses must always be neat and pretty.

DARLENE (O.S.)

(coming up the hall)

Debbie!

DEBORAH

And very quiet ... and polite.

DARLENE

(appearing in bathroom doorway)

Debbie, Laird says to get the lead out. I've been trying to get those dishes done, but those boys—

BYRON (O.S.)

Darlene, don't keep us waitin', darlin'.

DARLENE

(laughing, starting back down the hall)

Pippy, gimme a sec! Honestly, Debbie, what is your secret for keeping your brains in your head?

SUSAN

Me and Grandpa gots a secret.

DEBORAH

A secret? That's nice. Is it about Christmas, about a Christmas present?

Deborah leads Susan out of the bathroom and across the hallway to Laird and Deborah's bedroom. Susan carries one doll and Deborah the other.

SUSAN

No. Can I tell you?

INT. LAIRD AND DEBORAH'S BEDROOM — EVENING

Deborah goes to the bed, Susan behind her.

DEBORAH

Well, then it wouldn't be a secret any more. I think you'd better wait until after Christmas, okay? So you don't spoil any surprises? Okay, now pull back just the corner like I showed you, and fold it down.

Deborah helps Susan fold back the sheet.

SUSAN

Why can't I sleep in my own room?

DEBORAH

Because Grandpa's here now, remember?

SUSAN

I don't like Grandpa.

DEBORAH

Sure you do, everybody likes Grandpa, he's funny. Perfect, see how neat and pretty?

SUSAN

I don't like him.

DEBORAH

(holding up the two dolls from the bathroom)

Now you want to sleep with Samantha? Or Annie.

SUSAN

Annie.

DEBORAH

(putting Annie into the fold of the sheet)

Oh, you're mad at Samantha now?

SUSAN

I don't like her, and I don't like Darlene.

DEBORAH

Shhhh, honey! She might hear you.

Laird comes in quickly, grabbing up his coat.

LAIRD

Deb, come on! If we're late, God!

(picks up Susan, swings her over his head, she giggles)

Wish us luck, sweetheart! We're going to bring home a big trophy.

SUSAN

Bigger than the last one?

LAIRD

You just wait and see.

DEBORAH

(grabbing her coat, heading into the hall)

Laird, don't make her dizzy! You're going to have her up all night now. Byron?

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — EVENING

DEBORAH (CONT.)

(coming down the hall)

Byron, I don't want her telling me that she stayed up until all hours. Eight o'clock, no later. Little hand on the eight, Susan, big hand on the twelve.

EXT. GABRIEL GARDENS APARTMENT COMPLEX — EVENING

Junior and Darlene are already at Laird's pickup, tickling each other trying to keep warm, Junior filching kisses and feels much to Darlene's laughing opprobrium.

DARLENE

Junior, stop it! Just stop it now.

Laird bounds down the stairs with Deborah following. Laird unlocks the driver's door, climbs in, reaches across and unlocks the passenger door. Junior opens it and makes a gentlemanly gesture for Darlene to get in. Darlene elbows him in the gut.

DARLENE

Debbie, first. Come on, Debbie, honey. Moosh it over good.

Deborah climbs in, and Darlene follows, with Junior giving her ample behind an ample push

JUNIOR

Cram it in there, Darlene! Jeez, I've never seen a girl your size with a such a big rectum!

INT. JIM'S BEDROOM — NIGHT

PAN along a line of trophies on the mantel of the fireplace. Though the pan begins on several bowling trophies, there are other sports represented, including one for baseball. CAMERA PULLS BACK as Jim enters from the bathroom, drying off after a shower. He meanders to the trophies to pick up the one for baseball, remembering.

He makes a sudden realization that becomes a happy decision. He goes quickly to his closet and rummages for a second then comes out with a box. He puts the box on the bed, searches in it and takes out a baseball glove. He puts the glove on and pounds his fist into it a couple of times, his eyes gleaming with delight. Then he goes into the closet again and comes out with a bright silk shirt on a hanger that he lays out on the bed, and starts back for the closet.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY — NIGHT

A bowling ball makes a strike.

Laird struts back to the scoring table to cheers from his team and boos and jeers from the opponents. It's league night and the alley, music blaring, is packed with a colorful array of team shirts. Junior gives Laird a high five.

JUNIOR

Go, Darlene, make me proud of you.

Darlene walks to the rack for her ball, and the change in the atmosphere is immediate. Though everyone in the nearby lanes continue what they are doing, wiping sweat from hands, selecting a ball, scoring, etc., not a single man or woman misses any nuance of Darlene's voluptuous progress to the rack to get her ball and then, forward, to the head of the lane.

Montage of eyes, male hungry, female envious and derisive, ending on Deborah's, perplexed.

Darlene stops at the head of the lane, holding her black bowling ball like a novice, her rear-end in her tight black pants as curvaceous and hard as the ball.

JUNIOR

(leaning over to Laird)

Makes you wonder which shiny black ball she's gonna roll down the lane.

In f.g. Darlene goes through her fancy and inept preparations to bowl, turning to smile over her shoulder at Junior; in b.g. Jim enters the bowling alley on the mezzanine. In his silk shirt, Jim is dressed much more richly than any of the bowlers, and he carries a small gift bag and a larger wrapped gift. In this bowling alley, he stands out.

ANGLE JIM — He looks down and spots the group, grins.

ANGLE DEBORAH — Still watching Darlene, perplexed. She seems to sense Jim's entrance, turns to him, starts, smiles involuntarily.

DEBORAH'S POV — Jim, in distance, doesn't see her, is looking intently nearby.

ANGLE DEBORAH — She turns to find what Jim is looking at.

DEBORAH'S POV — Laird gives Junior a knuckle-rub and pulls his shirt up over his head, laughing.

ANGLE DEBORAH — She looks back to Jim.

OVER JIM'S SHOULDER — Jim laughs as he watches Junior stumbling around, with Laird tickling his belly button.

OVER DEBORAH'S SHOULDER — As Laird tickles Junior, laughing, he looks over to Deborah to see if she is catching the fun, but she's looking up at Jim, laughing now herself. Laird turns to see what Deborah is looking at on the mezzanine.

Laird starts as he sees Jim. Just then Junior manages to get his head out of his shirt again, sees the expression on Laird's face and looks up to the mezzanine to see what Laird is looking at.

ANGLE — Jim waves to Laird.

ANGLE — Junior turns back to Laird.

JUNIOR

Ooh, Laird, who's your pretty boy?

OVER JIM'S SHOULDER — Jim sees Junior look up at him, sees Junior say something to Laird and snort. He sees, too, that Laird also snorts, and then looks away embarrassedly.

ANGLE JIM — Extremely hurt.

ANGLE LAIRD — Pissed at himself, he turns back to Jim and waves to him.

OVER JIM'S SHOULDER —As Jim turns to leave the bowling alley, Laird calls out.

LAIRD

Jimmy! Hey, Jim. Over here.

Laird waves to Jim to come down. Jim hesitates, then starts for the stairs down to the lanes.

Deborah stands uncertainly, having witnessed most of this, but too far away to have understood, or to have heard Junior's remark.

NEW ANGLE Jim makes his way down to the lane but gets waylaid by a female LUSH on the make.

Darlene, meanwhile, rolls her bowling ball finally, double-handedly.

The ball wobbles slowly along the edge of the gutter to pick off a single pin, the ten pin.

DARLENE

I got one!

Darlene jumps up and down much to the delight and disdain of the two genders who watch her sensational display.

JUNIOR

Jesus.

LAIRD

Junior, next girlfriend would you try her out on the lane before you put her on the team? What happened to Bambi anyway?

JUNIOR

(eyes glued to Darlene)

Who cares?

LAIRD

How long you been seeing this one?

JUNIOR

Just under a week. (Ooh, did you see that?)

LAIRD

What's the score?

INSERT — SCORE SHEET — Darlene is the next to the last bowler.

LAIRD (O.S.)

It's gonna be close, Deb. You're gonna have to bring us in because you got What's-Her-Face over there.

ANGLE — WHAT'S-HER-FACE, and not a pleasant one, looks like she rolls a mean bowling ball. She wipes the sweat on her face and looks at Deborah.

ANGLE – DEBORAH, Deborah gives What's-Her-Face a glance before turning her attention back to Jim, who has freed himself from the Lush.

JUNIOR

Deb's good for at least a spare. That'll put us over. Darlene, wait! I'm gonna show you some English.

ANGLE — DEBORAH, LAIRD, JUNIOR, JIM, DARLENE IN B.G.

As Jim comes up, Junior goes to Darlene to help her on her form.

LAIRD

Yeah, what he knows about English. Yo, Jim, whatcha doin' here, man? Hey, that how they dress in the ivy leagues? *(whistles)*

JIM

(laughs embarrassedly)

A tad overdressed, I guess? Women like it, anyway.

LAIRD

What're you doin' here? You're bowlin'?

JIM

Not since high school. No, Deborah told me you'd be here tonight and I thought I'd come by and drop off your Christmas presents.

(to Deborah holding up a gift from the bag)

This is for Susan.

DEBORAH

You didn't have to do that!

JIM

(handing Deborah a second gift, small box)

And this is for you.

Deborah takes the gift gingerly, very moved and trying to hide it, but Laird sees her expression, knows it too well.

JIM

And this is for you, Laird. I just had a ... sort of ... inspiration.

LAIRD

(still glancing at Deborah)

Thanks, Jim. That's real nice.

JIM

It's for old times, you know? Open it.

Laird looks to the lane as Darlene rolls her second ball with a little help from Junior. Jim follows the look.

JIM

Wow.

LAIRD

Yeah, that's what everyone says.

ANGLE — The ball wobbles along the edge of the opposite gutter picking off a single pin, the seven.

ANGLE — Darlene jumps up and down ecstatically again.

DARLENE

Two!

ANGLE — LAIRD, JIM, DEBORAH

Smiles around, but there is a tension and embarrassment.

JIM

Open it, Laird. (*afterthought*) Open yours, too, Deborah.

Laird fumbles with the present, starting to unwrap it as Junior and Darlene rejoin the group.

DEBORAH

I— Not now. I've got to ... bowl now.

DARLENE

Okay, Debbie! Strike 'em out!

LAIRD

Jim, meet Junior and this is Darlene. Me and Jim go way back, played ball together for the Wildcats, didn't we, Jim?

JIM

As a matter of fact, that's what—

JUNIOR

Oh Jeez, is this the guy that—
(*stops himself*)

Everyone grows nervous. Laird goes back to unwrapping the present.

JIM

(after a beat)

The guy that what?

JUNIOR

Oh, Laird was telling me about this friend of his, went away to college and got his doctor degree, just back in town.

(glances at Laird, unable to suppress a grin)

Moved in with his mom. That you?

JIM

(hurt, angry)

Yes?

DEBORAH

(keeping the lid on her outrage)

Jim's mother's an invalid. His father died. Jim takes care of her now.

DARLENE

I think that's very generous of you. Your mother should be proud.

LAIRD

(taking Jim's baseball glove out of the box)

Jesus, Jim!

DEBORAH

(stunned, and immediately envious)

You gave Laird your mitt?

JIM

Just a kind of a ... sudden ... inspiration.

LAIRD

I always wanted a glove this good.

DARLENE

Oh, that makes me ... feel ... kind of sad.

JUNIOR

Oh, man, Laird, look at those five big fingers, how nice and oiled up they are. What do you suppose he's got in mind, you know, oilin' 'em up like that, then givin' it to you like that, and all, you know?

JIM

(in Junior's face, game for the fight)

Hey! What do you think you're—

JUNIOR

(meeting him at the same level)

Say what, pretty boy?

LAIRD

(coming between them)

Hey, hey, hey. Jesus, Junior!

JIM

Is this your friend, Laird?

LAIRD

Yeah, he's my friend.

DEBORAH

Jim, Jim.

LAIRD

Hey, come on, Jim, he's just loaded. Junior, sit down and shut up. Jesus! Yo, Jim, what else you got in your bag there?

Jim backs down. He takes "The Legend of Nothing" out of the bag.

JIM

Nothing.

(laughs, shares it with Deborah, but she doesn't laugh)

It's called "The Legend of Nothing." Nevermind, you wouldn't understand.

(Laird is deeply cut.)

Deborah, I read it to my mom; she loved it.

DEBORAH

(daring to look at neither Laird nor Jim)

Oh, good. Well, I had her in mind when I did it.

Laird watches the two of them closely, acidic with jealousy, fury. Jim gives away nothing. Deborah would like to just escape.

WHAT'S-HER-FACE

We're waitin'!

JUNIOR

(checking the score)

They pulled ahead, Deb, but all we need is seven. You can get that blindfolded. Strike, Deb!

Deborah puts Jim's present, which she has been holding tightly, into her shirt pocket and goes to the rack for her ball.

DARLENE

See Jim, a strike is when you knock 'em all down, but that's good, and they give you a lot of bonuses. And Debbie's the one to do it. She's done it lots of times tonight. Come on, strike 'em out, Debbie honey!

Deborah takes her position at the top of the lane and, with superb form, rolls a slick gutterball. She turns and walks back to the rack, gives a shrug to Laird who glares back at her. Putting her hand over the air-blower, she glances at Jim, then turns and squints down the lane.

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — NIGHT

The door opens into the camera explosively. Laird storms in. Deborah is chasing up the stairs after him, but he slams the door in her face.

DEBORAH

Laird, don't be such— *(Slam!)*

NEW ANGLE — Byron has been asleep on the couch, stewed, but Byron is always able to put a good face on it. He sits up suddenly.

BYRON

Laird, what on earth?

Laird turns the deadbolt on the door and heads up the hall into the bathroom.

LAIRD

Two gutterballs in a row! She gave up the whole goddam season!

BYRON

Well ... Lairdy? *(waits a second, looks at door)* Son, don't you think—

LAIRD (O.S.)

She's got a key.

BYRON

(waits another long moment, nervously)

But it don't look like she's comin' in, son.

LAIRD

She's got a key!

FLUSH of toilet. Byron sits up, makes himself more presentable as Laird re-enters.

LAIRD

Susan get to sleep all right? She give you any trouble? What time'd you get her to bed?

BYRON

Yep. Nope. Oh, eight, eight-thirty. Son, don't you think ... ?

Laird goes to the door, unbolts it, jerks it a crack open, heads for kitchen.

LAIRD

Want a beer, Pip?

BYRON

That'd be just fine.

LAIRD

No, you'll want your Beamer, won't you, Pip?

BYRON

Oh, that's all gone. I had a friend over, didn't think you'd mind, and that boy drinks like a Saint Bernard.

The door opens and Deborah comes in quietly, embarrassed, seething. She heads up the hall to their bedroom. Laird sees her pass by the kitchen doorway but pretends to be busy with the beers.

LAIRD

Deb, make sure you get those big Jim Beams from now on. Pip's got a friend.

(as he hands Byron his beer, calls after her)

You want a beer, too?

Laird and Byron share a glance of nervousness.

INT. LAIRD AND DEBORAH'S BEDROOM — NIGHT

Deborah comes in, leaving the door open behind her so that she is backlit. She checks on Susan, adjusts the blankets, takes Annie from Susan's hand and puts her up beside Susan's cheek. She kisses Susan softly, then heads out the door.

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — NIGHT

As Deborah comes back down the hall, Byron is continuing in a low voice.

BYRON

Nope, now nope, you just stop your worryin'. Your mother and me's gonna get this settled any day now, you'll see.

LAIRD

No, Pip, it's a real pleasure havin' you here. It's an honor.

BYRON

I know about these in-laws, Debbie.

Deborah goes to the buffet and opens one of the cabinets with a key. Through Byron's talk she takes out her drawing things and sets herself up at the table and furthers her work on a picture, dreamy and fantastical. Laird watches Deborah throughout.

BYRON (CONT.)

Tell you what, remember my cousin, Cholly? You remember Cholly, don't you, Lairdy.

LAIRD

(watching Deborah)

Little guy, yeah, with the fat wife.

BYRON

That's him, Cholly and Ella. Well, I'll tell you what about Cholly and Ella. When they got married Cholly was about the ugliest character you ever want to see, uglier than me even. You believe that, Debbie, uglier than me?

DEBORAH

(smiling politely, drawing more intently)

If you say so.

BYRON

(coming over to the table to sit by Deborah)

Well, he was. Uglier than me even. But in those days Ella was about as pretty as they come, tiny ...

VARIOUS ANGLES—During Byron's next lines, Deborah tenses but continues her drawing, moving her arm into position to shield the picture from first Byron, then Laird, when he begins to come to the table. Laird comes up behind Deborah and begins to massage her wired shoulders. Trapped between the two men, Deborah works quietly, ever more intently, her lines growing darker, shorter, the drawing changing its character dramatically while her jaw sets, her teeth clench, and her lips form a thin, hard line across her face.

BYRON (CONT., MOSTLY O.S.)

... woman, looked like a China doll, her features was that pretty and delicate. Well, sir, at first Cholly he used to beat that woman up somethin' awful, it was criminal, any little thing Ella'd do that Cholly didn't like, back of his hand, oh, and lots worse. But through the years Ella put on weight and now she's twice't Cholly's size and now she's the one beats up on him!

Laird finally gives up the massage and drops back, miserable.

BYRON (CONT.)

But there they are, still together there. And that's love.

CU DEBORAH, who looks at Byron, her jaw dropped open in astonishment.

BYRON (CONT. O.S.)

And that's why Inez'll be callin' up any day sayin' "Come on home." You don't just turn your back on forty years.

INT. LAIRD AND DEBORAH'S BEDROOM — LATER THAT NIGHT

CROSSFADE INTO CU SUSAN, her mouth dropped open in sleep. PULL BACK as Laird's hand comes into the frame, pulling up the blanket around her, removing Annie from Susan's clutch as he gives her a tender kiss. FOLLOW HIM as he goes out of the room, backlit, leaving the door open.

INT. O'HARE HALLWAY — NIGHT

Laird stops outside Susan's room and raps on the door.

LAIRD

Night, Pip.

BYRON (O.S.)

Night, son. Awful nice to be here.

LAIRD

Great havin' you here, Pip.

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — NIGHT

Laird continues down the hall into the living/dining room area. He turns off a couple of lights, watching Deborah the while as she still sits drawing at the table, aware of each light turned off. Laird leaves on only the light for the table and the Christmas tree lights, wanders to the table, reaches for one of her sketch books.

DEBORAH

Laird, don't ... get them dirty now.

She pulls together all the sketchbooks and puts them back in their cabinet, locks them up, Laird watching resentfully.

LAIRD

So, you gave Jim one of your little books, huh?

DEBORAH

Yeah, I thought his mom would get a kick out of it.

Deborah turns on the lights that Laird turned off and comes back to the table, picks up the slap-jack cards and starts to lay out a hand of solitaire.

LAIRD

God, he's changed. Jeez! When did you see him? Just today?

DEBORAH

Yeah. Stopped by, dropped off the book.

LAIRD

(incredulous)

You went to that house?

DEBORAH

His mother's house, yeah.

LAIRD

How did it look?

DEBORAH

Just like always. New coat of paint.

LAIRD

Not Jim's house. Yours.

DEBORAH

Oh. I didn't even look.

CLOSE ON LAIRD, watching her carefully. He comes around behind her again, puts his hands gently on her shoulders, leans over and brushes his lips against her neck.

LAIRD

Come to bed.

DEBORAH

I'd just toss and turn, Laird. I'm not a bit sleepy.

LAIRD

(his lips moving up from her neck to her cheek)

I don't want to sleep.

DEBORAH

Well ... I ... *(pause)*

LAIRD

Come on, you said you'd be better.

DEBORAH

I said I'd try. And I will try, Laird, but...

(pause)

LAIRD

Come on. You know how long it's been? I've ... I've been ... I've been havin' to use my hand, babe, I shouldn't have to do that.

DEBORAH

Well ... I'm sorry, but ... You should try, too.

LAIRD

Try what, babe? I'll try anything. You know me.

DEBORAH

Well, try to be ... gentle.

LAIRD

I'm gentle.

DEBORAH

You slammed the door in my face!

LAIRD

Shh, shh, shh, I'm sorry about that, baby, but you just made me so mad—

DEBORAH

And Byron was right there! How long are you going to let him stay here?

LAIRD

Shhh, he'll hear you. Deb, he's my father. That bitch threw him out...

DEBORAH

Laird, she's your mother, and someday you're...

LAIRD (CONT.)

...and I'm going to put him up as long as he needs me to. Shh...

DEBORAH (CONT.)

...going to say that in front of Susan.

LAIRD

...shh, shh, baby, shh. See how gentle I am? Like a little lamb.

(nibbles her neck with his lips)

Just taking a nibble here, just grazing on my girl, like she used to love so much, remember?

She allows herself to be turned to face him. He strokes her cheek lightly, then frames her face with his hands to look deeply into her eyes.

LAIRD (CONT.)

God, you're just so beautiful. Your eyes are so beautiful. I love you so much.

She buries her face in his chest.

DEBORAH

When you're like this ... I ...

His kisses grow more passionate. At first Deborah tries to return them, but as his hunger for her grows, she is able to give less and less.

FLASHBACKS THROUGHOUT — DEBORAH'S POV — Very brief, almost subliminal, shots of a man's head, his face never seen, just his hair, his ear, too close, too violent, gasping, grunting.

Laird leads Deborah to the couch and slides in on top of her, so hungry for her that he's ready to almost eat her. She twists her head to the side, suffocating under his kisses, and then finally manages to twist out from under him.

DEBORAH

(breathless)

Okay, okay. Okay, Laird, let me just ... let me just make up the couch and bring Susan out here so we can have the bed.

She heads up the hall to their bedroom.

INT. LAIRD AND DEBORAH'S BEDROOM — NIGHT

Deborah slips softly into the room, checks on Susan, then goes to the closet, takes out bedding and exits the room, leaving the door open.

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — NIGHT

Laird finishes pulling the hide-a-bed out of the couch as Deborah returns, and now he strips off his shirt and jumps into the center of the hide-a-bed, posing seductively, laughing. She laughs, too.

DEBORAH

Get off.

As she begins making up the bed, Laird caresses her behind.

LAIRD

You're lookin' good, looked good out on the lanes tonight, puttin' on some meat.

DEBORAH

Yeah, I noticed that. I'm starting a new diet after Christmas.

LAIRD

(grabbing her from behind, smooching her)

Don't go on any diets. I want you to get big, like Darlene.

DEBORAH

(tries to laugh)

Ouch, hey. Laird, you know what you could do?

LAIRD

Uh huh.

DEBORAH

Why don't you ... go shave?

LAIRD

Christ!

DEBORAH

Well, your beard hurts, Laird. Please.

LAIRD

All right, all right.

INT. O'HARE BATHROOM — NIGHT

Laird storms into the bathroom and starts to lather up his face. After a moment, Deborah comes to the door.

DEBORAH

And Laird... *(pause)*

LAIRD

What?

DEBORAH

Why don't you take a shower too?

LAIRD

Got any antiseptic? We'll just rub it all over you.

DEBORAH

Shhh, Byron will hear you. You worked hard all day, then you went bowling.

LAIRD

(advancing on her)

How about some chloroform? We'll just put you under for the whole horrible thing.

DEBORAH

(retreating toward living room, trying unsuccessfully to keep her voice low)

Well, it IS horrible. You make it horrible.

INT. LAIRD AND DEBORAH'S BEDROOM — NIGHT

Susan comes slowly awake.

DEBORAH (CONT. O.S.)

I have feelings too, you know. I shouldn't have to ask a thing like that. You never used to be this way, coming at me all hands, and dirty, and smelling, and out for your own pleasure.

Susan gets sleepily out of bed, clutches Annie, and stumbles to the bedroom door in time to see Laird's back as he follows Deborah into the living room.

LAIRD

(overlapping)

No, and I never used to have an ice cube for...

SUSAN

Mommy.

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — NIGHT

Laird backs Deborah to the hide-a-bed as Susan follows them, in the shadows of the hallway, unseen by both.

LAIRD (CONT.)

...a wife. I never used to have to get down on my knees and beg...

SUSAN

Mommy.

DEBORAH

For God's sake, stop shouting!

LAIRD (CONT.)

...for it. When was the last time you wanted me!

SUSAN

Mommy.

DEBORAH

(going around Laird to Susan)

You woke Susan!

SUSAN

(rubbing her eyes)

There's spiders in my hair.

DEBORAH

Let Mommy see. No, there aren't, you're just having a nightmare.

SUSAN

Nuh uh, there was a black rabbit under my bed.

LAIRD

(recovers with an effort, tousles her hair)

A black rabbit? If it was black, baby, how could you see it in the dark?

SUSAN

My eyes hurt.

LAIRD

Well, you got sleep in 'em is why.

SUSAN

(taking his thumb)

This little piggy went to market...

LAIRD

(overlapping)

Oh, no, that's sneaky.

SUSAN (CONT.)

...this little piggy stayed home. Come on, Daddy, I'll be the piggy and you be the back.

DEBORAH

(overlapping, continuing to make the bed)

Honey, it's late now.

LAIRD

(looking at Deborah defiantly, joins Susan)

...this little piggy had roast beef...

LAIRD/SUSAN (CONT.)

...and this little piggy had none, and this little piggy...

(Laird hoists Susan on his back, wheels around the room)

...went whee whee whee whee whee all the way home.

LAIRD (CONT.)

(releasing Susan to Deborah, who is very annoyed)

Ooops, better be quiet now or Mommy'll call the cops and put us in jail.

DEBORAH

Laird!

SUSAN

Nuh uh.

LAIRD

Oh, yes sir, Mommy loves jail. If she doesn't lock you in, then she locks you out.

DEBORAH

(putting Susan into the hide-a-bed)

Come on, honey, slip in here where it's warm.

Laird, who in the piggyback has ended up with Annie, throws the doll down on the bed and storms up the hall. The door SLAMS.

SUSAN

Why is Daddy mad?

DEBORAH

Oh, just no reason. You know who's coming over tomorrow? Grandma. She's bringing your Christmas present.

During this next, Deborah goes around the room turning off lights, leaving only the Christmas tree for illumination. She straightens some of the little angels on the tree fondly. In the end she settles down in the bed to take the braids from Susan's hair, to comb and re-braid it.

SUSAN

Another dolly?

DEBORAH

I don't know. It's a secret, we'll have to wait and see.

SUSAN

Grandma always gives me a dolly, and I don't like 'em. I want G.I. Joe.

DEBORAH

Well, G.I. Joe's a dolly.

SUSAN

Nuh uh, he's a action figure. You just combed my hair.

DEBORAH

Well, a little princess's hair can never have too much combing. Now which do you want, song or story?

SUSAN

Song.

DEBORAH

Which song.

SUSAN

Christmas carol.

DEBORAH

Which Christmas carol?

SUSAN

The one about the baby cheeses.

DEBORAH

The baby cheeses? *(laughs)*

SUSAN

Why are you laughing?

DEBORAH

Oh, nothing, sweetie, I just remembered something I have to tell your daddy.

(laughs again, then sings)

"Away in a manger..." that one?

SUSAN

The berry one!

DEBORAH

(sings) Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, The little Lord Cheeses—

(laughs)

SUSAN

Mommy, don't laugh!

DEBORAH

You're right, I'm sorry. *(sings)* The little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet head..."

SUSAN

Grandpa always laughs. I don't like Grandpa.

DEBORAH

...The cattle are lowing, the dum dee dum dum.

SUSAN

(overlapping)

Why can't I tell you Grandpa and mine's secret? I told Daddy.

DEBORAH

Did you? Did Daddy like it?

SUSAN

Oh, he just said never mind and don't say anything.

DEBORAH

(sings) The cattle are lowing, the dum dee dum dum— I can't think of it, honey.

SUSAN

Are you going to put Grandpa in jail?

DEBORAH

(sings) The dum dee—

Deborah breaks off, huge moment for her as she finally begins to realize what they have been talking about.

SUSAN

Are you going to stop him from babysitting me? "The dum dee dum dum." *(laughs)* Mommy, that's funny!

DEBORAH

(keeping her voice just right)

Susan. What's the secret? What did you and Grandpa do?

SUSAN

Can I tell now?

DEBORAH

Yes, what did he do?

SUSAN

He touched me.

DEBORAH

Did he? Can you tell me where Grandpa touched you?

SUSAN

It isn't nice.

DEBORAH

And you told Daddy... what ... what did you tell— ?

She breaks off as the hallway light comes on, throwing Byron's shadow on the floor as he approaches the living room. Deborah freezes.

BYRON

Oh, Debbie, you still up? I thought I'd get me a glass of milk.

As he goes to the refrigerator and pours a glass of milk, Deborah, rigid, pulls Susan to her ever so gently. Susan looks up at her. Deborah makes a gesture with her lips and finger, "Shhh." Susan giggles.

BYRON (CONT.)

Well, maybe I'll just get some of this good firewater, too.

(comes out of kitchen with a glass of milk and a beer)

Man could catch his death going to bed on cold milk. Grandpa's little dolly. How ya doin', darlin'?

SUSAN

(starting up to go to him)

Hi, Grandpa. You know what—

DEBORAH

(pulling Susan back)

Susan's been having a nightmare.

BYRON

Oh, honey!

DEBORAH

She's going to sleep with me tonight.

Deborah starts toward the hallway, carrying Susan.

BYRON

Goodnight then, angel doll. Give Grandpa kiss nightnight.

Byron kisses Susan over Deborah's shoulder. Deborah pulls away and starts up the hallway.

SUSAN

Goodnight, Grandpa. Don't let the bedbugs bite you.

When they reach the end of the hallway, Deborah looks to her own bedroom door, then opens the bathroom door.

DEBORAH

Daddy's asleep now, so be real quiet.

INT. O'HARE BATHROOM — NIGHT

Deborah opens the door, carries Susan in and sits on the toilet seat with her for a moment, listening for Byron's movements.

BYRON

(singing softly, O.S.)

Oh, Susannah, oh don't you cry for me...

SUSAN

Mommy, if Grandpa...

DEBORAH

Shhhh, shhhh.

SOUND OF SUSAN'S BEDROOM DOOR CLOSING

Deborah quietly opens the bathroom doorway and, gesturing again to shush, carries Susan down the hall.

INT. OHARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — NIGHT

Deborah slips Susan into the hide-a-bed and gets in beside her pulling the blankets up high, hugging Susan to her.

SUSAN

But if Grandpa—

DEBORAH

Shhh! Shhh! Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

CU DEBORAH, FROZEN

FADE OUT.

While screen is dark, we hear the sound of labored breathing and a child's whimpering and gasping.

CHILD

I can't breathe! Mommy, I can't breathe!

FADE-IN:

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — MORNING

ANGLE on Deborah in hide-a-bed, breathing hard, sweating. She has Susan in her arms. She wakes with a start and discovers where she is, looks up, sees Laird.

Laird is standing in the hallway, watching her as he tucks in a work shirt.

LAIRD

She for protection?

Laird goes up the hall. Deborah slips out of bed without waking Susan and follows him.

INT. O'HARE BATHROOM — MORNING

Laird is lathering his face. Deborah steps into the shot, watches him a moment. He turns to her, his face full of anger and accusation. She goes back down the hall.

INT. O'HARE KITCHEN — MORNING

ANGLE on eggs frying, smoking. DRAWBACK to discover Deborah standing above the skillet in a trance. Laird comes in quickly and takes the spatula from her.

LAIRD

Damn it, Deb!

Laird tries to salvage the eggs, but they're too far gone. He throws the whole skillet into the sink and turns on the water. He angrily picks up a plate with a piece of toast and a couple of rashers of bacon and carries it into the dining room.

ANGLE on Deborah as she turns off the water, follows him into the dining room and watches him as he takes a bite of toast and starts putting on his shoes.

DEBORAH

Laird...

(stops, he looks up at her)

Laird...

LAIRD

I'm right here, Deb. Right here, gettin' ready to go to work, bring home the bacon for you to burn. Not dressed in silk, but I'm here.

DEBORAH

We need to talk.

LAIRD

We need a little action, the way it looks to me. I'm late.

He pulls on his jacket as he goes out the door. POUNDING ON NEIGHBOR DOOR.

LAIRD (CONT.) O.S.

Junior, come on let's go, we're late.

Deborah looks up the hallway, shakes Susan awake, whispering.

DEBORAH

Susan, wake up, honey. Come on, baby, get up. Shhhh. You want to go for a ride, the zoo?

SUSAN

Can we?

DEBORAH

Come on, now. Shhh. Let's get dressed real quiet so we don't wake Grandpa. Okay?

SUSAN

(jumping out of bed)

Oh boy!

DEBORAH

Shhhh!

INT. RUTLEDGE LIVING ROOM — MIDMORNING

ANGLE ON CURTAINED WINDOW

Deborah's hand comes into the shot and pulls back the curtain so that we see her old house next door, its dark windows frowning.

Jim and his mother, MRS. RUTLEDGE, watch her with concern as Mrs. Rutledge helps Susan to cookies and milk. Jim is in sweats.

JIM

Would you like to go over and look around inside? It hasn't changed.

DEBORAH
(dropping the curtain)

No.

JIM
 Mrs. Ames ... remember, down the street? Mrs. Ames owns it now, and I'm sure she would love—

DEBORAH
 No! Thank you.

MRS. RUTLEDGE
 Dear, what Deborah is too polite to say is that it would probably bring back too much pain.

SUSAN
 What's that mean?

MRS. RUTLEDGE
 Your mother was a little girl in that house, dear. And now it doesn't belong to her any more.

SUSAN
 Is that the house where the other grandpa died?

DEBORAH
(surprised, dismayed)
 Who told you about that?

SUSAN
 Grandpa. He said—

DEBORAH
 Never mind, you can just forget that. The cookies good? You say thank you to Mrs. Rutledge?

SUSAN
 Thank you.

MRS. RUTLEDGE
 Any time! I've never had a little monster eating my cookies before.

Susan giggles.

DEBORAH

Mrs. Rutledge, could you mind Susan while Jim and I take a walk, could we take a walk, Jim?

Both Jim and his mother are taken off guard by Deborah's angst.

MRS. RUTLEDGE

Of course.

JIM

Sure, just ... uh ...

(starts for his jacket at the front door)

MRS. RUTLEDGE

Susan, let's see, I don't have many games any more, but perhaps you know some card games we could play?

SUSAN

Oh, yeah! Grandpa taught me a good one!

Deborah, on her way toward the door with Jim, hears this last, considers interfering, but waves it away and goes out the door which Jim opens for her.

MRS. RUTLEDGE

Good. What's the game called?

SUSAN

Bull doo-doo!

EXT. RUTLEDGE BACKYARD — MIDMORNING

Deborah and Jim come off the steps and turn right to walk up the sidewalk. She sees the swing set in the side yard.

DEBORAH

Oh, Jim, she's still got your swing set.

JIM

She never changes anything.

DEBORAH

Do you think it'll still hold me?

He opens the low picket fence gate for her.

JIM

Still holds me.

Deborah sits in the swing, laughs delightedly, a little embarrassed.

DEBORAH

Remember?

JIM

All we need is Laird, doing a couple of flips, falling out on his head.

They both laugh.

DEBORAH

I don't know why the two of you always played catch here. You had the park, you had the school yard, but you came here. I'd look down at you from—

(flicks her eyes up to a window of the house next door)

I'd look down and think you were doing it just to be near me.

JIM

(laughs) Yeah, he was.

CLOSE ON DEBORAH, deeply wounded.

JIM (CONT. O.S.)

He used to shout and hoot and do everything he could to get your attention. Remember? Your father used to come slamming out that back door, yelling at him.

FLASHBACK — DEBORAH'S POV from upstairs window. YOUNG LAIRD and YOUNG JIM play catch in Jim's backyard below.

YOUNG LAIRD

Deborah, oh Deb—o—rah!

DOOR SLAM.

JIM (O.S.)

Deborah, what is it? Deborah?

CU DEBORAH, a vacant, inward expression.

CU JIM, watching her

JIM (CONT.)

Deborah, what's going on?

DEBORAH

Jim, something bad is happening.

INT. RUTLEDGE LIVING ROOM — MIDMORNING

Mrs. Rutledge, at the table playing cards with Susan, looks down at Deborah and Jim through the sheers.

MRS. RUTLEDGE

My, it's so dark in here, isn't it?

She gets up and pulls the sheers, managing to sneak a peek at the pair below without their seeing her. OVER MRS. RUTLEDGE'S SHOULDER, we see Jim and Deborah in intense conversation.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Your turn!

MRS. RUTLEDGE

Sorry, dear, it's just these old eyes. Now ...

*(picking up her hand, in which she has far more cards than Susan;
as she sorts we see she has three tens)*

...you claim to have discarded a ten, I believe, and now, if I understand the game correctly, if I think you're not telling the truth, that's when I say—

SUSAN

(delighted)

Bull doo-doo!

MRS. RUTLEDGE

And you say Grandpa Byron taught you this game?

SUSAN

Good, huh? Now YOU do jacks. IF you have any, missy.

MRS. RUTLEDGE

(discarding a jack, face down)

Very well, one jack.

ANGLE OVER SUSAN'S SHOULDER. Her hand has far fewer cards than Mrs. Rutledge, yet Susan does happen to have two queens, which she now discards face down.

SUSAN

Lovely ladies, two abreast.

MRS. RUTLEDGE

(discarding two kings and a four, face down)

Three kings. Why this is easy.

EXT. RUTLEDGE BACKYARD — MIDMORNING

DEBORAH

What am I going to do?

Jim looks up at the window.

JIM

Let's walk.

Jim leads Deborah out the gate and onto the sidewalk where they turn and begin walking up the block.

JIM

What does Laird say?

DEBORAH

I haven't talked to him.

JIM

What! Deborah, you've got to tell Laird!

DEBORAH

He already knows.

JIM

(stops walking)

I don't understand.

DEBORAH

Susan told Laird before she told me. He told her not to tell me.

JIM

What! No, wait, she must have meant—

DEBORAH

Jim! She said "I told Daddy the secret and he said don't tell anybody else"!

JIM

Oh, God, no! That ... What does that—? No, Deborah, I can't— this is, uh... you've got to get help.

DEBORAH

Who?

JIM

There are places you can go.

DEBORAH

(snorts) Yellow Pages?

JIM

Well, that's ... a start but I can find out, we can—

DEBORAH

No.

JIM

Take Laird with you.

DEBORAH

He won't go.

JIM

Deborah what do you want me to do, be your doctor and just fix it all up for you? I can't. These people know about—

DEBORAH

No, they don't!

JIM

Then what are you going to do? Go to the police?

DEBORAH

I came to you!

JIM

Deborah, you can't ... you can't turn your back on this. Not this. How far has it gone, what's Byron done to her ... so far?

DEBORAH

Just ... touching, I think.

JIM

"Just" touching? Did he touch her? Or did he make her touch him?

(she shudders)

Deborah, it's always going to START with "just touching". And then ...?

(pause)

CLOSE ON DEBORAH as this sinks in.

EXT. NEW BUILDING CONSTRUCTION SITE — DAY

Darlene, in high heels and tight pants is making her way across various obstacles of the construction site, the men all around stopping work to watch.

ANGLE ON LAIRD AND JUNIOR as Laird strains to heave one end of a load of steel rod onto his shoulder.

LAIRD

Hey, Junior, you wanna give me a hand here?

JUNIOR

(sees Darlene in the distance)

Aw, man!

LAIRD

What ... is ... that!

NEW ANGLE, DARLENE waves to a MAN and holds up a bag.

DARLENE

You got a guy here named Junior?

The man points. Darlene looks, sees Junior, waves bag.

DARLENE

Junior! I made you lunch.

Junior looks at Laird and grins in embarrassment. Laird shakes his head, fuming, drops his end of the load of rod with a crash.

EXT. CHEZ INEZ BEAUTY SHOP PARKING LOT — DAY

Deborah pulls up in her car, parks, and she and Jim get out.

INT. CHEZ INEZ — DAY

Inez looks up from JANET, whose hair she is cutting, and watches Deborah and Jim through the front window. PHONE IS RINGING. SANDY answers it in b.g.

SANDY

(O.S., pronouncing it chezz eye—nezz)

Chez Inez, this is Sandy?

JANET

...but you can bet your life I'll never leave Chez Inez again, not after the butcher job that woman did on my hair.

INEZ

Well, you dope.

JANET

And the color! I asked for auburn but...

OVER INEZ'S SHOULDER we see that although Deborah starts for the door of the shop, Jim hangs back. Deborah stops, surprised, and turns back to talk to him.

EXT. CHEZ INEZ — DAY

DEBORAH

You're not coming in?

JIM

Deborah, I told you. This is up to you.

DEBORAH

But—

JIM

(waves through window to Inez)

No, come on, now, I got you here, but I'm only going to get in your way in there, and you know that.

(stretches out his legs on the hood of Deborah's car)

I'm going to run home.

DEBORAH

Sorry I kept you.

JIM

Deborah, don't ... come on, don't be like that, we agreed, you're going to get that old man out of there, and this is your step, and you're taking it, by yourself. And you're going to set it straight with Laird. This is what YOU said, remember, and I'm in full agreement.

DEBORAH

You're not going to be with me when I talk to Laird? You couldn't help me?

JIM

Deborah, you see the way Laird feels about me now. That guy in the bowling alley last night? God, he's changed.

INT. CHEZ INEZ — DAY

OVER INEZ'S SHOULDER while Inez continues to cut hair — and watch. Through the window we see Deborah's expression change, also a furtive gesture by Deborah to Jim that they move the conversation off to the left, then a glance and wave into the shop at Inez. Inez raises her scissors in salute. Both Deborah and Jim move out of Inez's line of sight.

SANDY (O.S.)

Okay, see you then. *(hangs up)* No, Janet, what you need is let Inez cut off that mop and act your age.

INEZ

Customers, Sandy.

SANDY (O.S.)

Well, somebody's got to tell her.

JANET (O.S.)

My husband would kill me.

SANDY (O.S.)

Let him.

NEW ANGLE — Inez moves to a new place, ostensibly to stretch and wash, but really to try to get an oblique view of Deborah and Jim.

INEZ

Oh, what a backache I got. Too many of you old dolls comin' in to get cranked up for the holidays.

Inez moves to a basin at the right front of the shop where in the mirror she can get a glimpse through the window of the area outside, where Deborah and Jim have moved. She washes her hands, and takes her time drying them, watching in the mirror. Meanwhile the shop chatter goes on O.S. while in the mirror Deborah is getting very close to Jim.

JANET (O.S.)

He says if God wanted women to have short hair he'd have made us men.

LORRAINE (O.S.)

My husband's just the reverse. I'd give anything to have long hair, but if it gets to my shoulder he says get it cut or get a divorce.

SANDY

Men! I say fry 'em up with the bacon and have 'em for breakfast.

EXT. CHEZ INEZ — DAY

In the corner of the ell of the strip mall, Deborah and Jim have found some privacy.

DEBORAH

I opened your present this morning.

JIM

Did you like them?

DEBORAH

Oh, yeah! But they're too beautiful. And they must have been very expensive.

JIM

They were my mother's.

DEBORAH

(even more touched)

How sweet! How good! Those earrings will be ... my ... treasure. I should have said thank you to her today!

JIM

(laughs) She doesn't even know yet that I took them. She was asleep last night when I left for the bowling alley, and then this morning I forgot to tell her.

CU—DEBORAH, again wounded deeply. She begins to cry.

JIM

She won't even miss—— Hey, hey, that's okay. Hey.

Deborah pulls away and backs into the extreme corner of the ell.

INT. CHEZ INEZ — DAY

OVER INEZ'S SHOULDER we see Deborah in the mirror pulling back so that she is no longer able to be seen. Jim also moves forward into the corner where he can no longer be seen. Inez stands frozen, forgetting even to pretend to dry her hands.

The women are cackling O.S.

JANET (O.S.)

...and all of the curlers are second hand so that you think if you're going to come out even alive, it's going to be as the bride of Frankenstein. But here's what really got to me—

EXT. CHEZ INEZ — DAY

In their corner, Jim has moved very close to Deborah to wipe away her tears. Now, her face so close, and her heart so vulnerable, it is the easiest thing in the world for Jim to kiss her. And he does, quite gently, first on the cheek, as though to kiss away a tear, and then on the lips. He pulls away, but she leans into him and kisses him again, putting her arm around his neck.

In a moment, he pulls away, and both of them look to see if they have been seen, both embarrassed, both guilty.

INT. CHEZ INEZ — DAY

ANGLE OVER INEZ'S SHOULDER INTO THE MIRROR as Jim crosses quickly across the face of the mirror, Deborah following more slowly. Inez turns to her left to look out the window in time (PAN LEFT) to see Jim start jogging across the parking lot.

JANET (O.S.)

He says that a woman's only supposed to "look good, cook good, and fook good". That's what he says, right in front of my sister.

Inez comes back into her position behind Janet, picking up her scissors again and snipping.

JANET (CONT.)

Well, Inez, you back? I thought I was gonna have to take my business elsewhere again.

INEZ

You do and I'll shave you bald.

Deborah comes through the front door.

INEZ (CONT.)

Well, look who it is, everybody, my daughter-in-law! Welcome to Chez Inez, Debbie. Sandy, can you take over here. Come on into the backroom, Debbie, so we can get away from this infernal henhouse cacklin'!

INT. BACK ROOM OF CHEZ INEZ — DAY

Inez ushers Deborah in.

INEZ

Coffee?

DEBORAH

Thanks.

INEZ

(with a smile, pouring coffee)

Wadn't that Jimmy Rutledge drove up with you? Shoot, he back in town?

(hands the cup to Deborah, still smiling)

Why didn't he come in?

DEBORAH

He ... had an appointment.

INEZ

Oh, yeah, he's a doctor now, isn't he? Pretty funny doctor clothes.

DEBORAH

No, he's going running now.

INEZ

(probing)

Well, he turned out just fine, didn't he?

DEBORAH

Yeah.

INEZ

(still probing, getting nothing back)

As good lookin' as ever. Even better. But the worst, the very worst player on that baseball team. Come runnin' up that time for that little blooper fly, took a tumble and fell flat on his face.

DEBORAH

He caught it though.

INEZ

Well, didn't he though? Come up wavin' that rich boy's mitt with that ball in it, just seein' stars.

DEBORAH

Laird said it was the best catch of the season.

INEZ

Yeah, Laird always stood up for him. But now, Debbie, you didn't have to come down here for these presents, I told you I'd drop 'em by your place after closin', and oh, wait'll you see what I got Susan. A doll! And she does everything but the four-minute mile!

(brings BRIDE DOLL out of the box)

And I crocheted her up this little bride outfit to boot, see with a little veil. I haven't wrapped it yet, but if you just give me a sec—

DEBORAH

That's ... not why I'm here, Inez.

INEZ

(hears the hardness in Deborah's change of voice, readies herself)

Oh? Why *are* you here then?

DEBORAH

It's Byron. He has to go.

INEZ

Well, I knew that. I just wondered how long it'd take you to find out. So tell him to go.

DEBORAH

Laird wants him to stay.

INEZ

Laird always worshipped Byron, who knows why. Always wanted to come first with him, but Byron always favored Lucy. But just let Byron take him down to the park and throw him one measly little ball and, "Oh boy, me and Pip's playin' catch!" Don't worry, Debbie, give him time, Laird'll get fed up too.

DEBORAH

There is no time. He's got to go today.

INEZ

So pack him up and send him off. I did.

DEBORAH

Where to?

INEZ

Let him go to Lucy's, wear her out for a while.

DEBORAH

She's got three kids. I don't ... think that's fair to Lucy. She's got enough to take care of.

INEZ

You want me to take him back, don't you?

DEBORAH

I know it's asking a lot, but—

INEZ

It's askin' too much. All the years I put up with that man's drinkin'. He's with that stuff like an old sow at her slops. Drinkin' away the food off the dinner table, runnin' from job to job. Laird and Lucy mighta went to college, who knows. You know what he said to me this last time? That I was cold, and hadn't no heart. No heart? When he's broke it so many times? Well, I'm not takin' him back. I want my peace now. I earned it.

CLOSE ON DEBORAH, blank, wilted.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE — MIDDAY

CLOSE ON DARLENE, exuberant, as she leans into the camera.

NEW ANGLE as Darlene takes her tongue and licks a bit of Junior's hamburger off the corner of his lip. Then she lightly wipes his mouth and face with her napkin, Junior deeeelighted.

DARLENE

You are so cute, Junior Johnson. You're like a little construction-worker doll ... what the Méxicanitas call un muñeco. When I get you home, can I put makeup on you?

JUNIOR

(looking around)

Darlene!

DARLENE

Some places a little lipstick can do wonders.

JUNIOR

Oh, yeah?

She leans closer and feels him up.

JUNIOR

Hey, Darlene, watch it now.

DARLENE

It's your lunch hour, isn't it?

JUNIOR

Yeah, but you know, you comin' out here all dressed like this and all, you know, cause the men, you know, are all, you know.

Darlene looks around at the men, who are all watching, puts her hands on her knees as though in a little fit of cute pique, accentuating her breasts as if by accident.

DARLENE

What?!?

INT. DEBORAH'S CAR — MIDDAY

Deborah sits a moment idling. BLARE OF HORN behind her. She jumps, looks in the rearview mirror, then sees that the stoplight has turned green. She stomps on the gas pedal and peels out through the intersection.

She switches on the radio. It's Grace Slick singing "White Rabbit".

GRACE SLICK

... ones that mother gives you
Don't do anything at all...

VARIOUS ANGLES of Deborah in car, both EXT. and INT. through the next shots.

During the early, quiet verses of "White Rabbit", Deborah drives through quiet residential streets, introspective, confused, indecisive.

GRACE SLICK

...Go ask Alice, when she's ten feet tall.
And if you go chasing rabbits,
And you know you're going to fall,
Tell 'em a hookah-smoking caterpillar
Has given you the call,
Call Alice, when she was just small...

As the music ramps up, Deborah reaches the outskirts of town and she accelerates, her expression taking on a quality of madness, her jaw setting, her gaze becoming fixed. She is now in countryside and suddenly Deborah cranks up the volume full blast and floors it.

GRACE SLICK

...When the men on the chess board
Get up and tell you where to go...

Coming up behind a car in her lane, she downshifts, turns the wheel expertly, stomps again on the gas and passes the slower vehicle. A third vehicle is coming straight on in Deborah's lane. Deborah puts the gas pedal to the floor, accelerates past the vehicle, turns the wheel to the right and her car makes it back into the right lane just in time. BRAKES SQUEALING, HORNS BLARING.

CLOSE UP — DEBORAH Her eyes glance up to the rearview mirror.

ANGLE — REARVIEW MIRROR The cars behind her have both pulled off onto the shoulder, at angles to the road.

ECU — DEBORAH'S EYES They glint with insane, malevolent humor.

GRACE SLICK

...And you've just had some kind of mushroom,
And your mind is moving, oh.
Go ask Alice, I think she'll know.
When logic and proportion—

Deborah's eyes drop to the speedometer.

The speedometer climbs as the scenery whizzes past.

FLASHBACK — LOW ANGLE FROM PASSENGER SEAT ON SPEEDOMETER

This speedometer is an older style, and it's bouncing around 90. A man's legs are stretched beneath the wheel, his foot to the floor on the gas pedal.

MAN (O.S.)

You want to die, Debbie? You want to die?

GRACE SLICK

...And the white knight is talking backwards,
And the red queen's off with her head,
Remember...

DEBORAH

Nooooooo!

Deborah stomps on the brake.

The car slews off the road into a field, spinning in circles in the mud until it slides to a stop. Deborah fights to regain control. Meanwhile the song has been continuing, the volume dimmed during the EXT. shots and full blast during the INT. shots.

GRACE SLICK

... what the door mouse said,
Feed your head,
Feed your head.

The car slides to a stop. Grace Slick's last quivering note hangs in the air for a long moment. Deborah sits with her hands clutching the wheel. SOUND OF WIND, the car vibrating with the buffets.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Little Gracie Slick, ladies and gentlemen, and the Jefferson Airplane in 1967,
driving a whole new generation into—

Deborah snaps off the radio, sits a moment longer, quaking, then turns the rearview mirror so that she can see her own eyes. They are wild, and it frightens her even more.

EXT. GABRIEL GARDENS PARKING LOT — EARLY EVENING

Laird turns his pickup into the driveway and pulls toward the O'Hare parking space.

INT. DEBORAH'S CAR — EARLY EVENING

CLOSE ON Deborah looking up to the rearview mirror.

ANGLE — REARVIEW MIRROR The pickup finishes pulling into the parking space

INT. LAIRD'S PICKUP — EARLY EVENING

JUNIOR

You know what I bet is upstairs waitin' for me in bed, all warm and juicy like a big Mac?

LAIRD

(fed up)

I don't know, Junior, what? A big Mac?

EXT. GABRIEL GARDENS PARKING LOT — EVENING

Junior jumps out of the passenger side of the pickup, laughing, and runs up the steps to his apartment, welcomed in by Darlene. Deborah, meanwhile, gets out of her car and walks quickly toward Laird's pickup, holding her jacket around her throat in the cold wind, a wrapped christmas present under her arm (Inez's Bride Doll). She meets Laird as he climbs out of the driver's side of the pickup, a half depleted six-pack of beers dangling from his hand.

DEBORAH

Get back in. I've got to talk to you.

LAIRD

It's cold out here. You wanna talk, let's go upstairs.

DEBORAH

Not in front of Byron, get back in.

LAIRD

I told you, Deb. He's my dad. He's not going anywhere.

DEBORAH

Byron molested Susan.

LAIRD

(after a moment of stun)

What do you mean he molested Susan?

DEBORAH

He ... molested her!

LAIRD

Get in.

Laird climbs back up into the pickup as Deborah walks quickly to the passenger side and climbs in.

INT. LAIRD'S PICKUP — EARLY EVENING

LAIRD

Tell me straight, what's going on with you, this morning you're walking around up there like a zombie and now you're tellin' me—

DEBORAH

She told me, Laird. Last night she told me.

LAIRD

Wait, wait. What did she say, exactly?

DEBORAH

She said he touched her.

LAIRD

Where?

DEBORAH

Do I have to draw a picture! Through her panties!

LAIRD

When? Last night?

DEBORAH

Yeah, last night.

(watching him carefully, her voice brittle)

But there were the other times too.

LAIRD

What else did she say?

Resentment and anger brimming at Laird's complicity, Deborah is ready to give it to him full in the face when she looks up and sees Byron coming out of the apartment.

Byron waves at them and starts down the stairs.

INT. LAIRD'S PICKUP — EARLY EVENING

DEBORAH

Come on, let's get out of here!

Laird starts the pickup, but Byron gives them a holler and comes up to the driver's side.

BYRON

Hey, hold on. Hold on.

(Laird rolls down the window.)

Where you off to, son?

LAIRD

We're just going to the store to pick up some things.

BYRON

Wait along. I'll go with you.

(goes to passenger side, opens door)

Scoot over, hon. Where you been all day. I been lonely as—

DEBORAH

Byron, we want to be alone.

LAIRD

Deb—

BYRON

No now, no sir, Debbie's right. Here I am always buttin' in on the two of you, no chance to be private. I tell you what. I'll go down to the store for you, I need the walk anyway, and you two go on upstairs and get your romancin' in. I'll give you plenty of time, how's that sound?

LAIRD

That's great, Pip, thanks.

DEBORAH

(pushing past Byron out of the pickup)

Milk, eggs, bread.

LAIRD

(getting his wallet out of his hip pocket)

Get some beer, too, Pip. And a big bottle of Beam.

Deborah runs up the stairs and through the door of their apartment.

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — EARLY EVENING

ANGLE THROUGH KITCHEN DOOR AS Deborah comes quickly through the front door and darts behind it, her back braced against the wall. She breathes hard, and

works to recover. Remembering the present under her arm, she takes it to the Christmas tree and puts it with the other presents, touches a couple of them, sadly.

Laird comes in after a moment, sees her at the tree, passes into the kitchen and puts the three beers into the refrigerator, taking one.

LAIRD

You want a beer? You look like you could use ... something.

As there is no answer, Laird takes a second beer, closes the refrigerator door and heads into the living/dining room. Deborah is still kneeling by the tree. He hands her the beer, but she doesn't take it, just watches him accusatorially. He puts the beer on the table, throws his car keys beside the breakfast dishes, still there, wanders around the room for a few seconds, unsure.

LAIRD

(taking a swig of beer, finally)

Think she was lying?

DEBORAH

You KNOW she wasn't lying! Why is that everyone's first question!

LAIRD

What do you mean everyone? Who else have you told this to?

DEBORAH

Jim.

LAIRD

You told him this!

DEBORAH

I needed help!

LAIRD

Why didn't you come to— You go to— You go talkin' this shit around!

DEBORAH

Jim'll keep it secret. He says he's supposed to report it but...

LAIRD

No!

DEBORAH

...but, wait now, Jim says because he's a doctor he's got to report ,,,, this ... stuff ... but he says he won't report it if we get Byron out of here. And no more babysitting. He can't ever be left alone with her again.

LAIRD

That'll kill him! For Chrissake we don't even know if it really happened. You know how she's always making things up. Pip was probably, he probably just brushed her accidentally, and wait, when did she tell you this, last night, right? Yeah, right after— Yeah, she comes in here, she sees me with my hands all over you, and her imagination gets going and out comes this story.

DEBORAH

What about the other time?

LAIRD

What other time?

DEBORAH

The time she told you.

LAIRD

What are you talking about?

DEBORAH

How long have you known!

LAIRD

What are you talking about, I don't know anything.

DEBORAH

Sure you do. Susan said she told you.

LAIRD

Susan? She never.

DEBORAH

She told me she did.

LAIRD

She didn't.

DEBORAH

She told me she did!

LAIRD

(trying to sort it out)

She... she... maybe she—

DEBORAH

And you told her to keep it a secret from me.

LAIRD

I never told her to keep any secrets from you!

DEBORAH

You told her that if I found out I'd call the cops and put Byron in jail.

LAIRD

I never did! Susan! Where is she?

DEBORAH

She's at Jim's.

LAIRD

Aw, Christ!

(getting his coat and keys)

Come on, we're going for her.

DEBORAH

No! If you bring her back and Byron's still here, Jim said he'll call the cops. He's not kidding!

LAIRD

Jim's going to call the cops on my dad!

DEBORAH

He's a doctor! It's the law!

LAIRD

(throws down the keys, grabs up the phone)

Okay then, call her.

DEBORAH

I don't think that's—

LAIRD

You call her! That kid's callin' my dad ... some kind of pervert and me a liar. What's Jim's number?

DEBORAH

Okay, okay! But let me do the talking. I don't want you yelling at her.

LAIRD

I'll talk to her.

DEBORAH

(takes the phone from him)

No, you'll be too rough. She'll know something's wrong. She'll feel guilty and she's got nothing to be guilty about. None of this is her fault and I'm not going to let you make it seem like it is! She's just a little girl. That's all she is, a little girl!

LAIRD

(seeing her close to tears, calms a bit)

I can talk to her all right. But I gotta know what she said.

DEBORAH

I told you what she said!

LAIRD

I gotta hear it from Susan, straight. You think I'm gonna hurt her? She's my little girl, too.

DEBORAH

Okay, but let me talk to her first.

LAIRD

(surrenders the phone to her)

Here.

INT. RUTLEDGE DINING ROOM — EVENING

Jim, Mrs. Rutledge and Susan, dressed in Mrs. Rutledge's once very fashionable attire —pillbox hat a la Jackie Kennedy, a fox stole around her neck, etc.— are at the dinner table. Jim is dishing up spaghetti as the PHONE RINGS. Jim goes to answer it.

SUSAN

Ugh! Worms!

MRS. RUTLEDGE

But they're very tasty worms.

(passing the spaghetti sauce)

And some nice blood?

Susan screams with laughter.

JIM

(into phone)

Hello? Hi. I've been thinking about you all day. How's it going?

ANGLE — DEBORAH

DEBORAH

Uh, pretty good, listen, could I talk to Susan?

ANGLE — JIM

JIM

(hesitates)

Sure. Susan, it's your mother.

SUSAN

(jumping for phone)

Mommy, guess what we're eating, worms and blood!

ANGLE — DEBORAH

DEBORAH

Sweetheart, shh shh, shh...

LAIRD

(reaches for phone)

Here.

DEBORAH

Wait now!

(pulls away from Laird)

She did! Well, that's very funny, listen, honey— No, shh, shh, honey, listen, remember the talk we had last night?

ANGLE — SUSAN

SUSAN

About G.I. Joe? Are you going to get him for me?

ANGLE — DEBORAH

DEBORAH

No, about Grandpa, remember? Well, Daddy's here and he wants to ask you a few questions.

Laird reaches for the phone, but Deborah pulls away.

DEBORAH (CONT.)

No, it won't take long, he's just got a couple of questions, you just tell him what he wants to know, okay? Okay, here's Daddy.

Deborah surrenders the phone to Laird with a look of admonition.

LAIRD

Hiya, baby, how ya doin'? Yeah, she's a nice lady, isn't he? Listen, honey, about— shh, shh, honey, your mom says ... grandpa put his hands on you. Did you tell her that?

DEBORAH

Laird— !

LAIRD

...And she says you told me about it. When was this, Susan?

(listens, trying to be patient; Deborah paces nearby)

No, baby, no she says you told ME about it, you remember telling ME about it?

(Deborah reaches for him, stops herself.)

No, she says I told you to keep it a secret or she'd bring the cops down on Grandpa, now did you tell her that or didn't you? If you're lying to your mother—

DEBORAH

(tries to pull the receiver away from him)

Laird, stop it!

LAIRD

Deb, cut it out!

Deborah gets the telephone cradle and depresses the button, backing away from him into the kitchen.

LAIRD

Goddam it. Give me the phone!

(she continues backing)

Give me the goddam phone!

He advances on her and raises the receiver to hit her with it. She falls backward onto the kitchen floor with a scream. He stops himself, shocked. Then he grabs the cradle from her, puts the receiver to his ear, hears the dial tone, and throws the phone down. He storms out of the kitchen, his anger unabated, and sweeps the breakfast dishes off the table with his arm.

ANGLE — DEBORAH

She picks up the phone, listens to make sure Susan isn't still on the line, then hangs up the receiver, huddling on the floor listening to the noises of Laird's rampage.

ANGLE — JIM AND SUSAN

Jim is watching Susan who, bewildered, holds the phone out to him.

ANGLE — LAIRD

He takes a swig of his beer and then returns to the kitchen. He extends a hand to Deborah and pulls her up to lean weakly against the refrigerator.

LAIRD

One of these days, Deb, you're gonna make me kill you.

PHONE RINGS. Neither moves to answer it.

DEBORAH

That's why I didn't want you to make the call.

(pulls plug from phone so that RINGING STOPS)

It doesn't matter what she said, she said one thing, you understood something else. You're not lying, I see that now, but neither is Susan.

The answering machine comes on. Both freeze, listening.

JIM'S VOICE

Deborah? Laird? Okay, well, you've probably got a lot to talk about, and, uh, I'll ... I'll ... just wait. Call me. *(click)*

LAIRD

Deb, this is my father, he wouldn't do that.

DEBORAH

Laird, we can't—

LAIRD

(starts pacing)

Let's just forget it. Let's just forget any of this ever happened.

DEBORAH

We can't! And we've got to tell Lucy and Dave.

LAIRD

Why!

DEBORAH

They have kids!

LAIRD

No, I'm not gonna— ! Okay, no more babysitting, we'll watch, we'll be careful.

DEBORAH

How close will you watch! You don't even believe it happened. He'll find a way to get to her. He'll do it again and again, he won't stop now that he's started, and it'll get worse!

LAIRD

No, I'm not gonna let you do this to him. This is crazy!

DEBORAH

Laird, he'll rape her!

LAIRD

(stops pacing, in her face)

You are so full of crap!

DEBORAH

He will, I'm telling you he will!

LAIRD

What in hell makes you such a goddamned expert!

DEBORAH

Because my father raped me!

She pushes him away from her and down into one of the dining table chairs so hard that his head hits the wall behind him. He sits, stunned, throughout these next revelations which she makes, each one, like the lash of a whip across his face, looming above him, punishing him.

DEBORAH (CONT.)

The first time when I was ten! But after that, any time he could get me alone he'd do it again! When my mother was in the hospital! Or weekends, he'd take me down to his office, on the floor! He even sent her on a trip once, back east to visit her cousin so he could have me all to himself, all day, every day. Even when she went to the store, when there wasn't time for more, he'd just paw me. He couldn't keep his hands off me. Once in the car at the post office, she went in to buy a stamp, the motor was running...

(slowing now as this last detail fixates)

...he reached over the back of the seat and right there in plain sight of her, he stuck his hand up my skirt, his fingers...

(gasps, but comes back to the job)

I could see her through the window, where she was standing in line, my mother, the back of her head. She turned to talk to a neighbor. She smiled.

(goes to phone)

Well, I'm not going to smile.

Her strength suddenly evaporated, she sinks to the kitchen floor beside the phone, plugs it back in, punches in numbers. In b.g. Laird still sits at the dining room table, staring at her, mute.

INT. RUTLEDGE DINING ROOM — NIGHT

The phone rings. Jim picks it up immediately.

JIM

Hello? Deborah, are you all right?

ANGLE — DEBORAH

DEBORAH

Listen, Jim, would it be all right if Susan stayed over tonight?

ANGLE — JIM

JIM

Well, sure but, Deborah I've got to know what's—

ANGLE — DEBORAH

DEBORAH

I'm doing it, Jim, I am. *(pause)* No, no, Jim, I'm doing it!

Laird seems to come back to the moment, tries to rise but sits again, presses his palms hard against his temples.

DEBORAH (O.S.)

Jim, please ... please ...

Laird looks at Deborah, who is worrying her own brow with her free hand, obviously in deep pain. Laird stands stiffly and walks toward her in the kitchen doorway, stopping beside her while she looks tentatively up at him.

DEBORAH (CONT.)

No, Jim, I am, I am.

(shrinks back to make way for Laird who steps over her and goes into the kitchen)

Thanks. Can I talk to her, please?

Laird opens a cabinet and takes from it a bottle of Advil. He pours four into his palm, fills a glass with water, downs them, gets a new glass from the cupboard, fills it.

DEBORAH (CONT., O.S.)

Hi, honey. Yeah, something must have broken at the phone company. Listen, honey, Daddy says to tell you that he remembers now, and it's all right. And, and, Jim wants to know if you can stay over there, would you like that?
(pause) Oh, and high heels, too! Well, fun! And if you get tired, Jim'll show you where to sleep, and... and... and... I'll see you later.

During the above Laird comes back from the sink, offers her the Advil bottle. She opens her free hand, and he pours two tablets into her palm, which she puts in her

mouth. He gives her the glass of water, stands over her while she drinks, takes the glass back from her.

LAIRD

Say goodbye for me.

DEBORAH

And, and Daddy says to send you a big kiss.

(makes kissing sound)

Okay, I'll give it to him. *(gasps)* Bye.

She hangs up and watches Laird as he makes his hunch-backed, sick way over her and heads up the hall, putting out one hand to the wall to keep his balance as he goes to their bedroom.

EXT. GABRIEL GARDENS — NIGHT

ANGLE FROM BELOW — Byron's back as he climbs the stairs, or tries to. He is pretty loaded, and he carries in one hand an open bottle of bourbon, and in his other arm, a bag of groceries. When he gets to the top of the stairs, Junior's door opens, and Darlene appears in it, waving Byron quietly into Junior's apartment.

DARLENE

Hey, Pip. Not a good idea to go in there right now.

INT. JUNIOR'S APARTMENT — NIGHT Junior's apartment is exactly like Laird and Deborah's, only reversed, spartan in furniture, and up to its window sills in bachelor mess. Darlene leads Byron into the living-dining room.

BYRON

What's going on?

DARLENE

There was a lot of noise over there just a few minutes ago. It's quiet now, but I was thinking of calling the cops.

JUNIOR

Aw, Darlene, come on!

BYRON

(chuckles) Was there a lot of bumpin' and thumpin', like the headboard hittin' the wall?

DARLENE

It was yelling, Pip! Both of them. And that's just not like Debbie!

BYRON

Well, honey, sometimes these things just TAKE a lot of yellin'. Huh, Junior?

JUNIOR

(laughs) Hey, Pip, come on, you know?

Junior comes over to Darlene and puts his arm around her waist, and she gives in, reluctantly. She beams and puts her left hand to her throat, waggling her engagement ring prominently.

DARLENE

Well, Byron, notice anything different?

BYRON

(chuckling) Not a thing in this world ever changes. Out on the ranch, honey, the girls'd...

(puts his left hand over his brow and squints, as though scanning the horizon, but waggling his ring finger)

..."Anybody seen my heifer?" Why, congratulations, Junior! Went out and bought a ring, did you?

DARLENE

Oh, this is my grammy's ring. We're just usin' it temporary.

Junior grins, embarrassed, trapped, dumb.

BYRON

Now, Junior, you got to love this girl, son.

JUNIOR

Sure, Pip, I know, you know, uh... you know.

BYRON

Well, no more needs to be said then. This calls for a drink. And I'm the right guy to walk in the door.

INT. O'HARE HALLWAY — NIGHT

Deborah walks up the hallway, tentatively. CAMERA TRACKS BEHIND HER AND THEN OVER HER SHOULDER INTO LAIRD AND DEBORAH'S BEDROOM to

reveal Laird's feet, then legs, then torso, lying on the bed on his back with his arm flung across his eyes.

DEBORAH

You okay?

LAIRD

Why didn't you go to the police?

DEBORAH

He's your father, I didn't want—

LAIRD

Your father. Why didn't you go to the police about your father?

DEBORAH

They'd have put him in jail. And where would they put me? And I was so stupid. I was so stupid that I thought all the girls were doing it for their fathers. But then I'd listen to them talk, Marisa Clark and Nicolette Wells, all about their boyfriends and their stupid dreams, and I thought no, it's just me ... and him.

LAIRD

Why didn't you tell your mother?

DEBORAH

I tried to, lots of times. She wouldn't listen. But she knew all right. You know how you always said, how could she leave us like that, how could a mother walk out on her family, well she didn't walk, she ran. As soon as she knew that he had me and wouldn't go after her, she left me to him.

(cries, for the first time)

I kept waiting for her to come back and get me. Mommy!

At her weakest here, she sinks onto the bed with him. He pulls himself up and reaches across the bed for her, but it is awkward, and they don't connect.

LAIRD

It must have ... must have been ... Did he ... do everything?

DEBORAH

Yeah. Everything.

LAIRD

How many times?

DEBORAH

I don't ... know ... over the years.

LAIRD

How many years?

DEBORAH

Laird ...

LAIRD

How many years!

DEBORAH

All of them! After my mother left it was all the time! Any time he wanted me!

LAIRD

No ...

DEBORAH

At night, still, I can remember lying there, waiting for him, sweating, the sheets wet and sticking all over my body. Maybe I'd fall asleep but I'd hear that door open, and he'd be there, like in a nightmare. You ever have a dream in slow motion ...

(lying back on the bed, her eyes closed, her body curling and uncurling as he watches)

...going on and on, and you can't get out, and you can't stop it. His hands, so gentle at first ... so cold, and gentle, and slow ... but then they'd change, and he'd be over me, and...

(stretched out in front of him, gasps)

She pulls suddenly straight and clutches at her crotch, gasping, shuddering violently as if in pain, or orgasm. Laird pulls away, unable to bear any more.

LAIRD

(softly)

Maybe you liked it.

DEBORAH

(sitting up, unbelieving, ready to strike him)

I hated it! I hated him! His hands... his body... I hated it!

LAIRD

(overlaps, yelling into her face)

Shut up! I don't want to hear anymore about his hands and his body. Why didn't you run then? Your mother ran, why didn't you?

DEBORAH

(overlaps)

Where? Where was there to go? Who would have me?

LAIRD

(overlaps)

Anywhere! Anyone would be better than him.

DEBORAH

(overlaps)

I was only ten. I was just a little girl.

LAIRD

The first time, but you stayed with him after that, didn't you? You stayed...

DEBORAH

(overlaps)

When, Laird? When I was eleven, twelve, thirteen? When?

LAIRD

(cont., overlaps)

...with him right up till the day he died.

DEBORAH

He wouldn't let me go. He said he'd kill me if I left him. He said he'd smother me with the pillows. You remember the way he was. He said—

LAIRD

(grabbing up the pillow, puts it over his ears)

Shut up!!!

DEBORAH

He'd drive me up to Tahoe, up to that cliff, and he'd tell me how he'd drive us both over that cliff. He'd say, "If you try to leave—"

LAIRD

Shut up!!!! I'm going for Susan.

DEBORAH

No!

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — NIGHT

SHOOTING UP THE HALLWAY — Laird charges out the bedroom door, headed down the hall, but Deborah is right behind him and pushes in front of him and tries to block his way, tries to push him back.

DEBORAH

No! She's not coming back here till Byron's gone.

LAIRD

Get out of my way.

Laird smashes her against the hall wall and pushes past her, heading toward the front door, opens it, feels his pockets for the keys.

Deborah rushes to the table and grabs his keys, and backs away from him as he advances on her.

LAIRD

Give me those keys.

DEBORAH

Think, Laird. Think what you're doing to her.

LAIRD

Give 'em to me!

Laird grabs her wrist and they begin a struggle over the keys. They bump up against furniture and knock over a lamp and end-table as the fight grows more intense. He pries open her fingers and forces her to drop the keys, and he picks them up, but she grabs his arm and bites it and he drops the keys again.

LAIRD

(screams in pain)

You bitch!

He pulls her head back by the hair and she is forced to stop the biting. But while he examines his arm, she snatches up the keys and runs for the door, and he's after her again, catching her with his arms encircling her stomach as she kicks at him and tries

to turn to flail at him. They stumble backwards across the floor and fall into the Christmas tree. So far Laird has been after the keys, but now he is after revenge. Tangled up in the Christmas tree, Laird gets on top of her and hits her in the face with his fist again and again.

LAIRD

Why didn't you fight HIM! Why didn't you fight HIM!

Byron, Junior and Darlene rush through the front door.

BYRON

Laird, stop it, you'll kill her! Get his other arm, Junior!

Junior and Byron together manage to grab Laird's arms and stop him from hitting Deborah, but it takes them a moment to subdue him. Darlene grabs him by the belt in back and pulls which helps Junior and Byron haul him off Deborah. As soon as Laird is off and held down, he comes a bit to his senses and stops struggling. Meanwhile Darlene goes to Deborah and tries to help her up.

DARLENE

Debbie, honey, are you hurt? No, just lay there, don't try to move.

DEBORAH

(hoarsely, pointing at the keys on the floor)

Don't let him get the keys.

Darlene does get the keys but doesn't know what to do with them.

BYRON

I'll get you some water, honey, you just rest.

(to Laird as he goes into kitchen)

You touch her again, I'll beat the crap out of you!

JUNIOR

(holding Laird down on the floor, but Laird no longer fights)

Jesus, Laird.

LAIRD

(from the floor)

You all right, Deb?

DARLENE

Does it feel like anything's broken, Debbie?

DEBORAH

(crawling out of the tree toward the sofa)

Go away. Take the keys and go away.

BYRON

(returning from kitchen with a glass of water and a wad of paper towels)

That's right, Darlene, I can handle this now. Junior, you two just go on home.

(to neighbors who have gathered at the open door)

Hey, this ain't no show! Fly out from here!

Darlene pushes Junior and the others out the door, the car keys in her hand.

DARLENE

Get out! Didn't you hear the man!

Darlene looks around for a place to put the keys, drops them on the table, and goes out the front door, closing it behind her.

Byron kneels beside Deborah, wets a corner of a paper towel in the glass of water and gently wipes blood from Deborah's lips.

BYRON

Here you go, honey.

DEBORAH

(grabbing the towel from him)

I can do it!

BYRON

What in the world is goin' on between you two?

DEBORAH

Sit ... sss ... sit down, Byron, we're going to have a talk.

LAIRD

Deb, shut up!

BYRON

Is this about me? Is all this—

DEBORAH

Sit down, Byron.

She tries to climb onto the sofa, but hasn't the strength.

BYRON

(helping her onto the sofa)

It's about money, ain't it? That devil money. Listen, on the first, the first of every month, I'll give you over a good portion of my check and—

DEBORAH

(laughs pathetically)

It's not money, Byron, God damn you, it's Susan.

LAIRD

(on his feet now, advancing warningly)

Deb— !

BYRON

(rising to meet him)

I said keep away from her!

DEBORAH

We know about you and Susan.

LAIRD

Deb!

BYRON

(quietly this time, puzzled)

Hush, Lairdy, hush.

(to Deborah)

What do you mean?

DEBORAH

We know you've been doing ... sex ... things to Susan!

BYRON

(horrified, looks from Deborah to Laird)

I'm sick. That makes me sick. You think ... I'd do that ... to Susan?

Byron starts to retch. He claps his hand over his mouth and runs up the hall and into the bathroom and slams the door. SOUND OF BYRON VOMITING.

LAIRD

Get out. Go to Jim. Don't come back.

DEBORAH

I'm keeping Susan with me.

LAIRD

The hell you are, you're crazy.

Deborah pulls herself off the sofa to her feet and walks stiffly toward the hallway.

DEBORAH

I'll just pack some things.

Laird blocks her way with a posture threatening more violence.

DEBORAH (CONT.)

Why don't you get out of my way.

After a moment, he yields just enough that she can get by him, but he still threatens her as she moves slowly, painfully sideways, untrustingly, past him and on up the hall and into Susan's room.

FADE OUT.

IN BLACK, INDISTINCT SOUNDS, THUMPING, SMALL CRIES, GROANS, WHIMPERS, GROWING LOUDER AND MORE DISTINCT

FADE IN:

INT. LAIRD AND DEBORAH'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

CU LAIRD – asleep. As the sounds grow more distinct, Laird slowly wakes, trying to figure out what he is hearing. Now it appears to be the sounds of lovemaking, coos and groans, the soft thumping of a headboard against a wall, creaks of bedsprings.

LAIRD

(mumbling)

Aw, Jesus, Junior.

Laird pulls himself onto the edge of his bed, dressed in the same pants but no shirt now. He raises his fist to pound on the wall, but hesitates because the sounds have

taken on a different note, a note of violence, sharper cries of a woman in pain, grunts of a man delivering blows, the thumpings not of a headboard it seems, but a head and body against the wall, muffled screams.

Laird rushes out the bedroom door.

INT. LAIRD AND DEBORAH'S LIVING/DINING ROOM – NIGHT

Laird runs down the hall and to the front door feeling for his keys in his pants pockets. Not finding them there, he looks around and spots them on the table where Darlene left them, scoops them up and runs out the front door.

EXT. O'HARE APARTMENT – NIGHT

Laird moves to Junior's front door, fumbles with the keys, inserts one into Junior's lock and runs into Junior's apartment.

INT. JUNIOR'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Laird runs up Junior's hall but outside the slightly open door to Junior's bedroom stops when he hears, to his astonishment, laughter and giggles coming from inside the room.

DARLENE (O.S.)

(laughing, cooing, crying, moaning)

Oh, Junior, Junior, ow, oh!

JUNIOR

(laughing, ecstatic, panting)

Fuck, Darlene, aw fuck!

DARLENE (O.S.)

(laughing louder)

Yeah! Yeah, I know!

Laird turns quickly and moves quietly back down the hall to the front door.

EXT. O'HARE APARTMENT – NIGHT

Laird comes out Junior's front door, closing it behind him and moving to his own front door, but stops, turns back, uses his key to lock Junior's door and then, with a look around to see if anyone is watching, goes back into his own apartment.

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM – NIGHT

Laird pauses inside, goes to toss the keys onto the table, hesitates, weighs the options, then, with resignation, does indeed toss them onto the table and heads up the hall.

Laird stops outside Susan's bedroom, opens the door and looks in.

INT. SUSAN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

The mess has deepened, a Jim Beam bottle lying on its side, emptied. Byron is lying asleep in the rumpled bed, a couple of dolls and stuffed animals shoved up against the wall behind him.

CU – LAIRD'S EYES as they lift from Byron and look up to the wall above and behind Byron.

INSERT – CLOSE ON an 8½ X 11 crayon drawing by Susan pinned to the wall, depicting a mommy and a daddy, holding hands, the mother holding the hand of a daughter who has a doll dangling from her free hand. TILT up, PAN left and PULL back to reveal that this drawing on paper has been incorporated into a large and beautiful painted mural by Deborah in which a mother is guiding the hand of a daughter who is holding a crayon down to the child's 8½ X 11 drawing. PAN left until, at the corner of the wall, a man's hand embraces the mother's shoulder, only the hand and forearm painted.

CU – LAIRD'S EYES – they crinkle into a rueful expression.

LAIRD closes the door and goes up the hallway and into his own bedroom.

INT. LAIRD AND DEBORAH'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Laird throws himself onto the bed, doubling his pillow beneath his head. Then he turns suddenly and grabs Deborah's pillow and buries his face in it. Loud, gasping sobs wrack him, unstoppable. He sits up on the bed, slides off the side and onto the floor into the corner, pulling the pillows and blankets with him and over his head.

INT. JUNIOR'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Darlene is cuddling into Junior's neck with a giggle when she hears Laird's muffled sobs.

DARLENE

Shhhh.

Junior and Darlene listen a moment, understanding finally what they are hearing. Darlene puts a finger up to Junior's lips with a shake of her head.

INT. SUSAN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Starting with a long oblique shot of the mural, Byron lying on the bed in front of it, DOLLY AND PAN to come at last to CU of Byron, his face pinched, listening to his son's muffled sobs.

FADE OUT.

IN BLACK, SOUND OF DOORBELL, THEN LOUD KNOCKS

INEZ (O.S.)

Laird! Byron!

FADE IN:

EXT. O'HARE APARTMENT — MORNING

Inez knocks again, pressing the doorbell at the same time. Junior comes out of his door, sheepishly, in sweatpants hastily pulled on, goes to unlock O'Hare door.

JUNIOR

Hiya, Inez. It's good you're here.

INEZ

I'll put a stop to this, you bet. I guess you know all about it.

Darlene appears in Junior's doorway in a state of delectable deshabelle.

DARLENE

Hi. You must be Inez?

INEZ

And you must be Junior's latest.

DARLENE

(extending her left hand with the ring)

I'm Junior's only.

INEZ

Besssst wishes!

Junior has now unlocked the O'Hare door, and Inez goes in. Junior shrugs to Darlene, who with a sweet smile gives the finger to Inez's back as they go back into Junior's apartment.

INT. O'HARE APARTMENT — MORNING

CLOSE ON INEZ, stunned, as she looks around the apartment. It's a mess. Not only has nothing been cleaned up since the fight, but layers of debris are piled on top, a pizza box, a KFC box, beer cans everywhere, and every Christmas present opened, the wrappings littering the floor everywhere. Laird is on the couch, with a blanket pulled over his head.

LAIRD

Get out. No one wants you here.

INEZ

Your wife walks out and suddenly you're helpless? I taught you better than this!

(goes into kitchen, comes back with a garbage bag)

Look, see how easy? Garbage, garbage bag, fits right inside like they was made for each other.

(tosses in trash but uncovers the Bride Doll on the table, picks it out of the litter)

You opened Susan's Christmas presents!?

LAIRD

She wasn't here. It was Christmas. Christmas presents get opened on Christmas. If Susan wanted to open Christmas presents Susan should have been here on Goddamn Christmas!

INEZ

Don't you blame Susan! None of this is her fault! Oh, Lord, why did I bother? All that time with that little hook in my achin' fingers so you can ... get Kentucky fried grease on the dress before Susan even sees it. We're settin' this right, and we're settin' this right right now! Byron!

She goes up the hall to Susan's room and looks inside.

INT. SUSAN'S ROOM — MORNING

Byron, sitting on the edge of the bed, unshaven for days, turns to blink at Inez in the doorway.

INEZ

This place stinks like a brewery. Get up. Shave. Wash yourself. And I mean now.

INT. O'HARE LIVING/DINING ROOM — MORNING

Inez comes back down the hall, turns to Laird on the couch.

INEZ

She has really done it to the pair of you, ain't she?

Laird starts to sob. Inez, shocked, comes to him, reaches her hand toward his head, but withdraws it. Then she reaches again and this time puts her hand on his head. He reaches out and embraces her legs tightly, pulls her down to sit with him. Inez wraps her arms around him, and he puts his head into her lap, weeping.

INEZ

I guess it's love, idn't it. No accountin' for it. I sure know the feelin'.

(trying to cheer him up)

Hey, hey, tell you a story on your Pip. First time I ever seen him dressed up was at a big harvest dance at the grange, just back from the marines, and I went lookin' for him. Oh, I told you this a dozen times.

LAIRD

(muffled, his face in her lap)

Tell me.

INEZ

Well, he was out in the middle of that floor when I got there, oooh, just dancin' like a twister, all spiffed out in black, black pants, black silky shirt, pure white tie...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RUTLEDGE HOUSE — AFTERNOON

Deborah's hand turns pages in a picture album showing old black and white photos of a happy young couple.

MRS. RUTLEDGE (O.S.)

Oh, those are just old pictures of me and James, dear. Skip farther back and you'll find the pictures of Jimmy, and all of the friends that you'll recognize. In fact, you'll find some pictures of Lairdy in there that I imagine you've never seen before. *(calls)* Susan, would you like to see some pictures of your father when he was only just a little older than you are now.

Susan comes running up and jumps onto the sofa beside Deborah, who winces. Deborah is badly bruised and swollen.

DEBORAH

Ow! Careful, babe. Here's Daddy, see. And here he is again.

SUSAN

That doesn't look like Daddy.

DEBORAH

Yes, it does, honey. It looks just like him. And, see, here he is in high school, this is his baseball team, and here's Jim.

SUSAN

Oh, yeah, that looks just like Daddy, but only a kid!

DEBORAH

(looking up at Jim as he enters)

You've got a lot of pictures of Laird.

Jim comes into the room with a tray with breakfast items on it.

JIM

Yeah. Can I pour orange juice for anyone?

SUSAN

Me!

MRS. RUTLEDGE

Me.

DEBORAH

Do you have any pictures of me in here?

MRS. RUTLEDGE

Well, let me think, dear.

JIM

(finishes pouring)

We might.

CU – DEBORAH, extremely hurt.

Jim finishes unloading the tray and returns to the kitchen. Deborah struggles to her feet from the couch and follows him, leaving the photo album to Susan and Mrs. Rutledge.

INT. RUTLEDGE KITCHEN — AFTERNOON

DEBORAH

Jim. Truth now. Laird's the one you love, isn't he? Truth now.

Jim is stunned. He just looks at her, discomfort, confusion, guilt chasing each other through his eyes. Also anger.

JIM

I guess you think that's ... part of your problems, but it's not, or shouldn't be. I never let on anything, not to you, not to him.

DEBORAH

Why did you ... kiss me ... like that?

JIM

I don't know. Because ... you wanted me to. I shouldn't have.

DEBORAH

Do you have any idea how that made me feel?

JIM

I'm sorry.

DEBORAH

You two didn't ever ... you know.

JIM

Why would you ask that?!

DEBORAH

Did you?

JIM

Why would you ask!?! What would that mean to you?

DEBORAH

It meant something to you.

JIM

Yeah. It meant too much. But it didn't mean anything to Laird.

DEBORAH

How many times?

Jim's stun is obvious.

DEBORAH

(gasps, pulls back against window, whispers)

I just heard myself.

JIM

He's always been crazy about you. Crazy. And that's never meant anything at all to you, has it?

DEBORAH

Crazy. What a crazy, crazy world.

OVER DEBORAH'S SHOULDER we see Inez's car drive up to the curb. Deborah looks out the window and sees it.

DEBORAH

Jim!

INT. INEZ'S CAR — AFTERNOON

ANGLE OVER INEZ'S SHOULDER IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT, showing Byron in the front seat, and Laird in the back seat, holding the Bride Doll. Inez turns off the key, shifts to park, and puts on the emergency brake.

INEZ

Don't you cry, Pippy. I know you didn't do that.

LAIRD

Mom—

INEZ

I lived with the man forty years! I slept with him! Now the two of you just sit and wait till I get back with Susan. Laird, I don't expect any trouble but—

LAIRD

Don't you make any trouble.

INEZ

She don't want Susan. She's got what she wants, and it ain't Susan. Well, leave them to each other and leave them to Heaven. I'll be right down with Susan.

Inez gets out of the car and starts for the front door of the house.

CLOSE ON LAIRD — Laird's eyes, resentful and confused, follow Inez then look down at the Bride Doll in his hands. He turns it over and over.

INT. RUTLEDGE HOUSE — AFTERNOON

Jim goes quickly toward the front door, Deborah more slowly, painfully, behind him.

Mrs. Rutledge, seeing their urgency, looks through the window and sees the car below and Inez beginning to climb her front steps.

MRS. RUTLEDGE

Susan, would you like to play our song on the piano?

SUSAN

Oh, yeah!

EXT. RUTLEDGE HOUSE — AFTERNOON

At the top of the steps Jim comes out of the door, closing it part way behind him.

JIM

Hello, Inez.

INEZ

(stopping on the lower steps)

I don't want any trouble, Jimmy. I'm just here to get Susan.

Deborah opens the door further and steps out, her bruises and swollen features exposed harshly in the exterior light.

ANGLE — LAIRD IN BACK SEAT, BYRON IN FRONT SEAT

BYRON

Oh, son, look what you done to her!

LAIRD

Oh, Jesus, baby!

Laird opens the door to the backseat and gets out of the car.

ANGLE — INEZ, DEBORAH, JIM

INEZ

Boy, you two sure know how to work each other over. Debbie, I'm goin' to make this easy for you. All we want is Susan.

DEBORAH

Well, you're not going to get her!

SOUND OF "CHOPSTICKS" BEING PLAYED ON PIANO BY SUSAN

JIM

Inez, Laird didn't tell you about Byron?

INEZ

Sure he told me, or tried to, I wouldn't listen.

(to Deborah)

Don't think you're gonna get away with this.

DEBORAH

I'm not taking Susan back there.

INEZ

No, I'm takin' her back. You two got your little love nest, fine. But you're not draggin' Susan into your filth.

JIM

What the hell are you— ?

INEZ

And I'll tell you right now, you keep your dirty lies about Pip to yourself, you hear me, or I'll fight you back, fire with fire.

(advances up the stairs)

I'll spread it all over town 'bout you beddin' down your father.

LAIRD

(at foot of stairs, taking a step up)

Mom!

DEBORAH

(to Laird)

You told her that?

JIM

(recoiling a step from Deborah's side)

Deborah!

INEZ

Oh, she didn't tell you that? I guess she's not so pretty now. She was sleepin' with the old man...

(points to the house next door)

...right there in that house, for years!

DEBORAH

He forced me!

INEZ

Night after night he forced you? You may get Laird to feel sorry for you with that rape story, but you don't get raped night after night year after year. You gotta ask for it, you gotta want it.

JIM

Deborah, when, when, when was this?

INEZ

She started up with him when she was ten, isn't that what she told you, Laird? Ten years old!

INTERCUTS FAVOR LAIRD as he moves up step by step.

LAIRD

Mom, lay off her! You don't know what you're talking about!

JIM

My God, Deborah, why didn't you run away, why didn't you come over here?

DEBORAH

He said he'd kill me.

Byron opens the car door and starts for the stairs.

BYRON

Oh, honey!

INEZ (O.S.)

Why didn't you kill yourself if it was as horrible as you pretend? I'd have killed myself, you bet I would, or I'd have killed him, ain't that right, Laird, ain't that right, Pip?

BYRON

(starting up the stairs)

Honey!

DEBORAH

Keep him away from here!

In b.g. Mrs. Ames and other neighbors have begun to come out of their houses.
SOUND OF PIANO inside Rutledge house continues.

JIM

Inez, let's try to calm down, let's—

INEZ

There ain't a court in this country would give you custody of Susan, not with you sleepin' with your own father, and now shackin' up with another man.

DEBORAH

We're not!

INEZ

Come smoochin' at my place, right out in the open! I didn't tell you that, Laird, but it's true, just the day before Christmas.

JIM

(overlaps)

Inez, you wouldn't take this to court. Think of Susan having to face the lawyers, telling them—

INEZ

Susan won't say nothin' because it's all a lie comin' out of that one mouth right there. Call Susan out here right now, and let her say it to his face. Susan!

The piano plays louder, obviously with the help now of Mrs. Rutledge.

DEBORAH

(overlaps)

You stop! You stop! Jim?

JIM

(overlaps)

Inez, get off these stairs. I'll have you arrested.

INEZ

(overlaps)

Did Susan tell anyone about this but her? No, and she didn't tell her either.

LAIRD

She told me!

Sudden silence, except the piano. CLOSE UPS ON ALL REACTIONS, each turning to look at Laird. As they have advanced up and down the stairs during the fight, Laird has ended up about in the center, Byron a few steps below him.

INEZ

(finally)

What are you talkin' about? You said you haven't even seen Susan.

LAIRD

She told me before. Something.

INEZ

What do you mean something?

LAIRD

I've been trying to think. Something about a game...

INEZ

What kind of story are you makin' up?

DEBORAH

(to Inez, coming quickly several steps down toward Laird)

Be quiet!

LAIRD

...we were in the car, I was driving, and I told her to hush, I was driving for Chrissake! Some kind of game Pip was playing with her, and she didn't like it.

(to Deborah)

Aw baby, she tried to tell me and I wouldn't listen.

BYRON

Wait now, wait.

All turn to Byron who is still bottommost on the stairs.

BYRON (CONT.)

She told me that same story, only it was about that little friend of hers in the apartment down the way, what's his name?

DEBORAH

Jason?

BYRON

Jason, that Jason. And Jason and her had a game, she said, a bad game, and I told her that if she stopped playing the game with Jason, I wouldn't tell anyone. And she did, she stopped. And that's what she told you too, I think, wadn't it, Lairdy?

OVER BYRON'S SHOULDER SHOOTING UP THE STAIRS, Laird and Deborah in f.g. standing beside each other, Inez further up the stairs in b.g., Jim still near the top of the stairs in deep b.g.

DEBORAH

You can't admit it even to yourself.

LAIRD

Pip!

Dropping the Bride Doll, Laird rushes down on Byron, grabbing his coat lapels and slamming him against the banister. The force of his descent causes the two of them to

slide and turn and stumble down the banister several steps, until they come to a stop at the newel post, wrapped in each other's arms.

LAIRD

Pip! Pip! Pip!

Laird beats on Byron's chest with his fists and then pushes himself away from him, back up against the other newel post, and sinking onto the platform at the foot of the steps, burying his head with his arms, and waving violently at Byron.

LAIRD

Take him away! Mom!

Inez comes down the steps, her violent eyes on Byron. When she gets to Byron, she stops and looks into his eyes. He looks away. She takes him by the arm.

INEZ

Come on, Pippy. Let's go home.

Inez leads Byron to the car and helps him into the passenger door, which is still open. She closes that door, and the door to the back seat. Then she looks at Laird with disgust, then up to Deborah.

INEZ (CONT.)

Don't think we're leavin' it at this.

Inez goes around and gets into the driver's seat, starts the car and drives away. Jim is at the top of the stairs, Deborah in the middle, and Laird huddled at the foot. The neighbors who have gathered at a little distance begin to disperse. Jim goes back into the house, leaving Deborah looking down at Laird. Before the dissolve, Deborah reaches down and picks up the Bride Doll at her feet.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RUTLEDGE HOUSE — GUEST BEDROOM

Deborah puts the Bride Doll carefully on top of the clothes in the suitcase, then picks it out again, studies the crochet work, sees the stain on the dress, shakes her head. She lifts the veil and looks into the face of the doll, touches it gently. Then she drops the veil and starts to put the doll back into the suitcase.

MRS. RUTLEDGE

(from the doorway)

Such a beautiful gown. Did Inez make it?

DEBORAH

(startled)

Oh. Yes. Yes, but there's a stain.

MRS. RUTLEDGE

Oh, dear.

(comes to Deborah, takes the doll)

Oh, yes, I see. But I think we can get this out. May I try?

DEBORAH

Well but ...

MRS. RUTLEDGE

Yes, I see you're packed; I thought you would be. But it won't take a moment, and we really must do it before Susan wakes up.

(looks down at Susan asleep on the bed)

She's lovely. How like you when you were her age.

(touches Deborah's face gently)

And you are lovelier than ever, my dear. You must believe that. All this ... will pass.

Mrs. Rutledge starts to leave with the doll, stops, comes back, presses a folded check into Deborah's hand.

MRS. RUTLEDGE (CONT.)

Oh, here, please don't think even a little thought about it. *(laughs)* But, please don't try to cash it until after Monday.

DEBORAH

You and Dr. Rutledge have been so good to me.

MRS. RUTLEDGE

Yes, he was a good man, wasn't he? Do you remember, dear, the advice he gave you?

DEBORAH

Dreams, nightmares, balance.

MRS. RUTLEDGE

Don't you think it's best you cut yourself loose from Jimmy?

(Deborah nods. Mrs. Rutledge goes out the door, stops in the hallway.)

Oh, hello, dear. We were just talking about you.

JIM

Yes. I heard.

MRS. RUTLEDGE

(holding up the doll as she leaves)

I've got a little disaster errand here. I'll be right back.

JIM

Where are you going?

DEBORAH

There must be some place.

JIM

I told you, you can stay here. You SHOULD stay here, at least until—

DEBORAH

(shuddering)

No, no, no.

(pulls back the curtain and looks at the house next door where Mrs. Ames is moving about inside)

Gee, Mrs. Ames looks ... comfortable over there.

JIM

You should have told me about your father. Inez said years. All through high school?

DEBORAH

Oh, sure, Inez told you, since I was ten.

JIM

You should have got out of there.

DEBORAH

Yeah, that's what Inez said. That's what Laird said. Tell me, Doctor, what IS the optimal age for a girl to go out on the streets?

JIM

There are places you could have gone.

DEBORAH

Some nice family? Who would want me, a girl who sleeps with her father? "You gotta ask for it, you gotta want it!" At least my father loved me. Me! He loved me! I just wanted him to stop doing that to me. You're a doctor, did you ever see anyone die? One minute he's there, everywhere. And then all that pain, and I can't do anything. And then he's just ... gone. And I'm screaming. Your mother never told you this? Your father never told you?

JIM

What?

DEBORAH

No, they promised me they wouldn't but ... that I stayed here with them for a few months? After my father died, when you were in Boston? They never told you?

JIM

No?

DEBORAH

They heard me screaming? They came running over? They didn't tell you? I was trapped. They pulled him off me. And they never told you, bless them both.

JIM

My God.

DEBORAH

Do you even remember when my father died?

JIM

Of course. Laird called me. I was in finals.

DEBORAH

I know. I was standing right there next to him. I told him to call and ask you to come to the funeral. But you didn't come.

JIM

Deborah, I wrote you, I was in finals, I couldn't come. I'm sorry.

DEBORAH

No, you didn't come. But that's okay, Jim, nobody came. Just your mom and dad. And Laird. And Laird. Laird took care of everything for me. Did everything he could to make me laugh. *(laughs)* Kept making horns behind the funeral director's head. He was so cute.

JIM

(chuckles) Yeah.

DEBORAH

Oh, Jim. *(waves it away)* I'll wake Susan. Can you get my suitcase for me?

JIM

Do you have money?

DEBORAH

(looks at check in her hand, is surprised)

Your mother was very generous. You have a wonderful mother, Jim. And I'll pay her back. I'll get a job and pay her back. And take care of things.

JIM

What kind of job? You don't have any experience, do you?

(Deborah laughs out loud.)

Well, I mean—

DEBORAH

Oh, never mind, Jim. I'm sure I'll find something I can do.

(tugging Susan awake)

Come on, honey, here, take Annie, we're going now.

EXT. RUTLEDGE PORCH — NIGHT

Jim opens the door for Deborah, who has Susan and Annie in her arms. Mrs. Rutledge comes up from behind with the Bride Doll. Jim takes it for Deborah, and comes out the door. Mrs. Rutledge gives first Deborah a kiss on the cheek, then Susan. Deborah follows Jim out onto the landing but stops, looking with alarm toward the bottom of the stairs.

JIM

You want me to do anything about this?

DEBORAH

Just stay with me until I'm in the car.

When they reach the bottom of the steps, Laird is there.

DEBORAH

Have you been waiting out here all night?

LAIRD

I'm sorry, babe. I'm so sorry.

DEBORAH

I'm sorry, too, Laird.

LAIRD

Let me put her in the car for you. You know your back.

DEBORAH

My aching back, yeah. Sustained a little injury.

She hands Susan off to Laird with the comfort of a pair who have done this thousands of times.

SUSAN

(barely wakes)

Daddy, I missed you.

LAIRD

Me too, babe. You go right back to sleep now.

Deborah takes out her keys, opens the trunk first and takes out a blanket, then opens the passenger door of the front seat, then unlocks the door to the back seat. Laird lays Susan out on the back seat and buckles the middle seat belt around her. Jim meanwhile hands the Bride Doll to Deborah and continues to the back of the car and puts the suitcase in the trunk.

LAIRD

You coming home now?

DEBORAH

(handing the blanket into the car to him, along with the Bride Doll and Annie)

I don't know where we're going. Here, put this over her.

Laird straightens the blanket over Susan and gently tucks in both dolls with her.

LAIRD

Mom says I got grease on that doll's dress.

DEBORAH

Mrs, Rutledge took ... care ... I think.

Laird backs out of the car and closes the back door quietly and carefully. He reaches into his back pocket, takes out his wallet and pulls some bills from it.

LAIRD

This is all I've got on me. But you've got the checkbook, right, and I'll always make sure there's lots of money in there. And call me every couple of days.

Wherever you are, however long it takes ... until you're ready to come home.

(begins weeping)

I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry.

Deborah takes the money from him and kisses him on the cheek and gives him a tissue out of her purse.

DEBORAH

Come on, Jim, give me a kiss, sweetly on the cheek.

Jim comes from behind the car and gives her a kiss on the cheek. She looks into his eyes deeply.

DEBORAH

Your eyes aren't at all like I've drawn them.

JIM

Hunh.

Deborah walks around to the driver's side, gets in.

At the curb meanwhile, Jim puts a tentative hand on Laird's shoulder. Laird hesitates a moment, then puts first one hand and then the other on Jim's hand, pulling it down from his shoulder and holding it tightly in both hands.

Deborah turns the key in the ignition. The engine grinds.

Laird runs up to the front of the car. Deborah pops the hood from inside. Laird opens the hood, jiggles the carburetor.

LAIRD

Okay.

Deborah turns the key again. The engine roars. Laird drops the hood and moves out of the way to the curb. He gives her the V sign and tries to smile.

Deborah watches him a second, then rolls down the window on the passenger side.

DEBORAH

You need a ride home?

Laird wells up, sobs, opens the door on the passenger side and gets in beside Deborah.

The car pulls away from the curb and drives up the street. Jim watches the car go up the street until it turns the corner and goes out of sight. Then Jim turns to climb back up the stairs.

FADE OUT
THE END