

# THE SIGN OF JONAH

An Original Screenplay

by

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EXT. SKY - DAY

The sun glares white.

SUPER: c 760 B.C.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

The sparkling ocean surface is turbulent. Nothing can be seen but water. Nothing except...

If one looks carefully...

The back of a MONSTROUS FISH suddenly appears in the water's surface, its scales gleaming.

Just as suddenly, it disappears into the glare.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

The word of the LORD came to Jonah  
son of Amittai...

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT - LATER

Under the moonlight, the dark ocean swells rise and fall.

Once again, the Monstrous Fish emerges, cutting swiftly through the water.

MALE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"Go to the great city of Nineveh..."

EXT. OCEAN SHORE - DAWN

Large waves peak into white crests, CRASHING down on the shore.

Amidst the waves, a giant fin momentarily appears, its scales reflecting the dawn.

It is the Fish, big like a whale.

MALE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...and preach against it...

Spent, it tries to fight its way toward the shore, but caught up in the waves, it rolls to its side, its gills gasping.

A wave rises up, catches it, and thrusts it forward. The backwash knocks it back.

Like a rudderless ship, it is tossed about, until finally, eyes rolling, it is beached...

MALE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 ...because its wickedness has come  
 up before me."

EXT. BEACH - SUNRISE - CONTINUOUS

Gills heaving, the Monstrous Fish lays inert on the deserted beach, when suddenly, a great contraction seizes it.

Eyes bugging, it buckles, and its giant mouth wrenches open.

Another huge contraction, and a flood of half-digested food heaves out of its mouth.

Its jaws slowly close. It shudders, jerks in a last breath, its eyes fall shut, and its bulk sags limply on the sand.

An emaciated body of a 33-year-old man, JONAH from Ancient Times, lays face down in the murky vomit of shells, sea plants, and splintered bones.

Whitewash surges up and around him. Gagging, he jerks his face out of the muck, gets slowly to his feet. His tunic, robe, sandals, beard, and hair are drenched in grime, tangled in shreds of seaweed.

Amazed, Jonah turns round and round drinking in the sunlight, the sand, the sea, the huge fish, tears streaming down his bearded cheeks.

He stops. Eyes narrowing, looks off towards a sprawling city in the distance.

EXT. ANCIENT CITY - SUNRISE - CONTINUOUS - JONAH'S POV

An ancient city (much like King Herod's Caesarea: a metropolis of white marble buildings) gleams in the sunrise.

EXT. BEACH - SUNRISE - CONTINUOUS

Jaw clenched and body dripping muck, Jonah turns a glowering eye to --

A jogger of today, ROBYN BIXBY, 16, a youthful softness, long thick hair, piercing eyes, earbuds on, her fingers moving as if playing a piano score. Her gait is fast but her head is bowed down, her shoulders burdened. She does not see the monstrous dead fish or Jonah.

Neither do the other joggers:

MARI-ANN DOVE, early 40's, too thin, too tan, tight expensive jogging attire, earbuds on, hair in a ratty looking pony tail.

ANDY BLAIR, 40's, great condition, expensive loose jogging gear, unshaven, hair not combed, earbuds on, and...

... the smattering of other early WALKERS, SURFERS, BEACHCOMBERS, FAMILIES with small CHILDREN, and DOGS who start filling the beach, all oblivious to Jonah and the Fish.

Most distinctive of all is WENDELL ORMAN, 50's, tall, sallow cheeked, wide shoulders, bean-pole frame. Not a handsome man, but one who can be intensely attractive when he wants to be, Orman jogs barefoot in the whitewash. As he jogs closer to Jonah, he does not see him or the Fish either. In fact, he runs straight over and through them and on down the beach.

Jonah turns and looks at the city --

EXT. MODERN CITY - SUNRISE - CONTINUOUS - JONAH'S POV

In contrast to the ancient Caesaria-like city, now Jonah SEES a Modern Beach City like Santa Monica, its high-rises gleaming in the brilliance of the rising sun, cars zooming, a helicopter overhead.

EXT. BEACH - SUNRISE - CONTINUOUS - ON JONAH

... as he continues to zero in on the Modern City, angry eyes blazing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ELITE ENCLAVE, CABALLOS, CALIFORNIA - NIGHT

All is quiet in the gated sequestered multi-million dollar neighborhood, its ancient oaks silhouetted in the moonlight.

EXT. ORMAN'S ESTATE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Settled at the far end of the cobblestone road, rising up behind wrought iron gates, gardens, lawns, and a lighted pool, is a 1930's Spanish-style estate. Pristine lighting filters out of its open glass doors onto the verandas and balconies.

Two German Shepherds on the front lawn sit rigidly alert staring up at the wide veranda, drooling.

MARI-ANN (O.S.)  
They've been sitting like that for  
twenty minutes.

INT. PARKS' FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

One of the joggers from the beach, Mari-Ann Dove, composer and singer of rock ballads, still a huge star, looks through binoculars out her window at the dogs on Orman's lawn three houses up, a tattoo of monarch butterflies wrapped around her wrist like a bracelet.

MARI-ANN  
Drooling.  
(beat)  
Why can't he just feed them like  
normal people do?  
(beat)  
I said, why can't he...

She turns to her long time partner, movie star STEVE PARKS, late 40's, lying on the sofa fixated to the big screen TV hanging on the wall. Surrounding the big screen are Mari-Ann's platinum discs.

Mari-Ann looks toward the big screen, where the movie, "Under the Moonlight", vintage late eighties, is playing.

ON BIG SCREEN

EXT. HOTEL SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Beautiful tanned COURTNEY WELLS, 18, wearing a provocative bikini, reclines by the pool, a distinctive ruby ring on her middle finger. Playing the part of "ready-for-romance Geena," she looks up at a young Steve Parks, late 20's, playing the part of the wolf, "Wade."

"GEENA"  
But I don't love you, Wade.  
(beat)  
I want it to be real. Like Tracy  
and Hepburn in "African Queen."  
Scarlet and Gable. Astaire and  
Rogers.

"WADE"

Tracy wasn't in "African Queen."  
 (off her frown)  
 Bogie.

"GEENA"

Well then like Bogie!

"WADE"

All right.

Puzzled, she looks at him -- what's he up to? Taking her in his arms, he pulls her in close --

"WADE" (cont'd) (CONT'D)

I'll be Bogart, but only if you  
 play Bacall.

Captivated by the idea, she smiles sensuously, looking very much like Bacall. As the MUSIC CRESCENDOS romantically, "Wade", looking very much like Bogart, leans in and kisses her...

MARI-ANN (O.S.)

Talk about dumb and dumber.

INT. PARKS' FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Annoyed, Steve pauses the movie, FREEZE FRAMING on "Wade's" lips two inches away from "Geena's", sun rays shining through the gap.

STEVE

"Under the Moonlight" launched  
 Courtney's career, Mari-Ann.

MARI-ANN

You mean having sex with the camera  
 launched Courtney Wells' career,  
 Steve.

STEVE

Are you going to spend your whole  
 life looking out that window?

MARI-ANN

(putting the binoculars  
 back to her eyes)  
 Better than spending your whole  
 life watching that movie.

EXT. BIXBY'S VICTORIAN TWO-STORY - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Next door to Mari-Ann Dove's cottage, Bixby's manicured two story Victorian home is dark except for one window upstairs.

DEVIN STORY, 24, stands at the lighted window watching Mari-Ann at her window next door.

EXT. MARI-ANN'S COTTAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS - DEVIN'S POV

Environmentally landscaped and expensive, dotted with bronze and pottery toadstools.

Mari-Ann continues looking through her binoculars toward Orman's.

INT. ROBYN'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

As Devin, hunky fitness trainer and aspiring rock musician, looks at Mari-Ann, he eats pizza, crust spilling on the floor. Clearly he is far more interested in Mari-Ann Dove than his "girlfriend," 16-year-old Robyn Bixby, who we saw jogging on the beach in the opening sequence.

Robyn, youthful and soft, a regal powerhouse in the making, talks on her cell phone, her bedroom a mix of little girl and teenage years: rainbows and Barbies, posters of pop musicians next to Beethoven and Yundi posters... An expensive high quality keyboard... Shelves of music books, sheet music and classical awards: certificates, ribbons, and trophies.

Reading sheet music, Robyn talks on her cell, one hand holding her phone, the other "playing" the notes from the sheet music on her desk.

Next to the sheet music is a form for a musical competition, which reads "THE EMPEROR COMPETITION." The passage she "is playing," Beethoven's Piano Concerto #5, comes into the SOUND TRACK.

ROBYN  
(into phone)  
Because I don't want a tattoo.

DEVIN  
Did you know Mari-Ann Dove owns a  
whole island in the Caribbean?

Robyn doesn't hear.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

(smirks)

I wonder what she does on her very own island.

ROBYN

(into phone)

A stud in my tongue?! No way. Just a little gold ring in my nose. That will be perfect.

Devin pokes at her navel.

DEVIN

One here too.

ROBYN

(jerking away before he touches her)

I'm on the phone, Devin.

(into phone)

Of course, he's here. No, no, don't hang up. He can wait.

Devin shoots her an impatient glare. She casts him a pert tease, quickly swaps her phone to her other hand, resumes "playing" the music on her desk.

Devin yanks the phone away and hits the "end call" button.

ROBYN (CONT'D)

You're so rude.

DEVIN

You like it.

(jerking his head toward Mari-Ann's)

Have you talked to her?

ROBYN

(kittenish)

Maybe I have, maybe I haven't.

Grabbing her hand that is "playing" the music, he clenches her fingers, forcing them to stop moving. The MUSIC halts abruptly.

Tugging her to her bed piled high with pillows and stuffed animals, he tries to kiss her. She pulls away.

DEVIN

What's with you?



ROBYN  
 (pleading)  
 Devin, do we have to do it all the  
 time?

Devin looks at her as if she's crazy.

DEVIN  
 I'm the guy, Robyn. You're the  
 girl.

ROBYN  
 I just don't want to have to do it  
 all the time.

DEVIN  
 (grins)  
 That's what guys and girls do.

ROBYN  
 But my parents might get home  
 early.

DEVIN  
 You're such a baby.

Plopping down on the bed, he starts throwing her pillows and  
 stuffed animals to the floor.

DEVIN (CONT'D)  
 Rock a bye, baby...  
 (beckoning)  
 Sleepy time.

Reluctantly, Robyn steps toward him.

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

JULIA HORN, mid-30's, vulnerable and easily crushed, but with  
 a strong core waiting in reserve, stares out blankly.

From the hallway, Julia's husband, film director Andy Blair,  
 one of the joggers on the beach, glances in as he passes by.

A beat, and he reappears at the door, staring at her hand  
 hanging down limply, holding a smoky cigarette, a distinctive  
 engagement/wedding ring set in white gold and diamonds on her  
 ring finger.

ANDY  
 What are you doing?!

Waving off the smoke, he lunges for the french doors, throws them open, turns, coughs and glares at her.

Listlessly, she motions toward her computer. Truly concerned, Andy crosses back to her, scans the e-mail on the screen.

ANDY (CONT'D)

He just wants a rewrite, Julia.

JULIA

He says my characters aren't real.

ANDY

(treading lightly)

Well... maybe... he's got a point?

JULIA

(snaps)

How would you know?

Their eyes meet. Hers dangerous.

JULIA (CONT'D)

You never even read my last two books.

BARKING erupts into the SOUND TRACK. Eager to get off it, Andy moves to the french doors and looks out.

ANDY

Dinner time.

EXT. ORMAN'S ESTATE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Wendell Orman, (the most distinctive of the joggers on the beach), talking on the phone with no-nonsense authority, strides out onto his veranda from his den, two raw steak bones in his hand.

Never looking at the dogs while he talks, he raises his finger and the dogs immediately STOP BARKING. Next he moves his finger in a circle, and the dogs instantly fall to the ground, turn over, and play dead.

ANDY (O.S.)

Come on, Julia, you gotta see this.

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Heaving a sigh, Julia pulls herself off her chair.

JULIA

We see it every night, Andy.

ANDY

I know, but it's great. Orman just feeds his dogs and the whole neighborhood watches.

EXT. ORMAN'S ESTATE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Still on the phone, Orman motions again to the dogs. They immediately turn over and start crawling toward the veranda, bellies to the ground.

ANDY (O.S.)

Masterful.

Orman snaps his fingers, and the dogs bolt upright into a sitting position. He throws them each a bone.

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Andy flops down on the sofa.

ANDY

If I could've cast him as Napoleon, it would've been Oscar time all over again.

JULIA

Yes, well, he's not an actor and this is not a movie. Wendell Orman doesn't need to play-act being an emperor. He's already got it all, and I wish he never moved here!

ANDY

You've gotta admit, Julia, his parties have been great for us. Every time we go, I make another deal.

JULIA

(bitter)

Great for us. Right.

ANDY

What's wrong with you tonight? Oh, yeah, the e-mail.

(beat)

Just start over. Write something you know about. Like real people.

JULIA

Real people don't exist in murder mysteries, Andy, and you know it. Besides, "real" is boring.

ANDY

Write about our neighborhood.

JULIA

A murder mystery? Here?

ANDY

Sure.

Julia stops and thinks about it. Trusting Andy's instincts, she moves to the french doors and looks out at the neighborhood.

EXT. ELITE ENCLAVE, CABALLOS, CALIFORNIA - NIGHT - JULIA'S POV

The bright pleasant moon suddenly goes behind a cloud and the neighborhood darkens, making it look sinister and foreboding.

Across the cobbled road, Bernard Sweeney's spic-and-span bungalow looks spooky inside the ancient oaks.

The bronze and pottery toadstools around Mari-Ann's million dollar cottage look like they are laughing...

ANDY (V.O.)

What do you think?

JULIA (V.O.)

I think it's ridiculous.

The Bixby home as always is perfectly manicured, as if nothing could be sinister in Robyn's life.

JULIA (V.O.)

I can't kill off one of my neighbors.

ANDY (V.O.)

Sure you can.

At Orman's estate, rainbirds pop on, spraying the vast, lighted lawns. The dogs race to get out of the way.

ANDY (V.O.)

Come on, Jules, I can hear your wheels spinning.

Orman stands on the veranda, smoking, still on the phone.

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Pensive, Julia moves to her computer and stares defiantly at the e-mail. Andy creeps up behind her.

ANDY

Who's gonna get it?

Julia spins around, confident, excited, ready to work.

JULIA

Oh, no you don't Andy Blair! IF I write it, this time you're gonna have to read it to find out whodunit.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TESS' BEDROOM - DAY (NEBRASKA)

Simple furnishings, Western heartland motif. TESS TYNDALE, 34, a stunning cowgirl, stands alone in her bedroom, staring intently at oil paintings on her wall.

ON OIL PAINTINGS - STYLE: BOLD REALISM

Lazarus wrapped in grave clothes emerging from the tomb...

The dead man coming to life on Elisha's bones...

Jesus healing the lame man.

In the corner of each one, the distinctive signature: JUDD TYNDALE.

RUTH (O.S.)

Tess! Marc's waiting.

TESS

I know, mom.

Tess grabs her two travel bags off the bed, starts for the door, stops at her desk, and looks at the framed photo of her and Judd.

SUPER: FRAMED PHOTO

In the photo, a much younger Tess (18) sits on the lap of rugged, distinctively handsome JUDD TYNDALE, 25, her arm around his shoulder.

Both in cowboy attire, (Judd in a plaid, brightly colored snap-up shirt for later i.d.), they beam with happiness. Barely noticeable, Judd sits in a wheelchair. Painted on the frame, the names TESS and JUDD, with the symbol of a HEART in between.

Turning away from the photo, Tess braces herself and hurries out.

EXT. RUTH'S NEBRASKA RANCH, GRAVEL DRIVEWAY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Tess and her mother RUTH, 55, salt of the earth, come out the screen door of the ancient but tidy ranch home, Ruth straightening Tess' hair with maternal care.

Tess gives her mom a quick kiss on the cheek and strides down the porch steps onto the gravel drive.

Tess' dog SHADOW bounds up to greet her. Dropping her bags, Tess wraps her arms around Shadow. Big heartfelt goodbye.

Julia's CLICKETY-CLACKING of her computer keys comes into the SOUND TRACK.

JULIA (V.O.)

The thirty-six acres in the quiet nook of Caballos, California was originally owned by Haze Coogan, the famous radio and movie star of the twenties and thirties.

MARC EDMUND, 40, a forceful cowboy, grabs Tess' bags and throws them in the bed of the pickup. Tess and Ruth hug a warm goodbye.

JULIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Coogan built up the estate for Hollywood parties, where high-end deals were consummated with sex and a handshake...

Tess and Marc hop into the pickup, and the pickup takes off.

JULIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

... New stars were born...  
(beat)  
... the old destroyed.

Missing her already, Ruth and Shadow watch the pickup rumble down the road.

JULIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

These days, the parties went beyond the confines of Hollywood to international trend-setters wheeling and dealing using sex, a handshake, and more often than not, a threat.

EXT. NEBRASKA COUNTY ROAD - DAY

Marc Edmund's pickup speeds down the gravel road, Tess' bags jolting back and forth in the bed of the pickup.

JULIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Stardom bought and sold for a price.

INT. MARC'S PICKUP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Marc drives, tight lipped. Tense silence.

JULIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Other than that, it was a normal multi-million dollar neighborhood with normal multi-million dollar patterns and rhythms...

Julia's CLICKETY-CLACKING FADES OUT...

Tess, studying Marc's face, banged up across the cheek and nose, tries to break the ice.

TESS

Get in a fight?

MARC

(not humored)

Roundin' up strays and hit a branch.

Swerving off the road, Marc slams on the brakes, cuts the engine, turns, and stares at her.

MARC (CONT'D)

You didn't even give this guy a bid. Not one drawing and he's hired you?

TESS

He hasn't hired me, Marc. I need to see his place first. Then maybe I'll give him a bid.

MARC  
Is he married?

TESS  
What does that have to do with anything?

MARC  
A lot. And you know it.  
(beat)  
It took me a long time to get over you and Judd. I didn't understand it then, and I still don't.

TESS  
(been here before)  
I married him instead of you.  
What's to understand?

MARC  
That's the problem with you, Tess. Everything is so simple. You just do things. Like going to California to stay in some stranger's house.

TESS  
I am not staying in his house. I'm staying at a hotel.

MARC  
A five-star hotel and he arranged it!

TESS  
My gallery in California arranged it.

MARC  
He's paying for it.

Frustrated, Tess says nothing.

MARC (CONT'D)  
You won't even tell me his name.

TESS  
That's because...

MARC  
I know, I know. I Google everyone you work for, then tell you all the reasons you shouldn't work for them.



Tess nods.

MARC (CONT'D)

Do you know anything about this guy? Have you Googled him?

TESS

Marc, you know I don't do that Google stuff.

(beat)

Look, my gallery is very high on this guy. He doesn't just love art, he buys art. If he spots someone, the next step is worldwide recognition. I can't turn down an opportunity like that.

MARC

I thought you weren't interested in worldwide recognition.

TESS

I'm not. But I don't want to bury my talents either.

Silence.

MARC

Your mom said you won't be coming back.

TESS

She what?!

MARC

Okay. She said not to be surprised if you don't come back because you didn't buy a return ticket.

TESS

I didn't buy a return ticket because I don't know if I'll come back home in three days or three months.

Tess turns, looks out the window. Marc looks over at her, and although she's sitting in the passenger seat, she seems strangely far away.

EXT. BERNARD'S BACK PORCH - AFTERNOON

As the CLICKETY-CLACKING of Julia's keyboard resumes and continues through the following sequence, BERNARD SWEENEY, 70's, wiry and strong-willed, stares out at bad memories, pouring Bombay gin in a shot glass.

JULIA (V.O.)  
Bernard Sweeney, Vietnam vet,  
guzzled Bombay gin on Fridays.

INT. BIXBY'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Streamlined with all the newest appliances and granite counters, the Bixby kitchen is a picture of perfection, all the Bixby's dressed in Sunday clothes.

Pudgy GREG BIXBY, early 40's, watches sports on his tablet at the kitchen table. Cooking pancakes, SUE PALEY BIXBY, early 40's, attractive, wears a wine-and-grape montage apron over her tailored executive-style suit. Robyn, in a simple pretty dress, makes orange juice in the juicer.

JULIA (V.O.)  
On Sundays after church, the ever-normal Greg and Sue Paley Bixby ate pancakes with their daughter, Robyn, pianist extraordinaire.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Mari-Ann Dove jogs doggedly on the beach.

JULIA (V.O.)  
Mari-Ann Dove, has-been composer and singer, jogged five miles on the beach every morning...

EXT. BEACH - SUNSET

Andy Blair jogs briskly along the shoreline.

JULIA (V.O.)  
... while superstar director Andy Blair jogged every day at any time on or off location.

INT. PARKS' FAMILY ROOM - SUNSET

Steve Parks, wearing an LA Dodgers cap, feet up on the coffee table, watches baseball on the big screen.

JULIA (V.O.)

In the summer, mediocre actor Steve Parks drove to L.A. for Dodger dogs.

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - TWILIGHT

Sitting at her desk, Julia continues typing.

JULIA (V.O.)

And in the winter, murder mystery novelist Julia Horn went to Vegas for shows, shopping, and gambling.

The CLICKETY-CLACKING stops.

JULIA

(under her breath)  
I don't gamble.

Thrumming her fingers, she thinks it over. Then:

JULIA (CONT'D)

It's fiction, Julia.  
(beat, continues typing)  
Meanwhile, Wendell Orman never went out at all because the world came to him.  
(beat)  
It went on like this year after year...  
(beat, typing stops)  
Year after year...

Not knowing where to go from there, Julia rumples her hair.

Hearing Robyn's PIANO PLAYING next door, she steps over to the window and looks out.

EXT. BIXBY'S VICTORIAN TWO-STORY - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS - JULIA'S POV

Bright lights illuminate the Music Room. The piano is at the wall-to-wall bay window, Robyn playing a strong performance of Beethoven's "Emperor," TRILLING through the neighborhood.

EXT. COYOTE CANYON RUN ROAD - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS - JULIA'S POV

Julia notices Orman's Mercedes coming slowly up the cobblestone road.

TULLY, 30's, Orman's chauffeur and fierce-looking bodyguard, is driving. But instead of Orman in the backseat, Tess Tyndale peers out.

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Robyn's "Emperor" RATCHETING UP, Julia draws back. From the shadows, she stares out at Tess, curious to know who she might be. Now she remembers!

JULIA

(under her breath)

She must be the artist. Andy said something about an artist coming to do Orman's wall.

(igniting)

That's it! Someone outside the neighborhood! A fish out of water... Yes!

Dashing back to her desk, Robyn's "Emperor" PUMPING in the background, Julia types rapid fire.

JULIA (V.O.)

...It went on like this year after year like clockwork, unruffled and pristine, until the Artist...

EXT. ORMAN'S ESTATE - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Orman's gates open, the Mercedes SILENTLY moves through, the two German shepherds race toward it.

JULIA (V.O.)

...tall and beautiful...

The Mercedes winds its way toward the house passing the vast lawns...

JULIA (V.O.)

...arrived in Orman's black Mercedes.

...and Julia's CLICKITY-CLACKING stops.

EXT. ORMAN'S BALCONY - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Orman stands in the shadows on his second story balcony smoking a cigarette, watching the Mercedes approach. He slips back inside to avoid being seen.

INT. ORMAN'S BEDROOM - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Orman strides through his bedroom: masculine elegant wealth, large antique furniture, dark bizarre artwork, toward a huge walk-in closet.

INT. ORMAN'S CLOSET - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Stepping inside - expensive slacks, shirts, suits perfectly organized - Orman grabs his holstered gun hanging on a hook and his bulletproof vest.

INT. ORMAN'S BEDROOM - TWILIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Wearing his bulletproof vest over a T-shirt, Orman checks to see if the gun is loaded, his dry-skinned hands swift and adept. Satisfied, he pockets it, grabs a dress shirt and puts it on over his vest.

EXT. ORMAN'S POOL - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Tully switches on the lights one by one -- cabana, lawn, pool and adobe wall. Orman's two German shepherds bound toward Tess.

TULLY  
(yells to the dogs)  
Sit.

The dogs instantly sit midway between Tully and Tess.

TULLY (CONT'D)  
They're fine as long as you don't  
reach out to them or try to pet  
them.

Tess nods, her attention on the clean lines of the Roman-style pool, the hacienda-like bathhouse on one side and the adobe wall on the other.

The adobe wall, about eight feet high and ten feet in length with a wood panel set into it, is prepared for mosaic tiling. A beautiful and dramatic presentation for a mosaic, and for Tess, very tempting.

Even so, taking it all in, she grows pensive.

Approaching from the house, Orman motions Tully to move on. The dogs stay put.

ORMAN (O.S.)  
 (calling out, a warning  
 about the dogs)  
 They don't like strangers.

Tess looks at the dogs, jerks her head for them to come. They immediately obey and she pets them. They love her.

Orman strides up to her.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 (all charm, complete  
 control)  
 Well, I guess you're not a  
 stranger.

They both smile and pet the dogs. Orman extends his peeling hand.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 Wendell Orman.

TESS  
 (shaking hands)  
 Tess Tyndale.

ORMAN  
 (motioning to wall)  
 First impression.

TESS  
 Stunning location.

ORMAN  
 But?

She balks. He waits.

TESS  
 This is California, Mr. Orman.

ORMAN  
 Wendell.

TESS  
 Land of palm trees, Spanish  
 haciendas, and beaches. My work is  
 from my life.  
 (MORE)

TESS (CONT'D)

Little Britches Rodeo, Laundry  
Hanging Out to Dry, Longhorns on  
the Prairie...

ORMAN

I've seen your work. I know you can  
do this.

TESS

(amused)

I'm sorry, Mr. Orman, but it's hard  
for me to reconcile a cowboy  
spittin' tobacco under a California  
palm tree.

ORMAN

Wendell.

TESS

Wendell.

ORMAN

(smiles)

Let me tell you a story.

Motioning her to the nearby chairs, they sit, the dogs  
surrounding Tess.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

I was at a gallery in San Francisco  
looking at your work, and the  
gallery owner told me something  
unusual. She said the artist, Tess  
Tyndale, learned her artistry from  
a mouth painter I already knew  
about: Judd Tyndale. A rodeo star  
who was paralyzed forever when he  
was thrown off his four-wheeler at  
the age of sixteen.

TESS

(darkening)

He was rounding up strays.

ORMAN

The shop owner also told me, at the  
age of eighteen, you married him to  
love and care for till death do you  
part.

TESS

Death parted us last year.

Seeing the tenderness in her eyes, Orman rises.

ORMAN

Mrs. Tyndale, I have known many --  
many -- women. Not one of them  
 would have done what you did.

(glances at his watch)

It's late. We'll talk tomorrow.  
 Tully will take you to your hotel.  
 Good night.

Orman strides away, leaving Tess staring at him, petting the dogs.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

It's late at night, only a few DIE-HARDS working out to the harsh, visceral MUSIC BLASTING in the gym.

Devin, wearing a Trainer's shirt, works with an OLDER CUSTOMER, adjusting the weights on the machine, his eyes on Robyn across the room.

Robyn works hard on the elliptical, earbuds on.

Begging off from the Older Customer, Devin hurries to Robyn, pulls off her earbuds.

DEVIN

Did you talk to her?

Robyn keeps working out.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

Come on, Robyn. Did you --

Robyn nods.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

What did she say?

Without losing stride, Robyn nods again.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

She said yes? Mari-Ann Dove said yes?

ROBYN

She's looking for a bass player.

DEVIN

Did you tell her I'm the best?

ROBYN

I wasn't going to lie, Devin.



DEVIN  
What did you say?

ROBYN  
I asked her to give you an  
audition. She said okay.

DEVIN  
(seeing gold)  
When?

ROBYN  
Thursday afternoon, three o'clock.  
Her house.

DEVIN  
Her house? I knew you could do it,  
Robyn. You're fantastic.

On top of the world, Devin starts away. Robyn leaps off her  
machine and hurries after him.

ROBYN  
Devin?

Coming up alongside him, she grabs his arm.

ROBYN (CONT'D)  
I have to tell you something.

DEVIN  
Shoot.

Leaning in, she whispers her short message. He jerks away and  
stares at her.

DEVIN (CONT'D)  
(mouths)  
You're what?

ROBYN  
(mouths, hopeful)  
Pregnant.

Disgusted, he shakes his head.

DEVIN  
(firm and final)  
You are so stupid, Robyn. Really  
stupid.

Watching him stride away, Robyn goes white.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLINIC WAITING ROOM - MORNING

NURSE KELLY, 26, youthful coed perkiness, mismatched surgical shirt and pants, neck tattooed with a small black cat, HUMS while she straightens multi-ethnic women's beauty and career magazines in racks, along with two small "No Smoking" placards on tables.

Moving to the door, she flips a switch and SOFT AMORPHOUS MUSIC fills the room. Satisfied, she exits.

INT. ORMAN'S OFFICE - MORNING - SAME TIME

Copies of Munch's "The Scream" and "The Death of Marat" hang boldly on the wall... An antique clock TICKS brusquely... Ancient and expensive medical texts and instruments line the bookshelves and glass cases, a collection of cyclops toys sitting in a row on the top shelves.

Orman, alone with the door closed, talks on his cell while smoking a cigarette and removing his bulletproof vest.

ORMAN

Don't worry Nigel. No one is going to bring me down.

(beat, smirk)

Why? Because everyone loves me.

A soft TAPPING at the door. Hanging his bulletproof vest on a hook, Orman doesn't hear.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

(beat, laughing heartily)

You're damn right it's back-breaking work, and I'm not getting any younger.

A LOUDER RAP AT THE DOOR. Hearing it, Orman crosses to the door.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

Me? Quit? Are you out of your mind?  
I love it.

Opening the door, he is met by smiling Nurse Kelly handing him a medical chart.

KELLY

Patient's ready, doctor.

Kelly would love to stay longer, but Orman takes the chart and shuts the door on her. Scanning the medical chart, he listens on the phone.

ORMAN

Don't worry about the new legislation. Just stick to what you know. And get me that race track in Vienna.

EXT. HOTEL BEACH FRONT PATIO - MORNING

Surrounded by luxury, Tess in cowboy shirt, blue-jeans, and barefoot, sits at her hotel room's outdoor breakfast table eating breakfast, talking to her mother on a flip phone. A small, dog-eared Bible lays open beside her plate.

TESS

(into phone)

I don't know if it's right for me, mom. I told him I'm a fish out of water here, but he thinks I can do his wall anyway.

Her coffee cup empty, she rises, goes to the breakfast cart, and pours coffee.

TESS (CONT'D)

No, I won't leave yet. Not after he brought me out here. I'll stay a few more days. See if I come up with something.

Tess pours her coffee and considers taking another pastry from the breakfast cart laden with food.

TESS (CONT'D)

Sure, go ahead and tell him. You have a way with Marc.

(wry)

I'm sure he'll be thrilled to death.

A wind surges in, flipping the pages of her Bible...

TESS (CONT'D)

Thanks, mom.

(beat)

Love you too.

Flipping her phone shut, Tess returns to her table with a pastry and coffee, surprised to see her Bible is now open to a different page.

It is open to the book of JONAH.

BOY (O.S.)  
 (Mexican accent)  
 The LORD God told Jonas...

Startled, Tess looks up.

An 8-year-old barefoot Mexican BOY in worn loose tee-shirt and shorts, carrying a fishing pole and bucket of water with fish in it, stands at the edge of her patio.

BOY (CONT'D)  
 ...to go and preach against the  
 great, but wicked, city of Nineveh.

Curious, Tess stares at him, then at the Bible opened to Jonah, then back at him.

TESS  
 Where did you come from?

BOY  
 Jonas knew if Nineveh repented, the  
 LORD would save the city.

The Boy motions for her to come out onto the beach with him. Intrigued, Tess rises and steps toward him.

BOY (CONT'D)  
 But Jonas did not want God to save  
 Nineveh.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Tess and the Boy step toward the water. It's a breathtaking morning, huge waves crashing on the shore, a variety of JOGGERS, WALKERS and BEACHCOMBERS enjoying the morning.

The Boy continues telling the story of Jonah...

BOY  
 So Jonas ran away and boarded a  
 ship.

Suddenly, like the first scene, JONAH and the dead Fish beached on the shore materialize. The joggers etc. do not see them.

However, as if it's the most normal thing in the world to Tess and the boy, both Tess and the boy DO see them!

BOY (CONT'D)  
 A storm came up, and the men on the  
 ship threw Jonas overboard.

TESS

(pointing to the fish)  
But the LORD provided a great fish  
to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in  
the belly of the fish three days  
and three nights.

BOY

(nods)  
After that, Jonas preached  
repentance to Nineveh and Nineveh  
repented. So the LORD did not  
punish Nineveh.

Their eyes meet, the Boy smiles a wonderful smile.

TESS

(eagerly)  
Who are you? What's your name? Can  
you... stay and talk? Would you  
like something to eat?

BOY

I am a bit hungry.

TESS

Of course. Come in, have breakfast  
with me.

Together they walk back to her hotel patio.

EXT. HOTEL BEACH FRONT PATIO - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Tess beelines for the breakfast cart and starts loading up a  
plate, leaving the Boy waiting at the edge of the patio.

TESS

What would like? Strawberries?  
Muffins? Eggs?  
(indicating pitchers)  
There's orange juice, milk...  
Whatever you...

Tess turns to see how he is getting on, but he is not there.  
She looks around, moves to the edge of the patio, stares out  
at the beach, confounded.

The boy is gone, but Jonah and the Fish are are still there.

CUT TO:

INT. OPERATING ROOM - MORNING

NURSE DE WINTER, 40's, too thin, tight jaw, stands at the shiny stainless steel counter drinking down pills.

Orman, in perfectly pressed green surgical shirt and pants, enters, nodding curtly at her.

ORMAN

De Winter.

DE WINTER

Doctor.

They exchange looks -- they hate each other.

Nurse Kelly turns a dial on the wall, and the same soothing amorphous MUSIC from the waiting room wafts in. Her devoted eyes follow Orman, now pulling on plastic gloves.

Orman moves to the end of the operating table, never looking at the unseen face of his Patient draped and spread eagle with her legs in stirrups.

Businesslike, De Winter crosses to Orman's side, turns on the bright lamp and aims it between the Patient's legs.

Putting on his surgical mask, Orman sits on a stool at the end of the operating table. De Winter moves the ultrasound monitor into Orman's view, while Nurse Kelly draws the curtain, blocking the Patient's view.

The consummate professional, Orman assesses the sterile instrument tray critically, then reaches for the lubricated open-ended speculum -- a tube-shaped instrument inserted into the vagina to hold the vagina walls apart -- and moves it toward his Patient.

His hand moves O.S., and the Patient's hand, laying at her side, comes into view. Her distinctively painted fingernails - - pink with black bows and hearts -- drum the sheets nervously.

Nurse Kelly's hand pats the Patient's hand.

KELLY

It'll be over soon.

Kelly smiles at Orman, who stares blindly at her.

Reaching to the instrument tray, Orman picks up ring forceps, moves them to the Patient, looks through her draped legs, then at the ultrasound monitor, its sound is OFF.

The SOOTHING MUSIC is almost hypnotic, the Patient's painted fingernails grinding into her palms...

ORMAN (V.O.)  
Rupturing the membranes...

The Patient's hand JOLTS OPEN and TREMBLES.

ORMAN (V.O.)  
Bloody amniotic fluid streaming  
out.

INT. STEVE PARK'S DEN - DAY

Steve Parks, cell phone to his ear, hunkers down out of sight behind his computer chair, listening nervously to the RINGING on the other of the line.

While he waits, his eyes stay fixed on the wall poster nearby entitled: "UNDER THE MOONLIGHT" (the title of the movie he was watching earlier). It shows young Steve Parks permanently moving in for a kiss with young Courtney Wells, the sunlight shining through the two-inch gap between their lips.

Frustrated, Steve is about to hang up, when --

COURTNEY (O.S.)  
Hello?

Steve gulps, slightly frantic.

COURTNEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Hello?

STEVE  
Courtney?

COURTNEY  
Yes.

STEVE  
It's Steve.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY - SAME TIME

Orman works, and his unseen Patient MOANS.

Nurse Kelly pats the Patient's hand. This time it is a black hand with a silver bracelet on the wrist.

KELLY  
 (mesmerizing)  
 Slowly now... Breathe out  
 tension... Breathe in peace...  
 Slower... Breathe out tension...  
 Breathe in peace...

Kelly's mantra grates on De Winter's nerves, but Orman, lost in his craft, hears nothing. Picking up his Bierer forceps, he moves them to his Patient...

Just behind him in the b.g., a small hand-written sign taped over the sink comes into FOCUS. It reads: DO NOT OVERHEAT THE GARBAGE DISPOSAL!

ORMAN (V.O.)  
 Passing the internal os...

Under the sign, in a huge shiny stainless steel sink, the garbage disposal mouth is large and gaping...

ORMAN (V.O.)  
 Exploring the anterior wall with my  
 forceps' tip.

...gradually filling the screen...

ORMAN (V.O.)  
 Probing... Gently... Non-  
 aggressively...

... until the screen goes entirely BLACK.

ORMAN (V.O.)  
 Opening and closing my forceps.

The BLACK SCREEN now BLEEDS into the Ultrasound Monitor.

ON MONITOR

A TINY BABY BOY, his RACING HEARTBEAT EXPLODING INTO THE SOUND TRACK, frantically cringes into the contracting uterus wall as if trying to hide.

The contractions are too strong, pushing him down toward the cervix and toward the metal object (forceps) hunting for him.

His legs pump as if running, his arms flail as if swimming. Like a drowning man, he reaches out for help.

Orman's open forceps grabs the arm and bites down on the humerus bone. The little boy wrenches in agony.



ORMAN (V.O.)

Gotchya.

The metal forceps twist and the arm rips off.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Sweat beading on his brow, Orman's eyes narrow, as he continues working methodically.

Nurse Kelly, staring at the monitor and lost in the moment, pats the Patient's hand a bit too zealously.

Orman shoots a glare at De Winter. De Winter glares at Kelly, and Kelly calms down.

All eyes, except the Patient's, are glued to the live-action dismembering event on the ultrasound screen, a tic consuming Nurse De Winter's eyelid.

Orman slides the bloodied forceps out of the woman, a tiny arm clamped between the blades.

Opening the forceps over the stainless steel tray, he jerks them. The tiny arm splatters onto the pile of amniotic fluid in the tray.

Sterilizing the forceps, he inserts them again.

The Patient's hand clutches the sheet -- only this time the hand is white, a distinctive white gold engagement/wedding ring band on her finger -- much like Julia Horn's.

CUT TO:

EXT. ORMAN'S WALL AND SWIMMING POOL - DAY

In the background, two uniformed GARDENERS trim the hedges, while two MAIDS, also in uniform, clean the cabana.

Talking on her flip phone, Tess, a sketch in hand, paces in front of Orman's blank wall, the two German shepherds capering happily at her side.

TESS

No, I'm not telling you his name.

(beat)

It's none of my business what he does for a living, Marc.

Frustrated, she crumples up her sketch.

TESS (CONT'D)

No. No ideas yet.

(beat)

Of course. Why would I stay if I  
can't come up with anything?

Tossing the crumpled paper at the already half full trash can nearby, she misses. One of the dogs picks it up and drops it into the can.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - AFTERNOON - ON OPERATING ROOM CLOCK

It reads: 4:05

Orman is still operating. Nurse Kelly moves to the corner and, facing the wall, takes a candy bar from her pocket. Quietly peeling the wrapper back, she bites into it, shuddering with satisfaction.

Grabbing Kelly's arm, Nurse De Winter leans in close.

DE WINTER

(whispering frantically)

It's another girl.

Kelly shoots her a fierce "keep your voice down" glare.

DE WINTER (CONT'D)

Since yesterday. Thirteen girls.  
Only one boy. It's gotta be a sign.

KELLY

(hissing under her breath)

Stop calling them boys and girls.  
They're uterine contents.  
Specimens.

(yanking her arm away)

Take another pill.

Stashing her candy bar back in her pocket, Nurse Kelly returns to the Patient and pats her hand. Only this time, the Patient is wearing a ruby ring on her middle finger, similar to the one on Courtney Wells' hand.

Watching the ultrasound, Orman's forceps work inside the Patient, his other hand pressing on a sterile towel over the fundus (abdomen) where needed.

ORMAN (V.O.)

White cerebral fluid draining from  
the external os...

(beat)

Forty units of oxytocin.

Back to work, Nurse De Winter goes into action, manipulating the intravenous supply.

ORMAN

Our patient, Nurse Kelly?

KELLY

Just fine, doctor. Ready to get back to her life.

Pulling out his forceps, Orman studies the miniature, bloodied skull crushed between his blades.

Pleased by his success, he straightens up and stretches his stiff back.

With his gloved hands, he now reconstructs the miniature body, matching the severed lower right arm to the severed stump of the severed stump of the upper right arm, which is still attached to the legless torso.

Exhausted and impatient to go home, De Winter plops down on a stool, looks at the clock, and stretches her ankles.

Orman rummages through the bloody heap in the stainless steel basin. Finding the left leg, he places it at the stump of the left side of the torso.

Grasping the crushed head, he adds it at the top of the neck and stares down at the incomplete body still missing the right leg.

Swearing under his mask, Orman glowers at the ultrasound monitor, manipulating the zoom, searching the screen.

Wondering what's wrong, De Winter comes over, sees the incomplete body. Pissed, she moves closer to the monitor.

Meanwhile, Nurse Kelly, who has also seen the incomplete body, looks kindly down on the Patient.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Breathe in peace...

The unseen Patient raises her hand and motions "OK" -- a distinctive tattoo of monarch butterflies wrapped around her wrist like a bracelet, similar to MARI-ANN DOVE'S hand and wrist.

Sterilizing his forceps, Orman stretches his tight overworked shoulders and neck, re-inserts the forceps, his eyes and De Winter's eyes fixing to the monitor...

ULTRASOUND MONITOR

Orman's forceps creep slowly up into the uterus.

A GUNSHOT EXPLODES into the SOUND TRACK.

EXT. BACK PORCH, BERNARD'S BUNGALOW - AFTERNOON

Bernard Sweeney fires another SHOT into the air -- BOOM -- then pours Bombay gin into a shot glass and drinks. The CLICKETY-CLACKING of Julia Horn's computer keyboard returns.

JULIA (V.O.)

After the Vietnam War, Bernard Sweeney was Haze Coogan's mechanic, working on his eleven vintage vehicles. To reward Bernard for his above and beyond service to his country in Vietnam, Coogan gave him the gatekeeper's bungalow for life.

Hard-boiled STELLA MYERS, mid-60's, SLAMS out the back porch door YELLING at Bernard.

JULIA (V.O.)

For fifteen years, Bernard shared his good fortune with Stella Myers.

Stella stomps off the porch, gets into her shiny vintage Cadillac, slams the door, starts the engine...

JULIA (V.O.)

Every Friday afternoon, they had a screaming knock-down-drag-out lasting no longer than ten minutes, but for the neighborhood it seemed an eternity...

...and careers out the drive onto the cobblestone lane.

JULIA (V.O.)

... and then Stella took off for weekend.

Julia's CLICKETY-CLACKING stops.

Bernard, bottle in one hand, pistol in the other, stares out.

JULIA (O.S.)

(caroling)  
Hello? Bernard?

Julia comes cautiously around the back corner of the house. Bernard waves.

BERNARD

Julia! Love of my life!

JULIA

Bernard! Man of my dreams!

BERNARD

Have a drink.

(indicating the back door)

You know where the glasses are.

Ignoring the offer, Julia marches up to him and frowns like a disapproving parent, arms akimbo.

JULIA

I'm taking the pistol away.

Julia extends her hand, but Bernard ignores it.

BERNARD

I just finished your last book,  
Julia. Wasn't very good.

His words cut like a knife.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Your characters used to have, you  
know, heart... Intelligence too.  
Now they're, well, I hate to say  
this, Julia, but they're not much  
different than the cardboard  
characters in Andy's movies.

The ultimate insult, Julia pales.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Julia, you don't have to kiss ass  
like Andy. He does enough of that  
for all of us. Write your own  
characters!

(beat, penetrating)

Or is it something else?

JULIA

(a bit shrill)

I don't kiss ass, Bernard!

Bernard meets her eye. She deflects, opens her palm for the gun.

JULIA (CONT'D)

I don't want you accidentally  
killing anybody.

BERNARD

I've killed lots of "anybodies,"  
accidentally and on purpose. It's  
not hard.

JULIA

Vietnam doesn't count.

His jaw hardens.

JULIA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Bernard. Of course, it  
counts. But let's not add Stella to  
your list, okay?

BERNARD

Stella?

He shakes his head -- that'll never happen. But unable to  
resist Julia's good intentions, and warmed by her concern, he  
hands her the pistol.

Fighting back stinging tears, she expertly flips the chamber  
open, empties the bullets into her hand, and snaps the  
chamber back. Then holding the pistol in one hand and the  
bullets in the other, she turns on her heel and strides away.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

(calling after her)

Take good care of that.

Julia waves the pistol in the air. "I will."

After she's gone:

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Love of my life.

EXT. CABALLOS LANE - EVENING

Sun still glowing in the horizon, Orman's Mercedes moves  
slowly along the narrow, overgrown Caballos Lane, passing  
exclusive estates set deep behind gates and lawns.

INT. ORMAN'S MERCEDES - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Tully, the ultimate stone-faced bodyguard, drives. Orman, in  
the backseat, talks on the phone. End of the day, his sweater  
is off, revealing his bulletproof vest.

ORMAN

Tell her she is a liar. We always get consent. My patients WANT to donate their baby's organs. It makes them feel useful.

Spotting something up ahead, Orman looks closer.

EXT. CABALLOS LANE - EVENING - CONTINUOUS - ORMAN'S POV

Deep in thought, cowboy booted, blue-jeaned Tess Tyndale walks along the side of the road.

INT. ORMAN'S MERCEDES - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Orman pokes Tully, motions for him to pull over for Tess. Tully nods, driving on ahead of her.

ORMAN

Tell her thirty-five hundred per specimen IS reasonable, and if she threatens me or lies about me again, she'll regret it. Tell her exactly that. She'll regret it.

Quickly, shutting the phone off, Orman throws it down and hurriedly pulls his sweater on over his bulletproof vest.

Tully drives onto the shoulder ahead of Tess, coming to a stop. Straightening his hair, Orman opens the door and calls back to Tess.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

Hop in! I'll give you a lift.

Tess strides up, a friendly nod, but reticent.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

Something wrong?

TESS

Been thinking about your wall and coming up empty... again.

ORMAN

(all charm -- very attractive)

No problem.

(motioning her into the car)

I have an idea.

INT. ORMAN'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Sitting at the head of his elegant candlelit dinner table, Orman pours white wine for Tess. In dress shirt and sweater, he looks exceptionally handsome, his color vibrant, his eyes afire, his charm irresistible.

In her cowboy togs, Tess looks out of place.

A MANSERVANT, dressed for serving formal dinners, enters with two gilded dinner plates, a beautiful presentation of white asparagus, purple tomatoes, and oysters on a bed of exotic lettuces, proudly laying them before Tess and Orman.

ORMAN

Man emerging from the sea.

TESS

(staring at the weird  
food)

"Man," what?

ORMAN

Emerging from the sea.

Pushing her plate aside, Tess grabs a baquette. Seeing only a dribbling of olive oil next to the bread, she looks at the Manservant.

TESS

Excuse me, do you have any butter?

Noticing Tess has moved her dinner plate aside, Orman picks it up, hands it to the Manservant.

ORMAN

Bring our guest something edible.

(looks at Tess)

Steak, potatoes, beans?

Relieved, Tess nods.

The Manservant rolls his eyes and exits.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

(back to business)

That's my idea for the wall.

Humankind rising up out of the  
chaos of the waters.

TESS

(brow furrowing)

Out of the chaos of the waters...



ORMAN

Surely you can see it. Your mosaic tiles glittering in the sunrise: man, the broiling ocean, the turbulent sky.

TESS

I didn't learn it that way.

ORMAN

What way?

TESS

Out of the chaos of the waters.

ORMAN

But that's what I want.

TESS

I know that's what you want.

Impasse.

TESS (CONT'D)

Look, Mr. Orman... I mean Wendell... I don't belong here. I've known it from the start.

ORMAN

Tell me, Tess...

Orman lights a cigarette, leans back, eyes her.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

(meant to hurt)

Why did you marry a cripple?

It does hurt, but not the way he thinks. Guilty and ashamed, her breath catches.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

Of course, I offend you by calling him a cripple.

TESS

(face reddening)

Not really. I've said worse. Right to Judd's face. Before I knew him.

Surprised, he eyes her incredulously.

ORMAN

Then why did you marry him?

TESS  
I loved him.

ORMAN  
Too simple.

TESS  
But I did love him.

ORMAN  
Okay... Then how did you start  
loving him?

TESS  
I don't know.

ORMAN  
Yes, you do. No one starts loving  
someone just like that.

Tess considers it.

TESS  
All I know is I met him three days  
before my eighteenth birthday. I  
was at the rodeo and Marc Edmund --  
already in college and the  
handsomest rancher around -- asked  
me to dance. Before I could say  
yes, an older girl -- from junior  
college -- grabbed Marc's arm and  
pulled him away.

Orman watches quietly, unable take his burning eyes off her.  
Everything in him must possess and dominate her.

TESS (CONT'D)  
After Marc disappeared, Judd  
Tyndale wheeled my way. Actually,  
Judd was the handsomest guy in  
town. Brilliant too.  
(beat)  
Anyway, he stopped in front of me  
and said in his warm drawl, "Wanna  
dance?" I shot back, "With a  
wheelchair?" He just smiled, looked  
straight at me with his clear hazel  
eyes, and said, "You don't know  
anything, do you, Tess?" Four days  
later, we were married.

Orman burns with envy, hiding it behind his cigarette smoke,  
scratching his dry hands.

ORMAN

Did you dance with him?

TESS

After that I never danced with anyone else.

Orman crunches out his cigarette and bolts out of his chair.

ORMAN

Come with me.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Orman leads Tess down a dimly lit stone stairwell toward an underground corridor. It's a little creepy, but Tess is more curious than afraid.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Stepping down from the stairs, Orman leads Tess through a shadowy corridor. Passing a wine cellar, they come to a closed door. Unlocking it, he opens the door, flips on the light, and motions her in.

INT. RAMAH ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Tess enters and, staggered by what she sees, instantly stops, staring at the painting on the wall.

TESS

Ramah!

(beat)

You bought it?!

Boldly realistic, the painting depicts a scene at a Bethlehem well at the time of King Herod the Great, soldiers stabbing baby boys to death, mothers and fathers fighting back. As with the paintings in her bedroom, the clear, legible signature reads: JUDD TYNDALE.

Knowing he's made big impact, Orman's eyes flash with satisfaction.

TESS (CONT'D)

I told Judd no one would ever buy it.

(beat)

But he said he knew someone would.

ORMAN

Why not? It's history. Herod the Great trying to kill the King of the Jews.

Studying the painting with tender admiration, Tess shakes her head.

TESS

Judd never said anything about history.

ORMAN

What did he say?

TESS

He said whoever bought it would understand it.

Haughty amusement flashes in Orman's eyes.

ORMAN

He was right.

Tess eyes him, curiosity growing. In his element, Orman loves this.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

Each face has become a part of me, Tess. Each hand... Each pair of eyes... The terror.

(beat)

See how that soldier doesn't look at the mother's face?

Tess looks at Soldier #1's revolted face turned away from the resisting mother and the infant he's yanking out of her arms.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

That's because he doesn't want her face to haunt him.

TESS

(incredulous)

That's exactly what Judd said.

ORMAN

Yes, but Judd could not know her perfume would.

TESS

Her perfume?

Orman lights a cigarette.

ORMAN

That soldier probably started  
smoking just so he would never  
smell her perfume again. To blot  
out all their perfumes.

(beat)

You don't wear perfume, do you,  
Tess?

He said it so oddly, Tess eyes him, intrigued.

Knowing he's reeling her in, Orman smiles a mysterious smile,  
then steps up to Soldier #2 smashing his fist into a mother's  
face, a naked two-year-old boy screaming.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

This one is just doing his job. You  
know, serving king and country, or  
more likely the jingle of gold in  
his pockets.

Tess points to Soldier #3 on his knees, stabbing a baby boy  
to the ground, his face mangled with pleasure and torture.

TESS

(testing)

What about him?

ORMAN

Simple. It's a hard-on.

Shocked, Tess jerks her head to look at him.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

Come now, Tess. Didn't Judd Tyndale  
ever tell you about blood-lust?

TESS

Yes. He did.

Together they stare at the painting.

ORMAN

(waxing lyrical with his  
soul)

Perhaps... those men would quit if  
someone gave them a good reason.

TESS

Isn't the dead child in their hands  
a good reason?

ORMAN

(scoffs)

Death is not a reason, Tess.

(the patient professor)

Death is as ordinary as life. I'm talking about something bigger than death. A sign. Not an ordinary sign like a black cat crossing the road or lightning striking twice. Not even plagues or earthquakes or tornados.

(swept away by his own grandeur, he forgets she's there)

I'm talking about an extraordinary sign for an extraordinary man. Something beyond reason, beyond death. A proof!

TESS

A proof?

Her voice jolts him back and, realizing he may have gone too far, he goes silent.

TESS (CONT'D)

You're the first person I've met who really understands Judd's work.

ORMAN

Perhaps because, as a physician, I see more of life and death than most.

TESS

(pleasantly surprised, and very interested)

You're a doctor?

Their eyes meet. He steps up to her.

ORMAN

Stay. Do the wall.

Resolute, she shakes her head.

Then her eyes light on Judd's signature. For a long moment, she stares at it, her mind working.

TESS

What if... What if I did the wall the way Judd would do it?

Seeing he's almost got her hooked, he shrugs, indifferent.

ORMAN

Anything you want.

TESS

And what if you can't see it until it's finished? If you hate it, you don't pay me.

He's got her, and all charm, he nods. Extending his hand, she takes it, and they shake on it.

SUE (V.O.)

What is that?!

INT. BIXBY'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Robyn's mother, Sue Paley Bixby, stares at a gold nose ring in Robyn's nose.

SUE

Not in my house, you don't.

ROBYN

It's in my nose, mom.  
(looking at her dad)  
And it's not just your house.

Sue shoots a sharp glance at her nondescript husband, Greg. Eating pancakes and watching sports on his tablet, he's oblivious to what goes on between his wife and daughter.

SUE

(re: nose ring)  
Is that Devin's idea?

ROBYN

I have a mind of my own, mom.

Robyn slips the nose ring off. Seeing it's a clip-on surprises Sue. Sighing with relief, she turns back to pouring pancakes on the griddle.

ROBYN (CONT'D)

I chickened out at the last minute.

SUE

Good. Temporary is fine. Permanent, never.

Looking at her clip-on nose ring in one hand, her other hand goes to her abdomen, and Robyn clouds.

ROBYN  
Mom...

SUE  
Hm?

GREG  
(breaking in)  
When's Orman's party this year?

SUE  
How should I know?

GREG  
If it's during the playoffs, I'm  
not going.

SUE  
You say that every year. And every  
year you go.

GREG  
(chuckle)  
Got to. He's The Man. Big bucks,  
famous, darling of the super-rich.  
Besides, I can record the game.

Trying to control her rage, Sue turns back to her pancakes.  
Robin moves in close.

ROBYN  
What would you say temporary is?

SUE  
That's a silly question, Robyn.

ROBYN  
I know, but you said temporary is  
fine, permanent, never...

Sue looks at her daughter, and is about to craft an answer,  
when Gregg interrupts:

GREG  
Have you seen the artist that  
Orman's got working for him? I'm  
gonna dance with that.

Jaw grinding, Sue shoves the spatula into Robyn's hand and  
quickly strides out of the kitchen.

Stranded with the spatula, Robyn looks out the window toward  
Orman's.



EXT. ORMAN'S ESTATE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS - ROBYN'S POV

Orman's sprinklers are on, watering the vast lawns, his mansion looking as regal as ever.

GREG (O.S.)

How about some more pancakes?

INT. BIXBY'S KITCHEN - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Robyn slides the spatula under a pancake and slips it onto a plate.

ROBYN

Sure, dad.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ORMAN'S SWIMMING POOL AND WALL - MORNING

Tess, in loose work T-shirt and shorts, rummages through a bucket of blue mosaic tiles amidst buckets of tiles of different colors and shapes, tile nippers and cutters, caulk guns, mortars, scoops and trowels, rulers, straight-edge, putty knives, bags of sanded grout...

Orman's two German shepherds lay in the sun nearby, eagerly watching her every move.

The center of the wall is covered by a canvas sheet. Tess works on a side section of swirling blues and greens.

Tully, an imposing silent shadow nearby, hoses off the pool furniture by the cabana. Tess' swimsuit and towel dry on a chaise lounge.

Orman, striding in a royal gait, approaches from the house, talking low on his cell. Tess, working on the wall, doesn't see him, but Tully and the dogs do.

Orman motions for them to leave.

Reluctant to go, the dogs slink over to the side, turn and lie down, watching Tess from there.

Tully turns off the hose and disappears.

As Orman gets closer, he pockets his phone and calls to Tess.

ORMAN

Beautiful day. As always.

Tess quickly pulls the canvas over the rest of the wall, turns, and waves.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
(eyeing her swimsuit)  
Enjoying the pool?

TESS  
(nods)  
Mmm. I'll be sorry to leave it behind.

ORMAN  
You don't have to. Lots to do here. A matching mosaic dinner table over there... Then maybe something for the south wall of the cabana...

TESS  
(changing the topic)  
Don't you ever swim?

ORMAN  
Me? I'm a pile of bricks in the water.

Tess smiles.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
(curious, eyes sparkling)  
What?

TESS  
I would have thought anyone who believed 'man emerged from the sea' would be an excellent swimmer.

ORMAN  
Never learned.

Unruffled and in control, he looks at the canvas covering the wall.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
(re: wall)  
How's it going?

TESS  
You'll love it.  
(beat)  
Or have you already peeked?

ORMAN

(shakes his head)

I always keep my promises. It's good business.

TESS

I'll be finished soon. A couple weeks and it's all yours.

ORMAN

A couple weeks? We haven't even talked. I've been busy. You've been busy.

TESS

I've got to get home.

ORMAN

(good humored)

That rancher still calling? What's his name? Marc?

Tess nods.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

What does he know?

TESS

He knows ranching, that's for sure.

Another easy smile from Orman.

ORMAN

Tess, every year I throw a big party.

(firm, wooing)

I want you to come. It's a week from Saturday.

TESS

Thanks, Wendell, but no.

Seeing his overt disappointment, she tries to soften the rejection.

TESS (CONT'D)

I won't know anyone.

ORMAN

You know me. You'll be my special guest. Isn't that enough?

TESS

I don't have anything to wear.

ORMAN

(warm hearted,  
encouraging)

Sure you do. Every year it's a  
costume party. This year it's  
cowboys and cowgirls, two-step, and  
country music.

(smiles, shrugs)

Just what the doctor ordered.

It's impossible to turn him down, and pleased by his  
attention and charm, she really doesn't want to.

INT. CLINIC WAITING ROOM - DAY

The ever present AMORPHOUS SOOTHING MUSIC hovers over Robyn,  
sitting rigidly upright, an open magazine on her lap.

Three other women are in the room, each sitting a distance  
from the other.

35-year-old CANDACE, mixed ethnicity, sits stone-faced.

28-year-old White ATTORNEY works on her iPad.

18-year-old MARCI, black, pretty, flips aimlessly through a  
magazine.

Candace MOANS.

Marci and Robyn sneak a look at each other.

Sharp abdominal pain grips Candace. Tears roll down her  
cheeks.

Terrified, Marci and Robyn look back at their magazines.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLINIC WAITING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Candace and Attorney are gone, but the MUSIC still wafts  
through the room.

Turning a page of her magazine, Robyn darts a glance at  
Marci, pacing and cramping up.

Nurse Kelly looks in from the hall. Seeing Marci doubled  
over, she motions to her.

KELLY

Let's get you to the bathroom,  
honey.

Marci backs away. Nurse Kelly points firmly down the hallway. Marci looks to Robyn -- what should I do?

Not knowing what to do, Robyn encourages her to go.

Marci shuffles out the door, turns, and disappears. Robyn stares blankly ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY - SAME TIME

Spacious elegant suite. A small ray of sunlight streams in through a crack in the blackout curtains lighting up the dining table set for two, champagne chilling in melted ice, candles burned low, cloth napkins neatly in place...

Steve Parks, wearing expensive Hollywood casual, paces anxiously, checks his watch, tension tight. A look into the mirror, he adjusts his shirt, belt, hair. Another glance at his watch, at the dying candles, and a long sour look at the huge unused bed: pillows neatly placed.

Frustrated, he strides to the dining table, leans over to blow out the candles when...

A QUIET KNOCK at the door.

He stops. Hopeful, he listens.

Another KNOCK.

A quick check in the mirror, he hurries to the door, steadies himself, a deep breath. Slowly he opens the door and looks out.

Beautiful Courtney Wells, now late-30's, stands before him.

Steve, gaping in blessed wonder --

STEVE

You came.

COURTNEY

Yes.

She steps into the room. Steve closes the door, turns and wraps his arms around her.

Similar to the movie UNDER THE MOONLIGHT, the MUSIC CRESCENDOES, Courtney shivers with excitement, and closing her eyes, her body ignites.

Steve leans in for a kiss, the sunlight shining through the cracks of the blackout curtains lights the gap between their lips.

CUT TO:

INT. CLINIC WAITING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Alone under the SOOTHING MUSIC that does not soothe, Robyn stares out in silence, her hands frozen in a knot. Nurse Kelly enters.

KELLY  
Anything happening?

Robyn shakes her head.

KELLY (CONT'D)  
(sprightly)  
Don't worry. It will.

Kelly replaces the magazines neatly in their racks.

KELLY (CONT'D)  
You can go now.

Robyn stares at Nurse Kelly as if she's crazy.

Nurse Kelly, sprucing up the room, pays no attention, snapping off the MUSIC. The room goes dead silent.

Flipping off the lights, Kelly steps into the hallway, leaving Robyn sitting in the dark except for the hallway light filtering in.

KELLY (CONT'D)  
Come on, honey. We're closing.

ROBYN  
But I thought... Wasn't I going to stay here? Weren't you going to...

KELLY  
(cutting her off)  
It's after six. We all have our lives too, you know.  
(smiles)  
Don't worry.  
(MORE)

KELLY (CONT'D)

Everything will be fine. It's your  
body, your life. Take charge!

Obediently, Robyn rises, but cannot move.

ROBYN

Where do I go?

KELLY

Home, where else?

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - SUNSET

Five murder mystery novels -- best sellers by Julia Horn --  
stand in a row on the shelf in Julia's elegantly decorated  
home office.

JULIA (O.S.)

I don't know what's wrong with me.

Standing at her bar, Julia mixes two Manhattans.

JULIA (CONT'D)

When I first started writing murder  
mysteries, it was hard, but not  
like this. My novels have gotten  
worse, and now I don't even know  
who to kill.

Mari-Ann Dove, planted on the flowery sofa, sucks on her  
bourbon'd cherry from her empty Manhattan. Both Julia and  
Mari-Ann, luxuriating in their buzz, are grumpy, the  
Manhattans adding to their mood, both smoking. A fan blows  
their cigarette smoke toward the open french doors. The SOUND  
of a basketball game going on outside.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Do you think it's writer's block?

Their boozy eyes meet. Mari-Ann's are pointed and knowing as  
she considers telling Julia the truth. Instead, she deflects.

MARI-ANN

Why do you have to kill someone  
here in our neighborhood?

JULIA

Andy threw down the gauntlet, then  
Bernard drove in the spike.

Mari-Ann shrugs -- what do they know?

MARI-ANN

Whatever you do, don't kill me. My producer is already trying to kill my career. You know, making room for the young, the beautiful, and the stupid. So I don't need you bumping me off and ending my life completely.

Julia hands Mari-Ann her Manhattan.

MARI-ANN (CONT'D)

What are you going to wear?

JULIA

Huh?

MARI-ANN

I'm thinking of my Nashville outfit. You know, tight on the skin, lots of cowgirl bangles.

JULIA

What are you talking about?

MARI-ANN

Orman's party.

JULIA

(dread)

Oh...

Julia moves to the french doors and looks out at Orman's.

EXT. ORMAN'S ESTATE - SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

A huge party tent sits on one of the lawns, catering trucks line the side of the house, SERVERS and SECURITY GUARDS, all wearing cowboy attire, hustle about.

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

Julia's eyes harden.

JULIA

I hate his parties.



MARI-ANN

So do I, dear. All those  
billionaires, politicians, and  
bankers owning the world and  
everything in it. We have to go. So  
we might as well wear something.

JULIA

Why?

MARI-ANN

Why?!

Julia swings around, her drink splashing out.

JULIA

Why do we have to go?

MARI-ANN

Don't play dumb with me, Julia. You  
know that's how we stay on top.  
Without them, we're nothing. You  
spilled your drink.

JULIA

That's not what I mean. I'm talking  
about him. Why do we have to swig  
his whiskey and dance on his dance  
floor pretending nothing ever  
happened?

MARI-ANN

Because we either play ball or get  
kicked out of the game.

(beat)

Besides, nothing did happen.

JULIA

Nothing happened?! How can you say  
that, Mari-Ann?

MARI-ANN

(challenge)

Did you ever tell Andy you went to  
Orman?

Julia looks outside toward the basketball court.

EXT. ANDY'S BASKETBALL COURT - SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

Half a dozen men play a sweaty, spirited game of three-on-three. Among them are Greg Bixby, Steve Parks, and Andy Blair.

Andy pulls down a rebound, lets out a WHOOP.

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

Julia looks back at Mari-Ann.

MARI-ANN

Did you?

JULIA

No.

MARI-ANN

You see? Nothing happened.

(slugging down her drink)

I never told Steve either. Not the first or the second time.

Therefore, if Andy and Steve and all the other idiot males on the planet don't know, then nothing happened. Thus all is well throughout the land where men have nothing better to do than dribble their balls.

(beat)

However..

(smoking glamorously)

...when we girls venture onto Orman's estate for his parties, the storylines cross, because Orman does know. He knows everything.

(creepy)

Spinning his web around the world, hauling us all into his net.

JULIA

Mari-Ann, I do believe you're drunk.

MARI-ANN

I'm losing Steve.

(beat)

So I'm screwing a twenty-four-year old loser who tells me he loves me.

Julia moves to her computer, glowers at the blank screen. Watching her, Mari-Ann decides to take the bull by the horns -

-

MARI-ANN (CONT'D)

It's not called writer's block, Julia. It's called God's judgment.

Stunned, Julia swings around and stares at her long-time friend.

Mari-Ann sweeps up her phone and keys from the table and rises.

MARI-ANN (CONT'D)

But!

Stone sober now, she steps up to Julia -- face to face.

MARI-ANN (CONT'D)

Never tell anyone. Never breathe a word about God or his judgment, because if you do, they'll say you're on drugs or crazy, or both. Then, they will sloooowwwly end your career. Or, if you're lucky, take you out fast.

Mari-Ann pulls a pretend noose around her neck, tongue lolling.

JULIA

(low)

I didn't know you believed in God.

MARI-ANN

Julia, even the demons believe there is one God -- and shudder.

Eyes locked, a long moment of truth, SOUNDS OF THE BASKETBALL GAME in the b.g.

Mari-Ann sashays to the door, turns, and smiles.

MARI-ANN (CONT'D)

So put on your party hat, girl. Giddy-up, giddy-up.

CUT TO:

EXT. ORMAN'S ESTATE - EVENING

Orman's party is a thick gathering of smug elitist wealth, all ethnic groups, everyone dressed in cowboy attire. SHOW BIZ TYPES on the lawns, FOREIGN MINISTERS and POLITICIANS rubbing elbows at the outside bars, CEO'S eating at tables, while the YOUNG and BEAUTIFUL CHEER a GUEST riding the mechanical bull.

A live COUNTRY WESTERN BAND PLAYS opposite the dance floor.

Tully, dressed stiffly in cowboy clothes, leather fringed cowboy vest, and gun belt with bullets and gun, stands to the side watching everything with the eye of a sober special service agent.

COUPLES GLIDE along the two-stepping dance floor.

Tess, looking more natural than anyone in her Western snap-up shirt, blue jeans, and boots, sits alone at a small side table. Taking everything in, she's not impressed. In fact, she's bored, her Margarita and chips untouched.

Greg Bixby approaches her.

Orman, dressed in a stunning classic notch full-dress Western tuxedo with black cowboy hat, his eyes roaming the crowd, is in a quiet huddle with two BANKERS.

BANKER #1, 70's, has a British stately manner, smooth and condescending. BANKER #2, also British, twirls the fringe on his vest nervously.

ORMAN

(to Banker #1)

Twenty five million? Missing from my Cypress account? What do you mean missing?

BANKER #1

Not exactly, Dr. Orman. Just blocked.

ORMAN

Blocked?

BANKER #2

(clearing throat)

You know, the Executive Order on Human Rights Abuse.

BANKER #1

I wouldn't worry about it.

Tully approaches in the b.g.

ORMAN

I am not worried about it. But as for you two...

(with a smile)

I am worried about what you're going to say to your board of directors when I pull the plug.

Banker #1 glares back haughtily. Banker #2 titters nervously.

Tully leans in to Orman who stares blindly at the dance floor.

TULLY

(low)

Senator Lake wants to talk to you privately, says it's urgent.

Suddenly seeing Tess dancing with pudgy Greg Bixby, Orman frowns.

ORMAN

He can wait.

Forgetting about the bankers, Orman strides toward Tess and Greg.

ETIENNE LACROIX, 30's, French accent, full of zest and good cheer, intercepts him.

ETIENNE

Great party, Wendell. All the right people.

Orman, wanting to get to Tess, spots Andy Blair in a small group nearby.

ORMAN

And here's one of them.

Orman reaches out, grabs Andy, and pulls him over.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

(to Etienne)

You've heard of the new blockbuster, "The Emperor Napoleon?"

ETIENNE

(nods)

I've seen it. Magnifique.

ORMAN

Meet the director and producer, Andy Blair. Andy, Etienne LaCroix.

ETIENNE

(pumping Andy's hand)

Well done. Well done.

ORMAN

(agreeing)

Two hundred and fifty million at the box office.

Andy looks at Orman - who is this guy?

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 (leaning in, low)  
 Brussels money. Talk to him.

Smiling broadly, Andy returns Etienne's hand pumping enthusiasm, and head to head, they start parleying, moving off toward Julia.

Orman moves on, passes Sue Paley-Bixby, her angry eyes zeroed in on Greg dancing with Tess.

EXT. ORMAN'S DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Greg Bixby is a puffed up peacock dancing with Tess, who tries to act pleasantly interested.

GREG  
 Hate to toot my own horn, but...  
 I'm a great teacher. All the kids  
 love me.

Humoring him, Tess nods.

GREG (CONT'D)  
 Teaching's a noble profession  
 but... well if you must know... I'm  
 really a cowboy at heart. Are there  
 a lot of cowboys where you live?

A hand from out of nowhere falls onto Greg's shoulder,  
 startling him.

ORMAN (O.S.)  
 Stick to teaching, Greg.

Greg looks, sees it's Orman, and gulps.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 This is my dance.

Nodding, Greg hurries away.

Taking Tess in his arms, Orman dances an elegant two-step, looking very sharp on the dance floor.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 Enjoying the party?

TESS  
 It's different.

They glide past Mari-Ann Dove in her tight spangled Nashville outfit doing a Photo Op with a FAT UGLY MAN, TWEAKING HER BUTT, both laughing uproariously. Robyn's boyfriend, Devin Story, stands nearby eyeing Mari-Ann with sexy eyes, Mari-Ann flirting back.

ORMAN

Good different? Or bad different?

They dance past Bernard and Stella, both warmly lit.

TESS

Just different.

Andy escorts Julia onto the dance floor; Bernard watches her.

Orman tries to pull her in closer, but she keeps her distance.

TESS (CONT'D)

Are all these people your patients?

Caught off guard, he flinches.

Looking out at the women laughing, dancing and partying, including Julia Horn, Mari-Ann Dove, Sue Paley-Bixby, and Stella Myers, he realizes they probably are or have been his patients.

ORMAN

Of course, not.

TESS

Then how do you know them all?

ORMAN

I don't. Most are friends of friends.

Orman nods toward random guests, identifying them.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

He runs a hospital, but I don't know him. That guy is a junior Minister of Finance in Mexico. I don't know him either. He's here with her. I think she finances health care missions to third world countries.

TESS

Back home everyone knows everyone at every party, just as our great grandfathers did.

ORMAN

That's nice for the Heartland. But here I can have the whole world at my doorstep. And why not?

He locks eyes with hers, trying to overpower her. She keeps her eyes locked on his, not overpowered.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

(trying another angle)

I tell you what. I have a ranch up the coast. Next weekend I'll drive you there for a picnic. No people, no party. Just plain and simple.

TESS

I'm here to work on your wall, Wendell, not picnic.

ORMAN

You said the wall is almost finished, and besides you have to eat.

She balks.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

Okay, Tess, I admit it. My parties are different.

This lightens her up a bit. Capitalizing on it, he pulls her in close. This time, still a bit unsteady, she lets him. Dancing tightly together, both in perfect sync, he leans in.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

(wooing)

Just a picnic.

(beat)

Let me show you how charming I can be.

Warming to him, she nods -- okay.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ROBYN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Robyn lets out a BLOODCURDLING SCREAM.



EXT. COYOTE CANYON RUN ROAD - NIGHT - SAME TIME

MUSIC still going strong at Orman's party, two VALETS -- keys in their hands -- run down the road to different cars.

Bernard hurries past Sue who is on her way home, nods to her then catches up with Julia who is "feeling no pain."

BERNARD  
(wraps his arm around her)  
Julia! Love of my life!

JULIA  
Bernard! Man of my dreams!

Both tipsy, they laugh and almost stumble.

JULIA (CONT'D)  
Where's Stella?

BERNARD  
Still burning up the carpet. Andy?

JULIA  
(stops and faces him)  
Kissing some French guy's ass.

They laugh, stopping momentarily.

BERNARD  
How's my gun? Does it miss me?

JULIA  
It's not loaded. It's gonna miss everybody.

They start to laugh again as Sue passes by, when a MUFFLED BLOODCURDLING SCREAM cracks through the air, stopping the three of them in their tracks.

JULIA (CONT'D)  
What was that?!

BERNARD  
(to Sue)  
Sounds like your place.

SUE  
(gasps)  
Robyn.

Sue takes off running toward her house. Bernard and Julia race after her.

INT. BIXBY UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Sue tugs at a locked door handle to the bathroom, Robyn crying on the other side.

ROBYN (O.S.)  
Somebody! Help me!

Julia and Bernard come charging up the stairs to the landing.

SUE  
She's locked herself in.  
(pounding on the door)  
Robyn, it's mom! Open the door!

Hearing the SOUND OF THE DOOR UNLOCKING, the three brace themselves, all staring at the door handle turning. The door opens. They look inside.

Sue freezes. Julia gasps in horror. Bernard, stepping closer, wonders if he's seeing what he thinks he's seeing.

INT. ROBYN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Robyn, wild-eyed, choking for air, dressed only in an oversized T-shirt, blood smeared down her inner thighs, stares at the bloody mass of a tiny aborted baby in one hand, her other bloody hand yanking at her hair.

ROBYN  
It's got arms! And a head!

SUE  
(forced control)  
Stop it, Robyn.

ROBYN  
She said it was my body. But it's not my body. Look!

Robyn holds up the tiny bloody body so Sue can see.

SUE  
Stop it!

Sue SLAPS Robyn hard across the face. In shock, Robyn stares at her.

SUE (CONT'D)  
Flush it.

ROBYN  
Flush it?!

SUE  
I said, flush it!

Sue races from the bathroom, SLAMMING the door.

ROBYN (O.S.)  
(screaming)  
Mommy?!

INT. BIXBY UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Her back to the closed bathroom door, Sue gasps for breath.

ROBYN (O.S.)  
MOMMY?!!

Sue races away.

Stunned, Julia and Bernard stare at Sue lunging down the hallway. Bernard chases after her and grabs her arm.

BERNARD  
(ordering her back to  
Robyn in the bathroom)  
Sue!

SUE  
Get out!! This is my house and none  
of your business! Both of you! Out!

Yanking her arm free, Sue escapes into a dark bedroom and SLAMS THE DOOR.

Bernard looks at Julia scrambling down the stairs.

BERNARD  
Julia! Where are you going?!

JULIA  
She said it's none of our business.

BERNARD  
(looks toward the  
bathroom)  
Someone has to help her.

JULIA  
What do you want me to do, Bernard?  
Pat her hand? Tell her to breathe  
in peace?!

Julia races away.

Left alone, Bernard tries to get his bearings. Finally, he faces the closed bathroom door and KNOCKS.

BERNARD

It's Bernard, Robyn... I'm coming in.

Turning the knob, he quietly opens the door.

INT. ROBYN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Orman's PARTY MUSIC pounding in the b.g., Robyn, shaking from shock, holds the miniature body in her bloody hand.

Taking in the blood on the sink, mirror, toilet, Bernard removes a towel from the rack and modestly wraps it around Robyn's waist. The gesture brings tears to her eyes.

Opening a linen closet, he looks in and pulls out a white washcloth. Unfolding it and laying it flat on his palm, he motions to Robyn to place the tiny body on it.

Shaking her head, she backs away.

BERNARD

It's all right, Robyn. I'm not going to take him away from you.

Finally, she concedes, placing it in the washcloth.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

While you wash up, I'll clean up.

Confused, she stares at him.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Get some clothes on.

Blinking, she nods.

INT. ROBYN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER

The bathroom is clean. Robyn, shaking and wan, washed and dressed, allows Bernard to gently place the washcloth holding the tiny baby into her hand. Motioning for her to stay put, he turns on the sink faucet and fills the basin halfway.

BERNARD

Listen to me, Robyn. Do you have a favorite name?

Wide-eyed and in shock, she doesn't understand.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
 Looks like a boy to me.  
 (beat)  
 John? Robert? Max? Edward?

She stares at him as if he's crazy.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
 (explaining)  
 We need a name for his baptism.

Their eyes meet. Trembling all over, trapped in the grip of despair, yet clinging to hope, she trusts him.

ROBYN  
 (hesitant)  
 I like Max.

BERNARD  
 I believe Max means greatest in  
 excellence.

Again, tears well in her eyes.

Taking her hand holding the body on the wash cloth, he moves it to the sink. Then, cupping his hand with water, he drips the water over the miniscule child.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
 Max, greatest in excellence, I  
 baptize you in the Name of the  
 Father, the Son, and the Holy  
 Spirit. May your soul fly to our  
 Savior, Jesus Christ.  
 (beat)  
 And when we all rise on the Last  
 Day, Judgment Day, may our Father  
 in Heaven reunite you with your  
 mother.

Pale as death, Robyn watches Bernard take each corner of the wash cloth and place it over the body, wrapping it.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. BERNARD'S BACK YARD - NIGHT - ON WRAPPED BODY

Orman's party MUSIC going strong up the road, Robyn places the wrapped body into a freshly dug hole, a shovel laying nearby.

Bernard hunkers down next to her.

BERNARD

Do you have anything to say?

Scared, she shakes her head.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

If you don't say it now, Robyn,  
you'll regret it the rest of your  
life.

Robyn holds back. Bernard wraps his arm around her shoulder.  
She starts to crack...

ROBYN

I'm sorry, baby.  
(tears well)  
I didn't know. They didn't tell me.  
They just gave me the pill...

BERNARD

Who, Robyn? Who didn't tell you?

Immersed in torment, she doesn't answer.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Doctor Orman?

ROBYN

(nodding)  
He came in, looked at my chart, and  
left. Everyone said it would be all  
right. But it's not all right, is  
it?

GROANING SOBS EXPLODE out of her.

ROBYN (CONT'D)

Forgive me, Max. Forgive me.

Bernard shovels the soil back into the hole while Orman's  
raucous country western MUSIC hammers through his angry soul.

EXT. ELITE ENCLAVE, CABALLOS, CALIFORNIA - LATER

The neighborhood is dead silent.

EXT. BERNARD'S BACK YARD - NIGHT

Bernard sits alone on a chair beside the small grave, his  
head hung low.

Sue Paley-Bixby, in her pajamas and robe, comes around from the side yard. Bernard turns. Their eyes meet.

BERNARD

Robyn's inside with Stella.

Seeing the tiny gravesite, Sue stops cold, stares at it and, repulsed, turns her back on it. Pacing up and down, she's got something to say, but doesn't know where to begin.

SUE

(hard as nails)

I put Greg through college. When I needed him most, he wouldn't marry me. He said he had to get his credential and teaching job before he could start a family. I told him his family had already started. He threatened to leave me.

Sue lifts her eyes toward Orman's estate.

SUE (CONT'D)

So I did what I had to do, and when Greg got his credential and teaching job, we married and lived happily ever after.

(beat)

He doesn't even remember. As far as he's concerned, it was just another problem. Once the problem was solved, it was over. But I remember. Every Sunday, I remember.

(barely breathing)

I hate going to church. But I thought if I took Robyn...

(scoffs)

Now look what's happened to her.

(tears misting)

Everyone is always so happy. Singing and praying. Everyone except me because someday I'll have to face my first child. So I hate my first child.

(beat)

When I saw Robyn tonight, I hated her.

(beat)

Is she okay?

BERNARD

(nods)

We've had a doctor out to examine her.

Sue nods her thanks, then looks down at the grave.

SUE

Tell her I don't want to see her.

(beat)

Ever again.

Sue turns and strides away. Bernard looks up at Orman's dark estate.

EXT. ORMAN'S ESTATE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

In the gloom of night, the party over, the tent sagging, litter all over the lawns, the estate looks like a foreboding fortress.

ORMAN (V.O.)

The power of destruction lives in  
my forceps, searing my hand...

INT. ORMAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

In his sleep, Orman relives his work in a dream, sweating and restless.

ORMAN (V.O.)

Shooting up through my arm...  
choking my neck... throttling my  
groin, and for a brief moment, I am  
death.

Orman's RACING HEARTBEAT THUNDERS into the SOUND TRACK.  
Pouring sweat, he bolts upright, eyes wild.

INT. MARI-ANN DOVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - SAME TIME

A fine spray of perfume mists through the shadowy light,  
clinging to Mari-Ann's bare shoulder.

Dressed in a slinky negligee that doesn't show too much of  
her thin, aging frame, she observes herself in the mirror,  
tilting her head, pushing her hair off her neck and spraying  
her neck.

Through the MIST, she eyes Devin Story, shirt off, a scorpion  
tattoo on his chest, jeans on, standing in the doorway,  
squirting two shots of GHB from a 30 ml clear plastic squirt  
bottle into a glass of fruit juice, and stirring it.

Mari-Ann's eyes invite him over.



As Devin moves towards her, The DOOR BELL RINGS. They stop and listen. The DOOR BELL RINGS again.

DEVIN  
(worried)  
Steve?

MARI-ANN  
He wouldn't ring the doorbell.  
(beat)  
Probably some drunk from the party.

Mari-Ann beckons him over. He takes a step. The DOOR BELL RINGS again... and again.

MARI-ANN (CONT'D)  
Stay here.

Mari-Ann throws on her robe and storms out.

EXT. MARI-ANN'S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Mari-Ann opens the front door, loaded for bear. It's Julia.

JULIA  
Oh, thank God, you're here!

MARI-ANN  
I'm busy, Julia.

Mari-Ann starts to close the door, but Julia, still in her cowboy attire, shoves it open.

JULIA  
You'll never guess what happened.

MARI-ANN  
Whatever it was, I'm sure it made the earth move. Tell me tomorrow.

JULIA  
It was horrible.

MARI-ANN  
Go home.

JULIA  
Robyn Bixby...

Julia sees Devin Story approaching from the hall, stirring his GHB drink. Stopped cold, she stares at him as if at a nightmare.

MARI-ANN

I told you, Julia, I'm busy.

Julia backs away, turns, stumbles, and hurries into the darkness.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JULIA AND ANDY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Andy, sprawled out on the bed, is in a deep sleep, snoring. Julia sits next to him, her arms wrapped around her legs, staring at him.

JULIA

(whispering through  
clenched teeth)

You sleep through everything, don't  
you?

(louder)

Everything!

Andy bellows a SNORT, keeps sleeping.

Silent tears streaming down her cheeks, Julia's thoughts go back to the past, yearning for brighter days.

EXT. BIXBY'S FRONT YARD - DAY - JULIA'S FLASHBACK

Five years earlier, Andy pours two glasses of lemonade at an ice-cream parlor style lemonade stand on Bixby's front lawn.

Moving toward Julia, he passes Bernard, Stella, Mari-Ann Dove, and Sue Paley-Bixby seated on folding chairs.

All drinking lemonade, they listen to 12-year-old Robyn, performing CHOPIN'S OPUS 64, #2, in C sharp minor on her upright piano, staged on Bixby's front porch.

It is an idyllic day, sun hats on.. pleasant faces... even the birds fly in to listen...

Julia looks at Bernard. Bernard looks at Julia, both smiling with tender pride for talented Robyn.

BERNARD (V.O.)

Someone has to help her.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. JULIA AND ANDY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Bernard's V.O. jolts Julia out of her flashback. Shivering, she pulls her legs in closer.

BERNARD (V.O.)  
(barely audible)  
Someone has to help her.

EXT. BEACH - SUNRISE

A thick foggy mist, the beach isolated, except for a lone jogger Robyn Bixby, huffing and puffing. Holding back tears, her hand holds her gut as she stumbles through her jogging. Unable to go on, she crumples to the sand.

Staring out at the ocean, she bursts into wrenching sobs.

EXT. HOTEL BEACH FRONT PATIO - SUNRISE - CONTINUOUS

Seeing the young woman (Robyn) sobbing in the distance on the beach, Tess stops eating breakfast and watches her through the heavy mist.

Almost instantly, the 8-year-old barefoot Mexican Boy in worn loose tee-shirt and shorts, carrying a fishing pole and bucket of water with fish in it, stands at the edge of Tess' patio.

They exchange a silent greeting, then together watch the young woman, their hearts going out to her.

TESS  
She needs help.

BOY  
Yes.

Their eyes meet. The Boy nods -- he will take care of it -- then he trots out toward sobbing Robyn.

Tess watches the Boy hunker down and talk to Robyn, take her hand, and point to the ocean.

As Tess watches, the fog lifts so she, the Boy, and Robyn see the Monstrous Fish, dead and stranded on the beach, with Jonah standing before it, still covered with muck, tears dripping down his beard.

Robyn rises slowly -- in awe -- and steps tentatively over to Jonah. She stares at him. He opens his arms to her. She falls into his arms sobbing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BERNARD'S BACK YARD - DAY

Julia comes around the corner, and seeing Bernard and Robyn working together planting flowers around Max's miniature gravesite -- a small wooden cross at the head of the dirt mound -- she stops abruptly, and turns to make a quiet escape. Bernard spots her, hurries over and grabs her.

JULIA

(under her breath so Robyn  
cannot hear)

Let go of me, Bernard.

He meets her eyes.

JULIA (CONT'D)

I only came over to apologize for  
running off last night.

BERNARD

Don't run off this time, Julia. Pay  
your respects.

Looking at Robyn's back bent over the grave, Julia shakes her head.

JULIA

I can't. You don't understand. I  
can't.

BERNARD

You can and you will.

Pulling her toward the side flower garden, he picks three flowers, presses them into her hand and motions her to Robyn.

Determined to make this quick, Julia strides to the grave.

ROBYN

His name is Max.

Julia goes pale.

JULIA

You... named him?

Robyn looks up and meets Julia's eyes. Robyn's eyes draw Julia into the MOMENT and into her own buried pain.

ROBYN

(nods)

We baptized him too.

Thrown, Julia gasps. Then, staring at the small grave and unable to resist its mystery, she hunkers down beside Robyn.

Julia reaches out to put the flowers on the small grave. Her fingers touch the earth, and her breath is swept away.

Bernard crouches down and puts his arm around Julia.

Tears slide down her cheeks.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Tears slide down Nurse Kelly's cheeks as she lugs the stainless steel basin at the end of the operating table to the stainless steel counter -- the blood, placenta and body parts sloshing over the sides.

De Winter enters, reacts.

DE WINTER

Hey! Be careful!

Buckling with grief, the basin slips from Nurse Kelly's hands and THUDS onto the counter.

DE WINTER (CONT'D)

You better not be cracking up on me.

KELLY

He bought a ring. He's going to...  
(blubbering)  
... marry her.

De Winter stares at Kelly -- what's with her?

Tugging a candy bar from her pocket, Kelly struggles the wrapper open.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Why? Why?! What about me? I don't understand.

DE WINTER

What the hell are you talking about?

KELLY

(mouth full)

Doesn't he know I'm in love with him?

DE WINTER

In love with who?

KELLY

Wendell.

DE WINTER

(incredulous)

Doctor Orman?!

KELLY

He's marrying a woman who was married to a cripple. A cripple!

Nurse De Winter, knowing the score, laughs outright.

KELLY (CONT'D)

It's not funny. I've loved him since the day I came here for my first abortion. He empowered me. Together we've been saving the future of mankind...

Flabbergasted, Nurse De Winter stares at her.

DE WINTER

Is that what you think? You're saving the future of mankind?

KELLY

Why else would I love him? He's a legend in his own time. He has so much money he could quit, but he keeps on no matter what.

Kelly follows De Winter to a cabinet over the counter.

KELLY (CONT'D)

He's my inspiration. He knows I'd do anything for him.

De Winter pulls out a bottle of painkillers, pops two in her mouth, and swallows.

KELLY (CONT'D)

When staff members freak out and quit because they can't look at the dismembered bodies, I work overtime. Why? For him! When no one else wants to pack up the fresh hearts and kidneys for shipment, I do it. Why? For him! When there's a botched job and the uterine contents are born alive, who kills it? I do! Why? For him!

(dejected)

Now, after all I've done for him, he loves someone else.

DE WINTER

Orman doesn't love anyone.

KELLY

Of course he does. He's bought the ring. I saw it.

DE WINTER

Look, if he marries her, which is highly unlikely, it's because she was married to a cripple. In his world, he cannot have that.

KELLY

So why is he marrying her?

DE WINTER

(disdain for Orman)

To show her that a world without cripples, without deformities, and without Down Syndrome bodies and misshapen heads is a better place to live in. He's going to turn her inside out until all she wants is his Big Beautiful World of Perfect People.

KELLY

I never thought of it that way.  
(the "light" goes on)  
He's sacrificing himself by marrying her... so he can cure her.

DE WINTER

(scoffs)

Cure her?

KELLY

Yeah, that makes sense.

Clearly disgusted, De Winter pops two more pills.

KELLY (CONT'D)  
Want a candy bar?

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

As a crashing wave lays suspended on her screen saver, Julia stares out the window sipping a Manhattan, her desk drawer half open.

Andy breezes in, plops his overnight luggage on the sofa.

ANDY  
I know why Steve Parks wasn't at Orman's party.  
(noticing the Manhattan)  
Whiskey, vermouth, and a cherry for lunch?

She shrugs.

ANDY (CONT'D)  
He was with Courtney Wells. Says he's going to marry her. Can you believe it?  
(shaking his head)  
After all these years with Mari-Ann. I don't get it.  
(off her non-response)  
Last call for Vegas. Come and scout locations with me.

JULIA  
Can't. I'd be too grumpy. Writer's block.

ANDY  
I can unblock it better than that Manhattan.

JULIA  
Andy...  
(tentative)  
Do you believe in God?

Although caught by surprise, Andy has an immediate response.

ANDY  
The fool says in his heart there is no God, Julia. And I, Andy Blair, am no fool.  
(rattling it off)  
(MORE)



ANDY (CONT'D)

'For God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.'

JULIA

(flabbergasted)

I never knew you believed in God.

ANDY

Julia, we got married in a church.

JULIA

Tell me seriously. Do you think I have writer's block or do you think it's something more... like God's --

ANDY

(interrupting)

Whatever it is, you're beautiful.

Julia huffs.

ANDY (CONT'D)

All right. If you really want to know, I'll tell you what I think.

(serious and wooing)

I think it's time for the pitter-patter of little feet.

Last thing she wants to hear, her jaw tightens.

Very much in love with his wife, Andy leans over, and as he kisses the top of her head, his eyes drop to her open desk drawer.

INSERT: JULIA'S DESK DRAWER

Bernard's pistol and bullets lay in a hodgepodge of pens, post-its, and cigarette packages.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Do you know there's a gun in your drawer?

(beat)

You're not going hunting with Uncle Jack again, are you?

JULIA

With a pistol?

(off his shrug)

It's Bernard's.

ANDY  
Why do you have Bernard's...

JULIA  
(cutting him off)  
I didn't want him shooting Stella  
and ending up in jail. So I took it  
away from him.

Andy laughs.

ANDY  
Bernard drinks, but he's not  
stupid, Julia.  
(looking at his watch)  
Gotta go.  
(whisking his luggage off  
the sofa)  
See you in a couple days.  
(calling back)  
Maybe then we can try again for  
some pitter-patter!

Stiffening, Julia listens to his FOOTSTEPS on the tiles.

EXT. BIXBY MUSIC ROOM - DAY - LATER

The front windows are open. Robyn plays the piano: EMPEROR  
CONCERTO, PART 2, ADAGIO.

INT. BIXBY MUSIC ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Robyn drives her fingers across the keyboard, playing the  
Adagio, plaintive, melodic, and beautiful...

The door opens and Sue peers in. Haltingly, she enters.

Sue and Robyn's eyes meet for a long frightening moment.

Suddenly, Sue rushes to Robyn. Robyn, bolting off the piano  
bench, lunges to Sue. They hug and weep in each other's arms -  
- reconciliation.

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Alone and smoking a cigarette, Julia pours a Manhattan and  
makes a toast.

JULIA

To Little Robyn Bixby. Welcome to  
the world of women and women's  
secrets: nothing ever happened.

Gulping down the entire Manhattan, she slams the glass onto  
the counter.

JULIA (CONT'D)

(jabbing out her  
cigarette)

Bullshit! Something did happen!

Picking up Bernard's pistol from her open desk drawer, she  
assesses it. It's got a good feel. She picks up the bullets.

JULIA (CONT'D)

(sing-song,  
loading a bullet)

Breathe out tension...

(loading another bullet)

Breathe in peace...

(loading bullet)

Breathe out tension...

(loading bullet)

Breathe in peace...

INT. ORMAN'S MARBLE STAIRWAY - DAY

Dressed in sports jacket and slacks, Orman bounds down his  
long elegant stairway tossing a BLACK RING BOX in the air and  
catching it, never noticing the MAID in uniform on hands and  
knees scrubbing his marble stairs.

EXT. ORMAN'S WALL AT SWIMMING POOL - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Searching for Tess, Orman strides across the pool deck,  
around the canvas-covered wall, past the buckets of tiles,  
into the cabana bar. Nothing. As he looks out toward the  
small woodlands beyond the pool --

TULLY (O.S.)

She's at the tennis court.

Startled, Orman swings around. Tully strides over.

TULLY (CONT'D)

Talking on the phone to her  
rancher.

Orman stiffens.

TESS (O.S.)  
 (calling)  
 Hello!

Turning, they see Tess in the distance coming toward them, a cotton pool dress over her swimsuit, a towel thrown over her shoulder, the two German Shepherds striding happily alongside.

ORMAN  
 (annoyed, an order to  
 Tully, low)  
 Get back to the house. And get  
 those damn dogs out of here.

Tully WHISTLES to the dogs.

Reluctantly, they come, and Tully and the dogs strike out over the lawn toward the other side of the house.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 (calling to Tess)  
 Before you swim...

He waits until she's closer, then tosses the BLACK RING BOX to her.

With expertise, she catches it with one hand.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 Open it.

Striding up to him, she opens the box. Inside, a huge pricey diamond ring.

Tess immediately recoils.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 (laughing, playfully)  
 I thought the same thing.

Seeing he's in good humor, she flips the lid closed and hands it back to him.

Reaching into his pocket, he pulls out a small leather snap pouch and hands it to her.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 This is the one.

Tess opens it and pulls out a silver ring adorned with one simple amethyst.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

A friendship ring. If you take it,  
you have to be my friend. Which  
means you'll cut me some slack and  
have dinner with me tonight.

He's so pleasant, she laughs.

TESS

I don't need a ring to be your  
friend, Wendell. And, yes, I will  
have dinner with you tonight.

Nodding, he motions toward the pool.

ORMAN

Time for your swim.

EXT. JULIA'S SIDE YARD - DAY

Julia, with Bernard's pistol at her side, strides  
purposefully down her side walkway.

With a quick movement, she turns off the path, slipping  
between citrus trees, moving towards Orman's perimeter wall.

EXT. PERIMETER WALL, ORMAN'S ESTATE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Coming up to the wall, Julia glances around, sees no one.

JULIA

(to herself)  
Go, girl. Go.

With one fluid movement, she grabs hold of the top of the  
wall, gets her footing and pulls herself up...

INT. BERNARD'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - SAME TIME

ROBYN'S PIANO PLAYING WAFTING in from the distance, Bernard  
steps past his window and does a double-take, seeing...

EXT. ORMAN'S SMALL WOODLAND - DAY - SAME TIME - BERNARD'S POV

Julia, slinking through the trees.

INT. BERNARD'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

ROBYN'S PIANO PLAYING CONTINUING.

Not liking it, Bernard hurries outside.

EXT. ORMAN'S SWIMMING POOL - DAY

ROBYN'S PIANO PLAYING in the background, Orman helps Tess out of the pool and hands her a towel.

TESS  
(drying off)  
There's that lovely music again. I  
hear it all the time. Who's the  
pianist?

ORMAN  
Some girl in the neighborhood.

Tess pulls on her pool dress.

TESS  
She's remarkable.

He dismisses it, moving on to important matters.

ORMAN  
Question!

She looks at him.

TESS  
Ready.

ORMAN  
You still love Judd, don't you?

Towel-drying her hair, Tess nods.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
You probably think that's the only  
love you can ever have. But there  
are all kinds of love, Tess.

Tess stops drying, looks at him.

TESS  
It's so easy with you.

Orman smiles, shrugs. This is going just fine.

TESS (CONT'D)  
I mean you understand. Marc never  
has. He's still angry because I  
married Judd.

ORMAN

That's because he loves you. He's probably furious at you right now for being out here with me.

Tess laughs.

TESS

You've got that right.

Their eyes meet. He steps in closer.

ORMAN

Friends? Or more than friends?

Eyes locked, Tess thinks about it. Clearly, she is willing to try to be more than friends.

He steps closer.

She waits. Yes, she is ready.

He leans in to kiss her. She does not resist.

Closer... closer...

... A GUNSHOT EXPLODES INTO THE AIR!

Orman lurches forward -- HIT! -- falling on Tess.

TESS

Wendell!

BARKING ERUPTS from the distant yard.

TESS (CONT'D)

Wendell!

In stunned fury, Orman rights himself and shoves Tess out of the way. One hand going to the pain in the back of his shoulder, the other clenches his concealed bullet proof vest.

TESS (CONT'D)

What happened?! What is it?!

The BARKING DOGS come running.

Just as Tess moves toward Orman, another GUNSHOT BLASTS IN THE AIR.

Caught in the line of fire, TESS IS SHOT in the back!

Stunned, she lurches forward then back, staring at Orman who is yanking out his gun, frantically looking around.

EXT. ORMAN'S SMALL WOODLANDS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

In the shadows behind a tree, Julia, still aiming Bernard's pistol at Orman at the pool, stares horrified at what is unfolding before her. She shot Orman, he did not go down, and now she has shot Tess.

EXT. ORMAN'S SWIMMING POOL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Orman stares at Tess -- her blood seeping through her pool dress.

Gaping at Orman's gun, Tess takes a step back and stumbling, she falls into the deep end of the pool.

ORMAN

Tess!

The dogs come racing up to the pool, BARKING and WHINING for Tess.

Throwing his gun to the ground, Orman crashes to his knees and reaches out to grab her.

Gasping for air, she stares at his hand, her blood streaming out into the water around her.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

Take my hand!

Tess stares at him... At his hand... So close...

ORMAN (CONT'D)

(clawing at the air)

Grab hold!

EXT. UNDERWATER -- ORMAN'S SWIMMING POOL - CONTINUOUS

Underwater, Tess' hand clenches and unclenches as if she is grabbing hold.

EXT. ORMAN'S SWIMMING POOL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

His hand suspended in the air, Orman watches, horrified, as she starts to slip under.

Grabbing hold of the edge, he strains as far as he can go. His fingers just brush against her shoulder.

The SOUND of a SPLASH distracts him. One of the dogs is swimming toward her, the other jumping in.



TESS  
 (garbled)  
 Wendell...

Her face goes under.

ORMAN  
 Tess?!... Help!!... Somebody help!!

He looks around. No one is there.

EXT. ORMAN'S SMALL WOODLANDS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gripped in horror, Julia, with Bernard's pistol dangling from her hand, just stares.

EXT. ORMAN'S SWIMMING POOL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Watching Tess' body move farther away, her blood flowing up through the water, Orman yanks off his sports coat and shirt and tugs at his bulletproof vest... It's stuck!

Hands shaking, he pulls and tugs. Finally, it breaks open.

Flipping off his shoes, he grips the edge of the coping and slips quickly into the water.

As the two dogs churn round and round Tess in the bloody water, Orman, one hand clutching the coping, stretches toward her, reaching for her sinking body. Impossible!

Heaving a deep breath, he lets go of the edge and catapults himself towards her.

EXT. ORMAN'S SMALL WOODLANDS - DAY - SAME TIME

Julia, pistol still dangling from her hand, takes a cautious step toward the pool... then another... and another...

Suddenly, she bursts into a run.

BERNARD (O.S.)  
 Julia!

Crazed, she whirls around, seeing Bernard charging toward her.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
 Wait!

Frantic, she drops the pistol and takes off running toward the pool.

Bernard runs over, picks up the pistol and pockets it, then keeps on running toward Julia.

EXT. UNDERWATER -- ORMAN'S SWIMMING POOL - DAY - SAME TIME

The legs of the swimming dogs circle Tess.

Orman, holding his breath, thrashes toward her.

Thrusting his arms upward, he tries to make himself sink down.

Suspended, her hair floating all around her head, Tess stares at him in disbelief watching him sink.

Orman motions his thumb downward.

Tess shakes her head, looking upward.

He hits bottom and grabs her feet.

Tess' eyes widen in horror as he yanks her down next to him.

She struggles against him, but he grabs her close, bends his legs and with one huge burst of strength pushes off the bottom upward toward the side of the pool.

Orman, holding onto Tess, her head drooped on his shoulder, BURSTS UP out of the water, throwing his hand to the side of the pool.

His fingers brush against the edge, but he is unable to grasp it. Horror grips his face as he tries again to reach the edge. No go.

They're starting to sink again into the bloody water.

Tess reaches out, misses the edge!

Suddenly, when all is lost, a hand reaches out from the deck and grabs Tess' arm.

It is Julia.

EXT. ORMAN'S SWIMMING POOL - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Julia, trembling uncontrollably, stares down at Tess, lying limply on her side. The dogs WHIMPERING, try to get close.

Orman leans over to look at the bullet wound in Tess' back.  
Julia yanks him away.

JULIA  
Get away from her!  
(pounding him with her  
fists)  
Get away!

Bernard grabs Julia. Julia swings around ready to punch, sees Bernard and stops, staring at him wildly.

BERNARD  
He's a doctor, Julia.

Terror in her eyes, she stares at Bernard.

Gently, urgently, Orman turns Tess on her back.

Tess' eyes open.

JULIA  
She's alive.

Orman turns Tess' head to the side and pushes slowly down on her lungs. Water ejects from her mouth.

All stare and wait. Orman leans in and breathes into her mouth, applying pressure to the lungs.

This time, blood and water drain out of her mouth. Frantic, he leans in and breathes into her --

ORMAN  
Breathe... Breathe...

He pushes her gently on the lungs. Blood flows out onto the concrete under her back.

Tess' eyes stare out blankly.

Orman assesses her white face, her limp body. He leans in and breathes into her again.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
Breathe, damn it!

His mouth bloody, he puts his ear to her chest and listens.

Grabbing her wrist he tries to find her non-existent pulse.

In the background, Greg and Sue come running from one direction, Tully from another.

Tess' head falls to the side, limp and lifeless.

Orman, kneeling beside Tess, along with Tully, Julia, and Bernard stare at the lifeless body.

In the background, Mari-Ann Dove comes running.

WHIMPERING, the dogs try to crouch in closer to Tess.

JULIA

She's dead.  
(backing away)  
Dead!

Sensing the onlookers, Orman, bloodied face and chest, looks up to see Tully, Greg, Sue, and Mari-Ann staring from him to dead Tess and back at him.

Julia, white as a sheet, Tess' blood on her, just stares at Tess' lifeless body.

Bernard, blood on him, keeps his eyes on Orman and Julia, assessing the situation.

Orman lunges for his gun on the ground, leaps up, and points it at them.

ORMAN

Okay, which one of you was it? Who shot me?

Stunned, they look at each other, wondering who did it.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

(pointing his gun at  
Tully)  
You?  
(swinging it at Greg)  
You?

Shaking his head, Greg quickly edges behind Sue.

Bernard steps between Orman and the neighbors; Orman's gun pointing straight at him.

BERNARD

Settle down, Wendell. None of us shot you.

ORMAN

That's far enough, Vietnam.

BERNARD

We're your neighbors. We've been to all your parties. Think! If we wanted to shoot you, we could have done it long ago.

Orman looks at his neighbors -- maybe Bernard is right.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

(eyes on Orman)

Anyone call 9-1-1?

SUE/MARI-ANN/TULLY

(in unison)

I did.

BERNARD

(turning to the group)

Go home and stay there.

Everyone hurries off except Julia. Staring down at Tess, she doesn't move.

Bernard wraps his arm around her. Leading her away, a WIND KICKS UP, ruffling the canvas on the wall.

Bernard looks at the wall, then back at Tess.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Come on, Julia.

EXT. ORMAN'S SWIMMING POOL AND ESTATE - NIGHT

Lights flash from police cars and an ambulance, all lining Orman's driveway.

Two PARAMEDICS wheel Tess' covered body on a gurney toward the ambulance.

EXT. BERNARD'S BACK PORCH - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Julia sits on the back steps with Bernard, both staring out at Max's miniature grave. Bernard cleans his pistol with a handkerchief, wiping off the fingerprints.

Julia doesn't notice; she's a mess. Bernard's DOORBELL RINGS O.S.

JULIA

I'm going to throw up again.

BERNARD  
No, you're not.

JULIA  
Did you see her? Her dead eyes?

BERNARD  
We've been over that ground.

Bernard deliberately grips the pistol so his fingerprints are on it.

JULIA  
I didn't want to kill her!

BERNARD  
Stop crying and keep your voice down.

Putty in his hands, she stops. He hands her a tissue. She blows and tosses it into a small trash basket, half full of used tissues.

JULIA  
But I thought if he was dead...

BERNARD  
We've been over that ground too.

JULIA  
I know I was wrong, it just seemed the only way!

ANDY (O.S.)  
(urgent)  
I came as soon as I heard.

Startled, Julia and Bernard straighten up as Andy strides toward them.

ANDY (CONT'D)  
There must be a dozen police cars out there. Horrible, isn't it? That poor woman.  
(beat)  
Well, Jules, you have your murder.  
(beat)  
Anyone know who did it?

Trembling uncontrollably, Julia stares at Andy, takes a deep breath, and is about to tell all...

BERNARD  
I did.

Andy's mouth drops. Julia snaps her face around and stares at Bernard.

Wrapping the gun in his handkerchief, he hands it to Andy.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
 You know me, always drunk, always  
 shooting my gun off.

Julia's about to protest, but he grabs her hand, crunching it to stop her.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
 I was in Orman's woodland. Vietnam  
 came back. I saw two V.C. and I  
 shot. That's it.  
 (beat)  
 Julia's been holding my hand until  
 the police come.

EXT. ORMAN'S ESTATE - NIGHT - LATER

A POLICE OFFICER escorts handcuffed Bernard up the drive toward a police car. Julia steps alongside him.

JULIA  
 (low)  
 Bernard, I cannot let you do this.

BERNARD  
 It's done.

Bernard turns to the officer.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
 Can I have a moment?

The officer nods, steps a few paces away, keeping his eyes on both of them.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
 Listen, Julia. This is important to  
 me. My life is almost over, yours  
 is just beginning.

JULIA  
 Just beginning? Bernard, I killed  
 that woman! There's no way I can  
 live with myself if you --

BERNARD  
 (cutting her off)  
 You are going to live with it  
 because you are going to write it.

JULIA  
 Write what?

BERNARD  
 The truth, Julia. The whole story.  
 About Orman and Robyn. Orman and  
 Mari-Ann. Orman and Sue. Orman and  
 you. Everything.

Julia stares at him.

JULIA  
 Bernard...I...I can't...

BERNARD  
 Trust me. It will be the best thing  
 you've ever done.

JULIA  
 But why? Why are you doing this?

BERNARD  
 Julia...

Their eyes meet, a depth of pathos bonding them.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
 ...love of my life.

Leaning in, he gives her a tender kiss on the brow, rejoins  
 the Officer and they move off.

LONG DISSOLVE  
 TO:

EXT. NEBRASKA HIGH PLAINS - MORNING

The high plains and buttes stretch out under the big sky.

INT. TESS' BEDROOM - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Julia, dressed in a simple black dress, stands in Tess'  
 bedroom surrounded by Judd's paintings, staring down at the  
 photograph of Judd (in his bright plaid cowboy snap-up shirt)  
 and Tess.



RUTH (O.S.)  
It's such a kindness...

Tess' mother, Ruth, also dressed in a simple black dress, stands at Tess' bedroom window looking out.

RUTH (CONT'D)  
...you coming all this way for the funeral.

Steeling herself, Julia turns to face Ruth.

JULIA  
Ruth, I have something to tell you. I want you to know the truth, and I need you to decide something for me.

Ruth turns and nods -- anything you want.

JULIA (CONT'D)  
Bernard Sweeney did not kill your daughter. I did.

The blood drains from Ruth's face.

EXT. RUTH'S FRONT PORCH - MORNING - LATER

Tess' dog, Shadow, at their feet, the Nebraska sky and pine ridge before them, Julia finishes her story.

JULIA  
(wretched, fighting tears)  
...Then he told me to write it...  
Write it all, he said. Everything!  
(beat)  
Now you know. I'm the one who should be in jail, not Bernard.  
Please tell me... What should I do?

Holding back tears, Ruth walks to the edge of the porch, turns back and meets Julia's devastated eyes.

RUTH  
Tess called me just hours before it happened. She sounded so happy! She had just finished the mosaic, and she knew it was right... just the way her husband Judd would have done it.  
(beat)  
She called it 'The Sign of Jonah.'

Julia stares at her, uncomprehending.

JULIA

'The Sign of Jonah?' I'm sorry,  
Ruth... I... I don't understand...

Ruth raises her hand interrupting, her eyes kind but penetrating.

RUTH

Stay with me for a few days...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ORMAN'S WALL AND SWIMMING POOL - MORNING - ON TESS'  
MOSAIC WALL MURAL

The finished mosaic is a replica of Jonah and the Monstrous Fish in the opening scene. Jonah, dripping with seaweed and muck, stands impressively on the shore gazing ahead.

The huge Fish and the glittering ocean are behind him -- the tiles bright in the sunlight. But depending on how the sun hits the tiles, the Fish can be easily seen or barely discerned as it blends with the seascape.

The SOUND OF A BULLDOZER begins TO DRONE into the SOUND TRACK.

Orman, unshaven, his rumpled robe hanging loosely over his bulletproof vest, stares at the mosaic. At this point, only Jonah is visible.

Behind him, four MEXICAN MEN shovel and bulldoze dirt from a huge mound into the drained pool.

BOY (O.S.)

(excited)

She did it!

Startled, Orman turns to see the 8-year-old barefoot Mexican Boy in worn loose tee-shirt and shorts approaching -- the same Boy, who talked with Tess and Robyn at the Jonah beach.

Glancing at the boy, and then at the Workmen, Orman figures the Boy belongs to them.

Taking in the mosaic mural, the Boy grins a wide grin.

BOY (CONT'D)

*Glorioso.*

ORMAN

(nods)  
Just what I asked for.

BOY

Yes, it is.

ORMAN

"Man emerging from the sea."

BOY

(shaking his head)  
No, doctor. You asked for a sign.  
That's why *El Señor* sent her to  
you.

ORMAN

No one sent her to me. I paid to  
bring her here.

BOY

(ignoring him)  
No, you asked for an extraordinary  
sign for an extraordinary man.

Puzzled, Orman looks at the kid.

BOY (CONT'D)

Don't you remember? You and Tess  
were looking at Judd Tyndale's  
painting of King Herod's soldiers  
murdering the young boys. You asked  
for an extraordinary sign.  
Something beyond reason, you said.  
Something beyond death.

ORMAN

(gasps)  
Yes. Yes. A proof.

BOY

That's it. A proof. A sign.  
(pointing to the mural)  
That man is not emerging from the  
sea. That man was vomited onto the  
shore by that fish.

ORMAN

(irritated)  
What fish?

The Boy points to the mural. Orman looks.

As the Boy speaks, the sunlight changes and the outline of the fish emerges behind Jonah.

BOY

"A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign," Doctor Orman. "But none will be given it except the..."

For the first time, Orman sees the FISH and Jonah!

Staring at the Man, the Sea -- and the Fish -- he trembles with fury.

ORMAN

(cutting the Boy off, snarls)  
"...Sign of Jonah."

BOY

(nods)  
"For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the huge fish..."

ORMAN

(heated breath)  
"... so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Hands clenching and unclenching, Orman cannot believe he has been so betrayed!

ORMAN (CONT'D)

No. No!

Stomping up to the mosaic, he looks closer.

The sunlight changes and the outline of the fish is obscured.

ORMAN (CONT'D)

(a wild man)  
Hah! There is no fish! It is man emerging from the sea! I told you! Look!

Orman turns back to the Boy, but the Boy is not there. He looks to the Mexican workers throwing side-glances at him -- who is he talking to?

For a long moment, Orman keeps searching. The Boy is gone!

Gasping for air, he turns back to the mosaic mural. The Fish once again is clearly visible, along with Jonah.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 (shaking)  
 She tricked me! She lied to me! She  
 and that cripple!

Marching over to WORKER #1 driving the bulldozer, he jabs his finger toward the wall, shouting over the noise.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 Bury it! All of it! Now!

Worker #1 balks, he can't believe it -- bury it?

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 You heard me! Do it!

Scared of the crazy man, Worker #1 does what he's told: drives the bulldozer to the wall and mows into it.

Orman watches.

ORMAN (CONT'D)  
 (low, teeth clenched)  
 Kill it. Kill it. Kill it!!!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Alone in his sparse cell, Bernard finishes reading a manuscript. Deeply moved, he closes it and looks at the title page.

It reads: THE SIGN OF JONAH, a novel by Julia Horn.

Stroking the title page as if he's found gold, he opens it to the dedication page, and reads aloud --

BERNARD  
 Dedicated to Max...

EXT. MAX'S GRAVE, BERNARD'S BACK YARD - DAY - SAME TIME

Hunkered down beside Max's small grave, Robyn reaches into a shopping bag and pulls out a small teddy bear. She hugs it, then places it tenderly at the grave.

BERNARD (V.O.)  
 The most excellent one.

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Standing at the open french windows, Julia looks out at Orman's mansion up the street. Smoking a cigarette, she is pale, wasted with worry.

Hearing Andy's MARCHING FOOTSTEPS coming down the hall, she snuffs out the cigarette, lunges for her chair and pretends to be working at her computer.

Dark and raging, Andy storms in, Julia's manuscript in his hand. Marching over to her desk, he SLAMS it down opposite her.

Julia, white as a sheet, stays frozen, not looking at the manuscript, its title page facing up: THE SIGN OF JONAH, a novel by Julia Horn.

ANDY

(right to the point)

Is it true?

JULIA

You told me to write real characters.

ANDY

Is it true?!

JULIA

Yes, Andy, it's true.

ANDY

All of it?

JULIA

All of it.

ANDY

Goodbye, Julia.

Andy scoops up the manuscript, dumps it in a nearby trash can and heads for the door.

Julia leaps from her chair, races after him.

JULIA

Goodbye?! What are you talking about?! Andy, you can't leave me!

ANDY

Oh, yes, I can. You wanted your career so badly, you killed my child.

JULIA

You wanted your career so badly you went to his parties.

Andy stops, turns on her.

ANDY

His parties? What's a fucking party compared to you spreading your legs so he could go up into you and brutally kill my child piece by piece?!

Andy turns and storms out.

In shock, Julia stands rigid, listening to Andy's angry FOOTSTEPS march down the corridor. The front door OPENS and SLAMS SHUT.

Sagging into a nearby chair, she buries her head in her hands. All is lost.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - TWILIGHT - LATER

No lights on, the office dim, Julia lays on the sofa, her hand over her eyes.

ANDY (O.S.)

(gentle)

Julia?

Julia bolts upright, bracing herself for the next onslaught.

Andy steps in.

ANDY (CONT'D)

You're right.

Not knowing what to expect, Julia doesn't move.

Andy moves to the french doors and looks out at Orman's. Fiercely intense, it takes him a long time to speak.

ANDY (CONT'D)

I went to his parties.

(beat)

How else could I make it to the top? You're either in the club or out of the club.

(dark)

And once you're in...

(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)

(beat)

...there's no getting out.

(beat)

I see it now.

LONG SILENCE.

Swinging around, Andy faces Julia.

ANDY (CONT'D)

You know what really pisses me off?  
He needs me more than I need him.  
He needs accomplices from top to  
bottom, bottom to top, or he is  
nothing. I'm his messenger boy in  
the movies. Andy Blair, Oscar  
winning director. Hell, Julia, I'm  
not even talented. You're the one  
with the talent and the brains.

Seeing Andy fired up, pacing and rubbing his hands together,  
Julia senses trouble and doesn't like it.

ANDY (CONT'D)

First! I'm getting Bernard out of  
jail. If anyone's doing jail time  
for you, Julia, it's gonna be me.  
You are my wife!

JULIA

Andy, you can't go to jail!

ANDY

Bernard's not staying in prison.  
Just because he told you to keep  
quiet doesn't mean --

JULIA

(interrupts)

I know, I know. I want him out of  
jail too, but Ruth told me to do  
what he said. I killed her  
daughter, Andy! What else could I  
do? I had to --

ANDY

(breaking in)

Second!

Andy moves to the trash can, pulls out Julia's manuscript and  
holds it up.



ANDY (CONT'D)

This is going to be my next movie.  
"The Sign of Jonah!"

JULIA

(gasps, horror)  
Oh, Andy, no! You can't!

ANDY

What do you mean I can't?

JULIA

He'll crush you.

ANDY

Julia, you haven't been listening.  
He's already crushed me. I've let  
him put me in a coma with his  
parties, his movies, his Brussels  
money, London money, D.C. money.

(beat)

Never again. I will never go back  
to groveling and kissing his ass so  
he can feed me my career the way he  
feeds his dogs. I'm awake, Julia.  
For the first time, I'm awake! My  
next film will be Robyn's story...  
and yours.

Robyn's PIANO PLAYING comes into the SOUND TRACK, a magnificent, fast paced, triumphant piece.

Hearing it, Andy turns and looks toward the Bixby's.

EXT. BIXBY'S VICTORIAN TWO-STORY - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS -  
ANDY'S POV

Robyn, intent, woeful, and yearning, plays the piano at the  
bay window.

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Watching Robyn, Andy's resolve deepens even more.

ANDY

Don't worry, Robyn. We're going to  
fight him with the truth, and we're  
going to win.

(beat)

For Max. And for all the excellent  
ones.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - MORNING

ROBYN'S MUSIC ABRUPTLY STOPS.

Orman works at the operating table in the b.g. as Nurse De Winter works at the stainless steel counter affixing printed labels on small and medium Styrofoam shipping boxes.

De Winter affixes the first label: KIDNEY.

On a second shipping box, another label: COMPLETE SPECIMEN.

At the operating table, Nurse Kelly pats the PATIENT'S youthful Latina hand, her adoring eyes fixed to Orman, dressed and scrubbed in his neat surgical clothes.

Clenching a sharp pair of closed stainless steel scissors, Orman aims them at the back of the neck of the partially born baby in his gloved hand, then slams the pointed scissors up through the back of the neck into the skull. The baby STRUGGLES in Orman's hands. The baby goes limp.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Jonah, with the Fish behind him, glowers at the Modern City in the distance.

Robyn's TRIUMPHANT MUSIC BURSTS BACK into the SOUND TRACK --

Small GROUPS of JOGGERS, WALKERS, DOGS, FISHERMEN, SURFERS, FAMILIES with SMALL CHILDREN, and BEACHCOMBERS stare at Jonah and the fish, some WAVING.

Among them are Robyn Bixby, Andy Blair, Julia Horn, Sue Paley Bixby, Bernard Sweeney, AND...

Tess and her husband Judd, (dressed in his distinctive checked cowboy shirt), wheelchair-less, and, like Tess, very much alive!

Talking excitedly amongst themselves, they point to the Fish and to Jonah in wide-eyed expectation, wondering what's going to happen next.

Jonah, so intent on his mission, doesn't notice any of them, but instead braces himself, then marches toward the Modern City... (Nineveh of today).

The Onlookers with their children watch spellbound...

The Surfers pump their fists in approval...

The Fishermen wave...

The Dogs bark...

Robyn, Julia, Andy, Sue, and Bernard, tear up, while Tess and her husband Judd look on, joyful and triumphant...

All watching Jonah marching toward the Modern City.

FADE TO LIGHT.