

SIDEWAYS

by
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(Based on the novel by Rex Pickett)

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UNDER THE STUDIO LOGO:

KNOCKING at a door and distant dog BARKING.

NOW UNDER BLACK, A CARD --

SATURDAY

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

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

A door is opened, and the black gives way to blinding white light, the way one experiences the first glimpse of day amid, say, a hangover.

A worker, RAUL, is there.

MILES (O.S.)
Yeah?

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

MILES (O.S.)
What for?

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

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

He closes the door with a SLAM.

EXT. HIDEOUS APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE --

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

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

He climbs into his twelve-year-old convertible SAAB, parked far from the curb and blocking part of the driveway. The car starts fitfully. As he pulls away, the guys begin backing up the truck.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Miles rounds the corner and finds a new parking spot.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. MILES'S APARTMENT - DAY

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

MILES

Fuck!

WHIP PAN TO --

The oven clock that reads 10:50.

ON THE PHONE --

Miles hurriedly throws clothes into a suitcase.

MILES

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

INT. MILES'S BATHROOM - DAY

ON THE TOILET --

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

LATER --

Miles SHOWERS.

IN THE MIRROR --

Miles flosses.

INT. "COFFEE CONNECTION" - DAY

Miles finally makes it to the front of the line.

BARISTA

Hey, Miles.

MILES

Hey, Simon. Triple espresso, please.

SIMON

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

MILES

No, I'm running late. Make it to go. And give me a New York Times and...

(scanning the display case)

...a spinach croissant.

EXT. 405 ENTRANCE RAMP - DAY

Miles's Saab chugs up the ramp and merges.

INSERT - NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD PUZZLE --

-- pressed against the steering wheel. The puzzle is about 1/3 finished.

EXT. 405 FREEWAY - DAY

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

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD --

A sign reads:

RANCHO PALOS VERDES

PALOS VERDES ESTATES

1/4 MILE

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

EXT. PALOS VERDES STREET - DAY

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

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

INT. ERGANIAN HOUSE - DAY

A GIANT PROJECTION TV --

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

WIDE --

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

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

MRS. ERGANIAN
Look what the cat dragged!

MILES
Hi, everybody.

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

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

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

The Erganians laugh. Miles works up a smile too.

MILES
I had to bribe them.

More lame laughter.

CHRISTINE
Hey, Miles.

MILES
(leaning to kiss
Christine)
Seriously though, the 405 was unbelievable today. Unbelievable. Bumper to bumper the whole way. People getting an early start on the weekend, I guess. Granted I got a late start, but still.

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

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

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

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

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

INT. ERGANIAN KITCHEN - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHRISTINE
So which one do you like better?

MILES
I like them both.

JACK
(to Christine)
See?

INT. SAAB - CONTINUOUS

IN A REAR VIEW MIRROR --

The Erganians wave good-bye.

INSIDE THE CAR --

Miles accelerates as he and Jack wave back.

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

MILES
I can't help the traffic.

JACK
Come on. You're fucking hungover.

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

Jack turns around, and starts rooting around in a cardboard
wine box.

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

JACK
You said you had it all lined up.

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

JACK
Yeah, Conundrum.

MILES

...and that one of the editors was passing it up to a senior editor. She was supposed to hear something this week, but now it's a week, and... It's always like this. It's always a fucking waiting game.

JACK

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

MILES

It's a long shot, all right? I've been rejected by seventeen other publishers, and I'm not getting my hopes up again. And Conundrum is just a small specialty publisher anyway. I've stopped caring. That's it. I've stopped caring. So just do me a favor -- don't bring it up again.

Jack sits back in his seat holding a bottle of champagne and two glasses.

JACK

Well, I had to tell her parents something. I mean hey, I'm proud of you. But Christine's parents, they sort of, you know, they kind of play in the big leagues, and they like people with a little ambition.
(removing the bottle's foil)
And you have it, man. You have it. I just --

MILES

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

JACK

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

MILES

That's a 1992 Vintage Byron. It's sacrilegious.

Jack untwists the wire. Instantly the cork pops off, and a fountain of champagne erupts.

MILES

See what I mean? It's pissed off.

Jack begins pouring two glasses.

JACK

Shut up.

(handing Miles a glass)

Here's to a great week.

MILES

Absolutely. An outstanding week.
I'm glad we're getting this time
together.

They clink and drink.

JACK

Oh, that's tasty.

MILES

100% Pinot Noir. Single vineyard.

JACK

Pinot Noir? How come it's white?

MILES

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

JACK

Just tell me.

MILES

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

JACK

(not really listening)

Sure is tasty.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

The Saab speeds up an On ramp, merges with traffic and heads
north.

INT. SAAB - DAY

The boys continue to drink and drive.

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

JACK
Oh yeah. Yeah.

MILES
And?

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

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

JACK
Oh yeah. Much better.

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

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

A CELLPHONE RINGS. Jack reaches into his pocket.

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

CHRISTINE (ON PHONE)
You guys having fun?

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

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

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

A silence, then --

JACK
So what's up?

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

Jack looks at Miles in a mute appeal for sympathy.

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

Jack hasn't even really heard the question.

JACK
Yeah, the Feldmans.

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

JACK
Well, then put him at the singles
table.

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

JACK
Then put him with the Feldmans. I
don't care. Whatever you and your
Mom decide is fine with me.

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

JACK

I didn't dismiss you. I told you what I thought, but it didn't seem to matter, so you decide. And this is supposed to be my time with Miles anyway, so please try not to call every five minutes.

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)

I'm not going to call every five minutes, but this is important.

JACK

Look, all I know is I just got on the road with my best man, and you call before we're even on the freeway. I just hope you're going to give me a little space before the wedding. Isn't that the point of this? Isn't that what we talked about with Dr. Gertler?

A silence. Then --

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)

Why are you being so defensive?

JACK

Because I feel attacked.

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)

So now I'm attacking you. I ask you one simple question, and suddenly I'm attacking you.

Jack heaves a big sigh and tries to remain calm.

JACK

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

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)

Bye.

JACK

I love you.

CHRISTINE (ON THE PHONE)

Bye.

Christine hangs up. Jack SLAMS his cellphone shut, momentarily blinded with rage.

JACK
Fucking Bride-zilla!

MILES
You invited Tony Levin?

EXT. 101 FREEWAY - EVENING

The Saab heads north along the Pacific Ocean and the illuminated offshore oil derricks.

INT./EXT. SAAB - EVENING

Miles signals and begins to head for an exit.

JACK
Why are we getting off?

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

JACK
What?

MILES
My mother. She's here in Montecito. Right off the freeway.

JACK
Your mother? Jesus, Miles, we're supposed to be up there already.

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

JACK
(begrudgingly agreeing)
How old?

MILES
Um...seventy...something.

EXT. 405 FREEWAY - EVENING

The Saab takes an EXIT.

INT. SAAB - EVENING

JACK
Did you get her a present?

MILES
(motioning toward the
backseat)
I'll just give her a bottle.

JACK
A bottle? That's no present for
your mother. She gave birth to you,
for Christ's sake.

MILES
I'm supposed to thank her for that?

EXT. CONROY'S FLOWERS PARKING LOT - EVENING

Jack heads toward the flower shop.

JACK
I'll be right back.

Miles stays put in the passenger seat. We move toward him as he pours himself more champagne. His thoughts wander to sad subjects, and his anguish grows palpable.

EXT. MONTECITO STREET - NIGHT

The Saab rounds a corner and parks in front of a modest condo on a terraced street with a partial ocean view.

EXT. MILES'S MOTHER'S CONDO - NIGHT

Approach the front door, Miles now clutches a dozen yellow roses, Jack the champagne.

JACK
Fuck, I forgot.

He pulls a birthday card and a pen out of his windbreaker.

JACK
Here, sign this.

As Miles does so and licks the envelope, Jack rings the bell.

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

MILES
Happy birthday, Mom.

JACK
Yeah, happy birthday.

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

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

They hug.

JACK
They're from both of us.

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

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

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

She gestures for them to come inside.

INT. MILES'S MOTHER'S CONDO - CONTINUOUS

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

PHYLLIS
Well, you were wonderful on that show. I never understood why they had to give you that brain tumor so soon.

(MORE)

PHYLLIS (cont'd)
 Why that didn't make you the
 biggest movie star in the world is
 a sin. It's a sin.

JACK
 Yeah, well, you should be my agent.

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

JACK
 You look fabulous, Mrs. Raymond.

PHYLLIS
 (over her shoulder)
 Oh, stop it. Make yourselves
 comfortable.
 (now around the corner)
 Have you eaten yet?

MILES
 No.

Jack gives Miles a look.

Miles leads Jack into this small split-level condo. The TV is on, and it's MESSY. Amid the newspapers and junk mail and dishes, an ab-roller and an ancient Schwinn exercycle sit long forgotten in a corner.

JACK
 (reconfirming)
 We're not going to stay too long,
 right?

MILES
 Yeah. We'll just hang out a little
 while and hit the road.

JACK
 Okay. Cool.

INT. MILES'S MOTHER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

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

He takes a seat on the sofa next to Jack, who is watching JEOPARDY.

MILES

Let me show you something. The secret to opening champagne is that once the cork is released, you keep pressure on it so you don't --

JACK

(concentrated on the TV)
Just a second.

Miles finishes opening the bottle with an elegant silence.

PHYLLIS (O.S.)

Ready for my close up!

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

PHYLLIS

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

EXT. MILES'S MOTHER'S LANAI - NIGHT

Miles and Jack are seated in webbed chairs around a circular glass table. They are mid-meal, and the champagne bottle is empty, now accompanied by a nearly empty bottle of Pinot Grigio. Everyone is more than a little lubricated, especially the birthday girl as she returns from the kitchen with another plate of food.

JACK

Mrs. Raymond, this is delicious.
Absolutely delicious.

PHYLLIS

(sitting down)

They're just leftovers. I could have made something fancier if a certain someone had let me know that a certain someone was coming for a visit with a certain special friend. Could have made my pork roast.

MILES

It's a surprise, Mom.

PHYLLIS

And I could have already put clean sheets on the other bed and the fold-out. You are staying. Wendy, Ron, and the twins are picking us up at 11:30 to go to Sunday brunch at the Sheraton. They do a magnificent job there. Wendy is so excited you're here.

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

MILES

You talked to Wendy?

PHYLLIS

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

MILES

(trying to be chipper)

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

PHYLLIS

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

MILES

Uh-huh.

(wiping his mouth)

I'll be right back.

He gets up and heads into the house.

INT. MILES'S MOTHER'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Miles heads toward...

INT. MILES'S MOTHER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

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

He twists open the bottom and pulls it apart, revealing it to be a secret stash for valuables disguised as a common household product. Inside are stacks of one-hundred dollar bills.

MILES

(quickly peeling some off)
Seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven,
twelve, thirteen, fourteen,
fifteen...
(one more for good luck)
Sixteen.

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

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

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

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

INT. MILES'S MOTHER'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Miles enters, FLUSHES the toilet and leaves.

INT. MILES'S MOTHER'S LANAI - NIGHT

Jack is pouring Phyllis another glass.

PHYLLIS

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

JACK

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

PHYLLIS

Spray and Wash. That's the one.

JACK

Yeah, I remember the girl who was in it with me. Yikes, she was something.

PHYLLIS

I don't remember her. I just remember you jogging.

Miles slides open the door and takes his seat again.

PHYLLIS

How come a handsome man like you is not married yet?

MILES

Jack's getting married next week, Mom, remember?

JACK

And Miles is my best man. My main man.

PHYLLIS

Yeah, yeah. And your wife works in real estate. With her father. Of course I remember.

(another gulp of wine)

Miles, when are you going to get married again?

MILES

Mom, I just got divorced.

PHYLLIS

You and Victoria should get back together. She was good for you. Because I saw something on TV about how people who live alone and don't believe in God live shorter lives.

Miles and Jack don't know what to say.

PHYLLIS

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

JACK

Oh, yeah. Very well. Still do.

PHYLLIS
I'm worried about you, Miles.

Miles sits in his chair and takes another drink of wine.

CUT TO BLACK

UNDER BLACK, A CARD --

SUNDAY

MILES (O.S.)
Jack. Jack.

INT. MILES'S MOTHER'S BEDROOM - DAY

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

WIDE --

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

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

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

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

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

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

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - DAY

TWO PLATES OF FOOD

Float in front of two breasts inside a zippered uniform.

WIDER --

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

JACK

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

MILES

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

JACK

That's your problem right there.

MILES

We have nothing in common with her. You get her in bed a couple of times and then what?

JACK

(sounds good!)
I don't know.

MILES

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

JACK

I get chicks looking at me all the time. All ages.

MILES

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

They eat in silence for a moment.

JACK

You need to get laid.

Miles just shrugs off the comment.

JACK

It'd be the best thing for you. You know what? I'm going to get you laid this week. I'm no going to give you a pen knife or a gift certificate. That's going to be my best man gift to you.

MILES

I'd rather have a knife.

JACK

I am not going to watch my best friend just waste away. You've been officially depressed for like two years now, and you were always a negative guy anyway, even back in college. Now it's even worse. You're wasting away. Teaching English to fucking eighth-graders when they should be reading what you wrote. Your books.

MILES

I'm working on it.

Miles concentrates on his eggs and hash browns.

JACK

You still seeing that shrink?

MILES

I went on Monday, but I spent most of the hour helping him with his computer.

JACK

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

MILES

And Lexapro, yes.

JACK

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

MILES

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

JACK

And get you back in the saddle.

EXT. CENTRAL COAST - DAY

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

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

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

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

MILES

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

JACK

Whatever's closest. I need a glass.

MILES

These guys make a top-notch Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. One of the best producers in Santa Barbara county.

(looking out the window)

Look how beautiful this view is. What a day!

JACK

I thought you hated Chardonnay.

MILES

No, I like all varietals. I just don't generally like the way they manipulate Chardonnay in California -- too much oak and secondary malolactic fermentation.

Jack nods without any idea what Miles is talking about.

EXT. SANTA ROSA TURN-OFF - DAY

The Saab passes over the 101 and turns onto SANTA ROSA, a shoulderless, single-lane road.

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

The boys now pass vineyard after vineyard of immaculate grapevines.

MILES

Jesus, what a day! Isn't it gorgeous? And the ocean's right over that ridge. See, the reason this region's good for Pinot is that the cold air off the Pacific flows in at night through these transverse valleys and cools down the berries. Pinot doesn't like constant heat, and it really despises humidity because it's thin skinned and susceptible to disease and rot.

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

JACK

Hey, Miles, I hope your novel sells.

MILES

I do too. Thanks.
(noticing)
Here we are.

The Saab now pulls off the road and makes its way down a long gravel driveway.

EXT. SANFORD TASTING SHACK - DAY

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

MILES

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

JACK

I told you. Filet and salmon.

MILES

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

JACK

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

MILES

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

JACK

(taking out his phone)
Let me call Christine.

MILES

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

JACK

I owe her a call.

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

JACK

Hey, honey. So we're up here about to taste some whites, and we need to know how the caterers are going to make the salmon...I know, I didn't forget, but we wound up at Miles's mom's house, and it got really late, and it was hard to call, so I'm calling you now. I said I was sorry. Yes, I did.

(to Miles)

You heard me say I was sorry, right?

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

JACK

Give me a break, will you? I just called to find out about the salmon -- for our wedding -- to be more involved, like you said -- and all you want to do is get into it with me about last night and, okay, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I didn't call. You're totally right. I know, but I'm trying to make this the best wedding I can with the best wine we can find up here.

(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)
 Don't I get any credit for that?
 Okay. Look, I've got to go. I'm out
 here in the parking lot, and Miles
 is waiting for me...

And so it goes, Jack's voice rising and falling. Miles heads inside.

INT. SANFORD TASTING ROOM - DAY

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

JACK
 (proudly)
 Baked with a butter-lime glaze.

MILES
 Now we're talking.

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

CHRIS
 This is your buddy?

MILES
 Yep, this is the bridegroom. Jack,
 Chris. Chris, Jack.

Chris and Jack shake hands.

JACK
 How you doing?

CHRIS
 You guys want to start with the
 Sauvignon Blanc?

JACK
 Sounds good.

Two glasses are filled with small amounts of straw-colored liquid.

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

MILES
 Let me show you.

We see details of what Miles now describes.

MILES

First take your glass and examine the wine against the light. Look at the color and clarity.

JACK

What color is it supposed to be?

MILES

Depends on the wine. Just get a sense of it. Thick? Thin? Straw? Amber? Yellow? Watery? Syrupy?

JACK

Huh.

MILES

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

Jack hesitantly smells, keeping a little too much distance.

MILES

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

(low)

Pretend it's young pussy.

Now Jack gets it and buries his nose in the glass.

MILES

What do you smell?

JACK

(making a joke)

Uh...wine? White wine? I don't know.

Miles takes a sniff himself.

MILES

There's not much there yet, but you can still find...

(more sniffs)

(MORE)

MILES (cont'd)
...a little peach...a little
vanilla from the oak...apple...and
there's even a hint of, like, a
nutty Edam cheese.

Jack smells and begins to brighten.

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

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

Miles expertly swirls the wine, then gives it to Jack.

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

They do so. Jack smiles.

MILES
See? That's what I want you to do
with every one.

JACK
When do we get to drink it?

MILES
Now.

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

JACK
So how would you rate this one?

MILES
Usually they start you on the wines
with learning disabilities, but
this one's pretty damn good.

JACK
You know, you could work in a wine
store.

MILES
Yeah, that would be a real step up
from teaching. Plus, I've got six
points on my license already.

Now Miles notices something about Jack.

MILES
Are you chewing gum?

JACK
Want some?

EXT. BUELLTON, CALIFORNIA - DAY

The Saab makes its way into this town right off the 101 Freeway.

SUPERIMPOSE --

BUELLTON

Various establishing shots of this very average-looking Central Coast town.

EXT. WINDMILL INN - DAY

The Saab pulls into the parking lot of this motel with a "Danish" theme. And look -- there's the Windmill itself, its shabby blades motionless.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

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

MILES
Hey Jack, hurry up!

JACK (O.S.)
Just a minute!

Opening the bedside drawer, Miles finds a Gideon's Bible and tosses it in the trash -- his hotel routine.

EXT. HIGHWAY 246 - DUSK

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

JACK

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

MILES

It's not even a mile.

JACK

We should have driven.

MILES

Not with the wine list these people
have. We don't want to be shy.

JACK

You think I'm making a mistake
marrying Christine?

MILES

Whoa, where's that coming from?

JACK

I don't know. Do you think I'm
doing the right thing? Tell the
truth.

MILES

I think it's great. It's time. And
Christine is great. You've got to
have your eyes open, that's all. I
mean, look at me. I thought
Victoria and I were set for life.

JACK

Christine's dad -- he's been
talking about making room for me in
his business. Showing me the ropes.
And I'm thinking about it. But I
don't know, might get a little
incestuous. On the other hand, Mike
does pretty well. A lot of high-end
commercial stuff. Writes his own
paycheck.

MILES

You'd stop acting?

JACK

Not entirely. This would provide
some stability is all I'm saying.
(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)

I could always squeeze in an audition or a commercial here and there, keep myself in the game in case something big comes along.

MILES

Wow. That's a big change.

JACK

We're not getting any younger, right? And I guess my career, it's gotten pretty, you know, cyclical. Time to settle down.

MILES

If that's what feels right.

JACK

It does. Feels right.

MILES

Then it's a good thing.

JACK

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

Miles now leads them away from the road and across a parking lot.

The camera pans to reveal --

THE HITCHING POST,

A local institution.

INT. HITCHING POST BAR - NIGHT

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

GARY

Hey, Miles. Long time no see.

MILES

Gary.

GARY

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

MILES

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

GARY

(shaking Jack's hand)
My condolences.

MILES

What are you pouring tonight?

GARY

Lot of good stuff.
(looking at a row of
bottles)
Got a 2000 Bien Nacido. Want a
taste?

MILES

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

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

GARY

What do you think?

MILES

Tighter than a nun's asshole but
good concentration. Jack?

JACK

Yeah. Tight.

Miles smiles and turns to Gary.

MILES

Pour us a couple.

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

JACK

Here's to my last week of freedom.

MILES

Yep.

INT. HITCHING POST DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Jack and Miles are reviewing their menus. Jack looks up for a second and spots a PRETTY WAITRESS placing an order at the bar.

JACK
Miles. Check it out.

Miles glances at the waitress and returns to his menu.

MILES
Oh yeah. That's Maya.

JACK
You know her?

MILES
Sure I know Maya.

JACK
You *know* that chick?

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

JACK
She is hot.

MILES
And married. Check out the rock.

Jack leans forward and squints.

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

MILES
This gal's married to some professor at UC Santa Barbara.

JACK

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

MILES

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

JACK

What else do you know about her?

MILES

Well...she knows a lot about wine.

JACK

Oooooohhh. Now we're getting somewhere.

MILES

And she like Pinot.

JACK

There you go.

MILES

Jack, she's a fuckign waitress in Buellton.

JACK

Good enough for me.

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

MAYA

Hey, Miles. Good to see you.

MILES

How are you, Maya? Busy night.

MAYA

Saturday. You guys been out tasting today?

MILES

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

JACK
 (big smile)
 Hiya.

MAYA
 (smiling back)
 Hi. I'll see you guys later.

She goes.

JACK
 Jesus, she's jammin'. And you *know* her.

MILES
 Yeah, I know a waitress here. So what?

JACK
 Gee, Miles, I don't know. Maybe she has a friend. You know, two girls, two guys, small town, Pinot... Did you see how friendly she was to us?

MILES
 She's friendly to everyone. Good for the gratuities.

JACK
 You're blind, dude. Blind.

Miles focuses again on the menu.

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

INT. HITCHING POST BAR - NIGHT

TWO BURGUNDY GLASSES --

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

WIDE --

Jack and Miles are enjoying a post-prandial drink.

MILES

Did you know that I hate Tony
Levin?

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

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

MAYA

(to Gary)
Highliner, please.

JACK

That's on us.

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

MAYA

Hey, guys.

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

MILES

You want to join us?

MAYA

(polite)
Sure.

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

MAYA

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

MILES

I finished it.

MAYA

Good for you.

JACK

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

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

MAYA
That's fantastic! Congratulations.

She offers her glass, and all clink.

MAYA
(to Jack)
Are you a writer too?

JACK
No, I'm an actor.

MAYA
Oh yeah? What kind of stuff?

JACK
Mostly TV. I was a regular on a couple of series. But I'd have to say commercials are my bread and butter. National mostly.

MAYA
Anything I'd know?

JACK
Maybe. Recognize this?

Jack takes a deep breath, and out comes a perfect Voice-over voice.

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

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

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

JACK
I am one of those guys!

MAYA
You are not.

MILES
(been there before)
He is.

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

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

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

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

They all take a drink of wine.

MAYA
 So what are you guys up to tonight?

Before Jack has a chance to speak --

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

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

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

MILES
 The Windmill.

JACK
 Windmill.

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

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

MILES
 See you.

As she leaves --

JACK

We'll catch up with you later,
okay?

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

JACK

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

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

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

JACK

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

MILES

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

JACK

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

MILES

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

JACK

I'm trying to get you some action,
but you've got to help me out.

MILES

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

JACK

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

MILES

How do you know?

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

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

The screen is absolutely BLACK.

JACK
Single. Waitress. Saturday night.
Looking for love. A little slap and
tickle.

MILES
Shut up.

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

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

MILES
Have you no shame?

JACK
Oooh. Oh. Miles. Miles.

MILES
Fuck you.

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

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

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

MILES
Shut the fuck up!

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

JACK
You should get your prostate
checked.

UNDER BLACK --

MONDAY

EXT. ELLEN'S DANISH RESTAURANT - DAY

Establishing.

INT. ELLEN'S DANISH RESTAURANT - DAY

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

MILES
What're we going to have? The 12-
egg omelete? Pigs in a blanket? The
"rancher's special breakfast?" Or
maybe just some grease and fat with
a side of lard?

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

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

Jack sarcastically taps an index finger on his temple.

MILES
What's your problem?

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

MILES
What is it?

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

JACK

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

MILES

Oooh, now the cards are on the table.

JACK

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

MILES

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

JACK

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

The older WAITRESS comes over.

WAITRESS

Can I take your order?

JACK

But I am warning you.

MILES

Oatmeal, one poached eggs, and rye toast. Dry.

WAITRESS

Okay. And you?

JACK

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

EXT. LOVELY HIGHWAY - DAY

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT --

A MAP of the region and a MOVING LINE showing the boys' route.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT --

Grapes growing on the vine.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GRAPE FIELD - DAY

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINERY - DAY

Miles has just downed a taste of thick red wine.

MILES

How much skin and stem contact?

POURER

About four weeks.

MILES

Huh. So that's where you get all the tannin. And how long in oak?

POURER

A year -- half in French, half in American.

MILES

Wow. Good stuff.

JACK

Very good oak. That's a good wood.

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

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LOVELY AREA ON A HILL - DAY

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

MILES

Nice, huh?

JACK

Beautiful

MILES

Victoria and I used to like this view.

(lost in nostalgia)

Once we had a picnic here and drank a '95 Opus One. With smoked salmon and artichokes, but we didn't care.

JACK

Miles.

MILES

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

JACK

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

MILES

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

JACK

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

MILES

She what?

(long pause)

When?

JACK
About a month ago. Six weeks.

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

JACK
Yeah.

MILES
...with the lousy wine list?

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

JACK
I had to tell you sooner or later.

No reaction.

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

Miles continues to stare straight ahead.

MILES
I want to go home now.

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

MILES
Is she bringing him to the wedding?

JACK
What do you think?

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

JACK
Because I knew you'd freak out and
probably get so depressed you
wouldn't even come on this trip.
(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)

But then I figured here would be the best place to tell you. We're here to forget about all that shit. We're here to party!

MILES

(undeterred)

I'm going to be a fucking pariah on Saturday. Persona non-grata. Everyone's just going to be holding their breath to see if I'm going to get drunk and make a scene.

JACK

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

MILES

(horrified)

You've all been *talking* about it? Behind my back? *Talking* about it?

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

JACK

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

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

EXT. LOVELY HILL AREA - DAY

A VERY WIDE SHOT --

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

EXT. LOVELY VINEYARD -- CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

JACK

Miles?

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

JACK

You going to be okay?

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

JACK

Come on. Let's go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOXEN WINERY - DAY

The sun hangs low as the Saab pulls into the parking lot.

EXT. FOXEN WINERY - DAY

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

STEPHANIE

Hey, guys. How's it going?

JACK

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

STEPHANIE

That's what people say.

MILES

You gotta excuse him. Yesterday he didn't know Pinot Noir from film noir.

JACK

But I'm learning fast.

Stephanie laughs. It's clear she likes big good-natured lunks like Jack.

MILES

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

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

Stephanie slides two glasses in front of them.

JACK

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

She THUMPS the cork off a bottle of Chardonnay.

STEPHANIE

Well, no better way to learn than tasting.

She pours almost flirtatious amounts.

JACK

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

STEPHANIE

Stephanie.

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

STEPHANIE

So what do you think?

MILES

Quaffable but far from transcendent.

JACK

I like it. Tastes great. Oaky.

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

STEPHANIE

Cabernet Franc.

(as they taste)

This is only the fifth year we've made this varietal. It's from our Tinaquaic vineyard. And it was a Silver Medal winner at the Paso Robles wine festival last year.

MILES

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

JACK

(ignoring him)

Tastes pretty damn good to me. You live around here, Stephanie?

STEPHANIE

Just outside Santa Ynez.

(low, to Miles)

And I agree with you about the Cab Franc.

JACK

Oh yeah? That's where we're staying. Windmill Inn.

STEPHANIE

Oh yeah.

JACK

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

STEPHANIE

Sure I know Maya. Real well.

JACK

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

MILES

Could we move on to the Pinot, please?

STEPHANIE

Chomping at the bit, huh? Sure.

As she turns to reach for the right bottle, Jack winks at Miles. Miles shakes his head. Stephanie pours each of them a full half glass.

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

STEPHANIE
I know. I need to be spanked.

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

STEPHANIE
Excuse me.

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

JACK
Yeeeah. I'm going to get this whole thing lined up.

MILES
What whole thing?

JACK
You. Me. Stephanie. Maya.

MILES
Do you know how often these pourers get hit on? Especially the cute ones?

JACK
Please.

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

EXT. FOXEN PARKING LOT - DAY

Miles is killing time by the car. He looks over and sees Jack waddling down the tasting room stairs with two cases of wine.

JACK
Get the trunk.

MILES
You have the keys.

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

JACK
We're on.

MILES
What?

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

MILES
Tonight?

JACK
Sooner the better.

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

JACK
Chick has got it all going on.

MILES
She's a cutie all right.

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

INT. WINDMILL INN - DAY

THE TV --

GOLF on ESPN.

MILES AND JACK

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

JACK
(mocking)
You know how often these pourers get hit on?
(getting up)
(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)
I'm going for a swim. Get the blood
flowing. Want to come?

MILES
Nah. I want to watch this.

CLOSE ON THE TV --

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

FADE TO BLACK.

UNDER BLACK --

The sound of an AEROSOL CAN.

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

WE OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE --

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

WIDE --

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

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

Jack runs in place and boxes the air.

MILES
So what should I wear?

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

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

JACK
Don't you have any other shoes?

Miles glances at his shoes sitting sadly on the floor.

JACK

(into the phone)

Hello? Oh hey, baby, just checking in. Ah, not much. We're about to go out for dinner, probably be out pretty late, so I thought I'd say goodnight. I know, I miss you too...

EXT. SANTA YNEZ - NIGHT

The boys get out of the car and walk along a timbered sidewalk in this tourist town with a faux Western theme.

JACK

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

MILES

What's it called?

JACK

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

MILES

Aye-aye, captain.

JACK

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

MILES

If anyone orders Merlot, I'm leaving! I am not drinking any fucking Merlot!

JACK

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

Miles takes a bottle from his pocket and rattles it.

JACK

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

MILES

Okay! Fuck!

Jack gives him a final look in the eye.

JACK

We're going in.

INT. MATTEI'S TAVERN IN SANTA YNEZ - NIGHT

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

MAYA AND STEPHANIE

At a booth waving at them. They look great.

MILES AND JACK

Make their way to the table, Jack wearing a broad, confident smile.

AT THE TABLE --

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

JACK

How you doin' tonight, beautiful?

STEPHANIE

Good. How're you?

JACK

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

STEPHANIE

Not so bad yourself.

Meanwhile, Jack looks over at Maya and purses his lips in an affable if uncomfortable smile.

MILES

What are you drinking?

MAYA

A Sea Smoke Reserve.

MILES

Oh yeah? How is it?

MAYA

(sliding the glass)

Try it.

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

MILES

Nice. Very nice.

MAYA

I know the vintner. Comes in the restaurant all the time. Only makes 300 cases.

MILES

This is good. Little hints of clove.

MAYA

I know. I love that.

LATER --

A WAITER finishes listing off the specials.

WAITER

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

The four diners exchange looks of delight.

WAITER

And who gets the wine list?

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

MAYA

I guess Miles wants it.

Jack glares at Miles, who immediately gets the hint.

MILES

Nope. You ladies choose.

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

MAYA

You choose, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

(opening it)

So what does everyone feel like?

JACK

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

MAYA

No, we're paying for the wine.

JACK

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

Miles draws a long breath.

STEPHANIE

So what's everyone ordering? Then we can sort out the wine.

MILES

Exactement!

Jack shoots Miles a look.

MAYA

I'm having the salmon.

MILES

That's what I'm having.

STEPHANIE

(still scanning the wines)

I'm thinking about the duck breast.

JACK
 (slapping his menu shut)
 Me too.

STEPHANIE
 Well, that narrows things down.

Stephanie lowers the menu so that only her eyes are peeking over the top. She looks at the others, and they look back at her.

STEPHANIE
 Sounds like...Pinot Noir to me.

Jack and Miles look at each other and in unison --

JACK AND MILES
 Pinot!

They high-five each other. This causes the girls to laugh.
 MUSIC STARTS -- they're off!

Dinner is improvised, but includes:

--The arrival of the first wine, a '95 Whitcraft.

--The salads.

--Maya takes a turn with the wine list. Miles pushes her finger down to the prices with three digits.

--New stemware is provided with the arrival of the second wine -- a '99 Kistler Rochioli.

--The four of them drink. Particularly Miles.

--Stephanie and Jack get cozier and cozier.

--The salmon and duck arrive.

--Miles is too shy to look into Maya's eyes.

--As Miles gets drunker, the camera angles become sloppier, the cutting choppy.

--Miles pontificates about some aspect of wine that only he finds interesting. His jaw tight, Jack silently prays that Miles's next word will be his last.

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

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

INT. UNDERWORLD -- DARK AND TIMELESS

Miles is boarding an open boat atop this underground river, the River Styx. Just beyond a ghoulish human cargo the hooded boatman CHARON wields a long staff. Miles is crossing over to the dark side.

INT. MATTEI'S TAVERN - BACK AGAIN

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

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

-- Another wine reaches the table -- a '96 Comte Armand Pommard.

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

MOMENTS LATER --

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

AT THE BATHROOMS --

He tries the Men's room door but it's locked. He pulls the Xanax out of his pocket and pops one in his mouth, swallowing it dry.

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

CLOSE ON THE KEYPAD --

As many numbers are dialed, and on soundtrack we hear the TONES, completely out of sync, along with a sound melange of interior phone RINGING and a PICKUP.

THE RECEIVER --

As Miles presses it desperately to his head.

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
Hello?

MILES
Victoria.

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
Miles?

Miles feigns an implausible upbeat tone.

MILES
Victoria! How the hell are you?

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

MILES
Heard you got remarried!
Congratulations. Didn't think you
had the stomach for another go-
round.

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

MILES
Just a little Whitcraft, north to
the Russian River, then the SST to
Burgundy. That old Cotes de Beaune!

He makes a whistling SST sound.

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
Where are you?

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

Silence.

MILES
Hello?

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

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

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

MILES
Ken.

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

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

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
I'd better get off the phone.

MILES
You see, I just heard about this today, you getting married that is, and I was kind of taken aback. Kind of hard to believe.

Silence.

MILES
Hello?

VICTORIA (ON THE PHONE)
I'm here.

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

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

Miles sucks something from between his two front teeth.

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

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

EXT. DEEP CANYON - DAY

For a flash, Miles is walking an unstable, narrow rope bridge
extending vertiginously across a great chasm.

INT. RESTAURANT - BACK AGAIN

Miles reaches the table, tries to sit and slips onto the
floor. Although at first Jack blinks heavily in disgust, the
girls burst out into hysterical laughter. Jack then laughs
too, perhaps over-laughing.

JACK
Easy, boy. Easy.

Maya helps him back into the booth.

MAYA
Are you all right?

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

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

STEPHANIE
(to the guys)
Excuse us.

MAYA
Sorry to make you get up again,
Miles.

MILES
That's okay.

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

JACK
What the fuck, man? What is up?

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

JACK
Pull yourself together, man.

MILES
I'm fine!

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

JACK
Where were you?

MILES
Just making a little phone call.

JACK
Did you drink and dial?

Miles's silence confirms his guilt and shame.

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

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

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

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

JACK
Oh Jesus, Miles.

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

JACK

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

MILES

Shut up. Shut your face.

JACK

Don't you see how Maya's looking at you? You got her on the hook. Reel her in! Come on, let's ratchet this up a notch. You know how to do it. Here.

(passing a glass)

Drink some agua.

Miles looks at the water, takes it and drains it. The girls now return to the table. Rather than get up, the guys just slide over.

MILES

(trying to appear sober)

Should we get dessert?

STEPHANIE

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

Jack raises both arms like a football referee.

JACK

Excellent idea. Waiter!

INT. SAAB - NIGHT

Jack drives. Miles blinks heavily as he tries to make sense of a hand-drawn map.

JACK

(grabbing the map)

Let me see that.

EXT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Saab pulls into a gravel driveway and comes to a stop outside this wood-framed cottage in the Santa Ynez area.

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

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

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

MILES
You sure you want to do this?

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

The front door is open. Jack knocks twice on the screen door before going in.

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The boys enter this modest living room furnished with weathered but charming old furniture. Scattered here and there are children's toys. Finger paintings are taped to the walls. Candles are lit, and MUSIC is playing.

JACK
We're here!

Stephanie sails in.

STEPHANIE
What happened to you guys?

JACK
We made it.
(pointing a thumb at
Miles)
No thanks to this guy.

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

JACK
Hi.

STEPHANIE

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

Miles hesitates a moment before Jack elbows him toward --

INT. STEPHANIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Miles wanders in to find Maya squatting in front of a little temperature-controlled wine storage unit.

MILES

Hi.

MAYA

Hey.

MILES

(squatting down too)
 Stephanie got anything good?

MAYA

Oh yeah. She's way into Pinots.
 Check this out.

Maya shows Miles a 2000 La Rinconada.

MILES

Wow. That's tempting. But shouldn't we hold back on that for a few years? It's pretty massive.

MAYA

(sliding it back in)
 Just thought you'd like to see it.
 (calling out)
 Hey, Steph? You sure we can open whatever we want?

STEPHANIE (V.O.)

Yeah!
 (a moment later)
 Anything but the Jayer Richebourg!

MILES

She has Richebourg? I have completely underestimated Stephanie.

MAYA

Who do you think you're dealing
with here?

Now she remover a '99 Tantara Bien Nacido.

MILES

Yeah, Tantara. I've only had their
Zin. We could do that...

MAYA

(now offering a '90
Eschevaux)
...or this.

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

MAYA

Nah. I don't think we know each
other well enough.
(picking one)
I think this guy's about our speed.

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

MAYA

So what gems do you have in your
collection?

MILES

Not much of a collection really. I
haven't had the wallet for that.
But I've got about thirty bottles
in the house. I guess the star
would be a 1961 Cheval Blanc.

MAYA

You've got a '61 Cheval Blanc
that's just sitting there? Go get
it.

Miles laughs.

MAYA

I mean seriously, most of the '61s
are peaking. At least that's what
I've read. What are you waiting
for?

Miles smiles a distant smile.

MILES

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

MAYA

You know what I think? I think the day you open a '61 Cheval Blanc, that's the special occasion.

MILES

How long have you been into wine?

MAYA

A long time, but I started to get serious about seven years ago.

MILES

Oh, yeah? What was the bottle that did it?

MAYA

Eighty-eight Sassicaia.

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

MILES

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

MAYA

(tastes again)

I think they overdid it a bit. Too much alcohol. Overwhelms the fruit.

MILES

(tasting again, impressed)

Yeah, you're right on the money.

Then Miles absently scans the refrigerator door and spots a photo of Stephanie holding a little girl.

MILES

Stephanie's kid sure is cute.

MAYA

Yeah, Siena's a sweetie.

MILES

Is she sleeping?

MAYA

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

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

JACK (O.S.)

"And now for a low, low 4.8 APR..."

...is followed by PEALS OF LAUGHTER.

MAYA

You got kids?

MILES

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

MAYA

Yeah, same here.

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

MAYA

Let's go in there.

Maya takes the bottle, and they wander into --

INT. STEPHANIE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

From a distant bedroom comes more laughter.

MAYA

Seems like our friends are hitting it off.

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

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

MAYA

It's kind of weird sitting here with you in Stephanie's house.

(MORE)

MAYA (cont'd)

All those times you came into the restaurant. It's like you're a real person now. Almost.

MILES

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

MAYA

Yeah, weird. But great.

MILES

Yeah, definitely.

An awkward silence, broken by Maya.

MAYA

So what's your novel about?

MILES

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

MAYA

What's the title?

MILES

"A Quarter Past Yesterday."

MAYA

Huh. Sounds intriguing. So it's kind of about death and mortality, or what?

MILES

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

MAYA

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

MILES
(squeezing it out)
Yeah. Thanks.

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

MILES
A paper.

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

MILES
That's great. I didn't even know
there was a college here.

MAYA
I commute to San Luis Obispo twice
a week. So when can I read your
book?

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

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

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

MAYA
Why are you so obsessed with Pinot?
That's all you ever order.

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

MILES

I don't know. It's a hard grape to grow. As you know. It's thin-skinned, temperamental. It's not a survivor like Cabernet that can grow and thrive anywhere...and withstand neglect. Pinot's only happy in specific little corners of the world, and it needs a lot of doting. Only the most patient and faithful and caring growers can do it, can access Pinot's fragile, achingly beautiful qualities. It doesn't come to you. You have to come to it, see? It takes the right combination of soil and sun...and love to coax it to its fullest expression. Then, and only then, its flavors are the most thrilling and brilliant and haunting on the planet.

Maya has found this answer revealing and moving.

MILES

I mean, Cabernets can be powerful and exalting, but they seem prosaic to me for some reason. By comparison. How about you? Why do you like wine so much?

MAYA

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

MILES

Yeah? Like what?

MAYA

I started to appreciate the life of wine, that it's a living thing, that it connects you more to life. I like to think about what was going on the year the grapes were growing. I like to think about how the sun was shining that summer and what the weather was like.

(MORE)

MAYA (cont'd)

I think about all those people who tended and picked the grapes. And if it's an old wine, how many of them must be dead by now. I love how wine continues to evolve, how every time I open a bottle the wine will taste different than if I had uncorked it on any other day, or at any other moment. A bottle of wine is like life itself -- it grows up, evolves and gains complexity. Then it peaks -- like your '61 -- and begins its steady, inexorable decline. And it tastes so fucking good.

Now it's Miles's turn to be swept away. Maya's face tells us the moment is right, but Miles remains frozen. He needs another sign, and Maya is bold enough to offer it: she reaches out and places one hand atop his.

MILES

But I like a lot of wines besides Pinot too. Lately I've really been into Rieslings. Do you like Rieslings?

She nods, a Mona Lisa smile on her lips. Come on, Miles. Finally --

MILES

(pointing)
Bathroom over there?

MAYA

Yeah.

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

INT. STEPHANIE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

The bathroom's a mess, the shower curtain is filthy, and the chipped and water-stained tub is filled with children's bath toys.

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

MILES

You are such a loser.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

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

INT. STEPHANIE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

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

MAYA

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

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

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

After a few seconds, Maya breaks away and steps past him, heading back into the living room. Miles realizes he's blown it and silently berates himself.

INT. SAAB - NIGHT

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

EXT. WHERE THE ROAD MEETS THE HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

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

AT THE SAAB --

Miles rolls down his window as Maya leans over.

MAYA

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

(pointing)

Two rights and a left.

MILES

Got it.

MAYA

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

MILES

Good. So did I.

MAYA

Okay. See you around.

MILES

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

MAYA

Oh. Of course.

Miles turns to the backseat, located a large manuscript box, and hands it to Maya.

MAYA

Wow. Great.

MILES

Just a second.

He turns around again, produces a second box, and hands it over as well.

MILES

Hope you like it. Feel free to stop reading at any time. I'll take no offense.

MAYA

Goodnight, Miles.

She gives him a friendly peck on the cheek.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Miles comes into the room and finds a red light flashing on the telephone. He kicks off his shoes and flops down on the bed. As he switches off the bedside lamp we. --

FADE TO BLACK.

UNDER BLACK --

TUESDAY

Jack's cellphone RINGS.

NOW EARLY MORNING --

Still fully clothed, Miles staggers across the room. Fishing the phone out of Jack's windbreaker pocket, he looks at the Caller ID: "Erganian, Christine" and the number. He briefly considers his options -- answer it? Shut it off? -- before placing it atop Jack's suitcase.

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

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

FADE TO BLACK.

LATER --

VROOM!

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

Miles opens his bleary eyes and listens.

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

JACK

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

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

JACK

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

MILES

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

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

STEPHANIE

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

MILES

Returns the wave and goes back inside.

MILES

You didn't invite Stephanie to go golfing with us, did you?

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

JACK

Oh hey, change of plans. Steph's off today, so we're going on a hike through some vineyards.

MILES

We were supposed to play golf today.

JACK

You go. In fact, use my clubs. They're brand new. Gift from Christine's dad.

(slapping some cash on the dresser)

It's on me. Oh, say, by the way, Stephanie and me were thinking we'd all go to the Hitching Post tonight and sit at one of Maya's tables, and she'll bring us some great wines and then we can all --

MILES

(sitting down)
Count me out.

JACK

Oooh, I see. Didn't go so good last night, huh? I bet it didn't. Not with you fucking calling Victoria, you dumb fuck. That was smart.

Miles looks down. Jack heads for the door.

JACK
Later, dude.

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

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

JACK
Oh, boy.

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

JACK
Yeah. Okay.

He snaps the phone shut and puts it back.

MILES
You should call her.

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

MILES
Right now.

JACK
Okay! Jesus!

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

JACK
I've got no problem calling her.

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

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

EXT. WINDMILL INN - DAY

Miles wanders out and looks down at Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

That was fun last night.

MILES

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

STEPHANIE

Thanks. I talked to Maya this morning. She said she had a good time too. You should call her. Where's Jack?

MILES

Had to make a phone call.

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

STEPHANIE

So what are you up to today, Miles?

MILES

Just kickin' back, I guess. Jack and I were supposed to go golfing.

STEPHANIE

La Purisima?

MILES

(nodding)

Beautiful course. Tough to get on sometimes. Yeah, I reserved the tee time about a month ago.

STEPHANIE

Oops. Sorry.

MILES

You golf?

STEPHANIE

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

MILES
Huh. Jack loves golf. Crazy about
it.

Just then Jack cracks open the motel room door.

JACK
(hushed)
Hey Miles. Miles.

Miles ducks back inside.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

JACK
Do you have that other condom?

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

MILES
What'd Christine say?

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

EXT. WINDMILL INN - CONTINUOUS

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

Miles watches Jack climb on the bike behind Stephanie, grasping her waist. Stephanie kicks the starter and revs the engine like a pro.

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

CLOSE ON MILES --

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

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

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

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Miles takes a styrofoam cup and helps himself to a cup of complimentary coffee from a pump thermos. Then he takes a look at the rack of pamphlets of local tourist attractions -- a water park, a mystery cave, and of course winery after winery.

EXT. JACUZZI - DAY

Amid turbulent water, Miles corrects his students' papers. He is alone in the tub, but at a nearby pool noisy STOCKY KIDS play with Super Soakers.

OVER MILES'S SHOULDER --

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

ANOTHER ANGLE reveals a stack of papers already heavily marked up with corrections, some of them mottled with water stains.

INT. CHINESE STRIP-MALL RESTAURANT - DAY

A young MEXICAN CASHIER rings up Miles's food -- rice, two entrees and an eggroll on a styrofoam plate, a fortune cookie and a Diet Coke.

MILES

Do you have any chopsticks?

CASHIER

What?

MILES

Do you have any chopsticks?

CASHIER

No.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Miles flosses, his lips pulled back into a grotesque moue.

LATER --

Miles checks his machine.

SYNTHESIZED VOICE (O.S.)
One new message.

POLISH VOICE (O.S.)
Miles, is Roman. Is the nineteen
and still no rent.

MILES
Fuck!

EXT. BANK PARKING LOT - DAY

Miles sprints from the car into the bank.

POLISH VOICE (O.S.)
Miles, why you do like this every
month? I spoke with Mr. Staglin,
and again he is very angry and
again he mentioned evicting.

INT. BANK - DAY

Miles lays a pile of his mother's hundreds before a FEMALE
TELLER with absurdly long fingernails.

MILES
I need a cashier's check for eight
hundred thirty-four dollars.

MOMENTS LATER --

The teller tears off the perforated edges of the check and
slides it over to Miles.

MILES
I don't suppose you could spare an
envelope.

She fishes out a deposit envelope.

MILES
I meant like a real envelope.

TELLER
That's all I have.

MILES

How about a stamp? Do you sell stamps?

EXT. BUCOLIC ROAD - DAY

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

INT. SAAB - CONTINUOUS

Whistling as he drives, Miles looks suddenly alarmed as through the windshield he sees --

AN OLD, DEAF SHAGGY DOG

Lumbering across the road.

Miles slams on the brakes and swerves, but WHOOMP! -- too late.

EXT. BUCOLIC ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Miles walks back toward the motionless dog lying on the pavement.

Looking for signs of life, he nudges it with one toe. Then he kneels down and rotates its old frayed collar, finding a tag reading "Skipper" and a phone number.

Miles looks one direction down the road. Nothing. He looks the other direction.

MILES

Oh, Skipper. Skipper.

EXT. GAS STATION -- DAY

AT A PAYPHONE --

Miles finishes DIALING the number on Skipper's collar.

VOICE (ON THE PHONE)

The number you have dialed is disconnected or no longer in service. If you feel you have reached this number in error...

BACK AT THE CAR --

Skipper lies atop a now bloody windbreaker in the trunk. Briefly considering his options, he hauls Skipper out of the car and carries the bundle toward a dumpster. Just then a GAS STATION ATTENDANT walks by.

GAS STATION ATTENDANT
Hey, where do you think you're going with that?

MILES
Oh, um...I found this dog on the road.

GAS STATION ATTENDANT
Well, you're not dumping it here. We don't allow that. You get that thing out of here.

MILES
But...you see, it's not mine. I don't know whose it is. I just...I tried calling and...

GAS STATION ATTENDANT
Not my problem. Get it out of here.

Miles heads back toward the Saab.

EXT. BUCOLIC ROAD - DAY

Miles has returned to where he hit the dog. He places Skipper on the nearby shoulder.

He pulls the jacket from beneath Skipper, but noticing how stained it is, he bundles it up and tosses it into nearby bushes. Before heading back to the car, he pauses to stare at Skipper, reflecting on the fleeting nature of life.

Just then, Miles notices TWO MEXICAN CHILDREN watching him just down the road. They panic and disappear into the bushes.

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

EXT. WINDMILL INN - DAY

The Saab pulls into the parking lot.

EXT/INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

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

JACK

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

JACK
Not now! Not now!

Miles quickly shuts the door.

INT. WINDMILL LOUNGE - DAY

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

JACK
Hey, there you are.

MILES
Yep.

JACK
What're you drinking?

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

JACK
Any good?

Miles shrugs.

JACK
(to the bartender)
Could I get a glass please?
(to Miles)
Stephanie took me out into the Pinot fields today. It was awesome. I think I finally got a handle on the whole process, from the soil to the vine to the -- what do you call it? -- selection and harvest. And the whole, you know, big holding containers where they mix it and age it.

(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)

We even ate Pinot grapes right off the vine.

(the new expert)

Still a little sour but already showing potential for great structure. Stephanie really knows her shit, Miles.

Jack now has his glass and pours himself some wine.

MILES

Where is Stephanie?

JACK

Upstairs. Getting cleaned up.

MILES

What the fuck are you doing?

JACK

What?

MILES

With this chick.

Jack just looks at him.

MILES

Does she know about Saturday?

JACK

Um...not exactly. But I've been honest. I haven't told her I'm available. And she knows this trip up here is only for a few days. Besides...

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

MILES

Besides what?

JACK

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

MILES

What?

JACK

Well, I've been doing some thinking.

MILES
Oh, you've been *thinking*. And?

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

Miles looks at him with incredulity.

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

Miles just looks at his friend, waiting for more.

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

MILES
Deep.

Miles draws a long sigh.

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

MILES
Well, how about this? Your best friend takes you wine tasting for a week, during which time you fuck your brains out and upon your return you cancel your wedding.
(MORE)

MILES (cont'd)

And you don't think everyone's going to be pointing the finger at ME?

JACK

I knew sooner or later you'd make this all about you.

MILES

That's exactly how they're going to see it!

They fall silent for a moment. Then --

JACK

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

MILES

Understanding of what?

JACK

Like I might be in love with another woman.

MILES

Twenty-four hours with a Buellton wine-pourer and you're in love?

JACK

Don't you condescend to me. Or her. You've been there.

MILES

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

JACK

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

MILES

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

JACK

(interrupting)

Here's what I'm thinking. We move up here, you and me, buy a vineyard. You design your own wine; I'll handle the business side. Then you get inspired and write a new novel, one that'll sell this time...As for me, if an audition comes along, hell, LA's two hours away. Not even.

MILES

You're crazy. You've gone crazy.

JACK

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

MILES

What are you talking about? Of course I like Christine.

JACK

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

MILES

That was three years ago after that first party!

JACK

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

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

STEPHANIE

Hi, guys. We should probably get going.

MILES

Where?

INT. SHAKEY'S PIZZA -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON A VIDEO GAME MONITOR

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

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

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

CARYL

Stephanie's heard this a thousand times, but if I'd bought on Alamo Pintado Road when I had the chance, I would have made a fortune when they put in that outlet center and the new watcha-ma-call-it.

(a drag off her cigarette,
then to Stephanie)

Your father knew it too, but he was a chickenshit. Always was.

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

Caryl exhales a puff of smoke as she watches. Stephanie is equally enthralled.

Miles takes it all in, trying his best not to shake his head in disgust.

EXT. SHAKEY'S PIZZA PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Caryl is behind the wheel of Caryl's oldsmobile as Stephanie gets Siena buckled up in the backseat. Jack pulls Miles aside.

JACK

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

MILES
 (dispirited)
 Sure, whatever.

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

STEPHANIE
 See you, Miles. You take care.

MILES
 Bye, Stephanie. Bye, Siena, Caryl.

SIENA AND CARYL
 Bye, Miles.

As he gets in the car --

JACK
 Call me on my cell if you go out.

MILES
 Yeah.

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

INT. GAS STATION/MINI MART - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE COUNTER --

As Miles places a box of security envelopes, a packet of beef jerky and some tropical fruit Skittles.

WIDE --

Miles points over the cashier's shoulder.

MILES
 And could I get a Perfect 10?

As the cashier reaches over for the magazine --

MILES
 Do you guys sell stamps?

INT. MOTEL ROOM BATHROOM - NIGHT

Miles is once again flossing.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

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

NOW SNOOZING ATOP THE BED --

The Perfect 10 face down on his chest, Miles awakens with a start and looks at the clock-radio. He thinks a moment, takes a deep breath, and bounds off the bed.

CLOSE ON A WATER-SAVER SHOWER HEAD --

As little needles of water come at us.

THROUGH THE BATHROOM DOOR --

We glimpse Miles taking a nice hot SHOWER.

EXT. THE HITCHING POST - NIGHT

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

INT. THE HITCHING POST - NIGHT

Miles affects nonchalance as he approaches the bar and peeks through the door into the restaurant, looking for Maya. He continues on into the bar.

GARY

How's it hanging, Miles.

MILES

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

GARY

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

MILES
Highliner.

GARY
Glass or bottle?

MILES
(considers, then --)
Bottle.

GARY
You got it.

MILES
Say, is Maya working?

GARY
Maya? Haven't seen her. I think
she's off tonight.

WIDE --

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

MILES
Oh, that's tasty.

EXT. HITCHING POST - NIGHT

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

GARY
You okay, Miles?

MILES
I'm good.

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

FADE OUT.

UNDER BLACK, A CARD --

WEDNESDAY

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The door bursts open, and Jack comes bounding in.

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

Miles comes to, very hungover.

MILES
No Stephanie?

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

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

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

JACK
Crap.

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

JACK
Did you ever get ahold of Maya
yesterday?

MILES
Nope.

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

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

JACK
(stepping back)
Oh yeah. Sure.

Miles lifts his club.

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

MILES
Thanks, Jack.

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

JACK
Don't whiff it.

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

JACK
Nice shot.

MILES
You're an asshole.

NOW ON THE FAIRWAY --

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

JACK
What about your agent? Hear
anything yet?

MILES
Nope.

JACK
What do you think's going on?

MILES
Could be anything.

JACK
Been checking your messages?

MILES
Obsessively.

JACK
Huh.

MILES

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

JACK

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

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

JACK

Watch the knees. Stay still.

MILES

Shut up.

JACK

Just trying to be helpful.
(a moment later)
Tiger Woods says it's all about stillness. Inner quiet.

Miles drops his club and turns to Jack.

MILES

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

JACK

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

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

MILES

What is it?

JACK

I don't know.

Miles downs the rest and is intrigued by the taste.

MILES

Huh. Let me see the label.

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

JACK

(whirling around)

What the fuck?

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

HUSBAND #1

Hurry it up, will you?

Jack looks at Miles, the two incredulous.

MILES

Fucker hit into us.

JACK

(yelling)

Hey, asshole! That's not cool!

MILES

Throw me his ball.

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

JACK

Nice shot!

THE COUPLES

Duck for cover as the ball whistles over their heads.

JACK AND MILES

Laugh hard.

THE TWO HUSBANDS

Climb into their cart and hasten down the fairway toward Jack and Miles.

JACK

Watches their approach, grinning.

JACK
 Oh, this is going to be fun.
 (jerking his driver from
 his bag.)
 This is going to be fun.

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

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

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

INT. GOLF COURSE CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

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

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

MILES
 I don't want to talk about it.

JACK
 Woman's beautiful. Lots of soul.
 Perfect for you. All I know is I'm
 not going to feel good about this
 trip unless you hook up with Maya.
 Don't you want to feel her tight
 little pussy grip down on your
 joint?

Nearby a GOLFER is with his YOUNG SON.

GOLFER
 Hey, you mind keeping it down,
 buddy?

EXT. SOLVANG - DAY

Jack and Miles are seated outside a touristy restaurant and are eating chili dogs.

JACK

So is it the money thing?

MILES

Is what the money thing?

JACK

With Maya.

MILES

Well, yeah, that's part of it. Woman finds out how I live and that I'm not a published author, that I'm a liar essentially, then yeah, she's going to lose interest real quick. If you don't have money at my age, you're not even in the game. You're just a pasture animal waiting for the abattoir. That's me.

JACK

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

MILES

Slaughterhouse.

JACK

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

MILES

Don't get my hopes up. I've been checking my machine every few hours as it is.

JACK

Okay, let's talk man to man for a second. Let's just suppose you don't get your novel published. What's your back-up plan?

MILES

I don't know, Smith and Wesson? I'm sure as hell not going to write another one, that's for sure.

JACK

I believe you are a great writer, Miles. And what would you say if I wanted to invest, say, fifteen thousand dollars in your career?

MILES

What?

JACK

You heard me. Buy you a little more time to write another one. Or hell, you could even get it published yourself, get it out there, get it in libraries, get it reviewed. Fuck these New York publishers. Let the public decide.

MILES

What are you talking about? I can't be indebted to you.

JACK

You didn't hear me right. It's an investment, not a loan. Or just take it as a gift.

MILES

I decline.

JACK

Would it make any difference if I told you Christine's parents are giving us a half-million bucks the day we get married?

Miles looks at Jack, agog.

JACK

Sort of an old-world dowry thing. Armenian thing.

MILES

And you're thinking about running off with another woman? You are nuts.

JACK

Well, don't you think I might have doubts about entering the lap of luxury via the marriage route? What about my pride? Did you ever think about that?

MILES

Yeah, Sam Bittner used to say the only way you got rich was either coming out of the right cunt or going into the right cunt.

Jack considers the wisdom of this.

JACK

Huh. So look, if you want to keep living hand to mouth on what is it? -- thirty-five grand a year before taxes? -- that's your business. But I believe in you, and I'm willing to put my mouth where my money is.

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

Jack is driving this time.

MILES

And Christine will approve it? If you get married, of course.

JACK

Absolutely. We care about you, man. Very much.

MILES

Well, I'll think about it. Thanks.

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

JACK

It's Steph.

(picking up)

Hey, baby. Yeah. Oh yeah. Yesssss. I mean I would, but let me see. Hey, Miles...Oh fuck it, we're going. We'll be right there. Me. Too.

He snaps his phone shut and turns to Miles.

JACK
We're on.

Jack takes an abrupt u-turn.

MILES
What's happening?

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

MILES
What exactly are we going to do?

JACK
I said okay?

MILES
You have to tell me--

JACK
I SAID OKAY?

Miles finally smiles at his friend's infectious buoyancy.

MILES
Okay.

BIG FUN MUSIC
BEGINS OVER:

EXT. FOXEN VINEYARDS - DAY

A HIGH WIDE SHOT --

The Saab pulls up outside the tasting room where Stephanie and Maya await with bottles of wine and a picnic basket. They climb into the back seat, and the car speeds away.

INT./EXT. THE SAAB - DAY

They're going FAST, hair whipping around.

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

MILES

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

MAYA

I had class last night.

MILES

Well, nice to see you now.

MAYA

You too.

EXT. BEAUTIFUL ROAD -- DAY

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

EXT. IDYLIC PICNIC SPOT -- DAY INTO DUSK

The girls have led them into a beautiful spot overlooking the ocean.

IN A SERIES OF SHOTS --

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

Finally, the two couples are silhouetted against the sunset.

EXT. SOME BIG WINERY PARKING LOT -- EVENING

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

INT. SOME BIG WINERY -- EVENING

A lecture by British wine sage CLIVE BROUGH is in progress. He holds aloft a Riedel Burgundy glass containing one of the few but growing number of local reds worthy of his attention.

In the audience, our foursome listen attentively. Then Stephanie leans forward and signals to Maya with a yawn or gagging finger in mouth that they hightail it. Although Miles protests at first, they stand and leave.

AT THE BACK OF THE ROOM --

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

INT. WINEMAKING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

This is an enormous, dimly-lit chamber filled with stainless steel fermentation tanks and stacks of oak casks.

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

LATER --

In the background, Stephanie and Jack lean against a tank, kissing. CAMERA DOLLIES to reveal Miles and Maya among the casks in the foreground. They are shy with each other, on the verge of kissing but holding back.

THE MUSIC
CONTINUES...

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

THREE BOTTLES OF WINE

Sit empty on the coffee table.

WIDE --

The four of them sit on the floor around the coffee table. They drink wine and pass a joint. Suddenly they explode in laughter.

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

EXT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maya's car pulls away from the house and, passing camera, begins making its way down the hill.

INT. SAAB - NIGHT

Miles sits in Maya's passenger seat as she drives. Maya even bobs her head to the music that continues as score.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Maya leads Miles down a brightly-lit white hallway. They're both a little woozy from hours of drinking.

AT THE DOOR --

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

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

The camera PANS to a nearby WINDOW overlooking the parking lot and all that lies beyond.

MUSIC ENDS AND
SLOW DISSOLVE
TO:

THE SAME VIEW BY DAY, SUPERIMPOSED WITH --

THURSDAY

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

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

It is a small, clean apartment furnished with simple taste. Maya is dressed in a robe and holds a coffee mug. She drops the paper on the dining table and continues into --

THE BEDROOM --

Where Miles lies on his stomach dead to the world. His stubbly face is squished against the mattress and he snores lightly.

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

EXT. FARMERS' MARKET - DAY

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

Maya and Miles are shopping. Miles carries the bags.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Across from each other at a picnic table, and surrounded by the remnants of breakfast, Miles and Maya read the newspaper. Miles is doing the crossword puzzle.

MAYA

You guys should stop by the restaurant for lunch today.

MILES

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

MAYA

About two-thirty.

MILES

Okay.

MAYA

(noticing)

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

Miles has just figured out a difficult clue, and as he writes it down --

MILES

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

MAYA
What rehearsal dinner?

Miles stops writing and looks up.

MAYA
Who's getting married?

INT./EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Maya leads the way toward the Saab.

MAYA
Were you ever going to say
anything?

MILES
Of course I was. I mean, just now I
could have told you something
entirely different. I didn't lie to
you.

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

MILES
Maya.

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

INT. SAAB - DAY

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

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

MAYA
Do you know what he's been telling
her?

MILES
He's an actor. I can only imagine.

MAYA

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

MILES

I'm sure he believed every word.

A stony silence.

MILES

Please trust me. I really wanted to tell you last night, but...

MAYA

Things were going too well. Right?

MILES

Oh, Maya. No.

EXT. MAYA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

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

MAYA

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

MILES

And I haven't been with anyone for two years. This is a big deal for me, Maya. I'm not Jack. I'm just his friend from college.

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

MAYA

Give me my paper.

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

EXT. WINDMILL INN - DAY

Miles pulls up and parks.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

As Miles enters, a shirtless Jack is immediately upon him, grabbing him in a big bearhug.

JACK

Yo! Yo! Here's my boy! Here's my boy! Who's your daddy, boy? Who is yo' daddy?

MILES

Put me down, Jack.

Jack continues his paean to Miles's triumphant night.

MILES

I said put me down. Jack!

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

JACK

I'm so proud of you! I love you!

Now they get up off the bed.

JACK

So tell me everything. Details. I like details.

MILES

No.

JACK

What?

MILES

It's private.

JACK

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

MILES

Let's leave it alone.

Jack looks at Miles, his face frozen with incomprehension.

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

MILES
 Is that all you care about? There's
 more to life -- and a relationship --
 -- than sex! This is all a big party
 for you, but not for me! This is
 serious. And you -- Just...leave me
 alone, okay? You're fucking me up.

JACK
 Wow. Okay. Calm down. Sorry.

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

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

MILES
 I did not have trouble performing!
 I was rock hard all night! Okay? Is
 that what you want to hear?

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

MILES
 Don't answer it.

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

MILES
 I'm telling you, don't.

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

JACK
 Hello? Oh, hey, honey. How you
 doing? Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

MILES
 (mouthing)
 Who is it?

JACK
(mouthing)
Christine.

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

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

Jack hangs up.

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

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

MILES
We gotta slow down.
(closing his eyes)
I'm so tired.

INT. FOOT LOCKER - DAY

Jack watches Miles be fitted for sneakers. A SALES ASSOCIATE in a referee shirt ties Miles's laces.

SALES ASSOCIATE
There you go.

Miles gets up and walks in a circle.

MILES
Do you like them?

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

MILES
Are they too sporty?

INT. MALL -- DAY

The boys exit Foot Locker, Miles wearing his new shoes and carrying a plastic bag with a string handle.

JACK
Feel better?

Miles shrugs.

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

He heads toward a Toys R Us.

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

Mildly concerned, Miles watches Jack go into the store.

EXT. FESS PARKER WINERY - DAY

Due to the worldwide fame of its namesake, this is the largest, most touristy winery in the area.

The parking lot is full, and a banner out front proclaims the day's event - a tasting of twenty participating local wineries.

INT. FESS PARKER - DAY

A BRIEF MONTAGE --

-- At the entrance hands are ink-stamped with a wine glass silhouette.

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

-- A WINE SNOB opens his carrying case of specialized stemware and removes just the right glass.

-- WINE TASTERS "chew" their wine and SPIT into buckets.

-- Clive Brough signs copies of his latest book.

AT THE AU BON CLIMAT TABLE --

Programs in hand, Miles and Jack finish their dollops of wine and extend their glasses for more, competing with other greedy TASTERS. The WINE REPS do their best to keep up.

MILES

We should have gotten here earlier.

JACK

Well, somebody I know wanted sneakers.

(indicating Clive)

You ever actually read any of that guy's books?

MILES

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

JACK

Uh-huh.

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

JACK

Like it?

MILES

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

(setting down his glass)

Hey, let me use your phone.

JACK
 (handing it over)
 What's up?

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

EXT. FESS PARKER WINERY - DAY

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

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

MILES
 Hi, it's Miles.

ASSISTANT (ON THE PHONE)
 Oh, hi, Miles. Let me see if I can
 get her.

(a moment later)
 You're in luck. I'll put you
 through.

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE)
 Miles.

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

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

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

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

MILES
 And?

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

(MORE)

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE) (cont'd)
 They really wanted to do it, but
 they just couldn't figure out how
 to market it. He said it was a
 really tough call.

MILES
 Huh.

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

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

EXT. DEEP CANYON - INSERT

Once again we see the narrow rope bridge extending
 vertiginously across a great chasm.

EXT. FESS PARKER WINERY - BACK AGAIN

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

MILES
 Yeah, I'm here.

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

MILES
 So I guess that's it.

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE)
 These things are so subjective.
 Many deserving books go
 unpublished.

(MORE)

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE) (cont'd)
 You're a wonderful writer, Miles.
 Don't be discouraged.

MOMENTS LATER --

Miles staggers toward the tasting room, unpocketing his Xanax and downing two, as Evelyn's cliches of consolation continue in his head.

EVELYN (ON THE PHONE)
 I still believe in you. Just hang
 in there, and who knows? After you
 get something else published, we
 can revisit this one. And next time
 we can try a different title.

Once at the building, he leans against it in a vain attempt to steady himself. The RUMBLE grows deafening.

INT. FESS PARKER WINERY -- DAY

Now back inside, Miles grabs the first dirty wine glass he finds and shakes it out as he approaches the closest tasting station. He pushes his way to the front.

The pourer offers the usual one-ounce dollop. Miles jacks it back, immediately extending his glass for more.

MILES
 Hit me again.

The same small amount is poured and downed. Once again Miles holds out his glass.

MILES
 Pour me a full glass. I'll pay for
 it.

POURER
 This is a tasting, sir. Not a bar.

Miles slams a twenty dollar bill on the table.

MILES
 Give me a full goddamn pour.

The pourer turns away to serve another party. Miles looks around indignantly, as though everyone should be sympathetic to this injustice.

Now Miles boldly reaches over and pours himself a full glass, right up to the brim and beyond.

POURER
Sir, what are you doing?

MILES
I told you I need a drink.

POURER
Then buy a bottle and go outside.

The pourer grabs Miles by the wrist before he can drink.

POURER
Put the glass down.

In the ensuing struggle, the wine spills, and everyone nearby steps back.

POURER
You're going to have to leave, sir.

The pourer signals to a SECURITY GUY at the door. Across the room Jack notices the disturbance and heads over.

Miles picks up the spit bucket and starts to guzzle it. Wine cascades down the sides of his face, onto his shirt and even onto his shiny new shoes.

The Security Guy yanks the bucket away from Miles, and drags him toward the exit. Jack catches up.

JACK
(to the horrified
onlookers)
It's all right. His mother just
died.

EXT. JALAMA BEACH - DAY

Two pelicans soar low over the water. Suddenly one of them dives, crashing into the water and disappearing from view.

Jack and Miles sit on the hood of the Saab, gazing at the ocean, sharing a bottle of wine.

JACK
Just write another one. You always
have ideas.

MILES
No. I'm finished. I'm not a writer.
I'm a middle-school English
teacher.

(MORE)

MILES (cont'd)

I'm going to spend the rest of my life grading essays and reading the published works of others. The world doesn't give a shit what I have to say. I'm unnecessary.

(a dark laugh)

I'm so insignificant, I can't even kill myself.

JACK

What's that supposed to mean?

MILES

You know -- Hemingway, Sexton, Woolf, Plath, Delmore Schwartz. You can't kill yourself before you've even been published.

JACK

Sure you can. What about that guy who wrote Confederacy of Dunces? He committed suicide before he got published, and look how famous he is.

MILES

That helps.

JACK

Don't give up. I know you're going to make it. I'm betting good money on it.

MILES

I'm forty-two. Half my life is over, and I have nothing to show for it. I'm a thumbprint on the first floor window of a skyscraper. I'm a smudge of excrement on a tissue surging out to sea with a million tons of raw sewage.

JACK

See? Right there. Just what you just said. That's beautiful. A thumbprint on a skyscraper. I couldn't write that.

MILES

Me neither. I think it's Bukowski.

Unable to respond, Jack looks up and down the beach.

EXT. RURAL ROAD -- DAY

ZOOM! There goes the Saab. The CAMERA lingers behind and PANS to reveal Skipper, covered in flies, visible decaying.

EXT. WINDMILL INN - DAY

Jack and Miles pull into the parking lot.

JACK
(lighting up)
Oh, look! There's Steph!

He smiles broadly and honks his horn. Miles turns to see --

STEPHANIE

Seated halfway up the motel stairs, her helmet in her lap, watching patiently as --

THE SAAB

Pulls to a stop in a parking space.

Miles masks his concern as he gets out of the car and reaches into the backseat for his Foot Locker bag.

JACK
(calling out)
Hey, baby. Looking good.

Stephanie stands up and slowly descends the steps, as Jack reaches into the trunk and pulls out a big cuddly lion doll.

JACK
Look what I got for our favorite girl.

Stephanie walks toward Jack as he waddles toward her hugging the lion. When they get close, Stephanie's face transforms with rage.

STEPHANIE
YOU MOTHERFUCKER!

She swings her helmet and hits Jack full in the face.

Jack falls, blood spraying out of his nose. Stephanie stands over him and continues to beat him with her helmet as he rolls back and forth, trying to protect his head with the stuffed lion.

Miles ineffectually attempts to stop her, dancing just out of range of the helmet.

MILES

Stephanie! Stop!

STEPHANIE

You fucking bastard! Lying piece of shit! You're getting married on Saturday? What was all that shit you said to me?

JACK

I can explain.

STEPHANIE

I thought you loved me! You fuck! I hope you die!

With that she backs away. Glancing at her bloodied helmet, she tosses it onto the pavement before getting on her bike.

STEPHANIE

Fuckface!

As she speeds away, Miles is left to comfort his wounded friend. The lion lies nearby, staring blankly at the sky.

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

Seated in the passenger seat and in great agony, Jack presses a blood-soaked towel against his face.

MILES

Aren't you glad you didn't move up here and marry her?

JACK

Don't need a fucking lecture. Who told her, anyway? You fucking told Maya, didn't you?

MILES

No, I did not. I'm thinking it must have been Gary at the Hitching Post. I'm pretty sure we told him the first night.

JACK

You told him. All I know is I'm
fucking hurting here.

MILES

Keep it elevated.

INT. LOMPOC GENERAL HOSPITAL ER WAITING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON A COSMOPOLITAN

Open to an article entitled "24 Ways To Please Your Man."

WIDER--

Miles reads, while nearby a YOUNG BOY dry-heaves into a
garbage can held by his FATHER. An OLD WOMAN is parked in a
wheelchair facing the wall.

LATER --

Miles is at a payphone. As he speaks he tries to peel off the
metal long distance sticker.

MAYA (ON THE PHONE)

Hi. It's Maya. Please leave a
message.

MILES

It's Miles. Listen, I don't know if
you even care, but I had to call
and tell you again how immensely I
enjoyed our time together and how
sorry I am that I let you down. I
think you're great, Maya -- always
have. From the first time you
waited on me.

(bracing himself)

I should also tell you that my book
is not getting published. I thought
this one had a chance, but I just
got the bad news from my agent.
That makes me three for three. So
don't bother reading it -- you've
got better things to do. Seems like
I'm not much of a writer. I'm not
anything.

(MORE)

MILES (cont'd)

In fact, the only real talent I seem to have is for disappointing people, and now you know that first hand. We're leaving in the morning, and I want you to know that I will take with me wonderful memories of you -- last night and this morning chief among them.

What else to say? He hangs up.

He returns to his seat. A moment later he extends his legs to look at his new shoes now stained with wine.

LATER --

Jack emerges unsteadily from the bowels of the emergency room, his face purple and swollen beneath the huge white bandage that holds the noseguard in place. Miles walks with him toward the exit.

MILES

Well?

JACK

I'm going to need an operation. Maybe a couple of them. They have to wait for it to heal first. Then they break it again.

MILES

Good thing you have a voice-over career.

JACK

(nasal)

Might fuck that up too. I should sue her ass. Only reason I won't is to protect Christine.

MILES

That's thoughtful.

JACK

(disgusted)

Yeah.

They walk by us and out the door.

EXT. STREET IN SOLVANG - DAY

Jack sits in the Saab's passenger side with the seat almost fully reclined. When his agony allows him to open his eyes, he glares at the Danish-themed stores lining the street. A glass-blower plies his ancient trade in a nearby window.

He hears a strange CLOMPING NOISE and turns his head to see a MAN IN WOODEN CLOGS walking noisily down the street, dressed in a traditional Danish costume and carrying a tuba. Jack takes a slug of wine.

Just then Miles gets back in the car.

JACK
I really hate this place.

Miles tears open a paper bag and removes a bottle of pills. A closer angle reveals them as Vicodin.

MILES
Take a couple of these, and you'll
learn to love it.

Miles opens the bottle and hands Jack two pills.

MILES
Two for you.
(going back for more)
And two for me.

Jack washes down the pills and passes the bottle to Miles, who follows suit.

EXT. WINDMILL INN JACUZZI - EVENING

Jack and Miles sit across from each other. For the first time we see large purple bruises on Jack's arms and chest.

JACK
So how did Stephanie find out? It's
not like she works with Gary.

MILES
Simple. Gary must have told Maya,
and Maya told Stephanie.

JACK
But how did Stephanie know it was
Saturday? We didn't get into that
with Gary, did we?

MILES

Let me think.

JACK

You sure you didn't say anything to Maya?

MILES

Sure I'm sure. And just what are you implying? I'm really pissed off at you about all this, if you want to know the truth. What's Maya going to think of me now just for association with you? You're the one who's sabotaging me, not the other way around, pal. Not by a longshot.

Jack takes a long lie-detecting look at Miles.

JACK

I don't know. Just seems fishy.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The boys lie on their respective beds staring at the TV. Jack gets up and lumbers slowly to the dresser mirror like a large dog who has just been neutered.

JACK

What's it look like to you?

MILES

Looks like you were in an accident.

Jack turns to Miles, nodding and thinking. Then he looks back in the mirror.

JACK

I'm hungry.

EXT. A.J. SPURS BARBECUE - NIGHT

Establishing. Thursday is Cajun Wings Night.

INT. A.J. SPURS BARBECUE - NIGHT

Miles and Jack are finishing their salads in the rustic-themed restaurant festooned with animal trophies.

JACK
You know what I'm thinking?

MILES
What?

JACK
I'm thinking it's time to settle
down. One woman. One house. You
know. It's time.

MILES
Well, you are getting married day
after tomorrow, so...

Jack nods his head with no self-awareness or acknowledgment
of the irony.

NOW TO PLATES ARRIVE

Mounded high with wings, slaw, beans and butter-whipped
mashed potatoes.

JACK
Mm. Mm.

Their cheery, zaftig blonde WAITRESS removes several foil
packets from her apron and places them on the table.

WAITRESS
And here's your Handi-wipes.

JACK
Oh, so that's what those things
are? For a second there I thought
you guys were handing out condoms.

The waitress over-laughs and swipes a hand at her naughty
customer.

WAITRESS
I'll be right back with more corn
bread.

Jack watches her go and leans in close to Miles.

JACK
I bet you that chick is two tons of
fun. You know, the grateful type.

MILES
Um...I don't know. I wouldn't know.

JACK

If I were you, I'd be all over that
like white on rice.

Now she comes back toward the table carrying a big basket. Beneath the hideous uniform, her nylons SH-SH-SH as she walks. When she arrives, she replenishes their corn bread basket using big tongs. Jack watches attentively.

JACK

Nice technique there...
(checking her name tag)
...Cammi.

CAMMI

It's all in the wrist.
(a moment later)
You know, you look really familiar.
You from around here? Where'd you
go to high school?

JACK

We're from San Diego. Why?

CAMMI

I don't know. You just seem really
familiar to me for some reason.
Never mind. Enjoy your meals.

JACK

Hang on. Did you ever know a Derek
Sommersby?

CAMMI

Dr. Derek Sommersby? You mean from
"One Life to Live?"

Miles looks away and sighs.

JACK

You have to imagine him with a
bandage and shorter hair.

MILES

And about twenty pounds heavier.

As Cammi stares at Jack, her face transforms into
astonishment.

CAMMI

No. Way. No way!

Jack smiles and nods.

CAMMI
Oh, my God!

MILES
Could you tell me where the
bathroom is?

CAMMI
(her eyes barely leaving
Jack)
Uh, sure, it's right over there,
second left past the buffalo.

IN A WIDE SHOT --

Miles gets up and heads toward the bathroom as Jack's
flirtation with Cammi continues.

The camera PANS with Miles as he walks by us and goes through
the bathroom door, which closes behind him, filling the frame
with the word "MEN."

LATER --

A TOOTHPICK DISPENSER

As a finger tips it forward to dispense one.

WIDER --

Miles stands by the cash register and picks his teeth as he
watches Jack finish speaking with Cammi and head his way.

JACK
She gets off in an hour, so I think
I'm just going to have a drink and
then...make sure she gets home
safe.

MILES
You're joking, right?
(seeing that he isn't)
What are you doing? Unbelievable.
Can't we just go back to the hotel
and hang out and we get up early
and play nine holes before we check
out?

Jack rests one hand on Miles's shoulder and drops his head, thinking how best to put it.

JACK

Look, Miles. I know you're my friend and you care about me. And I know you disapprove. I respect that. But there are some things I have to do that you don't understand. You understand wine and literature and movies, but I don't think you understand my plight.

MILES

Your plight?

CLOSE ON MILES --

As the disappointment in his friend deepens by the moment.

FADE TO BLACK.

UNDER BLACK, SUPERIMPOSED --

FRIDAY

Now comes the sound of hysterical KNOCKING.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- DAWN

Despite the knocking, Miles remains motionless in bed, his expression serene.

Then, with a start, he awakens and drags himself toward the door, opening it to find --

JACK

Silhouetted against the first rosy fingers of dawn. He is barefoot. In fact he is clad only in his underwear. Hugging himself, he pants and shivers.

JACK

Jesus fucking Christ, it's freezing.

He limps past Miles, yanks off the bed covers and wraps them around himself.

JACK
Vicodin. Where's the Vicodin?

Miles hands him the bottle, and Jack frantically pops a couple of pills, chewing them like candy. He sits down and bends over at the waist as though preparing for an airplane crash.

JACK
Fucking chick's married.

MILES
What?

JACK
Her husband works a night shift or something, and he comes home, and I'm on the floor with my cock in his wife's ass.

MILES
Jesus, Jack. Jesus. And you walked all the way back from Solvang?

JACK
Ran. Twisted my ankle too.

MILES
That's five clicks, Jackson.

JACK
Fucking-a it's five clicks! At one point I cut through an ostrich farm. Fuckers are mean.

Miles has now awakened enough to take in the absurdity of the whole scene, and he laughs hard. The blanketed bulge just sits there. Finally it looks up and shows its pitiful face.

JACK
And I left my wallet.

MILES
So?

JACK
My credit cards, cash, fucking ID, everything. Everything. We gotta go back.

MILES
Don't worry. We'll call right now and cancel your cards.

JACK

The wedding bands. The wedding bands are in my wallet.

MILES

Okay, so they were in your wallet, and you left your wallet somewhere. Christine'll understand.

JACK

She ordered them special. Took her forever to find them. They've got this design engraved on them with dolphins and our names engraved in Sanskrit. We've got to go back. Christine'll fucking crucify me.

MILES

You're talking about walking into a hornet's nest. We're not going.

JACK

(a pitiful whine)
Please, Miles, please.

MILES

No way. Get it out of your mind. Look, your wallet was stolen at a bar. Happens every day.

Jack stares straight ahead breathing through his mouth as he considers this. Then --

JACK

No! We've got to get my wallet! Those rings are irreplaceable! We've got to get them, Miles! I fucked up! I know I fucked up, okay? I fucked up. You gotta help me. You gotta help me. Pleeeeease!

Jack now descends to a level of wretchedness and desperation that Miles has never seen in anyone before.

JACK

Oh, God, please... Oh, God. I know I'm bad. I know I did a bad thing. Help me, Miles. Just this one thing, just this one last thing. Please, Miles, please....uuuuu.... Uuuuuu....uuuuuuu.....

No longer able to form words, Jack is reduced to emitting low, primitive sounds. Snot flows from beneath his bandaged nose.

INT./EXT. SAAB - MORNING

Miles drives in the early-morning light. Jack is now subdued, quieted by his pain and exhaustion.

MILES
She tell you she was married?

JACK
Yeah.

MILES
So what the fuck were you thinking?

JACK
Wasn't supposed to be back till six. Fucker rolls in at five.

MILES
Cutting it a little close, weren't you?
(off Jack's silence)
So how was she? Compared to Stephanie, say.

JACK
Horny as shit. Flopping around like a landed trout.

EXT. LOW-RENT SOLVANG STREET - MORNING

The Saab creeps around a corner.

INT./EXT. SAAB - MORNING

Jack scans the street.

JACK
Yeah, this is the block. Just keep going...
(spotting an AMC Pacer)
Yeah! This is it. There's her car.

Miles pulls over and cuts the engine.

MILES
So what's the plan?

JACK
You go.

MILES
Me?

JACK
Yeah, my ankle. Just go explain the situation.

MILES
(clearing his throat)
Uh, excuse me, sir, but my friend was the one balling your wife a couple hours ago, and he seems to have left his wallet behind, so we were wondering...

JACK
Yeah! Like that. I'm giving you ten grand. Just go up there real polite and reason with him. You're great at that.

MILES
So now the money has conditions??
Fuck you. And you said fifteen.

Jack purses his lips and slams his hand on the door handle.

JACK
I'll get it myself.

MILES
(grabbing Jack's shirt)
Hold on.

EXT. CAMMI'S STREET - MORNING

Miles crosses the street and approaches --

EXT. CAMMI'S APARTMENT COMPLEX -- MORNING

Searching for the right apartment, Miles passes a swimming pool in obvious disuse for years. It is surrounded by weed-fissured concrete and two rusted and broken hardware-store loungers.

Finding the right apartment, he presses his ear against the door. Nothing. Then he notices --

A SLIDING GLASS DOOR

A few feet away, just barely cracked open.

MILES

Creeps over, sticks his hand into the open space and pulls back the curtain to reveal --

A LIVING ROOM

That is hideously messy. Draped over a deformed beanbag chair are Jack's Levi's.

Miles gathers his courage, carefully slides open the glass door, and creeps inside.

INT. CAMMI'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

A furtive search of Jack's pockets reveals nothing. Then Miles notices a HIGH-PITCHED SOUND wafting from an open door down a short hallway.

Miles feverishly begins foraging through the debris on the floor. Again nothing. Meanwhile the noise from the bedroom grows louder -- female MOANING in odd rhythmic unison with a MAN'S VOICE.

IN THE HALLWAY --

Miles gets on all fours and starts crawling, weaving his way through a trail of shoes and clothes.

Nearing the open door, the sounds grow more distinct --

MAN

You don't think I fuck you, bitch?
I'll fuck you.

CAMMI

I'm a bad girl. I'm a bad girl.

Miles peers around the corner of the open door to see --

INT. CAMMI'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Cammi is tied to the faux brass headboard. A FAT GUY slams away at her. In the corner a soundless TV shows a presidential press conference.

MAN

You picked him up and you fucked him, didn't you, bitch?

CAMMI

I picked him up and I fucked him. I'm a bad girl.

MAN

And you liked fucking him, didn't you, you fat little whore?

CAMMI

I liked it when you caught me fucking him.

Whoa!

Miles manages to tear his eyes away from this nature documentary and scan the room.

IRIS IN TO THE WALLET atop the DRESSER.

Miles's eyes dart back and forth between the couple and the wallet. His HEART BEATING LOUDLY, he goes for it. He scrambles to his feet, dashes across the room, seizes the wallet and tears out. Behind him he hears --

MAN (O.S.)

The fuck was that?

CAMMI (O.S.)

The wallet! He took Derek's wallet!

EXT. CAMMI'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Miles comes flying out of the sliding glass door, followed swiftly by the man, who is of course stark naked. And he's fast for a man his size.

CAMMI (O.S.)

Get him!

INT. SAAB - MORNING

Jack is reclined in the passenger seat fast asleep. On the radio NPR'S CARL CASTLE reads the news.

THROUGH THE DRIVER'S WINDOW --

Miles comes sprinting toward us, mere steps ahead of Cammi's naked husband. Finding the car door locked, Miles knocks loudly on the glass, startling Jack awake.

MILES

Open up! Jesus! Open the goddamn door!

Jack flips the electric locks just in time for Miles to get in before --

WHUMP! The guy's belly hits the window. He pounds on the roof before trying the door, now re-locked.

MAN

You motherfuckers! I'll kill you!
I'll kill you motherfuckers!

Miles starts the car and begins to drive away. The guy tries to keep up but can't, running barefoot on asphalt. Jack turns to look --

OUT THE BACK WINDOW --

The guy recedes in the distance.

JACK

Removes the rings from his wallet.

JACK

You did it. You fucking did it.

They laugh and slap hands.

CLOSE ON MILES --

For all his failures, this time he did something right.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The shades are drawn. Jack is crashed out on the bed, snoring loudly. Miles folds his shirts and trousers -- readying his bags for departure.

At one moment he stops and watches his friend sleep.

A KNOCK at the door. Miles goes to answer it, but once his hand is on the knob, he pauses. If we're perceptive, we will know he's hoping against hope that it's Maya.

It's not. It's only the MAID with her big cart.

MAID
Housekeeping.

EXT. WINDMILL INN PARKING LOT - DAY

The boys load the car -- baggage and cases of wine. Jack is visibly limping and in pain.

EXT. 101 FREEWAY - DAY

The Saab enters the freeway and heads south.

INT./EXT. SAAB - DAY

Miles drives while Jack stares out the window, watching the landscape change as they leave wine country.

MILES
Hey, Jack? Jack?

JACK
Hmmm?

MILES
That was quite a day yesterday.

Jack's eyes close, but his lips spread into a smile.

JACK
Yep. Quite a day. Quite a week.

EXT. 101 FREEWAY - DAY

HIGH SHOT FROM A FREEWAY BRIDGE --

The Saab passes underneath us and continues southward.

EXT. FILLING STATION - DAY

Miles pumps the gas, while nearby Jack stretches his legs. As Miles puts the nozzle back in place --

JACK

So are you going to follow up with Maya? Why don't you invite her to the wedding?

MILES

Somehow I don't think inviting Maya to your wedding is the right move, do you? In fact, I have the distinct suspicion she's never going to want to see me again.

JACK

She'll get over it. Chicks get over stuff like that. She digs you.

Miles replaces the hose and screws on the gas cap.

JACK

Hey, let me drive.

MILES

I'm fine. Why don't you rest?

JACK

I don't know. I feel like driving.

INT. SAAB -- DAY

As the car makes its way back toward the freeway, Jack looks over at Miles and slows the car to a stop.

MILES

What's wrong?

JACK

Buckle up, okay?

Miles obeys. Without hesitation, Jack accelerates and jumps the curb, heading into --

EXT. VACANT LOT - CONTINUOUS

The Saab plows into a tree.

INT. SAAB - CONTINUOUS

MILES
What the fuck!

JACK
(pointing at his face)
You're the one who said it looked
like a car accident.

MILES
You're a menace!

JACK
I'll pay for it.

EXT. VACANT LOT - DAY

The boys get out of the car to inspect the damage. The hood is slightly crumpled, and the front fender is bent.

MILES
Look what you did!

JACK
I don't know. Doesn't look like
anybody got hurt in this one.

MILES
Oh, no. No, you don't.

JACK
You need a new car anyway.

Miles looks at his friend, incredulous.

JACK
I said I'd pay for it. Come on,
Miles. Just this last thing.

MOMENTS LATER --

The trunk is open, and the guys are unloading their cases of wine. Miles notices that one box is dripping.

MILES
You broke some.

JACK
Whatever. Sorry.

MILES
No, not whatever. You fucking
derelict.

MOMENTS LATER --

Miles looks on as Jack hoists a foundation block toward the open driver's door of the Saab.

JACK
You ready?

MILES
Get it over with.

Grunting with effort, Jack leans inside the car and drops the foundation block onto the gas pedal.

Direct hit! Jack leaps backward and hits the dirt just in time.

Miles and Jack watch the driverless Saab race toward the tree, its speed increasing. But just before hitting it, the car drifts to one side and sails right past.

MILES
Oh, fuck!

The car zooms wildly across the vacant lot and leaps over the curb on the far side. Narrowly missing a parked car, it RAMS into a LAMPPOST. A moment later, the lamppost lists and topples over.

The whole thing is finished in a matter of seconds. Still frozen in place, Miles and Jack turn slowly to each other. Oops.

EXT. 101 FREEWAY - DAY

From in front of the Saab, we see its now crumpled hood and fender, a couple of bungee cords holding the whole thing together.

EXT. PALOS VERDES STREET -- DAY

The Saab slowly approaches the end of the line -- the Erganians' house.

EXT. ERGANIAN HOUSE -- DAY

AT THE FRONT PORCH --

Miles has helped Jack carry his bags and the wine. He plops the last case down.

MILES
Well. That about does it.

JACK
Why don't you come in?

MILES
Uh-uh. You're on your own.

JACK
Okay. So I'll see you at the rehearsal.

MILES
Yeah.

They give each other a brief manly back-slappy hug.

JACK
Love you, man.

MILES
Back at you.

Miles heads toward the curb.

JACK
Hey, don't pull away till they see the car.

MILES
(over his shoulder)
You got it.
(then turning around)
Hey, why wasn't I injured?

JACK
(big smile)
You were wearing your belt.

BACK AT HIS CAR --

Miles gets in and watches through the side window as Mrs. Erganian opens the front door and welcomes Jack with shock and dismay. Jack points back at --

MILES --

Who raises one hand in a feeble wave. The camera slowly MOVES CLOSER as he continues to watch --

JACK --

Weaving his story of woe. He's a great actor when he wants to be. Mr. Erganian and a mortified Christine come to the door too. Mr. Erganian takes a few steps toward the car to get a better look.

VERY CLOSE ON MILES --

Watching the drama play out. Then his eyes drop as he momentarily loses himself in melancholy. This reverie is interrupted by --

VOICE (O.S.)
Do you have the rings?

Startled, Miles turns to look at --

A PRIEST

Who repeats the question.

PRIEST
Do you have the rings?

We are now in --

INT. ARMENIAN CHURCH - DAY

The WEDDING PARTY and the entire PACKED CHURCH have their eyes trained on Miles. He reaches into the vest pocket of his tuxedo.

CLOSE ON THE RINGS as they are handed to the priest. If those rings could talk...

Jack shoots a quick look at Miles, who suppresses the urge to laugh.

The priest sings the blessing of the rings.

EXT. ARMENIAN CHURCH - DAY

AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS --

The WEDDING FAMILIES greet the exiting guests in a receiving line. Smiling and exuberant, Jack seems utterly at home as the new groom.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STEPS --

Miles watches the scene, not without melancholy. Then --

VICTORIA (O.S.)
Hey, Miles.

Miles turns and looks up to see Victoria, standing one step above him. Just behind her is her NEW HUSBAND. He exudes the quiet confidence of a successful businessman who played college football, takes expensive skiing and sailing vacations, and hasn't read a novel since high school.

MILES
Hi, Vicki.
(taking her in)
You look beautiful.

VICTORIA
Thanks. Um, this is Ken Cortland,
my husband.

From his spot hovering over Miles, Ken leans down and offers his hand.

KEN
How are you?

MILES
Hi. How you doing? You're a lucky
guy.

KEN

Thanks.

(to Victoria)

I'll wait for you in the car.

(to Miles)

Nice to meet you, Miles.

MILES

Ken.

Exit Ken.

MILES

That was big of him.

VICTORIA

Yeah, he's good that way. Very considerate.

MILES

That's great.

VICTORIA

So how're you doing?

MILES

Since the last time we spoke? I don't know. Could be better. Could be worse.

VICTORIA

So what's happening with your book?

MILES

Universally rejected. I'm three for three.

VICTORIA

That's awful. Oh, Miles. What are you going to do?

MILES

Back to the drawing board, I guess. Or not. So...you're married. Congratulations. You look happy.

VICTORIA

I am.

MILES

Seems like everyone's getting married.

(MORE)

MILES (cont'd)
 A year ago it was all divorces. Now
 it's all weddings. Cyclical, I
 guess.

VICTORIA
 I guess.

Just then a black Lincoln Navigator pulls up alongside the
 curb. The passenger side window is halfway down, and the
 soothing sounds of STING waft out.

MILES
 (shifting gears)
 Well, let's go have some champagne,
 shall we? Toast all the newlyweds.

VICTORIA
 Not me. I'm not drinking.

MILES
 You quit drinking?

VICTORIA
 I'm pregnant.

MILES
 (hit in the solar plexus)
 Oh. Huh. Well...
 (rallying)
 Congratulations again, Vicki.
 That's wonderful news.

VICTORIA
 (going to the car)
 See you over there, Miles.

MILES
 Yeah.

As she gets in the car and cruises away, Miles glances back
 at --

THE RECEIVING LINE

--where Mike Erganian is introducing Jack to some dear old
 FRIENDS. Mike throws a loving arm around his new son-in-law,
 and Jack is drawn into Mike's bosom.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A hand-printed sign, attached to a Stop sign and decorated with balloons, reads: "RECEPTION THIS WAY!" with an arrow pointing right.

One by one, cars are making a right turn. But when his turn comes, Miles turns left.

EXT. MILES'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

The Saab pulls up outside. Miles leaves the car idling as he sprints inside. Moments later he sprints back to his car, this time carrying something.

EXT. IN & OUT BURGER - DAY

Establishing. The Saab is parked outside.

INT. IN & OUT BURGER - DAY

His bowtie undone, Miles sits at a booth eating a double-double. He washes down a bite by draining the contents of a big wax-coated soft-drink cup.

He brings the cup to his lap and refills it from a bottle of wine hidden next to him. As he sets the bottle back down, we glimpse the label: 1961 Cheval Blanc.

He takes another sip. As the camera MOVES CLOSER, all the complex emotions inspired by the wine ripple across Miles's face.

14-YEAR-OLD BOY (O.S.)
"The marrow of his bone," I
repeated aimlessly. This at least
penetrated my mind. Phineas had
died from the marrow of his bone
flowing down his blood stream to
his heart.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

The voice belongs to one of Miles's PUPILS reading aloud in class. Other students follow along silently from their own copies of A Separate Peace.

SUPERIMPOSED --

FIVE WEEKS LATER

Miles sits behind his desk at the front of the class.

14-YEAR-OLD BOY

I did not cry then or ever about Finny. I did not cry even when I stood watching him being lowered into his family's straight-laced burial ground outside of Boston. I could not escape the feeling that this was my own funeral, and you do not cry in that case.

The students look up.

14-YEAR-OLD BOY

Do you want me to keep reading the next chapter, Mr. Raymond?

MILES

(as though coming to)
Hmmm? No, we'll pick it up there on Monday.

INT. MILES'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Miles enters his tiny apartment. He loosens his tie and puts down his satchel.

On his way to the kitchen, he presses a button on his answering machine. As it plays, he opens the refrigerator and looks inside.

ANSWERING MACHINE

One new message.

MAYA'S VOICE

Hello, Miles. It's Maya.

Miles freezes, not wanting to miss a single syllable.

MAYA'S VOICE

Thanks for your letter. I would have called you sooner, but I think I've needed some time to think about everything that happened and what you said and the possibility of seeing you again.

(MORE)

MAYA'S VOICE (cont'd)

No matter what happens, whether we hang out a little or just decide to be friends, we'll need to go slow. I guess we have no choice since you live so far away. Another reason I didn't call sooner is that I wanted to finish your book, which I finally did last night.

Miles's heart pounds as his hopes soar.

MAYA'S VOICE

I think it's really great, Miles. You're so good with words. Who cares if it's not getting published? There are so many beautiful and painful things about it. Did you really go through all that? It must have been hard. And the sister character -- Jesus. But I have to say I was really confused by the ending. Did she commit suicide, or did he kill her? It's driving me crazy. And the title. Anyway, it's turned cold and rainy here lately. But I like winter, and I'm thinking about --

The machine BEEPS and shuts off. The message was too long.

Miles remains frozen in silence, overwhelmed by this message. Then --

MILES

The ending? That's the whole point.

THE END