

PAST PERFECT

original screenplay by
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OVER BLACK:

The SOUNDS of an operating room: surgical utensils ring against stainless steel pans, suction removes blood, hushed voices discuss anesthesia, motor response and EEG patterns.

Under it all, an EKG monitor beeps a counterpoint to the steady, dull throb of the heartbeat.

FADE IN:

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ANGLE - THE BRAIN,

separated and pulled back by retractors, is invaded by stainless steel instruments, accompanied by a thin gray cable.

Hands manipulate the tools and the camera, which disappear between the hemispheres, seeking the corpus callosum.

INSERT - A MONITOR

details the journey of the fiber optic TV camera and the precise movements of the surgical instruments as they delicately pull tissue aside.

Soon, a microscopically tiny clot is seen, barely visible.

VOICE (O.S.)

Found it.

THE FACES

of the O.R. staff show relief and satisfaction, several smiling, shaking their heads and nodding to one another.

CLOSE ANGLE - THE EYES OF A SMALL BOY

are closed in peaceful sleep.

PULL BACK SLOWLY to reveal the cloth covering his head, except for a square area of skull which has been shaved of hair.

The scalp is laid back, revealing a perfectly square hole in the skull where the two halves of the brain are retracted, the instruments probing deep inside.

The boy breathes evenly through a respirator.

Crowded around are DOCTORS and NURSES, but only DR. JACOB EVANS touches the instruments. He is 40, with thick blonde hair that frames a face with eyes the color of an alpine lake.

He studies the monitor with total concentration.

JACOB
Laser scalpel.

NURSE LISA FELDMAN moves quickly to pick up the laser scalpel and topples a tray of utensils, startling everyone.

CLOSE - JACOB'S HAND

tightens on the instrument.

JACOB

raises his head from the monitor, his blue eyes cold with anger, seeking the source of the distraction.

Feldman bends to pick up the tray. Everyone's eyes are on her.

She looks up at Jacob, fear in her eyes, her mouth half open in an apology.

Jacob eyes her for a moment, then goes back to his work.

DR. SALLY DIXON, an attractive strawberry blonde with deep green eyes, hands him the laser scalpel.

Under his breath, Jacob speaks to Sally.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Out.

SALLY
Pardon?

JACOB
Get her out.

Feldman is still fussing with the tray. She straightens at hearing Jacob's order and looks at him.

He ignores her.

She turns to Sally, who shrugs her shoulders.

Feldman reluctantly gives the tray to another Nurse and leaves.

ON THE MONITOR,

the laser scalpel neatly dissolves the clot and withdraws.

JACOB

sets the scalpel down and removes the magnifying lenses. He smiles a tight smile at Sally as he gets to his feet.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Close, please.

Jacob walks past the tray of instruments that were dropped and picks up a scalpel, holding it up for all to see and looking around gravely.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Never.

He exits the O.R., the people parting like the Red Sea.

The staff is perplexed. They nod their confused agreement and quickly look away from him.

As the door closes, the BUZZ of conversation starts up. Everyone looks at Sally.

NURSE #1

Never what?

Sally is settling into place, placing the magnifying lenses on her nose. She focuses on the monitor and says, offhand:

SALLY

Never screw up around Dr. Evans.

NURSE #2

You mean she's fired? Just like that?

NURSE #1

Who does he think he is?

SALLY

The best damned surgeon on the West Coast. Any argument?

The O.R. crew shake their heads.

NURSE #2

He's the "Iceman" all right: coolant for blood!

NURSE #1

I draw more blood shaving than he does operating!

ANOTHER DOCTOR

I couldn't even see what he was cutting!

Sally Dixon continues closing the operation. A little discomfited by the angry adulation, she says:

SALLY

Dr. Evans is gone, but a life is still at risk. How about some focus here?

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S SCRUB ROOM - LATER

Jacob sits on the bench, still in his scrubs, staring vacantly off into the distance, focusing on nothing, his hands lying inert in his lap.

Gone is the façade; his expression is empty and hollow--almost catatonic. We recognize that this is the real Jacob Evans and the effect is quite sad.

Sally enters, sees Jacob sitting there, and stops, perplexed. She's never seen him this way before.

Almost before she can stop herself, she speaks.

SALLY

Jacob?

Instantly, Jacob comes to life and the emptiness is filled by the familiar convivial persona.

He stands, slightly self-conscious at being discovered in his fugue state.

JACOB

Well! That was fast!

On Sally's perplexed look, Jacob looks at the wall clock and winces--he's been sitting, distracted, for forty minutes.

SALLY

Not really... forty minutes...
(she takes his hand)
... you were truly remarkable in there, Jacob.

She smiles, her green eyes flashing sexily.

Jacob looks down at their clasped hands, then carefully withdraws his.

He goes to the sink and carefully washes his hands: soaping them furiously, rinsing, then soaping and rinsing again.

CLOSE ANGLE - HIS HANDS

are exquisite: long, delicate fingers with carefully groomed cuticles and manicured nails--million dollar hands.

JACOB

is lost in thought, absently scrubbing away. Sally's brow is furrowed in wonder. She places her hands on her breasts and coos as she walks past him to the women doctors' dressing room.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Well, I'm not gonna wash mine!

Jacob turns from washing his hands, confusion on his face.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - LATER

Jacob walks across the parking lot. Alone once again, the empty look returns.

He gingerly sidesteps a puddle of water as he approaches an immaculate racing green Jaguar XJS V-12.

He examines droplets of water on the fender from a nearby rainbird. He is not upset; he's more depressed than angry.

The GARDENER sees Jacob inspecting the fender and comes running over, producing a rag from his pocket, apologizing profusely, and begins to wipe off the fender.

Jacob grabs his hand and stops him, examining the rag.

Convinced it is clean enough, he hands it back to the Gardener, who wipes off the rest of the water.

Then he backs away from Jacob like a serf before a nobleman.

Jacob smiles benignly at him and gets into the car.

INT. JACOB'S JAGUAR - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ANGLE - THE GLOVE BOX.

A hand opens it and removes and dons Italian driving gloves. Then the hand reaches over to a leather case, opens it, revealing several CDs.

One is chosen and eased into the Blaupunkt. The stillness is broken by a Mozart horn concerto.

JACOB

turns the ignition key and the powerful 12 cylinder engine ROARS to life.

As the A/C pushes back the heat, he settles into the plush leather upholstery and withdraws expensive aviator sunglasses from their case.

Just as he is about to put them on, he sees himself in the rearview mirror and hesitates. A look of sad emptiness crosses his face. He hurriedly puts the mirrored lenses on.

He looks into the mirror and smiles a toothpaste ad smile, trying to convince himself.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The Jaguar slowly eases from its parking place, revealing a sign at the head of the stall that reads:

Chief of Pediatric Surgery

DR. JACOB EVANS

CUT TO:

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS - TRAVELING - MOMENTS LATER

Jacob cruises the back streets, avoiding the traffic jams that pulse on the main thoroughfares.

He picks up his car phone.

JACOB

Christine? I'm on my way.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

JOSEPH EVANS, 6, smart in his polo shirt and matching shorts, plays with his Ninja Turtles action figures in the immaculate living room. He is blonde and blue-eyed, an exact duplicate of his father.

CHRISTINE EVANS, 30, tall and blonde, enters the room. She is wearing a simple white summer dress, but the effect is breathtaking.

CHRISTINE

Joseph, honey, put away your toys.
Daddy's almost home.

JOSEPH

Aw, Mom--

CHRISTINE

Right now!

She bends to help him pick up the figures and places them in a rucksack, which she loads over his shoulder and shoos him upstairs.

He grudgingly goes and she calls after him as he scales the stairs to his room:

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

And don't just throw them in there!
Put them in the toy box!

CUT TO:

EXT. JACOB'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The Jag glides past the tall front hedge and manicured lawn. A JAPANESE GARDENER waves from the rose garden as he passes.

The car pulls to a stop in front of a magnificent tudor-style home.

Jacob gently taps the HORN and steps out, taking off his gloves.

CLOSE ANGLE ON JACOB'S FEET

His Italian loafers remain immaculate as he steps from flagstone to flagstone across the lawn to the rose garden.

WIDER

Jacob stops in the middle an impressive rose garden: brilliant white, crimson red and sunny yellow roses bloom on fifty different bushes.

He bends to examine a delicate blossom.

The Gardener stands proudly by.

Jacob nods toward the shears on the Gardener's belt. The Gardener quickly snips off a beautiful rose and gives it to Jacob, who heads toward the house, carefully removing the thorns as he walks.

At the door he stops, turns, and surveys his world.

JACOB'S P.O.V. - HIS FRONT YARD,

hidden from the world by the tall hedge, is a Garden of Eden. Beautiful willows gracefully droop toward the verdant flower beds.

A DECORATOR strings lights between the trees.

JACOB

removes his glasses, turns and grasps the doorknob.

INT. ENTRY - CONTINUOUS

Christine and Joseph quickly run into the entry. Christine smooths Joseph's unruly hair, straightens her dress, then grabs Joseph's hand and smiles a tight smile.

They look up as the door opens, revealing Jacob, a rose in his hand.

Jacob surveys his family. Finding no flaws, he smiles broadly and hands the rose to Christine.

She examines it and smiles.

JACOB

I'm home.

He embraces Christine lightly and kisses her upturned cheek, then tousles Joseph's hair, while the boy beams up at him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

The Caterers work furiously, preparing a sumptuous feast for the night's festivities.

Jacob, Christine and Joseph enter.

The caterers stop what they're doing and give Jacob their undivided attention.

JACOB

How's it going? Good? The scampi...
is it fresh?

The HEAD CATERER nods his assent.

Jacob tastes a sauce on the range. He motions to the COOK.

JACOB (CONT'D)

More oregano. And don't scrimp on
the brie portions.

The Cook nods.

Jacob looks around at the ten or so caterers.

We are faintly reminded of his preeminence in the O.R. He claps his hands and smiles broadly.

JACOB (CONT'D)

You all know how import--

JOSEPH

Daddy? Daddy?

Joseph waves a sheet of paper at his father.

Jacob ignores the interruption and continues speaking.

Joseph is insistent.

Jacob turns to the boy and says harshly:

JACOB
What is it?

JOSEPH
Daddy, look at my picture!

Jacob gives Christine a look and she steps forward, shuttling the boy away from Jacob.

CHRISTINE
Daddy's busy now, honey. Let me see your picture.

JOSEPH
But I want Daddy to see it!

Jacob gives Christine a look of angry frustration. He turns back to the task at hand.

Christine gets the message and ushers the boy from the room.

Jacob doesn't miss a beat.

JACOB
Ready by seven o'clock--sharp! Is that clear?

The kitchen crew nod.

Jacob turns and exits.

INT. FORMAL DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

FOLLOW Jacob into the room, where the table is overloaded with the night's repast.

Jacob strides down the hall, giving orders to the MAID, a DECORATOR who has just entered and the BUTLER who offers to take Jacob's coat.

As Jacob LEAVES FRAME, DOLLY IN on the credenza in the entry, where two large photos in ornate silver frames stand side by side.

One photo, obviously the older of the two, shows a YOUNG JACOB with his parents in a rather formal pose, their smiles obviously strained.

The other photo is of Jacob, Christine and Joseph in a nearly identical pose. The similarity is striking and revealing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JACOB'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A Mercedes glides to a stop in front of the house. A white-coated valet opens the door.

A formally dressed COUPLE gets out and walk through the entry, a large arch overgrown with bougainvillea. DOLLY TO FOLLOW them.

In the front yard, the crowd numbers over a hundred formally-dressed guests.

A small orchestra plays under a white cupola. Guests dance on a parquet floor.

Tables are scattered around, lit by light strings that run between the trees and the house. It is a near perfect fall evening in Southern California.

We CONTINUE TRACKING through the crowd and OVERHEAR snippets of conversations: stock prices, medical breakthroughs, world politics and, now and then, a reference to the extraordinary party that Jacob Evans is throwing.

The crowd clears and we see Jacob and Christine, dressed elegantly, standing on the expansive porch, talking to several GUESTS.

Jacob is in his element and Christine is the gorgeous trophy on his arm.

JACOB

Come on, Jack, you're a lawyer: how about a little quid pro quo?

JACK smiles and withdraws his checkbook from his pocket.

JACK

Okay, what's the damage?

Jacob smiles and surveys the front yard.

JACOB

For dinner and dancing... that comes to about ten grand.

The others standing around laugh, but Jacob looks evenly at Jack. He puts his arm around Jack and says softly:

JACOB (CONT'D)

I'll let you beat me next time we
play golf.

Jack smiles broadly. That did it.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Think what it'll do for your
reputation!

JACK

Why, Jacob, a bribe! You scoundrel!

JACOB

It's time you returned some of the
money you've sued out of honest
doctors over the years!

Everyone laughs. Jack gets out his pen. Jacob gives him a
smack on the back and turns to go.

He walks away with Christine, greeting others as he goes.
She hugs him, proud of his negotiating skills.

CHRISTINE

Honey, let's dance.

She pulls him toward the floor where the other couples make
way. They dance smoothly together, in perfect sync.

The others watch their grace with awe and pleasure.

At the end of the dance, Jacob dips Christine and she throws
her arm back in a mock faint.

Everyone applauds and Jacob and Christine take bows as they
leave the floor.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. UPSTAIRS VERANDA - LATER

The party on the front lawn is in full swing. The SOUND of
the orchestra, the tinkle of crystal, and the buzz of
conversation all fill the evening.

PULL BACK to INCLUDE Jacob leaning over the railing, a bottle
of bourbon in hand.

CLOSE UP - JACOB

stares impassively ahead, drinking occasionally from the
bottle. He's borderline drunk, a million miles away and empty
as deep space.

Christine ENTERS FRAME tentatively and reaches to touch his shoulder, then stops herself.

CHRISTINE

Honey--

JACOB

Leave me alone.

CHRISTINE

But they want you--

Jacob continues staring ahead but his voice gets hard.

JACOB

I said, leave me alone.

Christine turns and leaves, crushed. She is met in the doorway by a figure who gently touches her arm as she passes.

The figure steps into the moonlight.

It is STEPHEN PRINCE, 35, psychotherapist, dark haired, with a generous mustache. He walks to the railing and leans over next to Jacob, staring ahead, holding out his empty glass.

Jacob takes a swig from the bottle and hands it to Prince, who takes a long draw and winces. He examines the label.

PRINCE

Serious firewater, Kemosabe.

JACOB

Dr. Prince, meet Dr. Johnny Walker:
psychotherapy by the ounce.

PRINCE

How do you do?

He takes another drink then gives the bottle back to Jacob, who drinks again.

JACOB

His rates are lower than yours: only
thirty-five dollars a fifth.

A long moment passes as the two men look out over the party.

PRINCE

They want you below.

JACOB

I know. Screw 'em.

PRINCE

God. You are drunk.
(MORE)

PRINCE (CONT'D)

(beat)
Old ghosts back again?

JACOB
They never left.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

The M.C. stands on the stage, shushing the crowd.

M.C.
And now a moment to Charles Whiteside
of the Disabled Children's Foundation.

Ironically, CHARLES WHITESIDE is not white. He's a deep blue-black and hails from Nigeria, with salt and pepper hair, distinguished in his white suit.

He motions to an ASSISTANT, who brings forth a large piece of cardboard.

WHITESIDE
Our thanks to Dr. and Mrs. Jacob
Evans for hosting our fundraiser.
We've tallied tonight's donations,
and can report that we have raised...

He motions to the Assistant, who turns over the cardboard sign.

In large letters it reads: \$156,346.17.

WHITESIDE (CONT'D)
One hundred fifty six thousand, three
hundred and forty six dollars and
seventeen cents!

Stephen Prince stands at the front of the crowd next to Jacob and Christine. He yells out.

PRINCE
That seventeen cents is mine!

This gets a good laugh and Jacob gives Prince a good-natured poke in the ribs.

Jacob flips a quarter into the air, catches and covers it.

JACOB
Double or nothing!

This also gets a laugh.

Whiteside shakes his head in mock frustration. He raises his hands for silence.

WHITESIDE

It's been a wonderful night. Your generosity will save many lives... And now a special presentation. Dr. Evans, will you please come forward?

Jacob seems a little surprised.

He approaches the stand and shakes Whiteside's hand, then turns to the crowd.

JACOB

Can I ask you all a favor? Would you please send your gardeners over here tomorrow to re-sod this lawn?

He defers to Whiteside amidst the laughter. Jacob is the center of an admiring crowd. Christine, however, has a look of concern on her face--she knows he is slightly soused.

WHITESIDE

Dr. Evans, as President of the Disabled Children's Foundation, I'd like to thank you for your unflagging efforts on our behalf. In the last five years, you have personally raised over ten million dollars!

The Assistant turns over the placard, which says \$10,000,000.00.

Applause and astonishment from the crowd.

JACK

That's alot of thrown golf games, Evans!

More laughter. Whiteside continues.

WHITESIDE

To show our appreciation, we have arranged for you and your family to spend a week in Paris--all expenses paid!

Spontaneous cheers erupt from the crowd.

Whiteside shakes Jacob's hands warmly.

He is congratulated by everyone as he descends the dais.

CLOSE ANGLE - PRINCE

hoists his glass heavenward, toasting Jacob. He speaks to no one in particular.

PRINCE

Here's to cheap therapy, Jakey-boy.

PULL BACK AND CRANE UP, RACKING FOCUS to Jacob as he is surrounded by well wishers.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 30,000 FEET OVER THE ATLANTIC - DAY

The jet moves sleekly past us and disappears into the rising sun.

EXT. PARIS - DAY AND NIGHT

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A) The Evans climb the Eiffel Tower.
- B) They ride in a boat on the Seine.
- C) They stand in front of Notre Dame Cathedral.
- D) The family walks among statuary in the Louvre.
- E) They walk along the Tuileries.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Jacob lies on his back, staring at the ceiling.

Christine sleeps, her back to him. His gaze is vacant again; it reveals an emotional emptiness that fills us with dread.

He doesn't blink or move. After a long moment, he turns on his side, his back to Christine's back.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE - NIGHT

The Evans sit around a small table, surrounded by bags and boxes, evidence of an extensive shopping trip.

Joseph is wearing a hat, pins and has several doodads as proof he's a tourist.

Christine's packages are all marked with the logos of the ritziest Paris boutiques.

Only Jacob shows no evidence of consumer spending.

They are eating ice cream parfaits, and Joseph is wearing most of his.

Christine is fussing over him and Jacob is reading an English daily. Christine wipes an ice cream smear off Joseph's face and prompts him:

CHRISTINE

What do you say to your daddy, Joseph?

JOSEPH

Thanks for the junk, Daddy.

JACOB

What do you mean, "junk"?

JOSEPH

But it's neat junk, Daddy.

He goes back to his dessert. Christine smiles at Jacob.

CHRISTINE

It certainly is neat junk, Jacob. I wish we could stay another week. Thank you.

JACOB

You're welcome.

He goes back to his newspaper.

Christine continues to look at him, suddenly filled with emotion.

After a moment, he senses her gaze and looks up.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Yes?

CHRISTINE

I love you, Jacob.

Jacob smiles at her and continues reading.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

Honey!

JACOB

What?

He looks from her to Joseph, who rolls his eyes, then goes back to his ice cream.

Jacob jumps up, suddenly in a hurry.

JACOB (CONT'D)
We've gotta go. We'll be late for
our flight. Come on, Joseph, finish
up.

Christine's face shows deep hurt.

Jacob stops fiddling with his wallet and looks at her.

JACOB (CONT'D)
All right. Me too, you. Okay? Can we
go now?

Christine resigns herself to Jacob's lame version of undying love. She gets up and busies herself with her packages.

Jacob spots a taxi and WHISTLES loudly.

It pulls over a few yards down the street.

JACOB (CONT'D)
That's lucky! You two get in and
I'll pay the bill. Go!

Christine and Joseph trundle their booty down the street toward the taxi.

Jacob turns and looks around for his waiter. He doesn't see him. He begins looking around.

He hears a HONK and looks toward the taxi.

JACOB'S P.O.V. - CHRISTINE

stands near the taxi, waving at Jacob to hurry up.

JACOB

signals back that he'll just be a minute.

JACOB'S P.O.V. - CHRISTINE

nods her head and gets into the taxi, shutting the door.

JACOB

looks around for a waiter, locates one and begins to dole out bills. Suddenly, in the distance, he hears a SIREN.

He looks up as it gets LOUDER.

REVERSE ANGLE (INCLUDE JACOB) - DOWN THE INTERSECTING STREET

an ambulance races TOWARD CAMERA, lights flashing, SIREN blaring.

DOLLY TO KEEP JACOB IN FRAME as we FOLLOW the ambulance in its screeching turn.

Past the turn, twenty yards ahead, it goes out of control, rolls over on its side and collides with the taxi, ramming it into a parked car with an excruciating screech.

FOLLOW JACOB

as he runs to the wreck. The taxi is wedged between the ambulance and the other car.

Christine struggles to open the door.

A BYSTANDER grabs Jacob's arm, pointing to the gasoline on the pavement.

BYSTANDER

L'essence!

THE GAS FLOWS

toward the curb from the overturned ambulance.

JACOB'S P.O.V. - THE TAXI DRIVER

lies slumped over the steering wheel.

In back, Christine holds Joseph, who is unconscious, his head covered with blood.

She is screaming hysterically, yanking at the door.

JACOB

runs to the wreck. He grabs the door handle, which has been nearly sheared off by the collision.

Screaming, he jerks his hand away. It's covered with blood, cut by the sharp exposed metal. He jumps back involuntarily, looking at his bloody hand.

He looks around frantically.

JACOB

Help me! Help!

The Bystander doesn't budge. His eyes are riveted on the gasoline, which now pools around Jacob's feet.

Jacob ignores the gas and sees Christine through the window, not three feet away. She is frantic, nearly overcome with hysteria. Joseph is still cradled in her arms.

He hesitates a split second, then grabs the already bloody door handle, jerking it with all his might.

Suddenly, an explosion erupts, obliterating the scene.

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

The SOUNDS of an emergency room:

Doctors shout orders, gurney wheels race across tile floors, slamming against heavy doorways, EKG monitors beep erratically, people are crying, the sound of tearing material.

SOUND OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

P.O.V. - THE CEILING

gradually comes INTO FOCUS. SOUNDS become more distinct.

PAN ABOUT to orient. A closed door. A ceiling fan whirs steadily.

Something white is raised INTO FRAME.

Another gauze-wrapped club appears. Screaming. The clubs are raised in a horrifying parody of victory.

A DOCTOR in a light blue smock ENTERS FRAME. He reaches out to the bandaged hands, gently pushing them OUT OF FRAME.

JACOB

stares in horror at his bandaged hands, ignoring the Doctor.

His mouth hangs slack-jawed at his misfortune.

JACOB
Oh, God! My hands!

DOCTOR
(in French)
Mr. Evans, I'm terribly sorry...

Jacob turns his attention to the Doctor, not understanding.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
(in English)
I'm terribly sorry about--

JACOB

I'm a surgeon! God and Christ!

He breaks down, crying, staring at his hands.

The Doctor places his hand on Jacob's shoulder.

DOCTOR

Monsieur, listen to me: Your wife
and son...

Total silence descends as Jacob's heart freezes in mid-beat.
He looks up, his eyes wide with disbelief.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

I'm very sorry...

Jacob stares blindly ahead, heart stopped, mouth half open.

His hands fall to his chest, unnoticed. His ears roar.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. SMALL TOWN GRAVEYARD - DAY

FX: BLACK AND WHITE FILM: A SIMPLE BLACK COFFIN

is lowered into the gash in the earth. PULL BACK and TILT UP
to REVEAL a young Jacob Evans, 17, standing next to his
mother, EVELYN EVANS, 37.

Other mourners stand behind them in silence. The Minister
closes his Bible and turns away.

Jacob is crying, overcome with grief. He looks from the
lowering casket to his mother.

CLOSE ANGLE - EVELYN

stares into the distance, her face soft behind the black
veil, her eyes like blue stones, strangely composed.

She notices Jacob's look and reaches into her purse,
extracting a hankie. She hands it to Jacob.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST LAWN - DAY

A hankie is passed from one hand to another. PULL BACK to
REVEAL Jacob, dressed in black, one hand bandaged thickly,
with healing bruises and lacerations on his deathly gray
face.

His eyes are red-rimmed and bloodshot.

TWO CASKETS, ONE LARGE AND ONE SMALL,
are lowered into the earth.

Stephen Prince places a hand on Jacob's shoulder, then walks away.

The other mourners give Jacob a moment's privacy by the grave.
He brushes away a tear, overcome with anguish. Then the flood comes and he cries in short, staccato bursts. His ears roar.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

An X-ray of a right hand is illuminated on a light box. The last two fingers are missing. Another hand with a pencil is pointing out details on the X-ray.

WIDEN to include DR. DAVID HANSEN, Chief of Surgery. He speaks INTO CAMERA, but we can't hear him. He is deadly serious and concerned.

He stops speaking, shakes his head, then starts again.

HANSEN
Jacob! Are you listening?

JACOB

has a vacant look in his eyes. He snaps to attention at hearing his name. Hansen speaks up.

HANSEN (CONT'D)
Do you want the prognosis?

Jacob waves his good hand noncommittally.

HANSEN (CONT'D)
Are you ambidextrous?

Jacob is confused, then understands and shakes his head.

HANSEN (CONT'D)
How's the ringing?

Jacob leans forward, shaking his head. Hansen speaks up, pointing to his ear.

HANSEN (CONT'D)
Are your ears still ringing?

Jacob nods.

HANSEN (CONT'D)

You're lucky the concussion didn't blow them out completely. Don't worry though, your hearing will return before too long.

Jacob shrugs and holds up his right hand, struggling to wiggle the remaining fingers. They move only slightly and we see that it causes him a great deal of pain to do so.

He gets up to go.

Hansen restrains him and Jacob sits back down.

HANSEN (CONT'D)

Jacob, have a good chance of regaining use of your hand...

Jacob waves his good hand, dismissing the notion.

HANSEN (CONT'D)

If you go to therapy! You've missed three appointments. It will be difficult and will take some time, but--

Jacob snorts. He smiles sardonically and gets to his feet.

JACOB

Time is all I've got left.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - LATER

Jacob walks slowly down the corridor, his bandaged hand tucked in his sport coat pocket. He stares at the floor as he walks.

People pass and say hello, but he ignores them.

JACOB'S P.O.V. - A PAIR OF ATTRACTIVE LEGS

step in front of him, stopping his progress.

PAN UP along the shapely body of Sally Dixon, who is dressed in her hospital smock, holding a clipboard.

She pulls her glasses down and looks INTO CAMERA.

SALLY

Jacob, are you all right?

JACOB

nods affirmatively and makes to go around her.

Sally puts a hand gently on his forearm.

He doesn't meet her eyes, but continues looking at the floor.

She is dismayed. Her eyes tear up at the sight of Jacob's pain.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Oh, Jacob, I'm so sorry... Christine
was so wonderful... And little Joseph!
I wish I could do something...

Jacob nods, making eye contact for an instant, then looks away.

He tries again to move around her.

This time she lets him go. She calls after him as he shuffles down the empty corridor.

SALLY (CONT'D)

If I can help...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACOB'S HOUSE/VARIOUS ROOMS - NIGHT

MOVE SLOWLY through the KITCHEN. The counters are messy with food, packages, and dirty dishes. No lights are on.

PASS THROUGH the doorway and into the darkened DINING ROOM, where several newspapers sit unopened on the table.

CONTINUE through the ENTRY where stacks of mail lie unopened on the sidebar table. The photos stand there, a painful reminder. A plant droops nearby, unwatered.

MOVE INTO the LIVING ROOM, which is lit only by the moonlight through the sheer curtains.

In the gloom, we begin to make out Jacob, sitting on the couch in his boxers, staring into the vacant and dark fireplace, a bottle of bourbon between his legs.

MOVE IN past the answering machine where the number "22" is lit in red LED. PUSH IN to Jacob's face, which is cold and distant.

The phone RINGS. The machine CLICKS on.

PRINCE (V.O.)

It's me, Stephen... Jacob, you can't
stay in there forever...

(MORE)

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

(beat; gently)

... I'm sorry, pal... I miss them
too. Call if I can help.

He hangs up.

Jacob takes a swig from the bottle and tries to move the
fingers. They wiggle only slightly.

He looks heavenward, a single tear escaping his eye.

JACOB

Christine... Joseph...

BACK AWAY slowly, leaving Jacob in the dark, alone.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - TRAVELING - NIGHT

A bright light shines DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA. PULL BACK to
REVEAL another light. PULL BACK FURTHER and the b.g. resolves
itself.

We are leading a red M.G. with the top down as it races along
a narrow country road. The headlights suddenly go dark.

CRANE UP and SLIDE PAST the hood to REVEAL Jacob Evans, 17,
hair blowing in the brisk October night, exhilarated at the
speed and challenge of his own private slalom course.

INSERT - THE SPEEDOMETER

reads 95 m.p.h.

AERIAL LONG SHOT - THE M.G.

races along the road, illuminated by a fingernail paring
moon, passing under shadowy oaks, along the twisting asphalt
ribbon of road, disappearing, then appearing again.

JACOB'S EYES

reveal a supernal gleam.

HIS P.O.V. - IN THE DISTANCE,

a covered bridge where the road narrows to one lane is seen.

We are approaching it rapidly.

JACOB

lets out an exhilarated hoot at the prospect of the darkened bridge. He grips the wheel tighter.

HIS FOOT

presses the gas pedal to the floor.

THE SPEEDOMETER

roars over 100 m.p.h.

NOSE CAMERA ON THE M.G. - THE BRIDGE AHEAD

We leave the moon's half-light and plunge headlong into total darkness.

The roaring engine, the SOUND of the horn honking and Jacob's blood-curdling scream overwhelm us.

Finally, we burst out into the silver moonlight.

Jacob is still howling with wild abandon.

FORWARD ANGLE FROM BEHIND THE DRIVER - THE ROAD AHEAD

We bear to the left with a sharp, wheel-squealing turn and blast over a rise in the road, lifting off.

For a moment, all we can see is black sky, with crisp stars poking through.

As we slam back down on the road, WE MAKE OUT the lights of a single house which are obscured by the trees which line the winding road.

JACOB'S SMILE

is fractured as he sees something ahead.

HIS P.O.V. - A DARK FIGURE,

hidden till a moment ago in the tree-cast shadows, steps into the middle of the road not twenty yards ahead.

JACOB

hits the brakes with both feet, his face frozen in a horrified mask. The tires shriek.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS STREET - NIGHT

Jacob, now now 20 years older, jerks his head around at the SOUND of squealing brakes and a blaring klaxon.

HIS P.O.V. - THE AMBULANCE

rounds the corner on two wheels, loses control and slams into the taxi.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

jerks awake, screaming, covered with flop sweat. His eyes are wild and the pupils are dilated.

He stares INTO CAMERA as the scream continues in intensity. We PULL BACK as he continues screaming. Then suddenly, we

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. HEARING CLINIC/WAITING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE on a photo of a grisly car wreck in TIME magazine.

PULL BACK to REVEAL Jacob sitting in the waiting room, thumbing through the magazine. He is unshaven, dressed in jeans and a polo shirt, as if he had just gotten out of bed and plans to go straight back.

There are about eight others waiting with him.

Jacob looks up as a small, dark-haired girl of five sits down next to him. EMILY MERRILL is a beautiful child with smiling eyes, possessing almost zen-like calm. She carries most of the magazines from the waiting room with her.

Across from Jacob sits a FAT LADY, chewing gum furiously, staring daggers at Emily.

Jacob's eyes meet the Fat Lady's and he smiles. She scowls back and slams down a copy of PEOPLE magazine on the coffee table, at which point Emily gets up and silently offers her one of hers.

The Fat Lady snaps it away angrily.

Emily then picks up the discarded PEOPLE and returns to her seat, smiling cheerily at Jacob.

Unmindful of anyone, Emily pulls out a pair of scissors and cuts out photos of people from the magazines and places them in a shoebox already crowded with pictures.

Emily notices Jacob watching her and beams up at him.

Jacob is so disarmed by her openness that he is momentarily embarrassed and turns away.

Emily notices his bandaged right hand. Her tiny hand moves to touch his.

Jacob is startled at her touch and jumps a little, pulling his hand away and putting it inside his jacket.

Emily looks at him kindly, her hand still on his arm. After a moment, she returns to her work, extracting a collage from the bottom of the shoebox.

Jacob can't help but look at it.

INSERT - COLLAGE

In the center of the page is a picture of Emily, smiling her knowing smile, surrounded by photos of male actors who are facing her with adoring looks on their faces.

JACOB

smiles, perplexed by the collage. He ventures a question:

JACOB (CONT'D)

What's that?

Emily shows no sign of understanding. She simply smiles and goes back to her work, affixing a photo of Tom Cruise to the collage.

Jacob points and tries again.

JACOB (CONT'D)

What's that?

Emily smiles again at Jacob and continues gluing.

Jacob shrugs his shoulders and turns from her.

As we PAN WITH HIM, the Fat Lady shoves her face INTO FRAME, startling him. She is apoplectic.

FAT LADY

She's can't do that!

JACOB

Pardon me?

FAT LADY

I said, she's can't do that! What kind of father are you?

JACOB

I'm not her--

The Fat Lady grabs a magazine out of Emily's grasp and shakes it in front of Jacob's nose.

Jacob blanches.

FAT LADY
This is public property!

Unused to such confrontations, Jacob is at a loss.

Emily sits between them, her eyes moving from one to the other with simple curiosity, apparently unaware she is the subject of the argument.

JACOB
I believe they're donated by
volunteers, and besides--

The Fat Woman straightens. She is one big mama.

FAT LADY
Besides, pinhead, I haven't read 'em
yet!

The Fat Lady looks down.

Emily has a hold of the magazine and is calmly trying to pry it loose from her grip. The Fat Lady is enraged; Emily is almost sanguine.

FAT LADY (CONT'D)
Why you little snip! I'll--

She pulls on the magazine, jerking Emily to her feet.

A tug of war ensues.

Jacob jumps up, trying to calm things down.

JACOB
Now just a minute...

The Fat Lady shoots Jacob a withering look.

FAT LADY
Back off, numbnuts, I--

At that moment, Emily relinquishes her half of the magazine and the Fat Lady flies backwards and lands on the coffee table with a loud CRASH, vaporizing it.

THE MAGAZINE

flutters into Jacob's outstretched hand.

He turns from the surprised and suddenly speechless Fat Lady to Emily, who is crying empathetically and moving toward her.

The Fat Lady warns her off.

FAT LADY (CONT'D)
Keep her away from me!

Jacob kneels in front of Emily and gives her the magazine.

She takes it, struggling with all her might to keep from crying.

Suddenly, the Fat Lady reaches over Jacob's shoulder and grabs the magazine out of Emily's hand.

FAT LADY (CONT'D)
Ha!

Emily bursts into tears.

Jacob turns to see the Fat Lady march out of the room with the magazine triumphantly held up like an Olympic torch.

At that moment, Emily's mother, ANNA MERRILL, enters the room. Anna is in her late 20's, dark-haired and brown eyed, dressed simply in jeans and a print blouse.

She moves quickly to Emily and scoops her up in her arms.

She turns to Jacob.

ANNA
What happened?

JACOB
Well, I... ah...

Anna puts Emily down, signing furiously to the child.

Emily sniffs, then signs back, finally pointing to Jacob.

Anna smiles and turns to Jacob.

ANNA
Emily says you saved her...

She looks around but the Fat Lady is gone.

In a hushed voice she whispers:

ANNA (CONT'D)
... from the ugly fat lady with bad
breath.

Jacob smiles.

Anna smiles back. He is taken back by Anna's smile, deeper and warmer than even her daughter's.

For a moment he basks in her smile, then awkwardly speaks:

JACOB
I'm... Jacob Evans...

ANNA
Anna Merrill. This is Emily.

She signs Jacob's name to Emily, who nods.

JACOB
What did you say?

ANNA
I told her your name.

JACOB
Anna, I'm really sorry...

He stops, again overwhelmed by her casual beauty. He stares at her, lost in the moment.

Anna is a little embarrassed, too. She decides he's a little weird and turns and gathers up Emily.

As she passes Jacob, she gives him a "people are strange" smile.

ANNA
No problem. Thanks.

She holds out her hand.

Jacob hesitates, his own hand behind his back. Anna shrugs.

Emily, perched in the crook of Anna's arm, signs something to him.

Anna turns to leave, but Jacob stops her.

JACOB
What did she say?

ANNA
She said, "the fat lady would've squashed you like a bug."

Anna smiles and exits.

Just before the door shuts behind her, Emily waves at Jacob.

He waves back, shaking his head, musing about the beautiful woman with the precocious child.

OUT IN THE CORRIDOR,

Anna walks briskly along with Emily in tow. She is visibly relieved to be out of there.

ANNA (CONT'D)

That was a close one.

Emily cocks her head, a question in her eyes.

IN THE WAITING ROOM,

Jacob finds his seat, embarrassed.

The others avert their eyes as he looks around.

THE RECEPTIONIST

leans out the window of her office.

RECEPTIONIST

Dr. Evans?

Jacob gets to his feet, glad to be moving.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Dr. Saunders will see you now.

INT. HEARING CLINIC/EXAMINATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The inner ear is seen through an otoscope.

It's a rather bizarre sight and we're not quite sure what we're seeing.

VOICE (O.S.)

What the hell is that?

JACOB

sits with the otoscope poked into his ear.

WIDEN TO REVEAL DR. ART SAUNDERS, a good 'ol boy from Alabama with an ample stomach and three chins, who lowers the device and looks at Jacob gravely.

Jacob is white with fear.

JACOB

What is it? What do you see?

Saunders peers through the scope again, furrowing his brow.

SAUNDERS

It.. looks... like... ah...

JACOB
Looks like what?

Saunders smiles and leans back in his chair, folding his arms over his ample paunch. He looks at Jacob gravely.

SAUNDERS
Like you'll live...

Jacob rolls his eyes, smiling weakly.

SAUNDERS (CONT'D)
And you'll be the same tight-assed
sumbitch you always were, 'cept you
won't hear people knockin' you behind
your back any more.

JACOB
That's good news.

SAUNDERS
Well, I don't know. You'll still
hear most of it...

He scoots back on his stool. His smile changes to a frown.

SAUNDERS (CONT'D)
My wife died of ALS five years back.
I miss her more'n anything. But life
goes on...
(long beat)
Now quit horsin' around. Get to
therapy for that hand. Your life
isn't over--been a cake walk till
now. It's finally getting interesting.

INT. HEARING CLINIC/WAITING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jacob enters from the Examination Room, awkwardly buttoning his jacket. He looks around and stops, seeing something.

HIS P.O.V. - EMILY'S SHOEBOX

of clippings sits under her chair, abandoned.

JACOB

picks up the shoebox and turns toward the Receptionist.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Miss? I think this was left by that
little girl--Emily.

The Receptionists examines the box and smiles.

RECEPTIONIST
Emily Merrill? What is it?

JACOB
Pictures, I guess. She makes collages
with them.

Uninterested, the Receptionist sets the box on her desk.

RECEPTIONIST
I'll see that she gets it next time
she comes in.

JACOB
When will that be?

RECEPTIONIST
In two weeks or so. Now, Dr. Saunders
says you are to come back to see him
in a month.

JACOB
Two weeks? That's a long time...

RECEPTIONIST
No, a month...

JACOB
No, I mean this...

He picks up the shoebox and withdraws the movie star collage
from it, showing it to her.

She is uninterested.

JACOB (CONT'D)
This was pretty important to her.
Maybe we should call her mother and
tell her.

RECEPTIONIST
If it's important, I'm sure she'll
come back for it. Now, about your
appointment.

Jacob looks beyond the Receptionist at Saunders standing in
the doorway, reading a file.

Saunders looks up when he feels Jacob's eyes on him, but
Jacob looks away.

Saunders smiles and continues reading the file.

JACOB
Maybe I could drop it by her house.
You know, if you could give me their
address.

The Receptionist turns to Saunders, who nods imperceptively, without even looking up.

She turns back to Jacob, making it clear she knows what he's up to.

RECEPTIONIST

Well, Ms. Merrill works at Northmont Elementary in Culver City, teaching hearing impaired children. She was here picking up some test scores-- she's probably gone back to work.

She gives Jacob the shoebox and smiles knowingly.

Jacob looks to Saunders, but he is gone; the doorway is empty.

Jacob forces a smile, feeling like a fifth grader.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NORTHMONT ELEMENTARY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

An average elementary school in a suburban setting.

Jacob's Jaguar ENTERS FRAME and pulls into a parking stall.

He gets out with the shoebox.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jacob stands in front of the office door, debating. He looks from the shoebox to the door then back at the shoebox.

Finally, he hurries down the hall, shaking his head, unsure of this course. He thrusts his bandaged hand in his pocket.

JACOB

Damn! What am I doing?

He continues down the hall, peering now and then through doorways, looking for Anna.

INT. ANNA'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anna's hands artfully sign a story. PULL BACK to reveal Anna in the midst of several CHILDREN.

Her hands are a marvel: long and delicate fingers gracefully describe the fearsome witch, the noble prince and the winsome sleeping beauty.

THE CHILDREN

sit with their mouths agape. Their faces show fear, then happiness, then laughter. They nudge each other, signing their reactions to the story.

ANGLE ON ANNA - INCLUDE CHILDREN IN THE F.G.

as Anna silently tells the story.

In the b.g., Jacob's face appears somewhat comically in the door glass, then disappears, only to appear again.

The children start to titter.

Anna turns, only to catch a glimpse of Jacob disappearing from view.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jacob, caught looking, pulls back. He looks down at his own mangled hand, then quickly stoops and places the shoebox on the ground near the door, retreating at almost a run.

The door opens before he's taken two steps and Anna appears.

ANNA

Hello?

Jacob stops dead in his tracks. He feels like a peeping tom.

He turns sheepishly and points at the shoebox on the ground.

Anna smiles and picks it up, turning back to the open door and signaling inside.

In a moment, little Emily bounds out and Anna gives her the shoebox. Emily jumps up and down, ecstatic to have it back.

Jacob is overwhelmed that so little could mean so much. He stands, forgotten for a moment, then turns to go.

Then he feels a small pair of arms encircling his leg. He looks down.

Emily is hugging him, her shoebox nearly crushed between her small body and his leg.

Jacob looks at Anna, who stands, her arms crossed, surveying the situation with a pleased look on her face.

She peels Emily off Jacob and signs to Emily, who signs to Jacob and runs back inside.

Jacob turns to Anna.

ANNA (CONT'D)

She says thanks. She thought it was lost.

JACOB

I got the feeling it was very important to her... What do they mean--the collages?

ANNA

They're how she sees the world. She can't read, yet--much, at least. And of course, she's deaf, so what's left is a pretty visual imagination.

JACOB

And a big heart.

ANNA

It's her special gift: she's a people magnet.

A moment of silence falls on the two.

Jacob fidgets as Anna looks carefully at him.

Finally, the spell is broken as Jacob turns to go.

Anna holds out her hand.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Thank you.

This time Jacob can't refuse. He holds out his left hand, which Anna takes as if nothing were wrong.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I hope your hand gets better.

Jacob, reminded of his plight, manages a weak smile.

JACOB

Not much chance of that, but thanks, anyway.

Anna looks deeply into his eyes.

He is strangely drawn to her.

After a moment, she releases him with a nod.

Jacob turns and starts down the hallway, his face flushed.

Anna watches him go, perplexed at his mixture of kindness and fear.

After a moment, she turns and walks back inside.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jacob trns the corner and leans against a wall. He is breathing heavily. Sweat pours off him; his face is red.

He shakes his head, astounded, and looks at his bandaged hand. He attempts to flex the fingers. They barely move.

A huge weight descends and he sags noticeably.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE (VENICE BEACH) - ESTABLISHING - DAY

The tiny frame house shows its age through peeling paint. The yard is ordinary, except for a planter containing two large rose bushes.

An old Pinto sits in the driveway. To the side of the house, wash hangs on a laundry line.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Anna's hands work at kneading a batch of bread. COUNTRY MUSIC is on the radio.

At the table, Emily works on another collage. This time she is surrounded by her favorite cartoon characters.

Anna hums along with the song on the radio.

A CREAK and the front screen opens. Anna stiffens, then relaxes.

In comes MARGO BRADSHAW, Anna's neighbor. Margo is about 35, plump, and making the best of a hard life with a smile and Haagen Dasz. Currently, she's munching Oreos.

MARGO

You're baking bread? What's the occasion?

Anna wipes away a trickle of sweat from her forehead, leaving a wide swath of flour. She tries to soft pedal.

ANNA

Hi, Margo. No occasion.

Margo is looking at the three bread pans sitting on the counter. She winks at Anna.

MARGO

Now I know one of these is for me.
(MORE)

MARGO (CONT'D)

And one is for you and Emily, so...
what's his name, and is he cute and/or
rich?

She crosses her arms over her ample breasts and beams, proud
of her detective skills.

Anna tries to be nonchalant.

ANNA

What makes you think it's a guy?

MARGO

The last time you baked bread, I was
still wearin' bikinis! So give--who
is it?

Anna shrugs, and works steadily at the bread.

ANNA

It was Emily's idea.

MARGO

I knew it was about a guy!

She dances a jig around the kitchen table, grabs Anna and
hugs her, all smiles. Her joy is contagious.

Anna works hard at not being caught up in it.

ANNA

He's just a guy I met at the clinic.
When Emily left her picture box
behind, he came clear over to my
school to return it. So I thought
I'd do something to return the favor,
that's all.

MARGO

He's not gay, is he?

ANNA

Margo!

MARGO

Well, is he?

ANNA

I don't think so. He seems very...
straight. I mean, he makes me feel--

MARGO

Like having sex!?

ANNA

Margo!

She turns, embarrassed, working frantically on the bread dough.

Margo smiles and turns to leave.

MARGO

Just be sure he's not married, gay
or on parole, okay? Be careful!
Remember: "Men are slime, men are
scum..."

ANNA AND MARGO

(in sing-song fashion)
"... All men should be shot, then
hung..."

Both women laugh wickedly at the joke.

Margo waves goodbye and tousles Emily's hair as she goes.

Anna watches as the screen door SLAMS shut.

ANNA

I'll be careful...

CUT TO:

INT. JACOB'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An NFL game is on the TV. The SOUND is low, almost a murmur.

DOLLY to include Jacob, who sits in a loungeer impassively,
absently massaging his bad hand through dirty bandages.

A bottle of scotch sits at his feet and his eyes are bleary
and red. He's well on his way to a hangover.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE JACOB'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Anna's Pinto moves slowly along, obviously searching for an
address.

INT. ANNA'S CAR - NIGHT - TRAVELING - ANNA

looks at the small scrap of paper bearing Jacob's address.
She is awestruck at the wealthy neighborhood.

Emily sits by her, a loaf of bread on her lap. Anna looks
doubtful as she speaks to herself.

ANNA

I had no idea...

She stops the car and stares with unconcealed wonder.

HER P.O.V. - JACOB'S HOME,

surrounded by the ivy covered wall and shut out from the world by the wrought iron gate, is more than a mansion--it's a castle.

ANNA

pulls over and stops the car. She looks at Emily for a moment, then courage prevails. She gets out, as does Emily.

EXT. FRONT GATE - CONTINUOUS

Anna and Emily approach the gate and look through the bars at Jacob's front yard.

Anna sets the loaf of bread down and turns back to the car.

In that instant Emily rings the BUZZER.

Anna whirls back, surprised. Emily beams up at her mom.

ANNA

Emily!

She grabs the child's hand and turns to go.

JACOB (O.S.)

(filtered)

Who is it?

Anna stops in her tracks and turns back. She looks around.

HER P.O.V. - A CLOSED-CIRCUIT TV CAMERA

stares down at her.

INT. ENTRY - NIGHT

Jacob looks at the monitor, which DISPLAYS Anna and Emily in wide-angle perspective.

He brightens up.

JACOB

Anna? Is that you?

ANGLE ON THE MONITOR - ANNA

holds up the loaf of bread to the camera.

ANNA

We brought you a loaf of bread. We wanted to say tha--

JACOB (O.S.)

Come in.

JACOB

pushes a button and the gate opens slowly. He turns from the monitor to the entry mirror, rubs his stubbly chin and notices his ratty bathrobe.

He places the scotch bottle on the credenza.

EXT. FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Emily bounds across the lawn toward the front door.

Anna follows, keeping to the flagstones, surveying the yard, which is illuminated by colored lights.

She stops when she sees the magnificent rose garden.

HER P.O.V. - THE ROSE GARDEN

is striking under the silver moon, lit by lights just enough to show the radiant yellow, red and white roses.

ANNA

stares with disbelief at the garden. She turns as the front door opens.

Jacob steps out, uncomfortable in the bathrobe.

Anna is equally uncomfortable.

Emily stands, smiling.

JACOB

This is a surprise!

ANNA

For us, too... I mean: wow!

(beat)

... Oh, here.

She walks up the steps and gives him the loaf of bread.

JACOB

Thanks.

Anna winces as she smells the alcohol on his breath.

She looks past him to the entry.

HER P.O.V. - THE SCOTCH BOTTLE

sits, nearly empty, on the entry credenza.

ANNA,

suddenly frightened, quickly steps back and makes to go.

ANNA

We just wanted to say "thanks," but
now we gotta go.

She signs quickly to Emily, who reacts as if she was just sent to bed. She is very disappointed.

JACOB

But you just... I mean, please, won't
you come in for a minute...?

He motions toward the entry and Emily starts to go in, but Anna grabs her shoulder, restraining her.

A strange hardness enters Anna's voice.

ANNA

We have to go.

She nods toward the car.

JACOB

But...

Anna smiles tightly, takes Emily's hand and back pedals toward the front gate.

Then she turns and walks quickly through the gate, disappearing.

Jacob is alone. He looks down at the loaf of bread and the rose.

After a long moment, he turns and goes back into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Jacob stands at the counter, preparing to cut the loaf of bread with a large knife. The bottle of scotch stands nearby.

The door BUZZER sounds and he looks up, brightening.

INT. ENTRY - CONTINUOUS

Jacob arrives at the front door, turns on the monitor and says:

JACOB

Anna, is that you?

ON THE MONITOR,

the street is completely empty.

JACOB

presses a button on the security panel.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Anna?

ON THE MONITOR,

the scene changes to the door stoop.

There stands Stephen Prince, arms akimbo, smiling.

PRINCE

Do I look like an Anna?

JACOB

is embarrassed and disappointed. He goes to the door.

ON THE STOOP, PRINCE

jumps back as the door opens, revealing Jacob with a large knife.

PRINCE (CONT'D)

Alright! So maybe I do!

Jacob notices the knife held limply in his hand. He shakes his head with disgust.

JACOB

Oh, Stephen. I thought you were someone else.

He turns and walks into the living room. Prince follows.

PRINCE

I'm glad I'm not. Who's Anna?

Jacob walks to the kitchen as Prince follows.

He takes a drink of the scotch and cuts the loaf in half.

PRINCE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Jacob ignores him and cuts the loaf into slices.

JACOB

You want some? It's homemade.

PRINCE

Well, that explains it.

(MORE)

PRINCE (CONT'D)

I haven't seen you in weeks, you won't answer the phone, you haven't gone near the hospital, you haven't been to therapy for your hand...

Jacob looks up, his eyes red-rimmed.

PRINCE (CONT'D)

... I guess I was worried for nothing. You were just puttering around the kitchen, pickling yourself and baking bread...

JACOB

I didn't make it.

He continues carefully spreading jam on a slice, then turns, holding it out to Prince, who eyes it like it's alive.

PRINCE

Jesus, Jacob! What are you doing?

Jacob shrugs and takes a bite out of the bread.

He smiles, savoring the taste, then turns, picking up the bottle as he goes, and leaves the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob enters, followed by Prince, flops down on the couch, takes a long draw from the bottle, draining it.

He winces at the alcohol's punch, then belches loudly. He laughs, quite drunk.

Prince sits down opposite him, terribly concerned.

They sit looking at each other in silence for a moment.

Then Prince says, in a low voice:

PRINCE

Jacob, who's Anna?

Jacob licks jam off his fingers as melancholy overshadows the gaiety of drink.

JACOB

I met her at the hearing clinic. Her daughter is deaf. So am I. So we have a lot in common. She was just here. She made the bread, brought it over here, then acted like I was a leper and ran off. But I'm not a leper!

PRINCE

No, Jacob, you're not...

Jacob holds up his bad hand, clad in dirty bandages, and wiggles the fingers slightly.

JACOB

I'm a deaf cripple, but I'm no leper!

He laughs indecently and picks up the bottle. He looks solemnly at it, then suddenly hurls it at the fireplace.

Prince jumps.

Jacob smiles, showing too many teeth.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Fuckin' A!

Prince rakes his fingers through his hair.

Jacob leans back, watching Prince, who finally looks up.

PRINCE

Tell me about her. Anna.

Jacob narrows his eyes, watching Prince carefully.

JACOB

What the hell. A little cranium shrinkage can't hurt. Okay. She's attractive, no, she's beautiful, she has sexy, alluring eyes and--

PRINCE

(sadly and quietly)

No. Tell me about her.

Jacob winces as if stung. The glaze goes from his eyes and he's Jacob again, hurt and wounded, but feeling.

JACOB

She's something. She isn't beautiful. Well, she is, but not on the outside. No, that's not true. She is, but not in the places you usually look for beauty. That's not true, either. She's beautiful there, but she's even more beautiful in the places you don't usually look: the way her eyes crinkle when she smiles, the way her hands move... she's got amazing hands... healing hands...

He holds up his own mangled hand and laughs ruefully.

JACOB (CONT'D)

In a way mine never were, or ever
can be.

He looks at Prince, who is overwhelmed at the outpouring.

Jacob is near tears.

Prince starts to get up to comfort him, but Jacob waves him
back to his seat.

Prince sits.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Hey, big deal. She's just some broad
who felt sorry for me, that's all.
I'm reading too much into it. I mean,
hell, it's just a loaf of bread.

Prince looks at Jacob, not saying anything. Then he smiles.

PRINCE

There's no such thing as "just" a
loaf of bread.

(beat)

You've got a physical therapy
appointment tomorrow. Be there,
alright?

He stands and puts his hand on Jacob's shoulder. Jacob stares
ahead, resigned.

JACOB

What the hell... alright.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY CLINIC - DAY

Jacob sits with the DR. SINGH RAHN, a thin, balding Pakistani
about 40.

Jacob is working on a series of strengthening exercises. He
works hard, straining to move the damaged fingers, his pain
a counterpoint to Rahn's pleased smile.

RAHN

You will make me very proud.

Jacob forces a thin smile in return and flexes again.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jacob picks up the phone and dials a number. It RINGS. After a moment, the machine kicks in.

ANNA'S VOICE

(filtered)

Hi. Please leave a message and we'll call you back. Bye.

The machine BEEPS.

JACOB

Hi, Anna, it's Jacob. I'm sorry you couldn't stay to talk last night. I hope I didn't do anything to offend you... I'm sorry if I did... So... if you want to call me back, you got my caller I.D.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - NIGHT

The answering machine drones the DIAL TONE.

PULL BACK to reveal Anna, sitting nearby, sadness on her face.

Margo stands at her shoulder, shaking her head.

MARGO

You should talk to him.

Anna turns to Margo, her eyes growing hard.

ANNA

I can't.

MARGO

Honey, just because he was drinking doesn't mean--

ANNA

How do you know?!

She gets to her feet and rushes into the bedroom.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I can't risk it!

Margo is left staring at a closed door.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob stares at the inert phone, a look of despondency on his face. He turns and douses the lights, exiting.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Jacob emerges from the bathroom in his pajamas. The telephone RINGS. He quickly moves to answer it.

JACOB

Hello? Anna?

WOMAN'S VOICE

No. It's your mother.

Jacob's countenance falls. He shifts the phone to the other ear and drops down on the bed, depressed.

JACOB

Hello, Mother.

EVELYN (O.S.)

I've been calling you every day for a month! Why haven't you called me back?

JACOB

I'm not feeling very well. I'll call you tomorrow, okay?

EVELYN (O.S.)

Jacob! Don't you dare hang up on me!
Jacob!

Jacob hangs up, then unplugs it from the wall.

He lies back on the bed. The DOWNSTAIRS PHONE rings. Jacob groans and rolls over.

In the near silence we hear Evelyn's voice angrily chiding Jacob.

He wraps the pillow around his ears and shuts his eyes tight.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - TRAVELING - NIGHT

DRIVER'S P.O.V. - THE ROAD

is eaten up with frightening speed as we ROAR along, around blind corners, over rises that catapult us into the air.

TIRES shriek as they seek purchase on the moonlit asphalt.

JACOB

is 17 again, delighted at the exhilarating ride.

He bears down on the gas pedal and the car lurches ahead.

HIS P.O.V. - THE COVERED BRIDGE

looms out of the blackness.

In an instant we are through it and heading for the propitious blind rise.

As the MG's tires leave the road, hurtling us into the inky blackness, silver light erupts and we find ourselves back on the moonlit road just before the bridge, moving at the same breakneck clip.

Again, we enter the darkness of the bridge, emerging on the other side, heading again for the rise.

As we crest it, we shift back to before the bridge--a perfect closed loop.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob tosses and turns, jerking his head from side to side, his face screwed into a horrible grimace, his eyes shut tightly.

He mutters to himself, his voice cracking with fear and anguish.

Finally, he jerks awake, screaming, his arms held up in front of his face in a self-protecting gesture.

JACOB

Father!

He stares directly ahead, his chest heaving, sobbing in great, choking spasms.

He buries his head in his hands.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Oh, God! Father!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. NORTHMONT ELEMENTARY PARKING LOT - DAY

Jacob sits behind the wheel, idly listening to classical music on the radio. He looks up at the sound of the BELL.

JACOB'S P.O.V. - CHILDREN

pour out of the front gate, playing and running.

Finally Anna walks out, an arm full of books, holding Emily's hand.

JACOB

opens the door and gets out.

FOLLOW HIM as he moves to intercept Anna and Emily.

Anna looks up and sees Jacob. Surprise is replaced by fear and she quickens her pace, clutching Emily's hand tighter.

Emily, on the contrary, begins to squeal, waving at Jacob.

Jacob stops on the other side of the Pinto.

Anna works furiously at opening the driver's door.

Jacob is perplexed.

JACOB

Hi, Anna.

ANNA

Hi, Jacob. How are you?

Emily runs to Jacob, hugging his leg.

He looks down at her, pleased at her warm response, tousling her hair.

JACOB

Fine. I've called you. Didn't you get my messages?

Anna has the car door open. She motions to Emily, who reluctantly leaves Jacob and crawls inside.

Anna is on pins and needles, anxious to get out of there.

ANNA

I've been really busy...

JACOB

What's the matter?

Anna shakes her head slowly.

ANNA

Nothing. I just don't think we should, you know...

JACOB
No, I don't. What?

ANNA
Please, Jacob. I can't...

There is a long beat as they look at each other in silence.

ANNA (CONT'D)
We're late. We gotta go.

She gets in and shuts the door.

The engine roars to life and she backs out of the space.

She throws it quickly in gear and takes off.

Emily is at the rear window, waving goodbye, smiling.

The car turns and disappears.

CLOSE ANGLE - JACOB

slowly lowers his hand from waving goodbye.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

The O.R. TEAM performs open heart surgery on a middle-aged WOMAN patient.

The view is rather alarming: the patient's chest is opened up like the hood of a car.

Sally Dixon is below, assisting. She looks up and sees Jacob. She waves, her eyes smiling above her facemask.

JACOB

nods his head in recognition. He is alone in the dark observation room. He absently rubs his right hand.

A slice of light illuminates him, then disappears.

Jacob doesn't turn.

Momentarily, David Hansen joins Jacob at the railing. They silently watch the operation below.

HANSEN
Time to get back in the saddle, Jacob.

JACOB
Can't hold the reins anymore, David.

Jacob raises his hand and wiggles the fingers a little.

HANSEN

I count eight good fingers and a damned good mind. You ever thought about teaching?

Jacob shakes his head.

HANSEN (CONT'D)

Well, think about it.

He turns and disappears into the shadows, leaving Jacob.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PUBLIC LIBRARY, VENICE BRANCH - DAY - ESTABLISHING

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

DOLLY PAST reference books. STOP and CENTER on a large leather-bound copy of "Who's Who in American Medicine - 2005."

ANNA

withdraws the book from the shelf and takes it over to a table.

As she prepares to sit down, she looks around.

HER P.O.V. - EMILY

is seated in the children's section, thumbing through a picture book.

ANNA

sits down and opens the book, flipping pages. She stops.

ANGLE ON BOOK - A BIOGRAPH OF JACOB EVANS

dominates the page, including a picture.

ANNA

reads the article to herself.

ANNA (CONT'D)

First in class at Yale Medical School, residency at the Mayo Clinic, Bringham Fellowship, chief of pediatric surgery, UCLA Medical Center... married to Christine Babcock, one child, Joseph, age 8...

She slams the book closed.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I knew it.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jacob's Jag pulls up to the curb. He gets out and walks through the chain link gate and up the steps to the front door.

CLOSER - JACOB

takes a deep breath, steadying himself, and knocks.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anna looks up at the KNOCK. She is potting several small house plants on the kitchen table.

She rises, wipes her hands on her jeans. Emily is not present.

ANNA

Just a sec.

She opens the door, revealing Jacob. Her face goes from surprise to alarm in a split second.

She doesn't know what to say.

Jacob looks sheepish.

JACOB

Anna, can I talk to you?

Anna looks down at Jacob's right hand.

HER P.O.V. - JACOB'S RIGHT HAND

is finally unbandaged, but the ring and pinkie fingers are missing. Angry red scar tissue covers the wound.

The wedding band Anna is looking for is missing.

JACOB

sees Anna's stare and quickly puts his hand behind him. Anna adjusts her gaze to his face, her question unanswered.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Can I come in?

Anna doesn't know what to say, but steps aside anyway.

Jacob enters.

She shuts the door.

He looks around.

JACOB'S P.O.V. - THE LIVING ROOM AND KITCHEN

are filled with houseplants, some blooming, some brown and brittle and apparently dead, several cacti, and dozens of trays sprouting tiny seedlings.

JACOB

walks into the middle of the room, looking around. He approaches one plant that looks dead.

He fingers the dry stalk and the crumbly leaves.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Why don't you throw this out?

ANNA

Why are you here?

JACOB

Why won't you talk to me?

Anna sits down on a kitchen chair, suddenly exhausted. She looks around the room, as if searching for the answer in the plants.

Finally, she looks back at Jacob.

ANNA

You scare me. That's why.

JACOB

Me? That's a good one. Why?

ANNA

It's kind of personal.

JACOB

If you don't tell me, I can't stop whatever I'm doing that's so scary.

Anna doesn't say anything for a long moment. Then:

ANNA

It's none of my business.

JACOB

Yeah, sure. I understand...

(beat)

... Well, I gotta be going...

He starts for the door. Anna gets up, confused.

ANNA

Jacob, please, don't take it that way... I just...

(beat; exasperated)

Would you like to see Emily before you go?

JACOB

(brightening)

Yes, I would. Very much.

TRACK TO FOLLOW as Anna leads Jacob down a short hallway.

INT. EMILY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A scarf over a lampshade bathes the room in a soft blue light. Emily sleeps, her picture box next to her.

Anna and Jacob enter and admire her in silence.

Anna takes the shoebox and sets it on the dresser.

Jacob sits on the edge of the bed.

He touches Emily's face with the back of his left hand, feeling the soft down on her cheek.

Fast asleep, Emily takes Jacob's hand and nestles it to her face.

Jacob smiles at Anna.

JACOB

She's a soul-catcher.

ANNA

A "soul catcher"?

JACOB

A person who takes your spirit from you, breathes life into it, and gives it back.

He gently removes his hand from Emily's embrace.

He stands and they leave the room. Jacob heads toward the front door.

JACOB (CONT'D)

I'd better go.

He opens the door.

Anna touches his arm, stopping him.

ANNA

Would you like to come over again? I mean, it's okay, if you want to... I'm sure Emily would like to see you...

JACOB

Yes. I'd like that very much.

He backs out the door. He stops when she says:

ANNA

I don't throw the dead plants away because I keep hoping somehow they'll come back to life. Does that make any sense?

A shadow crosses Jacob's face.

JACOB

Yes, it does.

He turns and walks down the steps.

Anna hugs herself in the cool night air as she watches him go.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOSEPH'S BEDROOM - LATER

Jacob sits on the bed, which is shaped like a race car.

JACOB'S P.O.V. - PAN ABOUT THE ROOM

It is intact; exactly like it was before the accident.

JACOB

picks up a school picture of Joseph.

INSERT - THE SCHOOL PICTURE

Joseph's hair is slicked down and he has a stern expression on his face.

JACOB

picks up the other framed photo on the dresser.

INSERT - THE OTHER PHOTO

is a smaller version of the family photo on the downstairs credenza.

JACOB

holds the two pictures side by side.

HIS P.O.V. - ANGLE ON JOSEPH'S SCHOOL PICTURE

PAN to the family picture and Jacob.

The expressions of Joseph and Jacob are identical.

JACOB

realizes his son was becoming just like him. He shakes his head sadly.

From the next room, the PHONE rings. He rises.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jacob enters and picks up the phone.

JACOB

Hello.

INTERCUT:

INT. EVELYN EVANS' LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

EVELYN EVANS, Jacob's mom, sits rigidly in a wingback chair.

The living room is an extension of her: ornate, immaculate, and cold. She is a beautiful woman: tall and willowy, with ash-blond hair.

We can't believe she is in her mid-fifties. Her jaw line is square, her cheekbones high and defined.

She speaks slowly and deliberately, struggling for control.

EVELYN

You said you'd call back.

JACOB

I've been busy, Mother.

EVELYN

You're back at work?

JACOB

I'm still in therapy for my hand.

EVELYN

Well, it's only a matter of time. You can do it if you want to, you know. You are immensely talented, Jacob, I've always said--

JACOB

Mother, what do you want?

Since normal cajoling doesn't work, Evelyn tries guilt.

EVELYN

I haven't seen you since the funeral.
That's almost six months! I was
wondering if you were coming home
for Thanksgiving.

JACOB

Mother, I am home...

EVELYN

I meant home here--in Carmel. It's
dreadfully boring. Everyone asks
about you...

(sharply)

You haven't been home in five years,
Jacob. You act as if you hate me.

JACOB

I don't hate you, Mother. It's just
been--

EVELYN

Inconvenient. That's all it's been.
Inconvenient. You make no attempt to
see or even talk to me. I wonder if--

Jacob is worn out with this.

JACOB

I'll come.

EVELYN

Really?

JACOB

Yes. I'll be there for Thanksgiving.

EVELYN

Oh, Jacob! Wonderful! We'll have a
marvelous dinner, just you and me!
I'll cook up a--

Jacob presses the star button on the phone. A BEEP sounds.

JACOB

Mother, I've got another call on
line two. I'll call you back later,
okay?

He hangs up the phone, expelling his breath with a whistle.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Jesus.

Evelyn stares at the phone receiver with disbelief.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Anna and Margo are playing Scrabble.

Emily sits at the table, her face resting between pudgy fists, watching the game progress.

Her eyes dart from Margo to Anna as they converse.

MARGO

He was here?

ANNA

It was no big deal. He just wanted to see Emily.

MARGO

Right. So, is he?

ANNA

Is he what?

MARGO

Is he married?!

ANNA

I didn't ask.

MARGO

You're kidding. Why not?

Anna shrugs her shoulders.

MARGO (CONT'D)

Did he have a wedding ring?

ANNA

He's missing his ring finger.

Margo screws her face up with disgust.

MARGO

Ugh!

(smiling evilly)

Anything else missing?

ANNA

Margo!

Emily giggles.

Anna looks daggers at Margo, who is impressed.

MARGO

Wow! She's getting good!

ANNA

She's not reading lips! It's a lot easier to just read your dirty little mind...

She smiles despite herself.

MARGO

So, do you think he's married?

Anna leans back in her chair, thinking. After a moment:

ANNA

No. I don't think so.

MARGO

Are you gonna go for it?

ANNA

I'm not sure. I'm worried about the drinking... Aha!

She places five tiles down on the board.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Gotcha! That's 65 points!

INSERT - THE TILES ON THE SCRABBLE BOARD

read "RISKY."

MARGO AND ANNA

both laugh. Emily beams at the two women.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANNA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Anna sits on the edge of the bed, looking at the telephone. A clock by the phone reads 10:15 P.M.

Finally, she musters up enough courage and picks up the receiver and punches in the number.

It RINGS.

INTERCUT:

INT. JACOB'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob answers the RINGING telephone.

JACOB

Hello?

Anna takes a deep breath, then plunges in.

ANNA

Jacob, this is Anna Merrill.

Jacob's face shows a cautious optimism.

JACOB

Anna! How are you?

ANNA

I'm fine. I was thinking... I've been kind of hard on you... I mean, I don't really know you, and you were just trying to be nice, so, I was thinking that maybe, if you wanted to, we could, ah...

JACOB

I'd love to.

Anna breathes easier, smiling.

JACOB (CONT'D)

How about dinner Friday night?

ANNA

Sure. That sounds good.

(beat)

You're not humoring me, are you?

JACOB

I'll try, if you want me to.

ANNA

No, I just meant--

JACOB

Is eight o'clock okay?

ANNA

Yes. Eight's fine.

JACOB

And you can bring Emily if you want to.

ANNA
 (surprised)
 Oh. Oh, sure, if you want her to
 come.

JACOB
 I just meant, if you want her to
 come.

ANNA
 We'll see. Friday, then?

JACOB
 Sure. I look forward to it.

ANNA
 Okay. Bye.

JACOB
 Bye.

Anna hangs up, eager to be off, exhaling with relief and embarrassment at her ineptness on the phone.

Jacob hangs up on his end, the exact same expression of relief, pleasure and embarrassment on his face.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE/CURBSIDE - NIGHT - JACOB'S JAG

pulls up to the curb and stops. The headlights go off.

INT. JACOB'S JAG - CONTINUOUS

Jacob fusses with his hair in the rear view mirror. It won't behave and he's frustrated with it.

He holds a comb gingerly with his right hand, struggling for control.

INT. ANNA'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anna applies makeup in the mirror. Emily stands by her, all eyes. Anna is having a tough time, too, getting things just so.

Emily tugs on her mother's dress.

Anna turns as Emily signs something to her.

ANNA
 Thank you, sweetheart.

Anna signs "I love you, too" to Emily, bends down and applies rouge to the child's cheeks, finishing off with a bit of lip gloss.

Emily is beside herself with joy.

Anna turns as the DOORBELL rings.

Emily follows her gaze and comprehends, running out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emily throws the door open, revealing Jacob, standing there with a potted rose in his arms.

Jacob looks around. Anna is not in sight.

He bends to Emily, talking slowly and loud, the way hearing people talk to the hearing impaired.

JACOB

Hi, Emily! Is your mama home?

Emily nods, then produces another of her collages.

INSERT - THE COLLAGE

is a collection of cartoon characters. Curiously, she has pasted her own picture over the bodies of several of them, including Wyle E. Coyote and Captain Hook.

JACOB

smiles, wondering at the significance.

Emily turns and runs down the hall.

After a moment, Anna appears at the end of the hallway. She is radiant in a simple blouse and skirt combination.

Jacob exhales a breath. He sees himself in the reflection of the window. Way overdressed.

He fights back an impulse to turn and run.

She moves toward Jacob, smiling. Jacob hands her the rosebush.

JACOB (CONT'D)

This is for you. I had my gardener pot it.

ANNA

It's beautiful.

JACOB

It's not too much for a first date,
is it? I'm kind of out of practice.

Anna laughs, a sparkling, relaxed laugh.

ANNA

Your gardener potted this? No, Jacob,
it's not too much. You are, but it's
perfect.

Jacob looks wounded.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I didn't mean that. I'm just nervous,
always saying the wrong thing. It
comes from talking to myself too
much.

She reaches for her coat, which lays over the back of the
sofa. Jacob quickly helps her on with it. Suddenly,

MARGO

Hi, kids.

Jacob turns around, startled.

Margo stands behind him, her hand held out to shake his.

They shake and she sizes him up slowly.

Anna shakes her head at Margo's impertinence.

ANNA

Jacob, this is ny neighbor Margo.

JACOB

Pleased to meet you.

MARGO

Can I ask you something?
Are you ma--

ANNA

We really have to go. Take good care
of Emily. Bye now.

She gives Margo the rosebush and kisses Emily.

Emily reaches to Jacob. He stoops and gives her an awkward
hug. She kisses him, leaving a perfect child-sized lip print
on his cheek.

He stands, unaware of the smear.

Anna takes his arm and leads him out the door, waving at
Emily and giving Margo a dirty look, which Jacob misses.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Bye, kids. Don't wait up.

Jacob waves and the door closes.

Margo looks at Emily.

MARGO
What do you think?

Emily extends her hand, palm down, and wags it side to side.
Margo does the same.

They both laugh.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACOB'S JAG - TRAVELING - NIGHT

Jacob inserts a CD into the player. Suddenly, the air is filled with the gentle strains of CHOPIN.

Jacob visibly relaxes.

ANNA
Who's this?

Jacob looks at her like she is crazy.

JACOB
It's Chopin. Do you like it?

Anna listens a moment. She nods her head slightly.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Would you prefer something else?
Here.

He gives her the CD case. She sorts through it. Finding nothing, she closes the case and smiles.

ANNA
This is fine.

JACOB
We could listen to the radio.

ANNA
Are you sure?

He nods. She ejects the CD and presses the "SEARCH" function. In a moment we hear Patsy Cline singing "HEARTACHES."

ANNA (CONT'D)
This is more like it.

JACOB
You don't like the classics?

ANNA
Oh, yes I do.

She turns up the radio, lost in the heart-felt music.

CUT TO:

INT. LE DOME RESTAURANT - LATER

Jacob and Anna are enjoying the exquisite meal. A WAITER hovers nearby, just within earshot, awaiting their slightest need.

Anna is almost paralyzed with excitement.

Jacob is in his element, totally at ease. Quite a reversal.

ANNA
I can't believe it! I don't know
anyone who's ever eaten here!

Jacob smiles, pleased she is pleased.

JACOB
How is it?

ANNA
Will they let me, you know, take
home a doggy bag for Emily?

Jacob laughs. Anna gets it and joins in.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I didn't mean it that way.

She smiles genuinely. He is overwhelmed by her.

After a moment, he goes back to his plate, trying gallantly to eat with his left hand, but he's terribly awkward.

His right hand lies hidden in his lap.

After more struggle, Anna reaches out and touches his hand.

ANNA (CONT'D)
You were telling me about... the
accident.

Jacob is dismayed. He looks at his lap, then slowly places his right hand on the table.

For a moment, they both look at it.

Then he replaces it in his lap and resumes eating.

JACOB

I tried to help them, but the gasoline caught fire and there was an explosion. I woke up three days later...

(long beat)

... It was my fault...

ANNA

I don't see how...

JACOB

I hesitated. When I grabbed the door handle, I cut my hand really bad. I stood there like an idiot, staring at my precious bloody hand. Then I looked up and there was Christine, pinned in the taxi, holding Joseph, terrified, the gas spreading outward from the car... by the time I moved it was too late...

Silence.

The Waiter, sensing something wrong, approaches.

WAITER

Something wrong, Dr. Evans?

Jacob waves him away.

Anna holds out her hand. He gives her his left hand. She holds out her other hand.

Jacob shakes his head.

She motions for his hand.

Finally, he places his right hand on the table and she takes it.

JACOB'S P.O.V. - HIS RIGHT HAND

is held gently in hers.

TILT UP from their hands to Anna's face. There are tears in her eyes.

BACK TO SCENE

After a long moment, Jacob pulls his hands back and hides the right hand in his lap.

He looks around, sees the Waiter and motions to him.

The Waiter comes.

JACOB
I'd like a J&B. Neat.

Anna looks at her own hands in her lap, understanding now.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - TRAVELING - LATER

The Jaguar tools among the late night traffic.

INT. JACOB'S JAG - TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Anna sits in silence, listening to a MOZART CONCERTO on the CD player. She steals a glance at Jacob.

He wears his black racing gloves, the last two fingers of the right one tucked neatly inside the palm.

He concentrates on the road a bit too much as he says:

JACOB
He left you?

ANNA
Yes. He left.

JACOB
How long ago was that?

ANNA
Emily was a year old.

JACOB
And you haven't kept in touch?

ANNA
Nope.

Jacob steals a glance at her while her eyes are elsewhere.

JACOB
That must be hard on Emily.

Anna waits so long to respond that Jacob looks again.

ANNA
It was very hard on her.

JACOB
And you?

ANNA

Me, too. But it's better this way...
he was unpredictable--an alcoholic.

She steals a glance at Jacob.

He continues looking ahead, oblivious to her pointed remark.

JACOB

That must've been terrible.

ANNA

Well, you know... you go on. What
else can you--

Suddenly, the car veers wildly, tires screeching. Jacob slams
on the brakes.

The car fishtails across three lanes of traffic, nearly
colliding head-on with a large delivery truck.

Finally, he manages to pull over and stop.

He holds the wheel with steely intensity, gasping for breath,
sweat popping, adrenaline icily flowing.

Anna releases her brace on the dashboard.

JACOB

You all right?

She nods.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - LATER

The Jag's left front tire is hopelessly shredded, the rim
badly bent.

JACOB

eyes the damage. Vehicles ROAR past, HORNS honking.

He straightens and Anna rolls down her window.

JACOB

It's totalled.

He gets back in, picks up his phone and dials a number.

JACOB (CONT'D)

I'll call triple A.

ANNA

Why don't you change it?

JACOB
I'm not dressed for that...

Anna stares at him with wonder.

Jacob blanches.

After a moment, she opens her door and gets out.

ANNA
Open the trunk.

Jacob hits the lever and gets out, mortified.

He goes to the rear of the car where Anna is already removing the jack.

JACOB
You think I don't know how.

Anna busies herself with the tools, ignoring him.

JACOB (CONT'D)
I do know how.

He motions for her to give him the jack.

For an instant, it appears that she isn't going to.

Then she relinquishes it.

ANNA
Alright... here.

Jacob kneels down by the front of the car, searching for a place for the jack.

Anna nudges him, pointing at the rear of the wheel well.

Jacob looks, discovers the slot and inserts the jack head.

He begins winding the handle.

He makes progress, when his foot slips on the gravel and his knee hits the ground, tearing his pants, bloodying his knee.

JACOB
Ouch! Dammit!

He wipes the blood away, then looks daggers at Anna.

She grimaces, reaching for him.

He waves her away angrily.

JACOB (CONT'D)
I can do it.

He kneels again and jams the handle into the receptacle. He leans into it, straining to turn it. Nothing.

He backhands the sweat off his forehead and tries again.

The car doesn't move.

Jacob bears down on the handle with all his might.

Suddenly, the handle gives, sending Jacob sprawling, bumping his head on the fender.

He jumps up, wrenching his back.

JACOB (CONT'D)
OUCH! My back!

Anna quickly comes to him, consoling him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACOB'S JAG - LATER

Jacob sits in the passenger seat, a hankie on his bloody knee, his head on the headrest, eyes closed, a goose egg sprouting on his forehead.

Suddenly, the car jerks downward, bouncing.

Jacob moans in pain. Through the window, Anna straightens up, hefting the jack. She walks to the rear.

The TRUNK closes and Anna gets in the driver's side.

ANNA
Okay. Ready to fly.

Anna adjusts her seat and mirrors. She turns the key.

The 12 cylinder powerplant ROARS to life.

She guns it, smiling.

JACOB
You ever driven a Jag before?

Anna secures her seatbelt, turns and smiles at Jacob.

ANNA
Never.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - MOMENTS LATER

The Jag's rear tires spin wildly, spewing gravel, fishtailing into traffic. Zero to sixty in nothing flat.

Over it all, we hear:

JACOB
Aaaaannnaaaaa!!

His yell recedes as the car disappears into the L.A. night.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACOB'S HOUSE/ENTRY - NIGHT

The door opens, illuminating the dark hall. Two silhouettes stand in the doorway.

Anna, under Jacob's shoulder, helps him inside. Jacob CLAPS his hands. The lights go on. Anna laughs.

ANNA
You've got one of those clapper things?

JACOB
Hey!

He smiles back at her. She helps him up the stairway.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jacob lies on the bed. The light is on in the bathroom.

JACOB
There's some Percodan in the medicine cabinet.

Anna appears in the doorway with several pill bottles.

ANNA
What's it mean: "Federal law prohibits dispensing without a prescription"?

JACOB
Just give 'em here.

Anna looks at the label, hesitating.

ANNA
Can I try something?

JACOB

Sure. Anything you want. After you give me those.

ANNA

Before. Take off your shirt.

She goes back into the bathroom.

The sound of RUNNING WATER.

Jacob is losing patience, but takes off his shirt.

JACOB

Anna!

She reappears, folding a wet, hot towel.

ANNA

On your stomach.

She takes the pillow. He lies, white in the darkness, breathing shallow, his voice muffled in the covers, whining.

JACOB

My drugs... please!

Anna places the steaming towel on his back.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Ow! That's hot!

She presses deeply into his lower back.

Jacob is aroused.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Ooh... So's that.

Anna ignores him.

When the towel has warmed his skin, she moves it and kneads his muscles like bread dough, deep and hard.

Jacob grimaces at the pain.

After a few moments relief begins to flow.

Wonder shows on his face. It works.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Wow! That's amazing.

Anna continues to work on his back, concentrating.

ANNA

Good, huh?

JACOB

Yeah. Mmmm.

She works up and down his spine, her thumbs pressing deeply into the flesh.

Jacob relaxes, his eyes closing.

Soon, he's snoring.

Anna leans forward.

He's asleep. She gets off him and sits on the edge, folding the towels.

As she places one at her side, his hand closes tenderly over hers. She turns.

Jacob is propped up on one elbow, watching her, stroking her free hand.

She turns slightly. Quietly, he says:

JACOB (CONT'D)

Incredible hands.

They look at each other for a moment, then Anna reaches out to take Jacob's bad right hand in hers.

She smiles.

ANNA

So are yours.

She leans forward, her eyes closing.

Jacob rises to meet her and they share a long and heart-felt kiss. He pulls her close.

Her momentary resistance fades and she melts into him. They intertwine.

Fully aroused, Jacob shifts position. As he does so, he cries out in pain, clutching his back and rolling away from her.

Anna smiles, and sits up, straightening her dress.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Maybe we should stick to traditional medicine...

She touches his arm tenderly.

They look into each other's eyes for a long moment.

Anna smiles and kisses him gently.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I should go, before I put you in traction!

Jacob reaches out and takes her hand, holding her.

JACOB

It would be worth it.

Anna laughs and stands, looking for a phone.

ANNA

I'll call a taxi.

Jacob reaches into his pants pocket and withdraws the car keys, tossing them to her.

She catches them deftly.

JACOB

Take the Jag. Bring it back tomorrow night.

ANNA

Won't you need it before then?

JACOB

I'm staying put. But tomorrow night you, me, and Emily are having dinner here. Okay?

Anna bends and gives Jacob a deep, passionate kiss.

Then she stands, waving as she goes out the door.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Anna, no speeding, okay?

Anna pokes her head back in the room.

ANNA

You should talk. You were moving pretty fast a minute ago, Mario!

She waves and disappears. Jacob lies back, smiling.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Jacob reaches gingerly for the phone. The clock on the nightstand says 10:09 A.M.

He presses a stored number. It RINGS and is answered.

JACOB

Mary? This is Dr. Evans. I'm gonna
have to cancel my lunch with David.
My back went out. I'll reschedule.
No, it's not too bad... Thank you.
You'll tell him...? Okay.

He hangs up the phone and lies back, the strain on his face.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Anna sits surrounded by her students. She closes her book
and signs "class over."

The kids jump up, grab their books and run out the door.
Emily is among them.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Anna passes through the front gate, carrying her briefcase.

Emily runs ahead with some classmates, eager to show them
the Jag, which fills the f.g.

The little girls ooh and aah over it as Anna approaches.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOB'S MASTER BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Jacob emerges from the bathroom in his robe, still wet from
a shower. The clock on the b.g. wall reads 1:30 P.M.

He moves slowly, bent over to minimize the pain. He dry
swallows a couple of pills and falls back into bed.

The front door BUZZER sounds.

Jacob yells downstairs.

JACOB

Anna? It's open!

VOICE (O.S.)

Hello!

Jacob tries gamely to get up, moving slowly to a sitting
position.

He smooths his hair, getting a smile ready.

ANGLE ON THE DOOR - SALLY DIXON

appears, dressed in a short skirt and a tight blouse with a scoop neckline. She carries a bouquet of flowers and a tupperware bowl.

Jacob's jaw drops open, totally surprised.

Sally, of course, thinks it's because of her looks.

SALLY

Surprise!

Jacob quickly covers up, pulling his robe closed.

JACOB

Sally! What are you doing here?

Sally enters like she owns the place.

She sets the flowers and the container down on the nightstand, and pushes Jacob back in a lying position.

SALLY

David told me you hurt your back, so
I came over to see how you were...

Jacob tries to get up, not liking the supine position.

JACOB

You didn't have to--

Sally pushes him back again. Firmly.

SALLY

Nonsense! I'm a doctor, too, remember?
(sexy smile)
Now, where does it hurt?

INT. JACOB'S JAG - TRAVELING - MOMENTS LATER

Pull into Jacob's open driveway.

A 700 series BMW sedan is parked there, with the license plate "SALLY MD."

ANNA

is nonplussed. She pulls up next to the BMW and gets out.

Emily gets out on her side.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sally spoons the soup into Jacob's mouth. He is embarrassed; she is enjoying every moment.

A bit spills onto his chest.

SALLY
Oops! I'll get it...

She stops the progress of the tricklet of broth with her finger, then licks it sensuously.

Jacob is mortified.

The DOORBELL rings. Jacob shoots a look at the clock.

INSERT - THE CLOCK

reads 2:17 P.M.

BACK TO SCENE

Jacob relaxes. Sally stands.

SALLY (CONT'D)
I'll get it.

Without hesitation, she leaves.

Jacob tries to stand, but the pain is too great.

He leans back again, tired.

INT. ENTRY - MOMENTS LATER

Sally glides down the stairway. We can't help but be impressed with the way she moves.

She opens the door.

Anna and Emily are there. The look on Anna's face goes from bad to worse as she surveys Sally's attire.

Sally is sickly-sweet.

SALLY
May I help you?

ANNA
Who are you?

Sally wrinkles her nose at Anna's impertinence.

SALLY
Who are you?

ANNA

I'm a friend of Jacob's.

SALLY

How nice. But he can't receive visitors right now. He's sick... in bed...

She smiles, just a shadow of "you know what I mean" in it.

Anna knows exactly what she means.

ANNA

I'm returning his car. Here.

She holds out the keys.

Sally takes them. Then, cattily:

SALLY

It's washed, then?

Anna clenches her fists, wheels around, takes Emily's hand and quickly descends the steps.

Sally waves, the winner.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Bye, now!

She shuts the door.

EXT. FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Anna marches quickly across the lawn, towing Emily behind her.

She reaches the gate and disappears without looking back.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sally enters the room, picks up the soup bowl and prepares to spoon some more into Jacob.

JACOB

Who was it?

SALLY

Just some woman returning your car. Here are the keys.

She gives him the keys.

Jacob is mightily alarmed.

JACOB
Why didn't you invite her in?

SALLY
She seemed to be in a hurry.

He gets to his feet as quickly as his back will let him and goes to the window.

HIS P.O.V. - THE FRONT YARD BELOW

shows no trace of Anna.

JACOB

turns to Sally, full of impotent rage.

JACOB
Jesus, Sally.

Sally approaches him and gently guides him back to the bed, where he lies down reluctantly.

Sally picks up the soup bowl again, unperturbed.

SALLY
Don't worry. Everything will be fine.
Just fine.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANNA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Anna is reading "Readers' Digest."

Emily is coloring, working on still another collage. COUNTRY MUSIC plays on the radio.

A KNOCK comes at the door.

Anna gets up to answer it. She peers through the peep hole. She sighs, shaking her head.

ANNA
Go away. Please.

JACOB (O.S.)
Anna, please open the door.
(beat)
If you don't, I'll say what I came
to say in earshot of all your
neighbors... even Margo.

That does it. Anna opens the door.

Jacob stands there with a cane, looking forlorn.

Anna motions him in. He enters.

Emily approaches him, interested in the cane.

He bends to hug her, groaning as he does, then straightens up. He settles against the couch as Emily wanders away, examining the cane.

JACOB (CONT'D)

You haven't returned my calls! What did I do?

Anna shakes her head, tired of this already.

She looks hard at Jacob, searching for his intentions.

ANNA

Nothing.

JACOB

Then, why?

ANNA

We're from completely different worlds, Jacob.

She motions around the living room.

ANNA (CONT'D)

This is my world: Cheap furniture in a rented house. Yours is out there in your ten million dollar home, your precious Jaguar, and your doctor friends.

The last word is spoken like profanity.

JACOB

You mean Sally? She means nothing to me--she's just a friend.

ANNA

That's my point. How can a friend mean nothing?

Jacob throws his hands up in frustration.

He meets Anna's gaze evenly, speaking slowly.

JACOB

Please don't do this. I can't take it. Not after what I've been through.

ANNA

It's not about you. It's about me. I can't take it.

JACOB
But we haven't even--

ANNA
Even what?!

Jacob is speechless. She glares at him.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Men! One thing on your minds!

She turns away from him, her arms folded across her breast, angry as hell.

Jacob speaks to her back, slowly, gently.

JACOB
We haven't even gotten to know each other.

Anna turns back.

Jacob pleads silently with her.

A long moment passes as they consider each other.

Finally, Anna gives in, stepping closer. They hug.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - LATER

Emily kneels at her bed, FACING CAMERA, her eyes closed, signing her prayers.

Anna kneels beside her, watching her sign the words.

Jacob is in the b.g., feeling like an eavesdropper. He looks at the ground as Emily says, in her guttural way:

EMILY
Amen.

She gets to her feet and jumps into the narrow bed.

Emily signs something to Anna. Anna returns it.

ANNA
Me, too, you.

She kisses the child. Suddenly, Jacob bolts from the room.

Anna watches him go, perplexed. She tucks Emily in.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jacob stands at the front window, brooding over his losses.

Anna appears at his side.

ANNA
Not much of a view.

Jacob turns. He's very serious.

JACOB
Show me how.

Anna cocks her head, questioning.

JACOB (CONT'D)
How to say, "I love you."

Anna smiles, then slowly moves her hands through the letters of the words.

Jacob awkwardly tries to mimic her movements.

ANNA
There. You spelled it out. That's one way. Here's another...

She places her hands over her heart, moves them to her forehead and pushes them, palms upward, toward Jacob.

Jacob repeats the gesture.

She smiles. They stand in the darkness, lit only by the street lamp through the window.

Jacob takes her in his arms.

JACOB
I know another way...

He kisses her deeply.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. HIGHWAY 101 - AERIAL - DAY

The Jaguar cruises north along the asphalt ribbon, green rolling hills on one side and the blue Pacific on the other.

The sound of a BACH INVENTION fills the air.

INT. JACOB'S JAG - TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Emily sits in the back, magazines and pictures strewn about, cutting and pasting another collage.

MOVE TO THE FRONT SEAT, where Jacob glances over his shoulder, worried what she'll do to his upholstery.

Anna smiles at his concern.

ANNA

She never spills glue at home.

JACOB

She never sits on Corinthian leather at home.

ANNA

Hey! We got naugahyde!

Jacob manages a smile.

Anna points out the window.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Look.

THEIR P.O.V. - THE ROAD SIGN

ahead reads: "San Luis Obispo: 2 miles."

ANNA

opens her purse and withdraws a compact disc.

ANNA (CONT'D)

You said when we got to San Luis, it was my turn.

She pops the BACH CD out of the player.

JACOB

I didn't know you had any CDs.

Anna puts her CD in the player and hits "PLAY."

The INTRO kicks in: rock solid country with a healthy twang.

ANNA

That's what you hoped. I got this one just for the trip. It's Ricky Skaggs.

Ricky sings about the road and tough times, with good humor and a pleasing voice.

JACOB

I'm glad you're coming along. I just can't face her alone anymore. She begs me to come, then picks at me the whole time I'm there.

ANNA

Why?

It takes a long time before Jacob responds, and when he does, it's almost in a whisper.

JACOB

Is it okay if we talk about something else?

Anna nods.

Ricky SINGS something about people who change.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - AFTERNOON

The Jag tools slowly along a winding road, taking corners with infinite care, as if the car were glass and would break.

INT. JACOB'S JAG - TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Anna shifts her gaze to Jacob.

He grips the wheel firmly, his eyes darting quickly from the road to his rearview mirrors and back again.

He is sweating, his jaw set.

ANNA

Jacob, are you okay?

He nods almost imperceptively.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Why are you going so slow?

JACOB

It's not that slow.

INSERT - THE SPEEDOMETER

reads 22 m.p.h.

BACK TO SCENE

Anna isn't convinced. What's wrong with him?

ANNA

Speed limit's forty five. Are we lost?

Jacob shakes his head, his eyes never leaving the road.

JACOB
It's up ahead...

ANNA
What is?

THEIR P.O.V. - THE COVERED BRIDGE,
essentially the same since 1968, comes INTO VIEW.

INSERT - JACOB'S FOOT
comes off the gas pedal.

ANNA
notices they are slowing down.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Why are you stopping?

Jacob comes to, unaware that he was slowing.
He presses on the gas and they ease through the bridge without
incident.

They continue up a rise where the road veers left.

Jacob slows down again.

Anna is worried.

ANNA (CONT'D)
What is it now?

THEIR P.O.V. - AS THEY CREST THE RISE,
a stupendously large oak tree comes into view, shadowing the
road.

Beyond, past white washed corral fences, stands a large,
white frame house with huge columns out front.

BACK TO SCENE

ANNA (CONT'D)
That's why you slowed down--to get
the complete effect! Is this it?

Jacob nods.

The property is like something out of a Thomas Kinkade
painting. Rolling green lawn. Horses grazing in a nearby
pasture. A collie dog barks.

Maples and oaks are resplendent with autumn colors in the
amber evening light.

As if on cue, Evelyn appears on the porch and waves.

Jacob pulls the car to a stop. He looks at Anna.

JACOB

Here we go...

He gets out and goes around to open Anna's door.

Evelyn seems surprised when she sees others in the car with Jacob.

When Emily bounds out of the back seat, Evelyn stares.

Anna notices, turns to Jacob and says, in sotto voce:

ANNA

You didn't tell her we were coming,
did you?

Jacob shakes his head.

A MAID appears on the porch and Evelyn orders her to get the luggage.

Jacob, Anna and Emily slowly ascend the steps.

Evelyn doesn't move.

JACOB

Mother.

He gives her a perfunctory hug and a peck on her cheek.

EVELYN

(whispering)

Thanks for warning me.

She pulls away and offers her hand to Anna.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Hello, I'm Evelyn Evans.

ANNA

I'm Anna. This is my daughter, Emily.

Evelyn bends toward Emily, who cowers near her mother's leg.

EVELYN

Hello, Emily. How are you?

JACOB

She's deaf, Mother.

Evelyn straightens a little too quickly.

With barely concealed condescension, she says:

EVELYN

Oh. How tragic.

(beat)

Well, won't you come inside?

INT. EVELYN'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is is ornate, stuffy and very over-decorated. Glass crystal figurines are everywhere.

Emily's eyes grow large when she sees all the interesting knick knacks.

EVELYN

Collectibles. All very old and very valuable.

Anna nods, understanding perfectly, and takes Emily's hand.

Evelyn then turns and ascends the stairs.

JACOB

(to Anna; whispering)

And very boring...

EVELYN

I'll show you your rooms...

Anna looks at Jacob, mouths the word "rooms," and starts to laugh.

Jacob can't help laughing too.

Evelyn turns around.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Coming?

Jacob takes Anna's hand and starts up the stairs.

JACOB

Yes, Mother.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The table is set with fine china and linen. The Maid serves. Evelyn sits at the head of the table, Jacob on one side and Anna and Emily on the other.

They eat, surrounded by silence.

Anna looks at Emily, who barely picks at her food.

Anna looks across at Jacob, who eats, lost in thought.

She turns to Evelyn, who smiles coolly at her.

EVELYN

Jacob's father also practiced medicine. He was a G.P. He delivered babies, set broken bones, gave allergy shots--the whole gamut. Not everyone can be a specialist in Beverly Hills...

She looks to Jacob as if this deserves a response.

He ignores her subtle prod and continues eating.

ANNA

I guess people need doctors everywhere...

EVELYN

He always had time for people--especially family.

She looks at Jacob.

He ignores her and eats his supper.

The tension is thick and thicker.

ANNA

I'm sure he's very proud of Jacob.

EVELYN

(coldly)
You don't know?

Anna looks at Jacob, who stares at his plate.

Evelyn glares at him.

He looks up, takes a deep breath and turns to Anna.

JACOB

He died twenty years ago.

ANNA

I'm sorry. I didn't know...

Evelyn stares angrily at Jacob.

He goes back to eating, his eyes on his plate.

Emily sits opposite Jacob, utensils held in chubby fists, watching Jacob intently.

Her eyes are full of empathy.

EMILY'S P.O.V. - JACOB

eats in silence.

PAN TO EVELYN, who looks INTO CAMERA at us. Her eyes are cold and distant, even though she is smiling.

The fact that we CAN'T HEAR HER only reinforces our unease.

EMILY

suddenly jumps up from the table and runs from the room.

The others are surprised.

Anna stands, embarrassed.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I don't know what's wrong
with her.

She quickly exits. Evelyn turns to Jacob.

EVELYN

Perhaps she's spoiled.

Jacob throws his napkin on his plate and storms out of the room without a word.

Evelyn sighs and takes a bite, staring impassively ahead.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Anna sits on the couch, holding Emily, who sobs quietly.

Jacob enters and sits down next to Anna.

Anna dries Emily's tears, then signs to her.

Emily shakes her head, then reaches out for Jacob.

He takes her on his lap. She puts her head against his chest, crying softly.

He awkwardly puts his arms around her and looks at Anna.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - LATER

Anna and Jacob stand in the hallway, whispering. It is late.

ANNA

I thought I was gonna explode tonight.

JACOB
I know. How's Emily?

ANNA
I've never seen her so upset. She
wants to go home.

JACOB
Me, too. One more day and I've done
my duty for another five years.

ANNA
Why doesn't she like me?

JACOB
Because you're not Christine. She
adored Christine. Mostly because
Christine was exactly like her.

ANNA
Really?

JACOB
Well, Christine wasn't cruel, but
she was compulsive and obsessive
like Mother is. Like my father was...

ANNA
(she hugs him)
And like you are.

JACOB
Just so you know what you're in for.

He kisses her.

ANNA
So, can I sneak into your room
tonight?

JACOB
She'd know for sure.

ANNA
So?

Jacob looks around and lowers his voice even more.

JACOB
So? She was pleasant tonight. You
want to see her angry?

He kisses her again and sends her to her room.

INT. GUEST ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Anna enters and finds Emily sitting up in bed, a small lamp burning, looking at a photo in a frame.

INSERT - THE PHOTO

Jacob, his mother, and father stare impassively out at us. It's a photo like the one in Jacob's entry.

ANNA

sits on the edge of the bed.

She takes the photo and sets it on the nightstand.

Emily makes the "I love you" gesture and snuggles down in the covers.

Anna makes the gesture back and kisses her goodnight.

INT. JACOB'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob closes the door behind him. It's dark.

After a long moment, he flips the lights on.

HIS P.O.V. - PAN ACROSS THE ROOM

It is exactly as he left it. Clothing is neatly ordered in the closet. Books are lined up by height on shelves.

On the walls are academic plaques, trophies, and newspaper clippings.

Curiously absent are typical teenage boy stuff: posters, car mags, or road signs--personality indicators.

JACOB

sighs and turns off the light. Moonlight streams in the window.

He sits down on the bed and stares into the dark.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - TRAVELING - NIGHT

LOW ANGLE as the road whipsaws like a snake under us.

Dark shadows loom and pass, trees reach over the road, leafy fingers reaching out.

Ahead, the bridge comes INTO VIEW.

All light disappears as we pass through. Young Jacob howls.

YOUNG JACOB

is ecstatic as he emerges from the other side.

YOUNG JACOB'S P.O.V. - THE ROAD AHEAD

disappears over a rise.

We crest, veering left, TIRES squealing. The distant squares of light from the house are visible.

The huge oak looms over the road, blackness under its canopy.

A FIGURE suddenly steps out from behind the huge trunk and into the roadway.

YOUNG JACOB

slams on the brakes and hits his lights.

CAR P.O.V. - THE LIGHTS SNAP ON,

revealing Thomas Evans standing in the roadway, looking back over his shoulder toward the house.

As we approach, he turns and looks directly INTO CAMERA, his face composed.

We MOW DOWN Thomas Evans in horrific SLO-MO.

CUT TO:

INT. EVELYN'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

DOLLY down the hallway toward Jacob's room.

His scream fills the air.

INT. JACOB'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anna throws the door open. Evelyn is right behind her.

Jacob sits upright, screaming, the cords standing out on his neck like ropes, his eyes wide open.

Anna runs to him.

ANNA

Jacob! Jacob! Wake up!

He continues screaming.

Evelyn reaches out and SLAPS him.

EVELYN
WAKE UP!

Anna whirls on Evelyn, shocked at the force of the slap.
Jacob stops screaming. His eyes dart, wild and fearful.

JACOB
Father! Father!

Evelyn jerks like a marionette. She staggers back a step.

ANNA
It's a dream! Jacob!

His vision clears.

He looks through Anna at Evelyn.

JACOB
I saw his face!

Evelyn shakes her head and takes another step back as if he were contagious.

Jacob barks at her fiercely:

JACOB (CONT'D)
He was sober!

Evelyn shakes her head and runs into the hall without a word.
Jacob watches her go, then refocuses on Anna.

ANNA
Jacob, I don't understand.

He pulls away and looks at her intently.

JACOB
Me neither--but it's time I did.

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Jacob runs out the front door, springs across the lawn and down the street. Anna follows him.

He stops in the middle of the road, directly under the huge oak tree.

Anna catches up, out of breath.

JACOB
It was here--in 1988.

Suddenly, the distant sound of SQUEALING TIRES is heard.

JACOB (CONT'D)

I was coming home from a football game, driving with the lights off-- as always.

Jacob and Anna face the direction of the SOUNDS.

Beyond them, Thomas Evans steps out from behind the tree.

He walks to Jacob and looks down the road.

THEIR P.O.V. - THE M.G.,

the lights off, crests the rise.

BACK TO SCENE

Unconcerned, Thomas turns to Jacob.

THOMAS

I warned you it was dangerous.

He faces the oncoming car.

Jacob follows his look.

THEIR P.O.V. - THE M.G.

fishtails wildly, the lights come on, heading for us.

JACOB AND ANNA

whirl around as the car passes through them.

The M.G. careens to a stop, and Young Jacob gets out, screaming.

YOUNG JACOB

Father!

He runs back toward them.

Jacob and Anna step aside.

Thomas is lying in the road, covered with blood.

Young Jacob takes his father in his arms, crying.

Jacob turns away from the scene, hyperventilating.

JACOB

Next thing I knew, Mother and Uncle Jonathan were there.

Anna looks up and sees a YOUNG EVELYN running toward the accident, followed by JONATHAN EVANS.

Evelyn pushes Young Jacob away, taking Thomas in her arms.

Jonathan grabs Young Jacob and points at the house.

JONATHAN
Call an ambulance!

Young Jacob sprints toward the house.

Jacob is still turned away from the gory scene.

JACOB
I called and ran back outside.

YOUNG JACOB'S P.O.V. - RACE ACROSS THE LAWN

and down the street.

Evelyn holds Thomas in her arms.

Jonathan stands, his head down.

He looks up, turns toward us, pockets something, then reaches out to intercept us.

BACK TO SCENE

Jacob and Anna stand on the far side of the accident.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Jonathan tried to stop me...

Young Jacob breaks away and goes to Thomas.

Evelyn sobs hysterically and pushes Young Jacob away.

EVELYN
Murderer!

Young Jacob recoils as if shot, then reaches to take Thomas's hand.

Thomas tries to speak, but only coughs up blood. He dies.

Evelyn shrieks.

Jacob turns to Anna, crying. She puts her arms around him, guiding him away.

Police cars and an ambulance pass them, lights flashing, TIRES squealing and SIRENS wailing.

JACOB
I killed him...

P.O.V. FROM THE HOUSE - JACOB AND ANNA

walk slowly down the road. All is quiet.

There is no accident; no ambulances or flashing lights.

CUT TO:

EXT. UPSTAIRS WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Evelyn watches as Jacob and Anna walk away, her face like stone.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. EVELYN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Evelyn and the Maid prepare the Thanksgiving feast. The clock reads 11:00 A.M.

Anna and Emily enter, eager to help.

ANNA

Sorry we slept so late. What a wild night!

Evelyn doesn't look up from peeling carrots.

EVELYN

Yes, it was.

ANNA

Can we help?

She picks up a potato and looks around for a peeler.

Evelyn quickly turns and snatches the potato from her hand.

EVELYN

No, that's quite all right. Rosa and I've got it.

At that moment, Jacob walks in, looking tired from last night but hoping to be of help.

He rubs his hands together.

JACOB

Okay! What can I do?

EVELYN

Rosa and I can handle--

She stops cold, then races past them.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Don't you touch that!

Jacob and Anna turn, following her with their eyes.

Evelyn runs toward Emily, who stands next to a hutch, holding a hand blown glass figurine, fascinated by its beauty and delicacy.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Give it to me this instant!

She wrests the figure from Emily, bobbling it.

It careens to the floor and shatters with a CRASH!

Evelyn and Emily stand frozen in time.

Then Evelyn grabs Emily and shakes her--hard.

Emily bursts into tears.

Anna rushes past Evelyn and scoops Emily up.

The child is wailing in high-pitched whoops.

Anna whirls on Evelyn.

ANNA
How dare you!

EVELYN
How dare me?! If you were any decent
mother, this would have never
happened!

Jacob comes from the kitchen and steps between them.

JACOB
Mother. Anna.

ANNA AND EVELYN
(whirling on Jacob)
STAY OUT OF IT!

Jacob blanches.

Emily's face is starting to swell.

Evelyn picks up pieces of the figure, muttering to herself.

EVELYN
It was a wedding gift--from my mother!

Anna looks Evelyn, astounded at her priorities.

Jacob puts his hand on her sleeve.

JACOB

We really need to keep an eye on her...

Anna whirls on Jacob, incredulous.

Under the harshness of her gaze, he bends to help Evelyn.

Anna steers Emily up the stairway.

Jacob reaches out for her.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Anna...

She pulls angrily away from him, fire in her eyes.

ANNA

Go to hell. Both of you.

Jacob watches as she carries Emily upstairs.

Evelyn doesn't even look up.

Jacob looks at his mother, hunched over on the floor, fussing with the shards.

JACOB

What's got into you? The child's deaf!

EVELYN

She's spoiled and insolent.

JACOB

She has the sweetest spirit I've ever known.

Evelyn looks at Jacob, surprised, then stands.

EVELYN

Is that it? You're done with Christine and Joseph's memories already?

JACOB

You want me to mourn for the rest of my life?

EVELYN

A decent period of time...

JACOB

Decent period?

(MORE)

JACOB (CONT'D)

For God's sake, Mother, I've been in mourning since I was seventeen! It's killing me! What do you think the nightmares are about?

INSERT - ANNA

stands in the upstairs hallway with Emily in her arms, hearing every word, her heart breaking.

BACK TO SCENE

Evelyn's mask finally comes off. Her eyes are full of hate.

EVELYN

You killed him.

Jacob screams and whirls around, grabs a huge porcelain vase off the credenza, and hurls it to the ground.

He takes a menacing step toward Evelyn.

She involuntarily steps back, then hardens, her face resolute.

Jacob hisses at her.

JACOB

God damn you. My father is dead, my wife and son are dead, my career is finished...

He thrusts his ruined hand in her face.

JACOB (CONT'D)

I have nothing to live for, but it's still not enough for you. You have to go on, twisting the knife.

He stalks into the kitchen and returns with a large butcher knife.

He holds it out to her.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Here--finish me off! I'm already half dead!

EVELYN

Don't be ridiculous.

JACOB

God, sometimes I think Dad was the lucky one...

She slaps him--words enough for her anger.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Did it ever occur to you that maybe
the reason he drank so much was to
get away from you?

Evelyn is speechless, a solitary tear tracking down her cheek.

Jacob stops, a thought occurring to him.

JACOB (CONT'D)

But he wasn't drunk that night--he
was stone cold sober...

(beat)

Like I am right now. And I've had
enough of you to last me for the
rest of my life...

He places the knife on the table and walks slowly upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Anna turns quickly and ducks into her room.

Jacob appears in the doorway, his jaw set.

JACOB

Get packed. We're leaving.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - LATER (RAIN)

Jacob slams the trunk closed.

Anna and Emily are already in the car.

Jacob gets in and peels out.

INT. JACOB'S JAG - TRAVELING - LATER (RAIN)

Jacob grips the wheel like an adversary's neck, seething.
Anna sits silently.

Emily is curled up in the back seat, escaping into sleep.
The rain pelts down.

ANGLE FROM INSIDE THE CAR - HIGHWAY 101 SOUTH ONRAMP

Jacob slows to turn, then continues on straight.

Anna looks at him, afraid to say anything.

JACOB

It's raining and I'm too angry to drive...

ANNA

I'll drive.

Jacob looks at her out of the corner of his eye.

JACOB

Right. We'll find a place in Carmel and go home in the morning. All right?

He gives Anna a withering look.

She nods her head, too tired to fight.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MONTERREY HIATT - EVENING (CLEARING)

Anna opens the door to the nondescript room and goes inside, carrying Emily.

Jacob follows them inside with their bags.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob sets the bags down while Anna settles Emily into one of the double beds.

Jacob sits on the bed closest to the window, looking out at the wet parking lot.

Anna sits on the other bed, looking at Jacob's back.

She finally gets up her courage and goes over and sits down next to him.

ANNA

I'm sorry.

JACOB

It's okay. I would have fought with her eventually--in about twenty years.

Anna smiles slightly and begins rubbing his back gently.

ANNA

I don't want to re-open old wounds, Jacob... but could you answer me one question?

Jacob nods.

ANNA (CONT'D)

You said that in your dream, your father was sober.

JACOB

Yes. He was.

ANNA

Well, if dreams are our mind's way of ordering our lives--you know, helping us--wouldn't it be more logical for you to see him drunk, so you wouldn't feel entirely at fault for his death?

Jacob turns to her, his eyes red-rimmed.

JACOB

More logical? Yes. The way it was? No.

(beat)

I'm going out for a while...

He shrugs her hands off him, stands, and dons his coat.

ANNA

Jacob, don't... please, please stay-- we need you.

Jacob turns toward the door.

JACOB

That's your first mistake.

He goes. Anna looks at the closed door, despondent.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Jacob emerges from the store, carrying a paper bag.

He gets into the Jag and pulls out of the stall.

INT. JACOB'S JAG - TRAVELING - MOMENTS LATER

Jacob heads west, into the night, stiffly upright, still angry and hurt.

The brooding clouds beyond the windshield gather for another onslaught of rain.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EVELYN'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

DOLLY past the huge table, laden with a complete five-course meal, set for five.

DOLLY to reveal Evelyn, sitting at the head of the table, in a dark evening dress, pearls around her neck, stoically eating her Thanksgiving meal--alone.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MONTERREY HIATT - NIGHT

Anna and Emily emerge from the room, dressed in coats. The night is dark and chilly. The neon sign reflects in the wet pavement.

On the sidewalk, Anna looks around, then motions to Emily.

They turn and walk down the street toward a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CARMEL BLUFFS - NIGHT

Jacob sits on the hood of the Jag, overlooking the turbulent ocean, blasted by icy winds, his collar pulled up.

He raises a bottle of Jim Beam to his lips and takes a long pull.

His eyes are as cold and hard as the rocks below.

CUT TO:

INT. KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Anna and Emily sit in a booth, eating their "Thanksgiving" dinner somberly.

Except for them, the place is deserted.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EVELYN'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

DOLLY down the hall in the direction of the sound of CRYING.

PASS THROUGH the doorway to the master bedroom. All is dark, except for a tiny nightlight. The WIND moans in the eaves; the TREES rustle along the side of the house.

In the darkness, Evelyn sits on the floor by the side of the bed, crying softly, a bottle of gin at her side, a drink in her hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - ESTABLISHING - LATE NIGHT

The station is a clean, modern affair in the southwest mode: lodgepole and slump block construction, with arches and red tile roof.

INT. BUS STATION WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Anna and Emily sit on a bench, their bags gathered around their feet, bundled up against the cold.

A couple of DERELICTS sleep on nearby benches.

Emily is afraid and confused. She signs to Anna. Anna signs back. We understand her to say they are going home.

Emily forms Jacob's name.

Anna signs and says:

ANNA

He doesn't care about us...

Emily shakes her head; it's not true.

Anna looks around.

HER P.O.V. - A PHONE BOOTH

stands unoccupied at the far wall.

ANNA

rummages through her purse for something. To herself:

ANNA (CONT'D)

Margo will pick us up.

She goes to put her purse in her duffel bag, but it won't quite fit in.

She adjusts the things inside so it will, then, with surprise, withdraws a gilded picture frame.

INSERT - THE PHOTO OF JACOB'S PARENTS AND HIM

from the guest room at Evelyn's.

Anna shows it to Emily.

ANNA (CONT'D)

What's this?

Emily knows she's in trouble. She signs to Anna, explaining herself.

Anna shakes her head.

ANNA (CONT'D)

That's still stealing.

Anna holds the picture in her hands and sighs.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Great. Now she'll think we're thieves...

INSERT - THE PHOTO

PAN ACROSS the faces, STOPPING on Thomas Evans.

Sadness veils his eyes; he's weighed down with care.

ANNA

studies Thomas's face.

After a moment, she looks up, her eyes bright with recognition.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I wonder...

She gets up and goes to the phone booth, picks up the phone book, and thumbs through it.

She finds a number and dials the phone. It RINGS and is answered by a machine.

JOHN TANNER (V.O.)

You've reached the Hatton Fields
Coroner's Office. Our hours are nine
to six, Monday through Saturday. If
this is an emergency, call John Tanner
at 555-1734.

Anna jots down the number.

Emily watches her closely, not sure what is happening.

Anna fishes out a quarter and dials another number.

INTERCUT:

INT. TANNER HOME - CONTINUOUS

JOHN TANNER picks up the phone. He's near 80, but hale and clear eyed.

JOHN TANNER
Tanner residence.

ANNA
Do you work for the Coroner's Office?

TANNER
Ma'am, I am the Coroner's Office.
Can I help you?

ANNA
I need some information on a person
who died.

TANNER
Who and when?

ANNA
Thomas Evans. He was a doctor in
Hatton Fields.

TANNER
Yes. I knew Thomas well. He's been
dead twenty years.

ANNA
Well, can you tell me--

TANNER
Why don't you come in on Monday?
I'll be glad to talk to you then.

ANNA
I can't--we're going back to L.A.
tomorrow.

TANNER
I'm sorry, but the office is closed--

ANNA
Please. This is important. Jacob
needs to know if his father was--

TANNER
Jacob Evans? Is he in town?

ANNA
Yes. Can you please help--

TANNER

Meet me at twenty three hundred
Pacifica in twenty minutes. The County
Building. All the records are there.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CARMEL COUNTY BUILDING - NIGHT

Anna and Emily step out of a taxi and scale the steps of the
granite colonnaded building.

INT. CARMEL COUNTY BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Anna and Emily step inside. The GUARD looks up from his
magazine.

GUARD

Looking for Doctor Tanner?

Anna nods. The Guard points to the elevators.

GUARD (CONT'D)

In the basement. The third door on
the left.

CUT TO:

INT. CORONER'S OFFICE/STORE ROOM - NIGHT

John Tanner rummages through a box of records in a dusty
back room. There are dozens of similar boxes lying around
haphazardly.

CUT TO:

INT. CORONER'S OUTER OFFICE - NIGHT

Anna and Emily step into the room and look around.

No one is present.

ANNA

Doctor Tanner?

TANNER (O.S.)

In here.

FOLLOW Anna as she takes Emily's hand and walks through a
door marked "STORAGE."

Along one wall are a dozen or so large stainless steel doors,
like filing cabinets.

Tanner is nowhere in sight.

Light shows under a door at the end of the room. Anna doesn't notice it--she and Emily are riveted on something closer at hand.

THEIR P.O.V. - AT EYE LEVEL, A STAINLESS-STEEL DRAWER

is partly open. The body of a large black man lies inside, his shoulders and arms so huge, that the drawer won't shut.

ANNA

turns a fascinated Emily away from the sight.

The door opens at the end of the room and John Tanner appears.

TANNER (CONT'D)

Miss Merrill?

He waves them in and disappears.

FOLLOW as Anna drags Emily behind out of the room, the child's eyes not leaving the open drawer.

In the next room, Tanner gives Anna the file.

TANNER (CONT'D)

Where's Jacob? I haven't seen him in ten years.

ANNA

He couldn't make it.

Tanner reaches for the file back, but Anna is too quick.

ANNA (CONT'D)

It's okay. He sent me.

She scans the report, then looks up at Tanner.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Was there alcohol in his blood when he died?

Tanner takes the file and looks at it, then shakes his head.

TANNER

Just a trace. Point oh oh five. Well below the legal limit. But he wasn't driving.

ANNA

I know. But was that enough to make him drunk?

TANNER
No--he could hold his liquor.

ANNA
Was he an alcoholic?

Tanner takes a step back and sizes Anna up.

TANNER
You a reporter?

ANNA
I told you, I'm Jacob's... girlfriend.

Tanner smiles at her hesitation.

But something in her manner convinces him she's sincere.

TANNER
Thomas wasn't an alcoholic. The only
alcoholic in that family is Evelyn.
But that's understandable, considering
how he died and all.
(beat)
He left alot of unhappy people behind
him: Evelyn, his brother Jon, and,
of course, Jacob...

ANNA
His brother?

TANNER
Jonathan Evans. Thomas's death ruined
him, too. He hasn't functioned since
the accident- overcome with grief.
If it wasn't for Evelyn's charity,
he'd've passed through here long ago--
like the other derelicts. He just
couldn't take it when Tom died. They
were very close. It's a damned shame.

ANNA
Is he still alive?

TANNER
He lives here in Carmel.

ANNA
Doctor Tanner, do you believe it was
an accident?

Tanner folds his arms across his chest.

TANNER
You mean, did anyone have any reason
to kill Thomas Evans?

Anna nods her head.

TANNER (CONT'D)

No... it was just bad luck.

(beat)

Is Jacob still troubled about it?

ANNA

Worse than ever.

TANNER

Damned shame. You tell him for me it was an accident. Pure and simple...

She holds out her hand to shake and he takes it, then holds on, looking at her somberly.

TANNER (CONT'D)

And you tell him you love him. That's the best medicine I know for a hurting heart.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CARMEL BLUFFS - NIGHT

Jacob takes a drink of whiskey. The bottle is nearly full.

He looks hard at it, then out to sea. The sky looks like it'll burst any minute. LIGHTNING thunders distantly.

Jacob looks at his maimed hand, the physical reminder of his shattered life.

FLASHBACK:

INT. LE DOME RESTAURANT - NIGHT

JACOB'S P.O.V. - LOOKING DOWN AT HIS HAND

as Anna's perfect hand gently takes his damaged one.

PAN UP slowly to Anna's face. She is crying softly, her eyes full of empathy and compassion.

JACOB'S

own eyes begin to fill with tears.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. CARMEL BLUFFS - CONTINUOUS

Jacob's eyes are wet. Over the crash of the waves on the shore and the distant THUNDER, he quietly speaks:

JACOB

Anna.

Another moment and he jumps to his feet and hurls the bottle over the cliff.

He jumps in the car and backs out, taking off down the narrow road.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JONATHAN EVANS' HOME - NIGHT

The DOORBELL is ringing. A bedraggled man in a bathrobe shuffles toward the door, his back TO CAMERA. He opens the door.

There stands Anna and Emily.

ANNA

Jonathan Evans?

The man nods. Anna steps forward, her hand outstretched.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I'm Anna Merrill. I'm a friend of
Jacob Evans.

He tries to hide his discomfiture. He waves them forward.

REVERSE ANGLE - JONATHAN EVANS,

80s, unshaven and bleary eyed, turns and moves back toward the frayed sofa.

Anna and Emily follow him into the room, which is dark and dirty. The furniture is old and weathered, covered with sheets. A black and white TV drones on. Empty beer cans and a TV dinner sit on a coffee table littered with fast food sacks.

Jonathan sits down on the sofa and motions for Anna and Emily to sit on the only other chair, a dilapidated wingback. It's cold in the room.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Sorry to bother you, but--

The old man points a skinny finger toward Emily.

JONATHAN

What's the matter with her?

Emily is staring at Jonathan intently.

Anna turns to her and signs for her to stop it, then turns back to Jonathan.

ANNA

I'm sorry. She's deaf, so she relies on her eyes to take things in.

JONATHAN

Gives me the creeps. Where's Jacob?

ANNA

Ah... he couldn't make it.

She withdraws the Coroner's Report from inside of her coat.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Can I ask you a question?

JONATHAN

Do I have a choice?

Anna fidgets with the Report.

ANNA

This is the Coroner's Report on your brother's death. You were there, weren't you?

Jonathan recoils like he was punched.

His palsied hands shake as he struggles to compose himself. His eyelids droop, too large for the watery eyes. His adam's apple bobs.

JONATHAN

I was there.

ANNA

Was Thomas drunk?

Jonathan points at the Report.

JONATHAN

What's that thing say?

ANNA

What was he doing out in the road?

Jonathan's shaky fingers comb through his thin hair, his head bent low.

Finally, he raises his eyes.

JONATHAN

Why does it matter?

ANNA

Because it's destroying Jacob. I
think he might try and hurt himself.

Jonathan looks at Anna.

He turns to find Emily at his side. She puts a tiny hand on
his stooped shoulder.

Jonathan almost crumbles under the weight of the compassion
in her touch. He starts to cry.

Anna sits, embarrassed, as the old man sobs into his hands.

Finally, he brushes away his tears and stands.

Without a word, he goes to a bookshelf and reaches up to a
high shelf, removing a dusty volume.

He opens it and extracts a piece of folded paper, yellow
with age.

He sheds his bathrobe and crosses to the coat tree.

He dons his coat and places the paper in an inside pocket.

JONATHAN

Let's go. I only want to say this
once...

He puts on his old fedora.

Anna and Emily follow him out the door and into the night.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MONTERREY HIATT - NIGHT

Jacob's Jag pulls into the nearly empty parking lot.

He jumps out and heads for their door.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jacob opens the door onto the dark room.

JACOB

Anna?

He flips the light switch.

The room is empty, except for his own bags.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Anna? Emily?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An old sedan pulls to a stop at the front door.

Anna gets out of the driver's side, followed by Emily.

Jonathan gets out slowly from the passenger side.

He straightens up, looking around, as if he hasn't been here in a long, long time.

ANGLE ON UPSTAIRS WINDOW - THE SHEER DRAPES

are pulled back. Evelyn's face appears.

HER P.O.V. - THE THREE PEOPLE BELOW

make their way to the front door.

INT. EVELYN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Evelyn turns away from the window, suddenly weak with fear.

Her heart races, the hand holding her drink shakes.

She places a hand on her breast, calming herself, then takes the rest of her drink with one large swallow.

She leaves FRAME.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUS STATION - NIGHT

Jacob stands before the ticket window, talking to the AGENT.

AGENT
Anna Merrill, you say?

He consults a passenger list. He finds her name.

AGENT (CONT'D)
She bought a ticket--make that two tickets--for Los Angeles. The bus left more'n an hour ago.

Jacob whirls around, frustrated and angry.

JACOB

Damn!

AGENT

But she wasn't on it. I sold her seats.

JACOB

Where'd she go?

AGENT

How in the hell would I know?

The Agent shakes his head at Jacob's lack of sense and goes back to his paperwork.

Jacob turns and runs out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Jag pulls into the driveway.

Jacob gets out and looks at Jonathan's old car quizzically as he passes it.

He goes up the steps to the front door.

The door opens. It is Anna.

Jacob bounds toward her, hugging her to him.

JACOB

Anna! Thank God! I thought you'd left... I checked everywhere and then I thought--

He stops cold.

Beyond Anna, in the living room, sit Evelyn and Jonathan, looking extremely ill at ease.

Jacob pulls away from Anna and notices her wet eyes.

JACOB (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

ANNA

Come in.

She shuts the door and leads him into the living room.

She sits him down on the couch and sits by him.

Evelyn sits stiffly in a chair near the fireplace.

Jonathan sits uncomfortably in a chair on the other side of the coffee table.

Emily is no where around.

Jacob looks around, thoroughly confounded. He focuses on Uncle Jonathan.

JACOB
Uncle Jonathan?

He nods toward Jacob. Jacob gets up and goes over to him.

JACOB (CONT'D)
What's the matter? Are you ill?

Jonathan shakes his head.

He motions for Jacob to sit down.

Jacob does. He turns to his mother.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Mother? What's wrong?

Evelyn won't look at him. She stares into the fire.

Finally, Jacob looks back at Anna.

Suddenly, he connects.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Emily! Where's Emily?!

He gets up, scared to death.

Anna pulls him back down.

ANNA
She's asleep. It's after midnight.

JACOB
Oh. Right.

Anna looks at Evelyn, who studies the fire.

Jonathan sits, his head bowed, the folded, yellowed scrap of paper in his hands.

Jacob points at the paper.

JACOB (CONT'D)
What's that?

Jonathan looks up, his eyes red and brimming with tears.

He holds out the paper to Jacob.

Jacob rises and takes it, opening it carefully.

HIS P.O.V. - IT'S A NOTE:

"Evelyn and Jon, I know the truth. Because my pain means nothing to you, I give you your own private hell. Thomas."

JACOB

looks up from the note, speechless. He holds it up.

JACOB (CONT'D)

What is it?

Jonathan looks at Evelyn, who sits, made of stone.

He turns back to Jacob, his voice quavery.

JONATHAN

We betrayed him. Your mother and I had an affair.

(beat)

I found the note on his body after I sent you in to call the ambulance.

Jacob is stunned.

JACOB

Mother? Is this true?

Evelyn stares into the fire.

Jacob stands, anger rising.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Is it?

She finally looks at him, her blue eyes gray and cloudy. She nods slowly.

Jacob takes a step toward her.

JACOB (CONT'D)

SAY IT!

Evelyn stares at her fingernails, silent.

JACOB (CONT'D)

SAY IT! Say you cheated on him! Say it's all your fault!

Evelyn has aged twenty more years in the last hour.

She turns away from him and says, slowly and quietly.

EVELYN

It was my fault.

Jacob reaches out, turning her roughly around to face him.

JACOB
Why? Why did you do it?

She looks him square in the eye.

EVELYN
Because he never loved me.

JACOB
That's not true!

EVELYN
He never loved either one of us. He loved a fantasy, a world he made up in his mind: a perfect wife and a perfect son in a perfect home in the perfect American dream! It had nothing to do with you or me! We were actors playing parts, all of us!

JACOB
I wasn't.

For the first time, she manifests grief and remorse.

EVELYN
Oh, Jacob, you were the best actor of all.

Jacob grits his teeth, speaking slowly and deliberately.

JACOB
God damn you.

He turns on his heel and storms out the front door.

Evelyn faces the fire, the light reflecting in the tears that slowly move down her cheeks.

CUT TO:

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT (RAIN)

Jacob almost runs across the lawn. He keeps on going past his car, and out into the road, toward the huge oak.

Anna runs after him.

ANNA
Jacob!

He stops in the middle of the roadway, puts his hands on his temples and screams--a long, hoarse and pitiful scream. He is doubled up in pain.

Anna comes to him and puts her arms around him, trying to lead him back to the house.

He jerks away from her.

JACOB
Leave me alone!

ANNA
Jacob! Please!

Jacob bolts away from her, staggering like a drunk.

He raises his hands heavenward.

JACOB
Is that it? My whole life some damned lie? God! What'd I ever do to you?
WHAT'D I EVER DO TO YOU?!

Anna stands a few paces away, scared for him.

ANNA
Jacob! It wasn't your fault! He killed himself!

Jacob wheels on her, venom in his eyes.

He is nearly wild with pain and anger.

JACOB
But he used me to do it! Why me?
(beat)
I loved him!

He breaks down in choking sobs. Anna approaches him.

ANNA
But he didn't know how to love you back.
(beat)
It wasn't your fault, believe me.

JACOB
Believe you?! I don't believe any of this! This can't be happening! It's not real!

ANNA
It is real, Jacob.

Jacob turns to her, livid.

JACOB
How would you know?

ANNA

I know how you feel, Jacob.

Jacob almost laughs.

JACOB

You can't possibly know how I feel.
You don't even know who I am. So why
don't you just leave? Get out of
here. Leave me alone... It's over...

Anna steps toward him, fire in her eyes. She slaps him.

ANNA

Damn you! I love you!

The slap wakes him up. He looks at her, astounded.

ANNA (CONT'D)

You think I don't know your pain?
You think my life has been easy?

Jacob looks at her evenly. Obviously he does.

ANNA (CONT'D)

You self-involved bastard. All you
think about is yourself. You've never
had even the most passing interest
in my life.

Jacob waves her away, turning from her.

Anna grabs him, whirling him around. She is mad as hell now.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Don't you turn away from my pain!
You listen to it, the same way I've
listened to yours!

(beat)

Do you know why I'm so afraid of
you?

JACOB

Why?

ANNA

Because I think you might be an
alcoholic.

JACOB

Well I'm not, so don't worry.

Anna cries loudly, and beats on his chest as she says:

ANNA

I don't know that!
(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)

Emily's deaf because her father was an alcoholic! She could hear when she was born! But when she was ten months old, he caught her writing on a wall with a crayon! A crayon! He'd been on a binge for days. He was so angry, he threw her down the stairs! She was in a coma for two weeks--she almost died!

These last few words as her energy drains from her. She is panting, crying, beaten down.

Jacob is shell-shocked.

They stand face to face in the middle of the road. The rain is pouring down, soaking them to the skin.

ANNA (CONT'D)

That's why I'm afraid...

She sobs, her tears mixing with the rain.

Jacob looks at her, stunned.

After a moment, he moves closer to Anna and takes her in his arms. She resists at first, then relents, crying on his shoulder.

JACOB

I'm sorry... I...

ANNA

Oh, Jacob. I'm so scared...

Jacob looks heavenward.

JACOB

Me, too...

(beat)

I love you, Anna.

She looks up at him through tears and rain.

ANNA

You promise?

JACOB

I promise.

They kiss.

In the b.g., Emily runs down the street toward Anna and Jacob.

She hugs her mother around the waist.

Anna turns to her and signs that it's okay.

Emily reaches for Jacob, who stoops and lifts her. She makes the "I love you" gesture to Jacob.

He kisses her on the forehead, hugs her, and puts his other arm around Anna.

CRANE UP AND PULL BACK as they walk slowly back to the house, the rain pouring down.

FADE OUT.

THE END