

M E E T J O E B L A C K

Screenplay by Bo Goldman

EXT. ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, N.Y. - 4:00 AM

A patch of water. PULL BACK TO REVEAL more water. BACK FARTHER TO REVEAL an expanse of river, up the bank to massive lawn running up to a great, classic Hudson River manor house; the country estate of William Parrish.

INT. PARRISH COUNTRY ESTATE - 4:00 AM

MOVE THROUGH French doors that lead from a wide terrace into an expansive living room, DOWN wide corridors lined with Bierstadt and Cole paintings, the Hudson River School, mists and trees and small boats and distant humans.

INT. PARRISH BEDROOM - 4:00 AM

MOVE THROUGH the doorway to reveal a master bedroom furnished with exquisite simplicity, revelatory of its sleeping occupant, WILLIAM PARRISH, 64, a warm but commanding face, a man of maturity yet who exudes a glow of enthusiasm.

Although asleep, there is an uncommon restlessness to him. Parrish grips his upper arm as if in pain. Now the severity of the pain wakes him, he squeezes his arm. The wind comes up, through the window a VOICE is heard distantly, or is it the wind itself:

VOICE (V.O.)

... Yes.

Parrish blinks, has he heard something, has he not, he is not sure, he releases his arm, his grimace of pain fades, the discomfort seems momentarily to have subsided.

He rises now, crosses to the bathroom. As he pees, a breeze outside the window, the wind again, but then the Voice comes up:

VOICE (V.O.)

Yes...

It is unmistakably a Voice, it is not the wind, Parrish has heard something, he looks around, but no one is there. He can't finish peeing, turns back to his bedroom. All bewildered, Parrish looks around once more, climbs back into bed, trying to trace the source of what he has heard or hasn't

heard; he is not sure.

He pulls the covers up now, not a SOUND, tries to close his eyes.

VOICE (V.O.)

Yes.

Parrish sits up again, frightened, but still there is no one there, he seems fraught with indecision, should he get up, should he not, what is happening? He looks out: absolute stillness and silence, CRICKETS chirp down by the river, a light FLICKERS from a shadboat, Parrish closes his eyes but then they flutter open, he glances up at the ceiling and finally, exhausted, falls back asleep.

EXT. REAR TERRACE, PARRISH COUNTRY ESTATE - NEXT MORNING

The great lawn infested with workmen, planting stakes, unrolling a huge canvas tent, gardeners fashioning topiary and adding landscaping of their own, crews setting up platforms, speakers, lights. Ubiquitous is ALLISON, 35, Parrish's older daughter, foremen competing for her attention and she relishing every moment.

A Painter approaches.

PAINTER

The big tent, Miss Allison --

ALLISON

Paint is rust and moss green.
Medieval colors -- Daddy's like
an old knight.

A Florist stops her.

FLORIST

The head table --?

ALLISON

What about it?

FLORIST

The flowers, ma'am--?

ALLISON

Freesia, freesia, everywhere. Daddy
loves freesia -- and you, over there,
lights. Not too bright. I'm looking
for a saffron glow -- sort of tea-
dance twenties.

EXT. GREAT HALL, COUNTRY ESTATE - MORNING

Parrish, groomed for the day, trots down the stairs, observing the activity outside through the windows. He checks his watch, strides down the hall, encounters MAY, 50, a family retainer who is opening the doors to the terrace as Parrish passes.

PARRISH

What do you think of all this, May?

MAY

It's going to be beautiful. And Miss Allison says the President may come.

PARRISH

Oh, the President's got better things to do than come to my birthday party.

MAY

(smiling)

What?

Parrish grins, continues on, is intercepted by Allison who, on catching sight of him, bounces in from the terrace.

ALLISON

Daddy!

PARRISH

Hi, Allison --

ALLISON

Have you got a minute?

PARRISH

Not much more. Big day in the big city. What's on your mind?

ALLISON

Fireworks. Update -- we're constructing the number '65' on the barge, archers from the State College at New Paltz will shoot flaming arrows at it, when it catches fire it will give us the effect of a Viking funeral with none of the morbidity... The Hudson River Authority says, for you, they'll

make a special dispensation - of course there'll be an overtime bill for the Poughkeepsie Fire Dept...

PARRISH

Allison, I trust you. This is your thing.

ALLISON

But it's your birthday.

Parrish smiles complaisantly, they continue on into a breakfast room where SUSAN, 30, Parrish's younger daughter, is grazing at a table laden with cereals and fruits and coffee.

SUSAN

Good morning, Dad.

PARRISH

Hi, honey.

ALLISON

(to Susan)

I'm Allison, you're 'honey'.

SUSAN

(smiling)

Drew called from the AStar, they're still two minutes away.

PARRISH

Drew's aboard?

SUSAN

He wanted to ride back down with you. Now sit and relax, get something in that flat tummy of yours --

But Parrish only pours coffee.

SUSAN (cont'd)

(to Allison)

You coming?

ALLISON

You've got patients waiting, I've got three hysterical chefs, one loves truffles, the other hates truffles, the third one doesn't know what truffles are. I'd better drive down.

Parrish gazes at the going-on outside which are increasing in intensity.

PARRISH

(unconsciously)

I hate parties --

ALLISON

Calm down, Daddy, you'll see, you're going to love it.

PARRISH

Isn't it enough to be on this earth sixty-five years without having to be reminded of it.

ALLISON

No.

Allison goes, Susan observes Parrish fidgeting.

SUSAN

Will you relax? I know it is a big deal day --

PARRISH

How did you know?

SUSAN

Drew told me.

PARRISH

Does Drew tell you everything?

SUSAN

I hope so.

PARRISH

You like him, don't you?

SUSAN

Yeah. I guess so.

A moment.

PARRISH

I don't like to interfere.

SUSAN

...Then don't.

The helicopter CHOPS in overhead.

SUSAN (cont'd)
-- Here comes our boy now --
Shall we?

EXT. COUNTRY ESTATE - MORNING

A BUTLER and May carry the overnight bags for the family as led by Parrish, they hurry towards the helicopter. En route they pass QUINCE, 38, Allison's husband, who is perched at a portable bar with AMBROSE, the head caterer, tasting wines.

QUINCE
...This shit's not bad.

AMBROSE
-- The late harvest Riesling, Mr. Quince, a possibility for dessert.

QUINCE
(pointing to another
bottle)
And that?

AMBROSE
Pinot Grigio. We're considering it
for the appetizer.

Ambrose takes a sip, swishes the wine in his mouth, spits it in a bucket.

QUINCE
What do you do that for?

AMBROSE
Well sir, it's 9:30 in the morning.

QUINCE
9:30's almost 10:30. Where I come
from, the sun's over the yardarm,
m'boy, and the cocktail lamp is lit.

Quince drains his wine, presents it for a refill, when he is hailed by Allison.

ALLISON
Quince! Everybody's waiting!

Quince downs this glass too, runs for the helicopter as DREW, 34, a young man going places, emerges from it, approaches Parrish and Susan.

DREW

(to Susan)
Hello, Beautiful.

SUSAN

Hi.

Drew kisses her, over her shoulder he glances at Parrish.

PARRISH

Good morning, Drew. Thanks for coming out.

DREW

Well, it's a big day. Wanted to line up a few ducks before kickoff. Any thoughts? Last minute refinements or variations?

PARRISH

'Thoughts'? Not a one -- but I did hear a voice last night.

DREW

A voice?

PARRISH

In my sleep.

DREW

What'd it say?

PARRISH

'Yes'.

DREW

'Yes' to the deal?

PARRISH

Maybe, who knows? You know how voices are. Let's go.

Quince comes running up now.

QUINCE

Hi, Bill --

PARRISH

Good morning, Quince.

QUINCE

How're you doing--?

PARRISH

I'm doing great. You ready?

QUINCE

I am, this is it. B Day.

PARRISH

How's that, Quince?

QUINCE

Bontecou Day. Going to close with Big John -- Look at you, Bill, all cool as a cat and over at Bontecou's, I'll bet he's shitting in his pants.

ALLISON

(to Quince)

Honey, please.

QUINCE

Okay. All aboard - New York, New York!

ALLISON

Remember everybody, tonight, dinner in the city at Daddy's. You too, Drew. We've still got some loose ends --

PARRISH

Not my birthday again?

SUSAN

You're only six-five once.

PARRISH

Thank God. Now could we go? Let's get this day started.

Drew ushers everybody on, first Parrish, then Susan and Quince, Drew the last to climb on, shuts the door behind him. As Allison hurries away from the whirling rotors.

INT. ASTAR HELICOPTER - DAY

The configuration of seats has Drew beside Parrish, in front of them Quince and Susan opposite each other in single seats. Just as Drew removes color-coded folders from his attache case and spreads them out for Parrish on his tray table, the pilot waves to Drew, indicating 'phone call'. Drew gets up

and heads for the cockpit, Parrish scans the folders, glances over at Susan who is making some notes on a file of her own. He motions to her to please come sit beside him, she checks that Drew is still busy in the cockpit, tucks her papers into her carryall, and crosses over to Parrish who folds away the work that Drew set before him into his tray table, locks it.

SUSAN

I thought you were in a meeting--?

PARRISH

I am. With you.

He peers up ahead at Drew, on the telephone and gesticulating intensely, right at home in the cockpit despite the CHOP of the blades and the pilot pressed up against him.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Do you love Drew?

SUSAN

...There's a start for a meeting.

PARRISH

I know it's none of my business --

Susan doesn't answer for a moment, then impulsively kisses her father on the cheek.

SUSAN

No, it's none of your business.

Another moment.

PARRISH

Do you love Drew?

SUSAN

You mean like you loved Mom?

PARRISH

Forget about me and Mom -- are you going to marry him?

SUSAN

Probably.

A moment.

PARRISH

(smiles)

Don't get carried away.

SUSAN

Uh oh --

PARRISH

Susan, you're a hell of a woman.
You've got a great career, you're
beautiful --

SUSAN

And I'm your daughter and no man
will ever be good enough for me.

PARRISH

Well, I wasn't going to say that --

SUSAN

What were you going to say?

PARRISH

Listen, I'm crazy about the guy --
He's smart, he's aggressive, he
could carry Parrish Communications
into the 21st century and me along
with it.

SUSAN

So what's wrong with that?

PARRISH

That's for me. I'm talking about
you. It's not so much what you say
about Drew, it's what you don't say.

SUSAN

You're not listening --

PARRISH

Oh yes, I am. Not an ounce of
excitement, not a whisper of a
thrill, this relationship has all
the passion of a pair of titmice.

SUSAN

Don't get dirty, Dad --

PARRISH

Well, it worries me. I want you
to get swept away. I want you to
levitate. I want you to sing with
rapture and dance like a dervish.

SUSAN

That's all?

PARRISH

Be deliriously happy. Or at least
leave yourself open to be.

SUSAN

'Be deliriously happy'. I'm going
to do my utmost --

He smiles.

PARRISH

I know it's a cornball thing but
love is passion, obsession, someone
you can't live without. If you
don't start with that, what are you
going to end up with? I say fall
head over heels. Find someone you
can love like crazy and who'll love
you the same way back. And how do
you find him? Forget your head and
listen to your heart. I'm not
hearing any heart.

(a moment)

Run the risk, if you get hurt, you'll
come back. Because, the truth is
there is no sense living your life
without this. To make the journey
and not fall deeply in love -- well,
you haven't lived a life at all.
You have to try. Because if you
haven't tried, you haven't lived.

SUSAN

Bravo.

PARRISH

Aw, you're tough.

SUSAN

I'm sorry. But give it to me again.
The short version.

PARRISH

Stay open. Who knows? Lightning
could strike.

Silence.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Forgive the lecture --

SUSAN

I won't. And when I tell Drew about it, he won't either.

PARRISH

You won't tell him, and even if you did, he'd clock it and punch it into his laptop in order to pull out some key phrases when he gives the Commencement Speech at Wharton.

SUSAN

You're terrible.

PARRISH

I know. But I'm the only father you've got.

She kisses him on the cheek.

SUSAN

Thank God.

PARRISH

He doesn't care. But thanks anyway.

EXT. 34TH STREET HELIPAD, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

The AStar lands, an attendant, waiting with a luggage cart, rushes to open the door and unload the bags. The passengers, Parrish paired with Quince, Drew with Susan, file off the rooftop through a door which opens into an elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Parrish, Susan, Drew and Quince face forward as they ride downwards.

QUINCE

Hey, this is it, the hour approaches, I'm getting all excited. So what do you think, is it --

(indicates Drew and Parrish)

-- just the 'Executive Committee' or could you guys use me?

DREW

Quince, m'man, thanks for the offer, but it's all set for just me and Bill.

More people might --

QUINCE

I know. Gum up the works.

Parrish is about to make some reassuring comment to Quince when the Voice suddenly intrudes:

VOICE (V.O.)

'...I know, it's none of my business.'

PARRISH

What?

DREW

I was saying to Quince we won't need --

PARRISH

Did you just hear something?

DREW

Why yes, Bill, I was saying to Quince --

PARRISH

No no, not you.

SUSAN

Daddy, what's the matter?

PARRISH

Nothing. I'm sorry.

A respectful silence, the elevator continues downwards, suddenly the Voice intrudes again:

VOICE (V.O.)

'...I want you to levitate. I want you to sing with rapture and dance like a dervish.'

Parrish grunts bizarrely, Susan notices and reacts:

SUSAN

What is it, Daddy --?

PARRISH

Nothing.

Parrish's eyes dart about, confirming no one has heard a

thing but him.

PARRISH (cont'd)
Just talking to myself again. You
know me --

The elevator door opens.

PARRISH
Well, here we are --

Parrish leads the group out.

EXT. 34TH STREET, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

They exit the building.

SUSAN
(to Parrish)
Are you okay?

PARRISH
A-Okay. Got my gloves on, my ears
pricked. I'm ready for action.

SUSAN
Well, go get 'em, Pops.

PARRISH
Yer damn right.

Parrish, followed by Drew, steps into a waiting limousine, Quince looks longingly after them. Susan, blowing a kiss goodbye to her father, steps out into the street to hustle a cab.

INT. LOBBY, BONTECOU WORLD HEADQUARTERS - DAY

DREW
...Tomorrow we sign off -- photo
opportunity, you and Big John, it'll
lead network news. Okay so far?

PARRISH
Sounds good.

DREW
It's going to be great --

PARRISH
Do you think I need a haircut?

DREW

Bill, after this deal, you'll be able to afford one.

Parrish smiles, they step into the elevator.

INT. BONTECOU EXECUTIVE OFFICES - DAY

Parrish and Drew emerge from the elevator, Parrish observing the overkill decor.

DREW

Their PR guy asked me, what did I think Parrish Communications stood for, that's principle and ethics-wise? I came up with something, but then it occurred to me, why don't I ask Bill? What do you think?

A moment, Parrish shrugs.

PARRISH

Our first annual report, must be thirty-five years ago now, I owned two stations, I wrote down a statement of purpose, that one day you would wake up to a Parrish radio station, read a Parrish paper at breakfast, catch our news on television during the day, and go to bed with one of our books or magazines and you would always be told the truth and in the bargain, have a good time.

DREW

That's great! Wait 'til I show it to Bontecou.

Drew opens a door, a conference room, a circle of top executives, now stepping out from the group is a huge, white-haired man, JOHN BONTECOU, 55.

BONTECOU

Bill, thanks for coming over...

(to Drew)

And how're you doing today, Drew?

(to Parrish)

You've got a firecracker here, the kid's really set the table.

PARRISH

Good, good. Glad to hear it.

BONTECOU

We've met before, y'know, that White House function, the President had you on his right and you know where I was?

PARRISH

I'm sorry, I don't recall --

BONTECOU

Left field somewhere. Well, Bill, I want to come in from the outfield, bat cleanup like you have, learn the plush ropes --

PARRISH

I thought you were buying my company.

BONTECOU

Oh, Mr. Parrish, I could never buy Parrish Communications. I could pay for it, of course, but it would always have your imprint.

Silence. Parrish looks around at the circle of 'suits', Bontecou holding away.

PARRISH

Well, that's very nice to hear.

Drew nods excitedly.

EXT. NEW YORK HOSPITAL CORNELL MEDICAL CENTER - DAY

The busy medical community at 68th Street and New York Avenue.

INT. CORINTH COFFEE SHOP, NEW YORK AVENUE - DAY

A thriving eatery diagonally across from the hospital's entrance, customers cheek-by-jowl as a pair of waiters juggle breakfasts served to a noisy throng of doctors, residents and interns.

Susan has squeezed into a seat in the corner. A counterman, with a smile and a greeting, places a cup of coffee in front of her. A sense this is a daily ritual, arming herself for the day; immediately she becomes aware of a man behind her speaking into the pay phone.

An attractive YOUNG MAN, early 30's, a pair of suitcase at

his feet, a raincoat slung over his shoulder.

YOUNG MAN

...Honey, you've got to go on...
there's a time to sow and a time to
reap, you sow now and forget about
him... yeah, I liked him, I don't
like him anymore... because you're
my honey and anybody messes with you
messes with me -- I'm on a plane in
a minute... as soon as I get my
phone in, you're my first call,
that's a promise... where you going
now?... good, hit the books, get that
degree, one day we'll hang out a
shingle together... you bet, honey...
later.

The Young Man hangs up, turns around and sits down to an overflowing plate of eggs and meat, potatoes and toast, the counterman refills his cup and the Young Man ties into the breakfast, eating it with such relish that Susan can't take her eyes off him. He senses her eyes, glances over, his cheeks filled with a mouthful of food, swallows embarrassedly.

YOUNG MAN

Good morning, I was talking kind of
loud there, sorry.

SUSAN

Not at all. It was fascinating.

YOUNG MAN

Oh yeah? What was 'fascinating'
about it?

SUSAN

You and 'Honey'?

YOUNG MAN

My kid sister. She just broke up
with her boyfriend and she's
thinking about dropping out of
law school.

SUSAN

I'm sorry --

YOUNG MAN

Nothing to be sorry about. That's
the way with men and women, isn't
it?

SUSAN

What's the way?

YOUNG MAN

Nothing lasts.

SUSAN

I agree --

YOUNG MAN

Why?

SUSAN

I was just being agreeable, now I've got to explain why?

YOUNG MAN

I'm not trying to sharpshoot you, but that 'nothing lasts' stuff, that's what was the trouble with Honey's guy. He was fooling around and Honey caught him at it. One girlfriend wasn't enough for him.

SUSAN

So you're a one-girl guy?

YOUNG MAN

Damn right. Looking for her right now. Who knows? You might be her.

Susan laughs.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)

Well, don't laugh. I just arrived in town, got a new job -- I'm trying to get into this apartment. You a doctor?

SUSAN

How'd you know?

YOUNG MAN

Everybody's a doctor around here. This apartment house is all green pajamas and slippers. The guy I'm waiting for to vacate is a doctor. What kind of doctor?

SUSAN

Me? Internal medicine.

The Young Man smiles.

YOUNG MAN

So if I needed a doctor, you could be it?

SUSAN

I could be her.

YOUNG MAN

'Her'.

A moment.

SUSAN

Yes, I could.

(a moment)

I have an office in the hospital.

YOUNG MAN

-- This is my lucky day. I arrive in this big bad city and I not only find a doctor, a beautiful woman as well.

Susan looks into her coffee.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)

I'm sorry, you mind my saying that?

SUSAN

Not at all.

YOUNG MAN

How 'bout another cup of coffee?

SUSAN

I've got patients coming in --

YOUNG MAN

And I want to get into my apartment and go to work. Please, what do you say, another cup of coffee?

Two pots are warming behind the counter, he reaches over and refills her cup and his. Pushes a container and pitcher towards her.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)

I see you use lots of sugar and cream. Me, too...

They smile at each other, fix up their coffee.

EXT. PARRISH COMMUNICATIONS, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

A magnificent granite building, a monument to good taste in the midtown sea of glass and aluminum.

INT. OUTER LOBBY, PARRISH COMMUNICATIONS - DAY

Parrish and Drew enter, no particular fanfare but an awareness the 'Chief' has arrived, everyone giving Parrish the appropriate wide berth, Drew right beside him.

DREW

I'm all excited --

PARRISH

Me, too.

DREW

I thought it was great, I thought you and Big John would be like a couple of bulls in a china shop --

(faltering)

Instead it was --

PARRISH

Like a marriage made in heaven?

DREW

You have a way with words.

They stride to the main bank of elevators.

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICES, PARRISH COMMUNICATIONS - DAY

Parrish, Drew beside him, proceeds through a high tech, but tasteful, maze, spiffy executive secretaries at burnished desks. Neither looking right or left, somehow Parrish manages to acknowledge their bright smiles and deferential nods despite his swift entrance.

He passes through an open set of doors and he is into his own suite, commanded by JENNIFER, his assistant.

JENIFER

Good morning, Mr. Parrish.

PARRISH

Hi, Jennifer.

Drew is still at Parrish's heels, but now Parrish stops at the open door, turns back to him, reminding Drew that this is as far as he goes without being invited.

DREW

So... Board convenes tomorrow, you'll recommend, we close and it's a deal, right?

PARRISH

As close as a deal could be.

DREW

(bursting)
Olympic.

Parrish disappears into his office. Drew, on his way out, glides past Jennifer's desk.

DREW (cont'd)

This is our lucky day.

Jennifer acknowledges Drew with a smile, rises and moves to Parrish's doorway, waiting for the day's instructions, but Parrish only nods to the door and Jennifer quickly closes it, returns to her desk.

INT. PARRISH'S OFFICE - DAY

Alone in his office, Parrish's ebullient mood immediately changes. Leaning against the back of the couch, he stares out through floor-to-ceiling windows, surveying the Manhattan skyline: cogitates.

He takes a seat on the couch, opens a folder, suddenly he flinches with a spasm of pain in his shoulder. It is sharp but brief, he notices it but what it does not continue, he ignores it.

Parrish resumes looking at the folder when suddenly the pain comes again. He reaches for his shoulder, tries to massage the pain, it does not subside. Parrish stands, trying to shake it off, but it refuses to go away, something is unmistakably wrong. Now a SOUND which he has come to recognize, makes itself heard:

VOICE (V.O.)

Yes.

Frozen with surprise, Parrish's eyes search the room for the source of the SOUND, it comes from no particular direction, yet surrounds him. Suddenly Parrish's symptoms sharply

intensify, he is sinking to the floor but somehow grabs a corner of the desk, holds on with one hand, with the other clutches at his shoulder and arm, the pain has violently seized the upper part of his body. He breaks out in a sweat, his pallor now waxen as the Voice repeats itself:

VOICE (V.O., cont'd)

...Yes.

Parrish grips the edge of the desk, the pain assaulting him on the one hand, the Voice coming at him from the other, each aberration feeds on the other, he is beside himself, consumed with pain and bewildered by what seems to be a hallucination but which he is certain is not. Parrish is possessed. He angles his face in every direction, arbitrarily chooses one and now embarrassedly, unconsciously, enrages, responds to the Voice.

PARRISH

'Yes' what?

VOICE

'Yes' is the answer to your question.

PARRISH

I didn't ask any question.

VOICE

I believe you did.

Parrish is absolutely confounded, seized up with pain and consternation at this unseen Voice which has such presence and reality.

PARRISH

Who are you?

Silence.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Goddammit, what is going on?!

VOICE

I think you know --

PARRISH

I don't!

VOICE

Try. Because 'if you haven't tried, you haven't lived'.

A moment.

PARRISH

What are you talking about?

VOICE

What you were talking about.

Parrish gasps.

PARRISH

What is this? Who is this fucking
guy?

He holds on tight to the corner of the desk, sweat dripping,
his skin ashen. Now he addresses the Voice again, searching
for it in another direction:

PARRISH (cont'd)

Tell me who you are!

VOICE

Are you giving me orders?

PARRISH

I'm sorry, I --

VOICE

No, you're not. You're trying to
'handle' the situation but this is
the one situation you knew you never
could handle.

A spasm, the worst one yet, finally it subsides and there is
an eerie silence in the room, a VOID, almost more disturbing
than the voice that has filled it.

PARRISH

Where are you? Are you there?

VOICE

It's enough now.

PARRISH

Please. Talk to me --

VOICE

There's going to be plenty of time
for that.

PARRISH

What do you mean?!

VOICE

I think you know --

PARRISH

Know what?

(a moment)

Know what, goddammit!

The VOICE is gone. Parrish searches the corner, but the room has lost the quality it had when it was inhabited by the VOICE, it is now just Parrish's office. Faint SQUEALS of traffic from the street, then a KNOCK at the door.

Parrish touches his shoulder, the pain is gone, but he is still wet with sweat, the KNOCK again. Parrish straightens himself up, adjusts his tie, runs his fingers through his hair, blinks as he addresses the door.

PARRISH

(carefully)

Come in.

Jennifer enters.

JENIFER

I've been buzzing you, Mr. Parrish.
Are you all right?

PARRISH

Sure.

JENIFER

Lunch is 'in' today, have you given
it any thought --_

PARRISH

(interrupting)

No. Nothing.

JENIFER

Nothing?

Parrish is within himself, doesn't answer.

JENIFER (cont'd)

Why don't I think of something?

Parrish still doesn't answer, however Jennifer is satisfied, correctly hearing his silence as an affirmative. She has her hand on the door, 'Open' or 'Closed'? He nods and she closes it.

Utter silence again. Parrish's eyes search the room, nothing there.

INT. CORINTH COFFEE SHOP, YORK AVENUE, DAY

The place has cleared out now, the counterman busy bussing tables laden with dishes and cups, Susan and the Young Man are still at the counter, but about to leave.

YOUNG MAN

...It's kind of a pro bono job.

SUSAN

'Pro bono'. That means doing good -- Going to be doing good all your life?

YOUNG MAN

I know what you're saying. Doesn't pay very well. Depends on the woman I marry. Maybe she'd like a bigger house, a better car, lotsa kids, college doesn't come cheap --

SUSAN

You'd give up what you want for the woman you marry?

YOUNG MAN

I would.

Susan rises now, the Young Man with her, leaving money for their checks they head for the door.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)

If I married you, I'd want to give you what you wanted, I know it's old fashioned and all that, but what's wrong with taking care of a woman? She takes care of you.

SUSAN

You'll have a hard time finding a woman like that these days --

YOUNG MAN

You never know. Lightning could strike.

Susan at the door now, pauses abruptly, her eyes on the Young Man.

EXT. CORINTH COFFEE SHOP, YORK AVENUE - DAY

The Young Man holds the door for Susan as they step out onto the street.

Susan is staring at him now, he smiles, all open and vulnerable.

SUSAN

I've got to go --

YOUNG MAN

Did I say something wrong?

SUSAN

No, it was so right it scares me.

YOUNG MAN

I've been thinking... I don't want you to be my doctor. Because I don't want you to examine me.

SUSAN

Why?

YOUNG MAN

Because I like you so much.

(a moment)

You have coffee here every morning, don't you? If I came by, could you give me the name of a doctor?

Another moment.

SUSAN

Sure, I'll give you the name of a doctor.

(a moment)

...And I don't want to examine you.

YOUNG MAN

Why not?

SUSAN

Because I like you so much. Now I've got to go.

She hurries away down the sidewalk, the Young Man watching her. Now he turns and starts off in the opposite direction.

ANOTHER ANGLE - SUSAN

She looks back at the Young Man, then turns and walks on.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE YOUNG MAN

He looks back at Susan as the distance between them widens, now he turns and walks on.

ON SUSAN

She looks around once more but the Young Man is still headed in the opposite direction, his back to her. She turns the corner and continues on.

ON THE YOUNG MAN

Approaching the corner, he looks back for Susan yet again, but she is gone, still turned he steps off into the street and a hospital supplies truck, speeding down the curb lane, HITS HIM BROADSIDE, a horrific impact, the THUD echoes as his body arcs through the air.

Another sickening THUD as it lands, the Young Man lies crumpled, still.

CUT TO:

INT. SALON, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE, NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

A beautiful space adjacent to the dining room, it has a glass roof which offers a superb view of the Manhattan skyline. The hour is before dinner: gathered on one side of the room are Allison and Parrish, on the other side Drew and Quince. COYLE, a butler, and LUISA, the housekeeper, pass hors d'oeuvres and drinks.

ALLISON

...Music, I know how you love music,
Daddy, and I want to have music that
pleases you -- and of course doesn't
put a thousand other people to sleep
-- I've agonized over this and
finally settled on Sidney Brown,
twenty-four men, very eclectic, plus
I'm feathering in a Latin sextet on
their breaks - Tito Puente, Trini
Lopez-zy, I forget their names --

Parrish has tuned Allison out, he tried to stay with it, but his mind has wandered, the event of the day too much with him.

ALLISON (cont'd)

You haven't heard a word, have you?
I keep talking and all you do is nod
like Mr. Himmelfass in The
Nutcracker.

Parrish still doesn't answer.

ALLISON (cont'd)
You don't care, do you?

PARRISH
What, honey?

ALLISON
I lay awake nights in a cold sweat,
I want this party to be like some-
thing Mom would have made for you,
I want it to be perfect --

PARRISH
(attentive now)
I know you do, darling.

ALLISON
And you could care less --

PARRISH
Oh, you couldn't be more wrong,
sweetheart. I can't tell you how
much I appreciate it and how I'm
looking forward to it.

ALLISON
Good. Songs. What songs should
Sidney -- Pancho and his six men we
can forget about -- what songs do
you think he should play?

A stab of pain, Parrish discreetly grabs his upper arm but
manages to keep his attention on Allison.

PARRISH
Tell it to me again.

Suddenly, the Voice cuts in:

VOICE (V.O.)
...Yes.

Parrish's head snaps, startled by the SOUND.

VOICE (V.O., cont'd)

(to Parrish)
Did you miss me?

Parrish reacts once more, aware again he is the only one who has heard the Voice, as an oblivious Allison continues:

ALLISON
(to Parrish)
Never mind. Leave it to me.

Parrish ignores her, his attention has been taken by the Voice. His eyelids flutter, nonplused, edgy and fearful.

LUISA
Mr. Parrish, dinner is served.

ALLISON
(to Quince and Drew,
across the room)
Chow-time, you guys.

Parrish is confounded. Blindly and disconcerted, he follows Allison and Drew and Quince.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

As a disturbed Parrish approaches the table, he hears the Voice once more:

VOICE (V.O.)
What are you looking so provoked about? 'Did you miss me?' It's a normal question. I missed you. But what do I get back? 'Not an ounce of excitement, not a whisper of a thrill --'

Parrish sits.

VOICE (V.O., cont'd)
'-- This relationship has all the passion of a pair of titmice'.

Parrish is on the edge of his seat, struggling to hide his panic.

VOICE (V.O., cont'd)
I'm waiting outside.

The conversation swirls on around Parrish, he is deaf to it:

ALLISON

(to Drew)
Did you speak to the Governor?

DREW
He's coming.

ALLISON
His wife?

DREW
Unfortunately. I sat between them
at the Bronx Zoo benefit -- it was
better than Seconal.

VOICE (V.O.)
I'm waiting outside. Won't someone
come to the door?

Parrish is in shock, still striving to gain control of
himself. As Coyle serves him, Parrish turns to Luisa:

PARRISH
Is somebody waiting outside, Luisa?

LUISA
I didn't hear a ring, sir.

PARRISH
Please have a look --

Luisa goes as Coyle continues serving.

ALLISON
(to Quince)
What about the Mayor?

QUINCE
He said he would be there with bells
on.

DREW
Good, maybe they'll drown him out.

Parrish is still not hearing a word, preoccupied with the
return of Luisa.

ALLISON
Please don't be negative, Drew, we
have an acceptance list that would
do The White House proud -- The
Secretary-General of the UN, the
Chairman of the FCC, nine Senators,

I don't know how many Congressmen,
and at least twelve of the Fortune
'500'.

QUINCE

No jocks? A twenty-game winner or a
Masters champion? Someone I could
talk to.

(a moment)

Or would talk to me.

Luisa returns to Parrish as the others' conversation drones
on:

LUISA

You're right, Mr. Parrish. There
was a gentleman at the door. He's
waiting for you in the foyer.

Parrish is stunned.

PARRISH

(after a moment)

Show him into the library, tell him
I'll be right there.

Parrish, spinning with anxiety, tries to summon up his courage
to go as Allison continues:

ALLISON

I've arranged for favors -- silver
charm bracelets for the women,
platinum keychains for the men --
all engraved 'W.P.' -- but now I'm
thinking of scrubbing them, they
seem so ordinary.

Finally Parrish rises from the table, starts out.

ALLISON (cont'd)

Are they ordinary? Do they seem
that way to you, Daddy?

PARRISH

Uh -- I don't know. No - uh - I
don't...

Allison is about to press the point, but then drifts into
disappointed silence as Parrish leaves the room.

DREW

(to Allison)

You're overthinking it --

QUINCE

I don't think they're ordinary. I
love keychains.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LIBRARY, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Parrish moves deliberately down the hall, slows as he nears the doorway to the library. The door is open. He hesitates before he crosses the threshold, taking in as much as his eye can see, now tentatively, he enters.

INT. LIBRARY, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

A beautiful, classic room, areas of dim, warm light, club chairs, books reaching to the ceiling, a rolling library ladder, a weathered dictionary on a stand, a model boat carved of bone set into the stacks which are separated from the reading area by a seven-foot high partition of obscured glass.

Parrish, poised in the doorway, looks around, nothing in sight.

PARRISH

Hello?

Silence.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Anyone here?

No response.

PARRISH (cont'd)

I said is anyone here?!

VOICE (V.O.)

Quiet down.

Parrish is startled, he shrinks backward for a moment, his eyes searching the room for the Voice, the timbre and pitch of which is exactly what he has heard before. There is the sense that someone is there but Parrish cannot see him, and he does not dare look.

PARRISH

(quietly)
Where are you?

VOICE (V.O.)

I'm here.

Now a flicker of a shadow from behind a corner of the obscured glass, the section of the room most distant from Parrish, there is a shape. Something is there.

PARRISH

What is this, a joke, right? Some kind of elaborate practical joke? At my 40th reunion, we delivered a casket to the Class president's hotel room and --

VOICE

Quiet.

Parrish falls silent, something in the SOUND and TONE of the Voice muting him. He takes a step backwards.

VOICE (cont'd)

Where are you going?

PARRISH

I - I - uh --

The shape moves, makes itself more visible. Although still diffused by the glass, the shape has definition, a person, a man, his features are not yet distinguishable, but he is there all right.

VOICE

The great Bill Parrish at a loss for words? The man from whose lips fall 'rapture' and 'passion' and 'obsession'...all those admonitions about being 'deliberately happy', what there is no sense 'living your life without...', all the sparks and energy you give off, the rosy advice you dispense in round, pear-shaped tones --

PARRISH

What the hell is this? Who are you?

VOICE

Just think of millenniums multiplied by aeons compounded by infinity, I've been around that long, but it's only recently that your affairs here have piqued my interest. Call it boredom, the natural curiosity of

me, the most lasting and significant element in existence has come to see you.

Parrish struggles to make sense of what he is hearing.

PARRISH

About what?

VOICE

I want to have a look around before I take you.

PARRISH

'Take me'...? Where?

VOICE

It requires competence, wisdom, experience -- all those things they say about you in testimonials -- and you're the one.

PARRISH

'The one' to do what?

VOICE

Show me around. Be my guide. And in return, you get...

PARRISH

(breathless)

Get what?

VOICE

Time.

PARRISH

What the hell are you talking about?

VOICE

Watch it!

PARRISH

I'm sorry --

VOICE

In return you'll receive minuets, days, weeks, I'm not going to go into details ... what matters is that I stay interested.

Parrish squints, trying to make sense of what is happening.

VOICE (cont'd)
...'Yes'.

PARRISH
Yes what?

VOICE
'Yes' is the answer to your question.

PARRISH
What question?

VOICE
Bill. Come on. The question. The question you've been asking yourself with increased regularity, at odd moments, panting through the extra game of handball, when you ran for the plane in Delhi, when you sat up in bed last night and hit the floor in the office this morning. The question that is in the back of your throat, choking the blood to your brain, ringing in the ears over and over as you put it to yourself --

PARRISH
The 'question' --

VOICE
(urging)
Yes, Bill. The question.

After a moment.

PARRISH
...Am I going to die?

The figure who is the Voice takes a step forward now, no longer obscured by the glass he comes into the light, revealing himself to be the Young Man seen previously in the coffee shop, but there is a change; he seems odd, off-center, not handsome but terrifyingly beautiful.

YOUNG MAN
Yes.

A moment, Parrish beside himself. He cannot bring himself to speak, finally:

PARRISH

Am I dreaming this?
(Another moment)
Are you a dream?

YOUNG MAN

I am not a dream.

PARRISH

You're coming to 'take me'. What is that? Who the hell are you?

The Young Man steps closer to Parrish, his face is inches from a shaking, sweating Parrish's face, the Young Man daring Parrish to identify him:

PARRISH

You are --?

YOUNG MAN

(urging again)
'...Yes --'

Parrish turns away. But the Young Man, spectacularly, is in front of him again.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)

(gently)
Who am I?

PARRISH

...Death.

Parrish is shocked, stunned, terrified at the word, by what he has comprehended. He surveys the Young Man who, at this moment, actually seems bewildered by his effect.

PARRISH (cont'd)

You're Death?

YOUNG MAN

Yes.

PARRISH

Death!

YOUNG MAN

That's me.

PARRISH

You're not Death. You're just a kid in a jacket and a pair of pants.

YOUNG MAN

The jacket and the pair of pants
came with the body I took. Let me
ask your opinion. Do I blend in?

A hopelessly confused Parrish does not respond for a moment.

PARRISH

You want me to be your guide --?

YOUNG MAN

You fill the bill, Bill.

PARRISH

I do?

(a moment)

How long will you be staying?

YOUNG MAN

You should hope quite a while.

PARRISH

And then --?

The Young Man nods, gently.

PARRISH (cont'd)

It's... it's... over.

A long silence. Parrish and the Young Man take each other in,
the sense that now they understand each other. A SOUND at the
door.

LUISA (O.S.)

Mr. Parrish?

Parrish does not hear her for the moment, Luisa steps inside
the Library.

LUISA (cont'd)

Will the gentleman be staying for
dinner, sir?

Parrish ignores her at first, finally he looks at Luisa then
at the Young Man, then once more at both of them as if to
verify the Young Man's presence has been acknowledged by
Luisa. The Young Man interjects:

YOUNG MAN

(to Luisa)

Yes.

(a polite afterthought)
Thank you.

Luisa nods perfunctorily and exits. Parrish is frozen, dumbfounded.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)
(to Parrish)
Where is dinner?

Parrish does not answer at first.

PARRISH
This is crazy -- you're not going to eat dinner with us.

YOUNG MAN
Bill, I am eating dinner with you. And your family. And that's what we're doing. It's not open for discussion. Nothing is. Don't you understand?

Parrish is frightened by the response.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)
Good. Now lead the way.

Parrish hesitates, then obediently leads the Young Man out of the library, down a long hallway and across the foyer.

PARRISH
Excuse me? Could I say something?

YOUNG MAN
Of course.

PARRISH
(quietly)
It just occurred to me --

YOUNG MAN
Speak up, please.

PARRISH
(louder)
When I introduce you, if I say who you are, I don't think anyone will stay for dinner.

YOUNG MAN
Then don't.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

As Parrish and the Young Man enter, Allison is heard in the background.

ALLISON

...Well, here's another possibility. It's a little last minute, but how does this strike you? Kaleidoscopes. Little gold kaleidoscopes. Some German firm went kerplunkt, Tiffany's picked these things up, they're perfect party favors, however they're not personal, they're winter scene or something, snow-flakes and dachshunds...

Parrish and the Young Man appear at the table, an awkward pause ensues, the unannounced guest's presence at a family dinner being noted, and the guest himself carefully surveyed. Finally, Allison breaks the ice:

ALLISON (cont'd)

(to the Young Man)

Hi there --

YOUNG MAN

Hello.

Parrish is horribly uncomfortable as the Young Man looks at each person as if he were discovering a face of the first time.

PARRISH

Uh -- sorry -- to have stepped away for so long -- uh -- this is a friend of mine I asked to drop by -- we got to talking and stuff -- uh -- he's going to join us for dinner -- um --

Parrish drifts into another awkward pause.

ALLISON

(to the Young Man)

Hello, how nice to meet you. And wouldn't it be nicer if my father would introduce you?

YOUNG MAN

(to Allison)

'...How nice to meet you.'

PARRISH

Oh, I'm sorry. This is my daughter,
Allison, and her husband, Quince,
Drew, my number one, works with me...

Parrish drifts off as the Young Man awkwardly shakes hands
with each person.

ALLISON

(prompting)
Daddy. Does your friend have a name?

PARRISH

A name?

DREW

(pleasantly, going
along with the joke)
Yeah, something he goes by --

PARRISH

Oh, excuse me. This is -- uh --
this is --

ALLISON

Daddy! Come on, a name.

DREW

Yeah, Bill, the suspense is killing
me.

PARRISH

Sorry...um - you - you know it's gone
right out of my head --

DREW

What?!

PARRISH (cont'd)

I'm sorry. This is - uh - uh...

The group waits patiently.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Joe!

ALLISON

Joe...

Parrish once more drifts into silence. (The YOUNG MAN is now
identified as "JOE".)

DREW

Just plain 'Joe'?

ALLISON

Love that name.

QUINCE

Me, too. Hey, buddy!

Joe, turned on by Quince's broad smile, reacts to it as Drew squints observingly at Joe.

DREW

'Joe...'

PARRISH

Yes.

DREW

Is there any more to it?

PARRISH

(alarmed)

What do you mean?

DREW

Like 'Smith' or 'Jones --'

Parrish's face reveals a desperate searching for a last name, a furtive glance at Joe. Parrish's brow darkens and a name tumbles from his lips:

PARRISH

-- Black.

ALLISON

Whew, at last. Nice to meet you, Mr. Black.

QUINCE

'Joe Black'. Won fifteen and lost two for the Brooklyn Dodgers in **1952.**

JOE

Yes?

QUINCE

(to Joe)

You bet. I'm kind of my Rotisserie League.

JOE

Are you?

PARRISH

He is! Let's sit down --

Luisa has set a plate in front of Joe, and Parrish's, which was taken to the kitchen to be warmed, has been returned. Joe looks over at the other guests, then picks up his utensils gingerly, strives to copy the others, stops, staring at his foot.

ALLISON

(to Joe)

Paillardé of veal.

QUINCE

Yeah, they hit the calf over the head with a mallet and then Luisa hits it again in the kitchen.

ALLISON

Honey --!

QUINCE

You know what I'm saying, Joe?

JOE

No --

PARRISH

(laughing emptily)

Joe knows what you're saying, just being polite --

Drew is studying Joe.

DREW

(to Joe)

Have we met?

PARRISH

Uh -- he's from out of town --

QUINCE

How long you here, Joe?

JOE

As long as it takes.

Drew is provoked by the response, but remains polite:

DREW

You and Bill old friends?

Parrish jumps in:

PARRISH

No --

DREW

(to Joe)

I get the feeling you've done some business before.

JOE

We have an arrangement now.

DREW

What side of the industry did you say you were on?

JOE

I didn't say.

DREW

(to Parrish)

Joe sounds like a ringer, Bill. I have the feeling you guys got the broad strokes already. Need any help with the details?

Parrish falls silent again, looking for an answer.

DREW (cont'd)

I'm sorry -- business at dinner...

(to Joe)

Forgive me for being so rude.

JOE

Sure.

The doors to the dining room open, Susan appears.

SUSAN

Hi, everybody. Sorry to be late - had to have dinner with my department chief --

ALLISON

You ate?

SUSAN

...I'm here, aren't I? Wouldn't miss a loose end meeting. What's on the table for discussion? Party favors, flowers -- hi Dad, hi Drew --

She kisses Drew in some light, humorous way they have obviously done before, their heads bobbing like plastic water toys and their lips meeting mid-air.

At the kiss's conclusion Susan suddenly notices Joe is present and has been watching. She is shocked, embarrassed, pleased, conflicted, an instant and wide spectrum of emotions.

SUSAN (cont'd)
What are you doing here?

Silence.

PARRISH
(stunned)
You know each other?

SUSAN
(lightly)
We've met.

PARRISH
What?!

SUSAN
-- This morning. The Corinth Coffee Shop. He was looking for a doctor.

QUINCE
Well, I guess he's found one.

DREW
Joe, you do get around.

Joe is happily confounded by all the interaction.

SUSAN
That's your name?

ALLISON
And isn't it a lovely one? So sturdy, so straight --

Joe has heard Susan's question but, as he studies her, doesn't answer.

DREW

Incidentally, Joe, where're you staying?

JOE

Here...

DREW

'Here'?

SUSAN

In this house?

QUINCE

Great!

Parrish pushes his plate away.

PARRISH

Uh - will that hold you, Joe?

SUSAN

Incidentally, 'Joe' what?

JOE

Black.

QUINCE

Hey, this is fun.

SUSAN

So, what are you doing here?

Parrish tenses, but Joe doesn't answer.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Cat got your tongue? You weren't so silent this morning.

Drew reacts to this allusion of intimacy.

ALLISON

Now, I'm getting interested. I want to know more ---

PARRISH

(to Joe)

We've got some things to discuss.

Parrish stands, motions for Joe to rise.

DREW

(to Joe)

-- Did I hear 'business'?

SUSAN

What 'business'?

QUINCE

Don't bother asking, we already tried.

JOE

It's so very nice to see you again.

SUSAN

Funny, I don't get that feeling. Maybe it's because you found out I'm Bill Parrish's daughter.

PARRISH

Cut it out, Susan.

(to Joe)

You and I've got to talk. Big day tomorrow, everybody. Joe, let's go.

Joe rises, follows Parrish to the door, stops:

JOE

(to Susan)

Susan.

(to Allison)

Allison.

(to Quince)

Quince.

(to Drew)

Drew.

(to Parrish)

Bill...

(to the group)

Thank you.

He makes an awkward little bow, then heads for the nearest door.

PARRISH

Joe, that's the kitchen.

JOE

Thank you.

Joe pivots, and he follows Parrish out the proper door.

DREW

That was 'Joe'.

ALLISON

He's cute.

DREW

Very.

Susan's eyes are still on the door where Joe exited, her face reflecting her irritation and bewilderment, as well as a tinge of excitement.

INT. HALLWAY, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Parrish leads the way, Joe beside him as they progress through the huge house.

PARRISH

...I'm sorry, I'm a little disconcerted, that stuff between you and Susan -- uh -- threw me.

JOE

'Threw' you? Where?

PARRISH

Shook me up. I mean that you knew her and everything --

JOE

I didn't know her. The body I took knew her. The man she met in the coffee shop this morning. I - uh - took him.

PARRISH

So there's nothing between you and Susan?

JOE

No.

PARRISH

I wish you had said something to me about staying here --

JOE

It hadn't occurred to me until then. I was just having such a wonderful time -- Besides, isn't this what I'm here for?

Parrish suddenly looks very anxious, Joe stops.

JOE (cont'd)
You seem uncomfortable, Bill.

PARRISH
No, I'm okay with this - uh - I
think. So --

He opens a door.

INT. MASTER GUEST SUITE, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

PARRISH
(to Joe)
Bathroom...tub...towels, sauna --

Parrish turns back to the bedroom.

PARRISH (cont'd)
...Chair, lamp, bed --

Parrish is in a stunned state, chatters on unconsciously:

PARRISH (cont'd)
Box springs, they're assembled in
Jakarta. Had to stay in a station
manager's house there unexpectedly
- best night's sleep I ever had.
Ordered twenty, they filled a con-
tainer and shipped them right over,
I've put one in every bedroom here
and in the country.

Joe tests the springs.

JOE
What a good idea.

PARRISH
Thank you. Would you like the man's
name?

JOE
No.

Parrish glances around, a room in which the occupant could
not want for anything.

PARRISH
If there is anything else, don't
hesitate --

JOE

I won't.

PARRISH

How long have I got?

JOE

You're putting me on the spot, Bill.

A moment.

JOE (cont'd)

Let's put it this way. When I go,
you go.

PARRISH

When you go, I go.

JOE

That's the best I can do.

(a moment)

...but minute-by-minute, I find
myself lingering.

PARRISH

...I just saw my doctor, he told me
everything was fine.

JOE

Your doctor?

(icily)

Did your doctor say anything about
a tiny, undetectable hole in your
aorta? Did he mention an irreparably
weak vein in the further reaches
of your famous brain? Were they any
prognostications about the possibil-
ities of a fatal collision on a golf
cart of suffocating in an avalanche
on a skin vacation in Gstaad?

PARRISH

No --

JOE

I hope you realize, Bill...in your
office this morning, that was your
time.

PARRISH

Closer than that.

Parrish keeps still, trying to cool the heat of Joe's temper.

JOE (cont'd)

...But meanwhile, you are still here. Count your blessings. Call it gravy, frosting on the cake, whatever it is you say.

PARRISH

Well, thank you for letting me know.

JOE

Not at all.

PARRISH

And - uh - I guess, 'goodnight'.

JOE

Good night to you, Bill.

Parrish gently closes the door.

Joe looks around, checks out his surroundings: curious, attentive.

INT. HALLWAY, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Parrish, unsteady, starts back down the hall, Luisa appears.

LUISA

...Miss Allison asked if you would like to have your dinner kept warm?

PARRISH

No. Thanks, Luisa.

LUISA

Very good, sir.

Luisa turns:

PARRISH

Luisa --

She stops.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Mr. Black's luggage was misplaced by the airlines. Would you mind getting a few things together for him? A couple of suits, some shirts,

ties, underwear, shoes. Have Coyle take his measurements off what he is wearing tonight.

LUISA

Certainly, sir.

Luisa nods, and heads back downstairs. Parrish enters his den, takes a seat in his chair, stares into the middle distance, ruminates.

INT. GUEST ROOM, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Joe has been examining his room, full of curiosity and wonderment at the oddest things, the handle on a casement window, the hem and weight of the fabric of a drape, hinges on the bedroom door. In the process he opens this door, steps out into the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Joe wanders down the hallway past the occasional Dufy or Miro, a Venetian tapestry cheek-by-jowl with a miniature Ming vase, and even a Bonsai garden with a trickling vein of water.

INT. KITCHEN HALLWAY, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

In the "back" of the house now, utilitarian paint and decor, the SOUND of laughter and a glare of light. Joe enters.

INT. KITCHEN, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

The staff is at ease, some smoking, remains of food around. Coyle, the butler, has his back to Joe and does not see him for a moment. In front of Coyle, an open jar of peanut butter which he is spreading in generous hunks of Wonder Bread. Joe is fascinated by the process. Coyle suddenly hears the silence, looks up and see Joe, standing up embarrassedly.

COYLE

Yes, sir?

JOE

Hello. I'm Joe Black. Nice to meet you.

COYLE

Yes sir, Mr. Black, a pleasure.

The staff all mumble expansive "Good evening, sir"s to Joe. He motions to them to sit, they do but Coyle does not. Coyle

shifts from foot-to-foot, the staff is not used to having Parrish family or guests in this part of the house.

JOE

(to Coyle)
What are you eating.

COYLE

You mean this, sir?

Coyle regards his peanut butter sheepishly.

COYLE (cont'd)

Laura Scudder's Peanut Butter.

JOE

(carefully)
'Laura Scudder's Peanut Butter'.
(a moment)
You like it?

COYLE

I would say, sir, it is right up there with Jif and Skippy. But miles ahead of Peter Pan.
(another moment)
Like a taste?

Joe nods, Coyle fashions a spoonful, offers it to Joe. Joe swallows it. But he has not yet found a comfortable way of masticating, his mouth and tongue go every which way, the staff observes him, fascinated.

COYLE (cont'd)

You're a peanut butter man now, eh, sir?

JOE

Yes, I am. I thoroughly enjoyed this - uh - peanut butter.
(to the staff)
And I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you.

Joe raises the spoonful of peanut butter in a kind of toast to the staff.

JOE (cont'd)

I'll be moseying on.

He heads out, with the spoonful of peanut butter, to cheerful "Goodnight, Mr. Black"'s, his tongue again licking the

edges of the spoon.

INT. SWIMMING POOL, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - DAY

A spectacular indoor Olympic pool, window commanding views of the skyline.

Susan is swimming laps, looking very professional in a black Speedo suit, Joe wanders in, still licking his peanut butter. He observes her, but she is unaware of him, however now, as she makes a barrel turn, his shadow falls over a reflection from a window, she aborts her lap, looks up to see who it is.

SUSAN

What are you doing here?

JOE

I'm lost.

SUSAN

-- Can't seem to escape you today.

JOE

I'm sorry.

Susan climbs out of the pool, gets halfway up the ladder, points to a stack of towels.

SUSAN

Hand me one of those, will you?

Joe turns to the towels, but one hand is occupied with the spoonful of peanut butter, he shifts it to the other hand, can't manage the huge Turkish towel one-handed, now implants the spoon in his mouth, lifts the towel with both hands and presents it to Susan.

SUSAN (cont'd)

You must have something really big going on with my father --

JOE

'Big'?

SUSAN

You appear at his side out-of-the-blue, stay at his house, eat dinner with his family, it's practically a first. You're in the red-hot center of big business and I thought you were a regular Joe.

JOE

I am Joe.

SUSAN

Not the one I met this morning, hitting on me in as nice a way as I've been hit on in a long time, but the moment you find out I'm my Dad's daughter, you act like a stranger.

JOE

That is not my intention.

Joe continues to nibble at his peanut butter.

SUSAN

What are your intentions? To make little dreams in coffee shops, turn a woman's head, and I don't mind admitting it was turned, I liked it, but ten hours later I feel like a fool. I don't get it. You, my father, here in this house, the coffee shop, it's making me upset, and I don't like being upset. Who are you anyway? And what are you eating?

JOE

(mumbles)

Peanut butter.

He finishes the spoonful.

JOE (cont'd)

But it's gone now.

He shifts the spoon from hand to hand, starts to stick it in his pocket, realizes this is inappropriate. Susan holds her hand out to him, he places the spoon in it and she sets the spoon on the table with the towels. She watches, fascinated, as Joe licks his gums, enjoying every last bit of his spoonful.

SUSAN

You act like you never had peanut butter before --

JOE

I haven't.

SUSAN

-- What kind of childhood did you

have?

JOE

Do you love Drew?

SUSAN

Come again?

JOE

When you put your mouth to his,
Susan, it seems a frequent thing.

SUSAN

Drew is none of your damn business.
Nor is where I put my mouth.

JOE

I'm sorry. Do you live here?

SUSAN

No, Joe, I'm swimming here. Then
I'm going home.

JOE

I guess what I'm trying to say is --
I'd like us to be friends.

SUSAN

I've got plenty of friends.

JOE

I don't have any.

SUSAN

I can see why.

She finishes drying herself, drops the towel on a chair, and
prepares to leave.

JOE

...I didn't mean to offend you at
dinner. I'm not quite at home some-
times with people. I get busy doing
- uh - what I do, and I don't seem to
have developed --

He drifts off.

SUSAN

Yes --?

JOE

I have a certain function to perform, and that seems to take all of my time. Bu sometimes - uh - I speculate - uh - I haven't left room for - uh - anything else.

SUSAN

I'm sorry to say I know what you're saying.

A moment.

JOE

Susan?

SUSAN

Yes?

JOE

Did you know you have a wet spot on your shoulder?

She glances at her shoulder, he grabs a towel, touches the drops of water, pats them dry, hands her the towel. She flashes a nervous smile.

SUSAN

Goodnight, Joe.

JOE

Goodnight to you, Susan.

Susan steps towards a door, Joe takes a step in the wrong direction, they almost walk into each other. Now she takes a step in another direction, as does Joe, again they almost collide.

SUSAN

Shall we dance?

Joe is completely puzzled, finally Susan heads for one door, Joe for another.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Joe --

JOE

Yes?

SUSAN

I think you want to go to the west wing. Through there.

Susan indicates yet another door.

JOE

(after a moment)

Thank you.

Joe redirects himself, goes to the door. As they both are about to exit, Joe and Susan sneak furtive looks at each other across the pool, smile at catching each other's glances. Joe exits. For a moment Susan's eyes remain on the door through which he has gone. Now she grips the towel over her shoulders, the one Joe gave her, pats the same spot he did.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NEXT MORNING

Parrish, dressed for the day, passes servants busy with their morning tasks, polishing doorknobs, putting away linen, dusting picture frames. He nods and greets them as he strides down the hall, brisk "Good morning"'s to Coyle and Luisa.

INT. GUEST SUITE, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - MORNING

Parrish knocks, waits a courteous moment, opens the door, finds Joe in an elegant shirt and trousers trying to tie his tie.

PARRISH

Good morning.

JOE

Good morning, Bill.

PARRISH

How are you? How're you feeling?

JOE

'Feeling'? I feel fine. How do you feel?

PARRISH

Um -- well, I didn't sleep too well. This is crazy. This is the left-field thing of all time. What do I do? What do I tell my family?

JOE

Oh, I wouldn't tell them anything,

Bill. You'll ruin the good start we had last night. I felt as if I were being treated like a person. 'Joe' this and 'Joe' that - a nice smile - Quince passed me the rolls -- no 'rapture' or 'passion' or any of those mighty things you seem so intent on imparting, but I am certain, should you - uh - say - uh - who I am - our adventure would end abruptly.

Parrish regards Joe, the tie is a sorry mess now, a batwing of silk stretching across his collarbone.

JOE (cont'd)

But I did so enjoy your family.

Parrish is startled, he regards Joe carefully.

PARRISH

What about my family? This 'adventure' involved only me, right?

Silence as Joe considers the point, Parrish quickly crosses to him, undoes the tie, and now begins tying it for him.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Tell you what, you promised that it's going to be only me and --

JOE

And what?

PARRISH

And I won't tell anyone who you are.

JOE

Sounds fair enough.

PARRISH

It is a deal?

JOE

A 'deal'?

PARRISH

You give your word, I give mine -- that we'll do what we say. It's a truth exchanged between two people.

A moment.

JOE

Bill --

PARRISH

Yes?

JOE

You've got a deal.

Parrish seems relieved. He has now, with some difficulty, completed the tying of Joe's tie, adjusts it beautifully on Joe's collar, then spins him around in front of a mirror. Joe, catching sight of his own appearance, rises to the balls of his feet, quite taken.

JOE (cont'd)

This is great!

(a moment)

Now what do we do?

PARRISH

Shake hands.

Joe immediately extends his hand toward Parrish, but Parrish freezes on seeing the hand, stares at it, now takes it. Joe pumps Parrish's hand vigorously, then breaks into a broad smile.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Parrish and Joe striding downtown, Joe's jacket fits perfectly, he blends right in and he clearly enjoys being part of the smart Fifth Avenue crowd on the way to work. Parrish senses Joe's pleasure, his slight preening, his eyes checking out the good-looking women headed for the offices at the top of corporate high-rises.

PARRISH

You know, I got to thinking last night -- with you here, and seemingly occupied, how's your work going - uh - elsewhere?

A flicker from Joe. He has heard what Parrish has said, his eyes busy with the grift and the sparkle of the Avenue, but he is concentrating on Parrish's words.

JOE

When you were shaving this morning, you weren't just shaving, right?

PARRISH

What do you mean?

JOE

You were hatching ideas, making plans, arriving at decisions, right?

PARRISH

I guess so.

JOE

So you understand the concept then. When you're busy here, your work, what your task is, is being executed elsewhere.

PARRISH

Of course.

JOE

So you've grasped the idea. Congratulations. Now multiply it by infinity and take it to the depth of forever, and you still will have barely a glimpse of what I am talking about.

Parrish falls silent, chewing over Joe's admonition.

PARRISH

Joe --?

JOE

Yes, Bill.

PARRISH

How about giving a guy a break?

JOE

Make an exception?

PARRISH

There's one to every rule.

JOE

Not this.

They stride on, cutting through the crowd, Joe all at home in his new surrounding, but Parrish just the opposite, uncharacteristically uncomfortable, phrases forming on his lips but unspoken, then suddenly he blurts out:

PARRISH

-- I don't deserve this. I'm still young, this is not my time --

JOE

That's what everybody says.

PARRISH

I'm not everybody.

JOE

That's what everybody says.

Parrish is trying to control himself, glances at Joe.

PARRISH

I want to live.

JOE

I understand.

A moment.

JOE (cont'd)

But you can't.

A sudden silence between them. Parrish's shoulders appear to have stopped slightly, the courage he displayed at raising these issues has vanished.

PARRISH

What's it like?

JOE

What do you mean?

PARRISH

What's it like where I'm going?

JOE

Can you keep a secret?

PARRISH

Yes.

JOE

So can I.

They turn into Parrish's office building.

INT. LOBBY, PARRISH COMMUNICATIONS - DAY

As Parrish and Joe enter, Parrish is hailed by JAIME, the Elevator Starter.

JAIME

Good morning, Mr. Parrish.

PARRISH

Good morning, Jaime.

JAIME

Knight's Reward in the 4th at
Calder --

A bemused Parrish walks on, Joe beside him, Jaime pursuing them.

JAIME (cont'd)

-- A closer in today with cheap speed. The colt will come from the clouds and boom! Fifty-eight dollar horse. I get you down, Mr. Parrish, just say the word.

PARRISH

(smiles)

I'm sorry, not today, Jaime.

Parrish and Joe arrive at the bank of elevators. Jaime, back at his post, hits a button.

PARRISH (cont'd)

(to Joe)

You know, everyday I've walked into this building, Jaime gives me a horse.

(a moment)

I wonder if any of them won.

The elevator materializes, Parrish and Joe step on.

INT. PARRISH COMMUNICATIONS, OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN - DAY

Parrish and Joe emerge from the executive elevator, Jennifer is waiting as usual with her pad, "Good morning"s, etc. As Parrish strides down the hall, Joe right beside him, he passes instructions back to Jennifer who, scribbling, hurries along behind them.

PARRISH

-- And call my family, I'd like them to come over for dinner tonight.

JENIFER

Didn't the family get together last night --?

PARRISH

(remonstrating, gently)
Jennifer.

JENIFER

Of course, Mr. Parrish. Right away.

Jennifer wheels and heads right back to the office as Parrish arrives at the door to the Board Room.

PARRISH

(to Joe)
Perhaps you would like to wait in my office --?

JOE

No.

PARRISH

What I'm trying to say is this is a Board meeting and you are not a member of the Board.

JOE

I'm sure you'll see to it that it won't be a problem.

Parrish hesitates, nods, conceding the point, reaches for the doorknob.

INT. BOARD ROOM, PARRISH COMMUNICATIONS - DAY

Parrish enters, Joe following right behind him. A euphony of "Good morning"'s from the various members of the Board, including Quince. Everyone sits when Parrish does but Joe, right at home, spots a tray of refreshments: coffee, pastries, he heads for them.

PARRISH

(to the Board)
-- This is Joe Black, a personal associate of mine - uh - he'll be joining us today. I know it's -- uh -- unusual, and my apologies -- and Drew -- uh -- carry on.

Immediately indications of surprise on Board members' faces at Parrish bringing in an 'observer', Drew's reaction guarded

but intense.

DREW

(after a moment, to
Joe)

Nice to see you. I didn't expect
you, but certainly you can't get
enough of a good thing.

JOE

Thank you.

DREW

(to the Board)

The Board of Parrish Communications -
is hereby called to order. Our sole
order of business is an acceptance
of John Bontecou's generous offer
and --

JOE

(to Drew)

Do you have any more of these deli-
cious cookies?

A hushed silence at the inappropriateness of Joe's inter-
ruption.

JOE (cont'd)

And a cup of tea. With milk, I
think. I'd like to try it English-
style. Yes, a cup of tea with milk.

DREW

Anything else, Mr. Black? How about
some water?

JOE

Why yes, thank you.

DREW

Hot or cold.

JOE

Cold.

DREW

And a glass.

Drew indicates to the Board's Stenographer to arrange Joe's
refreshments.

PARRISH

(quietly, indicating a
chair)

Would you like to sit down, Joe?

JOE

Yes.

Joe sits.

DREW

To review -- we're really crossing
the 't's and dotting the 'i's here.
Bill had a great and conclusive
meeting with John Bontecou yester-
day, all that remains for us is to
put it to a vote.

Smiles and murmurs of a congratulatory receptiveness from
the Board at Drew's news.

PARRISH

(emptily)

Thank you, Drew.

Parrish takes a moment, draws himself up to say something
official then stops himself, what follows is spontaneous,
reflective, deeply felt.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Umm -- I did enjoy -- or rather I
was interested in meeting John yes-
terday -- impressive... I suppose...
But it did get me to thinking. I
started in this business because
this is what I wanted to do. I knew
I wasn't going to write the Great
American Novel, but I also knew
there was more to life than buying
something for a dollar and selling
it for two. I wanted to give the
news to the world, and I wanted to
give it unvarnished. The more we
all know about each other, the
greater the chance we will survive.
Sure, I want to make a profit, you
can't exist without one but John
Bontecou is all profit. If we give
him license to absorb Parrish
Communications, and he has his eye
on a few others after us, we'll be
appointing him to the position he

craves -- Gatekeeper. In order to reach the world you will have to go through John Bontecou. And not only will you have to pay him to do this, far more expensive, you'll have to agree with him. Reporting the news is a privilege and a responsibility and it is not exploitable. Parrish Communications has earned this privilege, John Bontecou wants to buy it. As your chairman, I urge you to agree this company is not for sale.

A silence, everybody shifts, the Board is in shock, Drew is trying to maintain his balance.

DREW

(carefully)

...Sounds like you're not leaving much room for discussion.

PARRISH

(to the Board)

Sorry. I know it looks like I'm reversing my field.

DREW

That's your privilege, Bill. But given our needs, given the absolute necessity for growth, given the future, the truth is... joining John Bontecou is every bit as certain as - Death and Taxes.

Joe interjects:

JOE

'Death and Taxes'?

After a moment.

DREW

Yes.

JOE

"Death and Taxes"?

Another moment.

DREW

Yes.

JOE

What an odd pairing.

DREW

It's just a saying, Mr. Black,

JOE

Of whom?

DREW

It doesn't matter.

JOE

Then why did you bring it up?

Drew regards Joe.

DREW

You're not familiar with the phrase,
"In this world, nothing is certain
but Death and Taxes"?

PARRISH

I am now.

DREW

Glad I could be of some help.

The Board is provoked and mystified by Joe and even more by his presence, they cast meaningful glances at Parrish, Drew coolly grasps the irritation of the members. Parrish breaks the silence.

PARRISH

Shall we adjourn?

DREW

But the matter's still on the table,
Bill --

EDWARD SLOANE, a contemporary of Parrish's, has been warily silent, but extremely observant. Protective of Parrish, and sensing his burgeoning difficulty, he interrupts:

SLOANE

Why don't we let it rest for the
moment? Give it some air?

PARRISH

Well said, Eddie. Mr. Black, shall
we?

Joe rises.

JOE

(to Drew)

Those cookies were excellent.

He exits with Parrish, the door closes behind them. A BABBLE of disturbed reactions from the Board.

DREW

Who is that guy?

Drew grabs a telephone:

DREW (cont'd)

Felicia?

FELICIA (O.S.)

Yes, sir?

DREW

Get me a Field Background check on Joe Black. Litigations. Bankruptcies. Credit ratings. The works. Got it?

Drew hangs up.

INT. PARRISH'S OFFICE - DAY

Parrish enters, Joe right on his heels. They both stop, Parrish regards him.

PARRISH

-- What's the deal here? Are you going to be breathing down my neck right 'til the very end?

JOE

I don't understand.

Parrish tries to gather himself.

PARRISH

...I'd like to be alone for a while.

JOE

Are you sad, Bill?

PARRISH

Yes, I am. There's a research lib-

rary on the fourth floor. Why don't you go down and read some magazines?

JOE

You're not thinking of going somewhere, are you, Bill?

PARRISH

Joe, could I ask you to take a walk? Buy a tie or something. I know I'll be seeing you.

JOE

Of course.

But Joe doesn't move.

PARRISH

(prompting)

Now I'd like to be alone.

JOE

Oh. Okay.

Parrish reaches into his pocket and hands Joe some cash.

PARRISH

Here -- this will hold you for a while.

Joe stares at the money as Parrish shows him the door.

PARRISH (cont'd)

You know about money, don't you?

JOE

It can't buy happiness?

Parrish opens the door.

PARRISH

Jennifer, give Mr. Black a map of the city.

JOE

No thank you, Bill. I can manage.

Joe goes.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM AREA, NEW YORK HOSPITAL - DAY

Susan is busy giving instructions to a Nurse, a patient on

an examining table beside them. As she finishes, she suddenly notices Joe down the corridor in the reception area. She is startled for the moment, quickly makes a last notation, hands a chart to the Nurse and heads down the corridor.

SUSAN

Joe --

JOE

How nice you look. Is that your uniform?

Susan regards him.

SUSAN

Why did you come here?

Joe doesn't have an answer.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Are you ill?

JOE

Oh goodness, no.

SUSAN

Then why are you here, Joe?

JOE

I came to see you.

SUSAN

I don't have any time to see you now. I'm doing grand rounds and then I'm examining back-to-back patients until dinner and then --

JOE

Very well, I'll watch.

SUSAN

Watch me do what?

JOE

Whatever you do.

SUSAN

That's impossible. I'm a doctor, I'm --

JOE

And I'll be a visitor.

SUSAN

Patients have visitors, not doctors.

JOE

I don't mind --

Visible now behind them are a Caribbean woman in her mid-thirties, TEENA, an arm around her mother, EASTER, who is holding her stomach and rocking back and forth in her seat, in great pain.

TEENA

(urgently)

Miss? Miss Doctor?

SUSAN

(gently)

Just a minute, please.

TEENA

Please. My momma's sicker'n he is.

Easter looks up and sees Joe. She abruptly becomes still, eyes wide, as if sudden recognition.

EASTER

Obeah.

TEENA

No, Momma.

But Easter just stares at Joe, fearful.

EASTER

Obeah mon. I gonna die.

TEENA

Momma, stop it. Is just a man.

Joe looks at Easter, curiously.

SUSAN

(to Teena)

What's obeah?

TEENA

Bad spirit. She just all fever, she don' mean nothin'. Please help us?

SUSAN

Have you filled out the insurance forms?

Teena shakes her hand anxiously. Joe leans forward to Easter and speaks softly in perfect, lilting West Indian dialect.

JOE

No obeah, sister. No duppy, no jumbie. Evera ting gon' be irey.

Susan and Teena both look at him, astonished. Easter's fearful gaze remains locked on him.

JOE (cont'd)

Go wi' de doctor lady. Momma be fine.

EASTER

Don' leave!?

TEENA

(pleading)

Momma.

Susan leads Teena away. Easter is riveted on Joe.

EASTER

(with certainty)

Obeah.

JOE

Obeah evil. I not evil.

EASTER

What you then?

JOE

I from dat nex' place.

EASTER

You wait here'n to take us? Like you bus driver to dere?

JOE

(smiles)

No, no. I on holiday.

EASTER

(looks around, dubious)

Some spot you pick.

She winces with pain, gasping.

EASTER (cont'd)
Pain is bad.

JOE
I nuttin' to do wi' dat.

EASTER
Make it go 'way.

JOE
Doctor lady make it irey.

EASTER
Not dis pain. Dis pain tru an' tru.
Make it go 'way.

JOE
Can't, sistah.

EASTER
(adamant, pleading)
Can, mistah. Take me to dat nex'
place.

Joe regards Easter, a long moment.

JOE
Not time yet.

EASTER
Make it time.

Joe shakes his head, a firm no. But when he looks and speaks to Easter again, it is with concern and even regret.

JOE
Can't feel wi' de way tings gotta
be, Easter.

Susan and Teena return with an Orderly and a wheelchair for Easter.

EASTER
(to Joe)
Please...

TEENA
Come now, Momma.

Easter is helped into the wheelchair. She looks pleadingly at Joe. The Orderly starts to wheel her away. Joe stays him, putting his hand on Easter's arm.

JOE

Close your eyes, Easter.

She does, her pained grimace melts into a peaceful smile.

JOE (cont'd)

Soon.

He takes his hand away, and the Orderly wheels Easter off.

SUSAN

(to Teena)

Go with her. I'll be right there.

Teena goes. Joe remains his normal voice.

JOE

She's in a great deal of pain.

SUSAN

Yes.

Susan regards Joe, puzzled.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Have you spent a lot of time in the islands?

JOE

Some.

Joe shifts.

JOE (cont'd)

I - uh - I - realize now - uh - my
being here - um - your patient --
this is not really appropriate --
and I - uh --

SUSAN

Don't apologize. There's nothing
to be sorry for -- every hospital
should have someone like you.

Silence.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Well...I'm glad you came.

JOE

Thank you. I'm so very glad to be here.

Another awkward silence.

JOE (cont'd)

I guess you're busy --

SUSAN

Yes.

She doesn't move, they search for words.

JOE

Well, I could come again some other time.

Susan regards him.

SUSAN

Joe, I'm with Drew.

JOE

(sincerely)

Not now.

Susan smiles gently.

JOE (cont'd)

Don't you want me to come again...?

A moment.

SUSAN

I have to go, I'm sorry to say --

JOE

Be sorry for nothing.

Another moment.

SUSAN

Yes. Well...thank you, Joe.

Susan turns to go, hesitates.

JOE

Good-bye, Susan.

Susan waves softly to him, heads down the hall, glances back

once to see Joe has not moved, is watching her depart.

INT. PARRISH'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Jennifer shows Joe in, Parrish is deep in thought, beside him a meal laid out beautifully on his desk with linen and silver, but untouched.

Joe is more abstracted than usual, he is starting at Parrish's food.

JOE

Are you going to eat your lunch

PARRISH

It's all yours.

Joe starts eating, Parrish watches him, somewhat fascinated, Joe's chewing has improved.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Good?

JOE

Excellent. What is it?

PARRISH

Cold lamb sandwich with cilantro. A little Coleman's mustard.

Joe takes another big bite.

JOE

Truly - uh - splendid.

PARRISH

Glad you like it. My wife turned me onto cold lamb sandwiches. Joan -- that was my wife --

JOE

(familiarily)

Uh-huh.

PARRISH

Cold lamb sandwiches -- not as chewy as roast beef, not as boring as chicken. She knew stuff like that.

Silence, Parrish getting lost in his memories.

PARRISH (cont'd)

-- Everything reminds me of her --
there isn't a day that goes by that
I don't think about her -- One day
she was here. The next day she was
gone. What are you going to do? --
I guess you've heard all this a
trillion times before.

JOE

And more.

PARRISH

Why didn't you stop me?

JOE

Well...I don't know.

Silence.

JOE (cont'd)

How was it the first time you met
her?

PARRISH

I thought you'd heard a trillion
times --

JOE

This part I'm interested in.

A moment.

PARRISH

She had on this little blue suit --
with a little white collar that had
little red piping on it --

Joe is riveted on Parrish now, Parrish aware of him, has
paused.

PARRISH (cont'd)

You could have put her under glass
and I would have just stood and
looked at her. But when she spoke
-- I loved the sound of her voice
and her laugh --

(a moment)

-- I couldn't get enough of her --
and gradually -- or maybe it wasn't
gradually -- I realized I couldn't
live without her.

A KNOCK, the door opens and Drew enters, looks at Parrish, then at Joe, stands poised in the doorway.

DREW

May I interrupting?

JOE

Yes.

PARRISH

No.

DREW

(to joe)

'Just kidding'?

PARRISH

Sit down, Drew.

DREW

Before I do --

(glances at Joe)

I was hoping we might be alone,
Bill.

PARRISH

Joe and I have no secrets from each
other.

DREW

(to Joe)

How nice for you both.

Drew takes a moment, then plunges in.

DREW (cont'd)

Bill, pardon my candor, but I was
confounded by your decision this
morning.

PARRISH

Why?

DREW

I was hired, you told me, to help
bring Parrish Communications into
the 21st Century. This merger is
the vehicle --

Joe interrupts:

JOE

Perhaps a merger is a way to bring Bill's company into the 21st century. And perhaps it isn't. And perhaps cheating on your French Philosophers exam at The Groton School was an expedient way to get your diploma, and perhaps it wasn't. Be that as it may, Drew, a question can often be argued both ways.

Drew is stunned.

PARRISH

Joe, cut it out. And you too, Drew.

DREW

(to Parrish)

I thought this was practically a done deal --

PARRISH

Well now it's undone, okay? Forget Bontecou! Scrub him! I'm tired of his fancy name and his fancy offer. I'm not going for it.

A moment.

DREW

Okay.

Drew heads for the door, turns around.

DREW (cont'd)

(to Parrish)

Can I invite myself to dinner tonight?

(a moment)

Susan and I had ticket for the Knicks game. But she said you guys were getting together --

PARRISH

Dinner? Absolutely.

JOE

Absolutely.

DREW

(to Joe)

Damn decent of you.

Drew exits.

JOE

Why, at this juncture, are you letting yourself be so concerned by business matters?

PARRISH

I don't want anybody buying up my life's work and turning it into something it wasn't meant to be. A man wants to leave something behind. And he wants it left behind the way he made it. And he wants it to be run the way he run it -- with a sense of honor, of dedication, of truth. Okay?

JOE

Okay.

PARRISH

And I don't need your goddamn permission either! You! Drew! I don't need anyone to tell me how to run my life.

JOE

Easy, Bill. You'll give yourself a heart attack and ruin my vacation.

INT. SALON, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE, NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

The skyline glitters through the terrace windows. The hour is before dinner, Coyle and Luisa weave seamlessly among the family, offering hors d'oeuvres and drinks on a tray.

Allison and Susan together by a piano; Parrish, Quince and a distracted Joe are gathered near the terrace. Joe's eyes are on Susan across the room. Her eyes flicker towards him, aware of his gaze.

ALLISON

(to Susan)

...We're never all together two nights in a row. Maybe Christmas, Thanksgiving, that's it. What's going on?

SUSAN

Nothing's going on. Maybe he doesn't want to be alone. He's go-

ing to be sixty-five in a minute --

ALLISON

...I don't know, Daddy seems funny to me. Ever since Joe showed. It's like he dropped from the clouds...

Drew enters. He nuzzles Susan's neck, out of the corner of her eye she sees Joe still observing them.

ALLISON (cont'd)

...When Daddy walked in with him, he couldn't even remember his name. Now he's his house guest. And you know how he hates house guests. What is going on?

Drew, whose eyes have also been on Joe across the room, turns back.

DREW

(to Susan and Allison)
Good question.

Allison sees Susan's eyes flicker over towards Joe.

ALLISON

-- But he does seem very nice.

SUSAN

You think so?

ANOTHER ANGLE

Over at the terrace, Quince buttonholes Parrish, Joe standing by.

QUINCE

(to Parrish)
...I read you all the way on the Bontecou thing, and I know where you're coming from. And I'm with you a hundred and one percent.

PARRISH

Thank you, Quince.

QUINCE

But I've got to tell you, if mergers are in the wild, I've got some great prospects I've developed. I want to talk to you about them next week.

PARRISH

Next week?

QUINCE

Yeah. Or the week after.

Quince sees Parrish hesitate.

QUINCE (cont'd)

No good?

PARRISH

No, anything is possible.

(lightly)

It's up to Joe.

QUINCE

Joe, you don't know how glad I am
you're aboard. Anybody who can take
some of the weight off the old man,
I'm in his corner.

JOE

That's very gracious of you, Quince.

QUINCE

No problem. I'll leave you two
alone. I can tell you guys have
something on the fire --

An excited Quince drains his drink and heads for Drew as
Allison appears.

ALLISON

(to Parrish)

Did you know twenty-six members of
your rifle company are coming?

PARRISH

Who?

ALLISON

From the Korean War.

PARRISH

Conflict, honey. Korean Conflict.

ALLISON

Whatever it was, they'll be here.
We sent out invitations to everyone,
plane tickets included -- the RSVP's

are amazing. A few of them we didn't hear from, and some of them are dead, of course --

PARRISH

Of course.

ALLISON

(a moment)

You know, we're going to give this party for you whether you like it or not.

PARRISH

I like it. I like it. I'm sorry I don't seem more appreciative.

ALLISON

(resignedly)

That's okay, Daddy.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Across the room, Quince has pulled Drew aside:

QUINCE

...I know you're down, but you know when you're down, Drew, there's no place to go but up.

DREW

Thanks, Quince.

QUINCE

Never mind Bontecou. I've got some other merger possibilities up my sleeve, and I'm putting them to see old man.

DREW

Are you?

QUINCE

We'll do it together. I'll clue you in. Timing's got to be right. The old man says it's up to Joe.

DREW

'It's up to Joe'? Those were his words?

QUINCE

Yeah.

DREW

'It's up to Joe', huh?

QUINCE

Yeah, that's what he said.

DREW

Well, that's very interesting.

Drew gazes intently over at Joe who is crossing to Susan, for the moment by herself near the piano.

QUINCE

I thought so, too. Joe's a neat guy.

DREW

Yeah. Neat.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Joe approaches Susan.

JOE

I wanted to apologize, Susan --

SUSAN

I thought you said 'Be sorry for nothing'.

JOE

Well, now I am sorry. For intruding on you this afternoon.

SUSAN

It wasn't an intrusion. And if it was, it turned out to be welcome.

JOE

I appreciate you --

SUSAN

Excuse me?

JOE

I mean I appreciate that.

SUSAN

And I appreciate you, too.

A moment between them.

JOE

(delighted)

You do? Well, thank you very much.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Drew crosses over to Parrish.

PARRISH

I was a little abrupt with you this afternoon, Drew. Forgive me. I want you to know I value your advice.

DREW

As much as Joe's?

Parrish doesn't answer.

DREW (cont'd)

Who is this man? He's giving ubiquitous a bad name.

A moment.

PARRISH

You're competitive soul, Drew. That's what makes you a great addition to the money. Joe is just... around.

DREW

For how long? And why?

PARRISH

Please. Don't worry about him. And above all, don't antagonize him.

Drew glances over at Joe.

DREW

Boss's orders, huh? I'm great at following them. And I think I'll start right now.

Allison calls out from the other side of the room:

ALLISON

Dinner's ready, everybody!

A BUZZ as Coyle opens the doors to the dining room and the

family files in, Drew lingering behind with Joe.

DREW

I have a confession to make to you,
Joe.

Joe just smiles in response.

DREW (cont'd)

Do you want to hear it?

JOE

(pleasantly)

No.

DREW

Well, I'm going to tell you anyway.
I did cheat on that exam at Groton.
But so did twenty-six other guys,
and nobody ever mentioned it until
today. And I'm expecting you won't
mention it again. I don't know who
you are and where you're getting
your information, but I'm willing to
pretend I did not hear it, and let
bygones be bygones. But can I tell
you something else, it'd be nice to
see the big guy without you next to
him. What are you, his shadow? Do
you hold his dick for him when he
goes to take a leak? You know some-
times somebody would like a few min-
utes alone with W.P. That means
without you. Okay, pal? Let's eat.

INT. DINING ROOM, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Everyone eating silently but looks are exchanged, glances averted, Allison notices Susan and Joe looking at each other, Drew observes Parrish watching Joe, Quince, on the other hand, just eats.

Breaking the silence, Parrish chinks his glass, stands.

PARRISH

-- I - uh - want to thank you all
for coming - uh - my family --

Everyone at the table is all attention.

PARRISH (cont'd)

-- Allison and Quince, Susan -- and

the other members --

He glances at Joe, stops.

PARRISH (cont'd)
-- I'm so happy when we can get
together -- I mean I know you all
have busy lives --

SUSAN
Look who's talking.

ALLISON
(a laugh)
Yeah, speak for yourself.

PARRISH
Anyway -- I remember when you were
little girls --

An awkward pause. Quince chooses to fill the silence.

QUINCE
I love little girls --

Allison elbows him.

PARRISH
And now you're all grown up -- and
I'm - uh - um --

Parrish struggles to keep his emotions in check, Drew
clocking his behavior very carefully.

PARRISH (cont'd)
I had some words all prepared but
now I've forgotten them - uh - um -
wait a minute.

Silence, everyone waiting for Parrish to proceed.

PARRISH (cont'd)
Uh, it's gone...um -- it was on the
tip of my tongue.

SUSAN
It'll come back, Daddy.

PARRISH
Will it?...

Parrish looking around, searching for words he will not find.

PARRISH (cont'd)
Anyway, I'd like to go on but...

He hesitates, drifts into silence.

ALLISON
(tentatively)
Daddy, you could sit down if you
wanted to.

A moment.

PARRISH
There is so much I would like to say
-- but I can't --
(another moment)
So I better sit down. Carry on,
everybody.

He sits, then immediately stands up again.

PARRISH (cont'd)
One other thing -- why don't we all
have dinner again tomorrow night?

ALLISON
Dinner? Again?

SUSAN
Haven't you had enough of us, Dad?

PARRISH
(with great sincerity)
No.

The word lands with effect, Susan and Allison have heard it well.

SUSAN
We'll be here.

QUINCE
You bet.

ALLISON
With bells on.

The guests try to return to their food, Susan is the most concerned about Parrish's lapse, she does not say anything but Drew next to her senses her empathy and, in something of a display, gives her a pro forma hug. Joe has observed

every instant of Drew's performance, his anxiety is palpable when Coyle leans over to serve him, offering a tray of a roast that has been carved.

JOE

(to Coyle)

I would prefer some peanut butter.

COYLE

How would you like that, sir? On some kind of toast?

JOE

Toast? No...just the butter.

COYLE

Right away.

Coyle heads for the kitchen.

SUSAN

Why do you love peanut butter so much?

JOE

(intimately)

I don't know.

SUSAN

I adore things like that....food I can't do without. Don't you?

Joe is locked on Susan, it is as if there is nobody else in the room.

JOE

Yes...

SUSAN

It comforts you, doesn't it?

JOE

(captivated)

Yes...I've found that it does.

DREW

Mind if I throw up?

PARRISH

(admonishing gently)

Please, Drew.

JOE

(to Susan)

I'm very concerned about the woman
you attended to today.

SUSAN

I am, too.

JOE

Has her pain abated?

SUSAN

We're doing what we can for her.
But it doesn't look good.

JOE

I'm sorry to hear that.

DREW

Who are we talking about?

JOE

(to Susan)

But I know she's grateful for the
care you're giving her.

DREW

Is this a state secret or are we
being excluded just for the fun of
it?

JOE

(to Drew)

Susan's patient is whom we are
talking about.

SUSAN

Joe visited the hospital today.

Parrish's head swivels to Joe.

ALLISON

Did he? That's more than we get to
do.

DREW

Well, maybe next time Joe goes,
he'll take us along.

JOE

Perhaps you could remind me.

DREW

I'll make a note of it. Anything else?

QUINCE

I'd like to come, too. See Susan strut her stuff.

DREW

You're on, Quin-cee. Destination Hospital. Joe, you'll be the Tour Guide. Okay? How's that sound to you?

Silence. Parrish regards Joe, then Susan, his face reflects a sudden concern with their relationship.

JOE

Susan is a wonderful doctor.

INT. SALON, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

After dinner, the family and guests file back in from the dining room, Drew alongside Parrish.

DREW

I have to go, Bill -- it's been a helluva day. Need a few minutes to sort everything out.

PARRISH

Okay, we'll see you tomorrow.

DREW

Sure.

Drew peels off, heads for the foyer and front door, Susan follows him.

Parrish corners Joe.

PARRISH

Why did you go to the hospital?

JOE

I don't know.

PARRISH

You were just curious?

JOE

I guess...

PARRISH

About Susan?

JOE

I wouldn't put it that way.

PARRISH

What way would you put it?

JOE

You tell me, Bill.

PARRISH

How about you telling me? When I ask a simple question, I expect a straight answer. That's what I'm used to. Anybody who doesn't give it to me, I fire.

JOE

Are you going to fire me, Bill?

Silence, Parrish is at a loss.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Drew is putting on his coat, Susan with him, a tension between them, a heavy silence finally broken.

SUSAN

...See you tomorrow night.

DREW

Include me out. I've had enough of the conversations.

SUSAN

You don't mean that. You wouldn't disappoint Daddy --

DREW

Daddy'll do fine. Besides, he's got Joe.

(a moment)

And so do you.

SUSAN

Drew, you're out of line.

DREW

That may be. But I don't like the

fucker. I don't like the way he looks at you and talks to you. And vice versa.

SUSAN

Sorry, but I like the way he looks and talks to me. And vice versa. Okay?

DREW

No, not okay. I thought we had a good thing going here.

(a moment)

It shows you never know.

Silence, neither knows how to continue.

SUSAN

Well... goodnight.

DREW

Yeah. Goodnight.

Drew goes, Susan turns to find out at the far end of the foyer, he's been observing them. She walks up to him.

SUSAN

How long have you been standing there?

JOE

I don't like the way Drew spoken to you. But I feel better about it now because of the way you spoke back.

A moment.

SUSAN

Tell me about yourself, Joe. Who you are. What you're doing with my father.

Susan's directness has caught him by surprise, Joe blinks.

SUSAN (cont'd)

So you're not going to tell me?

Joe remains silent, rendered extremely anxious by Susan's inquiries.

SUSAN (cont'd)

You're married, aren't you?

JOE

Why?

SUSAN

Because guys who never say anything about themselves are always married.

Joe doesn't respond.

SUSAN (cont'd)

So you are married.

JOE

No, I'm not.

SUSAN

Girlfriend?

JOE

No.

SUSAN

Gay?

JOE

No.

Susan comes closer to Joe.

SUSAN

Then tell me, Joe, how come a man as attractive, intelligent, well-spoken, diffident in the most seductive way, and yet powerful, is all alone in this world?

Joe tries to respond but he can't, his stammer interrupted by Susan.

SUSAN (cont'd)

I'm sorry, I don't want to pry and you don't want to tell me. So let's leave it a mystery. That's the way you want it, isn't it?

Susan takes another step closer to Joe.

JOE

Thank you, I appreciate that.

They are inches apart now, the smell of each other surrounds

them, a heaviness to the moment, now Joe turns to head up the stairs.

SUSAN

Where are you going?

JOE

(softly)

To bed.

SUSAN

(suddenly fragile)

'To bed'?

JOE

Yes. I'm tired.

He excuses himself with an ineffable gesture, now climbs the stairs, Susan watches him disappear.

She turns back into the salon just as Allison and Quince are exiting, "good-byes" all around. Susan is left alone now with Parrish who is fixing a drink at a sidebar.

PARRISH

That was wonderful.

SUSAN

Yeah, it's good to get together.

PARRISH

Do you mind if I raise a little caution flag?

SUSAN

Raise away.

PARRISH

What is the nature of your interest in Joe?

SUSAN

Well, remember how you told me about "lightning striking"? The nature of it's in there somewhere.

Parrish drops another cube of ice in his drink, takes his time before answering.

PARRISH

I won't say you may be getting onto shaken ground --

SUSAN

Then what will you say?

PARRISH

I don't think this is the lightning you are looking for. Drew's a good man. I know I didn't seem to be completely in his corner before, but I've come to appreciate --

SUSAN

Now we love Drew and Joe in verboten? What's going on?

PARRISH

Nothing.

SUSAN

When you say 'nothing' that way, it's not nothing.

PARRISH

Then what is it?

SUSAN

It's something.

She kisses him.

SUSAN (cont'd)

G'night, Daddy. See you tomorrow. This is getting interesting.

She goes.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CARLYLE HOTEL - NEXT DAY

A large suite, room service carts creaking with pots of coffee and half-eaten pastries. The Board of Parrish Communications is gathered, absent are Parrish and Quince. Felicia, Drew's secretary, takes notes.

DREW

...I know you're all as uncomfortable as I am to be meeting without Bill, but I got a call last night from John Bontecou. Not only is he still interested, he is sweetening his offer.

(a moment)

Although it pains me to say it, in my opinion Bill Parrish dealt with us peremptorily in dismissing any deal with Bontecou. Therefore, I'm sorry to say that if we are to examine this new offer responsibly as the Board of Directors of Parrish Communications, we must do so without its Chairman.

(another moment)

Oh yes, there is one additional element: Bontecou is so anxious to get us, he said he'd take Parrish Communications with our Chairman or without.

The Board falls silent. Sloane, a peer of Parrish's, fidgets. Drew milks the moment.

DREW (cont'D)

It's no surprise if I suggest to you that the Bill Parrish we know is not the Bill Parrish you saw yesterday. You heard that speech -- some strange emotional rationale to buttress a knee-jerk rejection of a legitimate offer. Does it not strike you that something is possibly affecting this man's judgement? More specifically -- his judgement to make a critical business decision?

Silence, the Board clocking Drew's argument.

DREW (cont'D)

It's not pleasant to say the following, but I would be remiss, in this crisis, if I did not. When we present Bill with the improved Bontecou offer, and if he refuses to let us consider it -- once more makes an adamant or emotional rejection -- we will have no choice but to seek an alternative.

SLOANE

And what would that be?

DREW

Bill's birthday is the day after tomorrow. There is a provisory by-

law in our charter. Per the discretion of the Board, Corporate officers can be retired at age sixty-five.

SLOANE

You're taking this too far, Drew.

DREW

Am I not obligated to?

Drew leans over to Felicia, speaks quietly and she leaves the room.

DREW (cont'd)

How did this all come about? Crisis -- Bill Parrish, crisis -- his company, crisis for us. I came about with the arrival on the scene of -- Mr. Joe Black. Mr. Joe who? Joe Black. He attends our Board meeting, he sleeps at Bill's house, resides in his office. Never leaves his side. And, in my opinion, is always in his ear. Telling him what to do and Bill is listening. Who is Joe Black? What is his relationship to Bill Parrish? And most important, what is behind his influence on our Chairman?

SLOANE

You're building this thing up too much, Drew. He's had advisors before. Nobody tells Bill what to do.

The door opens and Felicia enters followed by Quince, surprised at seeing a convened Board, but still he is all smiles.

DREW

Thank you for coming.

SLOANE

Hello, Quince.

QUINCE

Hi, Ed, hi folks, I didn't know everybody was going to be here, what a nice surprise. What's the big confab?

SLOANE

(acidly)

This is a secret meeting.

DREW

(to Quince)

I hope you'll respect its nature --
What we're trying to do here is
gather our thoughts -- in light of
Bill's rejection of Bontecou's offer
-- and make an appropriate presenta-
tion to him as to how we think the
company might proceed. Won't you
share with our Board the information
you gave me last night?

Quince hesitates, then realizes what Drew has on his mind.
He nods confidently to Drew, then turns importantly to the
Board.

QUINCE

Well, I'm happy to tell you I've got
good news. As I was telling Drew,
I've been making a little hay while
the Bontecou sun was shining -- two,
possibly three new and boiling hot
prospects for merger.

DREW

How did Bill react to the leads
you've developed?

QUINCE

He was interested.

DREW

(prompting)

-- But he was concerned about the
timing?

QUINCE

The timing -- yes. He says it's up
to Joe.

DREW

'It's up to Joe'?

QUINCE

That's what he said.

Quince, having dispensed his information, looks proudly
around at the Board members. They are stunned, Sloane in
shock. Drew is absolutely still, letting Quince's words

sink in.

INT. DINING ROOM, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Parrish, Joe, Susan, Allison and Quince are seated at the table, dessert plates in front of them, coffee cups beside. Allison and Susan's eyes are on Parrish, looking for some clue as to why has he gathered the family together yet again. Parrish is somewhat within himself, but he peeks over his demi-tasse cup at Joe, Parrish aware of Joe's heightened interest in Susan, and Susan's reciprocation.

Coyle enters carrying two imposing stemmed silver trays with cakes on them, Luisa follows with one other. They set them down in front of Parrish.

PARRISH

What is this?

ALLISON

Annie made them.

PARRISH

Who's Annie?

ALLISON

From La Rosette, only the greatest
pastry chef in America.

(pointing)

This is orange, from real Seville
oranges. Lemon, on a mille-feuille
crust, a little on the fanciful.
And a while, nothing like a good old
white cake, vanilla, with Angel food
but some maroons shavings thrown in.

PARRISH

I don't like cake.

ALLISON

It's for the party, Dad --

PARRISH

Oh, the goddam party --

ALLISON

'Goddam party'!

Allison bursts into tears.

ALLISON (cont'd)
(to Quince)

Did you hear that?

Quince quickly slashes a piece, takes a huge bite.

QUINCE

This is great, honey. The orange.
Has it got a little vodka in it?
Like that Finnish stuff, orange
vodka --

(to Parrish)

Put your lips around this one, Bill.
It's out of this world.

PARRISH

No thank you, Quince.

(to Allison)

I'm sorry, honey. I'm no good at
this. Why don't you choose whatever
cake you like?

ALLISON

I knew you were going to say that.
Tito Puente. The old platoon. Now
the cake. You just don't care. Why
did I do this? I should have my head
examined. I'm trying to throw the
party for the century for my father -
and you know what -- he doesn't give
a shit.

She bursts into tears all over again.

QUINCE

But he does give a shit. Don't you,
Bill?

PARRISH

Yeah, I give a shit.

QUINCE

See. There. What'd I tell you?

Joe watches as Quince dabs at Allison's tears with a napkin.

QUINCE (cont'd)

Feel better?

ALLISON

Yeah, but --

QUINCE

But what?

ALLISON

What will I tell Annie?

Parrish forks a bit of a cake.

PARRISH

This one.

QUINCE

The vodka. What'd I tell you?

Quince puts a reassuring arm around Allison, she seems to relax now, Joe has been a keen observer of what has transpired between husband and wife, between man and woman, a sense that he has taken in the virtue of such a relationship.

INT. SALON, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

After dinner, Parrish, Allison and Susan are gathered together. At the bar on the other side of the room, Joe watches as Quince pours himself a stiff hooker of brandy.

JOE

(to Quince)

Cirrhosis of the liver is the fifth leading killer of adult Western males.

QUINCE

I didn't know that.

JOE

On the other hand, Winston Churchill drank a bottle of cognac a day and lived until he was ninety-one.

After a moment.

QUINCE

You're an original, Joe. A little hard to figure, maybe...

JOE

And you're a nice man, Quince.

QUINCE

Thanks.

JOE

You're welcome.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Drew appears unannounced in the doorway, exchanges a tense glance with Susan, then heads straight for Parrish who seems surprised to see him.

DREW

(to Parrish)

Sorry to intrude, Bill, but we've got a bit of a crisis downtown -- it's not something we could talk about on the phone.

Parrish takes Drew aside.

DREW (cont'd)

The Board's real unhappy, Pappy -- they felt you dealt with them pre-emptorily, you never gave them a chance to speak --

PARRISH

What is there to say? They know what John Bontecou is -- and if they didn't, they know now.

DREW

Yes, you made your feeling abundantly clear. Now they want to do the same with theirs.

PARRISH

What are their feelings?

DREW

If I read this Board right now, they want you to accept Bontecou's offer.

PARRISH

Over my dead body.

Parrish's burgeoning anger has now gotten the attention of Joe, Susan, Quince and Allison.

DREW

What do you think the Board is going to say when I tell them that?

PARRISH

I don't care.

DREW

With all due respect, you damn well better care because if you try to stonewall them again, there'll be blood on the floor.

Silence, Parrish carefully calibrating Drew's remark.

PARRISH

Whose?

DREW

Yours.

PARRISH

I'm feeling real uncomfortable right now because the guy who reports to me is threatening me.

DREW

I'm just giving you the truth. There was a time when William Parrish liked the truth.

Joe, although across the room, is all attention.

PARRISH

I think it's time you went home, Drew.

DREW

Certainly. Goodnight.

Drew goes, everybody is in shock, Susan pursues him out into the hallway.

SUSAN

Drew!

He stops.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Never talk to my father like that again.

DREW

Don't worry about it. There's a beginning and a middle and an end to everything. And I think I've come to the end of my chapter with the Parrishes.

Joe has followed them into the hallway.

DREW (cont'd)

And the end began with this guy.

Drew looks down towards Joe.

DREW (cont'd)

Mr. Black --? We ran a check on you
and you know what we came up with?

JOE

No, I don't --

DREW

Not good, not bad, you know what we
got? Nothing. No credit, no cars,
no mortgages -- no wives. Nothing.

Joe waits.

DREW (cont'd)

All of a sudden a guy appears on the
scene with the Chairman of one of
the greatest communications corpora-
tions of the world, the boss makes
him privy to all the company's
secrets, he attends the Board meet-
ings, and us working stiffs with
MBA's up the ass and years and years
and years of experience, we're left
outside with our noses pressed
against the window.

Joe doesn't respond.

DREW (cont'd)

This is a big-time operation, deal-
ing in big-time issues, demanding
big-time executives who make big-
time decisions. So, Joe, why don't
you tell me exactly what it is
that's big time about you?

After a moment.

JOE

You first.

SUSAN

(to Drew)

Why don't you get off his case?

DREW

Oh, you're the great Joe's attorney now? Are we going to go to court? Or are we going to go to bed? And I don't mean you and me. I mean you and him.

SUSAN

That's it. It's over. Get out.

DREW

So I guess a blowjob's out of the question?

Joe clears his throat.

DREW (cont'd)

Did you say something?

Joe considers him evenly.

JOE

Almost.

SUSAN

(to Drew)

I said get out.

Now Drew wheels, heads right for the front door and exits with a SLAM.

JOE

What an angry fellow.

A moment passes before Susan realizes she and Joe are alone, and Joe does as well.

SUSAN

I'm sorry about --

JOE

Please. We don't need to talk about Drew.

She regards Joe.

SUSAN

No. We don't.

They drift, osmotically, into the library in awkward silence.

SUSAN (cont'd)
Brave you had a chance to look at
Dad's rare books? Jefferson's
Parliamentary Manual, a first
edition Bleak House --

Joe comes closer, takes a deep breath.

JOE
I love your smell.

SUSAN
-- I guess you haven't.

Now Susan, close to Joe, leans closer, her nose in Joe's
neck. Joe holds himself very still.

SUSAN (cont'd)
I like your smell, too.

JOE
Thank you.

SUSAN
It was everything.

Silence, the TICKING of the clock.

SUSAN (cont'd)
When I was little, my mother used to
say, "Darling, you could set your
heart by this clock".

JOE
-- Could you?

SUSAN
Never tried, 'til now.
(suddenly)
Joe, may I kiss you?

JOE
Why, yes. Thank you.

A moment.

SUSAN
You're welcome.

Susan reaches out for Joe, they kiss, he is awkward but his
very awkwardness endearing. Susan pulls him closer, they
linger now, mouths on each other's, then separate.

SUSAN (cont'd)
Thank you.

JOE
You're welcome.

The clock TICKS on. A sense of foreboding falls over Joe's face, his fear that he is passing through some barrier, a point of no return.

SUSAN
Joe?

The apprehensive expression on Joe's face fades away.

JOE
Yes?

SUSAN
I don't know who you are.

JOE
Well...I'm -- uh, Joe. And you're Susan. And I - uh - have this weak feeling in my knees --

SUSAN
And is your heart beating strangely?

JOE
Faster. And I want the scent from underneath your ears and the taste of your lips and the touch of your tongue to stay with me -- forever.

An intake of breath. She is about to speak.

JOE (cont'd)
And you don't even have to say a word.

Their faces inches from each other's.

SUSAN
I have to go home.

But neither Susan nor Joe moves.

SUSAN (cont'd)
Don't I?

Her question makes Joe, almost involuntarily, smile. Susan takes the opportunity to step back from him. The SOUND of someone at the door, it is Parrish, Susan turns, comprehends immediately how the situation will appear to him.

SUSAN

Goodnight, Daddy.

She drifts right past him, exits. Joe and Parrish are left alone now, eyes on each other's.

JOE

Hello, Bill.

PARRISH

(carefully)

Hello. Would you like to join me, Quince and Allison for a nightcap?

JOE

Um -- not right now.

An awkward moment.

PARRISH

Okay. Goodnight.

JOE

Goodnight.

Parrish turns and exits, Joe's head inclines, he breathes in the scent of his collar.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE SUITE, PARRISH COMMUNICATIONS - NEXT DAY

Parrish, followed by Joe, emerges from his private elevator, is greeted as usual:

JENIFER

Good morning, Mr. Parrish.

PARRISH

Good morning, Jennifer.

JENIFER

The Board is waiting.

PARRISH

What?

JENIFER

Didn't you call a Board meeting?

Jennifer sees Parrish is trying to right his balance, she knows better than to press the point.

JENIFER (cont'd)

Yes, the members are waiting. They are in the Board room now.

Jennifer nods respectfully as Parrish doesn't cast a flicker of any further surprise, heads straight for the Board room, Joe right beside him.

INT. BOARD ROOM, PARRISH COMMUNICATIONS - DAY

Parrish and Joe enter, the entire Board is assembled, including Drew, Quince and Sloane.

PARRISH

Good morning.

An odd mixture of responses, the Board sheepish and at the same time looking their most dutiful at this odd meeting, its sudden convening clearly a problem for Parrish, a problem which he does not attempt to hide, only control.

DREW

Did you want to have a cup of coffee or something, Bill?

PARRISH

I don't think so. Do you?

Drew gets the message, at the same time Joe is checking out all the attendees, his eyes come to rest on Drew.

DREW

(to Parrish)

To get to the point, we have received new information from John Bontecou concerning his desires for this company to merge with his, and we wanted to set the details before you.

A moment as Parrish looks around, the moment extends, it appears he may not ever answer.

PARRISH

That's it?

DREW

Bontecou wants a quick response
and --

PARRISH

The answer is no, quick enough for
you?

DREW

Don't you want to hear the details?

PARRISH

I'm not interested in the details.
And I'm not interested in the big
picture either. What I am inter-
ested in is how my Board got conven-
ed behind my back, is entertaining a
further proposal from a man whom it
offends me to do business with,
moreover has the audacity to present
this to me like a prize fish, and I
am expected to clap for it like a
performing seal. No, thank you.

DREW

So I am to understand from your re-
sponse that you do not want to hear
the details of Bontecou's offer?

PARRISH

Yes, you are to understand that, and
now may I ask you a question?

DREW

Certainly, Bill.

PARRISH

Are you running this Board or am I?

Sloane leans in.

SLOANE

We're not getting anywhere here.
Why don't we take some of the best
out of this thing, let's consider
it coolly, let's take a week --

DREW

Bontecou wants a speedier response
than that.

SLOANE

He'll wait --

PARRISH

Doesn't need to. Today, tomorrow, a week from now -- 'a week from now', who can think about a week from now -- the answer is going to be the same -- a loud, unmistakable, all-inclusive, airtight -- 'No'.

A BUZZ amongst the Board, they finally rustle into silence under Parrish's withering glance.

PARRISH (cont'd)

That's it? I've got a busy day and this meeting has already set me behind. Shall we adjourn?

DREW

Before we do, while we're here, there is a second question the Board would like a response to, a far simpler one.

Parrish waits.

DREW (cont'd)

Who is the man sitting to the right of you?

Everybody's eyes are on Joe.

PARRISH

I've already introduced Mr. Black to you all.

DREW

But who is he? What are his credentials? What is his relationship to you?

No response from Parrish.

DREW (cont'd)

The feeling of the Board is this: we fear Mr. Black is not only influencing your decisions in regard to this company, but that you are relying on him to make them for you.

Quince flinches at these words, his hands clasped in front of him, his knuckles white as Parrish regards Drew, but still

does not answer.

DREW (cont'd)

The lack of response, Bill, is not appropriate. We are your Board, we have a right to know how you are managing the operations of this company, and most importantly, that you have not delegated someone to do it for you.

Parrish squirms, desperately uncomfortable but still does not speak.

DREW (cont'd)

Okay, one more time.

Drew regards Joe.

DREW (cont'd)

Who is Joe Black?

Parrish stares stoically into the middle distance as Quince's head sinks into his hands.

DREW (cont'd)

(to the Board)

A motion has been brought before the Board to invoke Article 19 of the corporate charter.

PARRISH

In English, please.

DREW

Mandatory retirement upon our Chairman's sixty-fifth birthday.

Parrish is expressionless.

DREW (cont'd)

At which time, the Chairman will be named Emeritus, he will be welcome to attend all meetings, and will serve as International Spokesman for the corporation plus, of course, a settlement, a golden parachute of such magnitude that his feet will never touch the ground.

Drew pauses.

DREW (cont'd)
Please indicate your vote by a "Yes"
or "No".

A "Yes" is heard, now another "Yes", now more "Yes"es, all reluctant, "No" from Sloane, "No" from Quince who realizes he is the instrument of Parrish's dismissal.

DREW (cont'd)
The motion is passed. We will of course delay the announcement, out of respect for our former Chairman, until after the celebration of his birthday this weekend.

PARRISH
Thank you for allowing me to save face, Drew.

Joe's eyes are riveted on Drew.

DREW
(to the Board)
The other motion before us is the acceptance of John Bontecou's offer to merge this corporation with Bontecou International --

Parrish stands, Drew stops speaking.

PARRISH
Joe?

Silence, then Joe rises.

JOE
(to the Board)
Who I am, and my relationship to Bill, will be divulged in our own good time.

Joe follows Parrish out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY, OUTSIDE BOARD ROOM - DAY

Sloane has pursued Parrish and Joe.

SLOANE
(to Parrish)
...It's not over, 'til it's over.

PARRISH

Please, Eddie, no 'Fat Lady Sings'
shit.

SLOANE

I still sense some doubt in this
group, we could turn it around.
You'll be up in the country?

PARRISH

Yes, the big 'celebration' of my
mandatory retirement birthday.
You're an honored guest, Eddie.

SLOANE

I'm going to stick it out here. We
still have a shot.

The elevator door opens, Parrish and Joe step inside and the
door closes, leaving Sloane behind.

INT. HALLWAY, PARRISH COMMUNICATIONS - DAY

The Board meeting has broken up, clusters of members have
lingered, exchanging post-mortems. And enraged Quince has
cornered Drew, out of earshot of the others.

QUINCE

What have you done? You've gotten
the old man fired!

DREW

That we did. Thanks to you. He was
wobbling, mind you, but you stupid
the coup de grace.

Quince falls silent, aquiver with this reality.

QUINCE

I'm going to put a stop to this!

DREW

Quince, you can't unscramble
scrambled eggs.

QUINCE

But I didn't mean to do it!

DREW

The train's left the station, pal,
and you're aboard. Would you like
to hear the silver lining? Check
that, gold. I've been working with

John Bontecou all along. We had a game plan -- acquire Parrish Communications then break it apart and peddle it piece-by-piece to the highest bidder. I set it up for him, he smacks it out of the park.

Quince is struck dumb.

DREW (cont'd)

Don't you know what this'll mean? You'll be rich. You'll sell your stock, you can stop kissing ass -- What'll it feel like to be a man?

QUINCE

I don't want to get rich this way -- I'm going to expose you.

DREW

Go right ahead. Tell William Parrish how you betrayed him at a secret Board meeting. And tell Allison how you got her father fired -- and he lost his company.

Quince goes ashen.

DREW (cont'd)

It's just life, Quin-cee.

Drew hails an employee across the hall.

DREW (cont'd)

(to Quince)

Wake up and smell the thorns.

Drew joins the employee as Quince slumps against the wall.

INT. FOYER, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Parrish enters, Joe right behind him, Coyle takes their coats, disappears. Parrish hesitates for a moment, shrugs as if he has a thought he doesn't want to share, then heads upstairs with Joe. He is trudging a bit, Joe senses his mood.

JOE

I'm sorry, Bill --

PARRISH

That's okay.

JOE

What's okay?

PARRISH

Just a manner of speaking.

Joe seems puzzled.

PARRISH

(cont'd)

What 'okay' is, it's 'okay' it's over. We've got bigger fish to fry, don't we, Joe?

JOE

'Fish'?

PARRISH

Never mind. I'm tired. I'm going to take a nap.

A moment.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Are you hungry? Coyle will have Luisa fix you something to eat.

JOE

I'm not hungry.

PARRISH

Then I can't help you.

Parrish turns into his bedroom, closing the door gently behind him. Joe continues down the hall, enters the guest wing.

INT. GUEST SUITE, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Midday sunlight streams into the sitting room, Joe passes through to his bedroom, sits tentatively on the bed, feels the edge of the silk spread, touches the pillow, then rises again, crosses back to the sitting room.

Susan appears in the doorway, Joe suddenly senses her, turns around.

SUSAN

You're here?

JOE

I am.

He stands, they regard each other for the moment.

JOE (cont'd)
May I take your coat?

She doesn't answer, starts to take off the coat herself, Joe comes around her to help, Susan senses him breathing in the scent at the back of her neck.

SUSAN
I just thought I'd drop by, scrounge a little lunch, I was in the neighborhood --

JOE
How beautiful.

He starts to hang Susan's coat up.

SUSAN
Just throw it on the chair.

Joe holds her coat carefully on the chair. An awkward moment, the two of them shifting from foot-to-foot.

SUSAN (cont'd)
When I called, they said that you and Daddy had just left the office.

JOE
He's taking a nap.

SUSAN
He must be tired -- this Bontecou thing --

JOE
Yes, he's tired. I believe so.

A moment.

JOE (cont'd)
You must be hungry?

Susan sits on the couch.

SUSAN
No, not anymore. Are you?

Joe hears the question but doesn't answer, sits down on the couch beside her.

SUSAN (cont'd)
(after a moment)
Are you cold?

JOE

...No.

SUSAN

Maybe it's the draft through the door.

She gets up, closes the door, sits back down again next to Joe. A warm, awkward silence, they move closer to each other, now they fall into a foreplay which Susan recognizes as such, Joe, on the other hand, participates hungrily but has no knowledge where it is leading. His movements are instinctive, the smell of her hair, the shape of her fingers, odd things about her seem to interest him. This excites her because she senses his untutoredness and the very sense of that stirs her, their reactions to each other are intuitive and spontaneous; even though Joe has no knowledge of how to make love to a woman, ironically his actions are such that they never beg the question -- has he done it before.

Strange territory for Joe, not to be 'in control' and exerting his power, but his inventions and responses in lovemaking are so real that an emotional exchange between he and Susan builds. Joe has found himself in an unexplored land of feeling and passion, he loves what is happening and yet at the same time, is terrified by it. He feels himself being lured by some power he has not only never been aware of, but is deeply dangerous to partake of; he knows what he is doing is putting who he is at great risk, yet he goes right on. The powerful contradiction is transmitted to Susan, and in the end there is the knowledge they have together made a journey, they both have been swept away in a stream of events they have created; and they don't care about the consequences.

Spent, they lie in silence. Finally Susan speaks:

SUSAN

It's so wonderful to make love to you. It's like making love to someone who has never made love before.

Joe senses an opportunity not only to admit to what she has said, but to tell her more, even the truth about himself. He weighs, then resists, the impulse.

JOE

Thank you.

Her head nestles underneath his arm, she has a sense of his comforting her without knowing that he is doing so.

SUSAN

Did you like making love to me?

JOE

I loved it.

SUSAN

More than you love peanut butter?

JOE

Yes!

She laughs at the earnestness with which he answers.

Joe seems to drift away now, they lie together as one but for the first time, she feels separate from him, sensing him gone to some distant, distant land.

SUSAN

Where are you going?

JOE

Nowhere? I'm...here.

SUSAN

For how long?

JOE

Oh, I hope a long, long time.

A moment.

SUSAN

Me, too.

Another moment.

JOE

What do we do now?

She smiles.

SUSAN

It will come to us.

INT. FOYER, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE (LATER) - DAY

Joe and Susan are at the front door, he has helped her on with her coat, she turns around, they kiss. The kiss lingers, Susan breaks away, reaches for the door, looks back longingly at Joe and then she is gone, Joe closing the door softly after her.

He turns back into the foyer, looks up, Parrish is on the balcony, it is clear he has observed Joe and Susan.

JOE

Hello, Bill.

Parrish, in a state of shock, doesn't answer for a moment.

JOE (cont'd)

Did you have a nice nap?

PARRISH

I couldn't sleep.

JOE

I'm sorry to hear that.

He starts up the stairs.

PARRISH

No, I'll come down

Joe waits guardedly at the bottom of the stairs as Parrish descends.

PARRISH (cont'd)

What's going on?

Joe senses Parrish's tone, doesn't answer.

PARRISH (cont'd)

I saw you kiss Susan.

JOE

Yes, I saw you see me.

PARRISH

Well, you're at the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong woman.

JOE

I'll be the judge of that.

PARRISH

I'm her father!

JOE

With all due respect, Bill, I'm not asking your permission.

PARRISH

Well, you goddam well should. You walk into my life, give me the worst news a guy can get, have me dancing on the heads of pins with my business and with my family, and now you're spooning with my daughter.

JOE

'Spoonning'?

PARRISH

Yes, and stop repeating everything I said, and turning it into a question. Spooning, fooling around, God knows what. You arrive on the scene -- why you picked me, I still don't understand --

JOE

I picked you for your verve, your excellence, and for your ability to - how shall I say - instruct. You've lived a first-rate life. And I find it eminently usable.

Parrish measures Joe.

PARRISH

What do you want?

Joe doesn't answer, riveted now on Parrish.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Everybody wants something, Joe. You've been taking me from pillar to post here. I thought I knew who you were, and it wasn't a whole lot of fun, however it was almost bearable. Now I'm getting something else from you, something very, very strange -- what is it that you want, Joe?

JOE

I'm only following the Parrish bywords. Looking for that 'ounce of excitement', that 'whisper of a

thrill' -- What there is no sense living your life without. You know what I mean, Bill.

Parrish's jaw sets.

PARRISH

You're violating the laws of the universe.

JOE

This universe?

PARRISH

Any universe that exists or ever existed. You may be the pro, Joe. But I know who you are. And you're all fucked up.

JOE

I don't like your tone, and I don't like your references.

PARRISH

And I don't give a shit.

JOE

May I remind you this is not just a dispute with a putative suitor, this is me. So watch it...Bill.

PARRISH

Cut the 'Bill' crap out -- you sonofabitch.

JOE

I told you, 'watch it'.

Silence. Now Joe turns on his heel, heads right out the front door. Parrish is left solitary, confounded, staring at the closed door.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM AREA, NEW YORK HOSPITAL - DAY

Joe walks down a hallway, a bouquet of flowers in hand, looks around the usual feverish activity, he seems lost for the moment, but a Receptionist catches his eye.

RECEPTIONIST

Can I help you?

JOE

Dr. Parrish.

RECEPTIONIST

She comes on at 6.

JOE

Oh.

He looks at the flowers, regards them for a moment, then heads for an elevator.

INT. EASTER'S ROOM, NEW YORK HOSPITAL - DAY

Easter is sitting up in bed, hooked up to an TV and monitors. She glances over at the doorway, Joe is standing there, observing her. An awkward silence, he looks at his flowers again, now sets them respectfully on Easter's bedstand.

EASTER

Mistah Bad News. 'Bout time you show up.

Joe speaks to her in the dialect.

JOE

Don' be facety, woman.

EASTER

None facety, mistah. You come for me? Dat's good news.

JOE

No, I come to see Doctor.

EASTER

Doctor? What could be wrong wit' you?

JOE

Nuthin'.

Silence, then Easter smiles.

EASTER

Oh, you come to see Doctor Lady?

JOE

Yes.

EASTER

My Doctor Lady?

JOE

Mine, too.

She thinks about this for the moment, Joe grows uncomfortable.

EASTER

You in love?

Joe seems slightly tormented by the question, Easter senses him trying to frame a respect.

JOE

Yah.

EASTER

You loved back?

JOE

I am.

EASTER

She knows you real self?

JOE

She knows how she feel.

EASTER

(scoffing)

Rass!

JOE

(irritably)

Don' need you okayin'.

EASTER

Schoolboy tings is you head.
Badness for you, badness for her,
badness for me, lyin' here tumor,
big as breadfruit, poison my inners
an' waiting.

JOE

Brung you flowers and all I gettin's
facety back.

EASTER

(stubbornly)

Only flowers I wan' see's one's
over my peaceful self restin' in
the dutty.

JOE

Can do no right by people. Come to
take, you wan' to stay, leave you
stay, you wan' to go. Rahtid!

Silence, Easter waits, watching Joe.

EASTER

You not in you right place, mistah.

Easter's response stops Joe cold, he looks away and then
back at her, she had clearly reached him.

EASTER (cont'd)

I ain' either. No more. You come
wi' me now. Take me.

JOE

But I not lonely here. Somebody
want me here.

Easter considers Joe, she smiles sympathetically.

EASTER

It nice it happen to you. It like
you came to Cat Island and you had
a holiday, sun didn't burn you red,
just brown, sleep no mosquito eat
you, rum no pounng you head nex' day.
But trut' is, dat bound to happen,
you stay long enough. So tak dat
nice picture home wi' you, but don'
be fooled. We lonely here mostly,
too. If we lucky, we got some nice
pictures.

Easter drifts into silence, her eyes and Joe's meet, a sense
they understand each other. Easter shifts, trying hard to
ease her discomfort.

JOE

(gently)

Got enough nice pictured, Easter.

She looks at him and nods gratefully and closes her eyes.
Joe watches her, now his eyes close. Easter exhales
raspingly, falls still. The monitors flatline. A beeping
alarm sound somewhere down the hall.

Joe opens his eyes, takes a deep breath, he seems troubled.

JOE (cont'd)
G'bye, sistah.

She slips out of the room.

INT. LIBRARY, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Parrish is playing solitaire. The SOUND of the front door closing, HEELS crossing the foyer, he looks up, at the foyer door is Susan.

PARRISH
Hello, honey.

He starts to get up, she motions to him to stay, looks around now.

SUSAN
Where's Joe?

PARRISH
Joe?

A silence.

PARRISH (cont'd)
Joe's not around.

SUSAN
Where is he?

PARRISH
I don't know.

Susan seems distracted.

PARRISH (cont'd)
Why are you looking for Joe?

SUSAN
Because I was sitting in a staff meeting, incredibly bored, my mind kept wandering and the only place it landed was -- Joe.

PARRISH
I don't understand.

SUSAN
Love. Passion. Obsession, all those things you told me to wait for. Well, they've arrived.

Parrish blinks, stares down at his cards.

PARRISH

This is crazy --

SUSAN

Why? A man appears at your side,
almost never leaves it, you clearly
trust him, depend on him, I sense
you value him deeply, why aren't
those things good enough for me?

PARRISH

You don't know anything about Joe --

SUSAN

What are you afraid of, Dad? That
I'll fall head over heels for Joe --
well, I have -- as you did with Mom.
(a moment)
That's always been standard,
whether you like or not.

Parrish tries to get hold of himself, changes gear now.

PARRISH

Susan, I don't think Joe is going to
be with us long.

SUSAN

Where's he going?

PARRISH

I don't know, I can't say --

SUSAN

C'mon! The guy's working with you.
You always know chapter and verse
about everyone who works --

PARRISH

In this case, I can't. I - uh -- I
just can't help you. I only would
tell you -- that with Joe, you are
on very, very dangerous ground.

Susan doesn't answer for a moment.

SUSAN

I love him.

PARRISH

I don't care if you love him! I'm
telling you he's no good for you!

A moment.

SUSAN

Of course not, Daddy. I'm sorry.

There is something in Susan's tone that lets him know not a
word has sunk in. Parrish slumps.

SUSAN (cont'd)

I love you, too.

She kisses Parrish, rearranges one of his ranks of cards,
shuffles through the deck, turns over the top card, lays
down a card Parrish needs.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Lightning does strike.

Parrish watches as Susan turns, disappears out the door.

EXT. THIRD AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY - TWILIGHT

Joe walking disconcertedly up the street, bumping shoulders
with the rush hour crowd, trapped in the life of the city,
he peers intently at faces, cars, into store windows. He
stops now at the window of a Korean grocery, something has
caught his eye, he steps inside.

Through the window, Joe can be seen making a purchase, he
hands the Korean Clerk some money, walks out.

Joe, back on the street now, unscrews the top of a jar of
peanut butter, dips a wad out with his fingers. The Korean
Clerk runs out after him.

CLERK

Change! Change!

Joe stops, uncomprehending. The Clerk hands Joe bills and
coins.

JOE

Why are you giving me money?

CLERK

Change.

JOE

I am who I am. I cannot change.

Joe tries to hand the money back, but the baffled Clerk refuses it.

CLERK

You change!

JOE

That's impossible. You're wasting your money. I couldn't change even if I wanted to.

The Clerk, exasperated, murmurs something in his language and returns to the store. Joe continues on down the street.

INT. LIBRARY, PARRISH TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Parrish is sitting in a wing chair staring at the fire. Joe appears in the doorway, Parrish doesn't notice him. Joe waits, finally Parrish looks up. They regard each other. Silence.

JOE

Uh --

PARRISH

Yes?

JOE

-- I have the feeling that, all in all, what I made this voyage for -- has served its purpose.

PARRISH

What are you saying, that it's time to go?

Joe doesn't respond, Parrish and Joe measure each other for the moment.

PARRISH (cont'd)

I'm ready.

JOE

You are?

PARRISH

Yeah.

JOE

Good. Tomorrow, after the party.

Parrish nods, Joe nods back.

CUT TO:

EXT. HELICOPTER POV, HUDSON VALLEY - AFTERNOON

A bird's eye view of the Hudson, over the George Washington Bridge, past the widest expanse of the river at the Tappan Zee, coming in now over the great lawns and old estates of the Upper Hudson Valley, down towards Annadale-on-Hudson and the Parrish country estate, which commands a beehive of activity, tents and workmen and vehicles.

EXT. PARRISH COUNTRY ESTATE - AFTERNOON

The Parrish AStar sets down in its roped-off landing area. The Butler runs towards it to open the door, Parrish and Joe disembark. Following the Butler, they make their way through the maelstrom: tents being raised, platforms for music groups, portable pools with clusters of florists leaning over the edge to arrange lily pads within. Parrish and Joe move solemnly, observing the activity, not speaking to one another. Although they are shoulder-to-shoulder, there is a distance between them. They walk on past chandeliers in the garden and fake trees with lights woven through their branches. Adding to the confusion, the AStar lifts off, the chandeliers rocking and floral pools rippling from the blast of the rotors. May, the housekeeper, appears.

MAY

(to Parrish)

Telephone call, sir. Mr. Sloane
from New York.

Parrish nods, starts up for a wing off the main house, Joe right at his side. Parrish stops.

PARRISH

Excuse me.

Joe, not knowing whether to be affronted or not, hesitates, and Parrish strides away. Joe does not follow.

INT. PARRISH'S STUDY, COUNTRY ESTATE - AFTERNOON

A low-slung but well-appointed room with a writing table, a working fireplace, expensive and appropriate Hudson Valley prints.

Parrish enters, clicks on the SPEAKERPHONE, observes the party activity through a wide, bow window.

PARRISH

Eddie?

SLOANE (O.S.)

(speakerphone)

Yeah - Bill - How are you? You okay?

PARRISH

Fine, fine. Big doing up here. Why are you still down here?

SLOANE (O.S.)

(speakerphone)

The Board's working through the weekend, trying up the loose ends this damn thing. But I want to give it one more try, I'm still holding out some hope.

PARRISH

Eddie, hold out all the hope you want but, I promise you, it's hopeless, it's over. Come on up, let's get drunk, if I had your shoulder to lean on I might actually enjoy this --

SLOANE (O.S.)

(speakerphone)

No, I'm going to stay down here, keep my finger in the dike and maybe by Monday, the waters could recede.

PARRISH

If you're trying to show me lay-down-in-front-of-the-bus loyalty, forget it.

SLOANE (O.S.)

(speakerphone)

Sorry, Bill, have a drink, eat your cake, blow out the candles and make a wish. Talk to you Monday. Okay?

PARRISH

Okay, Eddie -- anyway, thanks for the memory.

Parrish clicks off the SPEAKERPHONE, turns around and looks out the window again, the party preparations in full swing, colored lights are tested, they flicker on and off.

EXT. LAWNS, COUNTRY ESTATE - AFTERNOON

Allison is everywhere, Parrish emerges from his wing, she catches his eye immediately, the calm director of a DeMille-like epic, politely giving workers instructions, making lightning decisions.

Parrish turns his attention now to an ice-filled fountain encircling two giant topiary letters written in faux-Cyrillic, a 'B' and a 'P', as rubber-booted delivery men carefully arrange giant ice chests of caviar under each letter. A smile creases Parrish's face as, in an unexpected lull, Allison backs into him at the fountain.

ALLISON

Hi, Daddy, what do you think?

PARRISH

It's starting to grow on me. But what do the 'B' and 'P' mean?

ALLISON

The fountain is the Caspian Sea and the Sea is serving up caviar. The 'B's for Beluga, the 'P' for Petrossian. Of course, they also stand for 'Bill' and for 'Parrish'.

PARRISH

Do they, m'dear?

ALLISON

-- Plus we've got a baritone with a balalaika coming from The Russian Tea Room. I've dressed him in a Cossack shirt and he'll sing Nelson Eddy songs.

Parrish shakes his head.

PARRISH

You are amazing. Why, oh why, Allison, are you doing all this?

But before she can answer, a workman is tugging at Allison's sleeve, she turns away from Parrish to give him instructions out of Parrish's earshot, and then turns back, they step away now, daughter and father, alone.

ALLISON

I do it because I love you. Because

everybody I loved you. Mommy -- wher-
ever she is -- Susan, Quince, the
people who work for you, everybody
who's ever known you.

PARRISH

Yeah? And what about my enemies?

ALLISON

They respect you. Isn't that a kind
of love?

Unexpectedly, Allison brushes a lock away from Parrish's
forehead, with a flick she has rearranged his hair, he
blinks, a little embarrassed, but having liked it.

ALLISON (cont'd)

Above all, you've been a wonderful
father.

PARRISH

I haven't been the father to you
that --

ALLISON

That you've been to Susan?

PARRISH

I wasn't going to say --

ALLISON

But that's what you were thinking.
And that's okay. Because I know you
love me. Not like it is with Susan,
the way your eyes light up when she
comes in the room and the way she
always gets a laugh out of you, as
opposed to me when I walk in a room
and that look comes over your face,
"What does she want now?"

A weather-beaten military parade ground pennant passes, 24th
Infantry Regiment "C" (Charlie) Company.

ALLISON (cont'd)

I already feel I've had everything I
could have wanted for my birthday --

PARRISH

Hey, there's lots to come.
(gesturing to me
activity)

A little excess -- like you love.

The preparations are building to a climax, all the elaborate plans coming to fruition.

PARRISH

You know, darling, this is going to be a wonderful party.

ALLISON

(gently)
Yes, it is.

Allison wades into the maelstrom now, Parrish watches her go, swarms of purveyors and caterers following her.

EXT. WINE BAR, LAWNS, COUNTRY ESTATE - AFTERNOON

Ambrose, the head caterer, is making a last minute check of the bar's stock, Quince ambles up, in the background the activity has built to a pitch, waiters adjusting their uniforms, purveyors' trucks pulling out in a cloud of dust.

QUINCE

Give me a Seagrams and '7'.

Ambrose looks at him blankly.

QUINCE (cont'd)

No got? Okay a double V.O., water back.

AMBROSE

I'm afraid this is a wine bar, Mr. Quince.

QUINCE

Okay, give me a bottle of wine.

AMBROSE

Red or white?

QUINCE

Both.

Joe appears, looking bewildered, jostled by caterers setting up last-minute tables, a drummer from the band rolls his traps past on a little cart. Joe doesn't seem to know where he is, when his eyes alight on Quince, he heads for this oasis. Ambrose sets down two bottles of wine and departs.

QUINCE (cont'd)

(to Joe)
Red or white?

JOE
No, thank you.

Quince sips the red, now the white, now he pours some of each into one glass.

QUINCE
C'mon, have a drink. You look like you need one bad as me.

JOE
Do I? I'm a little confused.

QUINCE
Confused, huh? About what?

JOE
Love.

QUINCE
'Love'? Oh, man, I've got troubles of my own.

JOE
You love Allison, don't you?

QUINCE
Oh yes, I do.

JOE
How did you meet?

QUINCE
I was a world-class loser and she was a happy, little rich girl -- and for some reason she took me in.

JOE
But she loves you?

Quince smiles, nods embarrassedly.

JOE (cont'd)
How do you know?

QUINCE
Because there's nothing we don't know about each other and it's okay. I mean the deeper, darkest secrets

-- they don't matter.

JOE

'The deepest, darkest secrets --'?

QUINCE

Yeah, it's like you know every inch of each other's souls -- and then you're free.

JOE

What do you mean 'free'?

QUINCE

Free to love each other. Completely. Totally. No fear.

Quince seems uncharacteristically within himself.

QUINCE (cont'd)

All that hoopla up there reminds me how I will never measure up to a man like Bill Parrish - or his daughter.

He drains his wine.

QUINCE (cont'd)

Do you like me, Joe?

JOE

Oh yes, you are one of my favorites.

QUINCE

What would you say if you knew it was me who brought down Bill Parrish?

(a moment)

I told Drew and the Board that Bill depended on you. Drew led me on, but I had no business telling him in the first place. He was setting up Bill from day one. Drew and Bontecou are going to chop up the company and sell it off for parts. Bontecou was outside, Drew was Mr. Inside. And I was the fool who made it all happen. Oh God, what do I do?

Joe regards Quince.

JOE

Go to Bill Parrish and tell him

everything. He'll forgive you.

Quince drains one more glass of wine.

QUINCE

You think so? How do you know?

JOE

Because that's the kind of man Bill Parrish is.

A moment.

QUINCE

Well, maybe... I guess you know him better than anybody.

Another moment.

JOE

-- Getting to.

The orchestra behind them plays a few riffs, sound checks, getting close.

QUINCE

Do you think I should wait to tell him 'till after the party?

JOE

No.

Quince nods anxiously, then smiles gratefully. They look on as the pre-party activities swirl on around them.

EXT. FRONT ENTRANCE, COUNTRY ESTATE - SUNSET (LATER)

The moment just before sunset, the last pre-party minutes, a procession of guests' cars winding up to the guest house, being directed into adjacent fields. Susan cuts past a receiving line that files up the stairs, she skirts the house and heads straight for the action, the party on the lawns in the rear, climbs a terrace where she commands a view of the event on which the curtain is just about to rise.

EXT. LAWN, COUNTRY ESTATE - SUNSET

Guests milling, emerging from the crowd Susan sees, isolated by a fountain, Joe. He looks up towards her, he knows she has seen him, they proceed to a rendezvous that has not been prearranged but which they intuit. Susan slants through the guests, stopping here and there, excited greetings and cha-

tter float on the wind, "He, Susie!", "What a party", "You look great", she keeps moving, a shimmering wraith.

Joe is on the right coordinate to meet her, his graceful, unfailing step carrying him speedily to a destination he is not certain of, but where he knows he will find Susan.

EXT. GARDEN, COUNTRY ESTATE - SUNSET

The very last rays of the sun setting over the wide expanse of river, the light catching Susan and Joe as they enter the garden, the party forming behind them, the river flowing in front of them.

SUSAN

I like you in a black tie.

JOE

I love you in an evening gown.

SUSAN

It beats a surgical, doesn't it?

He smiles.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Daddy told me you might be leaving?

JOE

Yes. Your father and I, our time together has come to an end.

SUSAN

Where are you going?

Joe attempts to answer, but nothing comes out.

SUSAN (cont'd)

You won't tell me?

JOE

Well -- I --

SUSAN

And you can't tell me who you are.

Again the same indescribable gesture from Joe.

SUSAN (cont'd)

I'm in love with a man, I don't know who he is, where he's going or when.

JOE

I can tell you the when part. Tonight.

SUSAN

It gets worse.

JOE

No worse than it gets for me. I'm in love with a woman whom I don't want to leave.

SUSAN

Then don't.

A moment.

JOE

We know so little about each other --

SUSAN

We know all that we need to know --

JOE

But there's so much to tell you --

SUSAN

Don't. That will come later.

JOE

Will it?

SUSAN

Lightning struck. We caught it in a bottle. Don't let it out. I want to be with you, Joe --

Another moment.

JOE

What will we do?

SUSAN

'Love will find out the way'.

JOE

'Love will find out the way'?

SUSAN

It's a saying.

JOE

I believe that, don't you?

SUSAN

Yes, that's why I said it.

They are on the brink of some decision, Joe is about to make some declaration when Allison is heard --

ALLISON (O.S.)

There you are!

Allison appears.

ALLISON (cont'd)

What's going on here? Tete-a-tetes on my big night?

(to Susan)

C'mon honey, you're needed.

(to Joe)

Can it wait?

But before he can answer --

ALLISON (cont'd)

Glad to hear it!

(to Susan)

Let's go.

She takes Susan's arm and marches her off, Joe, in thrall, watches them go as the MUSIC erupts behind them, as 'up' dance tune, a lilting, catchy melody envelops them all. The curtain has risen on William Parrish's 65th birthday party.

INT. PARRISH'S STUDY, COUNTRY ESTATE - NIGHT

Quince is "on the carpet", sweating through a confession, Parrish moroses but philosophical at his desk.

QUINCE

...what can I say after I say that I'm sorry? I zipped when I should've zagged, I opened my big mouth one too many times, everything got all twisted --

PARRISH

It's okay, Quince. I understand. You've always meant well and I appreciate that. Sometimes things just turn out -- wrong.

A KNOCK on the door, it opens, Joe appears.

JOE

Excuse me --

He starts to step out.

QUINCE

Come in, Joe -- I want to thank you
-- okay, Bill?

PARRISH

Sure.

As Joe enters, Quince flashes a warm smile at him.

QUINCE

(to Parrish)

Joe knew the whole story. I told
him. It was his idea that I come
clean. I mean I wanted to come
clean but he gave me a pair of
balls, you know what I mean?

PARRISH

Yes, I believe I do.

Quince now drifts off.

QUICHE

Yeah, well -- I can tell you guys
got business --

PARRISH

No, I'm out of business, right,
Quince? However I do have some
unfinished business -- with Drew.
Get him out here. Get him on the
chopper and get him out here to-
night. I want to tell this guy
how I feel about him face-to-face.

QUINCE

Oh, that could be a tall order, B.P.
I doubt that Drew's anxious to see
you face-to-face.

Joe steps in.

JOE

(to Quince)

Tell Drew that Bill acknowledges
that this was a contest and he's

lost. The race is to the swift,
but could Drew summon a modicum
of understanding and allow Bill to
save face. Tell him Bill wants it
understood in the business community
he has merely moved upstairs in his
own company, and the executive
continuity is unbroken. Tonight's
the night to do it. He'll introduce
Drew to his press friends as well as
some of his close acquaintances from
Washington and Drew can tell them
that everything's sailing along just
fine.

Parrish is impressed by Joe's acumen, a look of grudging
admiration. He nods to Joe, summarizes:

PARRISH

(to Quince)

All in all, what Bill wants to do is
build the golden bridge to Drew with
no hard feelings.

QUINCE

You think Drew will go for it?

PARRISH

Quince, I've got confidence in you.

QUINCE

Sir, I'll deliver the package.

He heads out, Parrish and Joe fall silent.

PARRISH

Thanks.

JOE

Not at all.

A moment.

JOE (cont'd)

How are you doing?

PARRISH

What the hell do you care?

JOE

I was just asking, Bill.

PARRISH

You 'want to know', I'll tell you. You're looking at a man who tonight is not about to walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he's galloping into it. And the same time, the business he built with his own hands and his own head is being commandeered by a couple of cheap pirates. And, oh yes, I almost forgot, my daughter's fallen in love with Death.

Another moment.

JOE

-- And I'm in love with your daughter.

PARRISH

Say again?

JOE

I'm in love with your daughter, and I'm taking her with me tonight.

Parrish is stunned.

PARRISH

You're what?

JOE

I think you heard me, Bill.

PARRISH

You're not taking Susan anywhere. And what the hell does that mean anyway?

Joe doesn't answer for a moment.

PARRISH (cont'd)

I thought we had a deal.

JOE

I'm sorry, Bill --

PARRISH

Susan is my daughter, she has a wonderful life ahead of her and you're going to deprive her of it and you're telling me you're

sorry? Well, I'm sorry, apology not accepted.

JOE

I love her, Bill. She is all that I ever wanted, and I've never wanted for anything because I've never wanted anything before, if you can understand.

PARRISH

How perfect for you -- to take whatever you want because it pleases you. It's not love --

JOE

Then what is it?

PARRISH

Some aimless infatuation in which, for the moment, you feel like indulging. It's missing everything that matters.

JOE

Which is what?

PARRISH

Trust, responsibility, taking the weight, for your choices and feelings and spending the rest of your life living up to them. And above all, not hurting the object of your love.

JOE

So that's what love is?

PARRISH

Multiply it by infinity and take it to the death of forever and you will still have barely a glimpse of what I am talking about.

JOE

Those were my words, Bill.

PARRISH

Well, they're mine now.

Joe is silent for a moment, cogitating.

JOE

Susan wants to come. She says she's in love with me.

PARRISH

With you?! Who is 'you'? Did you tell her who you are?

JOE

No.

PARRISH

Does she know where she's going?

Joe doesn't answer.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Susan went, in whatever way she did, for that poor sonofabitch whose body you took, and everything else since has been aftermath. You say you love her but you don't know what love is. She 'loves' you but she doesn't know who you are. You make a deal, you're breaking it -- the bottom line is, Joe, you're conducting a Great Romance under false pretenses.

JOE

I don't like what you're saying.

PARRISH

I don't expect you to.

JOE

Are you threatening me?

PARRISH

I certainly hope so -- I loved Susan from the moment she was born, and I love her now, and every minute in between, and what I dream of is a man who will discover her and she will discover a man who will love her, who is worthy of her, who is of this world, of this time and has the grace and compassion and fortitude to walk beside her as she makes her way through this beautiful thing called life.

Parrish is beginning to reach Joe.

JOE

Are you telling me I can't be part of it?

A pause, Parrish's posture changes.

PARRISH

Why did you come in here and tell me, Joe? You are the Biggest Shot of all, you don't have to ask my permission, but that's what you're doing. You know why? Because you've somewhere, somehow, developed into a good guy, and you know this is all wrong... I don't know what you're going to do -- how can this be love? She doesn't know who you are. Why don't you tell her? Try it out on her? See what happens. Reveal everything there is to know about yourself and let the chips fall where they may.

Joe has received what Parrish has said.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Okay? -- I've given it my best shot. I wish I could tell you to sleep on it but...

Parrish lets his words drift into silence, he shrugs, Joe regards him.

EXT. LAWNS, COUNTRY ESTATE - NIGHT

Joe makes his way down the path from Parrish's study, a weight on his shoulders, his step measured, within himself until he is hit by the lights and laughter and MUSIC of the party. He drifts into the center and runs right into Susan, couples swirl about them, the eye of a storm of gaiety.

SUSAN

Hello, Joe. What'd you know?

She smiles.

SUSAN (cont'd)

There's something so indescribably sexy about you in a crowd. I could make love to you right here.

He hesitates, reaches out to take her hand, studies it.

SUSAN (cont'd)
If you're going to tell my future,
you're on the wrong side.

A moment.

JOE
There is something I do want to tell
you --

He stammers into silence.

SUSAN
But you can't.

Joe is about to respond but doesn't.

SUSAN (cont'd)
Just then -- when you hesitated --
the way you shift from foot-to-foot,
I've always found endearing but just
now -- I got a chill.

But he drifts again, now she takes his hand.

SUSAN (cont'd)
Remember that morning in the coffee
shop? You said 'What's wrong with
taking care of a woman, she takes
care of you --'

JOE
Did I say that?

SUSAN
And I said you'd have a hard time
finding a woman like that.

Joe shifts, she smiles at his embarrassment.

SUSAN (cont'd)
Well, you've found one, Joe.

JOE
The 'coffee shop' --

SUSAN
-- That was the place... and you were
the guy.

Joe seems resigned now, the air gone out of him.

SUSAN (cont'd)

And you said you didn't want me to
be your doctor because you didn't
want me to examine you --?

(a moment)

Well, I got to examine you after
all --

Joe blinks, at a loss.

SUSAN (cont'd)

I could come with you --

JOE

I - uh --

SUSAN

You want me to wait for you, you'll
be back --

Joe doesn't answer, Susan is suddenly anxious.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Why do I want this night to last
forever?

JOE

Don't you know, that's what I want
more than anything.

He touches her face.

SUSAN

You said before you couldn't tell me
who or where, only the 'when' -- Is
when now?

A moment.

JOE

May I kiss you?

She waits. He kisses her, they fall into a deep embrace.

SUSAN

That felt like a goodbye.

Joe's silence is heavy.

SUSAN (cont'd)

What's going on, Joe? I feel like
we're lifting off --

JOE

I'm still here.

SUSAN

But you're not. You're somewhere
else.

(a moment)

You're someone else --

Joe is struggling with a response, finally, inevitably, he drifts into a long silence. Susan is beside herself, her emotions tossed in every direction, Joe steadies her.

SUSAN

Tell me you love me -- tell me
you love me now --

JOE

I love you now, I'll love you
always --

SUSAN

Hold me --

He holds on tight to her. They are desperately entwined until finally she releases him.

JOE

Susan --

SUSAN

-- Yes?

JOE

Thank you for loving me.

She smiles wanly, Joe leaves her.

INT. PARRISH'S STUDY, COUNTRY ESTATE - NIGHT

Parrish is seated by the window, lights from the party flashing past, the MUSIC and laughter audible but muted, the fever of the celebration lost on him, within himself.

Joe enters, Parrish looks up.

JOE

...We should think about getting
started, Bill.

Parrish waits.

JOE (cont'd)
It'll just be us.

The tension in Parrish's body releases, he takes a breath.

PARRISH
Thank you.

Joe nods an acknowledgement, but his face reflects his pain. Parrish regards him sympathetically.

The silence is broken by a KNOCK on the door. Parrish, out of politeness to Joe, does not respond.

QUINCE (O.S.)
Bill --?

After a moment.

PARRISH
Come in.

Quince appears, flushed with excitement.

QUINCE
-- I got him. The chopper's two minutes away.

Parrish weighs the information for a moment.

PARRISH
(to Joe)
How are we on time?

Joe shrugs, nods gently.

JOE
Okay.

PARRISH
(to Quince)
Get him in here.

Quince exits, Parrish presses the button for the speaker-phone.

PARRISH (cont'd)
...May? -- I know you're busy, but I want you to put in a call to Eddie

Sloane for me --

MAY (O.S.)

At home, sir --?

PARRISH

No, he's at the office.

EXT. LAWNS, COUNTRY ESTATE - NIGHT

An area on the fringe of the party, the helicopter blades stop spinning. Quince hurries to the aircraft door, opens it and Drew steps out. Quince leads the way through the lights and MUSIC. Drew, fashioning an imperial entrance for himself, hails partygoers as he passes, Quince enjoying the irony.

DREW

This is damn big of Bill, I also think it's smart.

QUINCE

He had no choice. You're a formidable adversary.

DREW

He said that?

QUINCE

Well, you've got him by the short-hairs.

DREW

Yeah, the short, gray hairs.

He flashes a pleased-as-punch greeting to some unseen acquaintance as they press on to Parrish's study.

INT. PARRISH'S STUDY, COUNTRY ESTATE - NIGHT

Parrish is at his desk, Joe in a distant corner of the room.

SLOANE (O.S.)

(speakerphone)

We're all here, Bill --

PARRISH

I appreciate this, Eddie, members of the Board, this will just take a minute of your time. As the custodians of the company, you may receive information from what follows

that is valuable to you --
 (a moment)
-- or not. Either way, thanks.

SLOANE (O.S.)
 (speakerphone)
We're all ears.

Drew enters with Quince, Quince nods, excusing himself, and closes the door behind him.

DREW
Hi, Bill, happy birthday --

A moment.

DREW (cont'd)
I just wanted to say how appreciative I am of this - uh - grand gesture and --

PARRISH
Shut up and sit down.

Drew takes a seat.

PARRISH (cont'd)
You're a worthless sack of shit, you fucked me over, played footsie with John Bontecou, sold my company out to line your own pockets.

DREW
I don't know where you get that idea -- the Board agreed --

PARRISH
The Board didn't know you're a mole who burrowed inside so you could bury us all.

DREW
Is this Mr. Black's fantasy? Another one of his whoppers? Aren't you sick of this asshole lurking around? No one knows who he is, but one thing everyone does know, he somehow got your ear and has been pouring poison into it ever since.

Joe can no longer control himself.

JOE

You're the poison, Drew. You've operated behind-the-scenes to suborn the trust of a man who has stamped you with his imprimatur of class and elegance and stature. I've seen all kinds and degrees of deception in my time, but Bill Parrish has been on the receiving end of machinations so Machiavellian that it has rarely been my experience to encounter. And yet he has combatted them stoically, and selflessly, without revealing my identity. Had he violated the vow of secrecy he took, his task would have been far easier, he could have turned defeat into victory, but he is too honorable a man to have done that. And now I must release him from that vow. Because of me, he has lost his work, his company, his reputation -- and now he's going to tell you who I am.

Parrish is struck dumb. He looks at Joe pleadingly, shaking his head imperceptibly, but Joe nods to him blithely -- and then commandingly.

DREW

(to Parrish)

So tell me, tell me, I'm peeing in my pants.

JOE

-- And now you're going to pee some more.

PARRISH

Joe, don't do this --

JOE

It's time to put this person where he belongs.

PARRISH

It's not necessary, Joe. Drew's going to step aside --

DREW

I'm not stepping anywhere --

JOE

I appreciate your gentlemanliness,
Bill, but what we need to do here is
drive the dagger home --

DREW

The dagger --?

PARRISH

I told you to shut up.

JOE

(to Drew)

Prepare yourself, Drew - I am --

PARRISH

He is --

JOE

I'll take it from here --

(to Drew)

I am --

PARRISH

-- An IRS man.

Drew is stunned, Joe glances at Parrish, hesitates.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Yes, he is. He's an -- IRS man.

Aren't you, Joe?

Joe is at a loss, Parrish's eyes are glued to his, Joe gets
the hint.

JOE

Yes, I am.

(to Drew)

IRS man.

Drew's head swivels from Joe to Parrish and back again.

PARRISH

The Treasury Department asked
my cooperation in his undercover
investigation of John Bontecou.
They were convinced that Bontecou,
on past deals, had structured his
mergers and acquisitions in sus-
picious and complicated ways so as
to evade paying the taxes he is
liable for. The IRS wanted to go
after him, and this deal offered

them the opportunity.
(a moment)
I agreed to cooperate.

JOE

(to Parrish)
And we're very grateful.

PARRISH

Moreover, Agent Joe Black here --
of course that's not his real name
-- smelled out your involvement,
Drew. He developed evidence you
were working both sides of the
fence. Unfortunately, that's known
as a conflict of interest --

JOE

Undisclosed conflict of interest --

PARRISH

An offense --

JOE

An indictable offense.

Silence.

DREW

I think I'd like to talk to my
lawyer --

PARRISH

No lawyers, Drew. We're going to
offer you a deal.

Drew is all attention.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Confess to the Board every details of
your participation and then submit
your resignation.

DREW

And what do I get?

PARRISH

You get not to go to jail.

DREW

You're talking through your hat.
You're offering a deal because

you've got no proof.

PARRISH

Proof? We've got plenty of proof.

JOE

(to Drew)

And he's talking through his lips.

Joe steps forward.

JOE (cont'd)

Make no mistake, Drew, if you choose to test my resolve in this matter, you'll be looking at an outcome that will have a finality that is beyond your comprehension, and you'll not be counting the days or the months or the years, but millenniums in the house with no doors.

Drew slumps.

DREW

All right, you win. As soon as I get back to the city, I'll meet with the Board.

Sloane's voice erupts over the **SPEAKERPHONE**.

SLOANE (O.S.)

You're meeting with the Board right now, Drew. Resignation accepted. Moreover, I propose a motion to re-confirm William Parrish as Chairman of the Board of Parrish Communications as well as a rejection of the merger with Bontecou International. How say you, Board?

A chorus of thunderous "Yes"es resounds through the **SPEAKERPHONE**.

SLOANE (O.S., cont'd)

The motion is passed.

PARRISH

Well, thank you, that's great, but it's more than I bargained for. I just wanted to set the record straight.

SLOANE (O.S.)

But we want you back, Bill. Mean-
while, enjoy your party, celebrate,
we'll attend to the nasty details.
And Mr. Black, may we say thank you.

JOE

My pleasure. This is an IRS Agent's
dream. I'll be promoted to Chief of
Section off of this.

Parrish clicks the speakerphone off. Drew is staring at
Joe, shaking his head.

DREW

Who would've ever believed it? You,
an IRS Agent --

Silence. Joe shrugs, smiles.

JOE

'Death and Taxes'.

The door flies open, an anxious Allison appears.

ALLISON

Daddy! We've been looking all over
for you - this is your party - what
are you doing in here? Never mind.
You're on. Let's go.

She pulls him out of his chair, hustles him out of the room,
Joe right behind them.

EXT. LAWNS, COUNTRY ESTATE - NIGHT

The guests have formed themselves into a huge audience, the
orchestra strikes up "Happy Birthday" as Parrish appears
with Allison. An enormous cake is unveiled with one great,
lit candle, Parrish beams then laughs. He pauses over the
cake, now blows the candle out. APPLAUSE, cries of "Speech!
Speech!", Parrish tries to demur but the request becomes
loud and rhythmic, he holds up his hand, nods, quiets the
crowd. Joe observes from the fringe.

PARRISH

(to the guests)

I thought I was going to sneak away
tonight...

YELLS of "No!" "Never!"

PARRISH (cont'd)

...What a glorious night, every face I see is a memory. It may not be a perfectly perfect memory -- sometimes we had our ups and downs -- but we're all together, and you're mine for a night.

(a moment)

-- And I'm going to break precedent, and tell you my one-candle wish -- that you would have a life as lucky as mine, where you can wake up one morning and say "I don't want anything more."

(another moment)

Sixty-five years - don't they go by in a blink?

Parrish hesitates, waves and steps away, APPLAUSE that grows into CHEERS, the music resumes, another dance tune. Quince grabs him, pumps his hand and claps him on the back. Now Parrish spots Allison, he wraps her in a tight embrace, they hold each other close for a moment, but then are separated by a surge of guests. Parrish sees Susan, she smiles but there is a tinge of sadness about her. He heads towards her, they are somehow situated as if they were alone in this crowd.

SUSAN

What a night.

PARRISH

I'm having a helluva time.

A moment.

SUSAN

You were right about Joe, he is going somewhere --

PARRISH

(gently)

I'm sorry.

Susan is examining Parrish very closely.

SUSAN

Are you relieved?

PARRISH

Yes, but --

Parrish hesitates.

SUSAN

But what?

PARRISH

I want you to know how much I love you. That you've given a meaning to my life that I had no right to expect, and that no one can ever take from me.

SUSAN

Daddy --

PARRISH

No -- I love you so much and I want you to promise me something. I don't want you to ever worry about me. If anything should happen, I'm going to be fine and everything's going to be all right.

(a moment)

-- And I have no regrets.

Susan is in pain now, she can't summon an answer.

PARRISH (cont'd)

And I want you to feel that way, too.

SUSAN

I love you, Daddy --

PARRISH

That's why it's okay.

They drift into silence.

PARRISH (cont'd)

No regrets?

After a moment.

SUSAN

'No regrets'.

A long silence, Susan smiles.

PARRISH

It's a good feeling, isn't it?

Silence again.

SUSAN

Everybody's saying goodbye...

They regard each other, a long pause, they have reached an understanding.

PARRISH

I'm still here.

(a moment)

Would you like to dance with me,
Susan?

SUSAN

Oh, yes --

He starts to lead her to the floor, immediately stops.

PARRISH

If you don't mind dancing with an
old fogey like me.

SUSAN

Oh, Dad, you're not old. You'll
never be old.

He takes her in his arms and they dance away.

ANOTHER ANGLE

On a distant fringe of the party, a grass terrace that still commands a view of the dance floor, is Joe. His eyes are on Parrish and Susan, he watches them admiringly yet ruefully. A Waiter passes, catches sight of Joe, stops.

WAITER

Can I get you anything, sir?

Joe regards the Waiter for a moment.

JOE

Do you have any peanut butter?

The Waiter hesitates.

WAITER

I don't think so, sir.

JOE

Thank you, anyway.

The Waiter moves off. Joe's attention returns to Parrish and

Susan, the dance number ends, a BOOM.

ANOTHER ANGLE

On the dance floor.

PARRISH

What was that?

SUSAN

The fireworks are about to start.

Parrish looks up, sees Joe up on the terrace, waiting.

SUSAN (cont'd)

(to Parrish)

Shall we?

PARRISH

You go ahead, honey, I'm going to catch my breath.

Suddenly he hugs her, holds her very close. She looks at him, he smiles, nods, but doesn't release her until she smiles back. Now she heads out with the crowd for the fireworks. When Parrish senses she is on her way, he turns and heads up towards Joe.

Joe rises to meet Parrish as he approaches.

JOE

Happy Birthday, Bill.

PARRISH

Thank you.

They watch the guests gathering to view the fireworks. Joe's gaze lingers.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Did you say goodbye?

JOE

Not exactly.

PARRISH

I guess you have your reasons.

JOE

Yes.

Silence.

PARRISH

Now that we have a moment, would you mind if I expressed my gratitude for what you did for Susan?

Joe waits.

PARRISH (cont'd)

I never heard her speak of any man as she spoke of you -- It was always what I wanted for her -- but what happens to her now?

JOE

I wouldn't worry about it, Bill. These things have a way of working out.

Joe regards Parrish, waits until he has a sense that Parrish has accepted what Joe has said, then Joe continues:

JOE (cont'd)

And would you mind if I expressed my gratitude...?

Parrish waits.

JOE (cont'd)

For you. For the time you've given me. For the person you are.

A moment.

PARRISH

Don't blow smoke up my ass, you'll ruin my autopsy.

Joe barely manages a smile, now looks back longingly at the crowd below, searching.

PARRISH (cont'd)

It's hard to let go, isn't it?

JOE

Yes.

PARRISH

That's life. What can I tell you?

A silence, an understanding there is another more to say. Joe looks inquiringly at Parrish as if to say "Shall we?",

Parrish nods and Joe turns with him. They set off now away from the party, up a meadow that leads to a hill overlooking the river.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Down below, the party guests' faces are lit by the initial fireworks display. Among them is Susan, but her interest isn't there. Not something pulls her attention, an overpowering feeling that compels her to turn and see, at a distance, Parrish and Joe walking away up the meadow. Something about the sight saddens and at the same time frightens her, she turns back to the party, dazed, tracing on the fireworks.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Up the hill Parrish's step slows, Joe slowing with him.

PARRISH

I'm getting a little dizzy, I can
feel my heart pumping --

But Parrish doesn't wait for a response, just continues on up the meadow, towards the rise of the hill, Joe in step with him.

PARRISH (cont'd)

Should I be afraid?

Joe stops, Parrish stops with him.

JOE

Not a man like you.

Parrish smiles faintly, takes a deep breath, he strides out again, Joe right with him. In tandem they continue on and disappear over the crest of the hill. A barrage of fireworks lights up the sky.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Down below, Susan, in a pained reflex, again turns and looks up towards the hill. There is nobody there. She hesitates, now glides away from the party, her step quickens as she walks up towards the hill.

Susan halts, in the distance a figure is approaching from over the crest of the hill where Joe and Parrish disappeared. He is heading straight for her, she tries to make him out, seems to recognize him, starts to walk towards him as if pulled by a magnet. Now she stops again. It is a man, he

keeps coming, and now that he is close and recognizes him.

SUSAN

Joe...?

He smiles quizzically, hasn't quite heard her, stands right in front of her, loose, smiling, disoriented and yet so appealing. They are riveted on each other, uneasy and yet close.

SUSAN (cont'd)

You're here...

He is trying to get his bearings.

JOE

-- You bet.

Something about him makes Susan slightly tentative.

SUSAN

Where did you go?

Joe shrugs, scratches his head endearingly, uncertain of time and place.

JOE

I don't know -- y'know, I don't know
-- it's all blurred up and hazy. And
would y'know what I mean if I said I
don't think it's worth figuring out?

Some realization is dawning on Susan, it renders her lightheaded.

JOE (cont'd)

...But now I'm back.

Susan regards Joe intently, searching his face for an answer.

SUSAN

(gently)

That's it?

JOE

Well, I don't know what else to say.
It's a helluva party --

SUSAN

You think so?

JOE

Yeah...and you're the prettier thing here.

Susan blinks, a long silence, she touches the sleeve of his jacket, now her hand traces the outline of his face, she regards him intently and the dilemma she has been struggling with the last moments fades away.

Susan slowly realizes this is the Young Man. She is shaken, a sudden intake of breath.

YOUNG MAN

Hey, you all right?

His hand politely touches her elbow, courteously lending her support.

SUSAN

The coffee shop --

The Young Man nods, pleased with her recognition.

YOUNG MAN

I asked you if I said something wrong and you said it was so right it scared you.

Susan holds herself very still.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)

And forgive me for saying this -- but then you said -- and it's been with me ever since --

SUSAN

What has --?

He hesitates.

YOUNG MAN

You said you liked me.

SUSAN

No --

YOUNG MAN

Y'didn't?

A moment.

SUSAN

I said I liked you so much.

She falls silent now, overcome by the last moments' revelations. The Young Man senses her discomfort which is on the edge of pain.

YOUNG MAN

Hey, everything's going great --
don't y'think?

She doesn't answer for a moment.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)

Don't you feel that way?

SUSAN

...We know so little about each
other.

YOUNG MAN

But we've got time.

She searches the Young Man's eyes, his face is open, completely vulnerable, waiting for her response. A long silence, the words come out haltingly:

SUSAN

I wish you could've known my
father...

Another moment.

YOUNG MAN

Me, too.

Susan signs, the Young Man smiles gently, they are completely intent on each other.

SUSAN

...What do we do now?

A long silence.

YOUNG MAN

It will come to us.

Susan smiles, the fireworks finale goes off, the MUSIC comes up from below, the night fills with light. The Young Man searches Susan's face, now takes her hand -- and together they start back towards the party.

THE END

