

(I'LL NEVER FIND) ANOTHER YOU

BY

Michael Elliott

Inspired by actual people and events.

EXT. OUTDOOR PARK - DAY

CHRIS WESTON, 75, Mediterranean features. Bald. Mostly wrinkle free face. Walks his Beagle, ROSIE. It's an early January day; sunny but cold. He walks upright in that shuffling, half-step style so common for men his age.

CELLPHONE RINGS.

Retrieves phone from coat pocket. Stares at the displayed phone number. Seems he can't decide if he should answer. Sits on a nearby bench. Answers, puts it on speaker.

CHRIS
Hello, Barb.

BARB
(from phone)
Hey Zippy, how are you?

CHRIS
Surprised but...not surprised.

BARB
Yea...she needs you...again.

CHRIS
So, what drama has she in store for me this time?

BARB
She's sick and in the hospital.

He takes the phone off of speaker. Puts it to his ear.

CHRIS
What's the problem?

As he listens, worry shows on his face.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Text me which hospital...Yeah, tell her I'll come. When have I ever not?

He hangs up. Looks at his dog who has watched him with dog-like curiosity. He rubs her head.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
You're lucky you only live 14 years or so.

INT. CHRIS & VALERIE'S CONDO - DAY

VALERIE BISHOP, 70, Chris' sister, busy in the kitchen. She's a short, slightly rotund woman.

O.S. FRONT DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES.

CHRIS (O.S.)
Hey Sis! We're back.

He lets Rosie off the lease. She scrambles into the kitchen and goes straight to her food dish.

VALERIE
How was your walk?

He ENTERS the kitchen.

CHRIS
I got in all my steps. Of course they way I walk these days they're more like half steps...still....

The pauses causes Valerie to look at him directly.

VALERIE
What is it?

CHRIS
I need you to take care of Rosie. I've got to go away for a few days.

VALERIE
To go where?

CHRIS
Delaware.

VALERIE
To do what?

He is annoyed by all the questions.

CHRIS
Quit channeling Mom.

VALERIE
What...or who...is in Delaware?

Chris suddenly acts like a child afraid to tell the truth.

CHRIS
Joanna.

Valerie's mouth flies open.

VALERIE
Sweet Jesus.

CHRIS
She's in the hospital. She's dying.

VALERIE
About fucking time.

Her response angers him.

CHRIS
You kiss your grandchildren with
that mouth?

VALERIE
I'm angry you're getting involved
with her....again!

CHRIS
I am and I'm going.

She shakes her head.

VALERIE
You never learn. Go on. I'll watch
Rosie.

INT. CHRIS' SUV - DAY

On MD/DE 404, destination Rehoboth Beach, DE. Turns on his
satellite radio.

It begins playing "To Love Somebody" by the Bee Gees, (1967).
Chris robotically sings along to the familiar lyrics.

"There's a light, a certain kind of light, that's never shone
on me. I want my life to be lived with you, lived with you."

He becomes aware of the personal emotional power of those
lyrics. He turns off the radio. SIGHS, shakes his head.

EXT. TUNNELL CANCER CENTER/REHOBOTH BEACH, DE - DAY

His SUV pulls in, parks.

INT. RECEPTION DESK - DAY

It's a large, curved desk with multiple RECEPTIONISTS.

RECEPTIONIST 1
Welcome to the Tunnell Cancer
Center. How can I help you?

CHRIS
Joanna Herrmann, room number?

RECEPTIONIST
Are you her husband?

CHRIS
I should be. No, I'm just a friend.

She hands him a visitors pass as he signs in.

RECEPTIONIST 1
Fourth floor. Room 467. Elevators
down the hall and to the left.

INT. 4TH FLOOR - DAY

The elevator doors open. Chris ENTERS into the ward. Walks slowly, looking for Room 467. Finds it. The door is partially closed. Stops, stares at the door. Finally, takes a deep breath, knocks lightly on the door, pushes it open.

INT. JOANNA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

JOANNA HERMANN, 74, seated upright in the bed, reading a magazine. She is pale, thin. Her once blonde hair has faded, thinned, gone dull and washed out. Chris ENTERS.

JOANNA
I was expecting you yesterday.

He approaches, kisses her on the top of her head.

CHRIS
Had to persuade Val to take care of
my dog.

JOANNA
Thanks for coming.

Chris nods.

CHRIS
You knew I would.

JOANNA
I know but sometimes it's best to
act surprised and grateful.

CHRIS

What the hell is going on? Barb didn't give me any details.

JOANNA

You know, she still calls you Zippy.

CHRIS

Most people from college still do. I'm resolved to that fate. Now, what is going on?

JOANNA

I've got pancreatic cancer.

CHRIS

How long?

JOANNA

I was in a fender bender two months ago. A body scan found it. It's a sneaky cancer. It already had spread.

DR. WILLIAM LINHART ENTERS. Looks way too young to be a physician. Seems surprised that she has a visitor.

LINHART

And who do we have here?

JOANNA

This is my boyfriend, Chris Weston. This is Dr. Linhart, my oncologist.

The two men shake hands.

LINHART

She's told me a lot about you.

CHRIS

I can only imagine. So, what's the diagnosis?

Linhart looks at Joanna who nods.

LINHART

The cancer has spread to several lymph nodes so surgery is not possible at this point. We've initiated a protocol of chemoradiation. It combines chemotherapy and radiation therapy in an effort to shrink the tumor.

CHRIS

Is it going to be rough on her?

LINHART

Won't be too bad. The chemo is administered with a simple IV and pills so the side effects aren't as severe or painful.

CHRIS

And after tomorrow's treatment?

LINHART

She'll be discharged. Then come back at appointed times for cancer therapy at our outpatient clinics.

CHRIS

And at home?

LINHART

There'll be regular visits from a registered nurse and a home care aide.

CHRIS

Who's going to be her daily caretaker?

Dr. Linhart's face shows confusion.

LINHART

She told everyone you are.

Chris stares at Joanna who smiles and shrugs.

CHRIS

That's right. Please forgive my senior moment.

Dr. Linhart checks Joanna's vital signs.

LINHART

Radiation therapy is scheduled for 9am. They'll bring you around 8:15.

CHRIS

Who pays for the home care?

LINHART

Medicare and her health care handle the basics. Anything extra...well...that's out of pocket.

(MORE)

LINHART (CONT'D)
Really generous of you to assume
responsibility for any extra cost.
She's very lucky.

Turns to Chris.

LINHART (CONT'D)
Pleasure to meet you.

He EXITS.

Chris walks towards Joanna. He's highly annoyed.

JOANNA
(quickly, defensively)
You were going to volunteer. Admit
it. You were going to jump at the
chance to be with me everyday.

CHRIS
I'll be back later.

JOANNA
Chris...I...

He spins on his heels to face her.

CHRIS
Don't say it! Don't dare say it!

INT. CHRIS' HOTEL ROOM - DAY

He's seated at the desk. Again, rummaging through his box of
photographs. Plucks one out of the pile.

INSERT SHOT OF PHOTO: Chris and Joanna are seated at a table
at the Western Maryland College student center, circa 1967.

INT. FRATERNITY CLUB ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: September 1967

It's a large room. Color TV in the front. A dozen couches
arranged for unobstructed viewing. In the back is a
combination pool/ping pong table.

Chris is seated, speaking with fraternity brothers BILL
GRIFFITH (GRIFF) and RUFFIN MOORE, both 19. Griff has long,
Beatles-style hair, loud hippie-style clothes. Ruffin is
Chris' mirror image. Short hair, wears a t-shirt, jeans. It's
student move-in day so there's hyper activity in and out of
the frat house.

GRIFF

So, what happened to that townie girl you were dating last semester?

CHRIS

She dumped me over the summer.

RUFFIN

Women shit on you so much you should just wear a toilet seat around your neck.

Chris nods.

GRIFF

Lot of hot freshmen girls. You should check them out.

CHRIS

I'm going to avoid women.

GRIFF

Maybe we can start a "He Man Woman Haters Club"?

CHRIS

Griff, you're the biggest puss hound on campus. You'd fuck a snake if it had legs you could spread.

LAUGHTER.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Anyone want to go to the Pit?

RUFFIN

I still got to unpack.

GRIFF

I'm going to check out the freshman girl's dorm.

CHRIS

Make sure you're zipped.

RON SMITH, 19, another frat bro, ENTERS the clubroom.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Ron, want to go to the Pit?

RON

Sure.

Chris starts to get off the couch.

CHRIS

Let's go!

RON

Give me an hour. I've got to hit the Student Union, need stuff from the bookstore.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY/FB

Non-stop foot and vehicle traffic as hundreds of new and returning students pile into the campus.

Chris approaches the Student Union building.

INT. STUDENT UNION BUILDING - DAY/FB

Chris ENTERS. Stops at the top of the stairs to light a cigarette. Snaps his Zippo lighter closed.

Heads down the steps. Bookstore is empty. Turns, enters the grille/food service area. Spots a crowd in one corner massed around one table. Ron stands at the edge of the crowd.

CHRIS

You ready to go?

He seems disappointed that Chris has arrived.

RON

In a minute. Give me a minute.

Chris looks to see what's causing all the interest. The 18 year old JOANNA HERRMANN is a beautiful young woman. Long shiny blonde hair, radiant face, dazzling smile sits at one end of the table. Also, her roommate, BARB SHIPLEY, 18, an attractive brunette. A group of overly eager males vie for their attention.

Ron pushes Chris, directs him to a newly empty chair. He sits next to Joanna, Ron next to Barb. The other males seem annoyed they captured those prime seats.

RON (CONT'D)

Hi, I'm Ron.

BARB

I'm Barb.

JOANNA

I'm Joanna.

RON
Freshmen?

They nod.

JOANNA
Roommates.

Barb looks at Chris.

BARB
What's your name?

RON
That's Zippy.

BARB
Zippy?? How'd you get that name?

CHRIS
Long story.

JOANNA
Freshmen?

RON
Sophomores.

Ron has put a cigarette in his mouth. Pats his jacket.

RON (CONT'D)
Zip, got a light?

Chris uses his Zippo, lights Ron's cigarette. Places the Zippo on the table, uses his finger to spin it in circles. Joanna watches closely. Reaches into her purse, removes a pack of Salem cigarettes. Takes one from the pack, multiple guys, Chris the exception, frantically jockey to light it.

CHRIS
You got to be fucking kidding me.

Gets up, LEAVES. Joanna's eyes follow him as she waves off the other males.

JOANNA
What's his real name?

RON
Chris Weston.

JOANNA
What's his story?

RON
He's a good guy. Kind of crazy.

JOANNA
Really? Interesting.

RON
Don't bother. He has really bad
luck with women.

JOANNA
Now that's really, really
interesting.

INT. LARGE LECTURE HALL - DAY/FB

A theater-style, multi-row classroom. On the blackboard in the front is "Intro to Western Civ. Prof. Cornelius Darcy".

Chris seated mid-row, halfway up. Other STUDENTS begin filtering in. He detects shuffling feet to his left. Looks. Is surprised as Joanna and Barb APPROACH.

JOANNA
Can we sit with you?

CHRIS
Sure.

Joanna is all smiles.

JOANNA
I notice you always sit by
yourself. Hope you don't mind.

Chris shakes his head.

PROFESSOR DARCY, mid-50s, dressed in gabardine and tweed
ENTERS. Class begins.

INT. LARGE LECTURE HALL - DAY, APPROX 45 MINUTES LATER/FB.

Throughout the lecture, Chris gives Joanna side glances.
Every time she notices it, she smiles.

DARCY
We'll continue this look at
medieval European society in our
small group discussions.

He WALKS AWAY from the podium indicating class is over.

Students shuffle back down the aisle. They reach the steps, Joanna and Barb walk side-by-side. Chris lags several steps behind. The distance increases as other guys rush and push past him to speak to the coeds.

EXT. OUTSIDE LECTURE HALL - DAY/FB

Joanna and Barb wait for Chris to catch up. They ignore attention from other males.

BARB

I'll catch up to you guys later.
Nice seeing you again, Zippy.

She LAUGHS.

BARB (CONT'D)

I love that name.

JOANNA

What do you want to do now?

CHRIS

I was going back to my room.

JOANNA

Let's go to the Grille. I'll treat you to a Coke.

Chris doesn't respond. She walks up to him, leans her body into his.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

(softly)

Don't you like girls?

CHRIS

Yea, I like girls.

JOANNA

Maybe you just don't like me?

His breathing becomes deep and labored.

CHRIS

No, I'm sure I like you...a lot.

She kisses him lightly on the lips

JOANNA

Good. I like you a lot too.

She starts to walk to the Student Union. Chris doesn't move. Turns when she realizes he's not following her.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Are you going to be my boyfriend or not?

CUE MUSIC.

He runs to her. Stops, kisses her. She takes his hand.

MONTAGE: CHRIS AND JOANNA AS A COUPLE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

They're seated at a table in the Student Union, Chris has his Coke. They're both animated. Joanna laughs easily.

They walk hand-in-hand to the dining hall. Sit next to each other at a table with other students. Appear relaxed and happy.

EXT. BACK CAMPUS/GOLF COURSE - TWILIGHT/FB

They walk to the campus golf course. Chris carries a blanket.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - 7TH HOLE GREEN - TWILIGHT/FB

The blanket has been spread out on the manicured grass. Chris lays on the blanket. Joanna rests her head on his right shoulder. He has his arm around her.

JOANNA
Tell me more about your family.

CHRIS
Dad works at the Naval Academy. He runs the power plant. Mom has her own beauty shop. She's Italian. They met in Italy after the war.

JOANNA
That's so romantic.

CHRIS
One sister, Valerie, five years younger.

JOANNA
Did you go to Annapolis High?

CHRIS
No. St. Mary's.

She SNICKERS.

JOANNA

No wonder I had to work extra hard
to seduce you. Good Catholic boy.

CHRIS

Speaking of that, why me?

She props herself on her elbow to look at him directly.

JOANNA

Crowd I ran with in high school was
kind of wild. My mother wanted me
to come here because it's a "safe"
Methodist college. I know you're
not what she had in mind. I can't
wait for her to meet you.

CHRIS

Thanks for the warning.

She leans over him, her face close to his

JOANNA

So, why you? When you walked away
from me, I knew you were special.
Now, when I look at you, my panties
get damp.

She slides her body on top of his. Kisses him passionately.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. CHRIS' HOTEL ROOM - DAY

He's holding a picture from the shoebox.

INSERT SHOT: It's the two of them. Chris is holding up the
pin flag from the 7th hole. Their clothes wrinkled and
disheveled. Totally mused hair. They both have this semi-
guilty, shit-eating grin.

Tears fall onto the photo. Chris turns it over. Written on
the back is: "Our first hole-in-one". September 29, 1967.

He puts the photo back in the box, tears dot his face.

INT. HOSPITAL RADIOLOGY - DAY

Joanna is positioned on a linear accelerator, undergoing
radiation treatment. Attended by a complete 5-PERSON TEAM.

RADIATION ONCOLOGIST

What you're laying on is a Linear Accelerator. It uses microwave technology to increase the effectiveness of the high energy x-rays that attack the cancer cells. Relax. Should take a half hour.

INT, JOANNA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Chris relaxes in a chair, watching TV. AMY LAWSON, 48, ENTERS. She's Joanna's daughter and looks just like her.

AMY

Chris!

He stares at her. Mesmerized by how much she looks like her mother when younger.

CHRIS

Joanna?

EXT. NAUTILUS FITNESS CENTER, TOWSON, MD - EVENING
(FLASHBACK)

Identify the building/location

SUPER: March 1979.

INT. MEN'S LOCKER ROOM - EVENING/FB

Chris ENTERS the men's shower. With him is BEN WESTON, his 5-year-old son. He places Ben under a shower, turns on the water, adjusts the temperature. Begins soaping him

CLUB MEMBER

You bring your son to the club locker room? They allow that?

CHRIS

I'm a single dad, so I made a deal with the owner. I do all the club's advertising and they pay me with a free membership. They said I can bring Ben as long as he behaves.

CLUB MEMBER

I've seen him before, wondered who he belonged to because he was so well behaved. How do you do it? What do you say to him?

CHRIS

Told him if he didn't behave, I'd trade him to the gypsies for a goat. And then I'd shoot the goat.

INT. CLUB LOBBY - EVENING/FB

Chris and Ben APPEAR from the locker room area, approach the lobby's seating area. It's empty except for a young long-haired blonde girl who kneels at the center table, coloring in a coloring book.

Chris spots her and his pace slows dramatically. He stares at her. Scans the area. Goes to the check-in desk. Ben follows.

CHRIS

(pointing)

That little girl, who's she with?

CONCIERGE

Her mom.

CHRIS

Blonde like her?

CONCIERGE

Very.

CHRIS

Where is she?

CONCIERGE

Racquetball courts.

Chris leads Ben to a couch.

CHRIS

Wait for me here. Don't go anywhere I'll be right back.

BEN

Can I ask that girl if I can color with her?

Chris looks at her.

CHRIS

Sure..but be careful. Don't make her any promises.

INT. RACQUETBALL COURTS - EVENING/FB

Chris carefully negotiates the maze of courts. His search is helped because each hallway-facing wall is transparent.

He doesn't find his target in the main corridor, Makes a right. Finally, he spots Joanna.

She's in the middle of contesting a point. He's captivated by this first sight of her after nearly ten years.

She retrieves the ball, bounces it once on the floor. Gives a half glance behind her, tosses the ball into the air for service. While it's still in the air, she turns around quickly, walks towards the wall. Her partner follows her.

PARTNER

Joanna? Are you all right?

She nods. Gets close to the wall, sees Chris. Signals to him.

JOANNA

Wait! Wait right there!

She removes her safety goggles, drops her racquet. Steps into the corridor.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

It's really you.

She literally leaps into his arms.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?

CHRIS

I'm a regular at the Nautilus gym.

She squeezes him tight.

JOANNA

Yea, you've put on extra muscle.

She releases her grip. Looks at his shirt.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

I soaked your shirt. Sorry, I sweat like a hog. How did you know I was here?

CHRIS
I spotted your clone.

She LAUGHS.

JOANNA
That's Amy. She's 4.

CHRIS
Right now, she's sharing her
coloring book with my 5
-year-old son, Ben.

JOANNA
Wait! Your son is with my daughter?

They LAUGH.

CHRIS
Now that's scary.

He kisses her cheek.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Got to get going. We haven't had
dinner yet It was great seeing you.

He starts to leave.

JOANNA
How's Susan?

CHRIS
Gone. Almost 2 years.

JOANNA
You're a single dad?

CHRIS
Guilty.

He quickly DISAPPEARS around the corner.

JOANNA
(near whisper)
Holy shit! He doesn't know.

EXT. GYM PARKING LOT - EVENING/FB

Chris helps Ben into the car's back seat, buckles him in.
Opens his jacket, pulls his shirt up to his nose. Sniffs.

BEN
Does your shirt smell?

CHRIS
Yes...yes it does.

END FLASHBACK

INT. JOANNA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Amy LAUGHS.

AMY
You'd be surprised how many people
make that mistake. Chris! I'm so
thankful you're here.

They hug.

AMY (CONT'D)
It's been such a long time.

CHRIS
Yeah...25 years or so. What are you
doing now?

AMY
We live in Knoxville, Tennessee. My
husband works for a tech company.
I'm a bank VP. Three kids.

CHRIS
Tennessee, huh?!

AMY
That's why I was so relieved when
Mom told me you volunteered.

CHRIS
Volunteered? OK, let's go with
that.

AMY
How are Hannah and Becky?

A look of sadness crosses his face.

CHRIS
I don't see them much these days.

AMY
And I'm so sorry about Ben. When I
heard I was devastated.

The door opens, Joanna ENTERS in a wheelchair guided by an ORDERLY.

JOANNA
OK, driver, this is my stop.

The Orderly stops the wheelchair and secures the hand brakes. She rises slowly. Amy rushes over to help. Hugs her.

AMY
How you doing, Mom?

JOANNA
Much better now that you're here.

Joanna glances over at Chris.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
You two getting reacquainted?

CHRIS
I was filling her head with stories.

JOANNA
Something you're quite good at. I still believe a lot of the ones you told me.

Dr. Linhart ENTERS.

LINHART
That went quite well. Mr. Weston, could I talk to you privately?

The two women look at him and smile.

JOANNA
Cafeteria! I need some coffee. You boys play nicely now.

Arm in arm, Joanna and Amy EXIT.

LINHART
I'd like to give you a quick physical. Being a full-time caretaker will be taxing. Just want to make sure you're up to it.

INT. EXAM ROOM - DAY

Chris undergoing an EKG. Dr. Linhart closely watching the monitor. Shuts it off.

LINHART

EKG is good. Overall, I can't find any serious issues. You'll be fine.

CHRIS

Her cancer. What's the prognosis?

LINHART

She's at the T2 stage now. With chemo and radiation we can slow the spread for awhile.

CHRIS

Define "awhile"?

Linhart shrugs.

LINHART

She's fine now but after six months, you'll notice the changes. Best case, twelve to eighteen months.

INT. CHRIS' HOTEL ROOM - DAY

His overnight bag is packed, sits on the bed. He retrieves the shoebox from the desk top. Opens it, finds a picture, sits on the edge of the bed, closely examines it.

INSERT SHOT: It's a full color, 5x7 professional-style photo. It has a colorful pre-printed border. Across the top is written, "Maryland Science Center. Baltimore, MD. 1979".

Joanna is seated with 5-yr-old Ben on her lap. Chris with 4-yr-old Amy on his lap.

INT. CHRIS' HOME - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: March 1979

It's a bright, brick single home in the Baltimore suburbs. Chris and Ben are seated at the kitchen table.

BEN

I'm finished. Can I watch TV now?

CHRIS

OK, just while I clean up and then it's bed time.

He slides out of his chair, races into the living room, turns on the TV.

Chris collects the dishes, glasses and silverware. Dumps the dirty dinnerware into the sink, starts the water, squirts dish washing liquid over the mess. Grabs a pan from the stovetop. Drops it into the sink.

TELEPHONE RINGS.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Perfect timing as always.

He quickly wipes his hands on a dish towel. Answers.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Hello?

BARB
(from phone)
Zippy?

Chris is stunned.

CHRIS
Barb? What the hell?

BARB
How are you?

CHRIS
Worried now.

She LAUGHS.

BARB
Joanna wanted to call you but she was afraid you'd hang up.

He's dazed.

CHRIS
No...uhh...it's OK...I guess. She can call. What does she want?

BARB
You. (pause) Can she call now?

He's gone from dazed to apprehensive.

CHRIS
Sure...why the hell not?

BARB
I'll let her know. Stand by.

He hangs up. Slumps into a kitchen chair.

CHRIS
What the fuck?

TELEPHONE RINGS.

He lets it ring wondering how many times he can let it ring before she'd give up.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Hello?

JOANNA
(from phone)
It's me. Sorry about Barb. I was worried you'd hang up on and I have so much I want to tell you.

CHRIS
First thing I need to know. Where's Mark?

JOANNA
We're getting divorced. That's why I had Amy with me that night. He was packing, moving out.

CHRIS
How do I fit into your new status?

JOANNA
Why do you sound so cold?

CHRIS
I have a good memory.

JOANNA
(emotional)
Please. Meet me tomorrow. Please.

He takes a long pause.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Chris?

CHRIS
Cross Keys Plaza. Tomorrow, 12:30.

DOORBELL RINGS.

BEN (O.S.)
I got it!!

CHRIS
You know where it is?

JOANNA
Yes. Tomorrow, 12:30.

BEN (O.S.)
Dad. It's Debra!

CHRIS
I've got to go.

JOANNA
So I hear.

He hangs up. Take a deep breath.

CHRIS
(softly)
Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING/FB

Chris ENTERS. DEBRA MORGAN, 27, stands in the foyer, holding Ben. She has long flowing dark hair, smooth olive hued skin. Even wearing sports clothes, she's decidedly elegant and sophisticated.

CHRIS
What are you doing here?

She puts Ben down, annoyed at Chris' abruptness.

DEBRA
Well, pardon me. I didn't want to wait until the weekend to see my two favorite fellows. Is that a problem?

CHRIS
No! No! Not at all.

She sees he's agitated and wound up.

DEBRA
Who were you talking to?

CHRIS
Gloria. We have that presentation next week for Baltimore Federal Savings & Loan. She likes to get into my shit and cause trouble.

Debra approaches, kisses him.

DEBRA

She's jealous. You're the agency's rainmaker so that drives her crazy.

CHRIS

I've got to put Ben to bed.

She walks past him, stares into the kitchen.

DEBRA

Well, I'm staying, provided you don't have other plans.

Chris manages a weak smile.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

While you're taking care of Ben, I'll clean the kitchen.

CHRIS

Oh...sure...great idea. Thanks.

Chris hustles him upstairs.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT/FB

Chris reads a line from the Richard Scarry book, "Cars and Trucks and Things That Go."

CHRIS

The Pig Family drives by a broken down truck. "It won't be broken down for long," says Pa. "I saw Mistress Mouse working on it. She can fix almost anything".

He closes the book.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

That's all for tonight, pal. Time to go to sleep.

Kisses him on the cheek, turns off the light. EXITS.

INT. CHRIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT/FB

Debra lounges on the bed. Wears only a t-shirt and panties.

Chris ENTERS.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You look ready.

DEBRA
For you...always.

She watches as he undresses and puts on a t-shirt and workout shorts. He lays down on the bed but not close to her.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
Honestly, what's going on with you?
I've never seen you so nervous and jumpy.

She moves close, begins kissing him.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
You know, we've been together more than a year now.

CHRIS
Was I suppose to buy you a present?

DEBRA
Seriously, people keep asking me about our future plans.

CHRIS
Just random "people"? Or, more precisely, your mother?

His pointed sarcasm angers her.

DEBRA
Not just her, my entire family.

CHRIS
When we first started dating, she was the one who brought up, repeatedly, that I'm not part of your social set.

DEBRA
My Father likes you. He was impressed that you made "Baltimore Business" magazine's seventy nine people to watch in 19-79.

CHRIS
The big problem is she treats Ben like an annoying puppy. How many times is she going to "hint" it's a bad idea for you to be involved with a divorced man with a child?

She leans over him.

DEBRA
I love you. Doesn't that count?

CHRIS
I've learned that's not always
enough.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CHRIS & VALERIE'S CONDO - DAY

She's on the couch, reading a book. Rosie next to her,
sleeping.

O.S. JINGLING KEYS INSERTED IN FRONT DOOR LOCK.

The sound puts Rosie on alert. She jumps off the couch.

O.S. DOG WHINING, BARKING.

Chris WALKS INTO the living room, carrying Rosie who keeps
licking his face.

VALERIE
She missed you.

CHRIS
I missed her. And you too.

Puts Rosie down. Gives his sister a hug and kiss.

VALERIE
How is she?

CHRIS
Cancer hasn't dulled her need to be
in charge.

VALERIE
Now what?

Chris sits down on the couch.

CHRIS
I'm going back. I agreed to be her
day-to-day caretaker.

VALERIE
Agreed?

CHRIS
In the loosest sense of the word.

VALERIE
As Mom use to say, "what is wrong
with your brain?"

CHRIS
Val...I-want-to-do-this.

She's frustrated.

VALERIE
What hold does she have on you?

He has a blank stare.

CHRIS
My fraternity brothers said that
when I was with her, I didn't seem
like myself. When they found out we
were together again in the late
70s, every damn one of them called,
asked me if I had lost my mind.
John, Tommy, Griff, JC but the call
from Ruffin broke me.

INT. CHRIS' HOME/KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: May 1979

TELEPHONE RINGS.

Chris RUSHES INTO the kitchen to answer.

CHRIS
Hello?

OPERATOR
I have a collect station call for
301-323-2714 from Seoul, South
Korea.

RUFFIN
(talking over Operator)
Zip! Zip! Accept the charges.

OPERATOR
Will you accept charges?

CHRIS
Yea Operator. Put him through.
Ruffin, what the hell...??

RUFFIN

I heard from Griff. He told me you
and Joanna are back together. Are
you crazy? Get out of it.

Chris looks at the phone as if he is communicating with an
alien from another civilization.

CHRIS

Calm down, man. We're older now.
More mature and together. We know
how to make it work.

RUFFIN

You're fooling yourself. She'll
break your heart again.

CHRIS

I love you guys. I appreciate your
concern but we're fine. Honest.

RUFFIN

You still have that big blind spot.
Something about her changes you.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. CHRIS & VALERIE'S CONDO - DAY

CHRIS

I decided I had to find out what
that was.

VALERIE

And? Did you?

CHRIS

I found a psychiatrist who
specialized in past-life
regression.

Valerie makes the sign of the cross.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: September 1982

Chris is seated in a large cushioned chair. Eyes closed. The
PSYCHIATRIST sits across from him.

PSYCHIATRIST

When you're ready, describe where you are and what you see.

INT. CHRIS' DREAM/POV - DAY/FB

CHRIS

It's foggy...heavy. I'm walking along. I think I'm with someone but they're ahead of me. I'm wearing strange clothes.

His descriptions are shown via video in sync with his audio.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

My sleeves...they're very colorful...there's lace at the cuffs. Looks like I'm wearing a kilt and leather lace-up boots.

O.S. UNDEFINED SOUND THAT GROWS LOUDER.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I hear something.

PSYCHIATRIST

Can you tell what it is?

CHRIS

Sounds like a crowd of some sort. Fog is starting to lift.

JACOB

(thick English accent)
Claudia!! Move your fat arse or we'll be late.

Chris begins patting "his" body.

CHRIS

I'm a woman! I've got tits and long hair. The kilt is a dress. Holy shit. I'm a woman!

CLAUDIA

(thick English accent)
Go piss yourself, Jacob. My feet feel like I'm walking over hell's hot coals.

JACOB

If we don't get to the theater soon
it'll fill up. Then there'll be
hell to play.

CLAUDIA

Being with you sometimes is hell.

CHRIS

Fuck. It's Joanna and me
but...she's the guy and I'm the
woman!

PSYCHIATRIST

Anything else?

CHRIS

We're in the middle of a large
market square. Loads of people,
merchants, food, horses, dogs.
Seems to be London, around 16
hundred. I recognize it from my
Shakespeare anthology.

CLAUDIA

Jacob...do you love me?

He snorts.

JACOB

Sure...those times you're not
bedeviling me with all your
nonsense. Here we are.

CHRIS

We're in front of the Curtain
Theatre. Holy mother of god. The
Curtain Theatre. According to the
playbill, they're performing "Romeo
and Juliet".

Jacob kisses Claudia

JACOB

There you go, my sweet girl.
That'll have to do until we get
back home.

CHRIS

Bring me back. Bring me back!

PSYCHIATRIST

Listening to my voice, I'm going to
count backwards from 5.

(MORE)

PSYCHIATRIST (CONT'D)
When I get to zero, you'll awake.
You'll feel safe and relaxed.
5..4..3..2..1..0

Chris' eyes open.

PSYCHIATRIST (CONT'D)
How are you feeling?

CHRIS
How much do I owe you?

PSYCHIATRIST
Don't you want to discuss what you
just experienced?

CHRIS
I just want to pay and go.

PSYCHIATRIST
It's 300 dollars.

Chris gets out his checkbook, hastily writes the check. Hands it to him.

CHRIS
Thank you very much.

He starts to leave.

PSYCHIATRIST
Don't you want your tape?
I recorded the entire session so
you can listen to it later.

CHRIS
No thanks.

PSYCHIATRIST
What should I do with it?

CHRIS
Burn it.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. CHRIS & VALERIE'S CONDO - DAY

Valerie is stunned, disturbed and disbelieving. She's looking at her brother with a wide-eyed stare.

VALERIE

Have you ever told that story to anyone else?

CHRIS

No.

VALERIE

Explains why you've never been committed.

CHRIS

Finally, it begins to make sense. If we were together in past lives, why wouldn't those personality differences and traits, positive and negative, show up every time we found each other? That might be why I don't "seem like myself" when we're together because I'm now part of different selves.

VALERIE

Now you have multiple personalities?

CHRIS

No. More like I have multiple past life memories. Because every time she pops into back into my life, I end up rediscovering life. Just before we met, Mom and Dad drove up to campus because I was planning to drop out, enlist and go to Vietnam. I was that miserable. Then I met her and it was...magic! Same in 79...96. Ben died in 2016. Mom the next year. After all that pain, what's there to live for? Seventy-five years old, a dog my only companion. No inner life. No plan for the future, just wondering about when I'd die. Now I have purpose and goals. She has maybe, maybe eighteen months. I'll be with her to the end.

They stare at each other. He grabs the dog leash from the coat tree. Fixes it to Rosie's collar. EXITS.

Valerie slumps to the couch, cries.

INT. CHRIS & VALERIE'S CONDO - DAY/A FEW HOURS LATER

She is busy cooking dinner.

Chris and Rosie ENTER. The leash is removed and the dog makes a dash for her food dish.

VALERIE
Staying for dinner?

CHRIS
Absolutely

VALERIE
You two were gone a long time.

CHRIS
Yea...kind of like it will be our last walk for awhile. Unless you really need me to take her.

She shakes her head.

VALERIE
I have an ulterior motive. I think whenever you show up to reclaim her, that probably will be the last time I ever see you.

INT. CROSS KEYS PLAZA/BALTIMORE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: March 1979

The Plaza is enclosed on all sides by boutique shops and food establishments. Chris has found a bench slightly isolated from the foot traffic.

Joanna APPEARS. Spots Chris, quickly approaches. Her smile increases as she gets closer. Chris stands to greet her. She kisses him on his cheek.

JOANNA
Thanks for meeting me.

CHRIS
My curiosity overwhelmed my sense of self preservation. So, in detail, what the hell is going on?

JOANNA
Mark and I are getting divorced. The marriage started going downhill not too long after Amy was born.

CHRIS

How come?

JOANNA

Mark is a social worker for Baltimore City. It doesn't pay very well. I was an English teacher which doesn't pay much either. We struggled financially plus he was no help with Amy.

CHRIS

So who cheated first?

No answer.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I figured as much.

Joanna is near tears.

JOANNA

Please don't judge me. I begged him to find a new, better career but he wouldn't. So I did. I was hired by Merrill Lynch, training to be a stock broker. Even the trainee's pay was more than Mark made. He grew bitter and distant.

CHRIS

Suddenly you find yourself surrounded by well-heeled Type-A males. And you're so lonely, unhappy...so beautiful...

JOANNA

I deserve that. I drove Mark away. Made life with me unbearable. I started to fall apart, too. I was frightened and miserable that night. Then I turned around and there you were.

CHRIS

What do you expect to happen now?

JOANNA

(haltingly, unsure)
I want another chance.

She's upset when he doesn't respond.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
You have a girlfriend?

CHRIS
Yes.

JOANNA
I heard her name over the phone. I
imagine she's beautiful, smart,
loves you. Do you love her?

Tears begin to well in her eyes.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
This was a mistake. I'm sorry.

CHRIS
I don't love her.

He grabs her hand.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
I love you. I've loved you since
the day you sat next to me in
Darcy's class. God have mercy on
me. I can't help it.

She cries even more but now from happiness. She throws her
arms around his neck. Pulls him in close.

He removes a handkerchief from a coat pocket. Begins wiping
her tears.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Enough with the water works.

JOANNA
What do we do now?

CHRIS
Let's take it slow for now. Amy's
going to need time to get use to
all the changes. When Susan left,
it took Ben a couple of months.

JOANNA
Whatever you say.

CHRIS
I've got to get back to my office.
I'll walk you to your car.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY/FB

Joanna points to her car, a somewhat beat up Ford Pinto. She uses her key to open the driver's door.

CHRIS
I'll call you tonight.

JOANNA
I'd like that.

They stare at each for what seems like a long time. And then it happens. They throw themselves at each other. Kiss each other, wildly, passionately. It begins to seem like they're on the verge of losing control.

CHRIS
The keys! Give me the keys!

He snatches them from her hand. She jumps in, moves to the passenger seat. He follows. Starts the car. They drive out of the parking lot as fast as that heap can go.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Chris and Joanna are in bed; which is a disheveled mess.

JOANNA
I really like the way we're taking
it slow.

He kisses her. LAUGHS.

CHRIS
It was surreal. There you were,
actually in front of me. A moment I
thought I'd never experience again
was mine for the taking.

She kisses him.

JOANNA
And, boy, did you take it!

CHRIS
I hope we didn't traumatize that
old couple in the elevator.

JOANNA
They probably found it inspiring.
Shit, it's almost three o'clock.

Chris is out of bed, looking for his clothes. Finds Joanna's panties. Tosses them at her.

CHRIS
They're really damp.

She smiles.

JOANNA
What about your girlfriend?

CHRIS
That's my problem. I'll deal with it.

Walks over to her, kisses her.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
I love you. Always have. Always will.

EXT. THE WOLFF BUILDING/BALTIMORE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Identify building/location.

Chris ENTERS.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

KATHY JURIST, late 20s, is the company receptionist. She looks more like she's 16 with a head of natural, dark curls and a freckled face.

CHRIS
Any messages?

She smiles at him.

KATHY
Hmm...let me see...

He's familiar with this playful tone of voice which indicates the joke will be on him.

KATHY (CONT'D)
12:15...Debra calls. Told her you had left for lunch...12:30...Debra calls...wants to know if I know where you're having lunch..and with who or is that whom?

(MORE)

KATHY (CONT'D)
 12:45...she calls again...wants to
 know if I know when you're
 scheduled to return. 1:00, she
 calls again. Said it's urgent, call
 her ASAP.

She hands him all the pink message slips.

KATHY (CONT'D)
 Smells like trouble to me.

CHRIS
 Really? How so?

KATHY
 The only reason she'd call that
 often is she suspects you're up to
 something.

Chris nods, turns to walk away. Stops. Walks back.

CHRIS
 Did she happen to call anyone else
 here today?

KATHY
 Yea, just before lunch she called
 and spoke to Gloria.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CHRIS' SUV - DAY

He drives. Joanna in passenger seat.

CHRIS
 Amy get back OK?

JOANNA
 Yes. You know, she loves you. Those
 years that we all lived
 together...Anyway, she's glad you
 and I are involved again. How's
 your sister? I imagine she has a
 few things to say about this.

CHRIS
 She's overprotective. She thinks...

JOANNA
 That you're out of your mind.

CHRIS
Yea...mostly that.

They share a LAUGH.

Joanna stares out of the passenger window, watching the landscape change from urban to suburban to farmland and small towns.

JOANNA
Remember all the trips we made to
Ocean City?

INT. CHRIS' VW BUS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: May 24, 1968, Memorial Weekend.

Chris drives. Joanna in passenger seat. Passenger window rolled all the way down as she lets the soft, warm air send her long hair flying.

ROAD SIGN: Welcome to Ocean City, Maryland. America's Finest Family Resort.

There's a slow-moving, long line of holiday traffic crossing the two-lane bridge over the OC Inlet and Sinepuxent Bay, the only way into the resort.

Chris glimpses over at Joanna who is excited about the trip.

EXT. PARKING LOT, INN TOWN MOTEL, OCEAN CITY - DAY
(FLASHBACK)

Chris finds a parking spot. Turns off the engine.

CHRIS
Ready?

Joanna nods.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Nervous?

She nods even more emphatically.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Open the glove box.

She does and finds a small jewelry box.

JOANNA
For me?

CHRIS

You said you'd feel a lot more comfortable if we could tell people we're married. Open it.

She does. Removes what looks like a matching diamond engagement ring and wedding band.

JOANNA

These are beautiful. They're fake, right?

CHRIS

That's what the guy at the pawn shop said.

She slips on the rings. Admires them.

JOANNA

They do make me feel like we're actually married.

She looks into the box. Takes out the man's wedding band.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Let's not forget this.

Chris holds out his left hand. She slips the wedding band on his finger.

CHRIS

I do!

She LAUGHS.

JOANNA

You better.

She slides across the bench-style front seat. Kisses him.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. JOANNA'S HOME/SELBYVILLE, DE - DAY

Selbyville is a small village, population 3,000, whose attraction is tied to its proximity to Atlantic beaches and its beach oriented, country lifestyle.

Joanna's home is a 3br/2b single family home on a sizeable lot, fenced in back yard

Chris' SUV pulls into the driveway. He gets out, helps Joanna out. Grabs their bags.

CHRIS

Looks nice. When did you buy it?

JOANNA

Two thousand seventeen. It's my third home since I moved here.

CHRIS

Back in two thousand and one, if I remember correctly.

JOANNA

I asked you to come with me.

CHRIS

I couldn't. Not after what happened with me, Amy and your ex.

Joanna unlocks the front door. Hands him the key.

JOANNA

This is yours. Don't lose it.

INT. FOYER/LIVING ROOM - DAY

They ENTER. Spacious living room, nicely furnished and decorated.

CHRIS

You hungry? The nutritionist from the cancer center gave me some great recipes.

JOANNA

Maybe later. I want to take a nap. There's two guest rooms. Take your pick. Make yourself at home.

She EXITS to the rear of the house.

O.S. The sound of a door opening then closing. He picks up his bag, moves in the direction of that sound.

INT. REAR HALLWAY - DAY

He sees the open doors to the two guest rooms. Chooses the one with minimal furniture. Begins unpacking, putting things away. He places the photo shoebox on top of the dresser.

CELL PHONE RINGS.

He's surprised by this call. Swipes the screen.

HANNAH

Hello Dad.

It's a Skype call from his oldest daughter, HANNAH WESTON-ELLIS. She's 42, thick dark hair, self-assured.

CHRIS

Hannah! To what do I owe this unexpected honor?

HANNAH

Wanted to warn you, Becky and I are landing in Baltimore day after tomorrow then we're driving down to ButtFuck Delaware where you've decided to hide from reality.

CHRIS

Charming as always. Is your Aunt organizing this safari?

HANNAH

She told us how you've lost your mind, once again, over the "Blonde Bomber". Although, I find it hard to image that a women in her 70s who has slept with as many men as she apparently has, has any physical appeal remaining.

CHRIS

Stop quoting your mother.

HANNAH

Send Aunt Val the address, she's doing the driving.

CHRIS

Can I implore you to bring pictures of my grandchildren? Do they know I'm still alive or did you tell them a story...like I drowned trying to save a sack of puppies that was tossed off the bridge?

HANNAH

Except in my version, you're the one who tossed them off the bridge.

He stares at her self-satisfied smile.

CHRIS

See you in a couple of days.

INT. THE KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Chris busily arranging the kitchen to his liking. Begins pounding several chicken filets with a metal meat tenderizer.

Skillfully peels lemon skin from the lemon. Tosses the shavings into a sauce pot that's bubbling with wine.

Coats the filets with a slight flour covering.

Joanna ENTERS.

JOANNA

Smells good. What is it?

She leans against his back to get a look at what he's doing.

CHRIS

One of your favorites, lemon chicken.

JOANNA

I've always loved your cooking.

INT. KITCHEN/CHRIS' HOME - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: March 1979

Early morning sunlight flows through the kitchen window.

Chris, in gym shorts and t-shirt busily cooks breakfast. He has eggs, bacon, sausage and potatoes going simultaneously on the stovetop. A coffee pot drips fresh coffee. Reaches into the fridge, pulls out butter and orange juice.

Joanna ENTERS, wearing his bathrobe.

CHRIS

Good morning. How you feeling?

JOANNA

Between a day at the Science Center with the kids and a night with you...deliriously exhausted.

She wraps her arms around his waist.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Where are they?

CHRIS

Downstairs in the club room watching cartoons.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Good thing Amy likes Bugs Bunny.
(YELLS)
Ben! Amy! Breakfast in five
minutes.

Joanna opens the dish cabinet.

JOANNA
I'll set the table.

O.S. FURIOUS POUNDING ON FRONT DOOR.

CHRIS
Stay here.

INT. CHRIS' HOME/FOYER - MORNING/FB

O.S. DOOR POUNDING CONTINUES

Chris opens the front door. Immediately absorbs a punch in the face, then slaps and head blows. Raises his arms in self defense, pushes forward and closes the door.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MORNING/FB

Debra attacks him relentlessly, fueled by jealous anger.

DEBRA
You miserable son-of-a-bitch. You
lying piece of shit. Nobody treats
me like this. I fucking hate you.

He grabs her hands. She kicks him.

CHRIS
Cut it out! Stop it! I called you
several times Friday night. Left
messages. You didn't return my
calls.

She slows down a bit.

DEBRA
If it was so important why didn't
you call me yesterday? Oh, right!
You were with your blonde whore and
her bastard daughter. How could you
do this to me? After I told you I
love you and wanted a future with
you?

She begins hitting him again. Hard. He has no intention of striking back so he tries to control her hands.

Then, to his left, he gets a glimpse of something white. It's Joanna still in his bathrobe. She pulls Debra out of his grasp and punches her directly in the nose.

JOANNA

That's for my bastard daughter,
bitch.

Chris hears a CHEER, as from a sports event. He looks out from the front porch and is shocked to see, what seems to be, the entire neighborhood out in their front yards, on the sidewalks, some even approaching his front yard. All witnessing what's happening on his front porch.

The women pummel each other. Chris tries to break them up only to get repeatedly punched or slapped.

SFX: HOOTING, HOLLERING, CHEERING, CAT CALLS, WHISTLES FROM THE ASSEMBLED NEIGHBORS.

Debra rushes at Joanna, grabs her around the neck. They tug and pull at each other. Grab hair and clothing. Joanna's bathroom flies open, revealing she's totally naked underneath. She's oblivious.

SFX: CATCALLS, WHISTLING INCREASES, HEAVY MALE TONE.

Joanna breaks Debra's grip. Punches her in the face several times. Debra slowly slumps to the porch deck.

She squats down to get closer to her.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

You're done. His cock is my
personal property now.

She stands, cinches the bathroom tightly around her. Finally notices all the people gathered to witness the spectacle. Takes one step forward, does a perfect curtsy.

SFX: LOUD SPONTANEOUS CHEERING, LAUGHING, WHISTLING.

She kisses Chris.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

I'm going to feed the kids.

She ENTERS the house. Chris walks to edge of the porch to address the crowd.

CHRIS

What is wrong with you people? It's Sunday morning. Why aren't you all... in church...or something??

SFX: LAUGHTER, APPLAUSE

The crowd slowly disperses. Two neighbors, JEAN COOK, 33 and DIANE KRACHER, 30 APPROACH.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Oh great. Now what?

DIANE

Someone needs to help the loser.

Diane is a shapely, sultry voiced brunette. Jean is African-American. She's tall, looks even taller because of her fashionable Afro.

Their husbands, RICHARD COOK, 35 African-American, tall, close cut hair and GREG KRACHER, 34 average height, thick dark hair, moustache APPROACH. Greg carries a doctor's bag.

GREG

We're here to claim the body.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MORNING/FB

Debra sits on the deck, drinking bottled water as Greg examines her pupils.

GREG

Nothing's broken. Pupils are clear. No indication of concussion. Just a lot of surface bruising that'll fade in a few days. I advise you to schedule an appointment with your regular doctor to be safe.

Debra slowly rises to her feet.

DEBRA

Thank you, Doctor.

She starts to walk away, stops to glare at Chris.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

I'll get even with you for this.

She limps down the sidewalk, finds her Mercedes, LEAVES.

RICHARD
I'd be scared if I were you.

CHRIS
Trust me. I am.

DIANE
You going to introduce us to the
champ?

INT. CHRIS' HOME - DAY/FB

Chris, the Krachers and the Cooks ENTER.

JOANNA (O.S.)
In the kitchen!

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

She's gotten dressed, mixing Bloody Marys in a pitcher while
Ben and Amy finish breakfast.

JOANNA
Making breakfast for the adults.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY/FB

They sit around, drinking Bloody Marys.

CHRIS
How did it happen that the entire
neighborhood was out all at the
same time?

JEAN
We suspected something might happen
this morning. She had been driving
by your place, spying on you, all
weekend.

CHRIS
Really?

DIANE
It's hard to miss that shiny new
Mercedes.

JEAN

Friday night, she'd drive up the street, slow down in front of your place. Did it a bunch of times. She even drove down the back alley.

DIANE

Saturday afternoon she was pounding on your front door; yelling, screaming, cursing. I came over.

CHRIS

And?

DIANE

She demanded to know where you were. If you were with someone...

Joanna slips her arm inside Chris' arm. Pulls herself closer.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Her attitude pissed me off.

JEAN

Everyone on the block heard it. Talked about it all afternoon.

RICHARD

Then she shows up this morning. Parks and sits there for hours. Word went up and down the street. And what we thought would happen...happened.

END FLASHBACK

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/KITCHEN - MORNING

Chris pours a cup of coffee while talking on his cell phone.

CHRIS

So when do you expect to get here? I should be pissed at you but, believe it or not, I'm looking forward to seeing the girls. It's been too long. Hannah is still angry but the fact she actually called me is a positive step. Love you too.

He hangs up. Notices Joanna has been listening. Points at the coffee cup. Hands her that cup. Pours one for himself.

JOANNA
So, the Legion of Doom will descend
upon you tomorrow?

CHRIS
Like the Harpies in Greek
mythology.

JOANNA
I promise to stay invisible.

CHRIS
You don't have too. It's your
fucking house.

JOANNA
I'm a big...if not the
biggest...reason...

DOORBELL RINGS.

INT. FOYER/LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Chris opens the front door. He is greeted by MARY HOWARD and
TONYA DANIELS.

Mary is the RN. She's African-American, mid-50s, a smiling
woman whose presence creates instant confidence and calm.

Tonya is the Aide, appears to be of mixed ethnicity, late
20s. She has a shy, winning smile.

MARY
Mr. Herrmann?

CHRIS
Yea, let's go with that.

MARY
I'm Mary, I'll be tending to Mrs.
Herrmann a couple days a week and
in case of emergencies.

CHRIS
Nice to meet you and thank you.

MARY
This is my niece, Tonya. She'll be
your aide. She'll help you anyway
she can.

CHRIS
Great to meet you both. Come in.

He closes the door as the women step in.

MARY
Where is Mrs. Herrmann?

INT. KITCHEN/JOANNA'S HOME - MORNING

Chris and Tonya ENTER.

CHRIS
So, that's the basics. No need to worry about my bedroom or the kitchen. You can help yourself to what's in the fridge any time. Go relax in the TV room until your Aunt is done.

INT. JOANNA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Mary finishes taking Joanna's blood pressure.

MARY
One nineteen over sixty-eight. Kind of low but not anything to worry about. Overall you seem fine...

JOANNA
But at some point....

Mary sits down.

MARY
The gentleman who greeted us, he's not your husband?

JOANNA
He's a good friend.

MARY
A very good friend I would guess.

Joanna nods.

JOANNA
Too good, actually.

MARY
You two never considered getting married?

JOANNA
Several times.

MARY
What stopped you?

JOANNA
Me.

MARY
And he doesn't know why?

Joanna LAUGHS.

JOANNA
Are you a nurse or a psychiatrist?

MARY
Ms. Herrmann, I've had the duty and honor of helping people face the end bravely, confident in God's love and mercy. But there were some, too many, who failed to tell a loved one a secret that would have balanced their book of life.

Tears begin to form in Joanna's eyes.

MARY (CONT'D)
If he doesn't know that answer, his heart will be burdened until he faces his own end. If you have any love for him, you'll tell him and sooner than later.

Joanna nods.

JOANNA
Can you do me a personal favor?

MARY
Be happy to

JOANNA
I need a prescription filled and delivered.

She hands Mary a piece of paper. She smiles, suppresses a laugh.

MARY
It'll be my pleasure.

INT. TV ROOM/JOANNA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Chris seated on the couch, watching television.

Joanna ENTERS.

JOANNA

What are you watching?

CHRIS

HBO. It's called "The End of Us".
At first I thought it was about you
and me but it's about a deadly
fungus that turns people into
zombies. I wish I could be as
lively as these zombies. I'd have
some fun then.

She sits right next to him which Chris finds surprising. He
moves slightly to his right.

JOANNA

When did you get so shy?

CHRIS

I'm suppose to be looking after
you. Not...you know...

JOANNA

Still the good Catholic schoolboy.
I wondered how you got that way.
Then I met your mother.

CHRIS

You mean Our Lady of Post Marital
Virginity.

She LAUGHS in surprise.

JOANNA

Who called her that?

CHRIS

All of us. Me, Val, my brother in
law John, God rest his soul, the
kids.

JOANNA

That's hilarious.

CHRIS

She was like Olivia, Tony Soprano's
mom. Bitter, negative, sucked the
soul out of Dad. Surprised she
didn't try to have me wacked.

JOANNA

I liked your Dad. He was funny. I think the last time we spoke was when I found out he died.

CHRIS

August, two thousand and twelve.

They briefly watch the TV.

JOANNA

I want you out of the guest room.

CHRIS

Where am I suppose to sleep? In the garage?

JOANNA

You're so dense. No, with me.

Now he's really shocked.

CHRIS

What? What the...you have cancer.

JOANNA

It's not contagious, you dope. I still have stretches of good days. I think being close to you will make those days better. I'm going to take my meds and go to bed.

She gets up from the couch. Crosses in front of him. Reaches into her robe, tosses a pill vial at him. He catches it.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Here's your meds for tonight.

His eyes widen when he reads the label.

CHRIS

Viagra!

JOANNA

What? You don't need help getting it up at your age?

CHRIS

I can't remember the last it got up on its own.

JOANNA

Let's experiment tonight. Don't keep me waiting.

INT. JOANNA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Chris rolls to his left. Catches a glimpse of the nightstand clock. It is 1:30am. He rolls on his back. Joanna stirs, moves closer, nestles her head on his right shoulder.

CHRIS
How you feeling?

JOANNA
Like you hit me with a fire hose.

CHRIS
Why is all this happening now?

JOANNA
I got advice from a very smart woman. She made me see that I need to confess...well...I need to be accountable.

CHRIS
Like we said in the 60s...sounds heavy, man.

JOANNA
I can't believe some of the things I put you through. Like I almost killed your career.

INT. HOWARD WOLFF'S OFFICE/THE WOLFF AGENCY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: March 1979

HOWARD WOLFF, 55, Agency President, sits behind an ornate, solid wood desk. He is an elegant, well turned out individual. A full head of silver hair is expertly coiffed. Wears a well-tailored designer suit.

DOOR KNOCK.

HOWARD
Come in.

Chris ENTERS. Sits down opposite his boss. He looks directly at Howard who watches him as if this is the first time they've met. Then slowly but definitively he begins smiling which results in LAUGHTER.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
What in the fuck happened at your home last Sunday? Sounds like it was Ali versus Foreman.

CHRIS

I'm so sorry Howard. I couldn't control it. If that's why we were uninvited to pitch Baltimore Federal, I'm ready to resign...

HOWARD

Resign? What makes you think I want you to resign?

CHRIS

So you're not mad about losing the invitation to present?

HOWARD

Yea but not for the reasons you think. I'm not going to let a potential account tell me how to run my company. Fuck that. Grant Morgan is Baltimore Federal's biggest account and good friends with Bob Hecht, the president. This is his way of getting revenge for his daughter. So, tell me about this new love interest who apparently has a fierce left jab.

CHRIS

We met in college. From the first syllable, she lit a fire in me.

HOWARD

How old were you?

CHRIS

Sophomore year, nineteen.

HOWARD

Young, dumb and full of cum. Did a lot of dating before her?

Chris nods.

CHRIS

But none of it amounted to anything. The first time she got close, I couldn't breathe. My entire world changed.

HOWARD

And for the first time, you thought about marriage...kids...a career...a future...

CHRIS

All I wanted to do was just watch her do...anything.

HOWARD

So, she was the first woman to awaken your soul. Suddenly you realized life could be exciting, rewarding, beautiful. All you wanted to do was see life through her eyes. That's why you haven't been able to forget her. Like it or not she owns that part of you.

CHRIS

Wow. That's pretty heavy.

HOWARD

Kids?

CHRIS

Daughter, 4.

HOWARD

You'll be a great dad for her like you are for Ben. You're such a mensch. You're the most menschie non-Jew I've ever known. Maybe you were a Jew in a previous life.

CHRIS

So, what now?

HOWARD

Get the staff together. Tell them everyone's getting a raise. Also, I'm promoting you to Vice President of Creative Services. That's my way of giving Bob Hecht and Grant Morgan the finger.

Chris gets up, leans over the desk to shake hands.

CHRIS

Thanks Howard. Thanks a lot.

HOWARD

Everyone had you and Debra pegged as Baltimore's newest power couple but I had misgivings. People like Grant Morgan owns things...and people. You'd have been just another acquisition, an asset deeded to his daughter.

(MORE)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

You would have been programmed in the Morgan way, no more mensch. Be thankful for how this turned out.

END FLASHBACK

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/KITCHEN - EARLY AFTERNOON

Chris at kitchen table, eating a bowl of soup. Joanna ENTERS.

JOANNA

Is that all you're having?

CHRIS

Need to face them on a mostly empty stomach.

JOANNA

What's the reason for this meeting?

CHRIS

Don't know. I agreed to it because I haven't seen my daughters in nearly five years. I've got grandkids I've never met.

JOANNA

I'm sorry I played such a big part in that.

CHRIS

Debra did a good job of turning them against me. And honestly, I was no paragon of virtue back then. I made it easy for her.

O.S. A CAR APPROACHES IN THE DRIVEWAY.

JOANNA

Scared?

CHRIS

As my father would say, I'm a grown ass man and I can handle my business. But yea, I'm petrified.

She kisses him.

JOANNA

Show then how a grown ass man takes care of business. As for me, I'm going to hide in the bedroom.

INT. FOYER/LIVING ROOM - EARLY AFTERNOON

He approaches the door, takes a deep breath, opens it.

Valerie with Rosie on a leash approaches first. The dog is happy to see him. Valerie lets go of the leash.

CHRIS
Rosie, girl!

He picks her up. Looks at the women who all have dour expressions.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Reminds me of that old joke. If you want to find out who really loves you; lock your wife and your dog in the car trunk. Come back in 10 minutes, open the trunk and see which one is happy to see you.

Valerie hugs him.

VALERIE
How you doing brother?

CHRIS
I'm doing great.

He puts down the dog. Stares at his two daughters who keep their distance. HANNAH, 42, is tall, long dark hair, wears glasses. She looks like she never smiles. BECKY, 37, is shorter, strawberry-blonde hair. Has a positive, upbeat aura.

She moves towards him.

BECKY
Hi, Daddy.

She hugs him. He returns it

CHRIS
Hi, sweetheart. I miss you.

BECKY
I miss you too.

HANNAH
Can we not stand here and put on a show for strangers?

INT. WESTON-MORGAN HOME/BALTIMORE - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: September 1997

Debra is seated at the kitchen table drinking wine with her mother, LUCILLE MORGAN, 78, the matron of the Morgan clan. Obvious she puts a lot of effort into her appearance with excellent results.

LUCILLE

I warned you he wasn't one of us
but you wouldn't listen. I can't
believe you chased him after the
way he treated you. And now this.

DEBRA

That's enough Mother.

REBECCA WESTON, 14, ENTERS the kitchen. She's been crying. The two adult women stare at her.

BECKY (14)

When is Daddy coming home?

LUCILLE

He's not. He's run off with another
woman.

BEN (O.S.)

No he didn't.

BEN WESTON, 24, tall, fit. A full shock of thick brown hair. A backpack and sleeping bag slung over his shoulder.

Rebecca is thrilled to see him. Runs up, hugs him.

BEN (CONT'D)

How you doing, Peanut? Don't worry
about Dad, he's still hurt. He
needs to stay somewhere safe and
peaceful so he could heal quicker.

DEBRA

Amazing. You lie as easily as your
Father.

Ben's face flashes red but he keeps his composure.

BEN

I'm a hundred percent healthy and
I'm afraid to stay here.

DEBRA

I'm surprised you didn't bring your boyfriend. What's his name again?

BEN

That's none of your concern.

Takes Becky by the hand.

BEN (CONT'D)

Let's go up to your room and talk.

They quietly EXIT the kitchen.

LUCILLE

Your husband's a whore-monger. Your stepson's a homo. Good choices, dear.

INT. BECKY'S BEDROOM - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

It's a fashionable yet definitely a teenager's space.

Ben and Becky sit on her bed. She leans against him.

BECKY

Is Daddy going to be alright?

BEN

I'll take you to see him tomorrow.
But it's got to be our secret.

She smiles. Nods. Ben opens his backpack. Pulls out a couple of blankets, toiletries and a change of clothes.

BECKY

What are you doing?

BEN

With Hannah at boarding school, you shouldn't be alone. I lost a parent too. I know it can be scary at night. So, I'm going to sleep by your bed and if you wake up and you're scared or want to talk...or cry, I'll be right here for you.

BECKY

How long are you going to stay?

BEN

As long as it takes.

She hugs him as tightly as she can. He returns the hug.

BECKY

Thank you, Ben. Thank you.

BEN

I love you, Peanut. We'll get through this together.

END OF FLASHBACK.

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/KITCHEN - DAY

The women are seated at the table. Chris ENTERS.

CHRIS

Alright. Who's going to take the first shot?

The women look at each other.

VALERIE

Hannah wants to float an idea for your consideration.

HANNAH

Dad, you're going to be 76 in a few months and I worry about your health moving forward.

CHRIS

Do tell? And the reason for your newfound concern?

HANNAH

I wonder if you're capable of making good decisions for yourself? You need to be where there's real care givers looking after you.

CHRIS

I'm still quite capable of looking after myself. Besides, I'm not alone....

HANNAH

She's sick. You can pretend you're "together" but before long it'll be ...she's going to....

JOANNA (O.S.)

The word is "die".

She's ENTERED the kitchen through the dining room.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

You're a doctor. Why was that so hard to say?

She sits at the table.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Why are you trying to bully your Father into an assisted living center or worse? Or did Debra put you up to this?

Hannah becomes indignant.

HANNAH

What makes you think you're part of this family discussion?

JOANNA

Well, let me quote your Father, Quote. Joanna, it's your fucking house. Un Quote.

HANNAH

You're not good for him. The last time you were "together", Dad killed your second ex-husband, got shot and ended up in jail.

CHRIS

I didn't end up in jail. I was detained at the hospital while the police were investigating.

He looks at Valerie and Becky.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You two got nothing to say?

VALERIE

I have some concerns about your recent behavior. It's been odd.

CHRIS

As compared to what?

BECKY

If you want to stay here with Joanna then you should.

Hannah explodes.

HANNAH

We finally hear from Daddy's Girl.
You could never blame him for
anything. Just too soft-hearted.

BECKY

Better than being a judgmental,
cold hearted bitch!

The entire room falls into silence.

JOANNA

Well, Ouch!

Hannah jumps to her feet.

HANNAH

Who the fuck do you think you're
talking to?!?

Becky stands her ground.

BECKY

How is it possible you can live
this long and have never spent a
moment to look at yourself?

VALERIE

Chris, put a stop to this.

CHRIS

I'm enjoying it too much.

BECKY

I hated how you treated Ben. I
blame Mom. She was all sweetness
and light until he came out. Then
she denied his humanity. Since he
wasn't her "natural" son he wasn't
worthy of her attention. And you
just picked up and amplified that.
You were such a heartless cunt.

Hannah tries to smack Becky across the face but Becky grabs
her arm and stops it. Squeezes.

BECKY (CONT'D)

I was so happy when you were at
boarding school. I had him all to
myself. No one ever had a finer big
brother.

As her anger builds, she squeezes Hannah's arm more tightly.

HANNAH

Let go, you're hurting me.

BECKY

But the worst was when you didn't come to Ben's funeral. Killed in an accident, only 42. Where were you?

HANNAH

I couldn't. I was scheduled for surgery that day.

She finally releases her arm.

BECKY

Oh...like you're the only super star surgeon at Massachusetts General. The great Hannah Weston-Ellis. Accept no substitutes. Surprised you haven't dropped "Weston", like Mom.

She takes out her phone. Opens her photo gallery. Chris stands to look.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Daddy, here are your grandkids. This is Emily. She's 7. And this is Miles, just turned 3. You'd like him. He's goofy like you.

She hugs him tightly.

BECKY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. I let myself be bullied. By Mom, Hannah, Grandma.

CHRIS

That's okay, kiddo. I'm living proof that it's better to come to self knowledge later in life than not at all.

HANNAH

All this hearts and flowers doesn't change the fact that our Father killed another human being because of this woman.

Chris and Joanna look at each other.

JOANNA

Tell them.

Chris shakes his head.

CHRIS
No. You do it.

JOANNA
Your Father didn't kill Dimitri. It was Amy. He just took the credit...or blame.

VALERIE
Oh my dear god!

JOANNA
She was house sitting. I was in New York at a Merrill Lynch manager's meeting. Dimitri came for her.

VALERIE
Why?

CHRIS
He had been sexually abusing her for years. With Joanna divorcing him, he was afraid Amy would turn him in.

INT. CHRIS' HOME/FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: August 1997

He's in the family room alone, watching "The X Files".

TELEPHONE RINGS.

Sits on the end table, next to him.

AMY
(from the phone)
Chris? It's Amy. I need help.
I'm being stalked by my stepfather.
I think he's been snooping around the house.

CHRIS
What about the police?

AMY
I call them. They show up, look around but they don't find anything.

CHRIS

Your mom?

AMY

In New York. Please come and stay with me, I'm really scared.

CHRIS

It'll take me an hour. Make sure everything is locked. Keep the phone handy.

EXT. JOANNA'S HOME/BEL AIR, MD - NIGHT/FB

Chris comes up the walkway, rings doorbell. Door opens.

CHRIS

Did you check to see who it was?

Amy nods.

AMY

Saw you when you pulled up.

CHRIS

So what the hell is going on?

AMY

Dimitri is stalking me. I went to the pharmacy, he was there. I went to the supermarket, he was there. He followed me most of the way home. I'm sure I saw him sneaking around the house earlier.

CHRIS

You think he'd be more interested zeroing in on your mom.

AMY

He's been zeroing in on me since I was 10.

At first he doesn't comprehend her meaning but a growing look of disbelief and anger overtakes him.

CHRIS

That motherfucker. He wants to scare you into silence.

AMY

I think he wants to silence me permanently.

(MORE)

AMY (CONT'D)

He's worried I'm going to turn him in. The police said unless he makes a direct threat, there's nothing they can do.

CHRIS

I'll stay here as long as it takes. I assume the locks were changed.

AMY

Minutes after she kicked him out.

CHRIS

Check the windows and doors again. Then try and get some sleep.

She hugs him. LEAVES.

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/BEL AIR, MD/GARAGE - NIGHT/FB

Chris ENTERS, turns on the light. Looks around. Spots a golf bag in a corner. He removes different clubs from the bag. Selects a wood and an iron.

Breaks the iron over his knee, twists it apart so now it's shorter and with a jagged, pointed end.

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/BELAIR, MD/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT/FB

He takes a position on the couch. Places the home telephone on an end table. Checks his watch. It is 11:30pm.

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/BELAIR, MD/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT/FB

Chris dozes on the couch.

SFX: GLASS BREAKING.

The noise wakes him. He checks his watch. It is 1:15am. His first move is for the telephone. There's no dial tone.

SFX: GLASS BREAKING

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/BEL AIR, MD/KITCHEN - NIGHT/FB

Chris ENTERS. Notices the windows and door to the back deck are undisturbed.

Notices a light streaming into the dining room

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/BEL AIR, MD/DINING ROOM - NIGHT/FB

A flashlight beam illuminates a busted out window.
Indistinguishable SOUNDS come from outside.

Chris flattens himself against the wall. Grips the jagged
golf iron tightly in his right hand.

Hears SCRAPING and GRUNTING, hands grab the window sill.

More SCRAPING and GRUNTING. A man's leg appears through the
window opening. Chris immediately stabs it several times with
the jagged edge golf club.

SFX: HOWLS OF PAIN.

CHRIS
(yelling)
Amy! Amy! Get out of the house. Get
out now.

SFX: TWO GUNSHOTS.

One shot hits Chris high on his left shoulder. He staggers
backwards, falls.

He instinctively put his hand over the wound. Sees and feels
blood oozing.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
(yells)
Amy, get out before it's too late.
Hurry.

DIMITRI finally ENTERS through the window. Limp towards
Chris. Shines the flashlight, aims the handgun at him. Turns
on the dining room lights

DIMITRI
You the cheating asshole who's been
fucking my wife?

CHRIS
I was fucking her long before you
met her.

Dimitri kicks Chris twice in the ribs. Chris GASPS in pain as
his lungs collapse.

DIMITRI
I'll come back for you after I deal
with the lying little bitch.

Amy RUSHES IN from the kitchen, wielding a long kitchen knife. She stabs Dimitri in the right side of his upper back

He SHRIEKS in pain, stumbles backwards, drops the handgun. Amy retrieves it quickly.

Dimitri, who is a bear-like 6ft 3in reaches behind, removes the knife from his back, drops it.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

That was a mistake.

CHRIS

Shoot him, Amy. He'll kill us both if you don't.

This earns Chris another body kick. Dimitri refocuses on Amy. She aims the gun at him, shakes uncontrollably.

DIMITRI

Why would I hurt you? We mean so much to each other, don't we?

He takes small, hesitant steps towards her.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

Give me the gun, before you hurt yourself.

His eyes meet hers which causes her to freeze.

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

Be a good girl, like always.

CHRIS

(gasping, raspy)

Amy, who do you trust? You called me because you're afraid of him.

Dimitri breaks his gaze on Amy to focus his ire on Chris.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You've got to do this. Clear your mind. Aim for the center of his body. Squeeze the trigger.

Amy shakes off her spell-like trance. Dimitri suddenly realizes he's potentially in danger. Takes one giant step towards her. She fires 4 times. He grabs his mid-section. Grunts. Wobbles. Crashes to the floor.

Amy sinks to her knees, SOBBING.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Amy...Amy...pull yourself together.

She crawls on over to him.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Give me the gun. Give it to me.

She stares at it, still firmly in her grasp. Lays it on the floor in front of him.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Get whatever first aide shit is in the house and bring it here with warm water and towels.

She stands, nods.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
And as much fucking aspirin as you can find.

END FLASHBACK

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/SELBYVILLE, DE/KITCHEN - DAY

Everyone's totally spellbound by the story.

CHRIS
Amy patched me enough to stop the bleeding. Finally convinced her to leave. I wiped the gun clean put my prints on it. Stuck it in Dimitri's hand, squeezed it to get his prints on it. Then I stumbled next door.

JOANNA
That's your Father. Risked his life for a child that's not his. The bullet partially tore his rotor cuff, required surgery. Multiple broken ribs, damage to his kidneys.

CHRIS
You took good care of me.

She takes his hand, kisses it.

VALERIE
Why you'd hide it? Why didn't you tell us about this sooner?

Chris and Joanna look at each other. Burst out LAUGHING.

CHRIS

Have you forgotten that everyone was hating on us back then and for years later? You and Mom called Joanna a home-wrecking slut and I couldn't keep my cock in my pants.

JOANNA

Well, that part was mostly true. But, we had to keep it secret. You girls were just teenagers. You would have let it slip out. Can you imagine what your family would have done with that information? Your Father and Amy would have been locked away for years.

CHRIS

I couldn't risk her being subjected to an investigation. Getting dragged through the mud. I got the shit kicked out of me so completely, my self defense story was totally believable.

Hannah gets up.

HANNAH

I need to lie down for a bit.

JOANNA

The bedrooms are in the back, Take your pick

Hannah EXITS.

CHRIS

(to Becky)

You were really brutal to your sister.

Becky shrugs.

BECKY

She deserves it. She's got a big stick jammed so far up her ass when she farts, splinters fly out.

Everyone LAUGHS.

BECKY (CONT'D)

We're staying here tonight, right?

VALERIE

I thought we could find a motel.

BECKY

No. I want to have breakfast with my Father. And Joanna.

She gives everyone a bright, happy smile.

BECKY (CONT'D)

After all, this is her fucking house. I'll get our stuff out of your car.

She EXITS.

JOANNA

Her, I like a lot!

VALERIE

What's next for you two?

Chris and Joanna look at each other. Shrug.

CHRIS

Take it day by day.

VALERIE

It's just weird seeing you two together again. I know my brother loves you but what is it about him that you love so much?

JOANNA

Funny you should ask. I've wondered that myself. I've been reading about the world's greatest love affairs. Looking for clues. What they have in common is they just happened. No reasons. No explanations. Some unidentifiable magic occurs between two people.

VALERIE

Maybe there's some type of supernatural connection?

She gives Chris a quick, almost imperceptible smile.

JOANNA

Could be. The best thing I read was that Marc Anthony thought Cleopatra would poison him because their army was defeated by the Romans.

(MORE)

JOANNA (CONT'D)

And she said, "Fool. Don't you see now I could have poisoned you a hundred times had I been able to live without you." I tried to find ways to live without him and ended up poisoning myself.

Becky ENTERS, dragging everyone's luggage.

BECKY

What are we doing about dinner?

INT. JOANNA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She's in bed, watching TV. Chris ENTERS from the bathroom, slides beneath the sheets.

JOANNA

How you holding up?

CHRIS

It's like Tolstoy wrote, "Happy families are all alike. Every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

JOANNA

At least your daughters now know I didn't exactly kidnap you from the hospital.

CHRIS

That was one of Debra's multiple lies to turn them against me.

She moves closer to him.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

What did you find so attractive about Dimitri?

She moves even closer.

JOANNA

I confused his strength with actual masculinity. He had a huge used car business. Made a lot of money.

CHRIS

If I had known he was that big, I wouldn't have shown up that night.

She gives him a gentle shove.

JOANNA

Yes you would. You can't resist a Herrmann woman in distress.

CHRIS

Many years ago, a very smart man said you had awakened in me the love of life and its endless possibilities. That you had burrowed into my soul and owned it.

She snuggles against him.

JOANNA

I always kind of knew that.

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/SELBYVILLE, DE/KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Hannah sitting at the table, drinking coffee. Chris ENTERS.

CHRIS

I literally woke up and smelled the coffee. Why you up so early?

HANNAH

I like my coffee extra strong so I need to make the first pot.

Chris has poured a cup and taken several sips.

CHRIS

That's strong enough to put hair back on my head.

He sits next to her.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

How did you and Becky get along last night?

HANNAH

We were up all night talking...crying.

She opens her phone.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Here's your grandkids. This is Trevor, he's 10. Quite a soccer player. This is Anna, 6. She's teaching herself to play the piano. And this is Colin, just turned 3.

(MORE)

HANNAH (CONT'D)

He spends most of his time studying what the other two kids are doing.

CHRIS

You really didn't tell them I throw puppies off a bridge, did you?

She becomes quietly emotional.

HANNAH

I called them last night, told them you're a world famous businessman. But now that you've retired, you'll have plenty of time to visit them.

She leans against him.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry I've been such a bitch. Please come and visit. I want them to learn their grandfather has such courage and love that he literally would take a bullet for them.

CHRIS

I love you, sweetie. I can't wait to meet them. Hopefully, no bullets will be involved.

Becky ENTERS.

BECKY

Whoever strips the beds in our room better wear a wet suit considering how much we cried last night. It was an atmospheric river of tears.

CHRIS

Time for breakfast. I'm gonna cook up the entire menu; eggs, bacon, sausage, toast, muffins. We can also have fresh fruit if you two are willing to slice it up.

BECKY

Sure, Daddy. We'll both help.

CHRIS

Fruits in the fridge. Let me go roust the other women.

INT. JOANNA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

She's sitting on the edge of the bed, crying.

Chris ENTERS.

CHRIS

Hey, what do...what's the matter?

JOANNA

Me. I'm the matter. I'm so angry I pissed away my best years on men who didn't deserve me. I wonder why you don't hate me?

CHRIS

Don't think I haven't tried many times but it would never stick.

JOANNA

I would get so angry at you because no matter what I did you always found a way to forgive me.

CHRIS

Well...not really. Remember when you got in trouble, signing out for home when you actually shacked up with Pete McWilliams...again. I was so pissed off I called Dean Mowbray and pretended to be your dad.

She is totally shocked.

JOANNA

That was you!?!? I got in so much trouble both at school and home.

Chris is totally pleased with himself. He LAUGHS.

CHRIS

I know. It was great. I was really quite proud of how, instead of screwing you, I screwed you over.

JOANNA

Fuck you.

CHRIS

Wow! So over the top considering it was 55 years ago. I'm curious, did you enjoy fucking him? Karen Palmer told me he had a really small cock.

JOANNA

When did she tell you that?

CHRIS

Senior year. I was fucking her after the frat's toga party. One of the many, many times that year we weren't speaking. She remarked you probably were missing me because Pete's peter didn't measure up.

JOANNA

I always hated your disgusting frat boy posing. That's what got you suspended for a semester.

CHRIS

Granted. Getting wasted and turning the faculty parking lot into a demolition derby was not a good move. But you sure didn't miss the opportunity to let yourself get passed around.

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/KITCHEN - MORNING

Valerie, Hannah and Becky have stopped fixing breakfast and listen to the increasing louder argument.

BECKY

Dad got suspended?

Valerie nods.

VALERIE

Second semester, sophomore year. He and his best friend, Ruffin, got drunk one afternoon and when your Father drove back to campus, he drove into faculty parking lot and demolished a half dozen cars. Both got suspended.

SFX, B.G. A LOUD FACE SLAP.

The Women flinch.

INT. JOANNA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Joanna smacks him in the face, using as much force as she can muster. Chris rubs his left cheek, that's deep red.

CHRIS
Feel better now?

JOANNA
You are such a total dick. I missed you. Seemed every guy on campus swooped down on me. It was confusing. They couldn't make me forget you. But when you act like this, I wonder why I asked you to come be with me.

CHRIS
Well, here's a bulletin. Your ex-husbands, all the guys from college...they're all dead. I'm the lone survivor. I'm all you got. Better be careful, I might tamper with your meds.

He EXITS.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Chris walks in the direction of the kitchen. Joanna follows, repeatedly punches him in the back.

JOANNA
What did you do with the rest of the Viagra?

CHRIS
It's in the night stand.

JOANNA
It's really expensive. I want to get my money's worth while I can.

CHRIS
How expensive?

JOANNA
Sixty dollars a pill.

CHRIS
Wow! Not like the good old days when a room at Lee's Motel was ten bucks and five bucks would buy all the rubbers I could ever use.

JOANNA
So what about tonight?

CHRIS

No! My daughters are spending the night again. They might hear.

She LAUGHS.

JOANNA

How about all the times we fucked at your house with your parents in the next bedroom?

CHRIS

(smiling)

We were totally out of our minds in those days. Alright, tell me how small McWilliams' cock was and we're on for tonight.

They have walked, talked, stopped and gotten so absorbed in the banter, memories, anger and laughter they fail to realize they're now standing at the open entrance to the kitchen.

Valerie, Hannah and Becky are thunderstruck. The two groups stare at each in thorough awkwardness.

BECKY

So, what's the answer already?

HYSTERICAL, GUT BUSTING LAUGHTER.

Valerie takes Chris and Joanna each by an arm.

VALERIE

Let's enjoy a real family breakfast.

EXT. WEEMS CREEK/SEVERN RIVER, MD - SUNRISE (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: Sunday, May 5, 1968

Chris is alone in small rowboat fishing as the sun rises

EXT. WESTON HOME, ANNAPOLIS, MD - DAY/FB

Chris' 1962 VW bus pulls up in front of a sizeable, 2-story, gray shingle house.

Valerie (15 yrs old) RUSHES OUT to greet him.

VALERIE

About time you got back. You got a phone call from Barb Shipley.

Chris perks up at this news.

CHRIS
What did she want?

VALERIE
Just call her.

Chris jogs into the house. Valerie follows

INT. WESTON HOME/KITCHEN - DAY/FB

The house phone is wall mounted in the kitchen. Chris dials the number.

COED
(from phone)
McDaniel dorm.

CHRIS
Barb Shipley, please.

COED
(yelling)
Barb! It's Zippy.

BARB
About time you called. Will you talk to her?

CHRIS
Put her on.

JOANNA
I need to see you. Now.

CHRIS
I should take a shower. I smell like fish.

JOANNA
I can't wait. Leave now.

EXT. WESTERN MARYLAND CAMPUS - LATER THAT DAY/FB

He pulls in front of McDaniel dorm. Joanna immediately EXITS. She hugs him. Hangs on for the longest time.

JOANNA
I can't tell you how much I've missed you.

CHRIS

Well...give it a try.

She hops up on a retaining wall. He sits next to her, she grasps his hand.

JOANNA

Any plans for Memorial Day?

CHRIS

Not so far.

JOANNA

I'm finished my last exam Thursday morning. Come pick me up and let's go to Ocean City for the weekend.

CHRIS

Why me and not one of your more recent suitors?

JOANNA

Are you going to make me beg?

CHRIS

A little.

EXASPERATED SIGH

JOANNA

I took Pete McWilliams to the Sadie Hawkins dance last night. After an hour I made him bring me back. It struck me all at once how much I missed you.

CHRIS

He must have been thrilled.

JOANNA

He was pissed. I got manhandled.

CHRIS

Explains the long sleeves.

JOANNA

I heard that morning you had been re-admitted. I was so excited I called your house. Gave your Mother the message.

CHRIS

Explains why I didn't get it.

JOANNA
Other guys...dull, unfunny,
emotional cripples, ego maniacs.

PETE McWILLIAMS APPROACHES.

CHRIS
Speaking of all that.

MCWILLIAMS
How you feeling?

JOANNA
Better. Sorry about last night.

MCWILLIAMS
No problem. Went back to the dance,
picked up Karen Palmer. Had quite a
night.

JOANNA
So happy for you.

Chris and McWilliams stare at each other. No love loss
between them.

MCWILLIAMS
Heard you're coming back.

CHRIS
Sorry for your bad luck.

MCWILLIAMS
No bad luck. Had a lot of fun with
your lady. Happy to give her back,
slightly used of course.

He WALKS AWAY.

JOANNA
Fucking asshole.

Chris hops off the wall.

CHRIS
I've got to get home and take that
shower.

She hugs him, kisses him passionately.

JOANNA
Thursday, the 23rd, 1pm. I'll be
ready to go.

He gets into the VW, pulls away. Watches Joanna go back into the dorm via his rear view mirror. Executes a U-turn, heads deeper into the campus. Finds a parking spot at the Student Union. Gets out, scours the ground. Picks up a hefty rock.

INT. STUDENT UNION - DAY/FB

Chris ENTERS, bounds down the steps. Spots McWilliams sitting with some friends. Approaches quickly.

MCWILLIAMS
Look who's back. "Crash" Weston

The speed with which Chris approaches forces McWilliams out of his chair.

MCWILLIAMS (CONT'D)
What the fuck are....

Chris is on him, punches him squarely on the nose. Blood spurts in all directions. He topples backwards.

CHRIS
Don't ever touch her again. Don't ever talk shit about her either.

EXT. STUDENT UNION PARKING LOT- DAY/FB

He reaches his vehicle. Opens his left hand, drops the rock.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. JOANNA'S HOME/SELBYVILLE, DE - MORNING

Everyone gathers around Val's car as they pack up to leave. There's a happy buzz in the air. Everyone smiles, lots of laughter, hugs.

CHRIS
You two work out which summer week you'll come with your whole family. One week each. The kids will love it, so much to do. Got it?

Hannah and Becky nod. Hannah approaches, they hug.

HANNAH
Thank you for being so patient and understanding.

CHRIS

Well, you didn't give me a choice.

It's Becky's turn.

BECKY

Considering what a massive clusterfuck this could have been, it worked out pretty well.

She hugs him.

BECKY (CONT'D)

I always loved being Daddy's Girl, if only to piss off Hannah.

Quick kiss on the cheek. Valerie approaches.

VALERIE

When Becky mentioned Ben, I saw the look on your face. He was a great big brother. Just like you. Although you've gotten kind of strange in your old age.

CHRIS

Thanks, I think.

They all say good-bye to Joanna, squeeze into Valerie's car.
DRIVE OFF.

Joanna approaches from behind, wraps her arms around his waist.

JOANNA

You handled everything very well.

CHRIS

For the first time in 25 years, it feels like I have a family again.

JOANNA

Speaking of family, we've got to get going.

EXT. DULANEY VALLEY MEMORIAL GARDENS/BALTIMORE - DAY

Chris' SUV drives into the cemetery from the main road, maneuvers to a parking spot.

CHRIS

This is close enough.

They get out. Joanna silently follows him as they walk slowly to a granite headstone. They stop at Ben's grave.

"Benjamin Edward Weston, June 3, 1974 - August 26, 2016"
Beloved Son and Brother.

Chris stares at the headstone. Joanna leans against him, embraces his arm.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

How you doing, pal? Look who I brought to visit. You'd be happy to know I managed to patch things up between Hannah, Peanut and me. (starts choking up). I wish you could have been there. I wish you could see how happy I am.

JOANNA

Valerie told me you got arrested for getting physical with the accident investigators.

CHRIS

Lazy assholes. He was riding his bike not too far from here and gets pancaked by a Ford F350. There were no witnesses so the driver lies and the cops tell me the accident was partially Ben's fault.

JOANNA

When Amy told me, I wanted to call you but I had no idea what to say. I had no idea how to comfort you.

He grasps her hand.

CHRIS

You're doing great now.

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/SELBYVILLE, DE - DAY

They both ENTER.

JOANNA

Go wait in the TV room. I've got something I need to show you.

INT. TV ROOM - DAY

Chris seems apprehensive. Joanna ENTERS. Hands him a folder. He opens it. There's a photo of a middle-age male. Then a photo of his family that includes two children. Both boys.

CHRIS

Who's this?

JOANNA

That's Spencer Wilkens. He's an economics professor at Princeton.

CHRIS

So?

JOANNA

Take a close look. Doesn't he remind you of someone?

CHRIS

He looks a little like...me??.

JOANNA

That's because he's your son.
(pause)...our son.

He drops the folder like it's radioactive. She picks it up. Sits next to him. Opens it.

CHRIS

How did this happen?

JOANNA

The old fashioned way. Remember when you showed up at my parents' house, Christmas break, 1970?

CHRIS

I had to report to Norfolk for active duty. I was hoping I could talk you into waiting for me.

JOANNA

Well, you did talk me out of my clothes. I had just started using a diaphragm. Apparently, I needed more practice.

CHRIS

Why didn't you tell me?

JOANNA

You were at sea. I was afraid you'd absolutely abandon ship.

CHRIS

That's why you didn't answer my letters?

JOANNA

One big reason. I was angry at you too for messing up my plans. I attended Towson State Teachers College all summer to get enough credits to graduate a semester early. Then, boom! I'm pregnant.

CHRIS

Did you ever think of....

JOANNA

No. Mom wanted me to have an abortion. I refused. I gave up the baby for adoption.

She shows him a packet of papers.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

He was adopted by Edgar and Linda Wilkens of Manhattan. An older couple. He was a corporate lawyer, she was a pediatrician.

CHRIS

Wow...jackpot.

JOANNA

Edgar died in 2015. Linda in 2020. She gave Spencer all the records, adoption papers. Encouraged him to find me.

CHRIS

You've met him?

JOANNA

Several times. I heard from him this week. He wanted the latest cancer news and if I'm getting good care. Told him I was getting wonderful care...from his father. He's coming next weekend.

Chris visibly trembles.

CHRIS

How could you keep this from me for all this time?

JOANNA

It wasn't easy but necessary. Now he wants to connect with you.

CHRIS

This has been one hell of a week.

EXT. FRONT PORCH/CHRIS' HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: March 1979

Joanna, Diane and Jean continue drinking from the now almost empty pitcher of Bloody Marys.

JOANNA

So, you two are the neighborhood watch?

DIANE

Only as far as Chris is concerned. Once his wife left and he started dating, we began to notice that every weekend there was a different car parked out front.

JOANNA

Did you know his wife?

JEAN

Yea, Susan. We didn't know her that well. She was a distant, kind of quiet person. She was here less than a year.

DIANE

They met when he was in the Navy. Moved here in 75. Ben was around a year old.

JEAN

He told us, after she left, that he had married on the rebound...but never told us from who.

Joanna notices the way the other women look at her suggests they actually know the answer.

JOANNA

So, there were different cars every weekend?

DIANE

At first, then starting about a year ago, there was only the Mercedes.

JOANNA

What is she like?

DIANE

Friendly but focused. Knows she's upper crust and acts it.

JEAN

Her family is one of the oldest, wealthiest Baltimore families. Manufacturing, law, banking.

DIANE

The woman you used as a punching bag is accustomed to always getting her way.

END FLASHBACK

INT. JOANNA'S HOME/TV ROOM - DAY

Joanna is seated on the couch, working on her laptop. Chris ENTERS.

CHRIS

How do I look?

She gives him a quick once-over.

JOANNA

You look fine.

CHRIS

You sure?

She smiles, gets up, uses her hands to "smooth over" his clothes.

JOANNA

Relax, he already likes you. Be honest. Be yourself. It'll be fine.

O.S. CAR PULLING UP IN THE DRIVEWAY.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
I'll run interference.

DOORBELL RING.

She opens the door. SPENCER WILKENS, 53, is framed in the doorway. He's trim, average height, still has a full head of salt and pepper hair. His smile is wide and happy.

He steps in, gives Joanna a big hug.

SPENCER
Mom! So good to see you again.

JOANNA
Good to see you, darling.

They break the hug. Spencer's eyes automatically focus on Chris. Joanna takes his hand, walks him in Chris' direction.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Spencer, this is Chris Weston, your biological father. Chris, this is your son.

She steps aside as the two men survey each other cautiously. Chris extends his hand.

CHRIS
Good to meet you.

Spencer embraces him. Both men fight back tears.

JOANNA
Well, I think I'll leave you men alone to have a good cry.

INT. TV ROOM - DAY

They're seated on the couch. A bottle of single malt liquor is open on the coffee table.

CHRIS
So, you went from investment banking to Princeton?

SPENCER
The banking business was a grind. When I had a chance to teach, I grabbed it. Been at Princeton since 2008, just before the big Wall Street meltdown.

CHRIS

Apparently Joanna has done a good job of filling you in about us.

SPENCER

There are some things she couldn't tell me. Said I had to ask you.

CHRIS

Ask away.

SPENCER

How did you get the name Zippy?

Chris LAUGHS.

CHRIS

When I was in high school I became a fan of Tarzan movies with Cheetah the chimp. She had a crazy, high pitch laugh which I learned to imitate. I would use it at the most inappropriate moments. First semester freshman year, I broke up with the girl I was dating just before Christmas cause I didn't want to buy her a present.

SPENCER

(laughing)

Classy move.

CHRIS

It backfired big time. She was asked how it felt and she said, "Who wants to date a guy that acts like Zippy, the roller skating chimpanzee". A lot of my fraternity brother heard it and I've never lived it down.

He pours more scotch into each glass. Each takes a sip.

SPENCER

So, what's your take on why you guys never married?

Rosie ENTERS. Whines at Chris.

CHRIS

Let's walk the dog.

EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Spencer remains respectfully quiet while Chris attempts to sort it out.

CHRIS

We were young. Hormone driven.
Didn't think things through. My
senior year, we fought too much.
Break-up, make-up...over and over.
It was exhausting. I'm sure she
told you how you happened.

Spencer smiles.

SPENCER

She said you were hard to resist
back then.

CHRIS

Really? She was able to resist my
pleas to wait for me.

They silently walk a little further.

SPENCER

What happened later? When you guys
got together again?

Chris stops. Takes a deep breath.

CHRIS

I have no idea. Her divorce was
final. We were talking about buying
a house, private school for Amy.
Then she disappeared. No word. No
warning. No calls. No letters. I
went to her house. Nothing. I went
to her parents' house. Amy was
there but not her. They wouldn't
tell me where she was. It was the
absolute worst time of my life.
Without Ben to take care of, I
probably would have harmed myself.
Drink, drugs, death...who knows?

They stare at each other.

SPENCER

How are you coping with her
illness?

CHRIS

She's starting to weaken. She sleeps later, goes to bed sooner. Fatigue. Diminished appetite. Then some days she's all bouncy and full of energy.

SPENCER

You're brave to love her under these circumstances.

Chris shrugs.

CHRIS

Am I? Robert Browning was brave to love and then marry Elizabeth Barrett. You know, "How Do I Love Thee, Let Me Count The Ways...." She was sickly. Suffered from lung disease and a spinal injury. He didn't care. They had that undefinable magic. They had a son.

He pats Spencer on the back.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

And he loved and cared for her until the day she died in his arms.

SPENCER

Wow. You sound a lot like him.

CHRIS

I'm willing to bet...I was him.

Spencer's face shows confusion, surprise. Chris only smiles.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I'll explain on the way back.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

They're seated at the kitchen table, eating, talking, laughing. Spencer opens the photos on his phone.

SPENCER

Here's my two boys. Terry is 22, he'll graduate from Yale in May. And this is Jason. He's a high school senior, almost 18.

CHRIS

You've got a lot to be proud of.

SPENCER

I'm proud of you two. It's unfortunate Shakespeare never met you because you're the most star-crossed lovers ever. It would make me proud if you could put all the past garbage behind you and become what you were always meant to be.

Chris and Joanna are too emotional to reply. Spencer takes each by a hand.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Think about it.

They stand together and hug him.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

All right...now that I've dropped an emotional nuclear bomb, I've got to head back to New Jersey.

CHRIS

You know I want to meet your wife and boys.

SPENCER

You mean your grandsons?

CHRIS

(laughs)

Yea...them.

They escort him to the front door. He kisses both of them, EXITS from the house.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Wow, one emotional wave after another. I don't know if I can handle another.

JOANNA

Better find an emotional lifeboat. The next one's a tsunami.

INT. TV ROOM - EVENING

Chris on the couch, nervously twitching. Joanna ENTERS, carrying a large accordion style legal file folder.

CHRIS

What's that?

She drops it next to him.

JOANNA

This is 1980/81 revisited and explained. I warn you, this will be the most upsetting, maddening, gut wrenching thing you'll ever read about what happened to us.

CHRIS

Are you trying to scare me?

She nods.

JOANNA

I'll wait in the bedroom.

Chris watches her leave the room. Stares at the folder. Lifts the opening, peers inside. Reaches in, pulls out several bound packets of paper/documents.

INT. TV ROOM - EVENING.

Chris seated on the floor, papers and documents encircle him.

CHRIS

(muttering)

I don't believe this. That slimy bastard. It's a good thing he's already dead.

Picks up another document. Skims it.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Good god, no wonder she disappeared. What a heartless prick.

He throws it across the room. Sits there, shaking his head in disbelief.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Joanna is in bed, reading.

Chris ENTERS, gripping fistfuls of legal documents.

CHRIS

I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't read it myself. How could he do that to you?

JOANNA

He obviously hated me more than I imagined.

Chris sits on the edge of the bed.

CHRIS

Did you really think the court would have given him custody?

JOANNA

I couldn't take that chance. He had notarized affidavits from the two at Merrill that I had affairs with.

CHRIS

Pretty lurid stuff.

JOANNA

Then there are all the photos of me and Amy going in and out of your house. He built a pretty strong case that I was an unfit mother.

Chris stares down at the papers he's holding.

CHRIS

And his only demand was that we not get married?

JOANNA

Not exactly. He said he didn't want you raising his daughter

CHRIS

Why didn't you fight him?

JOANNA

I couldn't afford the legal fees. He warned me not to get money from you. Said it would escalate everything.

CHRIS

You said he made no money as a social worker.

JOANNA

We borrowed money from our parents all the time.

CHRIS

Yet he retains Michaelson & Greenberg.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Herb Michaelson was good friends with Howard, my old boss. They were a high dollar firm. All the filings, the motions, the research. Hired someone to take these photos. Bribed or blackmailed those Merrill guys. Where did Mark get the money?

JOANNA

I never thought to ask. I'm sorry I didn't have the courage to face you when it happened.

He reaches across the bed to hold her hand.

CHRIS

You did the right thing. I wouldn't have done anything different. I had to fight Susan to hold on to Ben. I get it. 100 percent.

JOANNA

What do we do now?

CHRIS

Only thing we can do. We get married.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE MORNING

DOORBELL RINGS.

Chris opens the front door. Mary and Tonya ENTER. Rosie APPEARS from the kitchen, makes a beeline for Tonya, greets her as enthusiastically as a dog can.

CHRIS

She's happy to see you.

TONYA

We're best friends.

CHRIS

Joanna's in the bedroom.

MARY

Any change?

CHRIS

A big one. Mary, where's a good place to get married around here?

She looks at him. There's a twinkle in her eye.

MARY

Praise God! I've had our entire congregation praying for you two.

CHRIS

How about your church?

MARY

Well, we're a small Baptist community...we're simple people...100 percent African American.

Chris kisses Mary on her cheek.

CHRIS

Perfect. There's a special grace and nobility in simple people. Let them see their prayers were answered.

MARY

Chris, we'll be honored to celebrate with you.

CHRIS

I don't want a quiet wedding. I want singing, testifying. I want people to be moved by the Holy Spirit. I want this to be our coming to Jesus moment.

MARY

I'll talk to Miss Joanna. I'm so happy.

Mary EXITS. He looks around for Tonya. She has taken Rosie into the back yard.

EXT. BACKYARD - LATE MORNING

Tonya is playing fetch with Rosie. Chris ENTERS.

CHRIS

We're going to be going back and forth to the cancer center all week. Why don't you take Rosie home with you.

TONYA

Oh, I'd love to.

CHRIS
Not too much trouble?

TONYA
Oh no, my family loves her.
Especially my Dad and little
brother. But I don't have a bed for
her or anything....

CHRIS
Take her stuff from here, as much
as you need.

Hands her a credit card.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Whatever else you need, use this.

TONYA
You trust me with a credit card?

CHRIS
Why not? I'm trusting you with my
dog.

INT. CHRIS' HOME OFFICE - DAY

He's converted his former bedroom into a home office.

Seated at the desk, reviewing documents from Joanna's custody
fight. Dials a number on his cell phone.

OPERATOR
(from phone)
Law offices of Harrison, Baker and
Nolan. How can I help you?

CHRIS
Yes, Rebecca Santori please.

OPERATOR
Certainly, who shall I say is
calling?

CHRIS
It's her Father.

The line goes quiet. Becky comes on immediately.

BECKY
Dad! Everything OK?

CHRIS

Yes. Do you still have any ties with your grandfather's law firm?

BECKY

Actually, I'm still listed as "Of Counsel". Why?

CHRIS

I need you to research something for me. Between November 1981 to March 1982, find out if the Morgan law firm or any family business contracted for work with the law firm of Michaelson and Greenberg.

BECKY

What's this about?

CHRIS

It's an old child custody suit. I have the initial complaint and filing. I'll email it to you with some other information. Will you do this for me, please?

BECKY

Sure, I'll see what I can find.

CHRIS

Thanks. Email me as soon as you find anything. Love you.

BECKY

Love you too, Daddy.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - EARLY AFTERNOON

Chris, Joanna and Mary talk. Tonya holds Rosie by her leash.

MARY

Things are looking okay but if joy and happiness could cure cancer, you'd be clean in a few weeks.

CHRIS

All right, we've got to get to her therapy session. You going to make the arrangements?

MARY

I'm getting with Reverend Weber tomorrow morning. We'll set everything up.

He walks over to pet Rosie.

CHRIS

Be a good girl for Tonya. She's in charge now.

TONYA

Don't worry. I won't forget she's your dog.

CHRIS

I have a feeling if Rosie could vote, I'd lose in a landslide.

INT. CHRIS' SUV - AFTERNOON

JOANNA

I don't know what sort of voodoo magic you used on Mary and Tonya but they think you walk on water.

CHRIS

Maybe I do.

JOANNA

You'd have shown me by now.

CHRIS

You sure? Man's got to have some secrets.

JOANNA

So, do we have to do anything to get ready for our wedding?

CHRIS

Mary assured me her congregation will handle everything. Now, I need to get you an engagement and wedding ring set.

JOANNA

I already have that.

From her purse she finds a small weathered box. Opens it.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Remember these?

She slips the rings on her hand.

CHRIS
You kept those?

Joanna nods.

JOANNA
I never felt more in love than I
did that weekend. These will do the
job. Finally.

Chris extends his right hand. She takes it.

INT. THERAPY ROOM, TUNNELL CANCER CENTER - AFTERNOON

Joanna seated in a chair. Nurse inserts an thin tube into her arm. Hangs the bag of chemo chemicals. Dr. Linhart explains how the procedure works.

LINHART
What the nurse is putting into your
arm is a cannula. It delivers the
medicine directly into your
bloodstream. It'll take about a
half hour to get your full dose.
We'll do it again in two weeks.

JOANNA
Side effects?

LINHART
Slight nausea, decreased appetite,
could be some hair loss. It'll be a
lot less severe than injecting the
treatment through a chest port.

INT. WAITING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Chris seated, waiting. An automatic door opens. Joanna is wheeled out in a wheelchair. Chris stands to greet her as she thanks the Nurse and gets up out of the chair.

CHRIS
How are you feeling?

JOANNA
Just glad I'm done for now.

CHRIS
Can you manage without me for a
couple of days?

JOANNA

That sounds suspicious.

CHRIS

I want to see Val and pickup some of my summer clothes. Plus my suit for our big wedding.

JOANNA

Look how excited you get thinking about it. Sure, do it.

EXT. CHRIS' SUV - PRE-DAWN.

It's dark as it pulls out of the driveway.

INT. CHRIS' SUV - SUNRISE

He activates the Bluetooth function on the steering wheel.

CHRIS

Messages.

BLUETOOTH

You have one new message.

BECKY

Hi Dad. I just emailed you the information you wanted. You were right. The Morgan law firm contracted Michaelson in February 1982. I read a part of it then I couldn't read anymore. Michaelson charged a little over 60 thousand dollars. Every order. Every invoice. Every payment. Everything was directly authorized by Grandpop..... I'm so sorry Dad. I'm so sorry for what they did to you. Love you.

EXT. ROLAND PARK/BALTIMORE CITY - SAME DAY

Roland Park is Baltimore City's most wealthy, upscale neighborhood.

Chris' SUV turns into Blythewood Road, a mile-long stretch of multi-million dollar homes. Stops in front of 21 Blythewood. Leaves his vehicle at the curb.

EXT. 21 BLYTHEWOOD ROAD - DAY

It's a magnificent luxury home that sits on two acres of prime real estate. Chris approaches the front door, rings the doorbell. The door opens to REVEAL Debra. She holds an oversized glass of wine.

CHRIS

I see you're still self-marinating.

DEBRA

Have you come to gloat over how your tearful bullshit won over our daughters? Especially Hannah. That had to be a master class of deception.

CHRIS

I know what you did. I know why. You can't hide that much hate and evil forever.

DEBRA

I can't believe I was ever so enthralled by your oily Mediterranean charm.

CHRIS

Your father's name was on everything but I know you put him up to it and cheered him on. When we got married, did you contact her to rub it in her face? It was all just an artificial, staged event, wasn't it? Just so you could declare yourself the winner. Our marriage was as genuine as professional wrestling.

DEBRA

I thought I could shake you out of your romantic delusions. No matter what I did, you couldn't forget her. Even after two daughters, she still had a mysterious stranglehold on you. That's why when you reconnected, when was that? 96? I let it go. But after that disgusting, low-class shooting and then you moved in with her...that was more scandal than the family could handle.

CHRIS
Please excuse me, I have to prepare
for my wedding.

DEBRA
I didn't get that invitation. I do
hope I'll get one for her funeral.

INT. JOANNA'S HOME - DAY

Chris stands in the bathroom while TERRY WILKENS, 23, helps
secure his necktie using a Windsor knot. He's a lanky,
muscular kid with long blonde hair, arm tattoos and ear
piercings.

TERRY
You need to be more still.

CHRIS
If I was more still, a doctor would
say I was in rigor mortis.

Terry smiles.

TERRY
You're a funny old dude.

Spencer ENTERS.

SPENCER
How goes it with the groom?

TERRY
He's stubborn but we got it.

SPENCER
You definitely look good, Dad.

TERRY
I have to ask a question.

SPENCER
Go ahead.

TERRY
Should I call him grandfather or
something like that?

CHRIS
Your grandfather, Edgar. What did
you think of him?

TERRY

I loved him. He was a great guy.

CHRIS

Always hold on to that memory and cherish it. As for me, what do you have in mind?

TERRY

Was thinking like, "PoppaChris"?

CHRIS

Sold!

They shake hands.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Thanks for your help.

TERRY

No problem, PoppaChris.

Chris and Spencer share a "thumbs up" sign.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Chris, Spencer, Terry and Spencer's younger son JASON 18, wait in the living room. Joanna, Valerie, Hannah, Becky, Amy and NAOMI WILKENS, 50 Spencer's wife, ENTER from the dining room. Joanna is wearing a pale blue Oscar De La Renta dress.

CHRIS

Wow...you look great.

DOORBELL RINGS

Chris answers. Opens the door to REVEAL Barb Shipley.

BARB

Zippy!! It's been so long!

She hugs him

BARB (CONT'D)

I found this bum lurking outside.

Ruffin Moore, 75, ENTERS. Chris' first reaction is shock, then happy surprise. They embrace.

CHRIS

I can't believe you're here!

RUFFIN

Shit...I've been waiting for this day for more than 50 years. I couldn't miss it!

CHRIS

Too bad Griff is gone.

RUFFIN

Barb told me he hit on Joanna a lot during our suspension.

CHRIS

I know. He was such a horny asshole. I couldn't be mad at him. You and Barb dating again?

Barb moves next to Ruffin.

RUFFIN

Sure, you're our inspiration.

Spencer moves close to Joanna.

SPENCER

His best friend?

Joanna nods.

JOANNA

Look at them. Seventy-five going on nineteen. A matched set of incorrigibles.

She looks around the room. All the female adult children are gathered around the couch: relaxed, friendly, talking, laughing. Valerie and Naomi huddle with Terry and Jason. The entire atmosphere vibrates with happiness and positivity

JOANNA (CONT'D)

I would never allow myself to admit he really was the only man for me. Let's get to the church before one of us changes their mind.

INT. VICTORY BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

The church is filling up. At the altar is a small band. The choir is rehearsing.

INT. CHURCH MEETING HALL - DAY

The Wedding Party ENTERS. Greeted by Mary and REVEREND FREDERICK WEBER, the church pastor.

MARY

You all look so nice and happy.
Joanna, Chris...this is our pastor,
Reverend Fred Weber.

Weber is a big African-American man both in height and girth. Dressed in traditional clerical clothes, full beard, balding gray hair. He spreads his arms wide to greet them.

WEBER

Mary has told us so much you and
your love and all its trials and
setbacks. Welcome.

CHRIS

Thank you Reverend Weber for
allowing us in.

WEBER

This will be great moment for the
congregation. To hear first hand
such a story of endless love. When
Mary told it to me, I got chills.
It's inspirational. Now, who is
everyone else?

CHRIS

This is Spencer, our son. And this
is my all-time best friend, Ruffin.

WEBER

And these young men?

CHRIS

That's Terry and Jason. They're...

TERRY

We're his grandsons.

Jason nods agreement.

CHRIS

You know, there's nothing uglier
than a crying old man. So, you
better cut it out.

WEBER

And who do we have over her?

JOANNA
Mary, please join the wedding party.

Mary is surprised and pleased.

MARY
I'd be honored.

JOANNA
These are our daughters: Amy, Hannah, and Rebecca. This is Naomi, our daughter-in-law My sister-in-law Valerie. And this is Barb, my oldest friend.

BARB
I actually helped introduce them.

WEBER
How long ago was that?

BARB
Ohhh...three facelifts ago, more or less.

The entire room breaks out in LAUGHTER.

WEBER
God has blessed you with such wonderful family and friends. Deacon, get the service started.

The YOUNG DEACON nods and EXITS the Meeting Room into the church.

The music starts and the choir sings "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands".

WEBER (CONT'D)
Time to get the show on the road!

INT. VICTORY BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

The church is full (approx 150 people). The entire congregation sings as the band plays.

Rev. Weber and the wedding party ENTER. Take their place at the front of the church. Rev. Weber raises his arms. The music/singing stops.

WEBER

Brothers and Sisters. This is a special and happy occasion. We're here to witness the marriage of two extraordinary people. Two people who have demonstrated the patience of Job in their suffering, faith and devotion. I present Joanna Herrmann and Christopher Weston.

Both turn to face the congregation. They receive sustained applause.

WEBER (CONT'D)

I'd like to have the bride and groom testify to all of you about their amazing journey that now brings them before God and this congregation.

JOANNA

I was attracted to Chris because he didn't seem attracted to me. It was my first day at college and my friend Barb and I were playing this stupid game of seeing how many boys we could attract. Well, Chris wouldn't play.

During her talk there are instances of laughter and shout outs of agreement and encouragement.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

I even set a trap to get him to notice me. Oh, he noticed me and couldn't get away fast enough. I finally got his attention and I thought, "he's kind of cute." I'll date him for awhile and then move on. He was so endearing, funny and passionate. I don't have time to chronicle all he's done for me...how he's loved me. Let me just say, he's been my lifeboat. Every time I was drowning because of another stupid decision, he'd come floating by and save me. This day should have happened 50 years ago. I'm grateful and happy it has finally arrived. Thank you for being here.

The entire congregation stands and applauds. When it quiets down, it's Chris' turn.

CHRIS

My sister wondered how I could consider this after all the pain I had experienced because of my relationship with Joanna. But like the poet Robert Browning wrote, "years of pain are erased by moments of happiness." Over the past 5 months, I've been nothing but happy. Even when I've been held to account for those damaging and unkind things I did in our past. I've loved her from the first time she smiled at me. I've loved her because of and despite of everything that's happened between us. It's as if we've known each other for a thousand years. I'll conclude with one more thought on love from Robert Browning.

He turns, takes Joanna's hands in his.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

"Heart, fear nothing, for Heart thou shalt find her-Next time Herself, not the trouble behind her." (pause) God bless us all.

People leap to their feet. Wild applause.

Band strikes up "Rise Above It All" with choir singing. After a few verses, Rev. Weber signals them to stop.

WEBER

Christopher R. Weston, do you take this woman as your lawfully wedded wife until death do you part?

CHRIS

I do.

WEBER

Joanna M. Herrmann, do you take this man as your lawfully wedded husband until death do you part?

JOANNA

I sure do.

WEBER

By the power vested in my by the
state of Delaware and before God
and this congregation of believers,
I'm happy to declare you husband
and wife. Please welcome and greet
Mr. & Mrs. Christopher Weston.

They turn to face the congregation. The band and chorus start
"Rise Above It All" again. Members of the congregation move
forward to greet them, congratulation them. Chris hugs his
son and grandsons and Ruffin. Kisses his daughters, sister,
daughter-in-law, Barb and then Mary.

INT. CHURCH MEETING HALL - LATER THE SAME DAY

There are still a sizeable number of people enjoying non-
alcoholic beverages and cake. Chris and Joanna are seated in
the back corner in separate chairs. She leans against him,
clings to his arm.

WEBER

OK, we're going to wrap up this
gathering with a closing hymn,
"Glad I Got Jesus."

The music/singing begins.

JOANNA

How badly are you going to miss me
after I'm gone?

CHRIS

As Becky said, it likely will be an
atmospheric river of tears.

JOANNA

I think you'll be so heartbroken
you'll die within a year just
because you'll want to be with me.

CHRIS

Well, I'll be seventy-seven. That
would be good timing.

JOANNA

Do you believe we can find each
other and be together for eternity?

CHRIS

We better or I'm going to find the
nuns and have it out with them.

JOANNA

(soft laugh)

Still the good Catholic boy. I'd like to think it would happen that way. Makes death not so scary because it's not the end. Maybe the beginning of something else. Could it be the way we stay connected forever?

CHRIS

I don't see why not. We've done it before.

JOANNA

We've done what before?

CHRIS

Ohh...nothing. It's just some senile rambling.

JOANNA

What is it that we've done before that apparently I don't know about?

CHRIS

You really want to know?

JOANNA

We're married. No more secrets.

CHRIS

OK...back in 1982 I saw a psychiatrist who specialized in past life regression. You won't believe what I found out...Have you ever been to England? How do you feel about the name Jacob?

EXT. VICTORY BAPTIST CHURCH - TWILIGHT

Music flows from the building, slowly segues from "Glad I Got Jesus" to "I'll Never Find Another You (1964)" by The Seekers

THE END