

Loose Ends

By

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FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Choir rehearsal. A group of women are assembled on the stage/sanctuary. They are casually dressed and vary widely in age. Among them are GRACE, tall, pretty, about 45, and BEV, a woman of similar age.

Musicians sit below them, tuning their instruments. CONDUCTOR, middle-aged, portly, steps to the podium. He raps his baton.

CONDUCTOR  
People! People, settle down!

The volume of incidental noise begins to drop.

CONDUCTOR (cont'd)  
Ladies -- are we ready? Orchestra?  
(rapping his baton)  
If you please. If you please!

The hall falls silent. He raises his baton. On cue, the choir launches into Bach's Christmas Oratorio.

The women look and sound angelic. Conductor furiously works his baton. The music rises into the rafters and escapes into...

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

A modest stone church on the edge of the prairie. Late-model cars and SUVs are parked out front. All sport Texas plates.

The Oratorio pours from the opened windows -- and dissipates in the dry, summer range.

EXT. CHURCH - LATER

The choir members file out, Grace and Bev among them.

BEV  
Are you joining us for lunch?

GRACE  
Sorry, I've got an errand to run.

BEV  
Something for yourself, I hope.

GRACE  
Something for Alice Waking Moon.

They come up on a late-model luxury car and stop.

BEV  
Her book is out?

GRACE  
No. I'm bringing her the galleys.

BEV  
You're going out there by  
yourself?

GRACE  
She doesn't like Dallas.

BEV  
She doesn't like people.

GRACE  
Maybe "people" gave her a reason.

Grace enters the car.

GRACE (cont'd)  
See you next Thursday.

EXT. INTERSTATE - DAY

Grace's car takes the exit for "Mineral Wells".

EXT. WINDING DIRT ROAD

The road dips and weaves through a pastel landscape. A  
container of latte sits in the cup-holder.

Grace opens the console to reveal a row of CDs. She selects  
a disc. As she looks up a deer bounds across the road.

She swerves. The car skids down an embankment. The air bag  
deploy. The deer disappears into the brush.

She eases out the driver's side door. She is unhurt. She  
walks around the car. One wheel is badly twisted.

She opens her phone and makes a call. As she talks she  
wanders away from the car.

She is at the center of a vast, scrub prairie. A few  
itinerant clouds drift across an immense blue sky.

GRACE  
...no, no, I'm sure it's not  
drivable... hold on...

She turns and scans the horizon.

GRACE (cont'd)  
I have no idea.

She returns to the car and opens the trunk. Inside, she rummages through a box of manuscripts.

She selects one and returns the passenger seat. Moving the sagged air-bag aside she frees up enough room to accommodate her long legs.

INT. CAR NIGHT

Grace reads. Bach leaks from the car. In the distance a tow truck dips and weaves, lights flashing, as it plows its way toward her.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY (MORNING)

A modern, impersonally furnished space. Grace reads the paper. MARK, late forties, paunchy, empties the last of the orange juice into a glass.

MARK  
That's it for the OJ. You want it?

GRACE  
You take it. I'll pick up some  
this evening.

Mark takes a call.

MARK  
Hello? Yeah, what's up... so what,  
he signed... well then, fuck  
him... what about Stickney...  
that's his problem... yeah, it  
makes the flowers grow... no...  
forget it... just forget it --  
I'll call you when I get there.  
(hangs up)  
I've got to fly down to Corpus  
Christi.

GRACE  
Will you be back in time?

MARK

In time for what?

GRACE

Tigh is expecting us. We're supposed to meet Michael.

MARK

Who the hell is Michael?

GRACE

We find that out this weekend.

MARK

Oh. What's his major?

GRACE

I don't know.

MARK

Well, let's hope his ambition in life isn't to save the whales.

GRACE

Let's hope it isn't to destroy them.

MARK

Yeah. Whatever. I'll be back Friday. Pick me up at the airport, we'll go from there. Just be sure the car still works when those crack-heads give it back to you.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Windows look out on downtown Fort Worth.

Grace and PETER Epstein, handsome, thirties, sit across the table. Each reads from their copy of a manuscript. Occasionally they glance at each other, but the timing is mismatched. Finally...

PETER

What?

GRACE

Do we really need this whole scene -- on the road to Sangin?

PETER

The whole scene? With the trucks in the mud?

GRACE

Yes.

PETER

Don't you like trucks?

GRACE

I'm neutral on the subject. Do you like trucks?

PETER

Since I was five.

GRACE

It's good writing --

PETER

Thank you.

GRACE

But it doesn't advance the story.

PETER

They're stuck in the mud. Nothing advances, it's one of the properties of mud.

GRACE

What's the purpose?

PETER

Of good writing?

GRACE

Of this scene.

PETER

The purpose? You will remember it.

GRACE

(pause)

All right Peter, we will indulge you. This time.

PETER

Don't make a habit of it.

GRACE

No.

TRUDY, fifties, wearing makeup that tries, and fails, to disguise it, cracks the door opened.

TRUDY  
Am I interrupting?

PETER  
Unfortunately, no.

TRUDY  
(to Peter)  
I just wanted to say how much I  
love the new work. It's brilliant,  
really brilliant!

PETER  
Tell that to my Editor.

TRUDY  
Of course Grace loves it.

Grace offers no confirmation.

PETER  
Of course.

TRUDY  
Well, I'll let you two get back to  
what matters most to all of us --  
the words.

Trudy bows out.

PETER  
"The words." What "words" do you  
think she's talking about?

GRACE  
I don't know.

PETER  
I think -- the small ones. She  
saves on the ink.

GRACE  
Let's get back to work.

They bury their heads in the manuscript. Pages turn...

GRACE (cont'd)  
Page seventy.

PETER  
Yes?

GRACE

This meeting between Kamal and Nadia should have come earlier.

PETER

Why?

GRACE

Her story is not believable, particularly as a prelude to sex -- and I assume that's what's coming.

PETER

I make the same assumption.

GRACE

I'm talking about the novel.

PETER

Ah. What page was that?

GRACE

Seventy.

PETER

(fumbles for the page)  
How can her story not be believable after seventy pages? I can write a whole life in fifty.

GRACE

We need to know more of her story.

PETER

We, the readers or we the novel?

GRACE

We the novel. The readers be damned.

PETER

All right Grace, I'll consider it.

They are back in the manuscript. No flirting. Peter finishes up, tosses his manuscript on the table.

GRACE

You've read through all my comments?

PETER

I don't know, there were so many of them.

GRACE

Have I been too hard on you?

PETER

Yes, but I chalk it up to affection -- for the novel.

GRACE

I didn't realize you were that fragile.

PETER

I didn't realize you were that affectionate.

GRACE

I will try to be more...  
restrained.

He walks around the table, leans over, kisses her.

PETER

Don't be.

Grace smiles. Peter collects his things.

PETER (cont'd)

When can you come over?

GRACE

(beat)

This evening.

PETER

Good. I'll make dinner.

GRACE

I'll look over the new work.

PETER

Try not to mark it up too much.

GRACE

Try not to give me a reason.

They walk to the door. He takes her in his arms.

PETER

All right, Grace -- I'll look  
forward to a nice...

(kisses her)

warm...

(kisses her)

literate...

PETER (cont'd)  
(kisses her)  
civil...  
(kisses her)  
evening.

He departs. Trudy enters.

TRUDY  
How did it go?

GRACE  
Fine.

TRUDY  
His agent is pushing for  
subsidiary rights. He's being very  
aggressive about it.

GRACE  
He has a name now. He doesn't need  
us as much as he once did.

TRUDY  
He still needs you, Grace. And I  
find that... useful.

GRACE  
Useful, how?

TRUDY  
Let's just say -- I think you'll  
keep him here.

GRACE  
Perhaps I should ask you for a  
raise.

TRUDY  
Oh Grace, you love this work! If  
pushed, I think you'd do it for  
free.

GRACE  
If pushed, I wouldn't do it here.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Books and magazines fill every available niche.

Grace and Peter sit half-dressed on the bed. Posted on the  
wall are pictures of children caught in combat.

GRACE

I still shudder when I look at those faces.

PETER

The children? They're fiction now, characters in a novel.

GRACE

They're real. The terror in their faces is real. I can't pretend otherwise.

PETER

You're not really trying.

GRACE

Is that how you deal with it?

PETER

It?

GRACE

The experience. War.

PETER

Are you asking as my analyst?

GRACE

As your friend.

PETER

My "friend"? Is that how you deal with "it"?

GRACE

It?

PETER

Adultery.

GRACE

I'm asking you, as your lover, to tell me how it felt to be there. In Afghanistan. To look into those real faces. I'm asking you to talk to me.

PETER

In Bagram, there was an explosion in the market-place. Picking through the debris, you couldn't tell what was once human and what was once vegetable.

PETER (cont'd)

It was all the same. It was all the same to the men who fired the round. So if we are sent to Hell Grace, for this slight... indiscretion, I will consider it worth the sacrifice of Heaven -- just to watch them burn.

GRACE

I want to hear more.

PETER

There isn't any more.

Peter takes her arms and pulls her to him.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Mark and Grace are driving on an opened expanse of highway, one lane in each direction. Mark fiddles with the radio.

MARK

Nothing but hillbilly music for ten thousand miles.

GRACE

I've got a disc.

MARK

You and the Croaking Arts Society?

GRACE

...Yes.

MARK

Fine -- put it on.

Grace inserts a disc. Chorale music fills the car.

They come up on a truck. Mark pulls out to pass, but each time on-coming traffic forces him back.

Flickering images of traffic play across the windshield, and off Grace's troubled face. The images morph into images of the war in Afghanistan, and then -- to sex with Peter.

Mark finds an opening and roars past the truck. As he pulls back into lane the truck blasts it's horn. Mark honks back and gives the driver the finger.

EXT. LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO - NIGHT

Grace and Mark park opposite a garishly funky cafe. He peers through the windshield...

MARK  
"Cockroach Cafe". That's really  
appetizing.

Grace starts to get out, Mark holds her back...

MARK (cont'd)  
Just remember, this kid's  
auditioning for us, okay? We're  
not the ones trying to impress  
him.

GRACE  
Auditioning?

MARK  
It's our daughter he's after.

GRACE  
You make it sound like a Real  
Estate deal.

MARK  
How different is it? Somebody has  
something, somebody else wants it.  
It all comes down to control --  
who controls the conversation. And  
it's going to be us, not him.

GRACE  
Why don't we just see if we can't  
have a nice time.

They leave the car.

INT. COCKROACH CAFÉ - DAY

The decor is boisterously tacky. TIGH, twenty-one, pretty, wiry, and MICHAEL, twenty-one, tall, intellectual, are already seated.

Introductions are exchanged. Grace and Mark settle in.

MARK  
So, Tigh tells us you're going to  
be an Engineer.

MICHAEL

Yes, sir.

MARK

Good field. Bridges, skyscrapers,  
that sort of thing?

MICHAEL

No sir -- aerospace.

MARK

Aerospace? That's kind of a risky  
business, isn't it? Those boys  
live and die by government  
contracts.

GRACE

It sounds fascinating.

MICHAEL

You're right sir, it is risky.

MARK

Damn right I am. You have to be  
practical in my line of work --  
Real Estate development; shopping  
malls, office towers, that sort of  
thing. You get that degree and  
look me up. I can put you in touch  
with the right people.

They open their menus.

MARK (cont'd)

Let's see... bug-burger, bug-  
burger with cheese droppings, bug-  
burger deluxe... infested with  
onions, that's a nice touch.

GRACE

Mark, we can all read the menu.

MARK

Yeah. Cute. This place is --  
groovy? Do they still use that  
word?

GRACE

They haven't used that word in  
forty years.

MICHAEL  
(to Grace)  
Tigh tells me you're an Editor for  
Wheaton Press.

GRACE  
I am.

MICHAEL  
Do you know Charles Evans Rice?

GRACE  
I've met him. Do you like his  
work?

MICHAEL  
I thought "Horizontal Rain" was an  
amazing book.

GRACE  
So did I. Have you shown it to  
Tigh?

TIGH  
I don't read fiction.

GRACE  
You used to.

TIGH  
Not now. Not for a long time.

MICHAEL  
She reads Geology. Take a walk  
with her and she'll read you the  
last million years right out of  
the rocks. You have a very bright  
daughter.

MARK  
Damn right she is. Gets it from  
her Mom.

GRACE  
I'd like to take that walk. Tigh?

TIGH  
(reluctantly)  
Sure.

MARK  
How about we take in the game,  
Mikey? Hell, the last thing I  
wanna see is rocks.

MARK (cont'd)  
 Look at 'em all day. Blow 'em up  
 to earn a buck.

TIGH  
 Dad, he really has to study.

MARK  
 Is that right, Mikey?

MICHAEL  
 I have time.

The waiter arrives.

WAITER  
 Are you folks ready to order?

GRACE  
 Let's see. I think I'll try the  
 Raw Sewage, please.

MARK  
 Gimme the Exterminator. Well done.  
 And a side of that fried lice. And  
 a beer -- with nothing crawling in  
 it. Or on it. Christ.

EXT. COUNTRY TRAIL - DAY

A brisk, sunny, Fall afternoon. Grace and Tigh follow a wooded path behind the campus, the Rocky Mountains rise in the distance.

GRACE  
 Michael seems nice.

Tigh picks up a stone, examines it, hands it to Grace.

TIGH  
 Take a look. It's a shale.

Grace studies the stone.

TIGH (cont'd)  
 Permian era. Two hundred and fifty  
 million years old. This whole area  
 was once lake bottom.

GRACE  
 Have you met his family?

TIGH  
 Can I see the stone?

Grace returns it to her.

TIGH (cont'd)

It's an oil-bearing sediment.  
We'll be lucky if the government  
doesn't let the drilling rights.

GRACE

Did you like his family?

They continue to walk. Tigh points to a distant ridge.

TIGH

Do you see that band of dark  
stone?

GRACE

Yes.

TIGH

Above it are rocks from the  
Tertiary. Below it, the  
Cretaceous. Dinosaurs.

GRACE

It's a beautiful afternoon.

TIGH

Are you glad to be out of the  
city?

GRACE

I am, but your father drives like  
a schoolboy. It makes me nervous.

TIGH

Did you like his family?

GRACE

(beat)

No. No, I didn't.

TIGH

Are you working with an author?

GRACE

Yes.

TIGH

Who?

GRACE  
 Peter Epstein.  
 (beat)  
 Are you nervous about tonight?

TIGH  
 No.

GRACE  
 Is it an important meet?

TIGH  
 They're all important.

GRACE  
 I've read that Nebraska is the  
 favorite.

TIGH  
 Are you tired?

GRACE  
 Not a bit.

TIGH  
 We should be getting back.

INT. COLLEGE PUB - DAY

A basketball game is in progress on multiple screens.  
 Michael sits on a bar stool. Two glasses of beer are set  
 out. He looks occasionally toward the men's room.

Mark emerges and takes a seat next to him.

MARK  
 Are we still down?

MICHAEL  
 I think so.

MARK  
 You *think* so? Not into sports,  
 huh?

MICHAEL  
 Not too much.

MARK  
 Yeah, you're an intellectual. I  
 figured Tigh would go for one of  
 those. You like my daughter,  
 right?

MICHAEL

Very much.

Mark takes a long drink, sets his glass down.

MARK

Listen kid, I don't want to keep you here, I know this isn't your scene. I can tell Tigh likes you. I don't know why, you don't seem to have much personality to me. But that's not my business. My business is seeing that she doesn't get hurt. I don't have much experience with intellectuals. My guess is they can be as cruel as anybody else. So, you be good to her, that's all. Just be good to her. Now, go somewhere and learn something, or whatever the Hell else your type does to kill time.

INT. TIGH'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Michael and Tigh sit on the edge of the bed.

MICHAEL

I like your mother.

TIGH

Everyone likes my mother.

MICHAEL

You don't.

(silence)

Why does everyone like her?

TIGH

Why do you like her?

MICHAEL

She seems... intelligent.  
Interesting. Friendly.

TIGH

She is.

MICHAEL

So?

TIGH

She has a shiny surface. Do you like things with a shiny surface, Michael? That's how they catch fish, isn't it?

MICHAEL

It seemed there was more.

TIGH

That's what the fish think.

MICHAEL

(pause)

Your father's quite a basketball fan.

TIGH

Do we have to talk about my parents?

MICHAEL

You're tense.

TIGH

I'm not.

Michael studies her for a moment. He goes to the door and locks it.

TIGH (cont'd)

What are you doing?

MICHAEL

You're tense.

TIGH

I'm fine.

He sits next to her, strokes her hair.

TIGH (cont'd)

This is not a good time.

He puts his arm around her.

TIGH (cont'd)

This is really not a good time.

He kisses her. She scowls, hesitates, embraces him hesitantly, eagerly.

INT. NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY - GYM - NIGHT

The gymnastics meet is in progress. Grace, Mark and Michael are in the stands. Tigh enters the arena and strides confidently to the high-bar. She begins her routine.

Her body takes flight, spinning effortlessly through space. Her arms barely flex. The steel bar warps to contain her.

On dismount she turns to find Grace in the crowd. Their eyes meet. Tigh allows herself a trace of a smile.

INT. RECITAL HALL - NIGHT

Rehearsal. Grace struggles with a difficult passage. The section is repeated. This time she executes it flawlessly.

In the brief silence that follows, we see on her face, a trace of a smile.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Grace is preparing dinner. She glances occasionally at the bathroom door, which remains closed with the light on.

The toilet flushes. Mark emerges.

GRACE

You should see a doctor.

MARK

It's nothing.

GRACE

Let the doctor tell you that.

MARK

Doctor's don't tell you that. They tell you you need tests.

GRACE

Then take the tests.

Mark peeks in the oven.

MARK

Steak? Good.

GRACE

I can make the appointment for you.

MARK

I'm fine. Give me a shout when it's ready. I've got some calls to make.

BEDROOM

Mark sits on the bed and makes a call. He sounds up-beat, but appears uncomfortable.

MARK (cont'd)

Charlie! Yeah... Mark... yeah, about Corpus Christie...

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Grace and Peter lie in bed, half-dressed, post-sex.

GRACE

We saw Tigh last weekend.

PETER

How is she?

GRACE

Fine -- and wants nothing to do with me.

PETER

That's natural. She wants to be independent.

GRACE

This isn't independence. It's anger.

(beat)

She knows about us.

PETER

Are you sure?

GRACE

Yes.

PETER

Is that why she's angry?

GRACE

No, but it adds fuel to the fire.

(beat)

She has a boyfriend. He's very nice.

PETER  
You're losing her.

GRACE  
I lost her a long time ago.  
(beat)  
He and Mark went off for a chat.  
God only knows what Mark said to  
him.

PETER  
If this boy is worth anything, it  
won't matter what he said.

GRACE  
He's very protective of her. More  
to the point, she's property. It's  
how he views women.

PETER  
That disturbs you?

GRACE  
It does.

PETER  
That's how I think of you, Grace.

GRACE  
As property?

PETER  
Yes.

GRACE  
(beat)  
That doesn't disturb me.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Grace reads at the kitchen table. The bathroom door is again  
shut, light on. She puts the book down, goes to the door and  
knocks. No answer. She knocks harder.

GRACE  
Mark?

No answer. She pounds on the door. The latch slowly turns.  
The door opens. Mark stands with his pants down. He is  
ashen.

MARK  
I can't pee, Grace. I can't pee.

INT. ART MUSEUM - DAY

Grace and Peter wander among the paintings. They stop at a Van Gogh, "Wheat Field with Cypresses". A blue sky billows threateningly over a stand of dark Cypress trees.

GRACE

Do you like Van Gogh?

PETER

(considers)

Not now, but I will when I'm older.

GRACE

I'm older.

PETER

Than I am?

GRACE

Yes.

PETER

A little.

GRACE

Seven years.

PETER

Well Grace, women live on average seven years longer than men. We will probably die on the same day.

GRACE

It feels like more than seven years.

PETER

We're in a museum. It distorts your sense of time.

GRACE

(beat)

Mark has cancer.

PETER

(beat)

How bad?

GRACE

I'm not sure.

GRACE (cont'd)

(beat)

I won't be able to... it won't be the same. He'll need my full attention.

PETER

I need your full attention.

GRACE

You've never had that.

PETER

I've had your thoughts, your idle moments, your day-dreams.

GRACE

It will be different now. I have an obligation to him. And I will keep it.

Peter turns to study the Van Gogh...

PETER

I'm starting to like this painting.

INT. GRACE'S OFFICE - DAY

Grace picks up the phone, dials.

INT. TIGH'S DORM ROOM - SAME

Tigh is studying. The phone rings.

INTERCUT GRACE'S OFFICE/TIGH'S DORM ROOM

GRACE

Hi.

TIGH

Hi.

GRACE

How are things going?

TIGH

Fine.

(beat)

What's wrong?

GRACE  
You have such an intuitive sense  
of me.

TIGH  
What's wrong?

GRACE  
Your father has cancer.

TIGH  
(beat)  
What kind?

GRACE  
Prostate.

TIGH  
I'll come home.

GRACE  
Come after the operation. Things  
are very busy now.

TIGH  
Who's the doctor?

GRACE  
Burstein.

TIGH  
Do you know his first name?

GRACE  
Why?

TIGH  
I want to do some research.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Tigh enters holding a shopping bag. Mark is asleep. She  
takes out a selection of sports magazines and arranges them  
on the night-table.

INT. KITCHEN

Grace is cleaning. Tigh enters.

GRACE  
I'm glad you could come.

TIGH

Did you see the test results?

GRACE

Tigh, we're not doctors.

TIGH

We're not idiots. Does Dad know  
the numbers are not good?

GRACE

The doctor is optimistic about his  
prognosis. That's what he knows.

TIGH

Are you aware there were  
alternatives to radical  
prostatectomy?

GRACE

Yes.

TIGH

What are they?

GRACE

Are you quizzing me?

TIGH

He could have had radiation or  
chemotherapy. Either one might  
have spared him an operation.

GRACE

We discussed the options with Dr.  
Burstein.

TIGH

Is that all? Did you do any  
research yourself -- or were you  
just "too busy"?

EXT. NMSU CAMPUS - DAY

A brisk afternoon. Tigh and Michael walk together.

MICHAEL

Will you make it to Huntsville  
this summer?

TIGH  
 Huntsville, Alabama. Southern terminus of the Mississippian syncline. Tuscombia limestone over Devonian shale. Not very interesting, geologically.

MICHAEL  
 I was thinking more of an above-ground visit.

The wind kicks up, Tigh raises her collar.

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
 I could make it to the Upper Peninsula in August.

TIGH  
 Michael... we're not really set up for visitors.

Michael puts his hands in his pockets. They walk on.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Grace and Peter share the sofa.

PETER  
 (amorously)  
 Are the children all in bed?

GRACE  
 Tigh is in Michigan.

PETER  
 Ah. What's in Michigan?

GRACE  
 She's doing field work for the summer.

PETER  
 You miss her?

GRACE  
 I'm a small part of her life.

PETER  
 That wasn't my question.

GRACE  
 Yes, I miss her. I miss the adult she's become.

GRACE (cont'd)

I miss the child she no longer is.  
I think of her -- more now than  
when she was young. She never  
thinks of me.

PETER

How do you know?

GRACE

She pushes people away and  
imagines it makes her stronger. It  
doesn't. It just makes her lonely.

PETER

And, Mark?

GRACE

He seems fine... for the moment.

PETER

Well Grace, if this is the best of  
all possible worlds, I hope your  
husband stays healthy forever.

GRACE

I pray for it daily.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

A banner announces that the "East Texas Regional Development  
Council" convention is in progress. A band plays country  
music. The hall is filled.

Mark and Grace sit at a large, round table. Mark taps his  
hands to the music. Grace wears a plastic smile.

BILLY, fifties, pudgy, ostentatiously dressed, saunters  
over.

BILLY

Mark! How the hell are you?

MARK

Hey, Billy! Not bad -- not bad at  
all.

They slap each other on the back. Maybe a little harder than  
they should.

BILLY

Looks like you lost a few pounds.

MARK

Looks like you gained a few.

BILLY

Livin' large, baby --  
(pats his stomach)  
like to show it off. This lovely  
lady your wife?

MARK

She is. Grace -- William Conroy:  
land baron.

BILLY

Ma'am, I expect you've been  
married to this gentleman long  
enough to know his boundless  
capacity for exaggeration.

GRACE

It's a pleasure to meet you.

BILLY

First time at the cow palace?

GRACE

It is.

BILLY

Well you ain't seen nothin' yet.  
Half these cowboys is still sober.  
Entirely too much sobriety around  
here -- but you stick around for  
another hour and see if somebody  
don't declare for Texas  
independence.

GRACE

Thank you. I'll pay careful  
attention to the time.

BILLY

So, Mark -- heard a few things,  
buddy. Heard cancer. That's rough.  
Takes a man off his game.

MARK

It was nothing.

BILLY

That right?  
(to Grace)  
He as tough as he sounds?

GRACE

Tougher.

MARK

Yeah, I had a touch of it. But I'm just hard to kill, buddy. Too much booze, too much tobacco. There's so much poison in me, that cancer just withered away and died.

BILLY

Yeah!? Well that's just great! I love that spirit!

(darkly)

But -- you never know about these things.

MARK

Don't you worry about me. Just watch your own ass.

BILLY

Well, all right! You keep on punchin'. Me, I got my dancin' shoes on, and I'm ready to *howl*.

Billy saunters off.

EXT. NMSU CAMPUS - DAY

A beat-up old car loaded with baggage limps onto campus.

EXT. NMSU CAMPUS - STADIUM

Tigh is jogging. Michael enters, waves. She jogs over. They embrace.

EXT. NMSU CAMPUS

Michael and Tigh walk across campus together. He takes her hand. A moment later, she withdraws it.

They enter the dorm.

INT. DORMITORY HALL

They stand outside Tigh's room. Michael leans over to kiss her. Tigh pulls back.

TIGH  
...I need a little time.

He strokes her hair.

MICHAEL  
Interesting rocks in Michigan?

TIGH  
Yes.

MICHAEL  
Pyroclastic, dimorphic subduction  
zones?

TIGH  
You babble very well in Geology.

MICHAEL  
You need time to adjust.

TIGH  
Yes.

MICHAEL  
It's a new situation.

TIGH  
It is.

MICHAEL  
Hi. I'm Michael. I'm going to be  
an engineer.

TIGH  
Hello.

He tries another kiss. She accepts. There are noises in the  
hall. She pulls him into the room.

INT. CAR - DAY

Grace and Mark drive up to the University hospital.

GRACE  
I can come in with you.

MARK  
Just pick me up in an hour. I  
don't want to hang around here any  
longer than I have to.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Grace is alone. The phone rings, she answers.

GRACE

Hello? Yes. No, he isn't. Yes...  
I'm his wife. Okay, I'll hold.

She puts the phone on speaker. Pointless Muzak drifts into the room. She begins to pace. NURSE comes on the line.

NURSE (V.O.)

Hello, Mrs. Irrizary? Please give me that prescription again.

GRACE

Excuse me, I think you have the wrong line.

NURSE (V.O.)

I'm sorry... Mrs. Irrizary, you wanted to know about the Annaprox?

GRACE

This is Mrs. Whitten.

NURSE (V.O.)

I am sorry. Who are you waiting for?

GRACE

Dr. Burstein.

NURSE (V.O.)

Please hold, he'll be right with you.

More Muzak. Finally, Burstein comes on the line.

BURSTEIN (V.O.)

Mrs. Whitten?

GRACE

Yes.

BURSTEIN (V.O.)

Are we on speaker-phone?

GRACE

Yes... but I'm alone.

BURSTEIN (V.O.)

We tried to reach your husband at the office.

BURSTEIN (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 (beat)  
 We didn't leave a message.

GRACE  
 Is there a problem?

BURSTEIN (V.O.)  
 His P-S-A is measurable. Not high,  
 but -- measurable.

GRACE  
 What does that mean?

BURSTEIN (V.O.)  
 It could be a lab error, or -- it  
 could mean the cancer has  
 returned.

GRACE  
 Which, in your opinion, is more  
 likely?

BURSTEIN (V.O.)  
 I can't speculate, Mrs. Whitten.  
 We have to redo the tests.

GRACE  
 He does seem to feel well.

BURSTEIN (V.O.)  
 We need to redo the tests.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mark is at the table. Grace brings dinner and sits.

MARK  
 How's the literary racket?

GRACE  
 Slow. Peter owes us three  
 chapters. Trudy thinks he's  
 stalling for a better contract.

MARK  
 Yeah? What happened to the  
 sanctity of the written word?

GRACE  
 It has a price. It always did.

MARK

All this starts to sound very familiar.

GRACE

Yes, art imitates real estate.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Mark sits in his recliner watching a basketball game. Grace enters and takes a seat facing him.

GRACE

Mark?

MARK

Yeah?

GRACE

The clinic called. The P-S-A test came back positive. It could just be a lab error, but -- they need to redo the test.

He starts to speak, then changes his mind. He stands, goes to the bedroom and shuts the door.

Grace hesitates, goes to the bedroom door, knocks. No answer. She enters. Mark is sitting on the bed, his back to her. Without turning, he waves her away.

INT. GRACE'S OFFICE - DAY

Grace and Peter sit opposite each other. Their heads are buried in the manuscript. They are tense.

GRACE

I can't follow this section. How is Hassan able to set up all these dummy accounts?

PETER

He's forging signatures.

GRACE

Still.

PETER

Still?

GRACE

It's too complicated. You need a knowledge of international banking to follow it. I can't follow it.

PETER

Maybe you're a little distracted.

GRACE

I am not distracted.

Peter pushes back from the table.

PETER

Take care of your other business.

GRACE

(beat)

He's ill. Give me another day to go over it.

PETER

Fine. And -- the rest of you?

GRACE

What does that mean?

PETER

Your body.

GRACE

I don't know. I've been busy.

PETER

Friday.

GRACE

I don't know. Maybe. I won't be able to stay.

PETER

Okay. Maybe. Friday. Maybe. Okay? Maybe?

Peter collects his things. They start for the door. He pulls her to him and kisses her -- hard. She shows no emotion.

He leaves. Grace reaches for the phone. She dials.

GRACE

Yes... hello... I'm calling about the clinical trial for Andicil... yes, it's stage 3... he's 53...

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Grace and Peter having sex. Peter rolls off her and sits at the side of the bed. Grace sits up. She does not look happy.

PETER  
Hungry?

GRACE  
No.

Peter goes to the

KITCHEN

and gets a dish of ice cream. He starts back, hesitates, then gets a second dish. He carries both ice-creams back to the

BEDROOM

where Grace is dressing.

PETER  
You know Grace, it's impolite to fuck and run.

GRACE  
I have to go.

PETER  
Slow down. You're war-weary. I've seen battle-fatigue before.

GRACE  
This is not Afghanistan. This is not your war. I have to go.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (EVENING)

Grace enters the apartment. Mark is standing by the balcony.

GRACE  
Hi. You're home early.

MARK  
Yeah. I took the afternoon off... just to feel time, you know? Just for the sense of it. I walked home -- all the way from West Rosedale.

GRACE

Really?!

MARK

Yeah. Just to feel that connection -- you know, with the Universe. It probably sounds stupid to you.

GRACE

No. I think it's a good thing, to appreciate the world around you.

MARK

Yeah, it is. I push too much, that was the problem. I pushed my body right into cancer. I realize that now. So, I walked home. Just to feel time.

(beat)

Come over here.

Grace walks over.

MARK (cont'd)

Have you looked at the skyline?

GRACE

Many times.

MARK

But, have you *really* looked at it?

GRACE

I have.

MARK

I never did. I paid an extra twenty-thousand bucks for a condo with a balcony, and I never knew what the hell I was buying.

(beat)

And also, Grace -- you're a beautiful woman. I never forget that.

Impulsively, he kisses her. Grace forces a smile.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Grace notices a book on Mark's end table titled, "The Empowered Mind" subtitled, "Techniques for Conscious Healing". She returns to the

LIVING ROOM

Classical music plays on the sound system. Mark is on the sofa, sleeping.

INT. GRACE'S OFFICE - DAY

Grace is on the phone.

GRACE

...no, they won't release the M-R-Is without a written request...  
no, I need you to send it...  
that's ridiculous -- he's sick,  
how can you hold it up... can I  
speak to someone else? No...  
please, I want to speak to someone  
else... *I don't care if it's the  
janitor, just let me speak to  
someone else.*

(pause)

Hello? Yes... they won't release  
them... Where? Will you send it to  
me... I know she was. Just send me  
the form.

She hangs up and turns to the computer. Trudy enters.

TRUDY

How's Peter?

GRACE

Fine.

TRUDY

When did you see him last?

GRACE

I don't remember.

TRUDY

You don't remember!?

GRACE

Last week. I don't remember the  
day.

TRUDY

What chapters did you work on?

GRACE

I don't remember.

TRUDY

You don't remember. Do you remember this is an office? Do you remember you're an Editor? Do you remember you're working on a novel?

Grace stares at her with no emotion. Trudy comes around the table and stands over her.

TRUDY (cont'd)

Do you know who Thomas Elwin is?

GRACE

I don't remember.

TRUDY

He's an Editor. At Quadrangle. Peter has been talking to them.

GRACE

Peter?

TRUDY

His agent. We built him up from nothing. I'm not going to let him slip away -- just because you "don't remember".

GRACE

Then pay him more.

TRUDY

You give him what he wants, do you hear me, Grace? You give him what he wants or I'll get someone who will. *They aren't hard to find.*

GRACE

How long do you think he'll stay if you fire me? How long do you think exactly, Trudy -- in seconds?

TRUDY

You're losing control, Grace. You're coming apart.

GRACE

I have work to do.

Grace turns back to the PC. Trudy storms out.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dark. Grace enters and turns on the light. A shopping bag sits on the counter. She peeks inside, and begins removing items: Panax Ginseng, Dong Quai, Neem, Echinacea, Comfrey, Bilberry...

INT. RECITAL HALL - NIGHT

The chorus is assembled for rehearsal. Conductor impatiently taps his baton.

CONDUCTOR

Ladies... ladies! One more time --  
part three, "Herrscher des Himmels  
erhore das Lallen".

The women begin to sing. Grace is evidently struggling. Bev gives her a long, hard look.

EXT. RECITAL HALL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Grace and Bev walk together.

BEV

You were a little off tonight.

GRACE

Was it very noticeable?

BEV

Not really. The woodwinds were out of tune. You wouldn't think that ever happens. After all -- they're woodwinds. They come from alpine meadows. Birds sang in their branches. Chipmunks played at their roots and all the flowers were happy.

GRACE

I think your appreciation for nature owes a great deal to Walt Disney.

BEV

Is there anything I can do to help?

GRACE

Thanks. I'm fine.

BEV  
Come out jogging with me -- the  
exercise will do you good.

GRACE  
I don't think so.

They reach Grace's car.

BEV  
We are friends. Don't forget it.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dimly lit. Mark sits on the floor in a meditative posture. A  
candle is burning. He is chanting.

MARK  
"Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya ..."

She waits. He notices her, finishes his chant.

MARK (cont'd)  
It's a meditation -- from the  
Bhagavad Gita. The Indians had it  
figured out five thousand years  
ago. It's about balance. When your  
bio-energy is out of balance you  
get disease.  
(beat)  
You think it's crazy, right?

GRACE  
No.

A book lies next to him. Multiple pages are tabbed. Pickling  
it up, he locates the selection he wants.

MARK  
Listen to this: "Consciousness is  
the symptom of the soul, and  
connects the body. That which  
pervades the entire body is  
indestructible". Do you see how  
profound that is?

GRACE  
No.

MARK  
We're all immortal. How can you  
not see that?

GRACE

I don't see that, but it may be so.

MARK

You have a rational mind. Too rational.

GRACE

It is who I am.

MARK

(angry)

You're not spiritual. That's a big problem with you.

GRACE

When did that become a problem?

MARK

When I realized there's more to life than accumulating material shit. I'm not into that anymore. You are. This disease has opened my eyes.

Grace starts for the kitchen. Mark yells after her...

MARK (cont'd)

You should look at your own soul Grace -- while you still have time. It's not so pretty. Maybe what you'll see is not so pretty.

KITCHEN

Grace makes a cup of coffee. Mark begins chanting; aggressively, recursively...

MARK (V.O.)

"Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya..."

INT. PUDGIES DINER - NIGHT

Blue-collar decor. Tigh and Michael sit at a booth, amid empty plates. A few fries remain unconsumed.

MICHAEL

Have you spoken to Hirshfield?

TIGH

Yes.

MICHAEL  
Did he offer you the fellowship?

TIGH  
(beat)  
We'll still see each other.

MICHAEL  
With you in Michigan -- how often  
will that be?

TIGH  
Michael... I want a career. I've  
never tried to hide that.

The WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS  
Will there be anything else?

They stare mutely at each other.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Michael navigates the deserted streets. Tigh leans against  
the passenger-side window, half-asleep.

He comes to a traffic light, stops -- and gently pulls her  
to him. She curls up at his shoulder and drifts back to  
sleep.

INT. GRACE'S OFFICE - DAY

Grace and Peter are immersed in the manuscript. Crisply --

GRACE  
Page one-eighty-nine.

PETER  
Yes?

GRACE  
You say Samir kills Hussein in  
revenge for the murder of his  
brother.

PETER  
So?

GRACE

He's been hiding in Sangin for two weeks. How would he know how Ayad was killed?

PETER

That's true.

GRACE

Page two-hundred and seventy-one. You say that Afghan troops pulled out of Nawza in February.

PETER

Yes?

GRACE

Then why would Zarina still be there in March?

PETER

You must be fascinated by the work, you have read it so precisely.

GRACE

I do like it. These aren't serious errors.

PETER

Are there serious errors?

Grace stares at him.

PETER (cont'd)

You don't know, do you?

(silence)

Do you think this is about dates? About seasons? You don't mention anything about how the work affects you. I can't tell if there's a problem with the writing -- or you're just numb.

(silence)

What's the point, Grace? Is it penance? Is it guilt?

GRACE

No.

PETER

What, then? You're tearing yourself to pieces.

GRACE  
I'm his wife.

PETER  
His wife!?! Just how many meanings  
does that word have for you?

GRACE  
I will take care of him. It has  
that meaning.

PETER  
This reads like the scribblings of  
a High School English teacher.

He pushes the manuscript at her.

PETER (cont'd)  
Fix it, or I'll get another  
Editor.

GRACE  
(evenly)  
I will re-read the work for  
content. If you don't like the  
result, I won't try to keep you.

PETER  
Stand up.

They stand.

PETER (cont'd)  
Give me your hand.

She extends her hand, tentatively. He curls it into a fist.

PETER (cont'd)  
I hope you win this fight.

She pulls her hand back.

GRACE  
(Coolly)  
Be here Thursday. Ten o'clock.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Grace enters. Mark is chanting in the living room. She goes  
to the

KITCHEN

A row of shopping bags trails away from the refrigerator. She reaches into the first and pulls out a package of chicken, partially defrosted and dripping.

In the next, a steak is defrosting.

She checks a few more bags, then opens the freezer. It's empty. She opens the 'fridge, it's almost empty.

Mark's chanting grows louder.

MARK (O.S.)  
"Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya..."

She brings a pair of bags to the garbage disposal. When she returns Mark is waiting for her.

MARK  
You've been poisoning me -- all  
the years you fed me that crap.

She takes the next set of bags, pushes past him, and brings them to the disposal. On her return...

MARK (cont'd)  
It's all poison. You filled me  
with poison, you fucking cunt.

Grace opens a cabinet, pulls out a supplement bottle and slams it on the counter.

GRACE  
Have some Bilberry. Your bio-  
energy is out of balance.

Mark raises his hand to strike her. Grace stiffens. He doesn't follow through.

She disposes of the next set of bags. When she returns Mark has gone to the bedroom, and resumed chanting...

MARK (O.S.)  
"Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya..."

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Grace sings with the choir. In the audience, Mark and Tigh hold programs.

EXT. CHURCH - PARKING LOT

Mark walks between Grace and Tigh.

MARK

Wonderful singing, Grace.  
Spiritual. Didn't you think so,  
Tigh?

TIGH

It was beautiful.

MARK

No, it was spiritual. There's a  
difference, honey.

(beat)

Were you following the words?

TIGH

Not really.

MARK

You have to follow the words. The  
words are important. The words are  
talking to God. That's why it's  
spiritual. If you don't follow the  
words, it's only beautiful.

Tigh stares straight ahead. They walk on.

MARK (cont'd)

When I was young, we used to say  
"the medium is the message". I  
never knew what that meant. But I  
understand now. It's about  
balance. Timothy Leary was right.

GRACE

The correct attribution is to  
Marshall McLuhan.

MARK

Whatever. Balance is what's  
important. Balance and harmony.  
Well done, Grace. Well done!

Impulsively Mark puts his arms around them. Both women look  
uncomfortable.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The family returns. Grace and Tigh go to the

LIVING ROOM

and settle in. From the kitchen --

MARK (O.S.)

Tigh -- how about some Comfrey  
tea?

Tigh exchanges a long look with Grace.

MARK (O.S.) (cont'd)

Lots of allantoin, tremendous  
anti-oxidant. Really revs up the  
immune system.

TIGH

Thanks, Dad -- nothing for me.

Mark enters with his cup of tea. He sinks comfortably into  
his chair and takes a sip.

MARK

Powerful stuff.

(beat)

Your mother thinks I'm crazy.

GRACE

I don't think that.

MARK

She buys the propaganda the drug  
companies put out.

(motioning to his cup)

They don't want you to know about  
this stuff -- but the Indians had  
it figured out five thousand years  
ago. Five thousand years, can you  
imagine that? Five thousand years,  
then your mother comes along and  
says it's all bullshit. That's not  
balance.

(beat)

So -- how's school?

TIGH

Good.

MARK

How's that boyfriend of yours?  
Nice kid. When's he joining the  
family?

TIGH

(beat)

You look good, Dad.

MARK

Feel good. Careful about my  
attitude. Careful about what I  
eat.

(glares at Grace)

No more poisons.

TIGH

What was the name of that tea?

MARK

Comfrey. I can make you a cup --  
no trouble at all.

TIGH

C-O-M-F-R-E-Y?

MARK

You got it.

(easing back in his chair)

So, how about some Mozart? I like  
Mozart. He's the best. Great  
music. Great for attitude.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mark is in his chair, sleeping. Grace enters. She helps him  
onto his feet. They start for the bedroom.

INT. DEN

Tigh works at the PC.

INT. KITCHEN

Grace reads at the table. Tigh enters.

TIGH

Do you know what Comfrey is?

GRACE

It's an herb.

TIGH

It's a poison. Drink enough of it  
and it will kill you. What else is  
he taking?

GRACE

He's trying a few things on his  
own.

TIGH

Where?

GRACE

The cabinets.

Tigh opens a cabinet and begins taking down jars and bottles, growing angrier with each item.

She lines them up, opens her phone, and takes a picture of the collection.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Grace is reading. Tigh enters, holding a printout.

TIGH

I have something to show you.

GRACE

(wearily)

Yes?

TIGH

(reads from the printout)

Wolfsbane: a poison. No anti-cancer activity. Nettle: used for menstrual cramps. No anti-cancer activity. Bilberry: no activity. Black Cohash: in small doses, a cardiac stimulant, in large doses; a poison. Do you want me to go on?

GRACE

To what purpose?

TIGH

These "therapies" are worthless. Why don't you stop him?

GRACE

He needs to believe in something. Is that so hard to understand?

TIGH

Why this? Why does he need to believe in this junk -- and not you? Why? Why, Grace? Why?

EXT. MOUNTAIN LEDGE - DAY

Tigh climbs toward a distinctly-colored outcropping of rock.

The ledge narrows. Dislodged pebbles tumble down the sheer mountainside. She loses her footing, flails out, and barely manages to find a hand-hold.

She claws her way back to firm ground. Her wrist is injured.

INT. NMSU GEOLOGY LAB - NIGHT (EVENING)

Tigh sits at her bench, peering through a microscope. Next to her a tray holds an assortment of rocks. Her wrist is bandaged.

Michael approaches.

MICHAEL

Hi.

(notes the bandage)  
What happened?

TIGH

It's nothing.

He pushes back the sleeve of her blouse. Other bruises appear.

MICHAEL

That's not the high bar.

TIGH

I need to finish this.

MICHAEL

I'll wait.

TIGH

Don't.

MICHAEL

Why?

TIGH

We have one month, then you go to Alabama, and I... we can't be this close.

He turns to the tray, selects a green-colored rock.

MICHAEL

This is nice. What is it?

TIGH

Olivine.

He returns it to the tray.

MICHAEL

You should be careful how you  
collect them.

INT. GRACE'S OFFICE - DAY

Grace and Peter sit opposite each other, their heads buried  
in their manuscripts. Peter pushes back from the table.

PETER

These comments are well thought-  
out. I didn't think you'd manage  
it.

GRACE

It's beautiful writing. You will  
be famous.

PETER

Is that meant as consolation?

GRACE

For?

PETER

Losing you.

GRACE

Will fame console you?

PETER

No.

GRACE

I'm going to lose my job. My  
husband. You. Do you have any  
words to console me?

PETER

It was your choice.

GRACE

That's not very consoling.

PETER

It was your choice, Grace.

GRACE

Was it? I had no choice in any of  
this.

GRACE (cont'd)

I slept with you because I had to,  
because I didn't know how not to.  
But I am still his wife, and if  
I've broken one promise to him,  
that doesn't mean I'm free to  
break them all. Where I can keep  
them, I will. I can take care of  
him because *in me* it doesn't  
require an emotion I don't have.  
It just requires time.

PETER

It doesn't "just require time". It  
requires *in you* that emotion you  
don't have -- and he will hate you  
for not having it.

GRACE

Then he will hate me. But I will  
take care of him.

PETER

It's a noble sacrifice you're  
making. No one will thank you for  
it.

INT. NMSU GYM - NIGHT

Numerous "BEAT OKLAHOMA" banners are strung across the  
rafters. The gym is otherwise deserted.

Tigh works out on the high bar. As she completes her  
routine, Michael walks toward her.

MICHAEL

Hi.

TIGH

How did you know I'd be here?

MICHAEL

You weren't in your room and you  
weren't at the lab. After that, it  
was easy.

Unconsciously she is holding her wrist.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

How much does it hurt?

TIGH  
 It's tolerable.  
 (beat)  
 How have you been?

MICHAEL  
 It's tolerable.  
 (beat)  
 You're putting too much pressure  
 on it.

TIGH  
 Is that a medical opinion?

MICHAEL  
 It's an engineering one.

TIGH  
 Well you're wrong. It's getting  
 stronger.

MICHAEL  
 Can I see?

Grudgingly, she extends her hand. He checks the bandage.

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
 It's too loose.

TIGH  
 It's fine.

MICHAEL  
 I don't think so.

He undoes the bandage. Slowly. They are nearly touching. Tigh allows him to proceed, but is unable to look at him.

He begins to re-wrap it. Half-way done he turns her face to him and kisses her. She makes no attempt to stop him.

He finishes wrapping the bandage.

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
 Try it now.

She mounts the high bar, and tentatively begins a routine. The tightened bandage has done it's work. She comes alive, her hands pound the bar, hurl her through space, her grip strong and secure.

She dismounts -- triumphant and breathless. Michael comes up to her. She turns away. He puts her arms around his shoulders. She reaches for him. He lowers her to the mat.

EXT. NMSU CAMPUS - NIGHT

TIGH and MICHAEL arrive at TIGH's dorm. MICHAEL leans over to kiss her. TIGH holds him back. She turns, and enters the dorm -- alone.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Grace enters. From the living room --

MARK (O.S.)  
"Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya..."

She continues to the

DEN

and unpacks a few things. Mark's chanting grows louder. He is almost shouting. She hurries to the

LIVING ROOM

MARK  
"Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya..."

His body is rigid. He is shaking

GRACE  
What's wrong?

MARK  
"Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya... "

GRACE  
(urgently)  
What's the matter? Are you in pain?

MARK  
There is no pain. "Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya" Pain is an illusion.

She hurries to the

KITCHEN

Emergency numbers are posted on the refrigerator. She makes a call.

LIVING ROOM

Grace returns. Mark is holding his side.

GRACE

I called for an ambulance.

MARK

My side, Grace. I have a pain in my side. I can't make it go away. I've said the Bhagavate. I have a good attitude now. It doesn't go away.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

The "BEAT OKLAHOMA" banners are gone.

Tigh mounts the high bar and starts a routine. She falls, starts again, falls.

She walks over to a bench, sits, drops her head. She may be crying.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Tigh staring blankly out the window. The phone rings, she answers

TIGH

Hello... when? Where is he? What did the doctor's say... I'll come home... no, I want to come.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - DEN - DAY

Tigh is on the phone.

TIGH

Yes, can you tell me what "Bayesian analysis" is? No, I'm not a doctor... yes, I'd like that explained... if it's too technical then why is it on your website... *then maybe you shouldn't publish information you can't explain...* yes, I'll hold.

Grace enters.

TIGH (cont'd)

...how long were they in remission... No, it just says "for the length of the trial" ... then who does...

TIGH (cont'd)

She just referred me to you... *no*  
*I'm not a doctor...* thanks.

She slams the phone down.

GRACE

Doctors?

(silence)

I tried also. They don't answer  
 your questions.

TIGH

How hard did you try?

GRACE

Very hard.

Tigh pulls a page from the printer and thrusts it at Grace.

TIGH

Here. It's the peer ranking of  
 every oncologist within three  
 hundred miles. Thaagard is at the  
 top of the list. I made an  
 appointment for Thursday.

GRACE

Thursday? He has an appointment  
 with Burstein.

TIGH

Burstein isn't even ranked.

GRACE

I thought you said "every  
 oncologist within three hundred  
 miles"?

TIGH

Fine. Then you do the research.

Tigh stalks out.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family is at dinner. Mark sits in a wheelchair. He looks  
 drawn, emaciated.

MARK

What month is this?

GRACE

March.

MARK

Is it Spring?

TIGH

Almost.

Grace begins to serve.

MARK

Sweet potatoes? Good. Good source of nutrients.

(to Tigh)

We went by Forest Park yesterday. Children flying their kites, mothers with little babies, the whole cycle of life.

(to Grace)

It was wonderful, wasn't it.

GRACE

Yes.

MARK

It's great to have you here, Tigh. Really great.

(beat)

The chemo is intense now, but that's how you beat this thing. I think of you. While they're pumping that stuff into me -- I think what a fine young woman you've become, how proud I am of you. I should say that more often. I don't say it enough do I, Grace?

GRACE

I think Tigh knows how you feel.

MARK

Do you, Tigh? I hope so.

(beat)

How's that young man of yours? We'll have to have him down -- when I'm a little stronger. The chemo really takes it out of you.

He picks indifferently at his plate, taking nothing.

MARK (cont'd)

It's almost Spring. I want to look at it. I want to look at almost Spring.

He tries to stand, but slips back into his chair. Grace wheels him to the balcony. He turns back to Tigh.

MARK (cont'd)

It's the treatments. They take it out of you.

She returns to the table. They finish the meal in silence.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Grace sits at the PC. Beside her is Tigh's list. She enters a URL. The profile of an oncologist appears. She peruses the entry and turns for the next URL.

She mistypes it, tries again, mistypes it.

She brings up the browser's history file, scans down the list of URLs -- and stops at an entry for "Hawthorne Family Planning Services".

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Grace and Tigh are having breakfast.

GRACE

I did some research last night.

TIGH

Good.

GRACE

Tigh --

The phone rings. Grace winces, gets up, and answers it.

GRACE (cont'd)

Hello? No... no, someone will be home, please deliver it. Thanks.

She sits down.

TIGH

Are you going to keep the appointment with Thaagard?

GRACE

Yes. Tigh --

TIGH

Be sure to tell him about the herbs.

GRACE  
Are you pregnant?

TIGH  
Why do you ask?  
(angrily)  
Did you go through my things? Is  
that what you did?

Tigh rushes off to her

BEDROOM

and rifles through the dresser drawers. She finds the  
abortion clinic pamphlets where she had hidden them.

She returns to the

KITCHEN

brandishing the pamphlets.

TIGH (cont'd)  
(furious)  
You found these?!

GRACE  
No.

TIGH  
Then how?

GRACE  
Last night. I saw the URL.

TIGH  
It's none of your business.

GRACE  
Tigh --

TIGH  
I don't want to discuss it.

GRACE  
I see.  
(casually)  
I was thinking about getting a  
nurse. Part time.

TIGH  
(agitated)  
We don't need a nurse.

GRACE

Then we should plan our schedule.  
I'm busy Mondays and Thursdays. If  
you'd like to go out, I'm here all  
day, Wednesday.

TIGH

I'll handle this on my own.

GRACE

Is it Michael's?

TIGH

Of course.

GRACE

Does he know?

TIGH

He doesn't need to know. We are no  
longer together.

GRACE

Tell him.

TIGH

No.

GRACE

(calmly)

We'll need to do a shopping. Do  
you want to go, or shall I?

TIGH

I don't know. I'll go.

GRACE

When?

TIGH

I don't know!

Tigh storms off to her room.

Grace finishes her coffee. She goes to

TIGH'S BEDROOM

and eases the door opened. Tigh sits on her bed, fuming.

GRACE

Tell him.

GRACE (cont'd)

(silence)

Are you determined to be as unlike me as possible?

(silence)

If you are, you will tell the truth no matter how painful it is, no matter what the consequences.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mark is in his wheelchair. Tigh enters holding a glass of juice. She puts it on his tray.

TIGH

Good morning.

MARK

Thanks. Sit down. I want to have a talk with you, father-daughter stuff.

She sits. He doesn't touch the juice.

MARK (cont'd)

So, how have you been -- really?

TIGH

Good.

MARK

I mean Tigh, *really*.

TIGH

Good. *Really*.

MARK

Because you know, I see things. The cancer... well, it does what it wants with my body but it leaves my mind clear, and I see things. For example, you never mention that young man of yours. I wonder about that.

TIGH

Dad --

MARK

No -- I don't want you to explain. I just want you to know that, with young people, fights are common. He said something foolish, you used a poor choice of words.

MARK (cont'd)

It passes. Things will work themselves out. You'll see.

TIGH

...thanks.

MARK

That's my girl. You buck up. He'll come around.

(beat)

It's a great morning. A great morning! I feel stronger today. I had a weakness in my arms yesterday. It was a vague kind of thing. I couldn't quite place it. But today my arms are stronger. I think that's a good sign.

TIGH

It is.

MARK

Your mother's been a tremendous help through all this. Of course we've had our share of problems. Every marriage does. But I'm learning to see more of her side of it. I know you and Mom don't always get along, but you should try a little bit, too -- to see her side. Will you, for me?

TIGH

You haven't touched your juice.

MARK

You haven't answered my question.

TIGH

Michael and I have separated.

MARK

Separated? It's just a fight. Don't worry, he'll apologize.

TIGH

It wasn't a fight. He wants a family. I don't.

MARK

You don't want a family? Of course you do. All women do.

TIGH

Not me.

MARK

No children? I mean... that's your right. But... no children. I thought... well... your mother and I married young. I thought you might do the same. You're a beautiful girl. I'm not just saying that because you're my daughter. You're a beautiful girl, and I thought there would be children. This disease -- the doctor's are optimistic, but I don't know. Sometimes I think... I want to live long enough to see my grand-children. I want that, Tigh. I don't know if I have enough time.

TIGH

Try to have some juice.

MARK

I don't think I can keep it down.  
(beat)  
And my arms ache. Both of them.

EXT. FORREST PARK - DAY

Lilies float placidly in a sun-dappled pond. In the parking area Tigh paces. Michael drives up and exits.

MICHAEL

Hi.

Tigh nods. She is tense.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

What's the matter?

TIGH

My father isn't doing well.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry.

She hesitates.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

What else?

TIGH  
I'm pregnant.

MICHAEL  
Have you decided...

TIGH  
There's nothing to decide.

MICHAEL  
We could keep it.

TIGH  
No.

MICHAEL  
Is that it? No discussion? No  
weighing the pros and cons?  
Just... an edict?

TIGH  
It's my decision.

He walks down to the pond, tosses a few rocks in the water.  
Waterlilies shiver in the ripples. He returns to her.

MICHAEL  
You've made the appointment?

TIGH  
(near tears)  
Yes.

MICHAEL  
I'll go with you.

TIGH  
No.

MICHAEL  
I'll go.

TIGH  
Don't.

MICHAEL  
Why?

TIGH  
(barely audible)  
I don't want this to be part of  
your life.

Tigh is crying. Michael puts his arm around her. She holds on to him for a moment, then pushes him away.

INT. POSH DOWNTOWN RESTAURANT - DAY

Peter is seated at the table. Grace arrives.

GRACE

Hi.

She takes a seat, notes the ambiance.

GRACE (cont'd)

This is a lovely place.

PETER

I should have taken you sooner.

GRACE

I don't know. I liked your home-cooked meals.

PETER

I liked cooking them for you.

GRACE

You have many talents.

PETER

I do. Six.

GRACE

Six?! Really! I don't suppose you'd care to list them.

PETER

I would -- if I didn't think you'd find it obnoxious.

GRACE

I'm sure I will. Now: list them.

PETER

Well, I can write. I'm counting that as one talent, though you understand, it includes fiction, nonfiction, and reportage.

GRACE

I agree. One talent. Same part of the brain.

PETER  
I can cook.

GRACE  
Two. What else?

PETER  
I'm mechanical.

GRACE  
You aren't.

PETER  
I am.

GRACE  
For instance?

PETER  
I fix my own car.

GRACE  
When!?

PETER  
When you're not around.

GRACE  
You never mentioned that.

PETER  
No. It would have been obnoxious.

GRACE  
But -- not out of character.

PETER  
Grace.

GRACE  
All right. That was unkind. I will  
grant you mechanical talent, but  
only out of kindness.

PETER  
Thanks.

GRACE  
That's three. Half way.

PETER  
Women like me.

GRACE  
Is that a talent?

PETER  
Yes. I work at it.

GRACE  
I liked you.

PETER  
I know.

GRACE  
I didn't realize I had become so enamored of... a talent. Not -- a whole person.

PETER  
Take it off the list.

GRACE  
Good. We are holding at three.

PETER  
I'm athletic.

GRACE  
You are. That's four.

PETER  
I speak three languages.

GRACE  
Five.

PETER  
I play the accordion.

GRACE  
You don't.

PETER  
I do. Badly.

GRACE  
If you do it badly, it's not a talent.

PETER  
It is if you do it as badly as I do.

GRACE  
We are holding at five.

PETER  
 (intimately)  
 I guess I can't use that.

GRACE  
 No.

PETER  
 I have only five talents. I was bragging when I said six. It was obnoxious and unseemly, and I apologize.

GRACE  
 I accept.

PETER  
 I admit it when I'm wrong. That's six.

GRACE  
 That's not a talent. But it is a virtue, and I appreciate it.

Drinks arrive. They sip for a while in silence.

GRACE (cont'd)  
 Why did you invite me?

PETER  
 I missed you.

GRACE  
 You're changing Houses.

PETER  
 And that.

GRACE  
 I suppose I should thank you -- for telling me before you told Trudy.

PETER  
 How is your husband?

GRACE  
 He's dying.

PETER  
 Is that what the doctors say?

GRACE  
 It's what they mean.

PETER  
How much longer?

GRACE  
Soon.

PETER  
Will you call me -- when this is  
all over?

GRACE  
"This"?

PETER  
When he's dead.

GRACE  
No.

PETER  
Why?

GRACE  
You understand Trudy will fire me  
when she finds you've left?

PETER  
I'd hoped that wouldn't happen.

GRACE  
It will.

PETER  
I can talk to my agent. Between us  
we can find you another job.

GRACE  
I don't need another job. I need  
another life.  
(beat)  
And so do you. Why don't you get  
married -- a nice Jewish boy like  
you, what are you waiting for?

PETER  
I'm not a boy.

GRACE  
You're a man. A man of many  
talents.

PETER  
Six.

GRACE

Five. And, I'll tell you a secret,  
most women would settle for three.

PETER

Which three?

GRACE

You can start by ditching the  
accordion.

They study their drinks. Peter reaches across the table and touches her hand. She turns her face to the window. Pedestrians hurry by. Softly, she is crying.

EXT. ABORTION CLINIC - DAY

Rain. A low brick building in a suburban neighborhood.

Tigh steps out of a cab. A few PROTESTERS are about, carrying signs such as "Abortion Is Murder", "Save the Unborn!" ...

She raises her collar against the rain and hurries inside.

MONTAGE - MARK'S CANCER WORSENS

-- Tigh in her room, reading.

-- Grace in the den, working.

-- Mark in the living room, sleeping in his wheelchair. Flickering images of a basketball game play off his face. Grace enters, turns off the TV, and wheels him to the bedroom.

-- The light goes out in Tigh's room.

-- Grace enters the living room and begins to straighten up. We hear a faint whimpering. She rushes to the bedroom.

END MONTAGE

INT. BEDROOM

Tigh enters.

Mark has his head in Grace's lap, his arms wrapped around her waist. Grace holds him. He is shaking with pain.

GRACE  
Call the ambulance!

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Grace, wearing a bathrobe, makes coffee. Tigh enters, also in a bathrobe.

She takes a glass. In the narrow confines she eases past her mother to reach the 'fridge.

She opens the door and empties the last of the OJ into her glass. It is only half full. She glares at Grace. Grace doesn't notice.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Mark is in bed, attached to an assortment of tubes and monitors. Grace and Tigh enter.

TIGH  
Hi, Dad.

MARK  
Girls.  
(beat)  
Rough night. That's how it goes.  
No big deal.

Motioning to the gear he is connected to...

MARK (cont'd)  
They put tubes in you. All kinds of tubes.  
(morosely)  
It doesn't do any good.

GRACE  
I brought you a few magazines.

He shakes his head. Grace sits down.

MARK  
What do the doctors say?

GRACE  
I haven't spoken to them yet.

MARK  
They're running tests. They don't fix anything, but they run tests.

He adjusts his position. He winces.

TIGH  
Are you in pain?  
(silence)  
Dad?

MARK  
(indicating Grace)  
Get that bitch out of here.

Grace stiffens, stands, leaves. He turns to Tigh.

MARK (cont'd)  
Can you ask the doctors to give me  
something... not much, just enough  
to take the edge off -- and no  
more fucking tests.

INT. DOCTOR THAGGARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Grace and Tigh enter. THAGGARD, forties, expensively  
dressed, carefully groomed, sits at his desk.

They wait as he studies the monitor. Finally, he looks up.

THAAGARD  
Please sit down.

They do.

THAAGARD (cont'd)  
The cancer has spread to his  
liver.

GRACE  
What's his prognosis?

THAAGARD  
(puzzled)  
The cancer has spread.

GRACE  
I heard you. What does it mean for  
his treatment?

THAAGARD  
We could operate.

GRACE  
Is that what you recommend?

THAAGARD

We can try to make him comfortable -- or we can be aggressive. Mr. Whitten will have to make that decision.

GRACE

On what information? You've told us nothing.

THAAGARD

His chances of a recovery are not good, but every patient is different. If you elect to have the surgery, Mr. Whitten will need to sign a release.

TIGH

Can you tell us Doctor, without an operation, how long he is likely to live?

THAAGARD

I don't know.

(beat)

If you haven't done so, I advise you to arrange for a Durable Power of Attorney. Ms. Meyers will explain the details to you.

TIGH

Can he delegate that power to me?

THAAGARD

Ms. Meyers will explain the details.

GRACE

Doctor, do you save many patients?

THAAGARD

About a third, Mrs. Whitten. That's all. One third.

INT. CAR - DAY

Grace is at the wheel, Tigh is in the passenger seat. They leave the hospital garage. A few blocks later they merge onto the highway.

The landscape flashes by. The women do not speak.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Grace and Tigh enter.

GRACE

Can I get you some coffee?

TIGH

What are you going to do about the operation?

GRACE

It's your father's decision.

TIGH

(irritated)

I know whose decision it is.

(reflectively)

It won't help him.

GRACE

Probably not.

TIGH

He's dying. It won't help him.  
He's dying and he has no place to go. No one to turn to. This isn't a home, it's a railway station. People pass through, but nobody lives here. Nobody ever did.

GRACE

Not now, Tigh.

TIGH

Why not now? He's dying. There is no later.

GRACE

Tigh --

TIGH

He's dying, Mom. Did you really think you could rush back here after twenty years of being somewhere else and pretend this is a family? You can't.

(in tears)

And he wants so much to have that, to have something to hold on to. So do I. But there's nothing left. All the stuffing has gone out of you.

Tigh rushes from the room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Grace is at Mark's bedside.

MARK

I'm not going to make it, am I?

GRACE

You've just had a rough few days.

MARK

Yeah.

(beat)

Why did you marry me?

GRACE

I loved you.

MARK

How long did that last?

Grace sits silently, her hands neatly folded in her lap.

MARK (cont'd)

Some marriage. I don't give a crap about you. You don't give a crap about me.

(silence)

How many men have you *fucked* since we were married?

(silence)

*How many!?*

(silence)

Why are you here?

GRACE

You're ill.

MARK

Get me some water. I'm thirsty.

Grace gets the water and returns to her chair.

MARK (cont'd)

What is it Grace, want to watch me expire -- just for the thrill of it?

GRACE

No.

MARK  
Why, then?

GRACE  
You're ill.

MARK  
I'm dying.

Mark turns away from her. He is crying. Grace goes to him and reaches for his hand. Angrily he pushes her away.

MARK (cont'd)  
Get out of here.

Grace returns to her chair, sits. Mark turns to find her still there.

MARK (cont'd)  
I told you to go.

Grace sits patiently.

MARK (cont'd)  
You fucking whore. If I could make it out of this bed I'd strangle you.

Silence. Mark eases back in his bed, studies her.

MARK (cont'd)  
Enjoying yourself?  
(silence)  
This is what you wanted, isn't it.

GRACE  
No.

MARK  
You're a liar.

GRACE  
Once. Not any more.

Mark struggles up to a sitting position.

MARK  
I want you to stay.

GRACE  
Yes.

MARK  
Stay with me to the end.

GRACE

Yes.

MARK

(viciously)

I want you to watch me die. I want you to see the pain on my face. I want you to feel it. I want you to watch the breath go out of me. I want you to choke when I choke. I want you to see the blood. I want you to hear the screams.

(beat)

Will you stay?

GRACE

(calmly)

If that's what you want.

MARK

Stay for all of it, Grace. Stay for the whole show. Promise me that.

GRACE

I will stay until the end. I will stay until you are dead.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (DUSK)

Grace sits on the couch. The sun is setting. Curtains rustle in the hot wind.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - DEN - NIGHT

Grace, fully dressed, is asleep at the desk. She awakes with a start. The apartment is dark. She turns on a lamp and looks around. No one is there.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Mark is sleeping. Grace enters. Tigh is already there.

TIGH

I don't think you should be here.

GRACE

I didn't come to please you.

TIGH

He doesn't want you here.

GRACE  
I saw him last night. He had a  
change of heart.

TIGH  
Did he?

GRACE  
Yes, he asked me to stay. He was  
adamant on that point.

Tigh looks around, finds a magazine, and begins to read.

GRACE (cont'd)  
Have you eaten?

Tigh thumbs through the magazine.

GRACE (cont'd)  
Get something to eat. I'll call  
you if his status changes.

LATER

Tigh returns, scowls -- Grace is gone.

The bathroom door opens, Grace emerges holding a pitcher.  
She begins watering the plants.

TIGH  
Are you hungry?

GRACE  
A little.

TIGH  
Go. I'll call you when he wakes.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Michael stands in an alcove. As Grace nears, he steps out.

MICHAEL  
Mrs. Whitten?

GRACE  
Michael? What are you doing here?

MICHAEL  
I wanted to talk to you.

GRACE

If this is about Tigh, it's not a good time.

MICHAEL

It's not about Tigh.

GRACE

Then, what is it about?

MICHAEL

You.

They continue to the parking lot elevators.

EXT. ROOF-TOP GARAGE - DAY

The elevator doors open. Grace and Michael exit into the shadows of a covered garage.

GRACE

All right, Michael -- what do you want to say?

MICHAEL

Tigh and I are not seeing each other. I think you know.

GRACE

Yes.

MICHAEL

We still speak on the phone. Not often. Mostly, she talks about you.

GRACE

Then you know all our secrets.

MICHAEL

One version.

GRACE

I won't give you another.

The pass out of the shadows, into the sunlight of the uncovered section of the garage.

MICHAEL

She's being cruel to you.

GRACE

You drove... seven hundred miles  
to tell me this?

MICHAEL

Someone should say it to you. I  
don't know if anyone has.

GRACE

(beat)

You know Michael, if you're trying  
to win her back, it won't help to  
have me as an ally.

MICHAEL

If I wanted an ally, you're the  
last person I'd pick.

GRACE

All right Michael, thank you for  
telling me.

MICHAEL

(extends his hand)

Good luck, Mrs. Whitten.

GRACE

And to you.

They shake hands. Grace starts back. Her phone rings. She  
answers, listens, turns to Michael.

GRACE (cont'd)

It's time.

She puts her phone in her purse.

GRACE (cont'd)

Michael, Tigh isn't sure what she  
wants. Don't give up too easily.

MICHAEL

I won't.

Grace turns and walks back to the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Grace enters. Mark is awake, thrashing and only partly  
coherent. Tigh stands helpless at his bedside.

DOCTOR and NURSE are trying to administer a sedative. He catches sight of Grace and leers at her. A spasm ripples through him and he turns away.

Fiercely, he fends off Doctor and Nurse, as he searches for Grace. He finds her and holds her gaze through another convulsion.

Doctor and Nurse try again. He screams as he fights them off. An orderly arrives. Mark is pinned to the bed.

The sedative is administered. His strength fades, his body sinks away from him. He finds Grace and manages one final, twisted, triumphal, grin.

Grace watches without expression.

His breathing becomes shallow. He blinks -- once, twice, again. The shaking subsided. He lies still. He is dead, eyes fixed on Grace.

Tigh comes up to him. She smooths his hair, leans over and whispers --

TIGH  
Goodbye, Daddy.

She leaves the room. Grace follows.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Grace reaches for Tigh's hand. Tigh pushes her away and disappears down the corridor.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY (MORNING)

Grace sits half-dressed, a full cup of tea on the table. The phone rings. She does not answer. Someone starts to leave a message. She walks out of the room.

LIVING ROOM (AFTERNOON)

Grace, dressed, sleeps on the sofa. On the TV, a basketball game is in progress.

NIGHT

Grace sits opposite an empty wheelchair. On the sound system the choir sings Bach.

EXT. FOREST PARK - DAY

Grace wanders aimlessly across an empty field.

She finds a bench, sits. She is warmed a little by the sun and removes her shawl. Her hair is a grayer, tangled. She looks old.

A group of joggers pass, Bev among them. Neither woman recognizes the other.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The wall clock reads 2:30 AM. Grace sits at the table, half-dressed, watching the minute-hand go around.

3:00 AM

She starts across the room. Her breath is suddenly sharp and labored.

She grips the sink to steady herself. She cannot catch her breath and sinks to the kitchen floor.

She closes her eyes. Slowly her breath evens out.

BEDROOM

Grace, fully dressed, sleeps. The morning sun fills the room.

EXT. FOREST PARK - DAY

Cloudy. Grace sits on a bench feeding the squirrels. It begins to rain.

An oak tree stands alone in a field. She hurries for it. The rain comes harder. She huddles against the broad trunk, as though it might supply the strength she no longer has.

EXT. RECITAL HALL - NIGHT

The choir sings. Grace listens from the back of the hall. Adjacent seats are empty.

INT. GRACE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Grace is boxing up Mark's things. She goes to the

KITCHEN

and gets a roll of tape. Other boxes are half-filled with kitchen items.

EXT. FOREST PARK - DAY (MORNING)

Grace is out walking. Bev again appears among a group of joggers. The women recognize each other. Bev jogs over.

BEV

Grace?

Impulsively, Bev hugs her. Grace barely responds. Bev pulls back, awkwardly.

BEV (cont'd)

You're... okay?

GRACE

Yes. Mostly. You were jogging -- I don't want to interrupt.

BEV

Come on, we'll walk.

As they stroll down the path a few joggers pass.

BEV (cont'd)

Every year the people in the park get younger. Except me. I don't know how I could have been so unlucky.

GRACE

You still look... lucky to me.

BEV

Thanks. I used to look luckier.

It is a clear, blue day.

BEV (cont'd)

When are you coming back to the choir?

GRACE

I'm not.

BEV

Oh --

GRACE

I'm moving. Massachusetts.

BEV  
Boston?

GRACE  
No, the country. I have a friend  
who owns a bookstore.

BEV  
You'll write?

GRACE  
(smiles)  
I will think of you, fondly.

They come to a place where the path divides, and stop.

GRACE (cont'd)  
I admire you for jogging.

BEV  
You should take it up. It cleans  
the soul.

GRACE  
I could never run that far.

They stare awkwardly at each other.

BEV  
Take care of yourself.

GRACE  
You, too.

Bev jogs off.

EXT. INTERSTATE - DAY

A car and trailer on a flat, featureless highway.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Car and trailer wind along a hilly, wooded road. Fall has blossomed. Car and trailer pass a sign announcing "Walden" and enter a gentrified New England village.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Quaint. Grace works behind the counter. A few patrons mill about. JEREMY, tall, distinguished, fifties, is at the shelves. He has noticed Grace.

ALBERT, pudgy, bald, fifties, reads at one of the tables. Occasionally, he steals a look at Grace.

Jeremy brings a book to the counter.

JEREMY  
You're new here.

GRACE  
I am.

JEREMY  
Is that a trace of an accent?

GRACE  
Yours or mine?

JEREMY  
Touché.  
(hands her the book)  
Do you recommend it?

She reads from the jacket...

GRACE  
"The Red Danube". Carl Felker.  
(flips it over)  
"The battle for modern Europe -- A  
story of knights and knaves, and  
how Capitalism became King."  
(handing him the book)  
Political non-fiction. I'm afraid  
you're on your own.

JEREMY  
Does it show?

GRACE  
A little.

JEREMY  
Well, I think I'll take it -- on  
your recommendation.

GRACE  
But, I haven't recommended it.

JEREMY  
Ah. It must be the lyrical way you  
read.

Grace rings up the purchase. Albert peers furtively over his book. Grace does not notice.

INT. WALDEN MARKET - NIGHT

A small grocery store. Grace examines the produce. Jeremy is at the opposite end of the aisle. Grace doesn't see him.

EXT. STREET

Grace carries a bag of groceries. Jeremy comes up next to her.

JEREMY

Hello.

GRACE

Hello.

JEREMY

Can I help you with that?

GRACE

Thank you.

She passes the bag to him. They walk together.

JEREMY

I wanted to apologize.

GRACE

For?

JEREMY

I was too forward in the store.

GRACE

Oh.

JEREMY

Will you accept?

GRACE

No.

JEREMY

I was... that offensive?

GRACE

You weren't offensive enough to warrant an apology.

JEREMY

(pause)

Where are you from?

GRACE  
You're very curious.

JEREMY  
I am. *Very*.

They turn down a tree-lined street. Houses are old, well-kept and widely spaced.

JEREMY (cont'd)  
You're... not married?

GRACE  
(amused)  
No.

JEREMY  
I'm divorced myself. One daughter.  
She lives with her Mom. I teach --  
at the college.

GRACE  
I'm not divorced.

JEREMY  
Oh. I shouldn't have assumed.

They approach a two-story Victorian; painted clapboard, six steps up to a broad, wooden porch.

JEREMY (cont'd)  
There's a concert tomorrow  
evening -- Mozart. Strictly local  
talent, but it would be a way to  
meet your neighbors... if you'd  
like to go.

GRACE  
This is where I live.

JEREMY  
I see... well... I guess I'll say  
good night.

GRACE  
Just Mozart?

JEREMY  
No... no, I think they're also  
doing something by Bach.

GRACE  
Bach? Yes, I would like to go.

## INT. CONVERTED CHURCH - NIGHT

The Quartet plays Mozart. Grace and Jeremy sit together in the pews. They keep their eyes focused forward -- no interaction.

## POST CONCERT

Grace stands with Jeremy amid a circle of CRONIES.

JEREMY

They're renovating the Brevoort Library. I've got to move to Tanninger Hall. I just hope they get the damned air-conditioning to work.

CRONY

Williams is doing a year in France.

(to Jeremy)

Didn't you do a year in Europe?

JEREMY

Yes. Heidelberg.

(to Grace)

Have you been to Germany?

GRACE

I haven't.

JEREMY

Well, you really must see Heidelberg. A marvelous city! Wonderful people. Thank God it wasn't bombed during the war.

Jeremy turns back to his cronies and drones on. Grace turns -- to catch Albert staring at her. He quickly turns away.

## INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Few patrons. Grace works behind the counter. Albert reads at a table -- occasionally stealing a glance at her. She is now quite aware of his attention.

She takes a book-cart and starts down a line of shelves heading in Albert's direction.

As she nears, he "casually" stands, selects a book from the rack, and takes a seat as far from Grace as possible.

Grace turns the cart toward him. As she closes the distance PATRON brings a book to the counter.

Grace checks Patron though, and turns -- to catch Albert again staring at her.

She walks swiftly to his table and takes a seat opposite him. Albert dives into his book. He waits, peeks over the binding. Grace is still there.

ALBERT

I... you're staring at me.

GRACE

Yes. I am.

He retreats behind his book. When he next ventures over the binding, he finds Grace has not moved.

ALBERT

It's... it's difficult to read when someone is staring at you.

GRACE

What are you reading?

ALBERT

...a book.

GRACE

(angling her head)  
"Understanding Perspective in Low Illumination". Photography?

ALBERT

Yes.

GRACE

It sounds very technical. You must be quite a brilliant man.

ALBERT

Me?! No!

GRACE

No?

ALBERT

Anybody can learn this. I'm not a brilliant man. Not at all!

Jeremy enters the store. He spots Grace and glides over.

JEREMY  
Hi -- you're busy.

GRACE  
I have a few minutes.  
(to Albert)  
Will you excuse me?

ALBERT  
I... sure.

Grace and Jeremy walk to the counter. From Albert's POV they appear engaged in a friendly conversation.

Jeremy touches her on the shoulder, and departs. Grace walks promptly back to Albert and sits.

GRACE  
Have you gotten much done?

ALBERT  
...what do you mean?

GRACE  
Your book. With no one staring at you.

ALBERT  
Oh. No, I was just... thinking.

GRACE  
Well, I'm a great believer in thinking.

ALBERT  
You are? Most people... I don't think most people are.

GRACE  
Then you must be very special.

ALBERT  
I just try to understand things, that's all.

GRACE  
Have you had much success?

ALBERT  
(glumly)  
No.

GRACE  
Neither have I.

Grace eases back in her chair. Albert picks up his book. He puts it down. He picks it up. He puts it down. Grace will not leave. In desperation --

ALBERT

You enjoyed the concert?

GRACE

The concert? I saw you there.

ALBERT

I always go.

GRACE

I'm sorry, I don't know your name.

ALBERT

Albert.

Grace tilts up the cover of Albert's book.

GRACE

"Perspective in Low Illumination".  
Well Albert, that must be a handy  
skill -- at concerts.

ALBERT

I guess I was staring.

GRACE

I guess you were. Why?

ALBERT

I thought you and Dr. Erlich made  
a handsome couple.

GRACE

Did you.

ALBERT

He's been very lonely since his  
wife left. So... so it's good that  
you two met.

GRACE

He didn't seem... lonely to me.

ALBERT

It's only natural.

GRACE

For... Doctor Erlich?

ALBERT  
 (confused)  
 Yes.

GRACE  
 Are you just interested in still  
 pictures?

ALBERT  
 Mostly. Landscapes. Mostly.

GRACE  
 Not -- moving pictures?

ALBERT  
 No. Landscapes.

GRACE  
 Oh. Well Dr. Erlich is interested  
 in the kind of pictures that move.  
 Colloquially -- movies. He just  
 invited me to see one, "Bonjour  
 Tristesse and". It's a  
 retrospective at the Hamilton  
 Gallery. Did you really think we  
 made a handsome couple?

ALBERT  
 I did.

GRACE  
 I told him no.

ALBERT  
 (more confused)  
 No? You... you told him, him --

GRACE  
 But -- you're only interested in  
 still pictures.

ALBERT  
 Well... well --

GRACE  
 I should get back to work.

Grace goes back to the counter.

Albert stares at his book. He stares at the ceiling. He  
 stares at the walls. He stares at Grace. She ignores him.

He stands, squares his shoulders, and leaves the store.

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Albert returns with a paper under his arm. He finds a seat, opens the paper and circles two movie ads.

He marches to the counter. ELDERLY WOMAN, is ahead of him.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Do you have "The Whispering Wind"?

GRACE

Is that Oakland?

ELDERLY WOMAN

Yes. I find she truly understands the female heart. Don't you?

GRACE

I don't think that's in. Let me check.

Grace goes to the computer and pokes a few keys. Albert taps impatiently on the counter. It's an annoying noise. Elderly Woman gives him a dirty look. Albert glares back at her.

GRACE (cont'd)

I'm sorry, it's out of stock. I can order it if you like.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Well, I was also looking for...

She rummages through her pocketbook. Albert fumes. She retrieves a crumpled piece of paper.

ELDERLY WOMAN (cont'd)

"The Suffering Sea". By Judy Isaacs. It's gotten wonderful reviews.

GRACE

We do have that.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Well that would be perfect. It's for my grand-niece. She'll be eighteen this year. Imagine, eighteen! Where has the time gone?

Albert drums faster. Elderly woman's look gets dirtier. Grace brings the book to the register.

GRACE

That will be twenty-one dollars.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Certainly.

Grace rings up the purchase. Elderly Woman fishes for her wallet.

ELDERLY WOMAN (cont'd)

She spends every summer with us at the lake, ever since she was five. Except when she was eleven her parents took her to Spain. She had a lovely time but... well, I missed her. Eighteen. Can you believe it?

She finds her wallet

ELDERLY WOMAN (cont'd)

How much was that?

GRACE

Twenty-one dollars, Ma'am.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Twenty-one dollars. I do hope she likes it. She's a very modern girl. But they still like the romances -- don't you think?

GRACE

I'm sure you would know better than I.

ELDERLY WOMAN

(suspiciously)

Yes. Yes, of course.

Elderly Woman pays and leaves. Albert lurches forward with his paper.

GRACE

Are you making a purchase?

ALBERT

What? No! "Civil Defense" is playing at The Grand, and... and --

He fumbles for the page, but he has lost the other ad.

GRACE

Yes.

ALBERT

Yes?

GRACE

I would like to see a movie with you.

INT. CINEMA - NIGHT

Grace and Albert watch the movie. Occasionally he steals a look at her. Occasionally she steals a look at him.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Grace and Albert walk together.

ALBERT

Did you... like the movie?

GRACE

Well, I thought the car chases were very well done. There were... three of them? Possibly more. I stopped counting at three.

ALBERT

I guess it wasn't very realistic.

GRACE

*I hope not.*

ALBERT

You probably like different kinds of pictures. More artistic.

GRACE

Sometimes.

ALBERT

I don't see enough movies. Not the artistic kind. I should see more.

GRACE

Why?

ALBERT

I think it makes you a more interesting person. I haven't had an interesting life. Not, like you.

GRACE  
 (icily)  
*Like me?*

ALBERT  
 Being a book editor. You probably  
 know lots of famous writers.

GRACE  
 How did you know I was a book  
 editor?

ALBERT  
 I guess people talk.

GRACE  
*They gossip.*

ALBERT  
 I guess.

They arrive at Grace's house.

ALBERT (cont'd)  
 I'm sorry you didn't enjoy the  
 movie.

GRACE  
 I enjoyed the evening.

ALBERT  
 (pause)  
 I... I take pictures.

GRACE  
 I know.

ALBERT  
 In the country. If you'd like, we  
 could go. Sometime.

GRACE  
 I would like that.

MONTAGE - GRACE AND ALBERT SHARE AN AFTERNOON

-- Grace and Albert out for a country drive.

-- Albert in a field with his camera and tripod.

-- Grace and Albert standing in a field. By gestures Albert  
 explains the operation of the camera to Grace.

-- Albert alone in a field.

-- Grace in the car, reading the photography book.

-- Grace and Albert at a picnic by a lake. Albert wanders down to the shore. Grace buries her head in the photography book.

-- Grace and Albert in a field. He is again tutoring Grace. There is a moment of dispute. Grace assumes control of the camera. She is now tutoring Albert.

END MONTAGE

EXT. WALDEN - DAY (DUSK)

Albert and Grace drive into town and park. They exit and begin to walk.

ALBERT  
I had a nice time.

GRACE  
So did I.

ALBERT  
You have a knack for photography.

GRACE  
You're a good teacher.

ALBERT  
No. You learn by yourself. You learn very fast.

They arrive at Grace's house. Albert follows her up to the porch.

ALBERT (cont'd)  
Well... I guess I'll see you at the bookstore.

Grace leans against a column, smiles.

ALBERT (cont'd)  
Well... well... good night.

Albert turns and goes down three steps and stops. He peers up at Grace. She has not moved.

He ascends the stairs. Tentatively, he leans over and kisses her.

He steps back, unsure.

GRACE  
Good night, Albert.

She vanishes into the house.

On the sidewalk a branch is illuminated by a streetlight. Albert picks it up. To his left is a picket fence.

He presses the stick firmly against the fence and clatters his way back to the car. House lights come on. Dogs bark. He does not notice.

EXT. ONE-LANE HIGHWAY - DAY

A weather-beaten car struggles up a mountain road.

EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY

The car pulls into a rocky, cleared area. A few young men linger about.

Michael exits. He chats briefly with one of the men, who gestures up the mountainside.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Tigh is working on a rocky, barren ridge. She turns at the sound of Michael's footsteps.

MICHAEL  
Hello.

TIGH  
(startled)  
What are you doing here?

MICHAEL  
Well, you don't answer my emails,  
you don't answer my texts, and you  
won't talk to me on the phone --  
so I thought I'd give you the  
chance to reject me in person.

There are green trees in the valley. Lichen, mosses and gray rocks cover the ridge.

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
Pretty desolate up here.

TIGH

I like it.

He picks up a rock and examines it.

MICHAEL

Oil-bearing?

TIGH

Not in this area.

MICHAEL

No. Of course not. Igneous rock.

No fossils. I remember.

He reaches out to touch her. She pulls back.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

Aerodyne is starting a new division. In Seattle. Interesting place, Seattle; basalts, andesites, dacitic, pyroclastic flows. I looked it up.

TIGH

You shouldn't have come.

MICHAEL

Well, I got to see you one more time.

He tosses the rock away. It bounces down the slope -- and shatters.

He starts down the trail. Tigh keeps a surreptitious eye on him.

When he is out of sight she sets her tools aside and climbs out on a high rock spire. A wide valley spreads out below her. The afternoon fades into a blood-red sunset.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Michael's car cruises down the highway. The mountains recede in the distance.

He pulls into a gas station, chats briefly with the attendant, and enters the attached convenience store.

The attendant starts filling his car with gas.

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Michael emerges with an armful of junk food. Faintly, a phone is ringing. He hesitates, then dashes for the car.

Coffee and food spill across the windshield. He gets the passenger door opened and digs his phone out of his pack.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - SAME

Tigh sits alone, high on the mountain, her knees curled against her chest, cell-phone pressed to her ear.

TIGH

Come back.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Grace and Albert driving deep in the lush New England woods. Albert pulls over. He lugs his camera and tripod into a field of daisies.

Grace wanders ahead. There are berries along the side of the road. She stops to pick them.

Albert, his gear slung over his shoulder, catches up with her. They crest a hill. A small lake comes into view. A few cottages dot the shore.

GRACE

Do you know where we are?

He checks something on his camera.

ALBERT

I hope I have enough film.

The road descends and begins to follow the contours of the lake.

They come upon a weather-beaten cottage. A rickety fence frames the property. A "For Sale" sign dangles from a rail.

ALBERT (cont'd)

This would be a good place to get a few shots of the lake.

He enters the front yard. Grace looks from the "For Sale" sign to Albert, suspiciously.

ALBERT (cont'd)

It's all right. No one lives here.

She enters the yard. There is a wooden porch with an overhanging roof. The railings are chipped and peeling. The floorboards creak as she ascends the stairs.

Albert is busy with his camera.

There is a hammock-chair. Grace pushes it. It wheezes back and forth on its rusty chain.

ALBERT (cont'd)  
There's a garden in the back.

Grace walks to the end of the porch and peers around the side of the house. The backyard is an overgrown tangle of vines and weeds. A few wildflowers poke through.

She returns to the middle of the porch. Next to her is a wooden column. She pushes it. It emits a shower of dust.

She turns to regard Albert.

ALBERT (cont'd)  
It will need a little work.

She runs her hand along the rail, frowns.

GRACE  
We'll have to replace the whole porch.

A wide smile creases Albert's round face.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

A truck sporting the logo "JACK'S CONSTRUCTION AND REMODELING" is parked in the driveway.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - KITCHEN

Albert scrapes floral wallpaper off the walls.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - BACKYARD

A wooden door is laid across two saw-horses. Grace, in a flannel shirt and jeans, furiously sands it.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

A warm, colonial space. Grace sits at the table, reading. Albert sorts through a box of photographs. Next to him is a photography magazine.

He selects a picture and hands it to Grace.

ALBERT  
What about this?

GRACE  
It's beautiful.

ALBERT  
That's not enough. It needs  
something special -- a twist.

GRACE  
What's "a twist"?

ALBERT  
Something to make it stand out.

GRACE  
Can I see the box?

He passes it to her. She rifles through the photos and selects one.

GRACE (cont'd)  
Send in this one.

ALBERT  
Why?

GRACE  
I like it.

He studies the picture.

ALBERT  
I don't know --

GRACE  
Albert, it's better than anything  
in that magazine. If you don't  
know it, then the problem isn't  
with your pictures. It's with you.

He studies the picture.

ALBERT

You know, it does have an interesting textural quality.

(beat)

Yes... yes I think I will send this one in. It's good. It's really very good.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - NIGHT

Winter, a full moon, the lake is frozen.

INT. BEDROOM

Albert wakes to the sound of sobbing. He finds her in a rocking chair facing the window, tears streaming down her face.

ALBERT

Grace, Grace -- what is it?

GRACE

(gasping)

He made me watch him die. I had to watch him die.

He helps her back into bed. She clings to him, distraught. A cold moon floats in the window pane.

INT. SEATTLE HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Modern furnishings. Tigh sits at the table working on her laptop. Sliding glass doors open on a backyard.

TOBY, four, and KEVIN, six, are playing with RAGS, the family dog. Mount Rainier looms in the background.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

A late-model car pulls in. Michael exits.

INT. SEATTLE HOME - DINING ROOM

Michael enters. He gives Tigh a kiss.

MICHAEL

All quiet?

TIGH

Toby keeps pulling Rag's tail. You should have another talk with him.

MICHAEL

Okay, but that mutt never seems to listen.

Toby spots his father and comes running into the house, his hand out-stretched, a Band-Aid on his thumb.

TOBY

Look!

MICHAEL

You cut yourself?

TOBY

Yeah.

MICHAEL

And... it bled?

TOBY

Yeah.

MICHAEL

And... it was really disgusting?

TOBY

Yeah! Kevin's building an airplane. Come on!

He pulls Michael out to the yard, where Kevin works on a wooden glider.

INT. SEATTLE HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tigh and Michael are cleaning up after dinner.

MICHAEL

I've got a conference coming up.

TIGH

When?

MICHAEL

July. In Boston. Wanna come?

TIGH

To an engineering conference?

MICHAEL

Come at the end of the week with the kids. We'll take another week and tour New England.

TIGH

When did you come up with this idea?

MICHAEL

I've been thinking about it for a for Durablewhile. Maybe you'd better sit down.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

The postal truck pulls away as Grace walks to the mailbox.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - KITCHEN

Grace sorts through the mail. There is a letter with a Seattle postmark. She opens it.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Dear Grace, the last time we spoke was the day your husband died. You advised me not to give up on your daughter. I didn't. We are married. We live in Seattle. We have two children. Boys. You have two grandchildren.

I'm sorry to say Tigh's anger toward you hasn't diminished. I wish it had. I think you have a right to know your grandchildren. I think they have a right to know you.

I've said as much to Tigh. As you can imagine, it wasn't an easy conversation. We will be in New England this summer. She will allow you to see the boys for one hour, at a neutral site, in a public place. This is all she will allow.

I'll understand if you'd rather put this part of your life, and us, behind you. But if you will accept these conditions, we will bring the children to Walden.

I hope you are well, Michael.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Grace stands at a table in the rear of the store obsessively rearranging a selection of children's books. Albert is off to the side, watching.

EXT. STREET

An SUV pulls up. Michael, Toby and Kevin get out. Tigh remains in the passenger seat; rigid, tense, unyielding.

INT. BOOKSTORE

Michael and the children enter. Kevin approaches Grace.

KEVIN

Are you my grandmother?

Grace is overwhelmed. Toby approaches.

TOBY

Do you have any games?

GRACE

Games? I don't know.

TOBY

Do you have a computer?

GRACE

We do.

TOBY

Can I play Sticks and Bones on it?

GRACE

I don't think we have that, but we have books. Would you like to read one?

TOBY

About dinosaurs?

GRACE

Maybe. Would you like to look with me?

She extends her hand. Toby takes it, they go off to the shelves. Kevin turns to Michael.

KEVIN

Where's Mom?

MICHAEL  
In the car.

KEVIN  
She's not coming in?

MICHAEL  
No.

KEVIN  
How come?

MICHAEL  
She's angry at your Grandmother.

KEVIN  
Why?

MICHAEL  
I think Kevin, because she doesn't  
know how to stop.

Grace and Toby have found a book with dinosaurs. They sit  
together, reading. Kevin turns to his father.

KEVEN  
She doesn't look mean.

MICHAEL  
I don't think she is either.

AN HOUR LATER

Grace and the children are reading. Michael approaches.

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
Guys, it's time to go.

KEVIN  
Can we finish the book?

MICHAEL  
No. It's been an hour. That's all  
the time we have.

Reluctantly the children stand.

TOBY  
Can we come back tomorrow?

MICHAEL  
Tomorrow we're going home.

They collect their things. Toby starts toward the door.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

Toby?

Michael inclines his head toward Grace. He looks confused for a moment, then catches on. He returns to Grace and extends his hand.

TOBY

It was a pleasure to meet you.

They shake hands. Grace is beyond speaking. Kevin extends his hand.

KEVIN

I had a very nice time.

They shake.

MICHAEL

All right boys, back to the car.

GRACE

(to Michael, hoarsely)

Thank you. Thank you for bringing them.

The family walks to the front of the store. Michael opens the door. Kevin hesitates, turns, and walks the length of the store to stand before Grace.

KEVIN

I don't think you're mean.

He returns to his father. The family departs.

Grace tries to put the books away but her hands are shaking too much. Albert comes over to help.

GRACE

I can do it.

She is unable to continue.

ALBERT

Come on -- there's coffee in the back.

INT. KITCHEN

Grace sits. Albert brings coffee.

GRACE

I'm sorry.

ALBERT  
It's all right.

GRACE  
They were beautiful children.  
Didn't you think so?

ALBERT  
Yes.

GRACE  
When they were young... when they  
were babies, I never got to hold  
them. *I never even knew.*

ALBERT  
They're still young.

GRACE  
I'm not young.

ALBERT  
You're not that old.

GRACE  
Look at me, Albert. I'm an old  
woman. I used to be pretty. I'm  
not anymore. Tell me I'm not  
pretty.

ALBERT  
You're beautiful.

GRACE  
No -- you have to tell me the  
truth. I can't have any more lies  
in my life. Not a single one. Tell  
me I'm not pretty.

ALBERT  
No.

GRACE  
*Tell me!*

ALBERT  
No.

GRACE  
Then you are lying to me. *You are  
a liar.*

ALBERT

Look at me, Grace. I'm short. I'm fat. I have no hair. Tell me I'm not handsome.

She reaches out and touches his face.

GRACE

I think you are beautiful. I think you are the most beautiful man in the whole world.

INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - KITCHEN

Grace reads at the table. Albert enters with the mail.

ALBERT

This came for you.

He hands her a letter with a Seattle postmark. She opens it.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Dear Grace, it was a pleasure to see you again. This was the boy's first trip back East. Toby loved Storyland -- and every place else that served him ice cream. Kevin loved Boston, especially the Planetarium. He's training himself to be an astronaut.

We will be in New England again next year. Perhaps then, we can all meet for dinner. All of us. As a family. I like the idea, but it didn't come from me. It came from Tigh.

Love, Michael.

Grace finds a piece of stationary and begins to write.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Grace walks out onto the back porch. The garden is neat and tended. The lake shimmers in the sunshine. Albert is toying with his camera. Somewhere, a bird complains.

GRACE (V.O.)

Dear Michael, once -- a long time ago, I tried to deliver a manuscript to a woman who lived on the edge of the prairie.

GRACE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Somewhere East of Lubbock I drove into a ditch and I could not get out. I was lost and alone in a vast wilderness. I didn't know how anyone would find me. But as the sun was setting, a tow truck appeared on the horizon, lights flashing, plowing across the empty prairie.

Thank you for finding me. You are all more precious than I have power to describe.

Love, Grace.

Albert sets the timer on the camera.

ALBERT

Come on! Come on!

She joins him in the frame. The wind kicks up and she struggles with her hair.

Behind them, azaleas rustle and fall silent. Albert stretches to his full height, and stands proudly, half a head shorter than Grace.

The shutter clicks.

FADE OUT.

THE END