"SIDEWAYS"

Screenplay by

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Based on the novel by

Rex Pickett

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UNDER THE STUDIO LOGO:

KNOCKING at a door and distant dog BARKING.

NOW UNDER BLACK, a CARD --

SATURDAY

The rapping, at first tentative and polite, grows insistent. Then we hear someone get out of bed.

MILES (O.S.)
...the fuck...

A DOOR is opened, and the black gives way to BLINDING WHITE LIGHT, the way one experiences the first glimpse of day amid, say, a hangover.

A WORKER is there.

MILES (O.S.)
Yeah?

WORKER
Hi, Miles. Can you move your car, please?

MILES (O.S.)
Why?

WORKER
The painters got to put the truck in, and you didn't park too good.

MILES (O.S.)
(a sigh, then --)
Yeah, hold on.

He closes the door with a SLAM.

EXT. MILES'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE --

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Wearing only underwear, a bathrobe and clogs, MILES RAYMOND comes out of his unit and heads toward the street. He passes some SIX MEXICANS waiting to work.

He climbs into his twelve-year-old CONVERTIBLE SAAB, parked far from the curb and blocking part of the driveway. The car starts fitfully.

As he pulls away, the guys begin backing up the truck.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Miles rounds the corner and finds a new parking spot.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

He cuts the engine, exhales a long breath and brings his hands to his head in a gesture of headache pain or just anguish. He leans back in his seat, closes his eyes, and soon NODS OFF.

INT. MILES'S APARTMENT - DAY

The door bursts open. Miles runs into the kitchen, looking just past camera.

MILES
Fuck!

WHIP PAN TO --

THE MICROWAVE CLOCK that reads 10:50.

ON THE PHONE --

Miles hurriedly throws clothes into a suitcase.

MILES
Yeah, no, I know I said I'd be there by noon, but there's been all this work going on at my building, and it's like a total nightmare, and I had a bunch of stuff to deal with this morning. But I'm on my way. I'm out the door right this second. It's going to be great. Yeah. Bye.

INT. MILES'S BATHROOM - DAY

ON THE TOILET --

Miles has a BOOK propped open on his knees. He turns a page, lost in his reading.

LATER --

Miles SHOWERS.

IN THE MIRROR --

Miles FLOSSES.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE - DAY

Miles finally makes it to the front of the line.

BARISTA
Hey, Miles.

MILES
Hey, Simon. Triple espresso, please.

BARISTA
Rough night, huh?
(ringing it up)
For here?

MILES
No, I'm running late. Make it to go.
And give me a New York Times and...
(scanning the display case)
...a spinach croissant.

EXT. 5 FREEWAY ENTRANCE RAMP - DAY

Miles's Saab chugs up the ramp and merges.

INSERT - NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD PUZZLE --

-- pressed against the STEERING WHEEL. The puzzle is about 1/3 finished.

EXT. 5 FREEWAY - DAY

As though from an adjacent car, we see Miles driving while carefully filling in an answer.

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD --

A SIGN reads:

RANCHO PALOS VERDES
PALOS VERDES ESTATES
1/4 MILE

PAN TO MILES as he signals to change lanes. The finished puzzle lies on the passenger seat.

EXT. PALOS VERDES STREET - DAY

The houses on this block are blandly palatial as in so many affluent Southern California suburbs.

Miles's car pull into the driveway behind an older BMW and two LEXI. He gets out and trots toward the front door.

INT. ERGANIAN HOUSE - DAY

A GIANT PROJECTION TV --

In a large split-level living room displays a GOLF TOURNAMENT.

WIDE --

Watching from the ultra-comfortable furniture are MIKE ERGANIAN, a tanned, silver-haired real estate caudillo; bride-to-be CHRISTINE ERGANIAN, his oldest daughter; and JACK LOPATE, wearing bowling shirt, shorts and flip-flops.

MRS. ERGANIAN, a warm and elegant housewife, shows Miles into the room.

MRS. ERGANIAN
Look what the cat dragged!

MILES
Hi, everybody.

Mr. Erganian and Jack get to their feet and shake hands with Miles. Jack remains affable, but we can discern his genuine irritation.

JACK
About time you got here, bud. Mr. Prompt.

MR. ERGANIAN
We were thinking maybe you took the wrong way and went to Tijuana and they didn't let you back in.

The Erganians laugh. Miles works up a smile too.

MILES
I had to bribe them.

More lame laughter.

CHRISTINE
Hey, Miles.

MILES
(leaning in to kiss Christine)
Seriously though, the freeway was

unbelievable today. Unbelievable. Bumper to bumper the whole way. People getting an early start on the weekend, I guess. Granted I got a late start, but still.

Although Mr. Erganian presses MUTE on the remote, he keeps watching for an extended moment, as do Jack and Miles.

MRS. ERGANIAN
Christine, why don't you ask Miles about the cake?

CHRISTINE
Oh, good idea. Here, Miles, come to the kitchen with me.

JACK
Don't bother him with that. We got to get going.

CHRISTINE
(taking Miles's hand)
It'll just take a second.

INT. ERGANIAN KITCHEN - DAY

Jack and the Erganians surround Miles as he eats from a plate with two pieces of CAKE -- one white, one dark.

MRS. ERGANIAN
Jack tells us you are publishing a book. Congratulations.

MR. ERGANIAN
Yes, congratulations.

Miles shoots Jack a look. Mr. Erganian gets some ice cubes from the refrigerator door.

MILES
Yeah, well, it's not exactly finalized yet, but, um, there has been some interest and --

MRS. ERGANIAN
(to Jack)
Your friend is modest.

JACK
Yeah, Miles, don't be so modest. Indulge them. Don't make me out to be a liar.

MR. ERGANIAN
What subject is your book? Non-fiction?

MILES
No, it's a novel. Fiction. Although there's a lot from my own life, so I guess technically some of it is non-fiction.

MR. ERGANIAN
Good, I like non-fiction. There is so much to know about the world that I think reading a story someone just invented is kind of a waste of time.

CHRISTINE
So which one do you like better?

MILES
I like them both, but if pressed I'd have to say I prefer the dark.

JACK
(to Christine)
See?

INT. SAAB - CONTINUOUS

IN A REAR VIEW MIRROR --

The Erganians wave good-bye.

INSIDE THE CAR --

Miles accelerates as he and Jack wave back.

JACK
Where the fuck were you, man? I was dying in there. We were supposed to be a hundred miles away by now.

MILES
I can't help the traffic.

JACK
Come on. You're fucking hungover.

MILES
Okay, there was a tasting last night. But I wanted to get us some stuff for the ride up. Check out the box.

Jack turns around, and starts rooting around in a CARDBOARD WINE BOX.

MILES
Why did you tell them my book was being published?

JACK
You said you had it all lined up.

MILES
No, I didn't. What I said was that my agent had heard there was some interest at Conundrum...

JACK
Yeah, Conundrum.

MILES
...and that one of the editors was passing it up to a senior editor. She was supposed to hear something this week, but now it's next week, and... It's always like this. It's always a fucking waiting game. I've been through it too many times already.

JACK
I don't know. Senior editor? Sounds like you're in to me.

MILES
It's a long shot, all right? And Conundrum is just a small specialty press anyway. I'm not getting my hopes up. I've stopped caring. That's it. I've stopped caring.

Jack sits back in his seat holding up a bottle of CHAMPAGNE and TWO GLASSES.

JACK
But I know it's going to happen this time. I can feel it. This is the one. I'm proud of you, man. You're the smartest guy I know.

Jack now begins to remove the foil from the champagne bottle.

MILES
Don't open that now. It's warm.

JACK
Come on, we're celebrating. I say we pop it.

MILES
That's a 1992 Byron. It's really rare. Don't open it now. I've been saving it!

Jack untwists the wire. Instantly the cork pops off, and a

fountain of champagne erupts.

MILES
For Christ's Sake, Jack! You just wasted like half of it!

Jack begins pouring two glasses.

JACK
Shut up.
(handing Miles a glass)
Here's to a great week.

MILES
(coming around)
Yes. Absolutely. Despite your crass behavior, I'm really glad we're finally getting this time together.

JACK
Yeah.

MILES
You know how long I've been begging to take you on the wine tour. I was beginning to think it was never going to happen.

They clink and drink.

JACK
Oh, that's tasty.

MILES
100% Pinot Noir. Single vineyard. They don't even make it anymore.

JACK
Pinot Noir? How come it's white? Doesn't noir mean dark?

MILES
Jesus. Don't ask questions like that up in the wine country. They'll think you're a moron.

JACK
Just tell me.

MILES
Color in the red wines comes from the skins. This juice is free run, so there's no skin contact in the fermentation, ergo no color.

JACK
(not really listening)

Sure is tasty.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

The Saab heads north.

INT. SAAB - DAY

The boys continue to drink and drive.

MILES
Did you read the latest draft, by the way?

JACK
Oh, yeah. Yeah.

MILES
And?

JACK
I liked it a lot. A lot of improvements. It just seemed overall, I don't know, tighter, more... congealed or something.

MILES
How about the new ending? Did you like that?

JACK
Oh yeah. Much better.

MILES
There is no new ending. Page 750 on is exactly the same.

JACK
Well, then I guess it must have felt new because everything leading up to it was so different.

INT. GAS STATION #1 - DAY

Miles is pumping gas. Jack is stretching his legs nearby or perhaps cleaning the windshield.

A CELLPHONE RINGS. Jack reaches into his pocket.

JACK
(looking at the phone)
It's Christine.
(snapping it open)
Hey you.

CHRISTINE (ON PHONE)
You guys having fun?

Christine's voice is so loud that Jack has to hold the phone away from his ear.

JACK
Yeah. All twenty minutes so far have been a blast.

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)
Good. That's good.

A silence, then --

JACK
So what's up?

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)
Just seeing how you're doing. And, um, Mom and I were starting to look over the seating charts again, and we're wondering if you wanted Tony Levin to sit next to the Feldmans, or should he be at one of the singles tables?

Jack looks at Miles in a mute appeal for sympathy.

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)
So what do you think? With the Feldmans?

Jack hasn't even really heard the question.

JACK
Yeah. The Feldmans.

As the conversation continues, Miles replaces the GAS PUMP, screws the GAS CAP back on, and together the guys get back into the car. We DRIVE AWAY WITH THEM.

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)
Really? Because I don't know, I was thinking that --

JACK
Well, then put him at the singles table.

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)
The problem with that is that then there's one extra --

JACK
Then put him with the Feldmans. Whatever you and your Mom decide is fine with me.

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)
Don't dismiss me. I'm trying to include you in this decision. He's your friend.

JACK
I didn't dismiss you. I told you what I thought, but it didn't seem to matter, so you decide. Besides, this is supposed to be my time with Miles. I hope you're not going to call every five minutes.

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)
I'm not going to call every five minutes, but this is important.

JACK
Honey, I'm just saying you know I need a little space before the wedding. Isn't that the point of this? Isn't that what we talked about with Dr. Gertler?

A silence. Then --

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)
Why are you being so defensive?

JACK
I don't know, Christine. Perhaps it's because I feel attacked.

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)
I ask you one simple question, and suddenly I'm attacking you.

JACK
Listen. I'll call you when we get there, and we can talk about it then, okay?

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)
Bye.

JACK
I love you.

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)
Bye.

Jack SLAMS his cellphone shut, momentarily blinded with rage.

MILES
Tony Levin? Why did you fucking invite Tony Levin?

EXT. 405 FREEWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

The Saab heads north -- now passing through LOS ANGELES.

INT./EXT. SAAB - LATE AFTERNOON

Miles signals and begins to head for an EXIT.

JACK
Whoa, why are we getting off?

MILES
I've just got to make one quick stop. Won't take a second.

JACK
What?

MILES
I thought we could just say a quick hello to my mother.

JACK
Your mother? Jesus, Miles, we were supposed to be up there hours ago.

MILES
It's her birthday tomorrow. And I don't feel right driving by her house and not stopping in, okay? It'll just take a second. She's right off the freeway.

EXT. 101 FREEWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

The Saab takes an EXIT.

JACK (O.S.)
How old's she going to be?

MILES (O.S.)
Um... seventy... something.

JACK (O.S.)
That's a good age.

OMIT.

OMIT.

EXT. CONDO COMMUNITY STREET - DUSK

The Saab rounds a corner and parks in front of a modest CONDO.

SUPERIMPOSE:

OXNARD, CALIFORNIA

EXT. MILES'S MOTHER'S CONDO - DUSK

Approaching the front door, Miles pulls a BOUQUET OF FLOWERS out of a plastic grocery store bag. Jack carries a bottle of CHAMPAGNE.

Miles pulls a BIRTHDAY CARD out of the bag too.

MILES
Wait a second.

He pulls a PEN from his pocket and signs it. As he licks the envelope, Jack rings the bell.

Moments later PHYLLIS comes to the door. She is a matronly older woman in a nightgown and housecoat.

MILES AND JACK
Surprise! Happy Birthday!

The boys offer up the flowers and champagne. Phyllis slurs slightly as she speaks -- she's been doing some celebrating of her own.

PHYLLIS
My God. Miles. And Jack! What a surprise. I can't remember the last time you brought me flowers.

They hug.

JACK
They're from both of us.

PHYLLIS
A famous actor bringing me flowers on my birthday. Don't I feel special?

MILES
A famous actor who's getting married next week.

PHYLLIS
Oh, that's right. Isn't that nice? I hope that girls knows how lucky she is, marrying no less than Derek Summersby.

The boys follow her inside.

INT. MILES'S MOTHER'S CONDO - CONTINUOUS

JACK
Jeez, Mrs. Raymond, that was eleven years ago.

PHYLLIS
Well, you were wonderful on that show. I never understood why they had to give you that brain tumor so soon. Why that didn't make you the biggest movie star in the world is a sin. It's a sin.

JACK
Yeah, well, you should be my agent.

PHYLLIS
If I was, I would sing your praises up and down the street until they put me in the loony bin. Now Miles, why didn't you tell me you were coming and bringing this handsome man? Look how I'm dressed. I've got to run and put my face on.

JACK
You look fabulous, Mrs. Raymond.

PHYLLIS
(over her shoulder)
Oh, stop it. Make yourselves comfortable.
(now around the corner)
You boys hungry?

MILES
Yeah, I'm hungry.

Jack gives Miles a look.

MILES
(low)
Just a snack. Calm down.

Miles leads Jack into this small condo. The TV is on, and it's MESSY. Amid the newspapers and junk mail and dishes, an AB-ROLLER and an ancient SCHWINN EXER-CYCLE sit forgotten in a corner.

INT. MILES'S MOTHER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Miles finishes twisting ice trays into a MOP BUCKET as it fills with water in the sink. He puts the champagne in and carries it into the --

INT. MILES'S MOTHER'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He takes a seat on the sofa next to Jack, who is watching WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE?

MILES
Let me show you something. The secret

to opening champagne is that once the cork is released, you keep pressure on it so you don't --

JACK
(concentrated on the TV)
Just a second. Guy's going for $2500.

Miles finishes opening the bottle with an elegant silence.

PHYLLIS (O.S.)
Ready for my close up!

The boys turn to see Phyllis now dolled up in thick make-up and a PANTSUIT. Her eyebrows are painted and cock-eyed. Overall she looks much worse than before.

PHYLLIS
Oh, champagne! Miles, why don't you bring that out onto the lanai? I thought we could eat on the lanai.

EXT. MILES'S MOTHER'S LANAI - NIGHT

Miles and Jack are seated in webbed chairs around a circular glass table. They are mid-meal.

Everyone is more than a little lubricated, especially the birthday girl as she returns from the kitchen with another plate of food.

JACK
Mrs. Raymond, this is delicious. Absolutely delicious.

PHYLLIS
(sitting)
They're just leftovers.

JACK
Is it chicken?

PHYLLIS
I could have made something fancier if a certain someone had let me know that a certain someone was coming for a visit with a certain special friend. Could have made a pork roast.

MILES
It was a surprise, Mom.

PHYLLIS
And I could have already put clean sheets on the other bed and the fold-out. You are staying. Wendy, Ron and

the twins are picking us up at 11:30
to go to brunch at the Sheraton.
They do a magnificent job there.
Wendy is so excited you're coming.

Silence. Jack freezes, his fork halfway to his mouth.

MILES
You talked to Wendy?

PHYLLIS
Just now. She's thrilled. And the
kids.

MILES
(trying to be chipper)
Yeah, well. You know, Jack's pretty
eager to get up to... you know, but,
uh, yeah. We'll see how it goes.

PHYLLIS
Well, you boys do what you want. I
just think it would be nice for us
to be together as a family on my
birthday.

MILES
Uh-huh.
(wiping his mouth)
I'll be right back.

He gets up and heads into the house.

INT. MILES'S APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Miles heads toward...

INT. MILES'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

...and goes directly to her dresser, opening a drawer filled with bras, panties and stockings.

He burrows through his mother's lingerie until locating a CAN OF RAID. A can of Raid?

He twists open the bottom and pulls it apart, revealing it to be a SECRET STASH for valuables disguised as a common household product. Inside are stacks of ONE-HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS.

MILES
(quickly peeling some
off)
...six, seven, eight,...
(one more for good
luck)
Nine.

His task complete, he closes the drawer, and as he stuffs the bills in his pocket, his glance falls upon FRAMED PHOTOS atop the dresser --

-- A proud NINE-YEAR-OLD MILES poses in front of his childhood San Diego home, showing off a WAGON filled with freshly harvested lettuce. On the wagon is a hand-lettered sign -- "10 cents a bunch."

-- A Sears portrait shows the RAYMOND FAMILY: a much younger Phyllis, her husband, and their two children -- a 12-year-old Miles and seven-year-old Wendy.

-- Miles at his wedding. He and his bride VICTORIA look young and attractive, their faces radiant and hopeful.

INT. MILES'S APARTMENT BATHROOM - NIGHT

Miles enters, flushes the toilet and leaves.

EXT. MILES'S MOTHER'S LANAI - NIGHT

As Miles slides open the door and takes his seat again, Jack is pouring Phyllis another glass.

PHYLLIS
And what was that other one you did, the one where you're the jogger?

JACK
Oh, that was for, uh, wait... That was for Spray and Wash.

PHYLLIS
Spray and Wash. That's the one.

JACK
Yeah, I remember the girl who was in it with me. She was something.

PHYLLIS
I just remember you jogging. So when's the wedding?

MILES
(irritated)
This Saturday, Mom, remember? We told you.

JACK
And Miles is my best man, Mrs. Raymond. My main man.

PHYLLIS
(another drink of wine)

Miles, when are you going to get married again?

MILES
I just got divorced. Phyllis.

JACK
Two years ago, buddy.

PHYLLIS
You should get back together with Victoria. She was good for you.

Embarrassed for his friend, Jack just stares at his food.

PHYLLIS
She was good for you.
(turning to Jack)
And so beautiful and intelligent. You knew her, right?

JACK
Oh, yeah. Real well. Still do.

PHYLLIS
I'm worried about you, Miles. Do you need some money?

MILES
I'm fine.

Miles takes another drink of wine.

CUT TO BLACK:

UNDER BLACK, a CARD --

SUNDAY

MILES (O.S.)
Jack. Jack.

INT. MILES'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - DAY

Jack finally awakens with a start and finds Miles standing above him, shaking him.

WIDE --

As Jack gets up, we see he has crashed on Phyllis's bed adorned with all her decorative PILLOWS.

INT. MILES'S MOTHER'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Still in her pantsuit and smeared makeup, Phyllis lies sprawled and snoring on the sofa. On the TV, ostensibly never turned off the night before, is an inane CARTOON.

As Miles opens the front door, he spots Jack heading toward the TV to turn it off. Miles waves him off.

MILES
(a loud whisper)
She'll wake up.

As they leave and Miles closes the front door quietly behind him, we PAN to the flowers still wrapped and forgotten on a side table.

INT. ROADSIDE IHOP - DAY

TWO PLATES OF FOOD float in front of two breasts tucked inside a zippered uniform.

WIDER --

Disheveled and unshaven, Jack and Miles are served breakfast by a young, innocently sexy WAITRESS. Jack leers after her.

JACK
Fuck, man. Too early in the morning for that, you know what I mean?

MILES
She's a kid, Jack. I don't even look at that stuff anymore.

JACK
That's your problem, Miles.

MILES
As if she'd even be attracted to guys like us in the first place.

JACK
Speak for yourself. I get chicks looking at me all the time. All ages.

MILES
It's not worth it. You pay too big a price. It's never free.

They eat in silence a moment.

JACK
You need to get laid.

Miles shrugs off the comment.

JACK
It'd be the best thing for you. You know what? I'm going to get you laid this week. That's going to be my best man gift to you. I'm not going

to give you a pen knife or a gift certificate or any of that other horseshit.

MILES
I'd rather have a knife.

JACK
No. No. You've been officially depressed for like two years now, and you were always a negative guy anyway, even in college. Now it's worse -- you're wasting away. Teaching English to fucking eighth-graders when they should be reading what you wrote. Your books.

MILES
I'm working on it.

Miles concentrates on his eggs and hash browns

JACK
You still seeing that shrink?

MILES
I went on Monday. But I spent most of the time helping him with his computer.

JACK
Well, I say fuck therapy and what's that stuff you take, Xanax?

MILES
And Lexapro, yes.

JACK
Well, I say fuck that. You need to get your joint worked on, that's what you need.

MILES
Jack. This week is not about me. It's about you. I'm going to show you a good time. We're going to drink a lot of good wine, play some golf, eat some great food, enjoy the scenery and send you off in style.

JACK
And get your bone smooched.

Jack spots the waitress coming out of the kitchen and motions for more coffee. She nods and smiles, indicating she'll be right over. Jack returns the smile and holds up a hand to signal he'll wait. Jack turns back to see Miles watching

him.

JACK
What?

EXT. CENTRAL COAST - DAY

In a series of shots, the Saab -- now with its TOP DOWN -- makes its way onto the 101 and travels past landmarks that those familiar with the Santa Barbara area might recognize.

MUSIC accompanies this sequence that anchors us into the rhythm of a road trip.

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

The car now descends the Santa Ynez Mountains and heads toward Buellton. Miles and Jack must SHOUT to be heard in the open car.

MILES
You know what? Let's take the Santa Rosa turnoff and hit Sanford first.

JACK
Whatever's closest, man. I need a glass.

MILES
These guys make top-notch Pinot and Chardonnay. One of the best producers in Santa Barbara county.
(looking out the window)
Look how beautiful this view is. What a day!

JACK
I thought you hated Chardonnay.

MILES
I like all varietals. I just don't generally like the way they manipulate Chardonnay in California -- too much oak and secondary malolactic fermentation.

EXT. SANTA ROSA TURN-OFF - DAY

The Saab passes over the 101 and turns onto SANTA ROSA road.

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

The boys now pass vineyards of immaculate grapevines.

MILES
Jesus, what a day! Isn't it gorgeous? And the ocean's just right over that

ridge. See, the reason this region's great for Pinot is that the cold air off the Pacific flows in at night through these transverse valleys and cools down the berries. Pinot's a very thin-skinned grape and doesn't like heat or humidity.

Jack looks at Miles, admiring his friend's vast learning and articulateness.

The Saab now pulls of the road and makes its way down a long gravel DRIVEWAY.

JACK
Hey, Miles. I really hope your novel sells.

MILES
Thanks, Jack. So do I.
(noticing)
Here we are.

EXT. SANFORD TASTING ROOM - DAY

Miles brings the car to a stop in the parking lot. As they get out and walk --

MILES
So what'd you guys finally decide on for the menu?

JACK
I told you. Filet and salmon.

MILES
Yeah, but how are they making the salmon? Poached with a yogurt-dill sauce? Teriyaki? Curry?

JACK
I don't know. Salmon. Don't you always have white wine with fish?

MILES
Oh, Jesus. Look, at some point we have to find out because it's going to make a big difference.

JACK
(taking out his phone)
Let me call Christine.

MILES
Doesn't have to be now. Let's go taste.

JACK
I owe her a call anyway.

Miles must curb his eagerness to go inside the tasting room as Jack SPEED DIALS.

JACK
Hey, honey. So we're up here about to taste some whites, and we need to know how the caterers are going to make the salmon.

Jack listens, then grows suddenly impatient.

JACK
No, I know, I didn't forget, but we wound up at Miles's mom's house, and it got really late, and it was hard to call, so I'm calling you now. I said I was sorry. Yes, I did.
(to Miles)
You heard me say I was sorry, right?

Miles just shrugs.

JACK
Miles heard me say I was sorry.

As Jack gets more and more involved with the phone call, he wanders off across the parking lot, progressively out of earshot.

JACK
Give me a break, will you? I just called to find out about the salmon -- for our wedding -- to be more involved, like you said -- and all you want to do is get into it about last night and, okay, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I didn't call. You're totally right. I know, but I'm trying to make this the best wedding I can with the best wine we can find. Don't I get any credit for that? Okay. Look, I've got to go. I'm out here in the parking lot, and Miles is waiting for me...

And so it goes, Jack's voice rising and falling. Miles decides to head inside.

INT. SANFORD TASTING ROOM - DAY

Miles is at the bar, TWO GLASSES in front of him. Jack walks in and bellies up next to him.

JACK

(proudly)
Baked with a butter-lime glaze.

MILES
Now we're talking.

CHRIS BURROUGHS, a POURER in a cowboy hat and ponytail, comes over.

CHRIS
This is the condemned man?

MILES
Here he is. Jack, Chris. Chris, Jack.

Chris and Jack shake hands.

JACK
How you doing?

CHRIS
You guys want to start with the Vin Gris?

JACK
Sounds good.

TWO GLASSES are filled with small amounts of PINOT NOIR VIN GRIS.

JACK
This is rose, right?

MILES
Good, yeah, it is a rose. Only this one is rather atypically made from 100% Pinot Noir.

JACK
Pinot noir? Not again!
(joking, to Chris)
You know, not all Pinots are noir.

They laugh.

Miles swirls his glass in tight circles on the bar, then lifts it to smell. Jack clumsily imitates Miles, perhaps even spilling some wine in the process.

MILES
Let me show you.

We see details of what Miles now describes.

MILES
First take your glass and examine the wine against the light. You're

looking at color and clarity.

JACK
What color is it supposed to be?

MILES
Depends on the varietal. Just get a sense of it. Thick? Thin? Watery? Syrupy? Inky? Amber, whatever...

JACK
Huh.

MILES
Now tip it. What you're doing here is checking for color density as it thins toward the rim. Tells you how old it is, among other things, usually more important with reds. This is a very young wine, so it's going to retain its color pretty solidly. Now stick your nose in it.

Jack waves the glass under his nose as if it were a perfume bottle.

MILES
Don't be shy. Get your nose in there.

Jack now buries his nose in the glass.

MILES
What do you smell?

JACK
I don't know. Wine? Fermented grapes?

Miles smells.

MILES
There's not much there yet, but you can still find...
(more sniffs)
...a little citrus... maybe some strawberry... passion fruit... and there's even a hint of like asparagus... or like a nutty Edam cheese.

Jack smells again and begins to brighten.

JACK
Huh. Maybe a little strawberry. Yeah, strawberry. I'm not so sure about the cheese.

MILES

Now set your glass down and get some air into it.

Miles expertly swirls the wine. Jack follows suit.

MILES
Oxygenating it opens it up, unlocks the aroma and the flavors. Very important. Now we smell again.

They do so. Jack smiles.

MILES
That's what you do with every one.

JACK
When do we get to drink it?

MILES
Now.

Jack gulps his wine down in one shot. Miles chews his before swallowing.

JACK
How would you rate this one?

MILES
Usually they start you on the wines with learning disabilities, but this one's pretty damn good.
(to Chris)
This is the new one, right, Chris?

CHRIS
Released it about two months ago.

MILES
Nice job.

CHRIS
We like it.

JACK
(to Miles)
You know, you could work in a wine store.

MILES
Yeah, that would be a good move.

Now Miles notices something about Jack.

MILES
Are you chewing gum?

JACK

Want some?

EXT. SOLVANG, CALIFORNIA - DAY

The Saab passes through this Danish-themed tourist town.

SUPERIMPOSE --

SOLVANG

EXT. BUELLTON, CALIFORNIA - DAY

The Saab makes its way into this very average-looking Central coast town right off the freeway.

SUPERIMPOSE --

BUELLTON

EXT. WINDMILL INN - DAY

The Saab pulls into the parking lot of this motel. And look -- there's the WINDMILL itself, its decorative blades motionless.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Miles and Jack enter the room and throw their suitcases onto their respective beds.

LATER --

The sounds of a SHOWER and OFF-KEY SINGING come from the bathroom while Miles sits impatiently on the bed. He pounds on the wall.

MILES
Hey Jack, hurry up!

JACK (O.S.)
Just a minute!

Opening the bedside drawer, Miles finds a GIDEON'S BIBLE and tosses it in the trash -- apparently his hotel routine.

EXT. HIGHWAY 246 - DUSK

Freshly showered and dressed for dinner, Miles and Jack amble along the shoulder of this busy local two-lane highway. They pass a mall and a car dealership.

JACK
I thought you said it was close. Now I'm all pitted out.

MILES
It's not even a mile.

JACK
We should have driven.

MILES
Not with the wine list these people have. We don't want to hold back.

JACK
You think I'm making a mistake marrying Christine?

MILES
Whoa.

JACK
Come on, do you think I'm doing the right thing? Tell the truth. You've been through it.

MILES
Well, you waited for good reason, and you proposed to Christine for some good reason. So I think it's great. It's time. You've got to have your eyes open, that's all. I mean, look at me. I thought Victoria and I were set for life.

JACK
Christine's dad -- he's been talking about bringing me into his property business. Showing me the ropes. And that's something, considering how long it took him to get over I'm not Armenian. So I'm thinking about it. But I don't know, might get a little incestuous. But Mike does pretty well. A lot of high-end commercial stuff.

MILES
So you're going to stop acting?

JACK
No way. This would just provide some stability is what I'm saying. I can always squeeze in an audition or a commercial here and there, you know, keep myself in the game in case something big comes along.

MILES
Uh-huh.

JACK
We're not getting any younger, right? And my career, well, it's gotten

pretty, you know, frustrating. Even with my new manager. Maybe it's time to settle down.

MILES
If that's what feels right.

JACK
(convincing himself)
It does. Feels right.

MILES
Then it's a good thing.

JACK
(nodding, feeling better)
Yeah. It's good. Feels good.

Miles leads them away from the road and across a parking lot. The camera PANS to reveal --

THE HITCHING POST, a local institution.

INT. HITCHING POST BAR - DUSK

Miles and Jack belly up. GARY, the Samoan bartender, spots Miles and extends a welcoming hand.

GARY
Hey, Miles. Long time no see.

MILES
Gary.

GARY
When's that novel of yours coming out? We all want to read it.

MILES
Soon, soon. Say, this is my buddy Jack. He's getting married next week.

GARY
(shaking Jack's hand)
My condolences.

MILES
What are you pouring tonight?

GARY
Lot of good stuff.
(looking at a row of bottles)
Got the new Bien Nacido. Want a taste?

MILES

Absolutement.
(to Jack)
They have their own label that's just outstanding.

Gary pours Jack and Miles a generous sample and the two men swirl, sniff and taste. Jack is beginning to get the hang of things.

GARY
What do you think?

MILES
Tight as a nun's asshole but qood concentration. Nice fruit.

JACK
Yeah. Tight.

MILES
(to Gary)
Pour us a couple.

Gary fills their glasses and corks the bottle. Jack raises his glass to toast.

JACK
Here's to my last week of freedom.

MILES
It's going to be great. Here's to us.

They clink their glasses and take a drink. We linger on them as Miles retreats inward and a restless Jack scans the room.

INT. HITCHING POST DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Jack and Miles review their menus. Jack looks up and spots a PRETTY WAITRESS placing an order at the bar.

JACK
Miles. Check it out.

Miles glances at the waitress and returns to his menu.

MILES
Oh, yeah. That's Maya.

JACK
You know her?

MILES
Sure I know Maya.

JACK
You know that chick?

MILES
Jack, this is where I eat when I come up here. It's practically my office. And sometimes I have a drink with the employees. Maya's great. She's worked here about a year, maybe a year and a half.

JACK
She is very hot.

MILES
And very nice. And very married. Check out the rock.

Jack leans forward and squints.

JACK
Doesn't mean shit. When Christine was a hostess at Sushi Roku, she wore a big engagement ring to keep guys from hitting on her. Think it worked? Fuck no. How do you think I met her?

MILES
This gal's married to I think a Philosophy professor at UC Santa Barbara.

JACK
So what's a professor's wife doing waitressing? Obviously that's over.

MILES
You don't know anything about this woman. Calm down. Let's just eat, okay?
(focusing on the menu)
The duck is excellent and pairs nicely with the Highliner Pinot.

Just then Maya comes by carrying a tray of food on her way to another table.

MAYA
Hey, Miles. Good to see you.

MILES
Maya, how are you?

MAYA
I'm doing good, good. You look great. Did you lose some weight?

MILES

Oh, no, actually. Busy night.

MAYA
Oh yeah, Sunday night. You guys been out tasting today?

MILES
You know it. This is my friend Jack. Jack, Maya.

JACK
(big smile)
Hiya.

MAYA
(smiling back)
Hi. Well, nice to see you guys here. Bye, Miles.

She goes.

JACK
Jesus, she's jammin'. And she likes you. What else do you know about her?

MILES
Well, she does know a lot about wine.

JACK
Ooooooohh. Now we're getting somewhere.

MILES
And she likes Pinot.

JACK
Perfect.

MILES
Jack, she's a fucking waitress in Buellton. How would that ever work?

JACK
Why do you always focus on the negative? Didn't you see how friendly she was to you?

MILES
She works for tips!

JACK
You're blind, dude. Blind.

Miles focuses again on the menu.

MILES

I also recommend the ostrich. Very lean. Locally raised.

INT. HITCHING POST BAR - NIGHT

TWO BURGUNDY GLASSES --

are refilled with the contents of yet another bottle of Hitching Post Pinot Noir.

Jack and Miles are enjoying a post-prandial drink.

MILES

Looks like he's thinking about something. Then --

MILES
I hate Tony Levin.

Jack swirls his wine and downs it in one gulp. Just then --

MAYA

Walks into the bar and takes a seat a few stools down. She has changed into a black cashmere sweater and corduroys, lovely but tired.

MAYA
(to Gary)
Highliner, please.

JACK
That's on us.

Maya looks over and smiles as Gary pours her a glass from their bottle.

MAYA
Hey, guys.

Maya gets an American Spirit Yellow out of her purse and lights it while Gary pours her a glass.

MILES
You want to join us?

MAYA
(polite)
Sure.

In no hurry, she takes a long sip of her wine, gets up and comes down the bar.

MAYA
So how's that book of yours going, Miles? I think you were almost done with it last time we talked.

MILES
I finished it.

MAYA
Good for you.

JACK
It's getting published. That's what we're up here celebrating.

Miles shoots Jack a look. Jack responds with a "don't-fuck-it-up-brother" glower.

MAYA
That's fantastic. Congratulations.

She offers her glass, and all clink.

MAYA
(to Jack)
Are you a writer too?

JACK
No, I'm an actor.

MAYA
Oh yeah? What kind of stuff?

JACK
A lot of TV. I was a regular on a couple of series. And lately I've been doing a lot of commercials. National mostly.

MAYA
Anything I'd know?

JACK
Maybe. Recognize this?

Jack takes a deep breath, and out comes a perfect VOICE-OVER VOICE.

JACK
"Now with low, low 5.8% APR financing."

Maya's mouth drops open and curves into a big smile.

MAYA
That's hilarious. You sound just like one of those guys.

JACK
I am one of those guys.

MAYA
You are not.

MILES
He is.

Jack launches into another one of his sure-fire hits.

JACK
(very fast)
Consult your doctor before using this product. Side effects may include oily discharge, dizziness, hives, loss of appetite, difficulty breathing and low blood pressure. If you have diabetes or a history of kidney trouble... you're fucked!

This makes Maya laugh a big throaty laugh. Jack joins in. Nervous about Jack's aggressive flirtatiousness, Miles musters a tight courtesy smile.

MAYA
(winding down)
Oh. I needed that. Thank you.

They all take a drink of wine.

MAYA
So what are you guys up to tonight?

Before Jack has a chance to speak --

MILES
We're pretty wiped. Probably go back to the hotel and crash.

This makes Maya slightly embarrassed at her apparent availability, but she recovers quickly, remains breezy.

MAYA
Yeah, I know what you mean. It's a long drive up here. Where're you staying?

MILES
The Windmill.

JACK
Windmill.

Maya downs the rest of her wine, stamps out her smoke, and picks up her jean jacket and purse.

MAYA
Well, good to see you, Miles. Jack.

MILES
See you.

As she leaves --

JACK
We'll catch up with you later, okay?

But she's gone. Jack gives Miles a slow burn look.

JACK
We'll probably go back to the hotel and crash?

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The guys walk drunkenly along the shoulder as CARS WHIZ BY.

JACK
The girl is looking to party, and you tell her we're going to go back to our motel room and crash? Jesus, Miles!

MILES
Well, I'm tired. Aren't you tired?

JACK
The chick digs you. She lit up like a pinball machine when she heard your novel was getting published.

MILES
Now I've got another lie to live down. Thanks, Jack.

JACK
I'm trying to get you some action, but you've got to help me out just a little bit.

MILES
Didn't seem to me like that's what was going on. You were all over her.

JACK
Somebody had to do the talking. And by the way, I was right. She's not married.

MILES
How do you know?

JACK
No rock. When she came to the bar, sans rock.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The screen is absolutely BLACK.

JACK
Single. Waitress. Getting off work. Looking for love. A little slap and tickle.

MILES
Shut up.

JACK
She probably went home, lit some candles, put on some relaxing music, took a nice hot bath, and laid down on her bed with her favorite vibrator.

Jack begins to make a soft BUZZING noise, growing gradually louder and more rhythmic.

MILES
Have you no shame?

JACK
Oooh. Oh. Miles. Miles.

MILES
Fuck you.

There's now a rustling noise and footsteps. Then a LIGHT is flipped on in the BATHROOM.

Miles closes the door behind him, and the only light visible is at the bottom of the bathroom door.

Miles PEES -- a series of semi-forced SHORT SQUIRTS. Then a FLUSH as a door opens and the light goes off. Jack starts BUZZING again.

MILES
Shut the fuck up!

Jack stops and Miles climbs into bed. Silence. Then --

JACK
You need to get your prostate checked.

UNDER BLACK --

MONDAY

EXT. BREAKFAST CAFE - DAY

Establishing.

INT. BREAKFAST CAFE - DAY

Miles and Jack are glancing at the menus. For some reason Jack is humorless and grumpy.

MILES
So what're we going to have? Pigs in a blanket? The "rancher's special breakfast"? Or maybe just some grease and fat with a side of lard?

JACK
(not amused)
So what's the plan today?

MILES
We head north, begin the grape tour up there, make our way south so the more we drink the closer we get to the motel.

Jack sarcastically taps an index finger to his temple.

MILES
What's your problem?

Jack exhales and looks away, as though he doesn't want to get into it.

MILES
What is it?

Jack sucks his teeth a moment searching for the right words. Then the dam bursts.

JACK
I am going to get my nut on this trip, Miles. And you are not going to fuck it up for me with all your depression and anxiety and neg-head downer shit.

MILES
Ooooh, now the cards are on the table.

JACK
Yes they are. And I'm serious. Do not fuck with me. I am going to get laid before I settle down on Saturday. Do you read me?

MILES
Sure, big guy. Whatever you say. It's your party. I'm sorry I'm in the way and dragging you down. Maybe you'd have a better time on your own. You take the car. I'll catch the train back.

JACK
No, see, I want both of us to get crazy. We should both be cutting loose. I mean, this is our last chance. This is our week! It should be something we share.

The older WAITRESS comes over.

WAITRESS
Can I take your order?

JACK
But I am warning you.

MILES
Oatmeal, one poached egg, and rye toast. Dry.

WAITRESS
Okay. And you?

JACK
(glaring at Miles)
Pigs in a blanket. With extra syrup.

EXT. LOVELY HIGHWAY - DAY

The Saab winds along this beautiful road that meanders through large open vineyards.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT --

A MAP and a MOVING LINE show the boys' route.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT --

GRAPES growing on the vine.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

Framed by foreground grapevines, the Saab passes in the distance.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FOXEN WINERY - DAY

Miles has just downed a taste of red wine.

MILES
How much skin and stem contact?

POURER
About four weeks.

MILES
Huh. That explains all the tannins.
And how long in oak?

POURER
About a year.

MILES
French or American?

POURER
Both.

MILES
Good stuff.

JACK
Yeah, oak. That's a good wood.

Just as the pourer turns away toward other TASTERS, Jack GRABS the bottle and helps himself and Miles to another glass. They slam back their drinks like tequila.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LOVELY AREA ON A HILL - DAY

Miles brings the Saab to a stop, and the guys get out. Before them lies an incredible view of endless vineyards.

MILES
Nice, huh?

JACK
Beautiful.

MILES
Victoria and I used to like this view.
(lost in nostalgia)
Once we had a picnic here and drank a '95 Opus One. With smoked salmon and artichokes, but we didn't care.

JACK
Miles.

MILES
She has the best palate of any woman I've ever known. She could even differentiate Italian wines.

JACK
Miles, I gotta tell you something. Victoria's coming to the wedding.

MILES
I know. You told me. I'm okay with it.

JACK
Yeah, but that's not the whole story. She got remarried.

MILES
She what?
(long pause)
When?

JACK
About a month ago. Six weeks.

MILES
To that guy? That guy with the restaurant...

Jack nods. Miles looks down at his shoes and draws a long breath. Then he stiffly gets back in the open car and closes the door.

JACK
Miles... MILES...

Miles continues to stare straight ahead.

JACK
(exploding)
Jesus Christ, Miles. Get out!

MILES
I want to go home now.

JACK
You've been divorced for two years already. People move on. She has! It's like you enjoy self-pity. Makes you feel special or something.

MILES
Is she bringing him to the wedding?

JACK
What do you think?

MILES
You drop this bombshell on me. Why didn't you tell me before?

JACK
Because I knew you'd freak out and probably get so depressed you wouldn't even come on this trip. But then I figured here would be the best place to tell you. We're here to forget about all that shit. We're here to party!

MILES
(undeterred)
I'm going to be a fucking pariah. Everyone's just going to be holding their breath to see if I'm going to get drunk and make a scene. Plus Tony fucking Levin?

JACK
No, no, no. It's cool. I talked to Victoria. She's cool. Everyone's cool.

MILES
(horrified)
You've all been talking about it? Behind my back? Talking about it?

Miles turns and locates an open BOTTLE of wine in the back seat. He uncorks it and begins to swig.

JACK
Hey, hey, hey. No, you don't!

Jack tries unsuccessfully to grab the bottle from Miles, but Miles bolts out of the car.

A VERY WIDE SHOT --

Pursued by Jack, Miles dashes down the hill, all the while taking huge swigs from the bottle.

OMIT.

EXT. LOVELY VINEYARD - CONTINUOUS

Miles slows to walk between rows of GRAPEVINES. He polishes off the bottle and tosses it. A painting Jack catches up with him in the adjacent grapevine corridor.

Miles's face crumbles as though he were about to cry. Then he collapses to the ground and closes his eyes tight.

Jack looks around impatiently for a moment. Then he squats down so he can see Miles underneath the vines.

JACK
Miles?

Miles ignores Jack and focuses on the beautiful RIPE GRAPES that surround him. They seem to distract him from his pain.

JACK
You going to be okay?

Miles looks up and shakes his head a definitive NO. Jack can't help but LAUGH.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KALYRA WINERY PARKING LOT - DAY

The sun hangs low as the Saab pulls into the parking lot, Jack at the wheel.

INT. KALYRA TASTING ROOM - DAY

The pourer, a brunette in her early thirties, breaks away from a BORING COUPLE down the bar. This is STEPHANIE.

STEPHANIE
Hey, guys. How's it going?

JACK
Excellent. My friend and I are up here doing the wine tour, and he tells me that you folks make one hell of a Syrah.

STEPHANIE
That's what people say.

MILES
(slurring slightly)
You gotta excuse him. Yesterday he didn't know Pinot Noir from film noir.

JACK
I'm a quick learner.

Stephanie laughs. She apparently likes big good-natured lunks like Jack.

MILES
I'm trying to teach my friend here some basics about wine over the next few days before he goes off and --

WHOOMP! Under the bar Jack stomps on Miles's foot. Miles winces.

Stephanie slides TWO GLASSES in front of them.

JACK

That's right -- I'm here to learn. I never had that much interest in wine before, but this trip has been very enlightening. Always like wine, of course, but I don't know. More of a beer man, really. Microbreweries.

She THUMPS the cork off a bottle of Chardonnay.

STEPHANIE
Well, no better way to learn than tasting.

She pours almost flirtatious amounts.

JACK
Now there's a girl who knows how to pour. What's your name?

STEPHANIE
Stephanie.

JACK
Nice.

Jack swirls the wine as though he were by now a sommelier. They look, they smell, they taste.

STEPHANIE
So what do you think?

MILES
Quaffable but far from transcendent.

JACK
I like it. Tastes great. Oaky.

Stephanie reaches for another bottle and pours. Jack's eyes never leave her.

STEPHANIE
Cabernet Franc.
(as they taste)
This is only the fifth year we've made this varietal. Very few wineries around here do a straight Cabernet Franc. It's from our vineyard up in Santa Maria. And it was a Silver Medal winner at Paso Robles last year.

MILES
Well, I've come to never expect greatness from a Cab Franc, and this one's no exception. Sort of a flabby, overripe --

JACK
(ignoring him)
Tastes good to me. You live around here, Stephanie?

STEPHANIE
In Santa Ynez.
(low, to Miles)
And I agree with you about Cab Franc.

JACK
Oh yeah? We're just over in Buellton. Windmill Inn.

STEPHANIE
Oh yeah.

JACK
You know a gal named Maya? Works at the Hitching Post?

STEPHANIE
Sure I know Maya. Real well.

JACK
No shit. We just had a drink with her last night. Miles knows her.

MILES
Could we move on to the Syrah, please?

As she turns to reach for the right bottle, Jack winks at Miles. Miles shakes his head.

STEPHANIE
This is our Estate Syrah...

She pours each of them a full HALF GLASS.

JACK
You're a bad, bad girl, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE
I know. I might need to be spanked.

She notices the boring couple, visibly annoyed that she has been monopolized.

STEPHANIE
Excuse me.

As she wanders down the bar, Jack turns to Miles, his mouth wide open.

JACK
A bad girl, Miles. She might need to be spanked.

MILES
Do you know how often these pourers get hit on?

They glance down the bar at Stepanie. She smiles back.

EXT. KALYRA WINERY PARKING LOT - DAY

Miles is killing time by the car staring at his shoes. He looks over and sees Jack waddling over from the tasting room with TWO CASES OF WINE.

JACK
Get the trunk.

MILES
You have the keys.

Jack puts the cases down and glances back at the building.

JACK
We're on.

MILES
What?

JACK
She called Maya, who's not working tonight, so we're all going out.

MILES
With Maya?

JACK
Been divorced for a year now, bud.

Jack puts the wine in the trunk, and they get in the car.

JACK
Stephanie, holy shit. Chick had it all going on.

MILES
Well, she is cute.

JACK
Cute? She's a fucking hottie. And you almost tell her I'm getting married. What's the matter with you?
(drumming on the steering wheel)
Gotta love it. Gotta love it.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

THE TV --

GOLF on ESPN.

MILES AND JACK

sit transfixed, each on his own bed. The curtains are drawn. Then out of nowhere --

JACK
(mocking)
You know how often these pourers get hit on?
(getting up)
I'm going for a swim. Get the blood flowing. Want to come?

MILES
Nah. I want to watch this.

CLOSE ON THE TV --

A guy gets ready to putt. The announcer whispers what an important moment this is. The guy misses.

FADE TO BLACK.

UNDER BLACK --

The sound of an AEROSOL CAN.

JACK
Miles. Hey, Miles. Time to get up.

WE OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE --

Jack spraying his feet with some Dr. Scholl's product.

WIDE --

Miles pulls himself out of bed and slouches toward his suitcase.

JACK
Fucking chick in the Jacuzzi -- goddamn, Miles, fucking going nuts up here. Whole place is wide open. Assylvania.

Jack does some actor's weird warm-up stretch.

MILES
So what should I wear?

JACK
I don't know. Casual but nice. They think you're a writer.

As Miles begins to dig through his suitcase, Jack flips open his cellphone and speed-dials.

JACK
Don't you have any other shoes?

Miles glances as his shoes sitting sadly on the floor.

JACK
(into the phone)
Hello? Oh hey, baby, just checking in. Not much. We're about to go out for dinner, probably be out pretty late, so I thought I'd say goodnight now. I know, I love you too. I miss you.

EXT. LOS OLIVOS - NIGHT

The boys get out of the car and walk along a timbered sidewalk in this tourist town with wine tasting rooms and gourmet restaurants.

JACK
Please just try to be your normal humorous self, okay? Like who you were before the tailspin. Do you remember that guy? People love that guy. And don't forget -- your novel is coming out in the fall.

MILES
Oh yeah? How exciting. What's it called?

JACK
Do not sabotage me. If you want to be a lightweight, that's your call. But do not sabotage me.

MILES
Aye-aye, captain.

JACK
And if they want to drink Merlot, we're drinking Merlot.

MILES
(dead serious)
If anyone orders Merlot, I'm leaving. I am not drinking any fucking Merlot!

JACK
Okay, okay. Relax, Miles, Jesus. No Merlot. Did you bring your Xanax?

Miles takes a SMALL BOTTLE from his pocket and rattles it.

JACK
And don't drink too much. I don't want you going to the dark side or passing out. Do you hear me? No going to the dark side.

MILES
Okay! Fuck!

Miles quickly POPS A XANAX. Jack gives him a final look in the eye.

JACK
We're going in.

INT. LOS OLIVOS CAFE - NIGHT

The boys enter this cozy if crowded restaurant and exchange words with the HOSTESS. Then they notice --

MAYA AND STEPHANIE

at a booth waving at them. They look great.

MILES AND JACK

make their way to the table, Jack wearing a broad, confident SMILE.

AT THE TABLE --

Jack plops down next to Stephanie, while Miles politely eases in on Maya's side. Jack touches a hand to Stephanie's bare neck and massages it meaningfully.

JACK
How you doin' tonight, beautiful?

STEPHANIE
Good. How're you?

JACK
Great. You look great.
(including Maya)
You both do.

STEPHANIE
Not so bad yourself.

Meanwhile Miles looks over at Maya and purses his lips in an affable if uncomfortable smile. Then --

MILES
What are you drinking?

MAYA

A Fiddlehead Sauvignon Blanc.

MILES
Oh yeah? How is it?

MAYA
(sliding the glass)
Try it.

As Miles swirls the wine and takes a sip, he begins to relax.

MILES
Nice. Very nice.

MAYA
Twelve months in oak.

MILES
On a Sauvignon Blanc?

MAYA
I know the winemaker. She comes in the restaurant all the time.

MILES
This is good. Little hints of clove.

MAYA
I know. I love that.

LATER --

A WAITER finishes listing off the specials.

WAITER
...medallions of pork with a dusting of black truffles served with a root vegetable foulon and wasabi-whipped potatoes. And finally a Copper River salmon grilled on an alder wood plank. And that comes with roasted new potatoes and steamed watercress.

The four diners exchange looks of delight.

WAITER
And who gets the wine list?

Miles raises his hand and takes the leather-bound book.

MAYA
(teasing)
I guess Miles wants it.

Jack glares at Miles, who immediately gets the hint.

MILES

Nope. You ladies choose.

Jack smiles and nods his approval. Jack takes the book out of Miles's hands and offers it to the girls.

MAYA
You choose, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE
(opening it)
So what does everyone feel like?

JACK
Whatever you girls want. It's on us tonight. Sky's the limit.

MAYA
No, we're paying for the wine.

JACK
I don't think so. We're celebrating Miles's book deal.

MAYA
Well, in that case...

Miles draws a long breath.

STEPHANIE
What's everyone ordering? Then we can sort out the wine.

MILES
Exactement!

Jack shoots Miles a look.

MAYA
I'm having the salmon.

MILES
That's what I'm having.

STEPHANIE
(still scanning the wines)
I'm thinking about the duck breast.

JACK
(slapping his menu shut)
Me too.

MAYA
Well, that narrows things down.

Stephanie lowers the menu so that only her eyes peer over

the top. She looks at the others, and they look back at her.

STEPHANIE
Sounds like... Pinot Noir to me.

Jack looks at Miles and raises one hand for a HIGH-FIVE.

JACK
Pinot!

Miles reluctantly slaps Jack's hand. This causes the girls to laugh. MUSIC STARTS -- they're OFF!

DINNER is improvised, but includes:

-- The arrival of the FIRST WINE.

-- The SALADS.

-- Maya takes a turn with the wine list. Miles pushes her finger down into the prices with THREE DIGITS.

-- New stemware is provided with the arrival of the SECOND WINE.

-- The four of them DRINK. Particularly Miles.

-- Stephanie and Jack get cozier and cozier.

-- The SALMON and DUCK arrive.

-- Miles is too shy to look into Maya's eyes. She's interested and available -- it's too much for him.

-- As Miles gets DRUNKER, the camera angles become sloppier, the cutting choppier.

-- Miles PONTIFICATES about some aspect of wine that Maya and Stephanie find interesting. Left out in the cold, his jaw tight, Jack wants to find a way in but can't.

-- Miles reaches over to refill his glass, but Jack's arm shoots out to stop him -- "Slow down."

CLOSE ON MILES as a distant RUMBLE begins to sound, the rumble of an oncoming ANXIETY ATTACK. By now he has drunk so much that he spaces out, descending into --

INT. UNDERWORLD - DARK AND TIMELESS

Miles is boarding an OPEN BOAT atop this underground river, the River Styx. Just beyond a ghoulish HUMAN CARGO the hooded boatman CHARON wields a long staff. Miles is crossing over to the dark side.

INT. LOS OLIVOS CAFE - BACK AGAIN

Miles returns to earth to find Jack and Stephanie now in their own little world -- Jack explaining something to Stephanie that she finds fascinating, just FASCINATING.

-- Miles converses with Maya, but it's clear from her bemused expression that he's being charming if not entirely coherent.

-- ANOTHER WINE reaches the table -- a Comte Armand Pornrnard.

-- Miles looks over at Jack and Stephanie. They share a short but sensual kiss.

MOMENTS LATER --

Miles is on his feet threading his way through the tables. He is very unsteady, and we cut between first and third person perspectives.

AT THE BATHROOMS --

He tries the MEN'S ROOM door but it's locked. He pulls the XANAX out his pocket and pops one in his mouth, swallowing it dry.

He notices a PAYPHONE nearby. Thinking better of it for a moment, Miles makes a drunken bee-line for the receiver.

CLOSE ON THE KEYPAD --

as many numbers are dialed, and we HEAR the TONES, completely out of sync, along with a sound melange of interior phone RINGING and a PICKUP.

THE RECEIVER --

As Miles presses it desperately to his head.

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
Hello?

MILES
Victoria.

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
Miles?

Miles feigns an implausible upbeat tone.

MILES
Victoria! How the hell are you?

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
Fine. What's, uh, what's on your mind?

MILES
Heard you got remarried!

Congratulations. Didn't think you had the stomach for another go-round.

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
Oh, Miles. You're drunk.

MILES
Just some local Pinot, you know, then a little Burgundy. That old Cotes de Beaune!

Miles laughs at his own non-existent joke.

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
Where are you?

MILES
A little place in Los Olivos. New owners. Cozy ambiance. Excellent food too -- you should try it. Thought of you at the Hitching Post last night.

Silence.

MILES (CONT' D)
Hello?

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
Miles, don't call me when you're drunk.

MILES
I just wanted you to know I've decided not to go to the wedding, so in case you were dreading some uncomfortable, you know, run-in or something, well, worry no more. You won't see me there. My wedding gift to you and what's-his-name. What is his name?

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
(silence, then --)
Ken.

MILES
Ken.

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
Miles, I don't care if you come to the wedding or not.

MILES
Well, I'm not coming, Barbie. So you guys have fun.

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)

I'm going to hang up now, Miles.

MILES
(rushing to keep her on)
You see, Vicki, I just heard about this today, you getting married that is, and I was kind of taken aback. Kind of hard to believe.

Silence.

MILES
I guess I just thought there was still some hope for us somewhere down the road and I just, I just --

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
Miles, maybe it is better if you don't come to the wedding.

Miles sucks something from between his two front teeth.

MILES
Whatever you say, Vicki. You're the boss.

He HANGS UP as nonchalantly as if it had been a sales call and heads back to the table.

EXT. DEEP CANYON - DAY

For a flash, Miles is walking an unstable, narrow ROPE BRIDGE extending vertiginously across a great CHASM.

INT. LOS OLIVOS CAFE - BACK AGAIN

Miles reaches the table, tries to sit and SLIPS ONTO THE FLOOR.

Although at first Jack blinks heavily in disgust, the girls burst into hysterical LAUGHTER. Jack then laughs too, perhaps OVER-LAUGHING.

JACK
Easy, boy. Easy.

Maya helps him back into the booth.

MAYA
Are you all right?

MILES
Fine. Just slipped.
(picking up his glass)
This is my blood.

Miles drinks. Stephanie makes a head gesture to Maya, who nods in return.

STEPHANIE
(to the guys)
Excuse us.

MAYA
Sorry to make you get up again, Miles.

MILES
That's okay.

Miles and Jack allow the girls to pass. Then --

JACK
What the fuck, man? What is up?

Miles reaches for his wine glass, but Jack moves it away.

JACK
Pull yourself together, man.

MILES
I'm fine!

But in throwing open his arms for emphasis, he spills a WATER GLASS. Jack rights it and throws a napkin on the tablecloth.

JACK
Where were you?

MILES
Bathroom.

JACK
Did you drink and dial?

Miles's silence confirms his guilt and shame.

JACK
Why do you always do this? Victoria's gone, man. Gone. Poof.

Miles looks down and squeezes his eyes tight while pushing out an exhale through his nose.

JACK
Stop it. You are blowing a great opportunity here, Miles. Fucking Maya, man. She's great. She's cool. She's funny. She knows wine. What is this morose come-down bullshit? These girls want to party. And what was that fucking ten-minute lecture on, what was it, Vouvrays? I mean, come on!

MILES
Let's just say I'm uncomfortable with the whole scenario.

JACK
Oh Jesus, Miles.

Miles belligerently reaches for his Comte Armand. Jack lets it pass.

JACK
And don't forget all the bad times you had with Victoria. How small she make you feel. That's why you had the affair in the first place.

MILES
Shut up. Shut your face.

JACK
Don't you see how Maya's looking at you? You got her on the hook. Reel her in! Come on, let's rachet this up a notch. You know how to to do it. Here.
(passing a glass)
Drink some agua.

Miles looks at the water, takes it and drains it.

The girls now return to the table. The guys slide over.

MILES
(trying to appear sober)
Should we get dessert?

STEPHANIE
We were thinking. Why don't we go back to my place? I've got wine, some insane cheeses, music, whatever.

Jack raises both arms like a football referee.

JACK
Excellent idea. Waiter!

INT. SAAB - NIGHT

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD --

Trees and bushes lit by the headlights show us we're headed into the woods.

INSIDE --

Jack drives. Miles blinks heavily as he tries to make a sense of A HAND-DRAWN MAP.

JACK
(grabbing the map)
Let me see that.

EXT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Saab pulls into a gravel DRIVEWAY and comes to a stop outside this wood-framed cottage.

Jack and Miles get out and head for the front door. On the way, Jack reaches into his coat pocket and produces a string of FOUR CONDOMS.

JACK
(tearing)
Here. One for you, three for me.

Miles wordlessly takes his. Just before they climb the porch steps --

MILES
You sure you want to do this?

Jack stops and looks at him for a moment with almost hostile incredulity.

THE FRONT DOOR is open. Jack knocks twice on the SCREEN DOOR before going in.

INT. STEPHANIE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The boys enter this modest living room furnished with weathered but charming old furniture. Scattered here and there are CHILDREN'S TOYS. FINGER-PAINTINGS are taped to the walls. CANDLES are lit, and MUSIC is playing.

JACK
We're here!

Stephanie sails in.

STEPHANIE
What happened to you guys?

JACK
Couple of wrong turns.
(pointing a thumb at Miles)
Thanks to Magellan, here.

After a brief hug, Stephanie and Jack peck-kiss.

JACK
Hi.

STEPHANIE
Hi.
(to Miles)
Maya's in the kitchen.

Miles hesitates a moment before Jack elbows him toward --

EXT. STEPHANIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Miles wanders in to find Maya squatting in front of a little temperature-controlled WINE STORAGE UNIT.

MILES
Hi.

MAYA
Hey.

MILES
She got anything good?

MAYA
Oh, yeah. Steph's way into Pinots and Syrahs.
(calling out)
Hey, Steph? You sure we can open anything? Anything we want?

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
Anything but the Jayer Richebourg!

MILES
She has a Richebourg? Mon dieu. I have completely underestimated Stephanie.

MAYA
Who do you think you're dealing with here?

Maya slips out a bottle of ESCHEVAUX.

MAYA
How about this?

Miles nods vigorously. Maya looks back and forth between Miles and the wine, her eyes narrowed. Then she slides it back in.

MAYA
Nope. I don't think we know each other well enough.
(picking out another bottle)
I'd say this guy's more our speed.

They rise, and Miles glances at the ANDREW MURRAY SYRAH and, raising his eyebrows, agrees. Maya begins opening it.

MAYA
So what gems do you have in your collection?

MILES
Not much of a collection really. I haven't had the wallet for that, so I sort of live bottle to bottle. But I've got a couple things I'm saving. I guess the star would be a 1961 Cheval Blanc.

MAYA
You've got a '61 Cheval Blanc that's just sitting there? Go get it.
(pushing him, playfully stern)
Right now. Hurry up...

Miles laughs, fights back a bit.

MAYA
Seriously, the '61s are peaking, aren't they? At least that's what I've read.

MILES
Yeah, I know.

MAYA
It might be too late already. What are you waiting for?

MILES
I don't know. Special occasion. With the right person. It was supposed to be for my tenth wedding anniversary.

Understanding, Maya considers her response.

MAYA
The day you open a '61 Cheval Blanc, that's the special occasion.

MILES
How long have you been into wine?

MAYA
I started to get serious about seven years ago.

MILES
What was the bottle that did it?

MAYA
Eighty-eight Sassicaia.

Miles whistles and raises his eyebrows. Maya pours, and they clink their glasses together before savoring the wine.

MILES
Wow. We gotta give it a moment, but this is tasty. Really good. How about you?

MAYA
(tastes again)
I think they overdid it a bit. Too much alcohol. Overwhelms the fruit.

MILES
(tasting again, impressed)
Yeah, I'd say you're right on the money.

Then Miles absently scans the REFRIGERATOR DOOR and spots a PHOTO of Stephanie holding a LITTLE GIRL.

MILES
Is this Stephanie's kid? Sure is cute.

MAYA
Yeah, Siena's a sweetie.

MILES
Is she sleeping or...?

MAYA
She's with her grandmother. She's with Steph's mom. She spends a lot of time over there. Steph's... well, she's Stephanie.

Jack's voice-over voice from the other room...

JACK (O.S.)
"And now for a low, low 4.8% APR..."

...is followed by PEALS OF LAUGHTER.

MAYA
You got kids?

MILES
Who me? Nah, I'd just fuck them up. That was the one unpolluted part of my divorce -- no kids.

MAYA

Yeah, same here.

Maya nods as she sips again, looking distant for a moment, thinking about something else.

MAYA
Let's go in there.

Maya takes the bottle, and they wander into --

INT. STEPHANIE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack and Stephanie are gone. From a distant bedroom comes more laughter.

MAYA
Looks like our friends are hitting it off.

While Maya goes to turn down the STEREO, Miles sits on the couch. Maya's shirt rides up as she crouches, giving Miles a glimpse of the small of HER BACK.

She takes a seat opposite Miles on the couch. They look at each other without speaking. Just what is the vibe here?

MAYA
It's kind of weird sitting here with you in Stephanie's house. All those times you came into the restaurant. It's like you're a real person now. Almost.

MILES
Yeah, I know. It's kind of weird. Out of context.

MAYA
Yeah, weird. But great.

MILES
Yeah. Definitely.

An awkward silence, broken by Maya.

MAYA
So what's your novel about?

MILES
Well, it's a little difficult to summarize. It begins as a first-person account of a guy taking care of his father after a stroke. Kind of based on personal experience, but only loosely.

MAYA

What's the title?

MILES
"The Day After Yesterday."

MAYA
Oh. You mean... today?

MILES
Um... yeah but it's more...

MAYA
So is it kind of about death and mortality, or...?

MILES
Mrnmm, yeah... but not really. It shifts around a lot. Like you also start to see everything from the point of view of the father. And some other stuff happens, some parallel narrative, and then it evolves -- or devolves -- into a kind of a Robbe-Grillet mystery -- you know, with no real resolution.

MAYA
Wow. Anyway, I think it's amazing you're getting it published. Really. I know how hard it is. Just to write it even.

MILES
(squeezing it out)
Yeah. Thanks.

MAYA
Like me, I have this stupid paper due on Friday, and as usual I'm freaked out about it. Just like in high school. It never changes.

MILES
A paper?

MAYA
Yeah. I'm working on a masters in horticulture. Chipping away at it.

MILES
Horticulture? Wow. I didn't know there was a college here.

MAYA
I commute to San Luis Obispo twice a week.

MILES
So... you want to work for a winery or something someday?

MAYA
Well...

MILES
I do have a copy of the manuscript in the car. It's not fully proofed, but if you're okay with a few typos...

MAYA
Oh yeah. Who cares? I'm the queen of typos.
(sipping the wine)
Wow, this is really starting to open up. What do you think?

MILES
My palate's kind of shot, but from what I can tell, I'd dub it pretty damn good.

MAYA
Can I ask you a personal question?

MILES
(bracing himself)
Sure.

MAYA
Why are you so into Pinot? It's like a thing with you.

Miles laughs at first, then smiles wistfully at the question. He searches for the answer in his glass and begins slowly.

MILES
I don't know. It's a hard grape to grow. As you know. It's thin-skinned, temperamental, ripens early. It's not a survivor like Cabernet that can grow anywhere and thrive even when neglected. Pinot needs constant care and attention and in fact can only grow in specific little tucked-away corners of the world. And only the most patient and nurturing growers can do it really, can tap into Pinot's most fragile, delicate qualities. Only when someone has taken the time to truly understand its potential can Pinot be coaxed into its fullest expression. And when that happens, its flavors are the most haunting and brilliant and subtle and thrilling

and ancient on the planet.

Maya has found this answer revealing and moving.

MILES
I mean, Cabernets can be powerful and exalting, but they seem prosaic to me for some reason. By comparison. How about you?

MAYA
What about me?

MILES
I don't know. Why are you into wine?

MAYA
I suppose I got really into wine originally through my ex-husband. He had a big, kind of show-off cellar. But then I found out that I have a really sharp palate, and the more I drank, the more I liked what it made me think about.

MILES
Yeah? Like what?

MAYA
Like what a fraud he was.

Miles laughs.

MAYA
No, but I do like to think about the life of wine, how it's a living thing. I like to think about what was going on the year the grapes were growing, how the sun was shining that summer or if it rained... what the weather was like. I think about all those people who tended and picked the grapes, and if it's an old wine, how many of them must be dead by now. I love how wine continues to evolve, how every time I open a bottle it's going to taste different than if I had opened it on any other day. Because a bottle of wine is actually alive -- it's constantly evolving and gaining complexity. That is, until it peaks -- like your '61 -- and begins its steady, inevitable decline. And it tastes so fucking good.

Now it is Miles's turn to be swept away. Maya's face tells

us the moment is right, but Miles remains frozen. He needs another sign, and Maya is bold enough to offer it: reaches out and places one hand atop his.

MILES
(pointing)
Bathroom over there?

MAYA
Yeah.

Miles gets up and walks out. Maya sighs and gets and American Spirit out of her purse.

INT. STEPHANIE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

The bathroom's a MESS -- the shower curtain is filthy, and the chipped and water-stained tub is filled with CHILDREN'S BATH TOYS.

Miles is bent over the sink splashing water on his face, trying to sober up and gather his courage. He stands, and without drying his face, presses his palms against his cheeks. Then he takes a deep breath and drops his hands.

MILES
You are such a loser. Come on!

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Miles comes out of the bathroom and looks for Maya, but she's not there.

Then he hears a noise from the kitchen, so he goes through the door into --

INT. STEPHANIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Maya is at the sink, filling a glass with water.

MAYA
I was just getting some water. You want some water?

Miles goes to stand by her and accepts a glass of water. Just as she's about to fill a second glass, he stops her and looks her in the eye, trying to recapture a moment that is long gone.

He kisses her and she kisses back, but the whole thing feels strained and awkward.

After a few seconds, Maya breaks away.

MAYA
Nice.

But instead of resuming the kiss, she steps past him, heading back into the living room.

MAYA (O.S.)
I should probably get going.

Miles realizes he's blown it and silently berates himself.

INT. SAAB - NIGHT

Miles drives down the hill behind Maya's car, which leads him through this very rural road.

EXT. WHERE THE ROAD MEETS THE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Maya's car comes to a stop just ahead of the Saab. She puts it in PARK and gets out.

AT THE SAAB --

Miles rolls down his window as Maya leans over.

MAYA
You know how to get back to the Windmill, right?

MILES
Got it.

MAYA
I had a good time tonight, Miles. I really did.

MILES
Good. So did I.

MAYA
Okay. See you around.

MILES
Um... did you still want to read my novel?

MAYA
Oh, yeah. Sure. Of course.

Miles turns to the backseat, locates a large MANUSCRIPT BOX, and hands it to Maya.

MAYA
Wow. Great.

He turns around again, produces a SECOND BOX, and hands it over as well.

MILES
Hope you like it. Feel free to stop

reading at any time. I'll take no offense.

MAYA
Goodnight, Miles.

She gives him a friendly peck on the cheek.

After she gets back in her car, she heads in one direction while Miles heads in the opposite.

OMIT.

UNDER BLACK --

TUESDAY

Jack's cellphone RINGS.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

NOW EARLY MORNING --

Still fully clothed, Miles staggers across the room.

Fishing the phone out of Jack's windbreaker pocket, he looks at the CALLER ID: "Erganian, Christine" and the number. He briefly considers his options -- answer it? shut it off? -- before placing it atop Jack's suitcase.

The moment he lies back down on the bed, the MOTEL PHONE RINGS. An old DIGITAL CLOCK next to it reads 7:10.

As Miles closes his eyes and pulls the pillow over his aching head, we again --

FADE TO BLACK.

LATER --

VROOM! Outside a roaring MOTORCYCLE comes to a stop. Then over the sound of an IDLING ENGINE come familiar if indistinct VOICES and LAUGHTER.

Miles opens his bleary eyes and listens.

FOOTSTEPS pound on the balcony outside, and Jack lets himself in, flushed and exuberant.

JACK
Fucking chick is unbelievable. Un-be-lieve-able!

He pounds on the wall, then goes into the bathroom and without closing the door unzips his pants to PEE.

JACK

Goddamn, Miles, she is nasty. Nasty nasty nasty.

MILES
Well, I'm glad you got it out of your system. Congratulations. Mission accomplished.

A hungover Miles gets up and looks out the door Jack has left open. Down in the parking lot he sees --

STEPHANIE

atop a mid-sized MOTORCYCLE, wearing a weathered fringed suede jacket. She gives him a big friendly wave.

MILES

returns the wave and goes back inside.

MILES
You didn't invite Stephanie to come with us, did you?

With a FLUSH Jack emerges from the bathroom and opens his bag.

JACK
Oh, hey, change of plans. Steph's off today, so she and I are going on a hike.

MILES
We were supposed to play golf.

JACK
You go. In fact, use my clubs. They're brand new -- gift from Christine's dad.
(slapping some cash on the dresser)
It's on me. Oh, say, by the way, Stephanie and me were thinking we'd all go to the Hitching Post tonight and sit at one of Maya's tables, and she'll bring us some great wines and then we can all --

MILES
(sitting down)
Count me out.

JACK
Oooh, I see. Didn't go so good last night, huh? That's a shocker. You mean getting drunk and calling Victoria didn't put you in the mood?

You dumb fuck. Your divorce pain's getting real old real fast, dude.

Miles looks down. Jack heads for the door.

JACK
Later.

MILES
Yeah, well, maybe you should check your messages first.

Jack stops, eyeing Miles suspiciously. Miles tosses Jack his phone. Jack flips it open and scrolls down with his thumb. He doesn't like what he sees.

JACK
Oh, boy.

MILES
(pointing at the room phone)
She's been leaving messages here too.

JACK
Yeah. Okay.

He SNAPS the phone shut and puts it back.

MILES
You should call her.

JACK
I will.
(heading out the door)
See ya!

MILES
Right now.

JACK
Okay! Jesus!

Jack picks up his phone, sits on the bed and looks defiantly at Miles.

JACK
I've got no problem calling her.

Now Jack closes his eyes and brings the heel of his hand to his forehead as he begins to concoct the BIG LIE.

JACK
(opening his phone)
Wait outside, will you?

EXT. WINDMILL INN - DAY

Miles wanders out and looks down at Stephanie.

STEPHANIE
That was fun last night.

MILES
Yeah. Good food. You've got quite a wine collection. Very impressive.

STEPHANIE
Thanks. Hey, I talked to Maya this morning. She said she had a good time too. You should call her.

Miles says nothing.

STEPHANIE
Where's Jack?

MILES
He had to make a phone call.

Stephanie cuts her bike's engine and climbs off, propping it up on the kickstand.

STEPHANIE
So what are you up to today, Miles?

MILES
Just kickin' back, I guess. I don't know. Jack and I were supposed to go golfing.

STEPHANIE
Huh.

MILES
Yeah, I reserved the tee time about a month ago.

STEPHANIE
Oops. Sorry.

MILES
You golf?

STEPHANIE
Me? No, I think it's kind of a stupid game. I mean, at least, I could never get into it. I tried it once.

MILES
Huh. Jack loves golf. Crazy about it.

Just then Jack cracks open the motel room door.

JACK
(hushed)
Hey Miles. Miles.

Miles ducks back inside.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

JACK
Do you have that other condom?

Miles reaches into his wallet and hands over the little foil square.

MILES
What'd Christine say?

JACK
Lucked out -- got voice mail.
Everything's cool.

EXT. WINDMILL INN - CONTINUOUS

Jack bounds out of the room and down the stairs like a child on Christmas morning.

Miles watches Jack climb on the bike behind Stephanie, grasping her waist.

Stephanie and Jack PEEL OUT, leaving Miles alone on the balcony.

CLOSE ON MILES --

As we begin to hear a SNIPPING sound which carries us to --

EXT. MOTEL ROOM BALCONY - DAY

Miles sits outside carefully trimming his toenails. SNIP, SNIP, SNIP. MUSIC BEGINS for this mournful montage of solitude.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Miles takes a styrofoam cup and helps himself to a cup of complimentary COFFEE from a PUMP THERMOS.

Then he takes a look at the rack of pamphlets of local TOURIST ATTRACTIONS -- a water park, a mystery cave, and of course winery after winery.

EXT. WINDMILL INN JACUZZI - DAY

Amid turbulent water, Miles corrects his students' papers. He is alone in the tub, but at the nearby pool STOCKY KIDS

play noisily with SUPER-SOAKERS.

OVER MILES'S SHOULDER --

The PAPER he's reading is marked up with circled spelling errors, and one entire paragraph has been crossed out. Finding a new error, Miles writes "NO!!!"

CAMERA PANS to reveal a STACK of papers already heavily marked with corrections, some of them mottled with water stains.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Miles FLOSSES, his lips pulled back into a grotesque moue. Then he brushes with a SONIC-CARE TOOTHBRUSH.

LATER --

Miles checks his machine.

SYNTHESIZED VOICE (O.S.)
No new messages.

He hangs up, disgusted.

EXT. CHINA PANDA RESTAURANT - DAY

A small Buellton eatery.

INT. CHINA PANDA - DAY

The only customer right now, Miles eats awkwardly with his chopsticks.

EXT. DRIVING RANGE - DAY

Miles DRIVES ball after ball, unsuccessfully trying to release his frustration.

EXT. BUCOLIC ROAD - DAY

The Saab roars past us, perhaps going a little too fast.

INT. SAAB - CONTINUOUS

Whistling absently as he drives, Miles leans over to turn the radio on and fiddle around to find a good station. Then all of a sudden --

WHUMP! The car has struck something with a hideous sound followed immediately by the receding "ARF-ARF-ARF-ARF" of an injured DOG in the Saab's wake. Miles applies the BRAKES.

EXT. BUCOLIC ROAD - DAY

Miles gets out of his car just in time to see --

A DOG

scampering into the nearby woods. Miles looks around -- has anyone seen him? Is there a nearby residence? Finding nothing, Miles momentarily weighs his options before finally GIVING CHASE.

He follows the path of the dog into --

EXT. ROADSIDE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Still hearing occasional distant barking, Miles finds his way among the trees and bushes, looking in vain for the ill-fated cur.

After a frenetic search, Miles reluctantly gives up and heads back.

OMIT.

EXT. BUCOLIC ROAD - DAY

Miles has returned to where he hit the dog. Just then, Miles notices TWO MEXICAN CHILDREN watching him from just down the road. They disappear into the bushes.

Looking like a criminal, Miles trots back to the Saab climbs behind the wheel and speeds away.

EXT. WINDMILL INN - DAY

The Saab pulls into the parking lot.

EXT./INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Miles trudges up the stops to the room. He opens the door and sees --

JACK

atop Stephanie, plowing her fertile fields. Despite the interruption, their pace does not alter.

JACK
Not now! Not now!

Miles quickly shuts the door.

INT. WINDMILL SPORTS BAR LOUNGE - DAY

Miles pours himself another glass of Pinot. Jack comes in and spots his morose friend.

JACK
Hey, there you are.

MILES

Yep.

JACK
What're you drinking?

Jack reaches over to check out the bottle's label. Miles remains cool to Jack's amiability.

JACK
Any good?

Miles shrugs.

JACK
(to the bartender)
Could I get a glass please?
(to Miles)
Stephanie took me out into the Pinot fields today. It was awesome. I think I finally got a handle on the whole process, from the soil to the vine to the -- what do you call it? -- selection and harvest. And the whole, you know, big containers where they mix it. We even ate Pinot grapes right off the vine.
(the new expert)
Still a little sour but already showing potential for great structure. Stephanie really knows her shit, Miles.

Jack now has his glass and pours himself some wine.

MILES
Where is Stephanie?

JACK
Upstairs. Getting cleaned up.

MILES
What the fuck are you doing?

JACK
What?

MILES
With this chick.

Jack just looks at him.

MILES
Does she know about Saturday?

JACK
Um... not exactly. But I've been honest. I haven't told her I'm

available. And she knows this trip up here is only for a few days. Besides...

Jack stops short in a rare instance of self-censorship.

MILES
Besides what?

JACK
Well... I don't know, just... the wedding.

MILES
What?

JACK
Well, I've been doing some thinking.

MILES
Oh, you've been thinking. And?

JACK
I may have to put the wedding on hold is all.

Miles looks at him with incredulity.

JACK
I fully realize that making a change like that might be tricky for certain people to accept at first, but life is short, Miles. I've got to be sure I'm doing the right thing before taking such a big step. And not just for my sake. I'm thinking about Christine's feelings too. I take marriage very seriously -- always have. That's why I've never done it before. The day I get married, it's going to be the real thing.

Miles just looks at his friend, waiting for more.

JACK
Being with Stephanie has opened my eyes. She's not uptight or controlling. She's just cool. Things are so easy with her. Smells different. Tastes different. Fucks different. Fucks like an animal. I'm telling you, I went deep last night, Miles. Deep.

MILES
Deep.

Miles draws a long sigh.

JACK
Don't get all judgmental on me. This is my deal. It's my life, and it's my call.

They fall silent for a moment. Then --

JACK
I was hoping to get some understanding from you. And I'm not getting it.

MILES
Understanding of what?

JACK
Like I might be in love with another woman.

MILES
In love? Twenty-four hours with some wine-pourer chick and you think you're in love? And give up everything?

JACK
Look who's talking. You've been there.

MILES
Yes I have, and do I look like a happy man? Was all that drama with Brenda a happy thing for me to do? Huh? Was it? Is she a part of my life now?

JACK
This is totally different. I'm talking about avoiding what you're talking about. That's the distinction. I have not made the commitment yet. I am not married. I have not said the words. In a few days, I might get married, and if I do, then I won't be doing stuff like this anymore. Otherwise, what's the whole point of getting married?

MILES
And what about Stephanie? She's a woman -- with a kid. A single mom. What do you think she's looking for? Huh?

JACK
(interrupting)
Here's what I'm thinking. We move up here, you and me, buy a vineyard.

You design your own wine; I'll handle the business side. Then you get inspired and write a new novel. As for me, if an audition comes along, hell, LA'S two hours away. Not even.

MILES
You're crazy. You've gone crazy.

JACK
What do you care anyway? You don't even like Christine.

MILES
What? Of course I like Christine.

JACK
You said she was shallow. Yeah, and a nouveau riche.

MILES
That was three years ago after that first party!

JACK
Look, Miles, all I know is I'm an actor. All I have is my instinct.
(his hand on his chest)
My intuition -- that's all I have. And you're asking me to go against it. And that's just wrong.

Just then Stephanie walks in. She cozies up to Jack, and he kisses the top of her head.

STEPHANIE
Hi, guys. We should probably get going.

MILES
Where?

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DUSK

CLOSE ON A VIDEO GAME MONITOR

as a crazy car races through the obstacle-ridden track, often leaving the road, much like Jack's libido.

ZOOM OUT

to reveal six-year-old SIENA seated in Jack's lap as they drive together. A delighted Siena laughs and giggles.

Miles sits nearby with Stephanie and her fifty-something, two-pack-a-day MOTHER CARYL.

CARYL
Stephanie's heard this a thousand times, but if I'd done what I wanted and I'd bought up in Santa Maria when I had the chance, I would have made a fortune when they put in that outlet center and that Home Depot.
(a drag off her cigarette, then to Stephanie)
Your father knew it too, but he was a fucking chickenshit. Always was.

Caryl looks over her shoulder, her gaze drawn to Jack and Siena, so completely happy together.

Caryl exhales a puff of smoke as she watches. Stephanie is equally enthralled. Miles takes it all in, trying his best not to shake his head in disgust.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY PARKING LOT - DUSK

Caryl is behind the wheel of her OLDSMOBILE as Stephanie gets Siena buckled up in the backseat. Jack pulls Miles aside.

JACK
Listen, I'm going to make sure Steph and Siena get home safe, and then maybe we'll hook up with you later, okay?

MILES
(dispirited)
Sure, whatever. Maybe I'll catch a movie.

Stephanie kisses Miles's cheek before getting in the car next to her mom.

STEPHANIE
See you, Miles. You take care.

MILES
Bye, Stephanie. Bye, Siena, Caryl.

SIENA AND CARYL
Bye, Miles.

As he gets in the car --

JACK
Call me on my cell if you go out.

MILES
Yeah.

Miles watches them drive away, then heads toward his Saab.

INT. MINI-MART - DUSK

CLOSE ON THE COUNTER --

as Miles places a box of security ENVELOPES, a packet of BEEF JERKY and some TROPICAL FRUIT SKITTLES.

WIDE --

Miles points over the CASHIER'S SHOULDER.

MILES
And could I get a Barely Leqal?

As the cashier reaches for the magazine --

MILES
NO, um, the new one.

INT. MOTEL ROOM BATHROOM - NIGHT

Miles is once again FLOSSING.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

POP! Miles opens a bottle of Pinot and pours himself a glass. He carries it to bed, takes a nice big slug, lies down on the bed and opens his magazine.

NOW SNEEZING ATOP THE BED -- ANGLE ON TOP OF HIM --

The Barely Legal face down on his chest, Miles awakens with a start and looks at the clock-radio. He thinks a moment, takes a deep breath, and bounds off the bed.

CLOSE ON A WATER-SAVER SHOWER HEAD --

as little needles of water come at us.

THROUGH THE BATHROOM DOOR --

Miles takes a nice hot SHOWER. But wait -- he has forgotten to put the shower curtain inside the tub. A closer look reveals a growing PUDDLE OF WATER on the floor.

EXT. THE HITCHING POST - NIGHT

Miles walks across the parking lot. He pauses before entering, then forces himself to take the leap.

INT. THE HITCHING POST - NIGHT

Miles affects nonchalance as he searches briefly for Maya. He continues on into the BAR.

GARY

How's it hanging, Miles?

MILES
You know me. I love it up here. How about you?

GARY
Busy night for a Tuesday. We had a busload of retired folks in on a wine tour. Usually they're not too rowdy, but tonight there was something going on. Full moon or something. What can I get you?

MILES
Highliner.

GARY
Glass or bottle?

MILES
(considers, then --)
Bottle.

GARY
You got it.

MILES
Say, is Maya working?

GARY
Maya? Haven't seen her. I think she's off tonight. Say, where's your buddy?

Miles just smiles.

WIDE --

Gary serves Miles, alone at the bar. Miles takes his first drink.

MILES
Oh, that's tasty.

EXT. HITCHING POST - NIGHT

It's closing time. The front door flies open, and Miles staggers out sideways. Gary follows him out, concerned.

GARY
You okay, Miles?

MILES
I'm good.

Miles heads in the wrong direction at first, then realizes his mistake and steers himself back toward the Windmill.

FADE OUT.

UNDER BLACK, A CARD --

WEDNESDAY

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The door bursts open, and Jack comes bounding in.

JACK
Come on, dude. Let's go golfing! I got us in at Alisal.

Miles comes to, very hungover.

MILES
That's a public course.
(then --)
No Stephanie?

JACK
She's working. I need a break anyway. She's getting a little clingy.
(magnanimous)
This is our day!

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

WHACK! Jack TEES OFF with a manly athletic swing and shades his eyes to watch the ball's trajectory.

JACK
Crap.

Miles, disheveled and sullen, approaches the teebox, sticks a tee in the ground and sets his ball.

JACK
Did you ever got ahold of Maya yesterday?

MILES
Nope.

JACK
She likes you, man. Stephanie'll tell you.

MILES
(preparing to swing)
Can you give me some room here?

JACK
(stepping back)
Oh yeah. Sure.

Miles lifts his club.

JACK
You know, in life you gotta strike when the iron's hot.

MILES
Thanks, Jack.

Miles refocuses and SWINGS just as Jack offers more helpful advice.

JACK
Don't whiff it.

WHACK! Despite the distraction, Miles manages to make a good, long drive.

JACK
Nice shot.

MILES
You're an asshole.

NOW ON THE FAIRWAY --

Jack is pouring two Dixie cups of wine as Miles prepares to take his next swing.

JACK
What about your agent? Hear anything yet?

MILES
Nope.

JACK
What do you think's going on?

MILES
Could be anything.

JACK
Been checking your messages?

MILES
Obsessively.

JACK
Huh.

MILES
They probably think my book is such a piece of shit that it's not even worthy of a response. I guess I'll just have to learn how to kiss off

three years of my life.

JACK
But you don't know yet, so your negativity's a bit premature, wouldn't you say?

Miles says nothing.

JACK
Or fuck those New York publishers. Publish it yourself. I'll chip in. Just get it out there, get it reviewed, get it in libraries. Let the public decide.

Giving Jack a look that says Jack has no idea what he's talking about, Miles takes a stance over the ball and focuses.

JACK
Don't come over the top. Stay still.

MILES
Shut up.

JACK
Just trying to be helpful.
(a moment later)
It's all about stillness, Miles. Inner quiet.

Miles drops his club and turns to Jack.

MILES
Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! What's the matter with you, man? SHUT UP!

JACK
Why are you so hostile? I know you're frustrated with your life right now, but you can choose not to be so hostile.
(holding out a cup of wine)
Here.

Still fuming, Miles begrudgingly accepts the wine and has a taste. He's immediately distracted from his woes.

MILES
What is it?

JACK
I don't know. Got it from Stephanie.

Miles downs the rest and is intrigued by the taste.

MILES
Huh. Let me see the label.

Suddenly a golfball THUDS against the hard fairway directly behind them.

JACK
(whirling around)
What the fuck?

Way back on the tee box, some 200 yards away, are a FOURSOME of two couples. One of the MEN is waving his driver.

HUSBAND #1
(shouting, barely audible)
Hurry it up, will you?

Jack looks at Miles, the two incredulous.

MILES
Fucker hit into us.

JACK
(yelling)
Hey, asshole! That's not cool!

MILES
Throw me his ball.

Jack walks over, picks up the offending ball and tosses it to Miles. Miles gets out his 3-wood and -- THWOCK! -- cuts it back low and hard.

JACK
Nice shot.

THE COUPLES

duck for cover as the ball whistles over their heads.

JACK AND MILES

laugh hard.

THE TWO HUSBANDS

climb in their CART and hasten down the fairway toward Jack and Miles.

JACK

watches their approach, grinning.

JACK
Oh, this is going to be fun.
(jerking a driver

from his bag)
This is going to be fun.

Jack heads in their direction, brandishing the club like a medieval knight with a mace.

As the husbands get a look at this sight, they turn their cart around and speed back toward their wives.

JACK
Hit into us again, motherfuckers, and I'll ass-rape all four of you!

EXT. GOLF COURSE CLUBHOUSE - DAY

Jack and Miles are turning in their cart and hoisting their clubs over their shoulders.

JACK
Just don't give up on Maya. Cool smart chicks like that --they like persistence.

MILES
I don't want to talk about it.

JACK
All I know is she's beautiful. Lots of soul. Perfect for you. I'm not going to feel good about this trip until you guys hook up. Don't you just want to feel that cozy little box grip down on your Johnson?

Nearby a GOLFER is with his YOUNG SON.

GOLFER
Hey, you mind keeping it down, buddy?

EXT. GOLF COURSE PARKING LOT - DAY

Miles and Jack walk toward their car.

JACK
Is it the money thing?

MILES
Is what the money thing?

JACK
With Maya.

MILES
Well, yeah, that's part of it. Woman finds out how I live, that I'm not a published author, that I'm a liar essentially, then yeah, any interest

is gonna evaporate real quick. If you don't have money at my age, you're not even in the game. You're just a pasture animal waiting for the abattoir.

JACK
Is an abattoir like a... like a... what is that?

MILES
Slaughterhouse.

JACK
Abattoir. Huh. But you are going to get the good news this week about your book. I know you are. I can feel it.

Jack's CELLPHONE rings, and he checks the caller ID.

JACK
It's Steph.
(picking up)
Hey, baby. Yeah. Oh yeah. Yesssss. I mean I would, but let me see. Hey, Miles... Oh fuck it, we're going. We'll be right there. Me too.

He snaps his phone shut and turns to Miles.

JACK
We're on.

MILES
What's happening?

JACK
We're going to have some fun. Remember fun? We're going to have some of it. Okay?

MILES
What exactly are we going to do?

JACK
I said okay?

MILES
You have to tell me --

JACK
I SAID OKAY?

Miles finally smiles.

MILES

Okay.

OMITTED

BIG FUN MUSIC BEGINS OVER:

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS OLIVOS - DAY

A HIGH WIDE SHOT --

The Saab pulls up where Stephanie and Maya await with bottles of wine and a PICNIC BASKET. The girls climb into the back seat, and the car speeds away.

INT./EXT. THE SAAB - DAY

They're going FAST, hair whipping around.

MAYA
Hey, Miles, I heard you came by the restaurant last night looking for me.

MILES
Oh, yeah. No. I mean yeah, I stopped by for a drink. Didn't see you.

MAYA
I had class.

MILES
Well, nice to see you now.

MAYA
You too.

EXT. BEAUTIFUL ROAD - DAY

WHOOSH! That car's going a little too FAST!

INT./EXT. LA PURISIMA MISSION CHURCH

The two couples wander around this historic site.

EXT. IDYLLIC PICNIC SPOT - DAY INTO DUSK

The girls have led them to a beautiful spot.

IN A SERIES OF SHOTS --

we see the progress of their picnic. We don't hear them, but there is a growing intimacy about their interaction. Even Maya and Miles seem to be overcoming residual awkwardness from the other night. Jack and Stephanie lean on each other as they eat and sip wine.

Finally, the two couples are SILHOUETTED against the SUNSET.

EXT. WINERY #3 PARKING LOT - EVENING

The parking lot is crowded. The foursome join others headed toward the main building.

INT. WINERY #3 - EVENING

A LECTURE by British wine sage LESLIE BROUGH is in progress. He holds aloft a RIEDEL BURGUNDY GLASS containing one of the few but growing number of local reds worthy of his attention.

IN THE AUDIENCE --

As our foursome listen attentively, Jack leans over to Miles.

JACK
You ever actually read any of this guy's books?

MILES
He wrote a great one on Burgundy, and I used to get his newsletter, but then there were doubts about whether he does all his own tasting. Plus a couple of times he declared certain years vintages of the century, and they turned out to be turkeys. Fucker never retracted.

JACK
Huh.

Stephanie leans forward and signals to Maya with a YAWN or a GAGGING FINGER IN MOUTH that they hightail it. Although Miles protests at first, they stand and leave.

AT THE BACK OF THE ROOM --

Stephanie finds a DOOR which she tests to see whether it is open. It is! She leads her pals furtively inside --

INT. WINEMAKING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

This is an enormous, dimly-lit chamber filled with stainless steel FERMENTATION TANKS and stacks of OAK BARRELS.

As the two couples walk in the near-darkness, they are entranced. Maya takes Miles's hand and leads him away.

LATER --

In the background, Stephanie and Jack lean against a tank, kissing.

CAMERA DOLLIES to reveal Miles and Maya among the barrels in the foreground. They are shy with each other, on the verge

of kissing but holding back.

THE MUSIC CONTINUES...

INT. STEPHANIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

THREE BOTTLES OF WINE sit empty on the coffee table.

WIDE --

The four friends sit on the floor around the coffee table. They drink wine and pass a JOINT. Suddenly they explode in LAUGHTER.

A sleepy Siena appears at the hallway door rubbing her eyes. Stephanie gets up, but Jack stops her, gathers Siena in his arms, and takes her back to bed.

EXT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Saab pulls away from the house.

INT. SAAB - NIGHT

Miles sits in his own passenger seat as Maya tries her hand at the Saab.

EXT. MAYA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Maya leads Miles up her back stairway. They're both a little woozy from the hours of drinking.

AT THE DOOR --

Maya searches through her purse for her keys while Miles hovers directly behind her, staring at her ear. Her ear?

Just as Maya puts the key in the lock, he impulsively leans forward to kiss the nape of her neck. Maya's reaction is immediate -- she turns to embrace Miles, giving him a long KISS. Then she opens the door, pulls him inside and closes the door in our face.

The camera PANS to the nearby ROOFTOPS.

MUSIC ENDS AND SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

THE SAME VIEW BY DAY, SUPERIMPOSED WITH --

THURSDAY

The CAMERA PANS back to Maya's door, tilting down to find a blue-wrapped NEW YORK TIMES. The door opens, and Maya's hand picks up the newspaper. The CAMERA FOLLOWS Maya inside to --

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

It is a small, clean apartment furnished with simple taste.

Maya is dressed in a ROBE and holds a COFFEE MUG. She drops the paper on the dining table and continues into --

THE BEDROOM --

where Miles lies on his stomach DEAD TO THE WORLD. His stubbly face is squished against the mattress and he SNORES lightly.

Maya looks at him for a moment before shaking his foot.

EXT. FARMERS' MARKET - DAY

This is a weekly event in a big PARKING LOT -- organic produce, candles and incense, honey and cider.

Maya and Miles are shopping. Miles carries the bags.

EXT. ORCHARD - DAY

Across from each other at a PICNIC TABLE, and surrounded by the remnants of BREAKFAST, Miles and Maya read the NEWSPAPER. Miles is doing the CROSSWORD PUZZLE.

MAYA
You guys should stop by the restaurant for lunch today.

MILES
Great. What's the latest we can get there?

MAYA
About two-thirty.

MILES
Okay.

MAYA
(noticing)
Did you hear about this Bordeaux tasting dinner down in Santa Barbara Saturday night? It's a little pricey, but if you wanted to go, I'd be into it. Why don't you stay through the weekend?

Miles has just figured out a difficult clue. As he writes it down --

MILES
No, we've got to get back Friday for the rehearsal dinner.

MAYA
What rehearsal dinner?

Miles stops writing.

MAYA
Who's getting married?

INT./EXT. PARKING AREA NEAR THE ORCHARD - DAY

Maya leads the way toward the Saab.

MAYA
Were you ever going to say anything?

MILES
Of course I was. I mean, just now I could have made up some story, but I didn't. I told you the truth.

Maya turns to confront Miles with a look of "Give me a break." Miles reaches out to touch her.

MILES
Maya.

MAYA
(jerking away)
Don't touch me. Just take me home.

INT. SAAB - DAY

Miles drives, glancing occasionally at Maya, who stares straight ahead.

MILES
I've told him. I've told him over and over, but he's out of control.

MAYA
Do you know what he's been saying to her?

MILES
He's an actor, so it can't be good.

MAYA
Oh, just that he loves her. That she's the only woman who has ever really rocked his world. How he adores Siena. How he wants to move up here and get a place with the two of them and commute when he has to.

MILES
I'm sure he believed every word.

A stony silence.

MILES
Please believe me. I was even on the verge of telling you last night, but...

MAYA
But you wanted to fuck me first.

MILES
Oh, Maya. No.

MAYA
Yeah.

EXT. MAYA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Miles brings the car to a stop. Maya opens the door and begins to get out.

MAYA
You know, I just spent three years trying to extricate myself from a relationship that turned out to be full of deception. And I've been doing just fine.

MILES
And I haven't been with anyone since my divorce. This has been a big deal for me, Maya -- hanging out with you, and last night. I really like you, Maya. And I'm not Jack. I'm just his... his freshman roommate from San Diego State.

Maya wants to let Miles's words reach her, but she can't just yet.

MAYA
Could I have my paper, please?

Unsure what she wants at first, Miles reaches into the back seat for the New York Times. He hands it to her and watches until she goes inside.

EXT. WINDMILL INN - DAY

Miles pulls up and parks.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

As Miles enters, a shirtless Jack drops the Barely Legal and is immediately upon him, grabbing him in a big BEARHUG. The TV is on, perhaps showing an E! True Hollywood Story.

JACK
Yo! Yo! Here's my boy! Here's my

boy! Who's your daddy, boy? Who is yo' daddy?

MILES
Put me down, Jack.

Jack continues his paean to Miles's triumphant night.

MILES
I said put me down. Jack!

Still gripping Miles in a bearhug, Jack flings the both of them onto the bed. Now on top of Miles, Jack KISSES both cheeks.

JACK
I'm so proud of you! Let me love you!

Now they get up off the bed.

JACK
So tell me everything. Details. I like details.

MILES
No.

JACK
What?

MILES
It's private.

JACK
You're kidding, right? Tell me what happened, you fucker, or I'll tie your dick in a knot.

MILES
Let's leave it alone.

Jack looks at Miles, his face frozen with incomprehension.

JACK
You didn't get any, did you?
(off Miles's silence)
You're a homo.

MILES
Just stop, okay? Make something up, and that's what happened. Whatever you want. Write my confession, and I'll sign it. Just stop pushing me all the time! I can't take it! You're an infant! This is all a big party for you, but not for me! This is

serious. And you -- Just... leave me alone, okay? You're fucking me up.

JACK
Wow. Okay. Calm down. Sorry.

Miles begins to calm down. Jack grows concerned and sensitively puts one arm around his friend.

JACK
Did you have trouble performing? Yeah, that's...

MILES
Shut up! Shut up, Jack!

The phone RINGS and both men look at it, silenced by the ominous sound.

MILES
Don't answer it.

But Jack is drawn to it as though enticed by a strange game of Russian roulette.

MILES
I'm telling you, don't.

Jack picks up the receiver and puts it to his ear.

JACK
Hello? Oh, hey, honey. How you doing? Uh-huh. Uh-huh.
(mouthing)
Christine.

Miles lies on his bed and clamps both hands over his ears. His face is dark with resentment.

JACK
Listen, honey. Let me call you back. Miles and I are in the middle of something. No, it's nothing serious -- Miles is just having one of his freak-outs. Yeah. Love you too. I'll call you right back.

Jack hangs up.

MILES
This whole week has gone sour. It isn't turning out like it was supposed to.
(deadly serious)
I want to go home.

JACK

Who's being selfish now? I'm the one getting married. I thought this week was supposed to be about me.

MILES
We gotta slow down.
(closing his eyes)
I'm so tired. Let's just get out of here.

JACK
I know what you need.

INT. SEARS - DAY

Jack watches Miles be fitted for SNEAKERS. A SALES ASSOCIATE ties Miles's laces.

SALES ASSOCIATE
There you go.

Miles gets up and walks in a circle.

MILES
Do you like them?

JACK
Yeah, they're great. Sporty. They're really sporty.

MILES
Are they too sporty?

INT. MALL - DAY

The boys exit Sears, Miles wearing his new shoes and carrying a PLASTIC BAG with a string handle.

JACK
Feel better?

Miles shrugs.

JACK
(noticing something)
Oh here, wait a second. I want to run in here real quick.

He heads toward a TOYS STORE.

JACK
(over his shoulder)
I want to get something for Siena.

Mildly concerned, Miles watches Jack go into the store.

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

Miles is slumped in the passenger seat as Jack drives. They pass a BIG COMMERCIAL WINERY. Jack slows down, preparing to turn in.

JACK
How about this one? We didn't hit this one.

MILES
Yeah, it's Frass Canyon. It's a joke.

JACK
You ever actually been in there, Miles?

MILES
I don't have to.

JACK
(turning the wheel)
I say we check it out. You never know.

EXT. LARGE WINERY PARKING LOT - DAY

The Saab finds a place in the large parking lot. A TOUR BUS, whose flank reads "Solvang Wine Tours," is in the process of letting out WINE TOURISTS, many of them elderly.

INT. LARGE WINERY - DAY

The room boasts not only a large TASTING BAR but also display after display of t-shirts, golf shirts, olive oils, chocolate sauces and other gourmet tourist items emblazoned with the winery's logo.

In the corner an ACOUSTIC GUITARIST with a small amp plays soothing Windham Hill-ish music.

The tasting bar is packed three-deep with TASTERS attended to by HARRIED POURERS.

Finally the POURER gets to their glasses. Miles chews a sip and swallows, then downs the rest in a single gulp.

MILES
Tastes like the back of a fucking LA schoolbus. Probably didn't de-stem, hoping for some semblance of concentration, crushed it up with leaves and mice, wound up with this rancid tar and turpentine mouthwash bullshit. Fucking Raid.

JACK
I don't know. Tastes okay to me.

(looking at the tasting sheet)
Hey, they got a reserve pinot.

MILES
Let me use your phone.

JACK
(handing it over)
What's up?

MILES
I can't take it anymore. I've got to call Evelyn.

EXT. LARGE WINERY - DAY

Walking across the lawn outside, Miles holds the cellphone to his ear.

ASSISTANT (ON THE PHONE)
Evelyn Berman-Silverman's office.

MILES
Hi, it's Miles.

ASSISTANT (ON THE PHONE)
Oh, hi, Miles. Let me see if I can get her.
(a moment later)
You're in luck. I'll put you through.

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE)
Miles.

MILES
Hey, Evelyn, it's your favorite client.

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE)
How's the trip?

MILES
Good, good. Drinking some good wines and kicking back, you know. So what's happening? Still no word?

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE)
Actually there is word. I spoke to Keith Kurtzman this morning.

MILES
And?

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE)
And... they're passing. Conundrum's passing. He said they really liked

it. They really wanted to do it, but they just couldn't figure out how to market it. He said it was a tough call.

MILES
Huh.

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE)
I'm sorry, Miles.
(off his silence)
So I don't know where that leaves us. I'm not sure how much more mileage I can get out of continuing to submit it. I think it's one of those unfortunate cases in the business right now -- a fabulous book with no home. The whole industry's gotten gutless. It's not about the quality of the books. It's about the marketing.

Miles is at a loss for words. A distant RUMBLE begins to sound, the familiar harbinger of an anxiety attack.

EXT. DEEP CANYON - INSERT

Once again we see the narrow ROPE BRIDGE extending vertiginously across a great CHASM.

EXT. LARGE WINERY - BACK AGAIN

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE)
Are you there? Miles?

MILES
Yeah, I'm here.

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE)
I'm sorry, Miles. We did all we could. You've been a real trooper.
(loudly, to her assistant)
Tell him I'll call back.

MILES
So I guess that's it.

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE)
You're a wonderful writer, Miles. Don't be discouraged.

MOMENTS LATER --

Miles STAGGERS toward the tasting room, unpocketing his Xanax and downing a couple, as Evelyn's clichés of consolation continue in his head.

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE)
Just hang in there, and who knows? After you get something else published, we can revisit this one. And next time we can try a different title.

Once back at the tent, he leans against it in a vain attempt to steady himself. The RUMBLE grows deafening.

INT. LARGE WINERY - DAY

Now inside, Miles grabs the first DIRTY WINE GLASS he finds and shakes it out as he approaches the closest tasting station. He pushes his way to front.

The pourer offers the usual one-ounce dollop. Miles jacks it back, immediately extending his glass for more.

MILES
Hit me again.

The same small amount is poured and downed. Once again Miles holds out his glass.

MILES
Pour me a full glass. I'll pay for it.

POURER
This is a tasting, sir. Not a bar.

Miles slams a TWENTY-DOLLAR BILL on the table.

MILES
Just give me a full goddamn pour.

The pourer turns away to serve another party. Miles looks around indignantly, as though everyone should be sympathetic to this injustice.

Now Miles boldly reaches over and pours himself a glass right up to the brim and beyond.

POURER
Sir, what are you doing?

MILES
I told you I need a drink.

POURER
Then buy a bottle and go outside.

The pourer grabs Miles by the wrist before he can drink.

POURER
Put the glass down.

In the ensuing struggle, the wine spills, and everyone nearby steps back.

POURER
You're going to have to leave, sir.

The pourer signals to a SECURITY GUY at the door. Across the room Jack notices the disturbance and heads over.

Miles hoists up the SPIT BUCKET, holds it aloft and starts to GUZZLE it. Wine cascades down the sides of his face, onto his shirt and even onto his shiny new shoes.

The Security Guy yanks the bucket away from Miles, and drags him toward the EXIT. Jack catches up.

JACK
(to the horrified onlookers)
It's all right. His mother just died.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Two PELICANS soar low over the water. One of the DIVES, crashing into the water and disappearing from view.

Jack and Miles sit on the hood of the Saab, gazing at the ocean, sharing a bottle of wine.

JACK
Just write another one. You have lots of ideas, right?

MILES
No, I'm finished. I'm not a writer. I'm a middle-school English teacher. I'm going to spend the rest of my life grading essays and reading the works of others. It's okay. I like books. The world doesn't give a shit what I have to say. I'm unnecessary.
(a dark laugh)
I'm so insignificant, I can't even kill myself.

JACK
What's that supposed to mean?

MILES
You know -- Hemingway, Sexton, Woolf, Plath, Delmore Schwartz. You can't kill yourself before you've even been published.

JACK
What about that guy who wrote Confederacy of Dunces? He committed suicide before he got published, and look how famous he is.

MILES
Thanks.

JACK
Don't give up. You're going to make it.

MILES
Half my life is over, and I have nothing to show for it. I'm a thumbprint on the window of a skyscraper. I'm a smudge of excrement on a tissue surging out to sea with a million tons of raw sewage.

JACK
See? Right there. Just what you just said. That's beautiful. A thumbprint on a skyscraper. I couldn't write that.

MILES
Neither could I. I think it's Bukowski.

Unable to respond, Jack looks up and down the beach.

EXT. BUCOLIC ROAD - DAY

ZOOM! There goes the Saab.

The CAMERA lingers behind and PANS to reveal THE DEAD DOG, now covered with FLIES AND MAGGOTS.

EXT. WINDMILL INN - DAY

Jack and Miles pull into the parking lot.

JACK
(lighting up)
Oh, look. There's Steph!

He smiles broadly and honks his horn. Miles turns to see --

STEPHANIE

seated halfway up on the motel stairs, her HELMET in her lap, watching patiently as --

THE SAAB

pulls to a stop in a parking space.

Miles masks his concern as he gets out of the car and reaches in the backseat for his Sears bag.

JACK
(calling out)
Hey, baby.

Stephanie stands up and slowly descends the steps, as Jack reaches into the trunk and pulls out a BIG CUDDLY LION DOLL.

JACK
Look what I got for our favorite girl.

Stephanie walks toward Jack as he waddles toward her hugging the lion. When they get close, Stephanie's face transforms with rage.

STEPHANIE
YOU MOTHERFUCKER!

She swings her helmet and HITS JACK FULL IN THE FACE.

Jack falls, blood spraying out of his nose. Stephanie stands over him and continues to BEAT HIM with her helmet as he rolls back and forth, protecting his head with the stuffed lion.

Miles ineffectually attempts to stop her, dancing just out of range.

MILES
Stephanie! Stop!

STEPHANIE
You fucking bastard! Lying piece of shit! You're getting married on Saturday? What was all that shit you said to me?

JACK
I can explain.

STEPHANIE
You said you loved me! You fuck! I hope you die!

With that she backs away. Glancing at her bloodied helmet, she tosses it onto the pavement before getting on her bike.

STEPHANIE
Fuckface!
(to Miles)
You too!

As she speeds away, Miles is left to comfort his wounded friend. The lion lies nearby, staring blankly at the sky.

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

Seated in the passenger seat and in great agony, Jack presses a BLOOD-SOAKED TOWEL against his face.

MILES
Aren't you glad you didn't move up here and marry her?

JACK
Don't need a lecture. You fucking told Maya, didn't you?

MILES
No, I did not. Must have been Gary at the Hitching Post. I think we mentioned it to him the first night.

JACK
You told him. I'm fucking hurting here.

MILES
Keep it elevated.

INT. HOSPITAL ER WAITING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON A COSMOPOLITAN open to an article titled "24 Ways To Please Your Man."

WIDER --

Miles reads, while nearby a YOUNG BOY dry-heaves into a garbage can held by his FATHER. An OLD WOMAN parked in a wheelchair faces the wall.

LATER --

Miles is at a PAYPHONE. As he speaks he tries to peel off the metal LONG DISTANCE STICKER.

MAYA (ON THE PHONE)
Hi. It's Maya. Please leave a message.

MILES
It's Miles. Listen, I don't know if you even care, but I had to call and tell you again how much I enjoyed our time together and how sorry I am things turned out the way they did. I think you're great, Maya -- always have. From the first time you waited on me.
(bracing himself)

And while I'm at it, I guess you should know that my book is not getting published. I thought this one had a chance, but I was wrong. Again. Don't bother reading it -- you've got better things to do. So you see I'm not much of a writer. I'm not anything really. The only real talent I seem to have is for disappointing people and now you know that firsthand. We're leaving in the morning, and I want you to know that I take with me wonderful memories of you. I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

What else to say? He hangs up.

He returns to his seat. A moment later he extends his legs to look at his new SHOES now STAINED WITH WINE.

LATER --

Jack emerges unsteadily from the bowels of the emergency room, his face purple and swollen beneath the HUGE WHITE BANDAGE that holds the NOSEGUARD in place. Miles walks with him toward the exit.

MILES
Well?

JACK
I'm going to need an operation. Maybe a couple of them. They have to wait for it it to heal first. Then they break it again.

MILES
Good thing you have a voice-over career.

JACK
Gonna fuck that up too. I should sue her ass. Only reason I won't is to protect Christine.

MILES
That's thoughtful.

JACK
(disgusted)
Yeah.

They walk by us and out the door.

EXT. STREET IN SOLVANG - DAY

Jack sits in the Saab's passenger side with the seat almost fully reclined. When his agony allows him to open his eyes, he glares at the DANISH THEMED STORES lining the street. An ABELSKIVER MAKER plies his lofty trade in a nearby window. He hears a strange CLOMPING NOISE and turns his head to see a MAN IN WOODEN CLOGS walking noisily down the street, dressed in a TRADITIONAL DANISH COSTUME and carrying a TUBA. Jack takes a slug of wine.

Just then Miles gets back in the car.

JACK
I hate this place.

Miles tears open a paper bag and removes a bottle of pills. A closer angle reveals them as VICODIN.

MILES
Take a couple of these, and you'll learn to love it.

Miles opens the bottle and hands Jack two PILLS.

MILES
Two for you. And two for me.

Jack washes down the pills and passes the bottle to Miles, who follows suit.

EXT. WINDMILL INN JACUZZI - EVENING

Jack and Miles sit across from each other. For the first time we see LARGE PURPLE BRUISES on Jack's arms and chest.

JACK
So how did Stephanie know it was Saturday? We didn't get into that with Gary.

MILES
Huh. Let me think.

JACK
You sure you didn't say anything to Maya?

MILES
Sure I'm sure. And just what are you implying? I'm really pissed off at you about all this, if you want to know the truth. What's Maya going to think of me now just for associating with you? You're the one who's sabotaging me, not the other way around, pal. Not by a longshot.

Jack takes a long lie-detecting look at Miles.

JACK
I don't know. Just seems fishy.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The boys lie on their respective beds staring at the TV. Jack gets up and lumbers slowly to the dresser MIRROR like a large dog who has just been neutered.

JACK
What's it look like to you?

MILES
Looks like you were in a bad car accident.

Jack turns to Miles, nodding and thinking. Then he looks back in the mirror.

JACK
I'm hungry.

EXT. A.J. SPURS BARBECUE - NIGHT

Establishing. Thursday night is Cajun Wings Night.

INT. A.J. SPURS BARBECUE - NIGHT

Miles and Jack are finishing their SALADS in the rustic-themed restaurant festooned with animal trophies.

JACK
You know what I'm thinking?

MILES
What's that?

JACK
I'm thinking it's time to settle down. One woman. One house. You know. It's time.

MILES
Uh-huh.

Jack nods his head with no self-awareness or acknowledgment of the irony.

NOW TWO PLATES ARRIVE

mounded high with ribs, slaw, beans and butter-whipped mashed potatoes.

JACK
Mm. Mm.

Their cheery, saftig blonde WAITRESS removes several FOIL PACKETS from her apron and places them on the table.

WAITRESS
And here're your Handi-wipes.

JACK
Oh, so that's what those are? For a second there I thought you guys were promoting safe sex.

The waitress OVER-LAUGHS and swipes a hand at her naughty customer.

WAITRESS
I'll be right back with more corn bread.

Jack watches her go and leans in close to Miles.

JACK
I bet you that chick is two tons of fun. You know, the grateful type.

MILES
I don't know. I wouldn't know.

Now she comes back toward the table carrying a BIG BASKET. Beneath the hideous uniform, her nylons SH-SH-SH as she walks. When she arrives, she replenishes their corn bread basket using big TONGS. Jack watches attentively.

JACK
Nice technique there...
(checking her name tag)
...Cammi.

CAMMI
It's all in the wrist.
(a moment later)
You know, you look really familiar. You from around here? Where'd you go to high school?

JACK
No, we're from San Diego. Why?

CAMMI
I don't know. You just seem really familiar to me. Never mind. Enjoy your meals.

JACK
Hang on. Did you ever know a Derek Sommersby?

CAMMI
Doctor Derek Sommersby? You mean from "One Life to Live"?

Miles looks away and sighs.

JACK
You have to imagine him with a bandage and shorter hair.

As Cammi stares at Jack, her face transforms in astonishment.

CAMMI
No. Way. No way!

Jack smiles and nods.

CAMMI
Oh, my God!

MILES
Could you tell me where the bathroom is?

CAMMI
(her eyes barely leaving Jack)
Uh, sure, it's right over there, right past the buffalo.

IN A WIDE SHOT --

Miles gets up and heads toward the bathroom as Jack's flirtation with Cammi continues.

The camera PANS with Miles as he walks by us and goes through the bathroom door, which closes behind him, filling the frame with the word "MEN."

LATER --

A TOOTHPICK DISPENSER as a finger tips it forward to dispense one.

WIDER --

Miles stands by the cash register and PICKS HIS TEETH as he watches Jack finish speaking with Cammi and head his way.

JACK
She gets off in an hour, so I think I'm just going to have a drink and then... make sure she gets home safe.

MILES
You're joking, right?
(seeing that he isn't)

What are you doing? Un-fucking-believeable. Can we just go back to the hotel and hang out and get up early and play nine holes before we head home?

Jack rests one hand on Miles's shoulder and drops his head, thinking how best to put it.

JACK
Look, Miles. I know you're my friend and you care about me. And I know you disapprove. I respect that. But there are some things I have to do that you don't understand. You understand wine and literature and movies, but you don't understand my plight. And that's okay.

CLOSE ON MILES --

as the disappointment in his friend deepens by the moment.

FADE TO BLACK:

UNDER BLACK, SUPERIMPOSED --

FRIDAY

Now comes the sound of hysterical KNOCKING.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAWN

Despite the knocking, Miles remains motionless in bed, his expression serene.

Finally he awakens and drags himself toward the door, opening it to find --

JACK

silhouetted against the first rosy fingers of dawn. He is barefoot. In fact he is clad only in his UNDERWEAR. Hugging himself, he PANTS and SHIVERS.

JACK
Jesus fucking Christ, it's freezing.

He limps past Miles, yanks off the bed covers and wraps them around himself.

JACK
Vicodin. Where's the Vicodin? My nose.

Miles hands him the bottle, and Jack frantically pops a couple of pills, chewing them like candy. He sits down and bends

over at the waist as though preparing for an airplane crash.

JACK
Fucking chick's married.

MILES
What?

JACK
Her husband works a night shift or something, and he comes home, and I'm on the floor with my cock in his wife's ass.

MILES
Jesus, Jack. Jesus. And you walked all the way back from Solvang?

JACK
Ran. Twisted my ankle too.

MILES
That's five clicks, Jackson.

JACK
Fucking-a it's five clicks! At one point I had to cut through an ostrich farm. Fuckers are mean.

Miles has now awakened to take in the absurdity of the whole scene, and he LAUGHS HARD. The blanketed bulge just sits there. Finally it looks up and shows its pitiful visage.

JACK
We gotta go back.

MILES
What?

JACK
I left my wallet. My credit cards, cash, fucking ID, everything. We gotta go back.

MILES
Big deal. We'll call right now and cancel your cards.

JACK
You don't understand. The wedding bands. The wedding bands are in my wallet.

MILES
Okay, so they were in your wallet, and you left your wallet somewhere. Some bar. Christine'll understand.

JACK
No. She ordered them special. Took her forever to find them. They've got this design on them with dolphins and our names engraved in Sanskrit. We've got to go back. Christine'll fucking crucify me.

MILES
No way. No way.

JACK
(a pitiful whine)
Please, Miles, please.

MILES
Forget it. Your wallet was stolen at a bar. Happens every day.

Jack stares straight ahead, breathing through his mouth as he considers this. Then --

JACK
No, we've got to get my wallet! Those rings are irreplaceable! We've got to get them, Miles! I fucked up! I know I fucked up, okay? I fucked up. You gotta help me. You gotta help me. Pleeeease!

Jack now descends to a level of wretchedness and desperation that Miles has never seen before in Jack, or in anyone else for that matter.

JACK
Oh, God, please... Oh God. I know I'm bad. I know I did a bad thing. Help me, Miles. Just this one thing, this one last thing. I can't lose Christine. I can't. I'm nothing without her. Please, Miles, please... uuuuu... uuuuuu.... uuuuuuu.....

No longer able to form words, Jack is reduced to emitting low, primitive sounds. Snot flows from beneath his bandaged nose.

INT./EXT. SAAB - MORNING

Miles drives in the early-morning light. Jack is now subdued, quieted by his pain and exhaustion.

MILES
She tell you she was married?

JACK

Yeah.

MILES
So what the fuck were you thinking?

JACK
Wasn't supposed to be back till six. Fucker rolls in at five.

MILES
Cutting it a little close, don't you think?
(off Jack's silence)
So how was she? Compared to Stephanie, say.

JACK
Horny as shit. Flopping around like a landed trout.

EXT. LOW-RENT STREET - MORNING

The Saab creeps around a corner.

INT./EXT. SAAB - MORNING

Jack scans the street.

JACK
Yeah, this is the block. Just keep going...
(spotting an AMC Pacer)
Yeah! This is it. There's her car.

Miles pulls over and cuts the engine.

MILES
So what's the plan?

JACK
The plan is... you go.

MILES
Me?

JACK
My ankle. Just go explain the situation.

MILES
(sarcastic, clearing his throat)
Uh, excuse me, sir, but my friend was the one balling your wife a couple hours ago, and he seems to have left his wallet behind, and we were wondering...

JACK
Yeah, yeah. Like that. Just like that.

Miles gives Jack a withering look. Jack reaches for the DOOR HANDLE.

JACK
Fuck you. I'll get it myself.

MILES
(grabbing Jack's shirt)
Hold on.

EXT. CAMMI'S STREET - MORNING

Miles crosses the street and approaches --

EXT. CAMMI'S HOUSE - MORNING

Miles presses his ear against the front door. Nothing. Then he notices --

A SLIDING GLASS DOOR a few feet away, just barely cracked open.

MILES creeps over, sticks his hand into the open space and pulls back the curtain to reveal --

A LIVING ROOM the is hideously MESSY. Draped over a deformed beanbag chair are JACK'S LEVI'S.

Miles gathers his courage, carefully slides open the glass door, and creeps inside.

INT. CAMMI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A furtive search of Jack's pockets reveals NOTHING. Then Miles notices a HIGH-PITCHED SOUND wafting from an open door down a short HALLWAY.

Miles feverishly begins foraging through the debris on the floor. Again nothing. Meanwhile the noise from the bedroom grows louder -- female MOANING in odd rhythmic unison with a MAN'S VOICE.

IN THE HALLWAY --

Miles gets on ALL FOURS and starts crawling, weaving his way through a trail of shoes and clothes.

Nearing the open door, the sounds grow more distinct --

MAN
You don't think I fuck you, bitch?
I'll fuck you.

CAMMI
I'm a bad girl. I'm a bad girl.

Miles peers around the corner of the open door to see --

INT. CAMMI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cammi is TIED to the faux brass headboard. A BIG GUY slams away at her. In the corner a soundless TV shows a PRESIDENTIAL PRESS CONFERENCE.

MAN
You picked him up and you fucked him, didn't you, bitch?

CAMMI
I picked him up and I fucked him. I'm a bad girl.

MAN
And you liked fucking him, didn't you, you fat little whore?

CAMMI
I liked it when you caught me fucking him.

Whoa!

Miles manages to tear his eyes away from this nature documentary and scan the room.

IRIS IN --

to the WALLET atop the dresser.

Miles's eyes dart back and forth between the couple and the wallet. His HEART BEATING LOUDLY, he goes for it. He scrambles to his feet, dashes across the room, seizes the wallet and tears out. Behind him he hears --

MAN (O.S.)
The fuck was that?

CAMMI (O.S.)
The wallet! He took Derek's wallet!

EXT. CAMMI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Miles comes flying out of the sliding glass door, followed swiftly by the man, who is of course STARK NAKED. And he's fast for a man his size.

CAMMI (O.S.)
Get him!

INT. SAAB - MORNING

Jack is reclined in the passenger seat FAST ASLEEP. On the radio NPR'S CARL KASSEL reads the news.

THROUGH THE DRIVER'S WINDOW --

Miles comes sprinting towards us, mere steps ahead of Cammi's naked husband. Finding the car door locked, Miles knocks loudly on the glass, startling Jack awake.

MILES
Open up! Jesus! Open the goddamn door!

Jack flips the electric locks just in time for Miles to get in before --

WHUMP! The guy's BELLY hits the window. He pounds on the roof before trying the door, now re-locked.

MAN
You motherfuckers! I'll kill you! I'll kill you motherfuckers!

Miles starts the car and begins to drive away. The guy tries to keep up but can't, running barefoot on asphalt. Jack turns to look --

OUT THE BACK WINDOW --

The guy recedes in the distance.

JACK

removes the rings from the wallet.

JACK
You did it! You fucking did it!

They LAUGH and SLAP HANDS.

CLOSE ON MILES --

For all his failures, this time he did something right.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The shades are drawn. Jack is CRASHED OUT on the bed, snoring loudly. Miles folds his shirts and trousers -- readying his bags for departure.

At one moment he stops and watches his friend sleep.

A KNOCK at the door. Miles goes to answer it, but once his hand is on the knob, he pauses. If we're perceptive, we will know he's hoping against hope that it's Maya.

He opens it. It's just the MAID with her big CART.

MAID
Housekeeping.

OMIT.

EXT. 101 FREEWAY - DAY

The Saab enters the freeway and heads south.

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

Miles drives while Jack stares out the window, WATCHING THE LANDSCAPE CHANGE as they leave wine country.

MILES
Hey, Jack. Jack.

JACK
Hrnrnrn?

MILES
That was quite a day yesterday.

Jack's eyes close, but his lips spread into a smile.

JACK
Yep. Quite a day.

MILES
Quite a week.

EXT. 101 FREEWAY - DAY

A driving shot.

EXT. FILLING STATION - DAY

Miles pumps the gas, while nearby Jack stretches his legs. As Miles puts the nozzle back in place --

JACK
Want me to drive?

MILES
No, I'm okay.

JACK
Hey, why don't you invite Maya to the wedding?

MILES
Somehow I don't think inviting Maya to your wedding is the right move. In fact, after your bullshit, it's

going to be hard for me to even go to the Hitching Post again.

JACK
You're so negative.

Miles replaces the hose and screws on the gas cap.

JACK
Come on, let me drive.

MILES
I'm fine. You rest.

JACK
I feel like driving.

INT. SAAB - DAY

As the car makes its way back toward the freeway, Jack looks over at Miles and slows the car to a stop.

MILES
What's wrong?

JACK
Nothing. Buckle up, okay?

Miles obeys. Without hesitation, Jack accelerates and JUMPS THE CURB, heading into --

EXT. VACANT LOT - CONTINUOUS

The Saab plows INTO A TREE.

INT. SAAB - CONTINUOUS

MILES
What the fuck!

JACK
(pointing at his face)
You said it looked like a car accident.

MILES
What the fuck!

JACK
I'll pay for it.

EXT. VACANT LOT - DAY

They get out to inspect the damage. The hood is slightly crumpled, and the front fender is bent.

MILES

Look at this!

JACK
I don't know. Doesn't look like anybody got hurt in this one.

MILES
Oh, no. Oh, Christ. No, you don't.

JACK
You need a new car anyway.

Miles looks at his friend, incredulous.

JACK
I said I'd pay for it.

MOMENTS LATER --

The trunk is open, and the guys are unloading their cases of wine. Miles notices that one box is DRIPPING.

MILES
You broke some.

JACK
Whatever. Sorry.

MILES
No, not whatever. You fucking derelict.

MOMENTS LATER --

Miles looks on as Jack hoists a FOUNDATION BLOCK toward the open driver's door of the Saab.

JACK
You ready?

Miles waves his hand in a gesture of "Get it over with."

Grunting with effort, Jack leans inside the car and drops the foundation block onto the GAS PEDAL.

Direct hit! Jack leaps backward and hits the dirt just in time.

Miles and Jack watch the driverless Saab race toward the tree, its speed increasing. But just before hitting it, the car drifts to one side and SAILS RIGHT PAST.

MILES
Oh, fuck!

The car zooms wildly across the vacant lot and, missing the tree, continues on until CRASHING THROUGH A FENCE and finally

toppling headlong into a CEMENT TRENCH. Only the back of the car remains visible.

The whole thing is finished in a matter of seconds. Still frozen in place, Miles and Jack turn slowly to each other.

JACK
It's okay. I've got Triple A.

EXT. 101 FREEWAY - DAY

From in front of the Saab, we see its now CRUMPLED HOOD and FENDER, a couple of BUNGEE CORDS holding the whole thing together.

EXT. PALOS VERDES STREET - DAY

The Saab approaches the end of the line.

EXT. ERGANIAN HOUSE --DAY

AT THE FRONT PORCH --

Miles has helped Jack carry his bags and the wine. He plops the last case down.

MILES
Well. That about does it.

JACK
Why don't you come in?

MILES
Uh-uh. You're on your own.

JACK
So I'll see you at the rehearsal.

MILES
Yeah.

They give each other a brief manly back-slappy hug.

JACK
Love you, man.

MILES
Back at you.

Miles heads toward the curb.

JACK
Hey, don't pull away till they see the car.

MILES
(over his shoulder)

Yeah.
(turning around)
Hey, why wasn't I injured?

JACK
(big smile)
You were wearing your belt.

BACK AT HIS CAR --

Miles gets in and watches through the side window as Mrs. Erganian opens the front door and welcomes Jack with shock and dismay. Jack points back at --

MILES raising one hand in a feeble wave. The camera slowly MOVES CLOSER as he continues to watch --

JACK --

weaving his story of woe. He's a great actor when he wants to be. Mr. Erganian and a mortified Christine come to the door too. Mr. Erganian takes a few steps toward the car to get a better look.

VERY CLOSE ON MILES --

watching the drama play out. Then his eyes drop as he momentarily loses himself in melancholy. This reverie is interrupted by --

THE VOICE OF AN ARMENIAN PRIEST

Startled, Miles turns to look at --

A PRIEST

who is singing the BLESSING OF THE RINGS.

We are now in --

INT. ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH - DAY

The church is packed.

CLOSE ON THE RINGS as the priest holds them aloft.

If those rings could talk... Jack shoots a quick look at Miles, who looks right back. The priest continues his blessing.

EXT. ARMENIAN CHURCH - DAY

AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS --

The WEDDING FAMILIES greet the exiting guests in a RECEIVING LINE. Smiling and exuberant, Jack seems utterly at home as the new groom.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STEPS --

Miles watches the scene, not without melancholy. Then --

VICTORIA (O.S.)
Hey, Miles.

Miles turns and looks up to see Victoria, standing one step above him. Just behind her is her NEW HUSBAND. He exudes the quiet confidence of a successful businessman who played college football, takes expensive skiing and sailing vacations, and hasn't read a novel since high school.

MILES
Hi, Vicki.
(taking her in)
You look beautiful.

VICTORIA
Thanks. Um, this is Ken Cortland, my husband.

From his spot hovering over Miles, Ken leans down and offers his hand.

KEN
How are you?

MILES
Hi. How you doing? You're a lucky guy.

KEN
Thanks.
(to Victoria)
I'll wait for you at the car.
(to Miles)
Nice to meet you, Miles.

MILES
Ken.

Exit Ken.

MILES
That was big of him.

VICTORIA
Yeah, he's good that way. Very considerate.

MILES
That's great.

VICTORIA
So how're you doing?

MILES
Since the last time we spoke? I don't know. Could be better. Could be worse.

VICTORIA
So what's happening with your book?

MILES
Universally rejected. Strike three.

VICTORIA
Oh, Miles. That's awful. What are you going to do?

MILES
Back to the drawing board, I guess. Or not. So... you're married. Congratulations. You look happy.

VICTORIA
I am.

MILES
Seems like everyone's getting married. A year ago it was all divorces. Now it's all weddings. Cyclical, I guess.

VICTORIA
I guess.

Just then a BLACK LINCOLN NAVIGATOR pulls up alongside the curb. The passenger side window is halfway down, and the sounds of Adult Contemporary Jazz waft out. Victoria gives Ken a little wave.

MILES
(shifting gears)
Well, let's go have some champagne, shall we? Toast all the newlyweds.

VICTORIA
Not me. I'm not drinking.

MILES
You quit drinking?

VICTORIA
I'm pregnant.

MILES
(hit in the solar plexus)
Oh. Huh. Well...
(rallying)
Congratulations again, Vicki. That's wonderful news.

VICTORIA
(going to the car)
See you over there, Miles.

MILES
Yeah.

As she gets in the car and cruises away, Miles glances back at --

THE RECEIVING LINE

-- where Mike Erganian is introducing Jack to some dear old FRIENDS. Mike throws a loving arm around his new son-in-law, and Jack is drawn into Mike's bosom.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A HAND-PAINTED SIGN, attached to a STOP SIGH and decorated with balloons, reads: "RECEPTION THIS WAY!" with an arrow pointing RIGHT.

One by one, CARS are making a right turn. But when his turn comes, Miles turns LEFT.

EXT. MILES'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

The Saab pull up outside. Miles leaves the car idling as he sprints inside. Moments later he sprints back to his car, this time carrying SOMETHING.

OMIT

INT. FAST FOOD PLACE - DAY

His bowtie undone, Miles sits at a booth eating. He washes down a bite by draining the contents of a big wax-coated soft drink cup.

He brings the cup to his lap and refills it from a BOTTLE OF WINE hidden next to him. As he sets the bottle back down, we glimpse the label: 1961 Cheval Blanc.

He takes another sip. As the camera MOVES CLOSER, all the complex emotions inspired by the wine ripple across Miles's face.

14-YEAR-OLD BOY (O.S.)
"The marrow of his bone," I repeated aimlessly. This at least penetrated my mind. Phineas had died from the marrow of his bone flowing down his blood stream to his heart.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

The voice belongs to one of Miles's PUPILS reading aloud in class. Other students follow along silently from their own copies of A Separate Peace.

SUPERIMPOSED --

FIVE WEEKS LATER

Miles sits behind his desk at the front of the class.

14-YEAR-OLD BOY
I did not cry then or ever about Finny. I did not cry even when I stood watching him being lowered into his family's straight-laced burial ground outside of Boston. I could not escape a feeling that this was my own funeral, and you do not cry in that case.

The students look up.

14-YEAR-OLD BOY
Do you want me to keep reading the next chapter, Mr. Raymond?

MILES
(as though coming to)
Hrnrnrn? No, we'll pick up there on Monday.

INT. MILES'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Miles enters his tiny apartment. He loosens his tie and puts down his satchel.

On his way to the kitchen, he presses a button on his ANSWERING MACHINE. As it plays, he opens the REFRIGERATOR and looks inside.

ANSWERING MACHINE
One new message.

MAYA'S VOICE
Hello, Miles. It's Maya.

Miles FREEZES, not wanting to miss a single syllable.

MAYA'S VOICE
Thanks for your letter. I would have called you sooner, but I think I've needed some time to think about everything that happened and what you wrote to me. Another reason I didn't call sooner is that I wanted to finish your book, which I finally did last night.

Miles's heart pounds.

MAYA'S VOICE
I think it's really lovely, Miles. You're so good with words. Who cares if it's not getting published? There are so many beautiful and painful things about it. Did you really go through all that? It must have been awfully hard. And the sister character -- Jesus, what a wreck. But I have to say I was really confused by the ending. Did the father finally commit suicide, or what? It's driving me crazy. And the title.

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD --

We see ourselves taking the BUELLTON EXIT.

MAYA'S VOICE
Anyway, it's turned cold and rainy here lately. But I like winter. So listen, if you ever do decide to come up here again, you should let me know. I would say stop by the Hitching Post, but to tell you the truth I'm not sure how much longer I'm going to be working there. I'm going to graduate soon so I'll probably relocate. We'll see.

EXT. MAYA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Miles climbs the wooden steps and approaches Maya's back door.

MAYA'S VOICE
Anyway, like I said, I really loved your novel. Don't give up, Miles. Keep writing. You're really good. Hope you're well. Bye.

Miles takes a breath. Finally he KNOCKS.

FADE OUT.

THE END