

THE HOUSE

by

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FADE IN:

SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY

Tree branches lashing about in wind and rain.

Stop sign fluttering in wind.

Water rushing down street gutter.

An occasional PEAL of THUNDER.

EXT. SEMPLE MANSION - DAY

The imposing hillside residence is barely visible through the rain and wind.

EXT. SEMPLE MANSION - RECEIVING PORCH - DAY

A car, lights on and wipers on high, comes around the drive and stops at porch.

INT. FRONT DOOR

The door is opened.

ROBERT SEMPLE (50) and AMY SEMPLE (51), his sister, shake and close dripping umbrellas. Their valises stand nearby.

He's a Hollywood screenwriter; she a spinster in tweed suit and sturdy shoes, a large silver cross around her neck.

AMY

Hastings!

ROBERT

Barely got up the road. Limbs everywhere.

CYRIL HASTINGS (79), British butler, a step slower but not yet doddering.

HASTINGS

Master Robert and Miss Amy.

ROBERT

(reproachful)

We're in our fifties now, Hastings.

HASTINGS  
So you are, sir.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Robert and Amy come into the house.

MOLLY MELFORD (60), cook and housekeeper, and CHRISTOPHER MALLORY (21) come up to greet them.

She speaks East End London; he's arty, foppish.

HASTINGS  
My niece Molly came over after the funeral. Young Christopher will be our factotum for as long as the tangible property devise requires.

MOLLY  
My uncle often speaks of you. And so highly.

ROBERT  
You're too kind.  
(to Christopher)  
You look like an actor, young man.

CHRISTOPHER  
(brightening)  
I'm over at the Maynerd School of Dramatic Arts.

AMY  
Hark my words. The way one behaves on stage is more important than the words one says.

CHRISTOPHER  
I'll try to remember that, ma'am.

Robert gives Amy an impressed look.

MOLLY  
Back to work for us it is, Christopher.

Molly leaves, Christopher following with the valises.

Hastings approaches Robert and Amy.

HASTINGS

I'm afraid we've had a scare. I distinctly heard someone in the basement last night. Thought it wise not to investigate on my own. I've locked all the doors leading down. I'm reasonably sure no one has gained entry to the upper floors.

ROBERT

Didn't father have a revolver?

HASTINGS

Still rummaging for it.

AMY

Police?

HASTINGS

Every able bodied officer is needed in Roxbury. The storm has caused considerable damage and not a few injuries. They're sending a man as soon as they can.

ROBERT

(sarcastic)

The darling grandchildren?

HASTINGS

Any time now.

AMY

Bernard?

HASTINGS

Mr. Rose has been greatly affected by the tragic deaths of your parents.

AMY

Is he up for the grandchildren?

HASTINGS

He'll be here in due time.

ROBERT

Frank and Edith?

HASTINGS

They won't be coming I'm afraid.

ROBERT

And I all the way from the coast.

AMY

Stay on a few weeks. The East is a good place to rehabilitate one's character.

ROBERT

F. Scott Fitzgerald said "Character is plot. Plot is character."

Amy rolls her eyes.

HASTINGS

There's tea in the living room.

Hastings moves carefully off in another direction.

On a wall hang portraits of Arthur Semple and his wife Margaret.

Between them is another of a young man in a tuxedo sitting sidewise on the bench of a grand piano as if casually talking to an audience.

Robert pauses.

ROBERT

(re: young man)

Edward. First born and martyred to boot.

AMY

Robert! Really.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

An extensive veranda is visible through large windows and French doors.

The nearby trees and shrubbery move in the wind and rain.

An occasional PEAL of THUNDER.

A large silver tea service stands on a sideboard. There are trays of scones, sandwiches, etc.

An assortment of wines and liquor surrounds an ice bucket.

Robert pours two fingers of scotch into a glass.

ROBERT  
God still wagging his finger at  
alcohol?

AMY  
(tit for tat)  
Still living with that actress from  
your film?

ROBERT  
The sixteen-year old from The Girl  
with Green Eyes?

AMY  
I was hoping she was at least  
twenty.

ROBERT  
She left me. Back to her sand box.

AMY  
Good for her. Afterall her eyes  
were hazel, and it was a dreadful  
film.

ROBERT  
Good noir script meets novice  
director, clueless producer and  
myopic cinematographer.

AMY  
You could just as well write  
scripts here, in this house.

ROBERT  
I have a house, in the Hollywood  
Hills.

AMY  
Meet a woman with some breeding  
rather than a bimchette.

ROBERT  
I'll have you know Emma Love read a  
book when she lived with me.

AMY  
I'll assume it wasn't Moby Dick.

Robert sets his glass down.

ROBERT  
Let's check out the basement.

INT. BASEMENT - POOL ROOM - DAY

Half windows along one wall dimly illumine the room. A full bar is along the opposite wall. A stone fireplace stands at one end of the pool table.

It rains outside with an occasional PEAL of THUNDER.

Amy carries a large flashlight. Robert fingers a golf club.

They don't exchange a word.

Amy shines the light all around the room, under the pool table and into the bar.

They exit into another, larger room.

INT. GAME ROOM - DAY

Half windows also run along the exterior wall.

Several tables with chairs stand about. A couple of sofas are against the walls.

Two ping pong tables in the center of the room.

Another fireplace butt-ends the pool room fireplace.

Amy shines her light about.

She points at a window on the far end of the room.

INT. WINDOW - DAY

The glass has been broken. Shards cover the floor.

Scrape marks and blood are on the wall beneath the window.

Amy's torch reveals occasionally smeared blood drops along the floor.

They follow the blood into an interior room.

INT. RUMPUS ROOM

There are no windows so the room is quite dark.

Amy flicks on the lights.

She checks out the sides and corners of the room with her light.

Comfortable chairs are positioned around a large screen T.V.  
The blood drops lead to a door.

INT. CORRIDOR

The circle of light from Amy's flashlight slowly follows the  
blood drops down a dark corridor.

SOMETHING CLATTERS to the FLOOR in the middle darkness.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - DOOR

Robert locks the door.

Amy clicks off her flashlight.

ROBERT

Any further would be risking it. He  
could be in any of a dozen places  
down there.

AMY

Why a he?

ROBERT

I assume the person's a he, as you  
assume God's a he.

AMY

He is our Heavenly Father.

ROBERT

Not mine.

AMY

Still think if a man got into my  
pants I would see the world more  
like you?

ROBERT

I didn't put it so crudely.

AMY

1 Corinthians, 6:18: "Flee from  
sexual immorality."

ROBERT

Spare me your Biblical  
admonition...



AMY

We should leave bandages and food  
for the person in the basement.

ROBERT

As a Christian gesture?

AMY

Christianity has nothing to do with  
it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Amy puts items into a picnic basket sitting on the counter.

Robert leans over an island writing.

Molly busies herself with kitchen chores.

MOLLY

Kind-hearted is what you are. For  
all we know he just needed to get  
in out of the cold rain.

AMY

Antiseptic, bandages, Ibuprofen,  
water, sandwiches... Read the note.

ROBERT

"My dearest intruder: Avail  
yourself of the various items as  
you will. Be advised that we have  
summoned the police. Best, Robert  
and Amy Semple."

AMY

Splendid!

INT. BASEMENT - CORRIDOR

The basket and a candlestick sit on the corridor floor in a  
circle of light from Amy's flashlight.

CANDLESTICK

Robert strikes a match and lights the candle.

The candle now casts a golden light on the proffered basket  
in the basement darkness.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Amy places cookies and finger sandwiches on her plate.

Robert sits in an easy chair reading a script.

DOOR CHIMES.

The sound of voices in greeting.

Robert and Amy look toward a large archway in anticipation of the arrivals.

DAPHNE SEMPLE MORRIS (26) and CHARLENE SEMPLE WHITE (28) walk quickly into the room.

Daphne wears a simple dress, a large tote over her shoulder.

Charlene is tall with a horsey elegance, a chic outfit and a stylish hat.

DAPHNE

Uncle Robert of Hollywood and Aunt  
Amy of Salem!

CHARLENE

Hello you two and don't get me  
started about this storm.

Everyone exchanges perfunctory embraces and air kisses.

ROBERT

You are both looking well.

AMY

Youth. Remember youth, Robert?

Before sitting Charlene examines the sofa cushion and takes in the room with an air of distaste.

CHARLENE

The day is gray, gray, gray

Daphne perches on the arm of the sofa.

She picks a vase off a nearby table and examines it closely.

Then replaces it.

DAPHNE

Sorry, Uncle Robert. We hated The  
Girl with Green Eyes. Are you and  
Emma Love really an item?

ROBERT  
We amicably parted ways.

CHARLENE  
Don't let them turn your next  
script into another banality, Uncle  
Robert.

ROBERT  
Writers have little power in  
today's Hollywood.

AMY  
Write a script so powerful it will  
give you power.

ROBERT  
Of course! Why didn't I think of  
that?

DOOR CHIMES.

The sound of voices in greeting.

Everyone looks in anticipation of the arrivals.

SCOTT "SCOTTY" KENDALL (25), hail-fellow-well-met, sport coat  
and saddle shoes, and KIPPER "KIPPY" KENDALL (23), a  
flamboyant painter, adorable, good-looking, enter  
theatrically.

Kippy smiles, waves fingers at her cousins, and heads for the  
liquor bottles.

Scotty, dutiful and unctuous, bends and kisses both women on  
the cheek.

SCOTTY  
The good-looking cousins... How  
nice to see you.  
(to Kippy)  
Pour me a scotch, Kip.

He turns and hugs Amy.

SCOTTY (CONT'D)  
It's been a while.

AMY  
Since the funeral.

Scotty turns and shakes Robert's hand.

SCOTTY

Gotta lotta questions about the movie business, Uncle Bob.

KIPPY

Hi, Robert. Didn't mean to run straight for the scotch. Yeah, Scotty's torn. Should he be a director or a producer?

He plops on the sofa between Charlene and Daphne and puts his hands behind his head.

SCOTTY

Have you ever seen so fucking much rain? Sorry, Amy.

Amy's face registers a brief moue of distaste.

Kippy hands Scotty his drink.

KIPPY

Robert, a drink? Girls?

ROBERT

Maybe later.

CHARLENE

Is there a single malt?

KIPPY

No.

CHARLENE

It's always like ordering from the well here.

DAPHNE

A glass of chardonnay.

CHARLENE

(fake smile)

Dago red in a water glass.

DOOR CHIMES.

AMY

That'll be Bernard.

KIPPY

How long is this going to take?

ROBERT

Three-story house. Basement. Attic.  
Lot of stuff.

CHARLENE

I'm afraid most of it will be just  
that... stuff.

DAPHNE

I've already got dibs on the  
Waterford crystal.

KIPPY

Don't know if I even want anything.

SCOTTY

Come on, Kip, there are probably  
boxes of unused oil paints  
somewhere.

BERNARD ROSE (65), the Semple family lawyer, paternal and wise, enters the room carefully as if it might hold a hidden danger.

He walks to the center of the group and extends his arms like Moses.

BERNARD

You are all here! Thank you for  
coming.

DAPHNE

When can we start?

BERNARD

I suggest you freshen your drinks.  
Say in the library in fifteen  
minutes?

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Bernard and Robert sit at either end of a library table.  
Scotty and Kippy are on Bernard's left; Daphne, Charlene and  
Amy on his right.

Scotty and Kippy squirm in their chairs; Daphne and Charlene  
sit long-faced and motionless.

Several folders lie in front of Bernard.

He holds a document up for all to see.

BERNARD

This is why we're here on this rainy day: the Personal Property Memorandum which, if you recall, your grandparents referenced in their will. It has detailed instructions to me and to Robert as to how the tangible personal properties of the Semple mansion are to be distributed among you grandchildren.

DAPHNE

What about the Waterford crystal?

BERNARD

Everything in good time, Daphne.

CHARLENE

Are cars tangible personal property?

BERNARD

They are.

(beat)

Margaret and Arthur, better known to you four as Gram and Pap, have come up with novel and unusual ways to execute the devise...

(clears throat)

... the distribution of their tangible assets.

He hands each grandchild a sheet of paper.

Daphne and Charlene study theirs intently.

Kippy lays hers on the table.

Scotty looks at his for a moment and lays his down as well.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Gram and Pap broke this big house into many sections. Wrote each section on a 3 x 5 card and put it in a bowl. When all the cards were in, they drew them out one by one. The first card for Daphne, the second for Charlene, the third for Kippy, the fourth for Scotty. I just gave you a list of your sections. Everything you find in them is yours. Here's Daphne's list as an example.

CHARLENE  
A scavenger hunt!

BERNARD  
Not quite, Charlene.

AMY  
Christopher will help each of you  
work your way through your  
sections.

BERNARD  
Daphne is welcome to anything she  
finds in the following areas.  
Basement: the east wall of the tool  
room; the game room; the What the  
Hell Room.

DAPHNE  
(sotto to Charlene)  
Need party hats from the 1960's?

BERNARD  
First floor: the north wall of the  
library; the east wall of the den,  
the north wall of the living room;  
the shelves to the right of the  
kitchen stove.

DAPHNE  
(sotto to Charlene)  
Weren't there vases on the den  
wall?

Bernard frowns at the two sisters.

BERNARD  
Second floor: the three hall  
closets; her father Frank's former  
room.

CHARLENE  
(sotto to Daphne)  
Maybe find his stack of girlie  
magazines.

BERNARD  
Third floor: the north wall of the  
kitchen. Attic: the northwest  
quarter.

DAPHNE  
Attic? Oh, party hats from the  
1930s!

BERNARD  
I beg your pardon, Daphne?

DAPHNE  
Nothing.

BERNARD  
Three days should be more than  
enough time.

DAPHNE  
The Waterford?

CHARLENE  
The automobiles?

ROBERT  
As items of considerable value  
they, and others like them, will be  
devised another way.

SCOTTY  
How is that?

BERNARD  
(beat)  
By cutting cards.

CHARLENE  
Cutting cards?

DAPHNE  
A game of chance? But I had dibs.

KIPPY  
What fun! Like an old Western  
movie.

SCOTTY  
I never knew Gram and Pap had an  
adventurous side.

CHARLENE  
Adventurous? Rash and unthinking  
you mean.

BERNARD  
There's little to be gained from  
getting one's dander up. The  
Personal Property Memorandum is  
quite clear.



DAPHNE

What's next? Shooting apples off  
one another's heads?

BERNARD

Two things actually.

Daphne and Charlene sit with pursed lips. Kippy and Scotty  
look amused.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Folding tables have been set up on  
the ballroom floor. On them you  
will find sundry items, from  
appliances to sets of china to the  
flags of sixty nations. The four of  
you must go there and, as adults,  
decide among you who gets what. Or,  
like children, squabble endlessly.

AMY

This I have to see.

DAPHNE

Are Gram and Pap taking revenge on  
us for something?

Bernard holds up a hand.

BERNARD

Lastly, two months before their  
death, Gram and Pap gave me a  
personal letter from them to each  
of you.

He gives each grandchild a sealed envelope.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

I quote the Memorandum: "... to be  
read at your leisure and meditated  
upon if you choose to so do." Gram  
and Pap cite what they believed to  
be your most admirable qualities.  
Be forewarned they also point up  
what they consider your most  
serious shortcomings.

Daphne tosses her envelope into her big bag.

SOUND of FRENCH DOORS being opened.

INT. LIBRARY - FRENCH DOORS - DAY

Hastings enters accompanied by an alluring WOMAN (45) in a trench coat spotted with rain. Her adjective is "noire".

HASTINGS

Excuse the interruption. May I present Lieutenant Carole Cross.

He gives her a sly side-ways glance.

HASTINGS (CONT'D)

She's here regarding our intruder.

The Lieutenant nods and comes over to the library table.

Her voice is honey and smoke.

WOMAN (CAROLE)

I understand you doctored and fed this person.

AMY

I didn't think it could hurt.

CAROLE

Kind but perhaps misguided.

Robert can't take his eyes off her.

ROBERT

Why?

CAROLE

Two inmates recently escaped from the Moreland State Hospital.

SCOTTY

The nut house?

KIPPY

We may have two intruders?

CAROLE

John Keel and Earl Bass. Mid 30s. Both homicidal maniacs. Keel a large scar on his cheek. Bass the more dangerous of the two. A real bad ass.

CHARLENE

As if the devise weren't horror enough.

DAPHNE  
What do we do?

CAROLE  
Their psychiatrist thinks they  
could end up trying to kill each  
other.

SCOTTY  
Until then?

CAROLE  
I'll check out the basement.

AMY  
With two lunatics crouched behind  
the furnace?

CAROLE  
That's what cops do.

SCOTTY  
Even girl cops?

CAROLE  
What year are you channeling? 1951?

ROBERT  
I'll come with you.

BERNARD  
I question the wisdom of that,  
Robert.

ROBERT  
I owe the Lieutenant as much.

CAROLE  
It's your house, everyone heard you  
volunteer.

DAPHNE  
What do we do?

CAROLE  
Lock yourselves in the library  
until I secure the basement.

INT. BASEMENT - POOL ROOM - DAY

The lights are on.

Carole stands near the pool table gun in hand.

Robert comes down the last two steps into the room.

It is still raining with an occasional PEAL of THUNDER.

CAROLE

Stay far enough behind me I don't  
bump into you if I swing around.

Carole looks under the table and behind the bar.

They go into the next room.

INT. GAME ROOM - DAY

Carole turns on the lights.

She walks quickly to the broken window.

INT. WINDOW - DAY

CAROLE

Knock out the glass, reach in undo  
the latch, lift the window and  
slide into the room.

She looks at the smeared blood drops on the floor.

CAROLE (CONT'D)

Looks like two intruders. Intruder  
#1 bleeds onto floor. Intruder #2,  
just behind him, steps on blood  
drops, smearing them.

INT. RUMPUS ROOM

Carole turns on the lights.

She quickly surveys the room.

CAROLE

(re: door)  
What's this?

ROBERT

The What the Hell Room. Odds and  
ends.

INT. WHAT THE HELL ROOM

Carole turns on the lights.

The room is stacked with extra chairs, old TVs, shelves filled with board games, party hats, etc.

Carole quickly explores the recesses.

INT. CORRIDOR

The lights are on.

They stand looking at the picnic basket.

It's empty, the candle burned down.

CAROLE  
Cupboard's bare.

INT. DARK ROOM

The light is on.

Enlargers, timers, developing pans, cover the counters along three walls. A large double sink stands against the fourth.

Black and white 8 x 10 enlargements hang from two lines stretched between the walls.

ROBERT  
After my brother Edward died my  
father lost interest in  
photography.  
(looks around)  
Haven't been in here since I was in  
high school.

He examines some of the enlargements.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
Jesus! These have been hanging here  
for twenty-five years!

He un-clips several.

INSERT - PHOTO

A man (20s) in a tuxedo stands smiling with another, older man, also in a tuxedo, holding a violin.

ROBERT'S VOICE  
Edward. This had to be when he  
played Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue  
and Concerto in F with the Boston  
Pops.

CAROLE'S VOICE  
Must have been good.

ROBERT'S VOICE  
Oh, he was good all right.

INSERT - PHOTO

The same man stands with his arm around a woman (20s).

ROBERT'S VOICE (CONT'D)  
Edward and my sister Amy before the  
Bible Bug bit her.

CAROLE  
Edward was the family jewel.

ROBERT  
Perceptive.

CAROLE  
(re: herself)  
Detective.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - LIBRARY - SAME

Everyone stirs about in ill-humor.

Bernard, Kippy and Scotty pour themselves drinks at a bar  
cart.

BERNARD  
Lieutenant Cross will secure the  
basement.

CHARLENE  
I hope she apprehends those  
monsters.

SCOTTY  
If indeed they're down there.

BERNARD  
Robert was foolish to accompany  
her.

AMY  
Are your antennae on the fritz?  
He's with her because her hair  
partially falls over one eye.

CHARLENE

Yeah, now that Emma Love walked out on him.

SCOTTY

Why does everyone rag on Uncle Bob? He's a fucking Hollywood screenwriter for Christ's sake. Sorry, Amy.

DAPHNE

Cut a deck of cards to have a chance at the Waterford...

KIPPY

I'll forfeit my turn if you want. You'll have a better chance.

CHARLENE

Since when have you ever offered us a hand?

SCOTTY

Hey, Kip's being quite generous.

BERNARD

The Memorandum doesn't require anyone to participate in the devise. Any tangible property that remains undistributed is mine to dispose of as I see fit.

DAPHNE

Now that really would be unfair.

BERNARD

But, dear cousins, I predict not a beverage coaster, not a toothpick holder will remain unclaimed after the next forty-eight hours.

INT. BASEMENT - CARPENTRY ROOM - DAY

The light is on.

Large workbenches with all manner of tools, old and modern, stand against the walls.

Lumber leans against the walls.

Carole checks out the nooks and crannies.

ROBERT

These benches have been here since the house was built a hundred years ago. The house was extensively remodeled in the Seventies.

CAROLE

Beside the pool room stairs how does one get into the basement?

ROBERT

The laundry and furnace rooms have stairs. Plus the elevator in the pool room.

Carole sees something.

CAROLE

Hell-o!

There's bloody gauze and an empty water bottle on one of the benches.

INT. TOOL ROOM - DAY

The light is on.

Carole moves very cautiously among various pieces of equipment, coils of hanging rope, and tubing.

ROBERT

I'm no help. You should have given me a gun.

CAROLE

Out of the question.

ROBERT

You were going to search these rooms alone?

Carole flashes him a soft smile.

CAROLE

I've got your back, Bobbie Boy.

INT. FURNACE ROOM - DAY

The room is quite bare except for the furnace.



ROBERT

Cross the corridor there's a large storage closet, then on through to the laundry room.

INT. STORAGE ROOM

The light is on.

Lots of shelves and items of every sort.

Carole listens and raises a finger to Robert.

A murmur of voices.

Carole and Robert listen.

There's someone in the laundry room!

MALE VOICE #1

Can we trust him?

MALE VOICE #2

We have no choice.

MALE VOICE #1

He could turn us in.

MALE VOICE #2

The girl could turn us in too.

Carole motions for Robert to get back.

Then, just as quickly, she throws upon the door.

CAROLE

Freeze!!!

Christopher sorts the kitchen laundry.

CHRISTOPHER

Holy shit!

Carole's misstep embarrasses her.

CAROLE

Sorry. I thought --

Christopher is badly shaken.

CHRISTOPHER

I didn't mean to --

CAROLE  
The voices?

CHRISTOPHER  
Running lines for an acting class.

INT. SUPPLY ROOM

The light is on.

The room looks like a small general store.

CAROLE  
My bad. I should have informed the  
staff.

ROBERT  
You've made my heart race.

CAROLE  
That line has a flirtatious  
subtext.

Robert is caught off guard by her perspicacity.

ROBERT  
Touché.

He opens a door.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
One last room. Old servant quarters  
not used in years. Unpopular guests  
used to get put in here.

INT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS

A minimally furnished room with a linoleum floor.

Carole checks under the bed.

She goes into the bathroom.

CAROLE'S VOICE  
Robert?

Robert enters and takes Carole's elbow in his hand.

She looks at him for a beat.

Two towels are draped over the shower curtain rod.

CAROLE  
Make yourself at home. The bastards  
took a shower.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - EXTERIOR DOOR - DAY

Carole examines the door.

CAROLE  
The only way out of the basement?

ROBERT  
Yeah. We always kept it locked.

Carole opens the door with ease.

She closes it.

She plucks a hair from her head.

She kneels.

Smears saliva on the jamb and the door's edge.

Pastes the hair across the crack.

CAROLE  
They left the house through this  
door.  
(looks up at Robert)  
Or they're somewhere upstairs.

INT. BALLROOM - DAY

Robert, Amy, and Carole enter the ballroom.

It has gone unused for a long time.

A concert grand piano sits on a small stage on one side of  
the dance floor.

Here and there orchestra chairs and music stands.

Several round tables with chairs stand at the foot of the  
stage.

INT. BALLROOM - STAGE - DAY

Robert's hand plays a four-note arpeggio.

ROBERT

Sixty-thousand dollar piano not  
tuned in I bet fifteen years.

(plays another arpeggio)

Back in the day four servants lived  
on this floor, and there were  
frequent parties and dances.

AMY

Our parents entertained less  
frequently after Edward's death.

CAROLE

He fell off the veranda?

EXT. FRENCH DOORS - DAY

They walk out onto the veranda. It appears neglected.

It rains and there is an occasional PEAL of THUNDER.

EXT. BALUSTRADE

Amy indicates a section of balustrade.

AMY

From here.

Carole runs her hand along the balustrade and leans up  
against it.

CAROLE

Was he a high jumper?

ROBERT

There was a full investigation.

AMY

He was sober. No reason was  
uncovered to suspect foul play. But  
no one saw him fall.

ROBERT

He was twenty-two, five years older  
than me. On his way as a pianist.  
Played with the nervous energy of  
an Oscar Levant.

AMY

Our brother Frank resented him, was  
jealous of him. He was on the  
veranda when Edward fell.

ROBERT  
So were a lot of other people.

AMY  
Frank eats darkness like a  
sociopath.

CAROLE  
(to Robert)  
Were you jealous of your brother?

ROBERT  
I adored Edward. I may have envied  
his talent, his suave manner.

CAROLE  
For instance?

ROBERT  
I remember a party two gorgeous  
girls hanging on his every word. He  
sits at a piano, knocks off a few  
bars of Cole Porter. They almost  
gobbled him up right there.

AMY  
Edward was the apple of our  
parents' eye. One of the first  
things I remember mother telling me  
was: 'Amy, always try to be more  
like Edward.'

ROBERT  
I remember that: "Robert, always  
try to be more like Edward."  
They liked each subsequent child  
less. So I was their least  
favorite.

CAROLE  
You honestly believe that?

ROBERT  
My three siblings had rooms with  
French doors that opened onto a  
veranda. I had to climb through a  
bedroom window if I wanted to go  
out on it.

CAROLE  
Poor baby.  
(beat)  
How were the Semples killed?

AMY

Hit and run in a cross walk. Killed instantly. A black SUV.

CAROLE

Long story short?

ROBERT

Still being looked into.

AMY

Frank drives a black SUV. When the police asked to examine it he almost lost it.

CAROLE

Tell me Frank's also greedy.

AMY

Trying hard to hold my tongue.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Daphne and Charlene are abuzz.

DAPHNE

Evidently Amy picked over Gram's jewelry.

CHARLENE

She wouldn't know a diadem from a drop earring.

DAPHNE

That big silver cross...

CHARLENE

Like she's expecting a swarm of vampires.

DAPHNE

So who gets the portrait of Edward?

CHARLENE

So who wants the portrait of Edward?

DAPHNE

It could be worth something.

CHARLENE

Daphe, learn to appreciate the aesthetic value of an object along with its monetary value.

DAPHNE

Char, you complicate everything with your perfect this, your flawless that.

CHARLENE

How ungenerous!

DAPHNE

(doing Charlene)

Dearies, if you can't afford a Tag Heuer Carrera you're better off not wearing a watch.

CHARLENE

Really.

DAPHNE

(doing Charlene)

Hackleback Caviar is a steal at \$500 a pound.

CHARLENE

(becoming amused)

Stop, Daphe.

DAPHNE

(doing Charlene)

There's cashmere and then there's Pashmina cashmere.

CHARLENE

My tastes are simple because I'm easily satisfied with the best.

Daphne looks off in a huff.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

Listen, a tasteful five-hundred dollar shoulder purse says more about you than a five-thousand dollar Persian carpet hiding in your study.

Scotty comes into the library holding his letter from Gram and Pap.

SCOTTY

(from memory)

"Scotty, we don't think you harbor  
a mean bone in your body. You are  
automatically likeable."

(beat)

Who would of thought?

"Automatically likeable."

Daphne and Charlene stare at him.

CHARLENE

How nice to hear.

SCOTTY

What were your strong points.

Daphne pulls her letter from her bag.

DAPHNE

Haven't read mine.

Charlene also produces her letter.

CHARLENE

Nor I.

The sisters open their letters and read with sober, then  
frowning faces.

SCOTTY

So what's the scoop?

DAPHNE

As if it's any of your business.

Charlene speaks up as if pleased to find anything positive in  
hers.

CHARLENE

"You are an intelligent young woman  
of very refined tastes."

SCOTTY

That's as good as it gets?

DAPHNE

"Daphne, you are an accomplished  
and thrifty homemaker."

SCOTTY

Musta took both of them to come up  
with that.



Kipper saunters into the room.

SCOTTY (CONT'D)  
Tell us what Gram and Pap said  
about you in their letter.

KIPPY  
(blasé)  
I'm good looking and sexy, overly  
melodramatic, immature, and  
insubstantial. I also harbor ill  
feelings.

DAPHNE  
You lookers get off with lighter  
sentences in court, did you know?

KIPPY  
We lookers are also under diagnosed  
by our doctors.

SCOTTY  
(to Daphne)  
Trade you Gram and Pap's dirt on me  
for yours.

CHARLENE  
Not everyone's lives are in the  
public record, Scotty.

Scotty pours himself a drink.

SCOTTY  
I'm so friendly I come off as  
devoid of intimacy. A man devoid of  
intimacy, just think. My bonhomie --  
I looked it up -- is so over the  
top that I end up standing for  
nothing.

He looks at Daphne and Charlene as if hoping they'll  
disagree.

INT. BALLROOM - DAY

Six long folding tables stand on the ballroom floor.

Near them is a wheeled serving cart loaded with appliances,  
dinner ware, etc.

Robert and Amy are moving the items off the cart onto one of  
the tables.

Christopher wheels another loaded cart up to them.

CHRISTOPHER  
Hastings estimates thirty cart  
loads.

He goes off to bring up another cart.

Robert and Amy resume arguing about her religion. The  
argument crescendos.

ROBERT  
I'll say it again: I can't fathom  
your concept of God.

AMY  
Even Helen Keller could see God.

ROBERT  
Spare me Helen Keller.

AMY  
God wants to be known.

ROBERT  
Ninety-five percent of the universe  
is invisible because it's dark  
matter, dark energy. We only see  
five percent of what's out there.  
So where's God?

AMY  
True or not, it's irrelevant.

ROBERT  
Astronomers have found a cluster of  
Quasars four billion light years  
across.

AMY  
You don't say.

ROBERT  
(mockingly)  
You don't say.  
(beat)  
How does Samson killing a thousand  
Philistines with the jawbone of an  
ass compare to something that  
immense?

AMY  
You're comparing two very different  
things.

ROBERT

A single Quasar produces the energy  
of a trillion suns.

AMY

Have you seen a Quasar, Robert?

ROBERT

Compare a Quasar to Christ's parlor  
trick of turning water into wine.

AMY

Another fatuous comparison.

ROBERT

Your Bia-ble is a hodgepodge of  
tracts written by men who were  
wrong about everything, even in  
their own day.

AMY

Forty men wrote the Holy Bible.  
Forty men moved by the Spirit of  
God over 1500 years on three  
continents.

ROBERT

Spirit of God, my ass. In the 4th  
Century a council of unwashed  
bishops sifted through two-hundred  
documents and decided that only  
seventy-three had the Spirit of the  
Lord in them. That's your Bible,  
sister!

AMY

God wants to be found.

ROBERT

Where is he then?

AMY

Everywhere.

ROBERT

In a cardboard box of new kittens?  
In the magnificence of a sunset?  
How about the children's cancer  
ward at Good Samaritan Hospital? Or  
in the pile of headless children  
left by ISIS outside Mosul?

Amy puts her hands over her heart.

AMY  
My old Robert the Atheist at his  
very best.

Amy hugs and kisses him.

ROBERT  
If you would only --

AMY  
If I would only what?

Robert gives up.

He hugs and kisses her back.

ROBERT  
(suddenly serious)  
Think Carole would look into Frank?

AMY  
Let's find out.

INT. FOOT OF STAIRCASE - DAY

Every one -- Robert, Amy, Bernard, Christopher, Carole, Daphne, Charlene, Scotty, and Kippy -- is ready to go up to the second floor.

Carole has taken charge.

CAROLE  
We're safer if we stay together.

BERNARD  
No stragglers.

CHARLENE  
Shoot to kill, Lieutenant.

Robert and Bernard carry flashlights.

Christopher has a clipboard with the list of Daphne's sections of the house.

CHRISTOPHER  
First stop the three hall closets.

They start up the stairs, comical in their efforts to maintain a tight group.

Carole follows them with an amused look.

INT. HALL - CLOSET

Christopher opens the door.

He flips the light switch.

Nothing happens.

CHRISTOPHER

Light's out.

On either side of the door Robert and Bernard run their beams over the shelves.

Daphne cranes her neck to see what all is there.

DAPHNE

Sheets. More sheets. Sheets enough  
for the 7th Army.

Charlene runs her hands over the contents of the shelves expertly assessing their value.

CHARLENE

Quality sheets and a dozen 100%  
wool throw blankets.

SCOTTY

(baby talk)

Bwankies for evweeone tonight.

INT. HALL - CLOSET

Christopher opens the door.

He flips the light switch, and the closet is brightly lit.

More shelves of sheets and bedding.

A variety of clothing on hangers.

Neatly filled shoe racks.

DAPHNE

More sheets.

Charlene leafs through the clothing.

CHARLENE

Some designer labels here. We'll  
take a closer look later. This  
wonderful suede jacket for example.

ROBERT

Guests were always leaving things behind.

Charlene kneels by the shoe racks.

CHARLENE

Show me the shoes! Here's a Louis Vuitton. Are these Jimmy Choo's? And look at these.

She holds up a worn pair of black dress shoes.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

Was Adlai Stevenson ever in this house?

KIPPY

Jimmy Choo is definitely not Gram.

BERNARD

Who leaves their shoes behind after a party?

AMY

A liquor river used to flow in that ballroom.

ROBERT

Quoth Sergeant Semple of the Salvation Army.

INT. HALL - CLOSET

The group has arrived at the last closet.

Christopher opens the door.

Like Frankenstein terrified by his pursuing mob, the scar-faced, maniacal man gapes wide-eyed at the group of nine.

MANIAC (JOHN KEEL)

Cut you all to the bone!

Then plunges through them knocking them this way and that.

He throws a block into Carole and is down the hall and onto the stairs.

INT. HALL - DAY

All are shaken badly and trying to get on their feet.

Carole rubs her upper arm.

CAROLE  
Anyone hurt?

SCOTTY  
Daphne now owns a homicidal maniac.

Charlene has her hand over her breast.

CHARLENE  
I'm having palpitations!

Bernard brushes his pants.

BERNARD  
Now we'll be on our toes!

DAPHNE  
Damn the devise!

Amy adjusts her big cross.

AMY  
Sweet Jesus!

Christopher works at a crick in his back.

CHRISTOPHER  
I'm demanding hazardous duty pay!

KIPPY  
Gotta admit this is exciting!

CAROLE  
Everyone stay here.

Carole draws her gun and heads for the stairs.

Robert looks after Carole and turns to the group, rubbing his jaw.

ROBERT  
Might as well see what's in the  
maniac's closet.

INT. HALL - CLOSET

The closet is brightly lit.

Blankets and a pillow make a bed on the floor.

BERNARD

A logical place to hide out.

AMY

Where's his crazy partner I want to know.

Christopher examines stacks of sheets.

CHRISTOPHER

Hope your house has lots of bedrooms, Daphne.

DAPHNE

More sheets?

KIPPY

Yeah, all pastels.

ROBERT

Looks like you're set to travel.

Shelving along one wall holds assorted pieces of luggage.

CHARLENE

Old sets of Samsonite.

DAPHNE

(feigned surprise)

Not a single Louis Vuitton carryon bag.

SCOTTY

How about one more Daphne section then break for a drink.

CHRISTOPHER

The cabinets by the stove. That should be quick.

BERNARD

We could all use a bracer.

ROBERT

Not Sister Amy.

AMY

(feigned prim)

Just a sarsaparilla, thank you.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The nonet stands as if about to sing to the stove.



Christopher opens the doors of the cabinets.  
They are filled with large stacks of plates.

                  DAPHNE  
          Now it's plates. More plates.

                  KIPPY  
          Plates enough for the 7th Army.

Charlene takes a plate and looks at it closely.

                  CHARLENE  
          (derisively)  
          Caterers' plates.

                  DAPHNE  
          Plates enough to cater Christmas  
          dinner for the House of  
          Representatives.

Bernard has found a collection of pepper grinders below the  
counter.

                  BERNARD  
          These look quite nice.

                  CHARLENE  
          Really, Bernard...

                  KIPPY  
          Catering plates are practical.  
          Break one no big deal.

                  SCOTTY  
          Here you go.

He has found a two-quart red Le Creuset casserole.

                  ROBERT  
          Got one just like that in L.A.

Daphne takes the casserole in both hands and examines it.  
She looks up at the group, fighting tears.

                  DAPHNE  
          It's chipped.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Everyone has drinks.

Robert takes a bottle from Amy's hand and examines it.

ROBERT  
You weren't kidding.

AMY  
Sarsaparilla. Bonded.

DAPHNE  
(waving martini)  
I'm the Queen of Percalé.  
(beat)  
When I'm not catering, that is.

Carole addresses everyone.

CAROLE  
And we met Mr. Keel, formerly of  
Moreland State Hospital. He didn't  
go out the basement door. He's  
still down there.

DAPHNE  
(sarcastic)  
How now will I ever get my  
tangibles out of the What the Hell  
Room?

SCOTTY  
Maybe you'll have better luck in  
the attic.

Bernard passes by.

BERNARD  
Your father once mentioned a cache  
of paintings there.

CHARLENE  
Gram was into oil painting for a  
while.

DAPHNE  
Will I be inheriting her oeuvre  
through some twist of my black  
fate?

KIPPY  
You're due for some luck.

CHARLENE  
Cutting cards to determine who gets  
what. I've never heard of such  
nonsense.

Bernard has Amy's ear.

BERNARD

Think I'll go to Bermuda when the  
devises is over.

AMY

I'm catching the early fall color  
in Vermont.

Robert homes in on the Lieutenant.

ROBERT

Hope all this isn't proving too  
tedious for you.

Carole takes a long swallow of scotch.

CAROLE

I'll manage.

ROBERT

That scotch goes with your voice.

CAROLE

Been watching old Robert Mitchum  
movies?

ROBERT

Makes your eyes darken.

CAROLE

Don't flirt with me, Robert.

Robert has no out.

ROBERT

Sorry. Old habit I seem unable to  
break.

Carole smiles wanly, takes his hand and rubs it  
affectionately.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

The four grand kids, Robert, Amy, Bernard, and Carole stand  
near an expensive, gleaming late model sedan.

Daphne regards the car and reaches out to touch what appears  
to her an imperfection but turns out to be, say, a leaf.

Christopher holds a square of plywood upon which are drawn  
four circles each labeled with the name of a grand kid.

BERNARD

It's very simple. Robert and I shuffle this new deck of cards and then, in turn, you four grand kids. The same before each cut of the deck.

CHARLENE

Really, Bernard, this is too much.

ROBERT

Would you prefer a footrace down the driveway?

Christopher places the square of plywood on a table.

Bernard shuffles the deck on top of the square.

He hands the deck to Robert.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Scotty shuffles the deck and places it on the table.

BERNARD

Clubs lowest, then diamonds and hearts, spades highest.  
(re: deck)  
Daphne, cut away.

Daphne approaches the deck sourly.

SCOTTY

(whispering sports commentator)  
This is for the near mint condition late model sedan.

She smirks at Scotty and quickly cuts the deck. She looks at the card.

DAPHNE

King of hearts.

She places the card in her circle on the plywood, a flicker of victory on her face.

Bernard shuffles the deck.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Scotty shuffles the deck.

BERNARD

Charlene?

Charlene quickly steps over to the deck and cuts it.

She holds up her card.

AMY

Seven of clubs.

CHARLENE

Of all the...

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Kippy puts her hand over her eyes and cuts the deck dramatically.

She holds up the card.

SCOTTY

Fucking deuce of diamonds. Sorry,  
Amy.

Daphne's schadenfreude is palpable.

KIPPY

(flippant)  
At least I've got my health.

INSERT - BOARD WITH THREE CARDS

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Scotty shuffles deck, neatens it, takes a step back, leans forward and cuts it.

He looks at his card and then shows it to the others.

SCOTTY

(fist pump)  
King of Spades!

Daphne mouths the word 'fuck'.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Bernard and Robert sign affidavits.

Christopher takes a photo of the four cards on the board.

Daphne and Charlene grumble to each other in b.g.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

The same group stands near a fully restored classic car, say, a 1969 Boss 429 Mustang.

Charlene makes a face.

CHARLENE

Really, Pap, why not a vintage  
Aston Martin?

DAPHNE'S VOICE

It looks muscle-bound.

SCOTTY'S VOICE

Tear up some asphalt with this  
baby.

KIPPY'S VOICE

A male sex organ.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS

Daphne cuts the deck with a frown.

Charlene, exasperated, cuts the deck.

Scotty cuts the deck.

SCOTTY

(to car)

Got room in my garage for you too.

INSERT - PLYWOOD WITH CIRCLES

Daphne has the Ten of Clubs, Charlene the Five of Diamonds,  
Scotty the Nine of Clubs.

BACK TO SCENE

Kippy covers her eyes with her hand and again cuts the deck  
in dramatic fashion.

CHARLENE

We all agree you're darling, Kippy,  
okay?

KIPPY  
You have to admit it's exciting.

DAPHNE  
Show us your God damn card.

KIPPY  
Jack of Clubs!

Kippy does her cutest, sexiest pose.

KIPPY (CONT'D)  
I win.

Daphne walks furiously across the floor and then back to her seat and sits in a sulk.

SCOTTY  
(to Daphne)  
You don't want this car. S'got no AC. No room to put it.

Daphne and Charlene march across the cement floor toward the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The four grand kids sit at a card table.

A deck of cards lies in the center of the table.

Bernard extracts a paper from his attaché case and walks to the table.

He places an antique pocket knife on the table.

BERNARD  
I have here a letter of authenticity stating that this pocket knife was once the property of the French painter Paul Gauguin.

KIPPY  
How fun is this?

CHARLENE  
Like the pre-novocaine days of dentistry.

SCOTTY  
Could bring several thousand at auction.

DAPHNE  
 (miserable)  
 What do we do, Bernard?

BERNARD  
 Each of you takes a card from the top of the deck and places it face down in front of you. The deck has been shuffled twenty-five times.

In turn the kids take a card. Charlene, annoyed, Scotty, animated, Daphne, discouraged, Kippy, dramatic, a hand over her eyes.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
 You first, Charlene.

Charlene turns over an Eight of Spades.

Scotty turns over a Three of Diamonds.

Daphne turns over a Seven of Clubs.

Kippy, eyes covered, turns over a Five of Hearts.

CHARLENE  
 (raised eyebrow)  
 I win... a pocket knife.

SCOTTY  
 Fucking Paul Gauguin's pocket knife! Sorry, Amy.

Daphne clasps her hands on the table and looks straight ahead.

KIPPY  
 You know what sounds really good right now? A baloney sandwich on white bread.

Daphne slowly turns her head and gives Kippy a baleful stare.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The four grand kids sit at a card table.

A deck of cards lies in the center of the table.

Robert, Amy, Carole, and Christopher come over to the table. They have sandwiches and potato salad on plates.



ROBERT  
We missed Gauguin's knife.

SCOTTY  
This high card business tests the  
mettle of one's character.

DAPHNE  
I'm about out of mettle.

CHARLENE  
Buck up. I won the knife, didn't I?

KIPPY  
(to Amy)  
Is there baloney on white?

AMY  
Pastrami on corn rye.

ROBERT  
Molly makes damn good potato salad  
for a Brit.

Bernard comes over to their table carrying a simple wooden  
box.

DAPHNE  
A knife... What next? Pistols?

BERNARD  
(opening box)  
May I present for your observation  
a brace of 18th Century duelling  
pistols by William Ketland.

CHARLENE  
(to Daphne)  
You're clairvoyent!

DAPHNE  
I'm screwed.

SCOTTY  
No idea what these could be worth.

KIPPY  
Duelling pistols. How romantic!

DAPHNE  
It's all a big game to you, isn't  
it?

Kippy is hurt but quickly rallies.

KIPPY

Your spite may be poisonous but  
thank God I'm immune to it.

Daphne folds her arms and looks away.

BERNARD

Now children, draw a card if you  
please.

The four draw cards and place them face down.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Cards up.

Charlene turns over a Nine of Diamonds.

Scotty turns over a Ten of Diamonds.

Daphne turns over a Six of Clubs.

Kippy turns to Daphne, covers her eyes dramatically, and  
turns over a King of Hearts.

KIPPY

Do these fire, Bernard?

BERNARD

With fresh powder I imagine they  
would.

Kippy doesn't take her eyes off Daphne.

Daphne gets up and quickly leaves the room.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Robert serves himself breakfast from the sideboard.

Carole enters.

ROBERT

I was hoping you'd be up early.

CAROLE

Hastings heard raised voices coming  
from the basement. Our two maniacs  
may be at each other. I sent word  
upstairs for everyone to gather in  
the library.

ROBERT

I don't like the odds down there.

CAROLE  
I'll try to flush them out of the  
house.

ROBERT  
Be careful, Carole.

Carole looks him in the eye before she turns to leave.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Robert is the first one to arrive.

A script in hand, he heads for an arm chair on the far end of  
the room.

SCOTTY'S VOICE  
Uncle Bob, look out! Behind you!

Robert turns.

He sees JOHN KEEL moving toward him with a rusty butcher's  
knife in his hand, a look of wild delight on his face.

Robert hurls the script at him.

Daphne, Charlene, and Kippy enter the library.

They assume positions of appropriate alarm.

Keel moves close and makes a sweeping lunge for Robert, who  
takes a quick step backwards.

Scotty picks up a small table and quickly advances toward  
Keel, who turns whacking the table with his knife.

KEEL  
Cut you all to the bone!

Keel wheels around and lunges again at Robert, the knife  
catching in his shirt sleeve.

KIPPY'S VOICE  
Get his back to the wall!

KEEL  
To the bone ever last one!

Charlene runs from the room.

Kippy comes up, holding a sofa cushion as a shield.

Scotty steps close and hits Keel on the shoulders with the small table.

Keel roars in pain and spins around at Scotty his knife just nipping Scotty's cheek.

DAPHNE'S VOICE  
Hit his head, Scotty!

Robert now has his back against the corner wall.

Keel moves in for the kill.

KEEL  
Cut ever last one --

A LOUD REPORT.

Keel lurches, dead on his feet.

HASTINGS

stands just inside the French doors, his extended arm holding a revolver.

HASTINGS  
I found the revolver.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Everyone tries to work off the shock of the maniac's attack.

SCOTTY  
(British accent)  
I say, Hastings, good show!

HASTINGS  
I was a fair pistol shot in the  
Royal Marines, lo, many years ago.

Kippy looks at her brother's cheek.

KIPPY  
You may have a scar like the  
maniac's.

ROBERT  
You saved the day, Hastings.

HASTINGS  
One does one's duty, Master Robert.

ROBERT

He would've killed me were it not  
for you, Scotty. I can never thank  
you.

Scotty is deeply affected by Robert's words. He tries to make  
light of them.

SCOTTY

You'd of done the same for me.

Kippy kisses Scotty on the cheek.

Carole comes into the room.

She sees Keel's body.

CAROLE

I knew I heard a shot. Is everyone  
okay? Hastings?

HASTINGS

I'm afraid the butler did it with  
the revolver in the library.

CHARLENE

Scotty most surely saved Robert's  
life.

Carole touches Scotty's cheek as she walks up to Robert.

She starts to put her hand to Robert's cheek, but instead  
places it over his heart.

CAROLE

Great action scene for your next  
screenplay.

She pats his chest.

ROBERT

If my hands ever stop shaking.

DAPHNE

Criminy, what's in store for us  
next?

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Carole looks at photographs on the wall of the library.

Robert sits in an easy chair reading a script.

CAROLE  
How darling!

Robert comes to her side.

INSERT - PHOTO

A much younger Hastings gives a fencing lesson to the four Semple children. Robert's lunge is parried by the butler as the other three look on.

BACK TO SCENE

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
Where's Edward?

ROBERT  
Even at that age he was worried  
about injuring his hands.

CAROLE  
(sotto)  
Show me more photos of Frank.

Amy comes into the room.

AMY  
You wanted to look at family  
photos?

CAROLE  
The photos still in the darkroom,  
the ones hanging in the house and  
any others.

ROBERT  
Start with the piano.

CAROLE  
Discretion's the word.

INT. LIVING ROOM - GRAND PIANO - DAY

The piano is covered with family photos of various sizes.

Robert has two 8 x 10s in his hands.

He shows one to Carole.

INSERT - PHOTO

A carefully posed photo of a teenage Frank in a suit.  
He looks athletic but strangely unnatural.

BACK TO SCENE

ROBERT  
Notice Frank's photos it's like  
he's missing something.

INSERT - PHOTO

A recent photo of Frank. His eyes look vacant.

ROBERT'S VOICE  
Amy thinks he's a sociopath.

AMY'S VOICE  
He has a sociopath's malevolent  
charm.

CAROLE'S VOICE  
And you?

ROBERT'S VOICE  
I find Frank unbearable for his  
self-absorption.

BACK TO SCENE

CAROLE  
You're not sure.

ROBERT  
I'm not a psychologist so I'm not  
sure he's a sociopath.

AMY  
I think he is. I just can't prove  
he threw Edward off the veranda.

INT. LIBRARY - LIBRARY TABLE - NIGHT

Robert, Amy, and Carole quickly go through large boxes of  
loose photos. A stack of family photo albums is also on the  
table.

ROBERT  
D'you really think you'll find  
something culpable in a photo of  
Frank Semple?

CAROLE  
Maybe I like your company.

ROBERT  
It's a two way street.

CAROLE

Meaning?

ROBERT

I don't flirt with you you don't  
flirt with me.

AMY

Stick to the photos, Robert.

CAROLE

Rita Hayworth's daughter saw the  
Alzheimers in her mother's eyes on  
the screen long before she was  
diagnosed.

ROBERT

Don't overestimate your powers,  
Carole.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

From the boxes of photos the three have winnowed a small  
stack of enlargements, a shoe box of snapshots, and several  
unopened packets of snapshots.

Amy fingers one of the unopened packages.

AMY

The date on these packages is just  
after Edward fell. They're still  
unopened.

ROBERT

Dad liked to shoot a roll or two at  
parties and share the prints later  
with his guests.

AMY

He had no use for anything digital.

ROBERT

He developed his own film. Someone  
dropped these rolls off at a  
drugstore.

CAROLE

May I look at the photos in the  
unopened packets?



ROBERT

Of course.  
 (beat)  
 Where is this going?

CAROLE

Probably nowhere. It's for Amy I  
 guess.

AMY

(shyly)  
 Thanks, Carole.

INT. BALLROOM - DAY

Six folding tables on the ballroom floor hold a hodgepodge of  
 items from the Semple mansion:

Appliances, cameras, sets of dishes, fishing gear, flags,  
 golf clubs, objets d'art, photos, radios, silver of all  
 kinds, vases, knife sets, an occasional antique item,  
 tchotchkes, etc.

Near the tables four squares have been marked off on the  
 floor with masking tape. In each is taped a sign with the  
 name of a grand child.

Hastings oversees Christopher as he removes trays of food  
 from a serving cart onto a table near the stage.

The four grand children sit together in chairs on the  
 ballroom floor. Bernard stands nearby.

Robert, Amy, and Carole sit at a round table on the stage.

Amy takes it all in and shakes her head.

AMY

These devise games... Were mom and  
 dad getting soft in the head?

ROBERT

No. They suddenly got puckish and  
 prankish.

Bernard stretches out his arms like Moses.

BERNARD

Welcome all of you to another stage  
 of the tangible property devise.

CHARLENE

I find it hard to believe Gram and Pap, normal with a capital N, devised this cursed devise.

BERNARD

I marvel as well at how devilishly feisty Gram and Pap are proving to be.

DAPHNE

Dread descends upon me like a dark blanket of malign fog.

BERNARD

Daphne, you may select any item from the first table. Charlene the second table. Kippy the third. Scotty the fourth. You have thirty minutes. There will be no talking among you during this time.

He waits for any questions.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Please begin.

Daphne is at her table and looking through its items before either Kippy or Scotty even reach theirs.

Charlene begins studying the hallmarks on a bundle of silver spoons.

Kippy takes in her table with a casual once over.

She is about to pick up an ornate candlestick but selects instead a handle bell. She rings it to her satisfaction and carries it back toward her seat.

Scotty carefully works his way through a large stack of folded flags.

He unfolds a large flag of Argentina and waves it about before quickly refolding it and heading for his seat with it under his arm.

Charlene now closely examines a large silver pitcher.

INT. BALLROOM

Bernard comes up to Daphne's table and consults his watch.

BERNARD

Daphne, Charlene, five minutes.

Charlene looks at Daphne's table.

She sees a porcelain pitcher.

BACK TO SCENE

She frowns, sighs, picks up the silver pitcher and heads back to her seat.

Daphne apparently cannot decide among three items: a heavy glass vase; a small marble bust; a square silver tray.

INT. BALLROOM

BERNARD

Five seconds, Daphne.

She finally opts for the vase.

She takes it unhappily in her arms and walks to her seat.

Kippy has absentmindedly begun to give her bell a little ring every few seconds.

CHARLENE

Jesus, Daphne, didn't you see the Limoges porcelain chocolate pot?

Daphne looks at her in confused alarm.

DAPHNE

Chocolate pot?

CHARLENE

Two grand if it's worth a dime.

DAPHNE

The vase with roses?  
(catching on)  
Not a vase...

SCOTTY

Ouch!

CHARLENE

Kippy, stop ringing your God-damned bell!

DAPHNE

Sheets, catering plates --

KIPPY  
-- and a nice glass vase.

INT. BALLROOM

Bernard comes over to the sideboard, takes a finger sandwich in hand and bites off a corner.

BERNARD  
Maybe Molly would come cook for me after the house is sold.

AMY  
I hope you're serious. She wants to continue working.

BERNARD  
Actually, I am. Hastings is provided for in the will. Retirement cottage and everything.

INT. BALLROOM - DAY

Bernard stands in one of the squares made by the masking tape on the ballroom floor.

The four grand children sit at a round table with plates of food and wine.

BERNARD  
You have two hours to go through all six tables and take anything you want. Put the items you select in your square. It goes without saying that if two of you want the same item you'll have to work something out.

KIPPY  
What if you don't really want anything?

BERNARD  
I do wish you would get into the spirit of the devise, Kippy.

SCOTTY  
Like Daphne?

BERNARD  
Daphne may have had some bad luck, but she has an acquisitive spirit.

ROBERT

The stuff you don't want sell it at your own garage sale.

KIPPY

I don't need money.

BERNARD

You may not but the American SPCA does, and the Red Cross and the Salvation Army...

AMY

Charity my three nieces and one nephew.

INT. BALLROOM - DAY

Bernard has the four grand children lined up.

He holds up a hand, looks at his watch.

BERNARD

(drops hand)

Begin.

Daphne heads straight for the Limoges chocolate pot.

Charlene grabs the collection of silver spoons she was examining before.

Kippy dutifully begins taking items from the last table to her square on the floor.

Scotty, as if channeling Kippy, begins taking items from the next to last table to his square on the floor.

Daphne and Charlene begin to look worried about how fast Kippy and Scotty are transferring items to their squares.

DAPHNE

You two aren't even looking at an item before walking it over to your square.

SCOTTY

So? You can do the same.

CHARLENE

Isn't quality or usefulness a criterion for you?

DAPHNE

To you it's just merchandise by the pound.

KIPPY

I'm thinking garage sale and my favorite charity.

CHARLENE

You have a favorite charity?

KIPPY

Of course. Don't you?

SCOTTY

There's this organization in Sweden that arranges for physically handicapped people to have sex.

KIPPY

It's called FAB in Swedish.

CHARLENE

Why am I not surprised, Kippy?

DAPHNE

We've become glorified garage sale schleppers.

SCOTTY

I'm putting my goods on the Swedish sex thing too, Kip.

CHARLENE

(scolding)

Many small museums in our own country would welcome donations however small.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Strips of yellow caution tape divide the huge attic space into quadrants.

At their intersection are taped the names of the grand children.

One of the quadrants is bare except for, say, a stack of spare roof shingles.

Robert, Amy, Carole, Bernard, Christopher, and the four grand children stand in that square.

Charlene is obviously annoyed that her quadrant is empty.

CHARLENE

I bequeath these roof shingles to thee, Old House. May they protect thee from future rains.

Daphne walks to her quadrant.

There are several shelves crammed with sundry items. Several large objects have been covered with dust covers. Others stand bare: two filing cabinets, a book shelf, etc.

DAPHNE

Start digging, Chris.

Chris takes a corner of a dust cover in his hands.

CHRISTOPHER

Better stand back.

DAPHNE

Pull it off already.

He quickly slides the canvas off what turns out to be a splintery highboy.

Dust engulfs Daphne.

SCOTTY

You said pull already.

DAPHNE

Shut up, Scotty.

Daphne fans dust.

Kippy studies the highboy.

KIPPY

This is a real piece of shit.

BERNARD

I'm sure Pap mentioned a cache of paintings in the attic.

CHARLENE

With the occasional Utrillo or Miró among them?

AMY

There never were many original works of art in the house.

ROBERT  
 Mom and Dad preferred to put up  
 Dad's photos.

CAROLE  
 Our two intruders were here.

SCOTTY  
 Where?

Carole gestures to another quadrant.

A dust cover has been pulled off a heavy chest of drawers.

All the drawers have been pulled out.

Carole goes over to it.

CHARLENE  
 Looking for what?

CAROLE  
 Weapons, what else. Or something to  
 sell.  
 (re: drawers)  
 Whose quadrant?

KIPPY  
 Mine.

Carol holds up a Christmas ornament.

CAROLE  
 You're all set for the holidays.  
 Even unopened packages of angel  
 hair.

KIPPY  
 Hey, that's kinda cool.

Daphne looks daggers at Kippy before turning back to her  
 quadrant.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Chris and Daphne have made headway through her pile of stuff.

Chairs and a table, floor lamps, end tables have been  
 uncovered.

Chris examines the shelves.



CHRISTOPHER  
A veritable appliance museum.

He holds up an electric knife.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)  
Does this scream 1972?

Daphne is going through the filing cabinets.

DAPHNE  
Apparently, Pap never threw out a  
receipt in his life.

She holds up a brittle yellow slip.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)  
Some fucking adapter he bought on  
January 13, 1968 for six dollars  
and eighteen cents.  
(beat)  
Tax included.

Kippy has uncovered a large box near a corner of the  
quadrant.

KIPPY  
These may be paintings.

Daphne quickly moves to the box.

She opens the box and grasps something between her two hands.

She turns around and holds out a painting to the group.

INSERT - PAINTING

A simply rendered scene of a fisherman in a rowboat on a lake  
with mountains in the background.

BACK TO SCENE

Daphne's face forms a look of exaggerated curiosity,  
expectation.

DAPHNE  
Well...?

KIPPY  
Oh, my God!

DAPHNE  
You recognize it?

KIPPY

Gram painted it when I was like five. She let me do part of one of the mountains.

CHARLENE

Those God-awful paint by numbers kits that came out in the early 1950s!

KIPPY

I now own eight of them. Any bids, kids? A painting by Gram. How about one fucking little bid?

INT. SECOND FLOOR - HALLWAY - DAY

Carole, Charlene and Christopher stand at a door.

CHRISTOPHER

Your first section.

CHARLENE

All of Edward's room. Probably come across one of his admirer's, now mummified, of course.

CAROLE

I'll check out the rest of the floor.

Charlene and Christopher go into Edward's room.

Carole quickly enters the next bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

She flicks on the light.

She quickly looks over the walls and baseboards.

Then looks behind all the photos on the walls.

Behind the last photo there's a peephole.

Carole looks into it.

She sees Charlene and Christopher looking through piano music in Edward's room.

BACK TO SCENE

Then she gets on her knees by the bed.  
Feels up into the bed springs with her hand.  
Finally, she runs her arm deep under the mattress.  
Pulls out a maroon journal.

INSERT - LEDGER

"DIARY"

BACK TO SCENE

RUMBLE of THUNDER

Carole sees something ugly in her mind's eye.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Through the large windows the nearby trees and shrubbery move in the wind and rain.

An occasional PEAL of THUNDER.

LARGE SET OF WATERFORD CRYSTAL

stands on the sideboard.

BACK TO SCENE

Daphne sits, with the three other grand children, at a card table, staring glumly at the Waterford.

SCOTTY

If you lose the Waterford don't  
jump off the veranda.

DAPHNE

So far it's squat for me in the  
devise.

KIPPY

Your luck could change.

DAPHNE

Not to mention Jeffrey's law firm's  
going through a rough patch.

CHARLENE

Don't forget the French chocolate  
pot.

DAPHNE

God knows where I can peddle that damned thing.

KIPPY

Faites alors le chocolat chaud.

DAPHNE

Don't think I don't know what you just said, Kippy. "Then make hot chocolate." You're such a show off.

KIPPY

(French accent)

Daphne iz cross with all ze people today.

BERNARD

Robert and I have shuffled this deck twenty-five times.

Bernard places the deck on the table.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Each of you shuffle and then, in turn, take a card off the top and place it face up on the table.

The four shuffle the deck.

Charlene takes a card and puts it on the table -- a Ten of Spades.

SCOTTY

(whispering sports commentator)  
For the Waterford crystal Semple White may prove hard to beat.

DAPHNE

Not funny, Scotty

Kippy takes a card and places it dramatically on the table -- a Jack of Hearts.

KIPPY

Oh, look at me!

Scotty takes a card and puts it on the table -- a Queen of Diamonds.

SCOTTY

So much for you, little sister.

DAPHNE  
 (near tears)  
 God-damn the devise!

She takes a card and puts it on the table -- a King of Clubs.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)  
 (stunned)  
 I won!

BERNARD  
 Indeed, Daphne!

DAPHNE  
 I won the Waterford!

The other three grand children nod and salute Daphne with mock applause.

Daphne doesn't know whether to cry or to cheer.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bernard stands in front of a grand piano covered with family photos.

BERNARD  
 A 1980 Steinway grand piano in  
 absolutely perfect condition.

Daphne whispers to Charlene.

DAPHNE  
 How could we have forgotten about  
 the two pianos?

CHARLENE  
 Grand pianos grand dust collectors.

BERNARD  
 The new owners of the two Semple  
 Steinways will be determined by a  
 roll of the dice.

CHARLENE  
 Yahtzee!

KIPPY  
 Seven come eleven I don't even own  
 a grand piano!

Bernard holds up two over-size die.

BERNARD

High roll wins. Two to twelve  
points possible. Who's first?

Kippy quickly steps forward and takes the dice in her hands.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Give 'em a roll on the carpet.

Kippy holds the dice to her forehead and closes her eyes. She  
rolls the dice.

A 4 and a 5 for a total of 9.

Charlene gives the dice a careless throw.

A 3 and a 6 for a total of 9.

Daphne, solemnly, bounces the dice off the carpet.

A 5 and a 6 for a total of 11.

DAPHNE

(fist pump)

Yes!

Scotty gives his dice a short toss.

A 6 and a 6 for a total of 12.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

I lose by one point!

SCOTTY

Sorry, Daphne. Some people were  
born to take it.

CHARLENE

Just as well, Daphe. Grand pianos  
arrive with great expectations only  
to end up tables for framed family  
photos.

SCOTTY

I put this Black Beauty in the  
living room then where do I put my  
baby grand?

BERNARD

Such a life of decisions, Scotty.

INT. BALLROOM - STAGE - DAY

Bernard runs his hand along the concert grand.

BERNARD

I'm told this was the piano once  
used on the Ed Sullivan Show.

CHARLENE

Why not someone we can relate to,  
Billy Joel for instance?

BERNARD

Are your homes grand enough for a  
concert grand?

SCOTTY

Luck's going to smile on you this  
time, Daphe.

DAPHNE

I don't give a flying you know what  
whether I win this piano or  
anything else.

CHARLENE

Atta girl!

Kippy is examining the piano carefully.

DAPHNE

What are you up to, Kippy?

KIPPY

I'm suddenly into the spirit of the  
devise.

DAPHNE

What does that mean?

KIPPY

This piano would be perfect by my  
big window that looks down on the  
river.

BERNARD

(hands dice to Kippy)  
Roll 'em.

Kippy tosses the DICE and they CLATTER across the stage  
floor.

A 3 and a 4 for a total of 7.

Daphne reacts with a smirk.

Charlene gives the dice an unenthusiastic throw. A 3 and a 2 for a total of 5.

CHARLENE

Of all the...

Scotty almost throws the dice off the stage. A 2 and a 2 for a total of 4.

Daphne tosses the dice carelessly.

DAPHNE

What the hell.

A 3 and a 3 for a total of 6.

Kippy says nothing but moves about the stage making fist pumps.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

I lose by one point!

CHARLENE

Be happy you don't have to pay \$200 to have the behemoth tuned every six months.

DAPHNE

(almost losing it)

I lost by one point again. How about that?

She walks to the edge of the stage and sits on the floor.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Robert hands Carole a glass of scotch.

ROBERT

The illustrator who draws me just put a yellow light bulb in the word balloon above my head. Do you see it?

CAROLE

Cops have little imagination.

ROBERT

That new script I need to write? I've been living it the past twenty-four hours!

(MORE)



ROBERT (CONT'D)

The tangible property devise for  
the four grand kids. The storm. The  
homicidal maniacs in the basement.  
The film noir lieutenant who comes  
to protect us.

(beat)

With whom I'm quickly smitten.

(beat)

I'll call it The House. An  
hilarious comedy-thriller.  
Hollywood look out! Here comes the  
new Robert Semple!

CAROLE

Your poor heart doesn't know which  
way to go, does it?

ROBERT

I sound childish to you --

Amy comes into the library.

AMY

Daphne, bless her greedy heart, won  
the Waterford crystal. Kippy got  
the concert grand.

She turns to Carole.

AMY (CONT'D)

I'm dying to see what you have.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

A large photo of Frank stands on the table in the b.g.

Carole lays three snapshots on the table.

She hands Robert and Amy a large magnifying glass.

CAROLE

These photos were taken the night  
Edward fell off the veranda.

INSERT - PHOTOS - MAGNIFYING GLASS POV

Edward basks in the midst of an admiring group. Frank, off to  
one side, shoots him a baleful look.

Edward now stands in the middle of the group. Frank's  
expression is even more contemptuous.

ROBERT'S VOICE  
Disliking someone isn't a crime.

AMY'S VOICE  
But disliking someone is a stepping  
stone to an eventual murder.

Edward leans back defensively as Frank pokes him in the chest with a finger and appears to be saying something unpleasant.

CAROLE'S VOICE  
Frank's dislike of his older  
brother is clearly in evidence the  
night he died.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Robert pours himself a drink from the bar cart. Holds up his glass to Carole who shakes her head.

Carole waits for Robert to return to his seat.

CAROLE  
Did you know there's a peephole in  
Frank's room that looks into  
Edward's?

AMY  
My God!

ROBERT  
This is news. Amy's taking the  
Lord's name in vain.

CAROLE  
(holds up diary)  
This was under Frank's mattress.

ROBERT  
Jesus H. Christ!

AMY  
Robert, really...

CAROLE  
I'm afraid it contains unflattering  
commentary.

ROBERT  
About Edward?

CAROLE  
About Frank.

Carole has marked several pages in the diary.

CAROLE (CONT'D)

It covers a two year period, from October 15 of 1980 to October 23 of 1982.

AMY

October 23. Two days after Edward falls off the veranda.

CAROLE

Frank made an average of two entries a week. They were invariably brief and pointed.

(reads)

"Edward brought Sally Haines over to the house tonight and played show tunes on the piano while she made eyes at him. When they left he kissed her on the porch and ran his hand up under her dress."

AMY

How wild does this get?

ROBERT

Good you found it before Daphne went over the room.

CAROLE

"Mom and Dad think Edward hardly drinks. Well, I was in a back booth at Mike's Sweet Shop and he came in with "Tits" Bohannon and they were both pretty hammered."

ROBERT

I saw Robert tipsy only a few times.

CAROLE

This one's more serious.

(beat)

"God damn Edward. He receives all the attention from everyone. I am invisible. I wish he had died when he was a little boy."

AMY

This is tragic.

CAROLE

He gives one of his last entries a title: "'The Fall'. And I don't mean Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. I mean Edward on the veranda and then three stories down onto the brick walkway. Now let's see if some attention comes my way."

ROBERT

Is that a confession?

CAROLE

Frank's diary is a screed of hatred.

Carole looks to one side and freezes. Amy and Robert also look.

They see the remaining maniac, EARL BASS, standing in the doorway of the library, a gauze bandage on his right forearm, chewing, a baguette of bread in one hand and a hatchet in the other.

BASS

(crazy)

D. A. believed Willie Brown kilt them two little boys. Not Willie, no siree. I kilt 'em!

Carole begins to slowly move her hand to her gun.

Bass raises the hatchet.

CAROLE

Get down!

He hurls the hatchet and it just misses Robert.

Carole rolls once on the carpet and fires at Bass's fleeing figure.

She is immediately up and after him.

INT. DOORWAY

Robert and Amy check the carpet for blood.

Carole returns out of breath.

CAROLE

I'm pretty sure he's gone back into the basement.

Amy holds up a finger.

AMY  
Blood, I think.

Carole samples it with a thumb and forefinger.

CAROLE  
Yeah.

She walks along a few steps and kneels beside another drop of blood.

Robert kneels beside her.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
The second time in six hours you  
were almost killed.

ROBERT  
You nicked him.

CAROLE  
Not seriously I think.

ROBERT  
Oh, but now he's got a nick.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Robert, Amy, and Carole sit at a small table and eat sandwiches.

Robert and Carole have drinks, Amy a glass of milk.

CAROLE  
The diary makes Frank a suspect in  
Edward's death.  
(sighs)  
But too much time has passed.

AMY  
Can I even speak to him now?

CAROLE  
Mention the diary or the photos  
you're asking for real trouble.  
(beat)  
It's a hot coal. Let a cool.

ROBERT  
Glad I'm out on the coast.

AMY  
Can I pay you a visit?

CAROLE  
Odds are the ongoing investigation  
won't link Frank to your parents'  
death.

AMY  
Shudder to think.

CAROLE  
My poking around poisoned Frank for  
you both.

Carole gets up.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
Dead on my feet. Good night you  
two.

Carole pats Robert's shoulder.

She leaves.

INT. KITCHEN - TABLE

Robert pours a liqueur into two small glasses. Slides one to  
Amy.

ROBERT  
You like almonds.

AMY  
Don't want to toss and turn with  
Frank all night.

ROBERT  
Then down the hatch.

He touches his glass to Amy's.

She sniffs at her glass. Takes a sip.

AMY  
Amazing.

She takes another sip.

AMY (CONT'D)  
Corruptor!

ROBERT  
I'm guilty.

She takes another sip.

AMY  
Carrie Nation would never break a  
bottle of this with her little  
hatchet.

She takes another sip.

AMY (CONT'D)  
I feel a glow. And Frank is now  
sitting in the corner.

ROBERT  
I call it summoning the angels.

Amy winks at her brother.

Robert fill's Amy's glass.

AMY  
You're not such a bad guy after  
all.

INT. DINING ROOM - SIDEBOARD - NEXT MORNING

Scotty puts bacon on top of his scrambled eggs with a pair of  
tongs.

Kippy comes in, yawns, fills a cup from the coffee urn.

KIPPY  
Think we'll be out of here today?

SCOTTY  
Uncle Robert said I saved his life.  
How about that? Did something  
important.

KIPPY  
You were very brave.

SCOTTY  
Can't remember the last time I did  
something important.

Daphne enters with a woeful expression followed by Charlene  
in a stylish robe.

Both take a plate.

KIPPY

Any hidden treasure?

CHARLENE

I'm having my garage sale in the parking lot of the University Field House.

DAPHNE

Can I squeeze in a white sale?

SCOTTY

Bernard lays on the guilt pretty thick.

CHARLENE

With a palette knife.

(to Kippy)

Find any oil paints?

KIPPY

Boxes. More boxes. Boxes enough for the Boston School of Art and Design.

SCOTTY

(to Charlene)

Surely you've found something you want.

CHARLENE

A 19th Century Sabatier chef's knife in its original factory wrapping.

KIPPY

How cool is that?

CHARLENE

I shall cherish it.

(sips juice)

Grapefruit. Fresh squeezed. Bless that Cockney woman.

(raises a finger)

And a Tiffany lamp in the storage room on the third floor. A piece is missing but never mind.

SCOTTY

Not the mother lode but some nuggets at least.



CHARLENE

(raises a finger)

The pièce de résistance. That grimy little oil that was in the den? I think it's a Sisley. We'll know for sure when its cleaned up.

KIPPY

Oh my God I think it is a Sisley. I remember Pap going on about it.

DAPHNE

We agreed to go fifty fifty on any objet d'arts!

CHARLENE

I hardly think of a Sisley as an objet d'art.

DAPHNE

Don't go lawyer on me, Charlene.

CHARLENE

Calm yourself, Daphe. Wait until they've cleaned it up.

Robert comes in and begins to arrange his breakfast on a plate.

ROBERT

Grapefruit juice! Cleans out one's carburator.

Amy enters, quickly takes a plate and fills it with scrambled eggs.

AMY

I could eat a horse.

SCOTTY

If we were in France.

She takes a bite off a rasher of bacon.

AMY

Then I'll settle for a pig.

CAROLE'S VOICE

I forgot to set my alarm.

She has on a sexy blouse and chic trousers. She wears her shoulder holster.

She fills her cup and takes a quick sip.

CAROLE  
This is when I need a cigarette.

KIPPY  
I've got Sherman's in my purse.

ROBERT  
Don't tempt her.

CAROLE  
I'll fight through the urge.

Bernard walks into the dining room and raises his arms like Moses.

BERNARD  
Good morning, every one!

He picks up a plate.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
With a hearty breakfast in us we  
just might break the back of the  
devise today.

He puts a spoonful of eggs on his plate.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
Lieutenant, what's the word on  
reinforcements?

CAROLE  
The morgue's sending a van for John  
Keel's body.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

We see the back of a painting that sits on an easel.

Bernard stands on the other side observing it as do, behind him, the grand kids, Carole, Robert and Amy.

BERNARD  
Pap bought it years ago. Wouldn't  
tell me what he paid for it. Think  
he was embarrassed. Four  
independent art experts have  
branded it a forgery.

Charlene steps forward and squints at the artist's signature.

CHARLENE  
Who again?

BERNARD

Willem Kalf, K - A - L - F, of  
Rotterdam, 1619 to 1693. One of the  
Dutch Golden Age painters.

SCOTTY

(re: painting)  
Doesn't grab you in the gut.

INSERT - PAINTING

KIPPY'S VOICE

Same 'ol same 'ol with Kalf still  
lives. Tapestry on a table, some  
gold or silver vessels, a Chinese  
porcelain bowl with fruit spilling  
out. Almost all depict a half-  
peeled lemon, the peeling still  
attached and looping down.

CHRISTOPHER'S VOICE

The lemon is cool.

BERNARD'S VOICE

One art historian from Boston  
maintained it's authentic and could  
bring several million dollars at  
auction.

BACK TO SCENE

ROBERT

Dad told him: "S'give me a million  
dollars and it's yours."

DAPHNE

Even a forgery wouldn't it be worth  
a tidy sum since it's so well done?

KIPPY

Dutch painters turned out 1.3  
million paintings in the twenty  
years after 1640.

CHARLENE

So a little forgery may not count  
for much.

CAROLE

What's your take on this painting,  
Kippy?

KIPPY

After Pap was told the painting was bogus I spent a lot of time looking at Kalf reproductions.

DAPHNE

Hoping to determine the painting's legitimacy or falsity.

KIPPY

Even though I'm a rank amateur.

CHARLENE

And hopefully call attention to yourself.

SCOTTY

Did either of you do anything to try to authenticate it?

KIPPY

Many of Kalf's authenticated still lifes have the partially peeled lemon in them, the pared rind still hanging in a coil.

BERNARD

Meaning?

KIPPY

All the coils turn clockwise.

CAROLE

Maybe it had to do with Kalf being a righty or a lefty.

KIPPY

In Pap's painting the peel of lemon coils counterclockwise.

SCOTTY

Then Pap's painting is a forgery!

KIPPY

Au contraire, mon frère. Any forger worth his deception would have studied prints of Kalf's paintings. The last thing he would do is paint something that obviously contradicts the originals.

DAPHNE

So Pap's painting could be both authentic and unique among Kalf's own still lifes?

AMY

If father's painting's genuine it could bring millions!

KIPPY

Perhaps. But not until an authentication body signs off on the painting.

ROBERT

Why on earth didn't you ever mention the lemon peel coils before today?

KIPPY

That was a decade ago. I'm fourteen, doing lots of drugs. Oxycodone, psychotherapeutics, marijuana, Scotch, cigarettes... Those cute little lemons didn't stand a chance.

DAPHNE

If you knew how many nights my sister and I have tossed and turned over the authenticity of this fucking painting!

Bernard pulls a paper from his attaché case.

BERNARD

The Memorandum stipulates that the ownership of the painting be decided by a cutting of the cards (re: paper) "unless new evidence arises that would prove or even suggest the authenticity of the Kalf still life."

ROBERT

The painting has to go to the four of you.

BERNARD

At least until a board of authentication can be arranged.

SCOTTY

Of course!

KIPPY

Painting's genuine we all get a bundle. If it's a fake... just how fun has all this been?

CHARLENE

Kippy, we need to talk about your interpretation of fun.

DAPHNE

I gladly accept a fourth interest in the still life. The devise has left me a pauper. Come on, Charlene.

Daphne takes off.

Charlene catches up to her.

CHARLENE

Where's the fire?

DAPHNE

We need to sort the designer labels.

As they approach the sideboard on which sits the Waterford, they make a sharp left turn. Daphne's big tote bag swings out and sweeps the Waterford onto the floor.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Robert sleeps on his side.

The SLIGHTEST MECHANICAL HUM.

His eyes open.

Then open wider.

He sits up and quickly gets out of bed.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Robert, carrying a small flashlight, walks quickly down to a door.

He raps sharply on it.

Carole, still slow with sleep, opens the door.

ROBERT  
Bass just used the elevator.

CAROLE  
How do you know?

ROBERT  
It woke me.

CAROLE  
I heard nothing.

ROBERT  
That hum is in my DNA.  
(beat)  
Mother used to go downstairs in it  
when she couldn't sleep.

CAROLE  
What floor?

ROBERT  
Third.

CAROLE  
One second.

Carole goes back into her room.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Carole emerges hastily dressed and carrying her weapon.

ROBERT  
I'm going with you.

CAROLE  
I wish you wouldn't.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

ROBERT  
What's he want with the third  
floor?

CAROLE  
Do I look like Sherlock Holmes?

ROBERT  
I'm thinking, maybe, Lauren Bacall.

CAROLE  
You would flirt on a sinking ship.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Intermittent lightening illumines the rain and sends blue sheets of light across the dance floor.

Carole walks toward the elevator, Robert close behind her.

The elevator door stands open.

Carole sweeps her flashlight around the ballroom.

CAROLE  
Is anyone sleeping in the old  
servant quarters on this floor?

ROBERT  
No, they're empty.

CAROLE  
Maybe he hoped I would hear him and  
come up here. He's gone down the  
other stairs to where everyone is  
sleeping!

They hurry to the other stairway.

ROBERT  
Maniacs are capable of elaborating  
a plan?

CAROLE  
Murderous ones.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlene sleeps on her side.

INT. BEDROOM - DOOR - NIGHT

The door knob turns.

The door slowly opens.

Bass slips silently into the room.

He inches across the carpet toward Charlene's bed.



INT. BEDROOM

Bass stands at the foot of Charlene's bed.

He watches her.

He takes an ice pick from his back pocket.

Charlene sleeps on her side.

Suddenly she opens her eyes.

INT. STAIRWAY - SAME

CAROLE

This could escalate very quickly  
into something serious.

ROBERT

You should have given me a gun.

CAROLE

So you can trip and shoot me in the  
back?

ROBERT

I shot a hundred rounds once with a  
.45 automatic.

CAROLE

Stay well back of me.

INT. DOOR

The door opens and Carole quickly looks in both directions.

She emerges into the second floor hallway and moves quickly  
down it.

Robert follows her at a distance.

Carole stops half way down the hallway.

She listens.

A CRASH like a vase knocked off a table.

A WOMAN'S SCREAM from a nearby bedroom.

The door opens and Charlene runs into the hall.

Bass appears in the doorway, sees Carole and goes back into the room.

ROBERT  
He'll go out onto the veranda!

INT. BEDROOM

Carole flips on the lights.

One of the French doors stands open.

Carole moves to it quickly and checks the veranda to her left and right.

EXT. VERANDA - NIGHT

She goes out onto the veranda.

Robert follows her.

She sweeps the veranda with her flashlight.

CAROLE  
Where the hell did he go?

They move to the balustrade.

A scream and something falls past them.

ROBERT  
Christ, he tried climbing up the  
drainpipe to the third floor  
veranda.

INT. DINING ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Robert, Amy, and Bernard sit at the dining table with their breakfasts.

The four grand kids stand holding their plates.

The Earl Bass affair is much on their minds.

Daphne is subdued after what happened to the Waterford.

CHARLENE  
I open my eyes I know someone's at  
the foot of my bed.

SCOTTY  
 Woulda filled my pants. Sorry, Amy.

AMY  
 I as well.

SCOTTY  
 Aunt Amy's in the game.

CHARLENE  
 I grab the lamp.

KIPPY  
 The lamp?

CHARLENE  
 I hurl it at him.  
 (she looks at others)  
 He's distracted for one second. I'm  
 out the door.

DAPHNE  
 He could've come into any of our  
 bedrooms.

CAROLE  
 He was out for blood.

BERNARD  
 Fungible blood.

Everyone looks at Bernard.

BERNARD (CONT'D)  
 My lawyer coming out.

KIPPY  
 What an exciting end to the devise.

DAPHNE  
 Only thing I'm getting out of the  
 devise is a sore back from my yard  
 sale.

CAROLE  
 You lost stem ware not a leg.

ROBERT  
 I'm glad you didn't have to shoot  
 Bass.

KIPPY  
 Have you ever killed anyone?

BERNARD  
An indiscreet question, Kippy.

CAROLE  
No.

CHARLENE  
Could you?

CAROLE  
Yes.

SCOTTY  
That's what cops do. Even girl  
cops. Sorry, Carole.

Hastings comes into the dining room.

HASTINGS  
An ambulance and a police car just  
pulled up at the porch.

INT. ENTRYWAY

The front door is open.

An ambulance is parked in the drive.

A man and a woman in blue scrubs push a cot with a body under  
a sheet through the door.

Robert walks to the door.

ROBERT  
And flights of tse-tse flies sing  
thee to thy rest, poor deranged  
ones.

Carole walks to his side and turns around.

CAROLE  
Time for me to say goodbye.

The four grand children, Amy, Bernard, Hastings, Molly and  
Christopher await her departure.

Everyone ad libs their goodbyes and thank yous.

HASTINGS  
We thank you for your service.

AMY  
You were incredible, Carole.

BERNARD  
Without you no devise.

DAPHNE  
(to Charlene)  
Nor would I have won and lost the  
Waterford.

Carole exits the front door followed by Robert with her valise.

EXT. RECEIVING PORCH - DAY

It has stopped raining.

They walk toward her car.

ROBERT  
How far to your place?

CAROLE  
Office fifteen miles. House twenty.

ROBERT  
You home Saturday?

CAROLE  
I am.

ROBERT  
May I stop by on the way to the  
airport?

CAROLE  
Do.

She hands him a card.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
My address is on the back.

She gets in the car.

Puts down the window.

There is an uncomfortable silence.

Robert gives her a casual, slow salute.

ROBERT  
Well done, Lieutenant Cross.

Carole forces a smile and drives off.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Daphne and Charlene sit on a sofa.

Scotty and Kippy sit in adjacent easy chairs.

Both have drinks, and Kippy smokes a cigarette.

Daphne stares into nothingness.

DAPHNE

Breaking the Waterford was the last  
straw.

CHARLENE

You can buy enough Waterford to go  
with all your plates and enough  
beds for all your sheets if the  
Kalf painting proves genuine.

DAPHNE

(tearing up)  
And Gram and Pap said I'm  
acquisitive and bossy to a fault.

CHARLENE

(sotto)  
They said I raise snobbism to  
levels before unseen.

Daphne looks at her.

DAPHNE

They did?

CHARLENE

Levels before unseen... When did  
they start writing like Henry  
James? Of all the...

Scotty pats Kippy's knee.

SCOTTY

You gonna keep the muscle car?

KIPPY

You want it?

SCOTTY

Bernard was right. You never got  
into the spirit of the devise.

KIPPY

You don't want it I sell it. Give  
the money to FAB.

SCOTTY

Buy those poor folks a lotta pokes.

Bernard comes into the room gesturing like Moses.

BERNARD

The devise is history and somewhere  
Gram and Pap are smiling. Hastings  
will arrange for a truck to  
delivery your tangible properties.  
Robert's off to Hollywood. I'm off  
to Bermuda. Amy's off to the first  
fall colors of Vermont. Keel and  
Bass are off to the morgue.

DAPHNE

When do we hear something  
definitive about the still life?

BERNARD

I called in a favor from an art  
dealer I know in New York. He'll  
put together an authentication  
board of five renown art experts.  
Six months he says.

(beat)

The Semple Estate will underwrite  
it of course.

Robert comes into the room.

ROBERT

I have two guest bedrooms and a  
pool. I won't say more.

Kippy moves to Robert, hugs him, and kisses his cheek.

KIPPY

Scotty and I are coming to L.A.

SCOTTY

(re: his foot)

How do I get this in a producer's  
door?

ROBERT

Lot of modest features desperate  
for funding. You'll get a  
producer's credit.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Just don't expect to see the movie  
at a local theater.

KIPPY

Low-budget films on the slasher  
channel.

ROBERT

Gotta start somewhere.

SCOTTY

Whadda you say, Kippy?

KIPPY

Dibs on the bedroom nearest the  
pool. You cut the checks.

Robert goes over to Daphne and Charlene.

ROBERT

Young ladies, I have a rendezvous  
with a new film.

Charlene stands and puts her hands on his shoulders.

CHARLENE

Don't let 'em mess it up on you.

Daphne puts an arm around him.

DAPHNE

Maybe I sit by your pool I forget  
about the devise.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Robert stands by his suitcase.

ROBERT

What will you do in retirement,  
Hastings?

HASTINGS

Indulge myself I imagine in vintage  
port wines while reading my way  
through Smollett for a third time.

ROBERT

To each his own.



MOLLY

Mr. Rose said he'd be happy if I was to become his cook and housekeeper.

AMY

You're a perfect fit.

HASTINGS

You know where the cottage is. Stop in the next time you're back, Master Robert.

AMY

(fighting tears)  
Of course he will.

ROBERT

I'm off.

Hastings chokes up as he and Robert embrace.

Robert wipes a tear, picks up his suitcase, and is out the door.

Hastings closes the door.

He turns to the two women.

HASTINGS

I wonder if I shall ever see Master Robert again.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Daphne sits on the sofa.

Amy sits opposite her in an easy chair.

They have coffees on a small table.

DAPHNE

Where in Vermont?

AMY

Up Route 100 from Readsburg to Newport through the Green Mountains. The traffic's doable they say.

DAPHNE

First bad storm all the leaves get blown away.

AMY

That's why I'm going while they're  
still attached to the branches.

Daphne's cell phone rings.

She takes it from her tote and holds up a finger to Amy.

She looks at the caller's number.

DAPHNE

Hi, mom.

Listens.

Charlene told you about the other  
maniac falling?

Listens.

An adventure I would have preferred  
to miss.

Listens.

I won't bore you about the devise.  
Let's just say it was a bust.

Listens.

Sitting having coffee with Aunt  
Amy.

(to Amy)  
Mom says hello.

Listens.

She's going to Vermont to see the  
foliage.

Daphne listens and her face darkens.

What does that mean?

Listens.

Yeah, but detectives came out just  
after the accident.

Listens.

You sound worried.

Listens.

You do.

Listens.

A lot of questions get asked when an older, well-to-do couple gets mowed down in a crosswalk.

Listens.

Promise me you won't worry.

Listens.

It'll be over soon.

Listens.

I will. Bye mom.

Daphne puts her cell back into her tote.

Charlene comes in carrying a croissant on a plate.

CHARLENE

I think this croissant flew stand by out of D'Orly.

AMY

Is everything okay, Daphne?

DAPHNE

(to Charlene)

Did mom call you earlier about dad?

CHARLENE

My cell's in my room. Haven't looked at it.

DAPHNE

Detectives have come to the house to question Dad three times in the last two days.

CHARLENE

About what exactly?

DAPHNE

They even asked him about Edward falling off the veranda.

Amy makes an effort to sound matter-of-fact.

AMY

In an accident like this a thousand questions get asked. It's routine.

DAPHNE

I said as much to mom.

CHARLENE

I'm more worried about this croissant.

DAPHNE

Charlene, let's get our shit and put it in the car.

Daphne gets up and leaves the room.

Charlene looks at Amy, shrugs, gets up and follows Daphne out of the room.

Amy sits as still as a stone.

Then leans forward and picks up Charlene's croissant.

She takes a careful bite.

Chews slowly.

She fingers her cross as she tries to stare off into the future.

AMY

Sweet Jesus!

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The house is small but attractive.

Robert gets out of his rental car.

He looks at the house with unease.

Walks up the sidewalk.

EXT. DOOR - DAY

Raps politely.

The door opens.

Carole is stunning in a dress.

WHISTLE of a TEA KETTLE.

CAROLE  
Come in, Robert. Water's boiling.

INT. HOUSE

She quickly goes into the kitchen.

Robert takes in the living room and dining area.

All is minimalist good taste.

The only thing with an obvious connection to Carole is the shoulder holster and gun draped over a dining chair back.

Carole comes out of the kitchen with a tray and tea service.

CAROLE  
I hope tea is not too blah.

ROBERT  
(mustering enthusiasm)  
Tea is fine.

CAROLE  
Pitcher of martinis sounds like more fun. But then I might have to arrest you when you got into your car.

ROBERT  
I might like that.

CAROLE  
No flirting.

Carole the cop suddenly is about to cry.

INT. DINING ROOM TABLE - DAY

They put cream and sugar into their tea.

CAROLE  
(forced)  
The devise was a hoot.

ROBERT  
A hoot.

CAROLE  
When's your flight?

ROBERT

Seven.

CAROLE

Pity you can't stay longer.

Carole fights back tears.

ROBERT

Table read tomorrow at ten at  
Palomar Studios.

CAROLE

I thought directors prefer writers  
keep their distance.

ROBERT

I can attend a reading. It's in my  
contract.

CAROLE

What's the film?

ROBERT

Thriller called Long Shadows.

CAROLE

Is the female lead of voting age?

ROBERT

She's married to the DP.

CAROLE

It's a ways to the airport.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Carole finishes making a sandwich for Robert.

She puts it into a paper bag along with a napkin.

CAROLE

Just egg salad but you won't have  
to stop along the way.

She holds out the bag.

Robert quickly kisses her on the lips.

She says nothing and puts a hand to her mouth.

Then she kisses him back in earnest.

They both walk to the front door reluctantly.

INT./EXT. SIDEWALK

Robert opens the door and steps onto the porch and then down to the sidewalk.

He turns to Carole.

ROBERT  
What kind of kiss was that? Goodbye  
or come back some time?

CAROLE  
I've --

Robert continues reluctantly down the walk to his car.

Carole wipes her eyes with a tissue.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
I've --

Ralph opens the car door.

CAROLE (CONT'D)  
I've -- I've never been inside a  
movie studio.

Robert stares at Carole.

A beginning of a smile on his lips.

ROBERT  
Greatest toy box in the world.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END