

Margot at the Wedding

by

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A cashier hands a boy, 13, his change across a counter. The boy stuffs the coins in his pocket. He lifts the cardboard tray with two hot dogs, a bag of chips, and two Cokes. This is Claude.

We follow him: He carefully carries the meal down the aisle, balances it in one hand as he opens the door.

The train noise blares as he traverses the area between cars.

He enters the new car repeating the balancing act. He waits while a man shoves his back-pack onto the metal rack above the seats. Claude hurries a bit more now, his concentration alternating between the food and the path.

He sits next to a brunette woman. He hands her a hot dog.

CLAUDE

Here.

He's met by a severe and pinched face. The eyes have black circles -- there is a scar above her lip. Claude instantly blushes and mumbles:

CLAUDE

Sorry.

He gets up and hurries a few seats further. He slides next to a pretty brunette woman, late 30's, with straight shoulder length hair. Her name is Margot.

MARGOT

That was quick.

CLAUDE

I sat next to the wrong person.

MARGOT

Really? Where?

She stretches up and peers over the seats. He grabs her shirt.

CLAUDE

Please don't look. She'll see you.

MARGOT

Careful with my blouse.

2 CUT TO:

2

Margot is sleeping, her head against the window. Claude listens to his iPod. He takes out the earphones, gets up, and walks to the front of the car. Opens the door and goes between cars.

The train roars and screeches. Claude screams. He stops, looks around. He screams again.

3 CUT TO:

3

Claude and his mother gaze out the dirt streaked window at a river. An old castle-like structure emerges from the water.

Houses are run-down. In the distance there's a power plant. Electrical lines crisscross the sky. Claude puts his finger against the glass and traces the wires.

CLAUDE

Will the wedding be crowded?

MARGOT

I don't know. I think she doesn't know anyone anymore.

CLAUDE

How long has she known Malcolm?

MARGOT

Only a year.

CLAUDE

Is that short?

MARGOT

(pointedly)

Would you marry someone you'd only known a year?

CLAUDE

I'm not going to ever get married.

MARGOT

I can't say I have a lot of hope for the whole thing.

CLAUDE

Why are we going then?

MARGOT

We're supporting her.

CLAUDE

I thought she wasn't speaking to you.

MARGOT

No...no...I wasn't speaking to her, but I'm over it.

4 EXT. FERRY DOCK - DAY

4

A ferry is docked. Cars pull up onto the boat. Margot runs, clutching a suitcase, holding down a floppy wine colored sun hat. Claude hurries alongside her, a bag slung over his shoulder.

5 EXT. FERRY - DAY

5

The rumbling and sputtering of the boat. People get out of their cars and stretch their legs.

Claude leans against the rail and lets the spray hit his face. Margot's cell vibrates. The caller ID: HOME. She stuffs the phone in her pocket.

MARGOT

Why aren't you wearing your new shades?

CLAUDE

I don't think I need them right now.

MARGOT

You begged for those glasses.

CLAUDE

I know, but...I will wear them, I just feel like people might think it's weird that a kid is wearing dark shades.

MARGOT

That's ridiculous.

Claude reluctantly takes out a pair of thin wrap-around punk sunglasses and puts them on. He looks around self-consciously.

MARGOT

You look very cool.

He takes them off.

CLAUDE

I don't need them right now.

6 CUT TO:

6

Margot and Claude wait. The ferry has emptied out.

CLAUDE

Do they know we're here?

A maroon Volvo station wagon peels around a bend and stops across the road. Two eyes peer out from just below the backseat window. A man, 40, in dumpy cargo shorts rolls down the window. He has a small moustache -- he's harried and sweaty. This is Malcolm. He points at Margot and Claude.

MALCOLM

Are you...?

7 INT. VOLVO - DAY

7

Malcolm drives. He smokes with the window open. Margot is in the passenger seat. In the back, Claude and the girl, Ingrid, sit shyly, their hair blows turbulently in the wind. Ingrid, 11, wears shorts, sandals, and a batik shirt with a panda on it.

MALCOLM

Paul apologizes for not coming,
she's still getting the house
ready.

MARGOT

I'm sorry it was such short notice.

MALCOLM

I don't care. Paul's frantic, but
I don't give a shit. Oh, and
Ingrid wants me to tell you that
she made us all bracelets.

INGRID

(embarrassed)

No, I wanted...I wanted to wait...

MALCOLM

Oh, I thought you asked me to tell
them. Anyway...

Malcolm holds up his wrist and shows a knit blue and orange bracelet.

MALCOLM
I got Knicks colors.

INGRID
They're not Knicks colors!

MARGOT
It's beautiful, Ingrid.

INGRID
(to Claude)
I made this one for myself.

She shows him the purple and green one around her wrist.

INGRID
Yours is yellow. Is that okay?

CLAUDE
I guess.

INGRID
Where's your dad and Josh?

CLAUDE
They might come later.

MARGOT
Josh's spring break is next week.
Jim teaches through Friday and then
they open the house in Vermont on
the weekend.

MALCOLM
(bluntly)
It means a lot to Pauline that
you're here.

Margot nods awkwardly -- she blushes.

MARGOT
Oh. Good.

A car suddenly pulls out of a driveway, but nowhere near
their car. Malcolm swerves anyway.

MALCOLM
Holy Jesus! Watch it, dicksack!

Ingrid giggles. Margot clutches the handle above the door.

MALCOLM

If you're wondering about the
moustache --

MARGOT

No, I wasn't.

MALCOLM

I had a full beard for a while and
then when I shaved it I left this
part for last, you know to see how
it looked, and... It's meant to be
funny.

Margot nods politely. The sound of tires on gravel:

8

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

8

The trunk slams shut. The Volvo is parked in a driveway
alongside a grey Colonial house that sits above the water.
They lift bags. An old mutt ambles toward them.

Pauline emerges from the house. She's pretty like her
sister, late 30's. She walks briskly toward them. Margot
smiles and opens her arms, but Pauline passes her and dips
down to embrace Claude. She kisses him on the lips.

PAULINE

You're so handsome.

Now she hugs Margot. They both tear up. Claude beams.

PAULINE

I never thought I'd get you here.

A loud thud. They all turn toward the property fence. A
large pile of dead flowers and rotting plants has been dumped
into their yard. There's whispering and movement through
brush on the other side. Margot looks at Pauline with
concern.

PAULINE

You're arriving in the midst of a
drama. Ingrid, make sure Wizard is
inside.

Malcolm trudges over to the trash cans.

INGRID

It's the Voglers.

PAULINE

The neighbors want us to cut down
our tree.

She indicates a large oak that extends up and into the
adjoining property.

MARGOT

No, that's our tree!

INGRID

They think it's sick and rotting
their property.

PAULINE

We're having the ceremony under it.

MARGOT

You took the swing down.

MALCOLM

Pauline thinks this is their way of
trying to be friends. I think they
resent us because we're...

He searches for the word, but can't come up with anything.
He says wearily:

MALCOLM

I don't know what we are.

9

INT. CLAUDE'S GUEST ROOM/INGRID'S ROOM - DAY

9

Claude sits on the squeaky bed, a yellow bracelet on his
wrist. An old flip-clock hums on the night-table. A door
opens onto a bathroom which has another door open onto
another bedroom.

Ingrid sits on her bed observing Claude. She holds a
realistic-looking stuffed rooster in an old-style tuxedo.

INGRID

This is my room.

CLAUDE

Okay.

INGRID

Do you like showers or baths?

CLAUDE

Showers. What about you?

Ingrid shrugs. She says, already bored with the topic:

INGRID

I don't care.

10 INT. STAIRWELL/MARGOT'S GUEST ROOM - DAY

10

Pauline and Margot carry bags up the stairs. Margot now wears a knit red bracelet. They're tentative with one another.

PAULINE

Is Malcolm what you thought he'd be?

MARGOT

Well, I didn't know what to --

PAULINE

The moustache is temporary. He left it for last when he was shaving. It's meant to be funny.

MARGOT

He told me.

PAULINE

Yeah...

They enter the guest room. The windows are wide open, the curtains blowing, but the room is very neatly made up.

PAULINE

I'm sorry -- with so little time to prepare, we had to put you in Malcolm's storage room --

MARGOT

This was Becky's room. Poor Becky.

PAULINE

Yeah, poor Becky. Now it's a storage room. I've just started to feel like it's our house not my parents. You know?

MARGOT

Our parents.

PAULINE

Of course. It might still smell like paint, but...

MARGOT

I thought he was a musician.

Pauline jimmies down the stiff windows. Margot begins to unpack and hang up clothes in the closet.

PAULINE

Well, music's officially a hobby... He's painting now. And writing letters to newspapers and magazines. He's very meticulous, he'll spend up to a week writing a response to a music review. He's incredibly smart. Maybe too smart. I don't know. We're doing very well.

MARGOT

Good. I mean, you must be.

Silence.

PAULINE

I don't know where to begin. What can I tell you? It seems I'm pregnant, but it's really early so... I haven't told anyone. I mean, I haven't told Malcolm or Ingrid.

MARGOT

Wow...

PAULINE

Yeah, if it sticks. We'll see. I hope so. Things are good. We did a couples seminar two months ago or so in Maine. They give you exercises and things to do. I know you're not convinced, but...

MARGOT

(vaguely)

Mm hm.

PAULINE

We got engaged right afterwards. The guy who runs it, Strickland, wrote a really interesting book about loving which I'll lend you if you want.

MARGOT
(non-committal)
Okay.

PAULINE
But only if you'll read it.
Because I need it back. I made
notes in the margins.

MARGOT
I may not get to it for a while.

PAULINE
Well, I'm not going to lend it to
you if you're not going to read it.

They meet eyes. Pauline quickly turns away.

PAULINE
It's going to be very informal by
the way. Just Mom and Becky.
Malcolm's brother. Few friends.
And now you and Claude. Nothing
like the first one.

MARGOT
(wary)
Becky's coming?

PAULINE/MARGOT
She isn't how you.../I'd really
like...

PAULINE
You go.

MARGOT
I was going to say, "I'd really
like some white wine."

PAULINE
Oh. Yeah. We have a...
Well...I'm glad you changed your
mind and came. I never heard from
you after I sent the invite...I
even wondered if you got it.

MARGOT
(quickly)
Well, I'm so pleased we're here.

PAULINE
Did you get it?

MARGOT

Yeah.

Pauline waits for an explanation.

MARGOT

I'm sorry you were so angry...

PAULINE

I wasn't angry. I was...disappointed.

MARGOT

Uh huh. But you see when you say, "disappointed" it puts me in a crummy situation. Like I let you down.

PAULINE

But you did in a way.

MARGOT

I don't see it like that.

PAULINE

Fine. I felt betrayed. Is that word okay?

MARGOT

Again, you're making me the aggressor.

PAULINE

You were the aggressor.

(pause)

Let's not... I've become a really good cook.

11 INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE DAY

11

Malcolm strums his guitar and smokes. Pauline sits at his feet with Ingrid and Claude. The kids look at a record sleeve. Margot is curled up on the sofa writing in a little brown notebook. She wears oval tortoise-shell glasses.

MARGOT

I can't believe you've still got all of our old records.

Ingrid pulls an album toward her. Her eyes widen at the scary image on the cover. She quickly turns it over and hands it to her mother.

INGRID

Mom, can you hide this please.

Pauline puts the record sleeve on top of a shelf.

PAULINE

(for Margot's benefit)

Malcolm played with Ric Ocasek
once?

MALCOLM

In the late '80's. It was a solo
gig after he left the Cars.

CLAUDE

So, you're kind of famous.

Malcolm reddens.

MALCOLM

No. No. Believe me, I'm not. I
used to want to be, but, No. Do
you want to be famous?

MARGOT

Claude wants to be very famous.

MALCOLM

Well, make sure you can handle
rejection. I can't. For me,
expectation just turns to
disappointment. So, ultimately I'd
rather not try. It'll all go black
for us soon enough anyway.

PAULINE

Claude, ignore him.

Pauline sneaks a look at Margot who is watching Malcolm with
an expression of either contempt or confusion. Pauline grows
uncomfortable. She says to Claude:

PAULINE

When your mother moved to New York
she used to send me books and
records. She sent me REM's
Murmur...

MARGOT

And the Pixies.

PAULINE

And X. She was very cool your mother.

MARGOT

You only liked top forty.

PAULINE

Yeah, but I love REM now.

Margot takes off her reading glasses and rubs her eyes.

MARGOT

I don't really listen to music anymore.

PAULINE

I was dating that guy, Horace back then. Remember him?

MARGOT

Was that the guy who liked to rough you up?

PAULINE

No, that was our dad.

Pauline and Margot crack up laughing. Malcolm raises an eyebrow at Claude.

MARGOT

Our father used to strip down to his skivvies and beat us with a belt.

MALCOLM

That man had a sexual screw loose.

PAULINE

It's awful -- that stuff that happens to kids. Malcolm was fondled by a male baby-sitter.

MALCOLM

Just use that information however you want...

PAULINE

Sorry. We're with family. I figured...

Claude looks at Malcolm. Malcolm doesn't meet his eyes.

PAULINE

I think Becky got it the worst.

MARGOT

Did she ever. Raped by the horse
trainer...

Margot breaks into laughter. Pauline spits her seltzer back into the glass. They both laugh hysterically. Tears stream down Margot's face. Claude watches.

12 EXT. PATIO - NIGHT

12

Malcolm, Pauline, Margot, Claude and Ingrid sit with a homosexual couple, Alan, 40's, and Toby, 30's, and their son, Bruce, 8, at an old wooden table eating crab, salad and soup. Part of Alan's face is paralyzed.

TOBY

Alan rolled over in bed and looked at me and he said I can't feel my face. It took three doctors before we knew it was Bells Palsy.

ALAN

They say a brush of wind can do it.

TOBY

Feeling is slowly coming back.

MALCOLM

We're all getting older... Which is terrible -- I don't care how universal it is. I can't remember names anymore.

MARGOT

I have that. I blank out on certain words now too. Like the other day, I couldn't remember the word for...

(laughs)

I've forgotten it again. The stuff in wine. Sediment! That was it.

MALCOLM

I know that. I was talking more about not remembering who was the bassist for Motley Crüe.

Malcolm lights up a cigarette. He offers one to Claude who shakes his head, No.

PAULINE
Ingrid, why don't you show Claude
and Bruce the game trunk.

INGRID
Okay.

Claude reluctantly follows Ingrid and Bruce. He looks back
longingly at the table of adults.

MALCOLM
(relieved, to himself)
Mick Mars.

MARGOT
Toby, I think you need to have
Bruce diagnosed.

TOBY
Margot, I don't want to have this
conversation with you.

We follow the kids inside. We hear in the background:

MARGOT
It's vital. If you keep telling
him he's like everyone else he'll
wonder why he isn't. He's
suffering.

TOBY
He's tested very well. He does B's
in school.

Claude stops -- his mother and Toby are arguing out the
window. Her eyes meet his for a second -- they make no
connection -- she goes back to Toby.

MARGOT
But, that's how autism works. One
part of the brain can work fine
while the other is damaged.

ALAN
We had him diagnosed, Margot.
Nothing was found wrong.

MARGOT
Did you really, though?

TOBY
I'm...I'm not going to have this
conversation. I'm sorry.

Silence.

MARGOT

I know it must be so difficult for you, but I think you have to --

13 INT. KITCHEN - SAME 13

Pauline unloads the plates onto the kitchen counter. She hesitates and exhales a deep, anxious breath.

14 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT 14

Margot paces while talking on a cell phone in the herb garden. She drinks a white wine with ice cubes and smokes a joint. The bottle lies at her feet, three-quarters empty.

JIM'S VOICE

What are you doing?

MARGOT

I left you a note.

JIM'S VOICE

Come back. Or meet me in Vermont on Saturday.

MARGOT

No...no. The wedding is on Saturday. I'm here for that. I can't really pull out. How would that look?

JIM'S VOICE

You haven't spoken to her in years -
-

MARGOT

Well, we're speaking now. She is my closest friend despite it all... You're the one who's been trying to get me to call her.

JIM'S VOICE

Did you tell Claude what you're doing?

MARGOT

(suddenly laughing)

Jim, this guy, Malcolm. He's exactly what you'd imagine except I think he's clinically depressed.

(MORE)

MARGOT (CONT'D)

Not ugly, but completely unattractive. And he has no job. The best I can make out is that he's a letter writer. I don't know, the house looks weird to me...she's trying too hard and it's kind of a mess...they took down the swing...

Silence on the other end.

MARGOT

Hello?

JIM'S VOICE

You said you weren't a hundred percent on this. You said that like a week ago. Can I come up there?

MARGOT

No. I don't want to see you -- I feel happier already having done it.

JIM'S VOICE

Really? You feel happier...

(silence)

Please don't tell Claude anything please, until we've talked more.

MARGOT

I need to tell him. And we need to tell Josh. Did he do his homework?

JIM'S VOICE

Yes.

MARGOT

This is happening and you have to get your mind around that.

15 INT. CLAUDE'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

15

Claude sleeps in bed. Margot gently touches his face. She whispers:

MARGOT

Are you asleep?

CLAUDE

(softly)

Yes.

MARGOT
Will you remember this?

CLAUDE
Yes.

MARGOT
I just talked to your dad...

Claude's eyes remained closed, but he smiles.

MARGOT
I'm only going to tell you if you
won't remember.

CLAUDE
Okay.

Margot hesitates. She changes her mind and says
thoughtfully:

MARGOT
Everyone finds you so funny and
charming. I always get compliments
about you.

Margot stands. She catches herself in a warped mirror and
smears some eye make-up off of her face.

MARGOT
Are you having fun? Is it nice to
see Pauline?

CLAUDE
(opens his eyes)
Yeah, I really like her.

MARGOT
Yeah. She is crazy though.

CLAUDE
In what way?

MARGOT
She's really berserk. Maybe it's
hormones. You don't notice
anything different about Pauline?

CLAUDE
No.

MARGOT

She's pregnant -- she told me. But she's keeping it a secret -- I mean from Malcolm and even Ingrid. Which I think is unforgiveable. Now she'll have to marry him. What's she planning -- to get married and not drink champagne? Then she'll just be lying. I guess she's afraid she'll miscarry. She probably will. I think on some level she's ambivalent about the marriage and that's why she's not telling him.

CLAUDE

Are you stoned, Mom?

MARGOT

Maybe a little.

CLAUDE

I don't like it.

16 INT. MALCOLM AND PAULINE'S ROOM - NIGHT

16

Water runs from the bathroom. Malcolm cradles a glass of whiskey and stands nude in front of a full length mirror.

MALCOLM

(shakes his head)

My scrotum is longer than my penis.

He turns around and looks at his ass. Pauline walks out of the bathroom. She wears mens pajamas, the top open.

MALCOLM

It's sweet how Claude looks up to me.

He waits for a reaction and gets none.

MALCOLM

Margot doesn't seem as crazy as you made her out to be.

PAULINE

What she did to Toby and Alan tonight didn't seem crazy enough for you?

MALCOLM

I guess that seemed pretty crazy.

PAULINE
 (immediately defensive)
 Well, she cares deeply.

MALCOLM
 Yeah, she's really worried about
 Bruce.

PAULINE
 This has nothing to do with Bruce.
 She thinks everyone is autistic.

Malcolm is about to speak, but instead he halts, paralyzed.

PAULINE
 What?

MALCOLM
 Nothing, you keep changing your
 position -- I'm just trying to
 figure out if I should agree with
 you or not?

PAULINE
 Well, can't she be both, care
 deeply and be crazy? Do people
 have to be all one thing?

MALCOLM
 I guess not.

PAULINE
 Well, okay...
 (back into it)
 It is nice she came for the
 wedding. She's so pretty, don't
 you think?

MALCOLM
 (warily)
 She's attractive.

PAULINE
 A little thin maybe... But it is
 nice she came.

MALCOLM
 Let's fuck.

17 INT. MARGOT'S GUEST ROOM - SAME 17

Margot lies on her front, her hand underneath her. She tries to masturbate. The bed creaks. Finally, she flips over and gives up. She wears a rubber night-guard in her mouth.

18 EXT. HOUSE - DAY 18

A croquet game in progress. Pauline and Malcolm play Margot and Claude. Ingrid lies in the grass singing to herself. The dog next to her. Malcolm concentrates -- he carefully lines up his shot. Finally, he swings --

The ball misses the wicket. He shakes with frustration.

MALCOLM

Fuck it!

Claude looks through a slit in the wooden fence and into the neighbor's yard: A naked man, 40's, crouches. Arms extend from below and pull him downward. His ass pokes up over the weeds.

MARGOT

Honey, you're up.

Claude shakes out of his reverie. He walks briskly up to his ball and smacks it. It bullets forward and lands just short of Pauline's ball.

MARGOT

Claude, don't just whack it. Think about it before you hit.

CLAUDE

Sorry.

Pauline knocks her ball into Claude's. She holds her ball down with her foot and prepares to swing.

MALCOLM

Paul, what are you doing?

PAULINE

I'm sending Claude's ball into the bushes.

MALCOLM

Take the extra hit.

PAULINE

I don't want to do that.

MALCOLM
It's the smarter play.

She whacks -- Claude's ball travels about two feet.

PAULINE
Shit.

MALCOLM
Pauline! See, I knew you
couldn't... Your feet are too
small!

Margot steps up to take her turn. She regards the house.

MARGOT
You took the awnings down.

Claude looks back into the adjacent yard: Flashes of skin. A breast. Pubic hair. Claude crouches to see more clearly -- the bodies disappear from sight.

Malcolm draws a deep breath and takes a few practice strokes. He swings -- his ball rockets past Margot's, rolls up over a ridge and onto the cement drive. It quickly sails down into the road and bounces into a ditch.

Malcolm shakes furiously. He lifts his mallet, turns toward the house, rethinks momentarily, and hurls it up over the incline and down to the water. Pauline puts her hands on her hips.

PAULINE
Well done.

MALCOLM
Fuck you.

Malcolm hesitates then tramps down the stairs to the beach.

Claude watches the pink of flesh moving up and down.

MARGOT
Honey, you're up.

He approaches his ball and smacks it toward the double wickets.

MARGOT
You're going the wrong way.

CLAUDE
Oh.

He blushes and laughs. Pauline laughs. Margot shakes her head.

MARGOT
So stupid.

CLAUDE
Mom, I'm sorry. Jesus.

Margot places her mallet down and starts toward the house.

CLAUDE
We're in the middle of it.

MARGOT
This is why I hate games. I hate
what it does to me.

Pauline cackles loudly. Margot turns around and stares at her. Malcolm calls from the stairs:

MALCOLM (O.S.)
Wait, we're not finished!

19 EXT. PATIO - DAY

19

The five eat a salad nicoise lunch.

MARGOT
Malcolm, do you notice how Pauline
sometimes can't make eye-contact.
How her gaze hovers just above your
head.

MALCOLM
Yeah, I kind of know what you mean.

MARGOT
I always think I have something in
my hair. It's not necessarily bad,
Paul. It's just something you do.

Pauline looks mildly horrified. She suddenly turns to Claude.

PAULINE
Claude have you ever seen your
mother climb a tree?

CLAUDE
No.

MARGOT

We don't have much opportunity in
Manhattan.

PAULINE

As kids Margot climbed everything.
She could even climb that tree.

She points at the tall oak that stretches over the fence into
the neighbor's property.

CLAUDE

Can you do it, mom?

MARGOT

Maybe later.

CLAUDE

No, now.

INGRID

Do it now, Margot!

PAULINE

Show him, Margot.

20 CUT TO:

20

Margot strides toward the tree. The group follows behind.

She grabs hold of a branch and lifts herself.

Claude grins, impressed.

With brisk dexterity, Margot scales the tree.

Claude, Pauline, Malcolm and Ingrid watch with glee from
below.

PAULINE

I told you.

Margot reaches a perch near the top and looks down at the
gang. They wave. She waves back.

The sun is hot. She sweats, flushed. She takes a deep
breath and relaxes against the bark. Trees for miles. The
neighbors' house is faded and grey. In the far distance,
toxic white smoke comes out into the sky.

An earwig walks across her arm. She flicks it off, slips for
a moment and catches herself. Her breathing grows more
rapid.

A bug buzzes around her head. She swats at it.

Her family has stopped watching. Claude and Malcolm throw a baseball. Pauline's gone back inside. Ingrid clears the table.

MARGOT
(under her breath)
Shit.

She wipes her face, her shirt is almost entirely soaked. The buzzing continues.

Close on Margot's ear. A small black gnat lands on the lip of the lobe. It hesitates and darts inside the hole.

Margot gasps. She jams her pinky in her ear.

Pauline comes back out with an ice tea.

CLAUDE
What's she doing now?

PAULINE
(dryly)
She's stuck.

21 CUT TO:

21

A young volunteer fireman climbs a long ladder up the side of the tree and toward Margot. He reaches out his hand to her.

MARGOT
(annoyed)
I got it.

She slowly lowers herself.

22 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

22

Pauline is laughing, recounting the story. Claude and Ingrid laugh too. Margot shakes her head, embarrassed and furious.

CLAUDE
You were great on the way up.

MARGOT
Don't patronize me, Claude.

Margot turns her head to the side and pats on the top of it.

PAULINE
We're all laughing, Margot.

MARGOT

You're laughing in a kind way.
Claude is taking too much pleasure
out of it.

CLAUDE

I am not.

MARGOT

You are. You like to make fun of
me. To see me get embarrassed.
It's mean.

Silence. Margot puts her pinky back in her ear. She frowns.

PAULINE

What are you doing?

MARGOT

I've got a fucking bug in my ear,
okay?

23 EXT. FOREST - DAY

23

Pauline and Margot hike along a dirt trail. Claude and
Ingrid idle behind, carrying walking sticks.

PAULINE

I thought Claude could hand out
programs. Ingrid's going to sing.
Do you want to read a poem or
something?

MARGOT

You know I can't speak in front of
people. I'm doing this
"conversation" at the bookstore in
town on Friday and I totally regret
having said I'd do it.

PAULINE

You're doing a "conversation?"

MARGOT

Yeah, talking about my work in
front of a crowd. I didn't invite
you because...I thought it'd be
boring.

PAULINE

Uh huh.

MARGOT

What? Say it.

PAULINE

It's nothing. It's just...I would come...I want to come. I get a kick out of it. It's just weird, you know... So, you're not here for...

(she stops herself)

Okay, I get it. When did they ask you?

MARGOT

A while ago. I'd said, No, but then when I was coming here anyway and...I guess it helps sales and...so...so.

PAULINE

I see.

We catch a quick glimpse of people walking ahead in the path.

PAULINE

Did I tell you, Becky got her tubes tied.

MARGOT

Why? Is she seeing someone? She's still obese, I assume.

PAULINE

I think it's symbolic.

MARGOT

I bet mom paid for it. We should audit mom.

PAULINE

I considered it in my twenties. You know, when I was fucking everyone. You remember.

MARGOT

I did my share.

PAULINE

But not like me.

MARGOT

You want to count?

PAULINE

No, Margot, I don't want to count.

(pause)

What was it about Dad that had us
fucking so many guys?

MARGOT

I think it was the only time we
could really feel unselfconscious
and get out of our heads.

PAULINE

(dismissive)

I don't think that's it. I just
think it was something we were good
at.

Behind, Ingrid smacks her walking stick into Claude's.

INGRID

Your mom thinks Bruce is gay.

CLAUDE

No, she said she had Aspergers.

INGRID

I thought that's what that means.

CLAUDE

No, it's like lesser retarded.

INGRID

I have adult ADD.

CLAUDE

You mean child ADD.

INGRID

No, for some reason I have the
adult one. Maybe I'm retarded.

Up ahead -- in the path -- is a couple, 40's, with a six year
old girl. The back of the man's pants are smeared with dirt
and the woman is packed into acid washed jeans. The little
girl whines and lags behind.

Margot and Pauline slow down. Claude and Ingrid catch up.

MAN

Come on!

LITTLE GIRL

I don't want to!

MAN

Come on!

LITTLE GIRL

I don't want --

The woman grabs the girl harshly by the arm and pulls her.
The girl screams.

MARGOT

Hey!

The man and woman turn around sharply.

MARGOT

Be careful!

WOMAN

What?

MARGOT

Be careful the way you pull on that
child's arm. You'll take it out of
its socket.

MAN

Don't tell us how to treat our
child.

MARGOT

I don't care how you treat your
child as long as you don't hurt
him.

PAULINE

(under her breath)

It's a girl.

WOMAN

She threw a rock at me.

MARGOT

She's a little girl!

WOMAN

She knew what she was doing.

She starts suddenly toward Margot.

WOMAN

There is no hitting in our family.
Do you understand?

Margot backs up quickly. The woman stops about ten feet away.

WOMAN
Stay out of it, bitch.

The woman turns back around. She lifts the girl into her arms and they trudge over the incline and out of sight.

INGRID
That was the Voglers.

PAULINE
Jesus, Margot, what are you doing.
They already hate us.

MARGOT
(wiping her eyes)
Don't tell me what I can and can't
do. That's child abuse.

CLAUDE
Mom, she was psychotic.

MARGOT
Stop picking on me. Everyone.

24 CUT TO:

24

The four of them emerge into a clearing. Nobody speaks. A child's pink sneaker lies in the path.

MARGOT
Oh God.

Pauline walks over to it. She crouches.

PAULINE
It could be anyone's.

Margot bursts into tears. Pauline hesitates then holds her.

INGRID
What are they going to do to us?

PAULINE
They're not going to do anything,
honey.

25 EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

25

Malcolm looks at Pauline. He's in the midst of writing a letter on a legal pad. Pauline is worked up.

PAULINE
We have to cut down that tree.

MALCOLM
Where are we going to get married
then?

PAULINE
I don't...we'll do it in the
fucking drive-way if we have to.

Claude and Ingrid listen from just inside the house. Ingrid looks at Claude nervously.

INGRID
Your mom started a war. We have to
make sure we wear shoes because
they might start throwing glass.

CLAUDE
Has that happened before?

INGRID
I can't remember. I think so. No,
it definitely has. Now I remember.

Behind them, Margot, made-up and wearing a dress, clomps down the stairs, across the carpet and onto the porch.

PAULINE
Where are you going?

MARGOT
(tersely)
To town. I'll be back for dinner.

PAULINE
Come on, nobody blames you, Margot.

An old orange BMW idles at the end of the driveway. Pauline, Malcolm, Claude and Ingrid watch Margot cross the drive-way.

A man, 50's, opens the passenger door. He smokes a brown cigarette. Margot gets in. The man waves at the group on the patio. Pauline, Malcolm and Ingrid and Claude wave back.

CLAUDE
Is that Dick Koosman?

PAULINE
Yeah. He has a house up here.

CLAUDE
What's he doing with mom?

PAULINE
Good question.

26 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

26

Ingrid sits at the roots of the tree, squeezing honey out of a honey bear onto her hand -- she watches the ants come. Claude sits on a low branch and looks over the fence:

INGRID
How much do your parents make in a year?

CLAUDE
I think about a hundred. They bank at Chase.

The front door of the Vogler's opens and a boy, 14, pees from the entrance-way into the plants in the yard.

INGRID
Are they rich?

CLAUDE
No. They're middle class.

The boy finishes and violently hurls a toy car at the fence.

BOY
Just let me live!

The toy lands a few feet short. He goes inside and closes the door.

INGRID
Upper or lower?

CLAUDE
I think just middle.

Claude watches: Malcolm scurries around the side of the Vogler house holding a dead mole by its tail. He stumbles, recovers and flings the animal at the front door. He races back toward his property.

27 EXT. PORCH - EVENING

27

Margot and Malcolm have cocktails. Pauline drinks a bottled water. Ingrid has cray pas, markers and paper and draws at a table. She draws a mole.

Claude draws a boy with a big claw for a hand and CLAWED under it. Wizard, the dog, lies at his feet.

MARGOT

Dick and his daughter asked us over to swim tomorrow.

PAULINE

We didn't invite them to the wedding.

MARGOT

You're not really friends.

PAULINE

We're friends enough that's it's awkward. Maisy baby-sits for us all the time.

MARGOT

He's doing the interview with me in town on Friday. Did I tell you, he and I are collaborating on a screenplay, an adaptation of one of Dick's novels.

PAULINE

No, I didn't even know you knew he was up here.

Malcolm takes one of Ingrid's markers and doodles.

MALCOLM

Is he even a good writer? Why do people care about him?

PAULINE

You're competitive with everyone. It doesn't matter if they even do the same thing as you.

(to Claude)

He's competitive with Bono.

MALCOLM

It's true. I don't subscribe to the credo that there's enough room for everyone to be successful. I think there are only a few spots available and people like Dick Koonsman and Bono are taking them up.

Pauline looks at Malcolm's drawing. It's a graphic image of a man fucking a woman in the ass.

PAULINE

Malcolm, what would ever make you think that's something to draw right now?

Claude and Ingrid stare at it. Malcolm balls it up.

MALCOLM

Sorry, I wasn't thinking about it.
Sorry, Margot.

28 INT. VOLVO - DAY

28

The car pulls into a driveway. A modern house. Dick and Maisy come out to greet them.

DICK

You found it!

Margot, the kids and Pauline get out. We stay in the car with Malcolm. Pauline comes to his window.

PAULINE

What's up?

MALCOLM

I don't want to do this...

PAULINE

Come on, don't be that way.

Maisy sits on the hood of the car and Ingrid introduces her to Claude. Dick approaches Margot -- she turns back to Pauline.

MALCOLM

I'm not being that way -- I just don't feel like it. I'm going to go back and... I have work to do.

PAULINE

Dick doesn't care that you don't make any money.

MALCOLM

Is that why you think... That's not why I'm...I just hate swimming. I really hate it. It's disgusting to me. My mistake was saying I'd do it to begin with. You have fun.

PAULINE

Fine, we'll have fun.

Malcolm's gaze goes to Maisy's breasts. Margot watches him watch her.

MALCOLM
People always pee in the pool.

PAULINE
I don't think Dick and Maisy pee in their pool.

MALCOLM
I'll bet you 500 dollars there's pee in that pool.

29 EXT. DICK'S POOL - DAY

29

Pauline and Margot float beneath Claude who stands above them.

PAULINE
To the end and back. Claude, you say Go.

CLAUDE
Okay.

Margot knocks on the side of her head with her hand.

CLAUDE
Go!

Pauline flings herself in and is off. Margot hesitates then follows. Maisy and Dick watch from the chairs. Ingrid floats on a raft and cheers. Claude runs along the pool-side.

DICK
How's your dad?

CLAUDE
Good.

DICK
He and I shared a thesis advisor at Stanford. Did you know that?

CLAUDE
No.

Pauline hits the far wall with her palm and flips around. Margot stops short and follows her sister. They're neck and neck. Their arms cut in and out of the water.

DICK
I was dating your mom back then,
did you know that?

CLAUDE
No.

Pauline lands -- touches the wall first. Margot a close second.

CLAUDE
Pauline wins!

Pauline beams. Margot immediately drifts to the ladder. She's panting heavily.

CLAUDE
Mom cheated. You didn't touch the wall!

MARGOT
I did so. It doesn't matter. I lost anyway.

PAULINE
It was close.

Pauline floats on her back, exhausted.

Ingrid swims beneath Claude -- long strands of hair stream up from beneath the surface.

Margot gets out of the water and Dick wraps her in a towel. For a moment it's an embrace. Margot looks quickly over at Claude --

His foot slips.

He topples in.

Water roars around him.

He opens his mouth. Bubbles spurt out.

He drifts down.

Lying next to the drain is a field mouse. Its eyes are white.

Splash. Hands wrap around him.

He goes up.

The sounds of wind and blurry voices now clearer.

Pauline brings Claude to the surface and pushes him to the ladder. She helps him climb out. Ingrid and Maisy are grinning. Their expressions slowly shift as they see Claude's face.

Claude is sobbing.

PAULINE

It's okay.

Margot immediately wrenches Claude from Pauline's grasp. She looks shocked and angry.

MARGOT

I got him.

She leads her son behind the bushes out of everyone's sight.

MARGOT

It's okay, my baby.

She gently lets him down. His sneakers squeak and slosh. Claude, soaking wet and ashamed, looks at his mother. She breaks into laughter. Claude wipes the water and tears from his eyes.

CLAUDE

I'm sorry I laughed about the tree.

MARGOT

Now we're even.

30 INT. PAULINE AND MALCOLM'S DEN - DAY

30

Margot, reclining on the couch, drinks a white wine with ice cubes. Pauline passes the doorway and stops. She holds tear-sheets of flowers and wedding decorations from various magazines.

PAULINE

Here you are.

MARGOT

You've got a problem.

PAULINE

What do you mean?

MARGOT

I don't like the girl and I don't like the way Malcolm looks at her.

PAULINE
Oh, come on, it's sexy.

MARGOT
You didn't see it. I saw it.
You've got a problem.

PAULINE
I'm not worried.
(pause)
We could teach Claude how to swim.

MARGOT
He won't want to do it. It's too
late.

Pauline waits for more -- nothing comes. She takes a couple steps into the room. She holds out her hand for the glass. Margot passes it to her. Pauline sips.

MARGOT
Are you supposed to be doing that?

PAULINE
No.

She hands it back.

PAULINE
I liked your last story in, was it Harpers? The one about mom. I was very...I liked it very much.

MARGOT
It wasn't really about mom.

PAULINE
I thought it was. Anyway. Why don't you want Claude to know how to swim?

MARGOT
I didn't say I didn't want him to. Why do you care? It's not in his life -- we're New Yorkers. If he wants to learn when he's older, he can. I'm curious why you're so interested in the whole thing.

PAULINE
I'm not. I'm just... As a safety thing and...I'm... Forget it.

(pause)

(MORE)

PAULINE (CONT'D)

It's interesting -- this is the first time Dick has invited us over.

MARGOT

But are you really friends?

PAULINE

Kind of. We're neighbors. We employ Maisy. I mean I don't care, I just think it's interesting.

(pause)

Are you excited about the talk? I thought I'd come if that's okay. My friend, Agnes, asked me, "What's it like to have a celebrity as a sister?" I said, I've got no problem with celebrity. Alice Munro taught at Bennington and was kind of a friend of mine.

MARGOT

I'm not a celebrity.

PAULINE

Well, you're well known.

MARGOT

To a very few people.

PAULINE

Just accept the compliment.

MARGOT

I guess I didn't realize it was a compliment.

31 EXT. FOREST - LATE DAY

31

Margot walks the path alone. She hugs herself as a light breeze kicks up. Her footsteps echo in the trees.

The little pink sneaker still lies in the dirt.

She crouches down and takes it.

32 CUT TO:

32

CLOSE: A note is being written.

"...and if you are acting with any sort of abuse toward your child I will call the police."

The word "any" is then underlined twice. The page is torn from her little brown book.

33

EXT. VOGLER HOUSE - EVENING

33

Margot's fist is raised about to knock on the front door. She stops herself. She puts the note on the Welcome mat and holds it in place with the child's shoe. She wanders around to the back of the house. She looks into a lighted window:

It's a white tiled bathroom.

A wet brown animal body covered in clear plastic is balanced on the sink. Mr. Vogler tears into the plastic. The carcass is butterflied open exposing the innards and ribs.

Mrs. Vogler runs the tub. She pours salt from a box in the water. The man slides his hand in her waist-band. She rubs against him.

Margot chews her cuticle.

The man saws the legs. His arm jerks back and forth, straining to cut through the bone. Sweat pours down his temples.

Margot raises her hand to her face and presses against the window. She peers through her fingers. The blade pierces the bone with a violent release and the hoof falls to the floor.

Margot moves to another window. The pig's face now looks at her.

Blood drips and leaks into the crevices of the tile. The woman brandishes a syringe filled with an orange liquid.

Suddenly a face appears in the glass. Margot leaps back. It's a thin boy. He says something. The family turns to the window. The father flicks off the bathroom light.

From inside Margot illuminates like an apparition.

Margot scampers into the trees. She pushes through branches, her shirt tears. She runs.

34

INT. CLAUDE'S GUEST ROOM - EVENING

34

Claude sits on the bed. The record sleeve from Blondie's "Parallel Lines" rests in his lap. He reads the lyrics to the song, "Sunday Girl." He depresses the red record button on an old portable tape recorder. He sings a cappella and full voice, passionately, as sweetly as he can.

Maisy appears in the doorway and watches. Claude turns mid-lyric. He jumps, startled.

MAISY
Singing?

Fumbling, Claude shuts off the tape recorder.

CLAUDE
Hm? A bit.

She drifts into the room and hovers closely above Claude who remains on the bed.

Margot passes by in the hallway, disheveled from her escape. She watches: Maisy takes the lyric sleeve from Claude's hands. Her T-shirt hangs above her waist showing her smooth stomach.

MAISY
Can I make a suggestion?

CLAUDE
Uh huh.

MAISY
You should get underarm deodorant.

CLAUDE
Uh huh.

MAISY
You kind of smell.

Claude blushes.

MAISY
Better I tell you than someone else.

35 INT. MARGOT'S BATHROOM - EVENING

35

Margot puts on mascara and watches Claude, who stands behind her, in the mirror.

MARGOT
I think you smell nice. You smell real.

CLAUDE
I stink.

MARGOT
It causes cancer.

CLAUDE
Underarm deodorant?

MARGOT
Yes. It's got chemicals and things
that are extremely harmful.

CLAUDE
I'm not going to die from underarm
cancer.

MARGOT
No, you'll get it somewhere else.
Like your stomach or your
testicles.

CLAUDE
(laughs)
Testicles.

MARGOT
Don't laugh, that's a serious
thing.
Who told you this, anyway? Maisy?

CLAUDE
Yeah.

MARGOT
I hope you're not interested in
that girl. I find her
insufferable.

CLAUDE
What does that mean?

MARGOT
It means I can't suffer her. She's
loud and stupid. She goes on about
things of which she knows nothing
about.

CLAUDE
She got into Harvard early.

MARGOT
Stupid people get into Harvard
early all the time.

CLAUDE
Where did you go again?

MARGOT
Barnard.
(pause)
I just don't think you should do
anything with her.

CLAUDE
(embarrassed)
We're just friends.

MARGOT
If you do, use a condom.

Claude looks into the toilet. A square of toilet paper with a red lip outline floats on top of the water.

CLAUDE
Where are you going?

MARGOT
Out with Paul and Malcolm and Dick.

CLAUDE
Are kids coming?

36 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

36

Claude's POV through the window: Dick and Margot in the back seat of the Volvo. Malcolm and Pauline the front. The ignition turns.

Claude leaves the window. We hear the car rumble away. Claude and Ingrid sit on the couch, hamburgers in front of them. Maisy is cross-legged on Wizard's dog bed and chews a stalk of celery.

INGRID
Who do we know who's gay?

MAISY
How do I know what gay people you
know.

CLAUDE
Alan and Toby.

INGRID
And Bruce. He's gay and Aspergers.

CLAUDE
I don't know if Bruce is gay.

INGRID
He might be, it's very common.

CLAUDE
Your mom is pregnant.

INGRID
No she isn't.

CLAUDE
She is.

Ingrid looks stricken.

MAISY
How do you know that, Claude?

CLAUDE
She told my mom. But you can tell -
- she's hormonally weird.

MAISY
Holy shit, Ingrid you're going to
have a baby sister or brother.

INGRID
(quietly)
My mom thinks your mom is
unreliable.

CLAUDE
Who cares.

But he does. Claude bites into his burger. His eyes fix on the crease between Maisy's breasts. Maisy says to Claude:

MAISY
Do you think your mom is fuckable?

CLAUDE
I don't know.

MAISY
I think she's hot, your mother.
I'd do her if I was gay. I might
anyway. I mean if she came on to
me.

CLAUDE
She won't.

INGRID

I'm not going to do anyone.

There's a scraping sound on the window. The kids turn quickly:

CLAUDE

What was that?

INGRID

Is it scary?

37 EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

37

The three kids lie in the grass and watch through the slats in the fence: The Vogler family eats at an outdoor table. A pig turns on a spit over a smoky barbecue. Mrs. Vogler says something and the kids and Mr. Vogler laugh.

Maisy climbs over Claude to see better. He feels her breasts press against his back. Suddenly he swats crazily at his ear. Ingrid is poking him with a blade of grass.

38 INT. VOLVO - NIGHT

38

Malcolm drives quickly with Pauline next to him. He's smoking with the window open, Dick and Margot in the backseat.

PAULINE

Margot used to never speak. I remember when we went on a double date in high school, that kid Ron asked you if English was your first language.

MARGOT

It's true. I used to think I might have some kind of brain defect.

PAULINE

You thought you were aphasic.

MARGOT

I'm still not sure.

PAULINE

Oh, Jesus, Margot.

MARGOT

It's very possible, Paul.

PAULINE
I just...your diagnoses sometimes
irk the hell out of me.

Malcolm lights another cigarette -- the car jerks sideways.

MARGOT
Malcolm, can you slow down.

MALCOLM
What?

DICK
I can drive if you like.

MALCOLM
No, you got dinner, the driving's
on me.

DICK
Well, I'll let you pay your half if
you'll slow down.

MALCOLM
Well, neither Pauline or I ordered
dessert.

PAULINE
Malcolm, let it go.
(taunting)
Margot would insist on driving if
she knew how.

MARGOT
(to Dick)
My license elapsed. But I know
how.

MALCOLM
It's probably for the best. I have
this theory, I think, historically,
women have been held back in so
many ways that when they get power,
like they do behind the wheel, they
can't help but abuse it. It's akin
to Hannah Arendt's Eichmann theory
about prison guards and prisoners
switching rolls.

DICK
That's a charming philosophy.

MARGOT

Yeah. Tell that one a lot.

MALCOLM

This isn't a blanket thing. I mean, women can be great drivers too...

He takes a long satisfied drag on his cigarette.

PAULINE

Said the man with the moustache that he thinks he's wearing in quotes.

MARGOT

It's meant to be funny.

MALCOLM

(to Pauline, re: Margot)
Are you doing this for her benefit or mine?

Malcolm pumps the brake.

MALCOLM

What the fuck?

PAULINE

What?

MALCOLM

(momentarily sober)
No, there they go. Okay. It's fine. I thought I had no brakes for a minute...

Malcolm pitches his cigarette out the window -- it flies through Margot's window and lands on her lap.

MARGOT

Malcolm!

Dick grabs the lit butt and chucks it in the road.

MALCOLM

(turning around)
What?!

The car swerves again -- everyone jumps.

MARGOT

Watch it!

MALCOLM
It's fine, Margot!

PAULINE
(to Malcolm)
You're just so incompetent.

MALCOLM
(exploding)
Why don't you fucking drive
yourselves home!

Malcolm screeches the vehicle over to the shoulder. They jolt to a stop.

PAULINE
(quietly furious)
Oh, God.

Pauline opens the door and staggers toward the brush. She leans against a tree and looks like she might vomit. Malcolm watches in the rearview mirror.

MARGOT
You should go after her.

Malcolm sighs heavily and gets out of the car. Margot and Dick watch out the back window. Pauline sees Malcolm coming and bolts into the woods. Malcolm charges after her.

DICK
Come back with me tonight.

MARGOT
I've got Claude.

DICK
Come on, I've been trying to get
you up here all year.

MARGOT
(vaguely)
She's pregnant.

Dick leans over to Margot's neck. He licks her.

Claude lies in bed with Ingrid. He chews off a piece of his pinky fingernail. He hesitates and places it on an end-table.

INGRID

Why are you putting that there?

CLAUDE

I just want to keep it.

INGRID

I left a piece of skin in a movie theater once so it could watch movies all its life.

CLAUDE

I don't know if it's the same thing.

INGRID

Are you obsessed with Maisy?

CLAUDE

No.

INGRID

You're always staring at her tits.

Ingrid traces Claude's upper lip with her finger.

INGRID

You have a moustache.

CLAUDE

My mom bleaches it.

INGRID

I'm going to kiss your cheek and then you kiss mine.

CLAUDE

I don't want to do that.

INGRID

Why not?

CLAUDE

Because it's pointless...

Claude hears footsteps creak downstairs. He goes to the door and peers out: Pauline and Malcolm, a little disheveled and dirty, climb the stairs. Neither speaks. Malcolm goes into the hall bathroom. Pauline into their room. Running water groans through the old pipes.

INGRID

Where are you going? I thought we were having a conversation.

CLAUDE

You're starting to annoy me.

40 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 40

Claude walks -- he passes an open door: Malcolm is shaving his moustache -- the electric razor whirring.

41 INT. MARGOT'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS 41

Claude enters. It's empty. Her brown notebook rests on the bedside table. He hesitates then opens it:

It's packed with writing -- a nearly indecipherable cursive in black ink. The name Claude can be made out on the page.

Claude takes the book and climbs up into bed. He nestles against the pillow and squints to read the writing.

MARGOT (O.S.)

What are you doing?

Claude startles. Margot stands in the doorway with a glass of water.

CLAUDE

I didn't think you came home.

MARGOT

Where would I be?

CLAUDE

Can't Josh and Dad come to the wedding?

MARGOT

We've been through this. Go to bed.

Claude slides down to the floor. He hesitates.

CLAUDE

Can I sleep in here?

MARGOT

No, honey.

CLAUDE

We can put a pillow between us.

MARGOT

Okay. Just for tonight.

Claude takes a long pillow and places it like a barrier in the bed. We stay on him as he waits. Finally Margot climbs into the covers in a nightgown.

MARGOT

When you were a baby I wouldn't let anyone else hold you. I think that may have been a mistake.

42 EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

42

Malcolm, his moustache gone, a cigarette dangling from his mouth, hammers in a stake at the base of a collapsed, white tent. A workman holds a pole steadily.

Pauline sets up chairs around a series of tables. Ingrid idles a few feet away. They're in the midst of talking:

INGRID

Why was it a secret?

PAULINE

Because I didn't want to get you excited before it was real. It's not really a baby yet. In two more weeks we can celebrate together, okay?

INGRID

Why did you tell Margot?

PAULINE

Because she's my sister and I trust her. How do you feel about it?

INGRID

I don't want a sister.

Pauline touches Ingrid's hair gently.

INGRID

I'm going to go get Wizard.

She runs toward the house. Pauline marches toward Malcolm.

PAULINE

Margot told Claude something I expressly told her in confidence. And he told Ingrid.

(MORE)

PAULINE (CONT'D)
I'm stunned that she put me in this position. It's so fucking infuriating.

MALCOLM
Well it's that thing where--

PAULINE
Don't say anything. You know what...just be there for me. Silently.

MALCOLM
Okay.

PAULINE
Why do I have to be so careful around her, but everyone is allowed to make fun of me?

MALCOLM
I don't know if --

PAULINE
Malcolm, what did I just say?
(sighs)
You know, I just want you to take my side, I don't need you to make it better.

Malcolm puts his hand awkwardly on her shoulder.

PAULINE
Ingrid's really upset about it. Fuck. I can't believe she did this to me!
(pause)
I didn't tell you because... I didn't want you to feel like you had to marry me. I found out right before our seminar... I'm pregnant.

MALCOLM
Uh huh.

PAULINE
Well...does that sound good to you?

MALCOLM
I'm still digesting Margot telling Claude. What a fucking nut job.
(quickly)
Sorry. I think I'm really happy.

Ingrid is watching from across the field.

PAULINE
Come here, honey!

Ingrid hurries through the sparkly, dewy grass. Pauline hugs her and they spin.

43 CUT TO:

43

Margot watches from the upstairs window. The mother and daughter walk arm in arm down what will be the aisle. Finally, Margot turns away -- she's in Pauline and Malcolm's room.

She opens drawers: Underwear, socks, bras. Topless photos of Pauline posing in the bedroom. A photograph of Margot and Pauline in their teens on Halloween dressed as Pat Benatar and Patty Smyth respectively.

Margot grins.

Another photo of Margot, Pauline and an obese woman -- Becky -- in their 20's.

Margot's expression saddens. She opens another drawer. Polaroids of Pauline and Malcolm in different sexual poses.

She flips through these and drops them on the bureau.

Amidst the underwear and socks she finds pill containers. She squints to read the labels. She opens one and shakes out a few blue pills into her palm. She swallows one and puts the rest in her pocket.

More drawers open: Self-help books, incense, pamphlets on Buddhism. A stack of pornographic DVD's.

CLAUDE (O.S.)
Hey.

Margot starts and shoves the drawer shut.

MARGOT
Hey. I'm just looking at Pauline's incense and self-help books. I don't understand it. This junk makes her look stupid and she's not. I don't like to think of her this way.

CLAUDE
Uh huh.

MARGOT

She's such a hypocrite. Somehow I'm a kook for going to therapy, but she's got enough drugs here to medicate a...

(settles on a word)

...an elephant. And she's always with these losers.

CLAUDE

Malcolm's not a loser.

MARGOT

Claude...think about it.

CLAUDE

He's cool.

MARGOT

What makes you think he's cool?

(softens)

I'm more talking about her investment in things like the Forum and ashrams.

CLAUDE

What's the Forum?

MARGOT

Like a cult.

CLAUDE

She was in a cult?

MARGOT

Years ago. She and Lenny also followed some guru who was a follower of the Mukdananda who made her drink his bath water. Who knows what she's doing now.

INGRID (O.S.)

Margot! Claude!

44 EXT. FIELD - DAY

44

Claude hacks his way through the tall weeds.

CLAUDE

Wizard!

We move past him, obscured by grass, Pauline and Ingrid yell:

PAULINE/INGRID
Wizard! Wiz!

Margot enters the frame. The kids walk ahead.

MARGOT
Wizard! Here, boy!

She stands a few feet away from Pauline. The kids can be heard shouting in the distance.

MARGOT
How long has he been gone?

PAULINE
I don't know. Ingrid brought him in last night, but we couldn't find him this morning.

MARGOT
Oh boy.

PAULINE
Did you tell Claude I'm pregnant?

MARGOT
I don't know.

PAULINE
You did.

MARGOT
I guess I said something.

PAULINE
You did. You don't have to tell him everything.

MARGOT
He wants to know. If I don't tell him, he figures it out.

INGRID (O.S.)
Where is Wizard?

Ingrid approaches with Claude.

PAULINE
I don't know, honey.

Ingrid sinks into her mother's body. Claude and Margot walk ahead.

CLAUDE

You didn't let him go out into the road or something where something could've happened to him?

MARGOT

Why would you think I'd do something like that? That's awful.

CLAUDE

I just... I'm just making sure.

MARGOT

That's a terrible thing to say to me.

CLAUDE

I didn't mean on purpose, I just meant maybe in case...you knew something. I'm sorry.

45 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

45

Margot enters and opens the refrigerator. She gets out a white wine bottle. She turns around and jumps, startled.

MARGOT

Woa!

Malcolm sits at the table, eating saltines out of the box, a pad and paper in front of him.

MALCOLM

Hey, sorry. I'm here.

MARGOT

No, I... I should've looked.

MALCOLM

I'm just writing my vows. Trying to do something appropriate but also funny -- not jokey, more character based humor.

Margot pours herself a glass of wine. She looks to Malcolm to see if he wants some. He shakes his head. She takes a long drink. Silence.

MALCOLM

You having an okay time?

MARGOT

Oh, yeah. Besides Wizard getting --

MALCOLM

Yeah, we'll...we'll find him...or else, I don't know...

MARGOT

We won't.

MALCOLM

Right, or else he's dead or something.

(pause)

It means a lot to Paul that you came.

MARGOT

Yeah.

Silence. Malcolm mumbles a tune.

MARGOT

Oh God, this is the same toaster we had here as kids. Paul is so weird.

MALCOLM

I hear you've heard the news.

MARGOT

Yeah. Congratulations.

MALCOLM

Pretty cool. Hard to fully take in. It's a little abstract still. I haven't had that thing yet where you realize that you're not the most important person in the world. I'm anxious for that to happen. I guess I have to thank you -- I wouldn't know yet if you hadn't arrived.

MARGOT

You're welcome.

MALCOLM

Of course I can't help but worry I'll pass some not so great genes onto the kid. I mean, in my family there's a lot of hand washing, you know. I don't have it, but my brother does.

(pause)

You working on anything now?

MARGOT
Besides the thing with Dick?

MALCOLM
Oh, right.

He nods. She nods. Silence.

MARGOT
How about you?

MALCOLM
Oh, I'm working on some acrylic
paint --

MARGOT
Nobody fills the ice cube trays.

Malcolm stops, immediately embarrassed. Margot is looking in the freezer. She takes out the trays and brings them to the sink. She runs the water.

MARGOT
Sorry, what were you --

MALCOLM
Nothing. It doesn't matter.

MARGOT
No, what were you saying?

MALCOLM
It really... Nothing.

MARGOT
Okay.

She treads back to the refrigerator, balancing the full trays.

MALCOLM
I was saying I'm doing these
abstractions in acrylic paint. But
it's not... I'm not getting paid
or anything. I don't know, I hate
that question, "What do you do?"

MARGOT
You asked me.

MALCOLM
I know, but...

Malcolm exhales in frustration.

46 EXT. FIELD - DAY

46

Pauline and Malcolm open the gate to the Vogler's property.

MALCOLM

I think we shouldn't mention the tree, we should let them know that there will be people and music on Saturday and it will be louder than usual.

PAULINE

And that they can come for a glass of champagne. But you tell them. I think they respond to you better.

They approach the Vogler's sun-worn and paint chipped house.

MALCOLM

Well, I am ultimately one of them. You shouldn't've made me shave the stache.

PAULINE

(laughs)
Yeah, right.

MALCOLM

Oh, hey, Ingrid is asking me if I was ever gay. Do you know what that's about?

PAULINE

No.

Mr. Vogler, wearing a fleece vest and carrying a hatchet over his shoulders, tramples out of the brush.

PAULINE

Hi.

Vogler stops. His face is jagged and worn.

PAULINE

Hi, I'm Pauline. This is Malcolm. We've met before. We're your neighbors.

The man watches them strangely with icy blue eyes.

VOGLER

You gonna cut that tree down?

PAULINE

Well, we grew up with that tree and we're getting married under it Saturday and --

She waits for Malcolm to jump in. He doesn't. Vogler says softly, but sternly:

VOGLER

The roots are growing into our property. It's rotting, it's killing our plants.

PAULINE

We had a tree doctor out and he said it was healthy.

Pauline smacks Malcolm's arm.

PAULINE

Would it hurt you to say anything?

MALCOLM

What? What do you want from me?

PAULINE

You're making me do the whole fucking thing.

MALCOLM

You brought up the tree.

PAULINE

He brought up --

She stops herself. She says to Vogler:

PAULINE

I'm sorry... This was better thought-through back at the house.

Pauline's gaze goes above Vogler's head -- like Margot described earlier. He runs his hand through his hair as if something might be caught in there.

PAULINE

We were wondering if you and your wife -- I'm sorry I forgot her name -- would like to come over for...

VOGLER

You should ask her. She makes the plans. I'm going to go in now.

He tramps inside. The screen door bangs.

MALCOLM

I felt like you didn't give me a chance to say what I wanted to say.

Pauline hits him in the chest and starts to walk away. Malcolm comes after her, his rage growing.

MALCOLM

I want to punch that guy in the nose!

PAULINE

You've never hit anyone.

MALCOLM

I have too!

PAULINE

Who?

MALCOLM

Lots of -- You don't know them. They're not around because I've punched them.

A smile breaks across Pauline's face. Malcolm seethes.

MALCOLM

Don't laugh, Pauline. It's not funny. I'll fucking punch your sister.

Malcolm clenches his fists. He points at Vogler's place.

MALCOLM

The threat is not out there. It's in our house. It's sleeping in my studio. I mean, I wouldn't actually hit her, but I feel...I feel like doing it. She's such a fucking idiot.

PAULINE

She's not an idiot. You might not like her --

MALCOLM

She is. She is an idiot! You're an idiot.

PAULINE

Jesus.

MALCOLM

You're both fucking morons. I'm so fucking... I'm trying so hard. You don't give me any credit.

PAULINE

What is wrong?

MALCOLM

I don't know, I have the emotional version of whatever bad feng shui would be. I don't know. You tell me, you understand this shit.

PAULINE

Did you drink your teas?

MALCOLM

Yeah, I drank my fucking teas! Don't judge me now. Really, I think when you look back at this you're going to see I'm not acting like a crazy person. That this is the right reaction. In proportion with what is going on. This is right!

Malcolm looks around furiously. The only thing available to him is a leafy stalk. He pulls on it, but it won't uproot. He tears the leaves off in a rage.

PAULINE

You have the most oddly self-conscious form of rage I've ever --

MALCOLM

I hate you.

Exhausted he approaches her. He says, still with anger:

MALCOLM

Let's make love.

47 CUT TO:

47

Pauline walks back to the house, buttoning her dress. She looks up suddenly and stops: A man watches her from the lawn. He holds a bouquet of flowers. Pauline runs to him.

PAULINE

Jim...

They embrace. Her hand cups the back of his neck.

CLAUDE (O.S.)

Dad!

Claude runs from the house.

48 EXT. PATIO - LATE DAY

48

Pauline, Malcolm, Margot, Jim, Claude and Ingrid eat fish stew and peasant bread. Jim's flowers sit in a vase. He wears a tan knit bracelet that Ingrid made.

JIM

It was a difficult decision because Claude has so many friends at school now, but it is expensive and Bronx Science is a great public school.

CLAUDE

I didn't get into Stuyvesant.

MARGOT

He's not a good test taker.

MALCOLM

I went to Stuy.

MARGOT

(caught off-guard)
Really?

MALCOLM

Really.

CLAUDE

I'd rather stay at Packer, but it's so expensive.

Malcolm lifts up a bottle of Jameson from the floor near his chair and pours himself another stiff drink.

JIM

Josh is a great test taker, but
Claude thinks more abstractly.
He's more creative. Right?

CLAUDE

I guess so.

Jim smiles warmly at his son.

JIM

I saw the one armed man who really
has two arms at the bodega.

CLAUDE

Did you give him confusing change?

JIM

I did. I tripped him up with some
nickels. And a Canadian quarter.

MALCOLM

You know what I tried the other
day? Sitting down to pee. Have
you done this, Jim?

JIM

No...no.

MALCOLM

I did it as a lark. As a joke
really. I was going to call
Pauline in and say, guess what I'm
doing here...

PAULINE

I'm sorry I didn't get to have that
experience.

MALCOLM

I was thinking, you know, my dad
used to say, "Why stand when you
can sit." And this is a really
good example of that. I mean, it
took me so long to try because I
was embarrassed.

(to the sisters)

You guys do it all the time.

MARGOT

I never sit down in a public place.
I squat and hover.

Ingrid goes wide eyed for a moment.

MALCOLM

Anyway, I recommend it. At least to try it.

PAULINE

Jim, I'm sorry about the room. It's usually Malcolm's storage room so it's kind of make-shift right now.

JIM

It's fine.

Margot stares at Jim.

JIM

Margot, open your gift.

An unopened present in blue tissue paper sits beside Margot's plate.

MARGOT

I get self-conscious opening presents in front of people. This weekend is about Pauline.

PAULINE

Oh...poo. Open it Margot.

Margot slowly unties the white ribbon and peels away the tape. Pauline groans:

PAULINE

Come on, get to it.

Margot takes out a pair of furry slippers.

MALCOLM

Those look warm.

JIM

I remember last year in Vermont you said your feet were freezing.

Her eyes find Claude who watches his parents carefully. She leans across the table to Jim and they kiss chastely and briskly on the lips.

MARGOT

Thank you.

49 INT. JIM'S CAR - NIGHT

49

Jim drives with Margot in the passenger seat.

MARGOT
I already have slippers.

JIM
Well, that's okay. Two sets are fine, right?

MARGOT
It makes me sad to get a present that I already have.

JIM
Why?

MARGOT
It makes me feel like you don't know me.

She jams her pinky into her ear trying to get at the bug.

JIM
What's wrong with your ear?

MARGOT
I asked you not to come. I was so clear and you did it anyway so blithely.

JIM
We need time alone to sort this out. You can't just run away --

MARGOT
Okay, so we're here. I'm giving you this time.

JIM
(trying a joke)
Well, now you're putting too much pressure on me.

Jim smiles crookedly at her. She half-smiles back. He takes a moment, preparing to speak. Then:

JIM
What is that?

His headlights catch a woman cowering at the roadside. They pass.

MARGOT
Keep driving.

Jim slowly pulls over to the shoulder.

MARGOT
No...no...no. Jim, no.

JIM
Let me just...

Jim gets out of the car. A sobbing woman crouches, cradling a bloody dog.

WOMAN
Please help me.

Jim comes toward her.

WOMAN
Please help me. He got hit by a car. Please help me.

Margot opens her door and steps out.

MARGOT
(warily)
Jim...

Jim kneels down by the whining pit bull. The woman screams:

WOMAN
Help me!

MARGOT
Careful, he might bite you!

Jim suddenly lifts up the twitching animal.

50 INT. RENTAL CAR - NIGHT

50

Jim drives, his front covered in blood. Margot is shot-gun. The lady rides in back with the panting pit in her lap.

WOMAN
Hurry...he's dying. He's dying.

Margot puts her hands over her ears. Jim speeds up.

WOMAN
He didn't do anything. Roger is an innocent. He's an innocent creature.

MARGOT

Oh, God.

JIM

Margot.

MARGOT

(whispering)

I can't stand her.

51 EXT. VETERINARY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

51

Jim comes outside tucking his wallet in his back pocket. Margot sits on the car hood smoking a joint.

MARGOT

You paid, didn't you?

JIM

She didn't have her purse with her. It wasn't so expensive. Roger's going to live.

MARGOT

I don't give a fuck about Roger. And...that makes me feel like shit. You make me feel like shit. I wouldn't have stopped.

JIM

Of course you would've.

MARGOT

No, I wouldn't've. I would have kept driving. I hate myself when I'm with you.

JIM

(frustrated)

Margot, I'm not... I can't talk to you when you're this fucked up.

MARGOT

You're just like Claude in that way...you make me feel guilty. Sometimes I find you so despicable.

Margot stubs out the joint on the car roof. Jim suddenly removes his sweater and puts it around her shoulders. He fishes into his pants pocket for his keys. Tears start down Margot's cheeks.

JIM
What's wrong?

MARGOT
I don't know.
(pause)
Before you gave me your sweater I
think I didn't realize I was cold.

Margot leans in to him, her forehead presses against his cheek. After a moment, he puts his arms around her.

MARGOT
(quietly)
Take me home and go away.

52 INT./EXT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

52

Margot smokes by the open door. She drinks a glass of white wine. Pauline eats from a left-over Chinese container.

MARGOT
If it were someone else I'd
understand it, I'd feel sympathy
even. But since it's me, I just
feel bad. And horribly critical.
I haven't been able to tell Claude
what's happening. And I have to.
I'm going to.
(frustrated)
How can I be all these people? How
can I be married to Jim. And fuck
Dick. And want them both and then
neither of them...

PAULINE
I know. We're at the age where
we're becoming invisible to men and
if a guy wants to fuck us, it's
very tempting.

MARGOT
What are you saying?

PAULINE
I'm saying, if you get your sense
of self from being fuckable and
that starts to wane -- it's very
hard. I almost had an affair too.
But you know, you don't have to do
it. You can, I don't know, get a
manicure or something.

Margot grows furious. She turns to hide her face.

PAULINE
You know I tell people you're my
closest friend. I really miss you.

MARGOT
(barely)
Me too.

PAULINE
But I can't help feeling that you
really came to my wedding because I
live a mile away from the guy
you're fucking.

MARGOT
Come on, Pauline. You make it
sound like I'm using you.

PAULINE
Yeah.

There is a long silence between them. Finally, Pauline indicates to Margot that she has something in her nostril.

PAULINE
You have a...

Margot clears her nose quickly with her finger.

MARGOT
Did I get it?

PAULINE
Yeah, I think so.

MARGOT
(suddenly)
Paul, what are you doing getting
married to this guy? He's not good
enough for you. He's so coarse,
he's like guys we rejected when we
were sixteen. You know...don't
make a mistake like this.

(pause)
I'm sorry, maybe I have no right to
say that, but you know I'm truthful
so... Would you rather I lie?

PAULINE
Who should I be with then?

A smashing sound. Margot steps outside: Two hooded figures turn over a recycling can, glass smashes on the ground. Garbage is strewn across the driveway.

MARGOT (O.S.)

Hey! Hey, you! You pick that up.
I will call the police. This is
our property. Pick that up.

Pauline remains seated at the table, stunned. Margot comes back inside.

MARGOT

Creeps.

53 EXT. DRIVEWAY - MORNING 53

Malcolm crams the trash back in the cans. He sees something amidst the milk cartons and corn husks. He reaches down and lifts up a severed pig's hoof.

54 EXT. FIELD - MORNING 54

Claude and Ingrid idle in the tall grass calling to Wizard.

CLAUDE

Dogs usually come back, I think.

INGRID

What happened to your dad?

CLAUDE

He went to Vermont.

INGRID

He didn't want to come to the
wedding?

CLAUDE

I don't think he could... I think
he couldn't.

(pause)

You want to see me dance?

INGRID

Okay.

Claude dances. The gangly weeds blow around him. There's a rustling in the brush. A patch of fur catches Ingrid's eye.

INGRID

(under her breath)
Wizard...

The animal is gone.

A figure appears in the distance behind Claude. The boy, the Vogler's son, approaches shirtless in swimming trunks. Ingrid's attention goes to him.

CLAUDE
You're not watching.

The boy comes into focus. He holds a dead squirrel by its tail. Ingrid backs up next to Claude. The boy stops a few feet away and hurls the squirrel at them. The kids jump back as it lands at their feet.

BOY
Where are you going?

CLAUDE
(stopping)
We have to get home.

BOY
Is that your girlfriend?

CLAUDE
No, she's my cousin.

BOY
You a fruity?

CLAUDE
Um...no.

BOY
(to Ingrid)
You a fruity?

INGRID
(with certainty)
No.

BOY
We will hurt you.

Claude takes Ingrid's arm and they start to walk away.

INGRID
He's a Vogler.

CLAUDE
He's just a stupid boy.

Claude sneaks a look over his shoulder -- the boy follows.
Claude's gait quickens.

INGRID
Hold it, I have a rock in my
sandal.

CLAUDE
Come on, Ingrid.

Ingrid slows, lifts her leg and removes a sandal. The boy is
behind them. Claude yanks Ingrid's arm and she topples over.

INGRID
Oww!

Claude leans down to help her. The boy leaps on Claude.
They both crash to the ground and roll through the grass.

CLAUDE
Get him off me. Ingrid!

Ingrid hesitates then runs toward the house.

Claude wrestles with the boy. The boy growls. He grabs hold
of Claude's arms and sinks his teeth into Claude's shoulder.

CLAUDE
Ayy! Help me!

Claude kicks and yanks himself free. He runs wildly.

Close on Claude. Tears stream down. He coughs and spits.

55 INT. HOUSE - SAME

55

Claude bursts through the front door. Ingrid sees Claude and
runs to the kitchen. Margot, in a suit, goes over notes.

MARGOT
Woa, don't run so fast.

CLAUDE
There's a boy! He bit me!

MARGOT
(alarmed)
Who bit you?

CLAUDE
A boy. A Vogler! Where's Ingrid?

MARGOT

Let me see.

He tilts his head, she leans down and looks at his neck. There are red and purple bite marks.

MARGOT

(rising)

I'm calling the police.

Claude grabs her arm.

CLAUDE

No, don't! It'll get worse. Why did you say anything to them?

MARGOT

Claude, this isn't my fault.

CLAUDE

That boy bit me because you couldn't keep your fat mouth shut.

MARGOT

Claude, you're being a jerk.

CLAUDE

You shit in your shoes and then you fuck them!

Margot smacks Claude in the face. Ingrid stares wide eyed.

56 INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

56

A placard reads: A Conversation with Margot Zeller and Dick Koosman. People mull about with drinks. Pauline and Claude admire the display of Margot's books.

PAULINE

You really want to know? I'll tell you. She wrote a story about Lenny and me.

(flips through pages)

Yeah, it's in here. I mean we were talking almost every day at this point and there was no warning. Maybe a couple of remarks that she'd used some things of ours... Then The New Yorker comes -- we have a subscription -- and there's the story and... It's things we said and did -- stuff I told her in confidence.

(MORE)

PAULINE (CONT'D)
 I think it helped end our marriage.
 I read it and thought, "She hates
 me."

CLAUDE
 She doesn't hate you.

Pauline stares at a blown up author photo of her sister.

PAULINE
 You think? Margot tried to murder
 me when we were girls. She put me
 on a baking sheet, sprinkled me
 with paprika and put me in the
 oven.

57 CUT TO:

57

The crowd files in. Margot and Dick stand in a corner.

MARGOT
 Jim was here.

Dick flips through some notes.

DICK
 Is Jim still writing?

MARGOT
 (nods)
 I told him to go to Vermont without
 me.

DICK
 I'd love to see him tell a linear
 story for a change. Jim never
 wanted to make it easy for the
 reader, did he. The nicest man
 I've ever met, but he can't play
 the game.

MARGOT
 I'm not joining him. I'm going to
 stay here and then...we'll see.
 Right. Okay?

DICK
 I didn't ask you to do that.
 (pause)
 The guy's pointing at us...

58 CUT TO:

58

Margot and Dick sit on stools holding microphones in front of rows of fold-out chairs. Only a few empty seats remain. Pauline and Claude sit in the back.

DICK
I'm very interested in your story
"Middle Children."

Some people applaud, but it trickles off before it gets started.

DICK
The father is a loathsome character
yet we also feel a strange sympathy
for him.

MARGOT
Yeah, well I was very interested in
exploring a father-daughter
relationship. While he clings
desperately to her, suffocates her
really, he also silently resents
the responsibility of parenthood.

DICK
There's this sexualized push-pull
with Daphne which I find --

MARGOT
He craves isolation really. I
always thought of him as someone
who so over identifies with
everyone around him that he begins
to lose all sense of himself.

DICK
You make his only recourse to
abandon his family, including his
beloved daughter.

MARGOT
Right, that's true. That's true.

DICK
I write historical fiction so I
don't have to answer to this, but I
wonder for someone who writes so
nakedly about family, how
autobiographical is this portrait?

Margot rests her lips on the tip of the microphone.

MARGOT

My father was a loving person. He had his days, of course, but...he was devoted to us as children. I wouldn't have written this portrait were it true.

Pauline nods slightly.

DICK

But I'm interested in how the father could be in fact a portrait of you.

Margot stares, dumbstruck.

MARGOT

Umm...I don't... Why do you assume it's based on... We all take from life. I had to have our refrigerator repaired the other day at our apartment in Manhattan. I was alone with a guy, I think he was Puerto Rican, sent over by...Whirlpool, I think it is who made our fridge. Although he said he worked for an independent organization who Whirlpool subcontracts. I think he was retarded. There was an anger in him and suddenly I became afraid for my life. I called Jim at NYU. I asked him to come home.

Margot stops. Her face is awash in sweat.

Pauline takes Claude's hand and presses it to her chest. His eyes widen, fixed on his mother.

MARGOT

It might be Frigidaire... I'm sorry... I don't... I'm not sure what I'm... I think I need to take a moment...

She stands and walks off the stage. She realizes she still has the mike. She goes back and places it on her seat.

MARGOT

(almost incoherently)
You're an asshole...

59 INT. BOOKSTORE BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

59

Margot grabs a pill from her pocket, puts it on her tongue and drinks from the faucet. There is a knocking. Margot opens the door. Claude looks up at her. Pauline and Dick wait in the background.

MARGOT

I need to be alone right now, okay?

CLAUDE

What's wrong?

MARGOT

I don't know. I'll tell you sometime. Go on.

CLAUDE

Are you sure?

MARGOT

Yes. Go with mom. I'll see you later.

CLAUDE

You said, mom.

MARGOT

(snapping)

But you know what I mean. Go with Pauline. Jesus, do I...do I need to spell it out for you?

(she points)

Go. With. Her.

60 INT. CHURCH - DAY

60

A simple, spare space, empty except for Pauline and Claude.

PAULINE

Are you okay?

CLAUDE

I'm okay.

PAULINE

You're your mom's favorite. Do you know that?

CLAUDE

I don't think she has a favorite.

PAULINE
She's always liked you best. More than Jim even.

CLAUDE
But they're married. It's different.

PAULINE
But she still loves you best. It's hard, I think, to find people in the world you love more than your family.

CLAUDE
I like Malcolm.

PAULINE
Yeah? Good. I don't know. I do too.

(pause)
I can teach you to swim if you like.

CLAUDE
No, thanks.

Claude looks at the floor. His sneaker rests next to her open toed sandals. She taps his foot with hers.

PAULINE
Has your mother talked to you yet?

CLAUDE
I don't think so. About what?

PAULINE
Are you okay? It's hard to see your mom like that -- get attacked like that. Right? It was mean what he did. I think it was really shitty.

CLAUDE
Mm hm.

PAULINE
You know, I think your mom's going through a rough time right now and...whatever she tells you...like if she says she's leaving your father...remember that she often changes her mind and...
(MORE)

PAULINE (CONT'D)
I don't want you to worry about
anything right now.

Claude says nothing.

61 EXT. HOUSE - LATE DAY

61

Pauline's Volvo rolls into the drive. She and Claude get out of the front seats. Margot climbs out of the back holding a big cake box. No one speaks.

Malcolm, in a fleece vest and safety goggles, drags a chainsaw toward the oak tree. Ingrid runs to her mom.

INGRID
He's cutting it down.

PAULINE
Good.

Pauline passes Maisy reading on the patio.

MAISY
My dad's late to pick me up. I
hope I'm not a pain.

PAULINE
You're not a pain.

Margot sits on the back stairs drinking a glass of wine with ice. The tent is up. The tables and chairs are placed around the lawn. She watches Malcolm prepare to take the tree down. She puts her pinky in her ear and twists. Claude approaches.

MARGOT
I told Paul I didn't want you guys
to come.

CLAUDE
I thought it was interesting.

MARGOT
What did Paul say?

CLAUDE
I think she liked it.

MARGOT
Yeah, right. Did you talk about me
afterwards?

CLAUDE
No.

MARGOT
I can tell you're lying.

CLAUDE
We didn't, mom.

MARGOT
I don't trust her.

CLAUDE
She really loves you. She does.

Margot tosses the remainder of her drink into the weeds.

MARGOT
Pauline told me she's very
disappointed in you.

CLAUDE
Why?

MARGOT
She thinks you laze about the
house. Ingrid is always offering
to help clean or cook. She made
bracelets for all the guests. Even
Malcolm puts up the tent. You just
wait until everyone else does it
for you.

CLAUDE
That's not true.

MARGOT
It is true. You're never helpful.
I wish I had taught you better
manners.

CLAUDE
I can try to make popovers. If I
can remember how.

MARGOT
Don't bother.

She looks at him with grave disappointment.

CLAUDE
Why are you looking at me like
that?

MARGOT

I just see how much you've changed.
Your body language. You used to be
rounder and more graceful. You're
so stiff now. So blase.

CLAUDE

What do you mean?

MARGOT

(retreating)

I can't explain it.

Margot shakes her head. She's suddenly distraught.

MARGOT

It's okay though.

CLAUDE

Uh huh.

Claude looks devastated. He starts toward the beach.
Margot's eyes well up -- she says, trying to make things
better:

MARGOT

You're still handsome.

62

EXT. HOUSE - SAME

62

Pauline marches toward Malcolm. Malcolm wears the safety
goggles and revs the chainsaw.

PAULINE

Are you able to do this yourself?

MALCOLM

Pauline, do you want me to cut it
down or not?

PAULINE

Watch the tent.

The jagged blades pierce the trunk. Pauline crunches her
face. Malcolm stops suddenly.

He walks around the tree and inspects the bark.

MALCOLM

(indicating his fleece)

I liked how it looked on Vogler.

Pauline starts to say something -- stops. Then:

PAULINE

I think it's over between Dick and Margot. He was so cruel to her today. And poor Claude had to watch it all. She should just get out of the marriage and then she can fuck whoever she wants, you know. It's cowardly. And Dick Koosman. What a choice. I mean...you know?

MALCOLM

I agree. I hate the idea of Dick fucking Margot.

PAULINE

What does that mean? You want to fuck Margot?

MALCOLM

Pauline, that's not what I said.

PAULINE

I know you have a crush on her, you already told me that.

Malcolm reddens and starts the chainsaw again. They yell over the noise:

MALCOLM

I didn't say that. I said I thought she was attractive after you grilled me. She has no interest in me anyway. Not that it would matter if she did.

PAULINE

Have you ever done anything like that.

MALCOLM

What do you mean?

PAULINE

Have you ever cheated on me?

MALCOLM

No!

Malcolm shuts the motor.

MALCOLM

Can I do this?

PAULINE
Those emails you had with that
student of mine.

MALCOLM
(exhales)
Uh huh.

PAULINE
Did that...I know you said it was
nothing.

MALCOLM
It was.

PAULINE
I just... Can you say it again?

MALCOLM
I just did. Now, can I cut down
the tree?

PAULINE
You never did anything with her?

MALCOLM
No. She emailed me after we met at
that reading at the college and...
You know we were friends.

PAULINE
Right, just a regular friendship
between you and a twenty year old
girl.

MALCOLM
Pauline, how many times do I have
to say it.

PAULINE
But...why don't I believe it?

MALCOLM
Because Margot can't understand why
you're with me and now when she's
around you look for things.

PAULINE
(hesitates)
You promise.

MALCOLM
I promise.

Pauline looks at him long and hard. Malcolm takes off his goggles.

PAULINE
Okay. I'm sorry.

MALCOLM
It's okay.

Malcolm and Pauline continue to stare at one another. He guns the chainsaw. Tears spill suddenly from his eyes. Pauline startles. He flicks the switch off.

MALCOLM
I'm going to tell you something.

PAULINE
(suddenly terrified)
What?

MALCOLM
I don't want to lose you, though.
Okay?

Pauline's face goes pale.

MALCOLM
I'm going to tell you... Just let
me... Maisy...

Pauline teeters.

PAULINE
I don't want to know.

MALCOLM
...we didn't really do anything.
We were goofing around, I was
making fun of her cause she dates a
jock...

PAULINE
I don't want to know.

MALCOLM
I shouldn't've put myself in that
position, I know that. We brushed
lips really. It was barely a kiss.
And then we stopped. That was it.

His nose runs. He wipes it messily with his arm.

MALCOLM

Our tongues touched. I don't want to under-sell it either. I mean... We made out. I made out with her. I don't know why. I don't even like her. It's been a heady time.
(Pauline says nothing)
What are you thinking? Please, tell me what you're thinking.

Pauline rushes at the tree -- she smacks her hands on the trunk and throws all her weight behind one great shove. It doesn't budge. In frustration and rage, she runs.

63 CUT TO:

63

Ingrid is the only one on the patio as Pauline approaches.

INGRID

Has anyone seen Wizard?

PAULINE

No. Where's Maisy?

INGRID

Upstairs, I think with Claude.

64 INT. PAULINE'S BEDROOM/HALLWAY - DAY

64

Pauline enters in a daze. A toilet flushes. Maisy comes out of Pauline's bathroom.

MAISY

Oh, hi. Sorry, I had to go. I hope that's okay I used yours.

Pauline nods strangely. She goes to the window. Her dove grey wedding dress hangs on the back of the door.

MAISY

I love your wedding dress. It's so unconventional and great.

Pauline nods. Her eye catches the Polaroids of her and Malcolm nude which lie on top of the bureau. Maisy looks at the pictures too.

Maisy shifts uneasily and leaves the room. Pauline follows. Maisy walks down the hallway, aware that Pauline is right behind her.

MAISY

Is everything okay?

PAULINE
 (pause)
 Nothing.

Maisy stops at the landing. Claude sits at the bottom of the staircase playing with a string.

MAISY
 Claude, do you want to play
 croquet?

CLAUDE
 Okay.

Pauline raises her leg -- her foot hovers at Maisy's lower back. She hesitates. Claude reacts with horror. Maisy turns around to see Pauline with her foot in the air like she's doing karate. Pauline's eyes dart around aimlessly.

Maisy stares, confused. Pauline slowly lowers her leg. Something dawns on Maisy. She races down the stairs.

65 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

65

The deafening shriek of the blade as it cuts into the tree. Malcolm is soaked in sweat. Ingrid watches from a few feet away.

In the distance -- Dick's orange BMW grinds into the driveway. Maisy hurries toward him.

Ingrid says, buried in the noise:

INGRID
 There's Dick.

Malcolm sees Dick. He pushes the blade harder into the wood.

INGRID
 Is it almost ready?

MALCOLM
 (distracted)
 Almost.

Maisy is talking to her father. Dick spots Malcolm. He immediately starts toward him. Malcolm hesitates. Cold fear creeps up his neck.

Dick speeds up.

Malcolm backs up slowly -- drops the chainsaw -- and bolts toward the water. Ingrid watches, confused.

Dick takes off after him. Malcolm stumbles down the long wooden stairs to the beach.

Malcolm runs wobbily -- he pants, already out of breath. Sweat pours down his face and body.

Dick's gait is swift -- his arms stiff, bent at the elbow. His jeans make a swish swish. He takes the stairs two at a time.

Malcolm grasps the railing, moving as fast as he can sideways, trying not to fall. He reaches the beach, his feet sinking in the sand. He trips and topples forward.

He looks up -- Dick lunges.

Dick pounds Malcolm's head and face. Malcolm throws his arms up and tries to block the punches.

MALCOLM

I didn't do anything! I didn't do anything!

DICK

Fucking sleazebag!

Dick gets up. He kicks Malcolm hard.

DICK

I don't ever want to see you again.

Malcolm balls himself up against a rock. He cries:

MALCOLM

Fuck off, dickhead.

Dick marches forward and kicks Malcolm again hard.

MALCOLM

Ow!

Dick lights a brown cigarette and walks away. Malcolm screams:

MALCOLM

Fucking dickbag! She's lying!

He touches his face and sees the blood on his fingers.

MALCOLM

(choking on tears)
Oh, man.

There's a rustling noise in the wind. Malcolm looks -- a mud- and sea-coated Wizard watches him with a panting smile.

66 CUT TO: 66

Wheels sputter in the gravel. Dick's car peels out with Maisy in the passenger seat. Claude and Margot watch from the porch.

67 INT. LIVING ROOM/DINING ROOM - SAME 67

Pauline is seated at the table with place cards, flowers, silverware, napkins, dishes. Margot enters. Claude follows.

MARGOT

Come with me to New York.

PAULINE

I can't talk about it --

MARGOT

Okay, but you can't marry him. You have to go now. We can think about what to do with the baby --

PAULINE

(stands)

Margot, I can't --

MARGOT

Don't turn vague, listen to me --

PAULINE

I want you to pack all your things and get out of here. You can take our car and leave it at the ferry.

MARGOT

(startled)

What?

CLAUDE

I'll help out more. I can make popovers.

Pauline looks at Claude strangely. She leans down and kisses him on the lips.

PAULINE

Do you love me?

(Claude nods)

Good.

MARGOT

Don't take this out on me? I'm on your side.

PAULINE

No, you're not. You're not.

MARGOT

I've kept my mouth shut because --

PAULINE

No, you haven't kept your mouth shut! No you haven't...kept your mouth shut...

MARGOT

Okay, I told you and I was right. He's done an insane thing. You don't know this man. What he did is criminal.

PAULINE

Margot, I can't...

MARGOT

It's pedophilia.

PAULINE

Get out!

Pauline shoves a stack of plates and silverware off of the table. The plates shatter. Silence save for their breathing.

PAULINE

Becky and I talk about you -- about what a monster you are. Is it cause Mom gave me the house? Can't I have anything? What was I thinking? I let you in. Get! Out!

MARGOT

What? What are you saying? I don't recognize you -- it's like you're channelling someone.

PAULINE

(suddenly)

Ingrid!

68 EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

68

The purple of Ingrid's batik shirt shines in the grass beneath the tree.

The trunk -- a gash at its base -- teeters.

Pauline takes off into the field.

Ingrid sings to herself and traces the branches in the air with her finger.

Pauline sprints --

PAULINE

Ingrid!

Ingrid says to no one in particular:

INGRID

What?

Pauline's breaths are rapid, jagged.

Ingrid stands.

A wind whips up. The tree sways.

Pauline thrusts her arms out, seizes Ingrid and hurls herself away from the tree.

INGRID

Ow!

Ingrid sobs as they run. Pauline looks back. The tree is still standing. They embrace a few feet out of its range.

INGRID

It wasn't going to fall!

PAULINE

I'm sorry.

Malcolm trudges up the stairs. He's bloody and tattered. Wizard trots behind him.

INGRID

Wizard!

She hugs the dog and holds him by the collar. The three of them stand a few feet apart.

There's a horrible creak -- and suddenly --

-- crack --

Malcolm pulls both girls toward him --

The tree topples -- the thick trunk rips through the wedding tent and crashes through tables and chairs and the fence --

-- onto the Vogler's property.

69 INT. VOLVO - DAY

69

The speedometer needle wavers around 30. Margot clutches the steering wheel. Claude looks morose. Pauline and Ingrid sit stonily in the back seat. The Volvo jerks into the oncoming lane and back. Margot draws a deep breath.

CLAUDE
I thought you couldn't drive.

MARGOT
(irritated)
I can drive. Why does everyone say that? I used to drive.

They inch up a small hill. A car cascades down past them. The Volvo shakes. Pauline suddenly snaps out of her daze:

PAULINE
We have to call people and cancel.

INGRID
What happened? Can I still sing?

Margot rolls down the window.

MARGOT
(to Claude)
You do smell.

CLAUDE
Well, I'm not wearing any deodorant.

They reach the top of the hill, over the crest, and descend. The vehicle picks up speed. Margot presses down on the brake.

MARGOT
Shit.

CLAUDE
What?

MARGOT
 I don't think...
 (she pumps again)
 No... We don't have brakes.

PAULINE
 (resigned)
 The brakes are bad, that's right.

CLAUDE
 What does that mean?

MARGOT
 What do you think it means?

CLAUDE
 I mean, what can we do?
 The car coasts faster down the hill.

CLAUDE
 Mom.
 Margot places her arm stiffly across Claude's front.
 Pauline wraps her body around her daughter.

Margot swerves into the shoulder -- she makes a sharp turn into the forest and crashes through the bramble and muck. The car slows until it comes to a sudden stop at the base of a tree.

70 CUT TO:

70

Margot and Claude, Pauline and Ingrid trudge through the bony white trees of the forest -- their bags weigh them down. They're all covered in sweat and there's dirt caked on their feet and ankles.

MARGOT
 I ruined these shoes.

Pauline's face screws up. She's suddenly in pain. She races behind a tree. Margot follows.

INGRID
 Mom, are you okay?

PAULINE (O.S.)
 Don't look!

Margot stops.

PAULINE (O.S.)
Shit!

INGRID
Mom, what happened?

PAULINE (O.S.)
Nothing.

Margot steps to see around the trunk. The kids follow behind. Pauline removes her panties from under her skirt. She tosses them in the brush.

PAULINE
Fuck.

Margot turns to the kids. Ingrid hides a smile.

CLAUDE
Did she poop in her pants?

MARGOT
It happens to everyone. Not just babies. It'll happen to you too someday.

71 EXT. FERRY - DAY

71

Margot and Claude sit, streaked with mud and perspiration. Margot drinks a beer, Claude a Coke. Margot pops a blue pill in her mouth and swallows. Ingrid swings on the rail.

Pauline hangs up a cell phone and hands it back to her sister. She takes the beer and swigs.

PAULINE
I left mom and Becky a message.

MARGOT
I don't think mom knows how to work the machine.

Margot puts her pinky in her ear.

MARGOT
I can hear it flapping.

PAULINE
You should take care of that. It can hatch eggs.

Claude turns his head. In the Chevy next to them sits Mrs. Vogler and the Vogler boy. She sings along to the radio. She runs her hand through her son's hair gently. He nestles into her shoulder.

72 EXT. SEASIDE TOWN STREET - EVENING 72

The four of them get out of a taxi. A small, peeling hotel.

73 INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS 73

A dark tight space with a faded and dirty green wall-to-wall carpet. Pauline combs Ingrid's hair on one of the two double beds. Ingrid practices her wedding song. Claude sits on the other bed and looks into the open bathroom door: Margot stands with her back to him. She talks on her cell phone in a whisper. She hangs up. Claude walks inside. The sink drips.

MARGOT

Sweetie, there's a bus that leaves
to Vermont from town tomorrow
morning. I just talked to your dad
and he's going to pick you up.

CLAUDE

Aren't you coming?

MARGOT

No.

CLAUDE

Why not?

MARGOT

I have to help out Paul and Ingrid.

Claude tugs gently on his yellow bracelet.

CLAUDE

I don't want to go tomorrow.

The distant bong of a low drum and beneath that -- chanting. Claude follows Margot to the window. Ingrid and Pauline are already looking out.

Clumps of demonstrators march in the street. Some people hold up signs with slogans -- NO MORE -- BRING BACK -- the rest is obscured from the window. Some marchers are dressed in black hoods with white face paint and carry cardboard coffins.

PAULINE
There's Malcolm.

Pauline points to a guy in a vest. As he turns around we see it isn't him. Pauline withdraws, suddenly on the verge of tears.

PAULINE
I can't live in that house alone.

MARGOT
You're going to be fine.

PAULINE
Maybe...maybe I could get a place in Brooklyn -- Williamsburg or something. People are living there right?

MARGOT
You don't want to live there. It's all young people.

PAULINE
But what do you think of that idea?

MARGOT
Maybe. Let's see. You know if you don't want to come with me, I'm sure mom will let you stay with her --

PAULINE
(through tears)
You're already trying to pass me off on mom...

MARGOT
Don't say that. Come on, you'll come home with us.

PAULINE
You don't even know where you're going to live. You might have to move in with mom too.

Margot tightens.

PAULINE
What? Oh.
(mouthing a whisper)
Didn't you tell him?

Margot looks at her son who continues to watch out the window.

74 CUT TO:

74

Pauline emerges from behind the armoire doors wearing a long nightshirt that reads: I Spent The Night With Arsenio Hall. She enters the bathroom. She mutters to herself.

PAULINE

What have I done? What have I done?

Margot jimmies up the stiff window to let in some air. A few stragglers still march in the street. Trash and pieces of signage line the gutter. Margot turns into the room. She puts her hand to her cheek and strokes her smooth skin. She watches her son who removes his jeans for bed.

CLAUDE

What?

MARGOT

Nothing. Just then I felt so much love for you.

75 CUT TO:

75

Pauline tucks in Ingrid who lies next to Claude. Margot sits on the other bed scribbling in her brown notebook. Pauline marches around and across to the other side of the room. She snatches the book out of Margot's hands.

MARGOT

Hey!

PAULINE

You cannot write about this. You can't have it.

MARGOT

I wasn't writing about you.

PAULINE

You already took a part of my life, you can't have any more. And that goes for Ingrid and Malcolm and Wizard. We all own our own rights. They're not for sale.

MARGOT

Give it back.

Pauline glances at the book.

PAULINE
 If I could read your handwriting
 I'm sure I'd be furious. But if I
 ever see a story that involves a
 hotel room or any of this shit, I
 will fucking take your bowels out.

Pauline thrusts the book back at Margot --

CUT TO:

The kids sleep in one bed. Margot and Pauline lie awake in
 the other.

PAULINE
 You've now successfully ruined two
 of my marriages.

MARGOT
 You're not wearing any underwear.

PAULINE
 It's hot, I'm pregnant. Move over.
 Jesus.

MARGOT
 You're not hot, your feet are cold.

PAULINE
 Stop touching me. I am so hot.
 Feel my head.

Margot puts her lips to Pauline's forehead.

MARGOT
 You have a fever.

PAULINE
 I don't have a fever... I'm
 pregnant...are you always like
 this?

MARGOT
 Get used to it... Mom and Becky
 share a bed -- you and I will
 probably get the other.

PAULINE
 You should just go to Vermont.

MARGOT

I was thinking -- you know if you want -- you and Ingrid could go to Vermont. Keep Claude company and Jim adores you.

PAULINE

You don't like Malcolm because you're not attracted to him.

MARGOT

Will you do it?

PAULINE

No. I won't do that for you.

MARGOT

(pause)

Did you two talk about me in town? What did you say?

PAULINE

(pause)

I told him you often change your mind.

76 INT. BAR/RESTAURANT - MORNING

76

Cheap plastic tables. A small karaoke stage in front. Margot, Claude, Pauline and Ingrid sit at the bar. Margot drinks her wine with ice. She wears Jim's sweater. The kids have Cokes. The remains of ketchup-soaked french fries in a plastic red basket lie between them.

A man with a mullet climbs up on the karaoke stage. The music begins. The man sways and sings "On and On" by Stephen Bishop. He croons sweetly and beautifully. Claude's eyes moisten. Margot swallows a blue pill and chases it with the wine. She takes her son's hand and whispers:

MARGOT

I'm sorry, sweetie. There's something wrong with me.

PAULINE

I'm going to call him.

Margot quickly turns to her sister.

MARGOT

No. Don't. I'm telling you.

PAULINE
I...I need some clothes and things.

MARGOT
He should get the hell out of our
house.

PAULINE
Okay. I'll tell him to get the
hell out of our house.

Pauline walks over to a pay phone.

77 CUT TO:

77

Pauline holds the receiver to her ear. She stares at a drawing of a monster fucking a woman on the wall above the pay phone. Malcolm is crying.

MALCOLM'S VOICE
The tent looks so lonely.

PAULINE
It has no one to get married in it.

78 EXT. HOUSE - INTERCUT

78

Malcolm sits in the grass, the tree and wreckage behind him.

MALCOLM
I know. And it's smashed. I'm
such a fucking idiot. Please don't
take me seriously. I mean take me
seriously, but not the fucked up
parts, you know. I love you so
much. Please marry me.

PAULINE
You can't do what you did again.
Do you understand?

MALCOLM
I promise.

PAULINE
No matter how tempting.

At the bar: Margot watches her sister carefully. She absent-mindedly picks through her red knit bracelet and drops it onto the floor.

Ingrid slides something small and grey across the bar to Claude.

INGRID

You left it in my room.

It's a piece of fingernail. He hesitates then puts it in his pocket.

At the phone: Pauline rests her head against the wall. Malcolm is bawling on the other end.

PAULINE

I don't know. I don't know.

Malcolm clutches Wizard and sputters:

MALCOLM

I ate some of the cake. I don't know why, but I did it.

PAULINE

What was... How was it?

MALCOLM

Good.

PAULINE

It's not too sweet? They sometimes make their stuff too sweet.

MALCOLM

Maybe. Maybe it was. I didn't even notice... They fucked up the cake. How sad. I love our little baby. I miss you.

PAULINE

I miss you too. Maybe we should do another seminar.

Malcolm says something incomprehensible.

PAULINE

I can't understand you, honey.

Margot finishes her glass of wine, her eyes still on her sister.

INGRID

There's gramma and Aunt Becky!

Margot startles and looks out the window. Across the street is an older woman, 70's, and a large woman, mid 30's, eating ice cream cones and looking in a boarded-up shop window.

PAULINE
They didn't get my message.

Pauline now stands above them.

MARGOT
I told you she can't work the
machine --

Ingrid's chair scrapes as she stands. She takes her mother's
hand. Margot remains seated.

PAULINE
What? You're not coming?

MARGOT
I'm coming, I'm coming. What did
he say?

Pauline and Ingrid head for the door. Claude waits for
Margot.

MARGOT
What did he say?

She grabs her bags and drops some bills on the table.

MARGOT
(to herself)
Don't worry, I got it.

79 EXT. STREET - MORNING

79

The sisters and children come outside. The mother and Becky
now idle further down the street.

PAULINE/INGRID
Mom!/Nana!

Margot takes Claude's arm and walks quickly in the opposite
direction. Claude, confused, glances over his shoulder.

MARGOT
Don't look. Keep walking.

CLAUDE
Why are we --

MARGOT
We have to get you to your bus.

80 CUT TO:

80

A huge parking lot. A bus in the distance. Claude tries to keep pace with his mother.

CLAUDE
Did you do something?

MARGOT
What do you mean, do something?

CLAUDE
I mean, why is the wedding not happening? Is there something that you did?

MARGOT
Pauline has transferred all her stuff onto me. I don't understand her anymore. Why'd she pick this man? It is really berserk. And you know, she referred to me as her closest friend. We never see one another --

An unfamiliar sound comes out of Margot. The sadness is unexpected -- she sobs uncontrollably. She tries to speak:

MARGOT
I mean we're not close. Even if we want to be. You know?

CLAUDE
But was there anything real?

MARGOT
No! How many times do I have to say it? Jesus. You think so little of me.
(through her sobs)
It's good you're going. You shouldn't be around me either. I'd go if I were you...

CLAUDE
Will you find Pauline and Nana after I leave?

MARGOT
(half-serious)
I don't know. Maybe I'll go to church.

Margot is sweating. She wipes her brow with her sleeve. She periodically looks behind her. Nobody seems to be following.

CLAUDE
(growing nervous)
Are you angry at me?

MARGOT
No, honey. I'm not mad at you.

CLAUDE
I don't want to go with you mad at anyone.

MARGOT
Everything's fine. I'm not mad at anyone.

Up ahead is a tiny depot. People climb onto a white bus.

CLAUDE
Can you come with me?

MARGOT
No, you know that.
(pause)
We should talk about the next few months a little bit and what's going to happen --

CLAUDE
I don't like Vermont.

MARGOT
Your dad will be very happy to see you. And I'm sure Josh is dying to hang out.

CLAUDE
Please come, mom.

MARGOT
(suddenly irritable)
Claude, stop it. Okay?

She watches a man sustain a long embrace with another man. Margot closes her eyes. She breathes deeply.

MARGOT
You used to need me to watch you when you played.

CLAUDE
What do you mean?

MARGOT
(vaguely)
When you first started to play with friends, you wouldn't do it unless I watched you. You were afraid I would go out the back door. I don't know where I would go. Our yard didn't lead anywhere anyway.

She takes off her sweater and reveals an old faded yellow T-shirt. She isn't wearing a bra. Claude says suddenly:

CLAUDE
I masturbated last night. While everyone was asleep I went into the bathroom and did it.

MARGOT
You don't have to tell me, sweetie.

The bus driver slams the luggage compartment closed.

MARGOT
You've got to go.

Margot ties her sweater around her waist and takes Claude's hand. They approach the bus. Claude's body tenses.

CLAUDE
How will you get home?

MARGOT
I don't know. I'll see. Maybe Dick can drive me to the...
(pause)
Jesus, I lost the word for a second. The train.

CLAUDE
Uh huh.

He looks at her longingly.

MARGOT
Come on. You always don't want to leave me and you always have a good time once you do.
(provocatively)
I think you like getting away from me.

CLAUDE

I do not. I like hanging out with you.

She hugs him. He clutches her.

CLAUDE

The world feels strange to me right now.

Margot nods sympathetically. She kisses his lips and releases him. He reaches into his bag and shyly puts on his wrap-around punk sunglasses. Margot makes a face.

CLAUDE

What?

MARGOT

They make your face look too wide.

Claude removes them and puts them back in the bag.

CLAUDE

See you soon.

MARGOT

Bye, sweetie.

CLAUDE

Say, you'll see me "soon."

MARGOT

You're acting like a baby.

She backs away --

CLAUDE

Don't see Dick.

MARGOT

Don't worry. I don't think he wants to see me anyway.

CLAUDE

Please, Margot. Promise me.

MARGOT

(hesitates)

Don't call me that.

Claude doesn't move. Margot points at the bus and mouths "Go". She turns in the other direction. Claude, frustrated and anxious approaches the vehicle.

81 INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

81

Claude hurries toward the back and finds a window seat. He puts his bag next to him and looks out the dirty glass.

Claude's POV: Margot, her back to him, puts her finger in her ear and shakes her head.

The sweater around her waist loosens and drifts to the pavement. She starts walking.

The bus hisses and lurches forward. Claude strains to see: Margot looks back.

The bus groans as it picks up speed. Margot sprints.

MARGOT

Wait!

She's runs full speed, waving her arms wildly.

MARGOT

Wait! Wait!

She pants, breathless.

The bus brakes.

She passes Claude's window. We stay on Claude. He waits. Finally, she appears next to him, covered in sweat, and panting. She kisses him on the head. The bus starts moving.

MARGOT

(almost euphoric)

Did you see me running out there?

CLAUDE

Yeah.

Margot cranes her neck to see outside.

MARGOT

Good. That was a lot of running.
I'm out of breath.

Claude turns away from his mother and looks out the window.

CUT TO BLACK.