

BIG LOVE

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"PILOT EPISODE"

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ANIMA SOLA PRODUCTIONS/PLAYTONE/HBO ORIGINAL PROGRAMMING

BIG LOVE

FADE IN:

INT. NICKI'S BEDROOM / NICKI'S HOUSE - TUESDAY MORNING

DESERT MUSIC... the plaintive, undulating voice of a woman singing in Arabic; foreign, yet familiar; mysterious...

Morning shadows fill the under-furnished room.

AN AIR CONDITIONER HUMS.

ON a man's sleeping body. The sheets are lightly draped over him, exposing enough to discern that he sleeps in the nude.

ANGLES: Strong shoulder; thick, defined thighs; unshaven face against the pillow. BILL HENDERSON, 40s. Male animal.

Another body sleeps in the same bed, a woman; the sheet obscures most of her sleeping form.

The SOUND OF AUTOMATED SPRINKLERS WHOOSHING on from the lawn.

Bill scratches his nose; opens his eyes: pools of anxiety.

A WOMAN'S LAUGHTER.

INSERT: THIS BEDROOM, LAST NIGHT; CUTS of a couple making love, sheets, tussled hair, SIGHS... The man's face, Bill's, red; the woman GIGGLES: "Come on, honey, almost." Suddenly Bill's body gives up: "Damn it"; Bill in the bathroom, throwing water on his face; Bill in the doorway, angry. The woman: "Bill. It's okay. Just come back to bed."

BACK TO: Bill, sitting on the side of the bed. He glances over his shoulder at the sleeping woman:

BILL

You awake?

No answer.

As Bill pulls on his underwear, we see what he can't: the woman's eyes are wide open. This is NICKI, 26, keen, intense; her face showing the strain of irresolution.

Bill lifts cash from his wallet and slips it beneath a glass of water on her bedside table.

CLOSE ON a hundred dollar bill, magnified and distorted by the water's refraction.

DESERT MUSIC rises up like the wind...

EXT. NICKI'S HOUSE / LINDA VISTA LANE - DAY

The block of near identical homes in an upscale development: 12 foot high front Palladian windows, identical driveways and front walks, identical sage hedges dividing the lots.

Bill exits Nicki's front door in business slacks and shirt, carrying his suit jacket, black leather attaché, and a "Big Gulp" with straw, dodging SPRINKLERS WHOOSHING around him. A Chevy Suburban parked at the curb CHIRPS as he unlocks it.

EXT. BILL'S SUBURBAN - CONTINUOUS

As Bill throws his black leather attache into the back seat he glances up.

TILT UP: A curtained window of the house next to Nicki's.

His POV: From behind the curtain, a thin, blonde teen (SARAH, 16) gazes out, wistful, in her nightgown. She waves, slowly twirling her hair, a slight self-conscious smile on her lips.

ON Bill, offering a small, hurried wave in reply as he quickly climbs into the car.

BARB (O.C.)
Honey? Sarah.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM / BARB'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

BARB, 40, enters. A serene, strong face, with deep convictions. She frantically adjusts her panty-hose:

BARB
You need to get dressed. I got called in. I'll have to drop you and Ben with Teenie at McAllister.

SARAH
Then we have to walk?!

BARB
Honey, just hurry. Wake Ben up, remind Teenie that today is Scouts-- and grab some fruit and yoghurt from the fridge. Please.

DESERT MUSIC accelerates...

EXT. DRIVEWAY / LINDA VISTA LANE - LATER

LONG: Barb rushes out the front door of her house -- juggling books, bag, and stumbling into an older model Station Wagon.

Sarah reads in the passenger seat; Ben and Teenie huddled, barely seen, napping in the back.

THE STATION WAGON SQUEALS out of Barb's drive and past the house to the left of hers; STAYING ON THAT HOUSE.

RINGING PHONE...

INT. KITCHEN / MARGENE'S HOUSE - DAY

MARGENE, 21, barefoot, in a man's large, white oxford shirt, nestles the phone against her shoulder and holds LESTER, her 3 month nursing infant, to her breast. She glances a bit nervously toward her back door as she waits for an answer to the RINGING PHONE...

MARGENE

Ouch! Lester, stop. Don't bite.

SANDRA (O.C.)

Law Offices.

MARGENE

Hi, Mom. How are you?

INT. WORK STATION / SMALL LAW FIRM - DAY

SANDRA, 52, Margene's mother, at a word processor -- on the phone:

SANDRA

H-o-t. Have you been out yet? My AC went on the fritz last night. Landlord's so cheap. What's up?

INTERCUT:

MARGENE

Nothing. Just wondering what you're doin' this afternoon.

Margene's POV: AARON, her 1 1/2 year old, in his crib a few feet away, starting to fuss and squall--

SANDRA (O.C.)

I gotta work late.

MARGENE

Oh, okay.

Margene glances again out the sliding glass back door--

SANDRA (O.C.)

So how are things? Anything new?

Her POV: a Cute Pool Guy, about her age, in a tight-fitting uniform, kneels by the backyard pool.

MARGENE

Nothing much. Pool guy's here.

ON Margene's face: an undesired desire for Pool Guy.

SANDRA

That's nice.

MARGENE

No. We're having a problem with the water. You know when you test it?

SANDRA

Something's wrong with the water?

Pool Guy looks up, sees Margene staring, smiles...

ON Margene's face as she turns away, flushing red...

MARGENE

I guess. The guy says acorns from the tree got in the filter and it's all messed up, the whole filter machine thing has to be replaced.

SANDRA

That's good. Listen, I gotta go--

MARGENE

(off Lester's bite)
Ouch!

SANDRA

Honey?

MARGENE

Just Lester. He's teething. I'll talk to you later then, Mom. Bye.

Margene hangs up.

Margene drifts back over to the glass doors, making sure the Pool Guy doesn't see her staring as she watches him work; he doesn't; she exhales.

DESERT MUSIC carries us to...

EXT. HENDERSON HOME PLUS - DAY

A crane hoists a huge sign into place above a large store in a new strip mall: "HENDERSON'S HOME PLUS."

INT. SECOND FLOOR CORPORATE OFFICES / HOME PLUS - DAY

Bill and DON EMBRY, 44, solid, clean-cut like the career military he once was -- proceed through a busy area of open cubicles toward Bill's enclosed office. As they pass, EMPLOYEES glance up from their work stations; big smiles:

FIRST EMPLOYEE
Hi, Bill. Don.

SECOND EMPLOYEE
Morning, Don. Mr. Henderson.

INT. BILL'S OFFICE / HOME PLUS - CONTINUOUS

Bill enters his office followed by Don. An AD-MAN waiting.

BILL
Hey, guy. Thanks for coming in.

AD MAN
There he is. All cued up and ready to rock and roll.

TV AD MUSIC kicks in.

TIGHT on the TV in Bill's office as a hokey ad runs:

BILL (T.V.)
Bill Henderson here inviting you to the grand opening of our new Henderson Home Plus, this Saturday.

ON Bill watching himself on TV.

TV Bill lies in a bed; in a bathtub; opens French doors:

BILL (T.V.)
The name you trust, the stuff you want. Beds to bathtubs, faucets to French doors. Serving the Wasatch Valley with a hometown difference, now from a second location in Pioneer Plaza.

TV Bill dons a big cowboy hat in front of the store:

BILL (T.V.)

Now, where are my cowhands?

ON TV: Wagon full of employees in prairie garb, rounding the corner of the parking lot; fixed grins, waving mechanically.

The three men, CHUCKLING at the ad as Ad Man turns off TV.

BILL

I dunno about the cowboy hat, the cowboy hat okay?

DON

You kiddin'? Cowboy hat's great.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

UNDERWATER on WAYNE, 4, a fat little Buddha-Boy, eyes open, swimming toward us like a porpoise. Behind him, RAYMOND, 3, gliding toward us as well.

ABOVE THE WATER Nicki in a baseball cap at a pool-side table, supervising her toddlers swimming. She leafs through a Banana Republic catalogue; talks excitedly on her cordless phone in the single, conjoined back yard clearly shared with the two other houses: same pool as Margene's -- Pool Guy's gone.

NICKI

Yes. The cinnamon and the grey. Doesn't matter. Well, the large one grey, then.

(DOORBELL RINGS)

Whoops, I gotta run.

WAYNE (O.C.)

Mother?

(half-beat)

Mother--?

Nicki's POV: Wayne and Raymond stand on the pool's steps.

NICKI

So you have everything, right? Overnight's fine. 'Kay. Bye-bye.

WAYNE

We're done now, Mother.

NICKI

Well let's get you dried off.

(DOORBELL AGAIN)

In just one sec. Oh boy. You know who that is, don't you?

WAYNE

UPS.

NICKI

You are so clever, Wayne.

EXT. NICKI'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

UPS Man walks to his truck, glancing back over his shoulder.

His POV: At the still open door, Wayne and Ray in towels, as Nicki rips open the top box of a pile of boxes, scooping out handfuls of white plastic shipping peanuts, hungrily, lifting out new shirts wrapped in plastic.

VOICE MAIL RECORDING (O.C.)

You have 16 new messages.

EXT. BILL'S SUBURBAN / INTERSTATE 15 - DAY

Bill drives in rush hour traffic, I-15, downtown Salt Lake.

INT. BILL'S SUBURBAN - DAY

Bill adjusts his cell phone headset.

BEN (V.O.)

BEEP: Dad, Dad, I did it!

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - EARLIER THAT DAY

BEN, 15, a sweet boy yet to realize he's grown into a sexy young man -- on a cell phone in front of the High School:

BEN

I won, I won in middle weight.
Coach moved me up and I did it!

INSERT: IN A GYM, two writhing, sweaty bodies in wrestling uniforms. Ben presses his opponent's shoulders down; a referee, kneeling, slaps the mat and blows his WHISTLE.

BEN (V.O.)

Two minutes, ten seconds, a pin!

BACK IN FRONT OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, JASON EMBRY, 15, fair and lean, spins Ben around and high-fives him as he walks past:

JASON

Way to go, Benny.

BEN

Hey, Jason.

(into cell)

Dad, gotta go. But I'll tell you
about it tonight -- I qualified.
I'm goin' to state!

INT. BILL'S SUBURBAN - DAY

Bill, proud, signaling a lane change for an exit.

TEENIE (V.O.)

BEEP: Hi Daddy.

EXT. BILL'S SUBURBAN / UNIVERSITY AVENUE - DAY

Bill, passing by the shaded University of Utah campus; the
granite-domed State Capitol.

TEENIE (V.O.)

I can't get Mommy on her cell. And
Nicki and Margene, well...

INT. TEENIE'S BEDROOM / BARB'S HOUSE - EARLIER THAT DAY

A large iguana in a fish tank. THROUGH THE GLASS: TEENIE, 9
thin long hair and thick glasses, on the phone in her room.
She wears her Girl Scout uniform, replete with badges:

TEENIE

You have to bring me home some
pinkies. Rex doesn't like the
grubs; he hasn't eaten for three
whole days. I think he's dying.

INT. PETCO - DAY

ON squirming fetal mice being plucked up with tweezers and
put in a Chinese takeout container.

TEENIE (V.O.)

Thank you, Daddy. I love you.

Bill pays for the mice at the counter.

INT. MARGENE'S BEDROOM / MARGENE'S HOUSE

Nicki opens the bedroom door ON Margene in bra and panties,
disconsolate, sitting amidst a pile of discarded outfits:

NICKI

Marge--?

MARGENE

I wanted to wear something nice for dinner, but I'm still so fat. I don't fit into any of my old stuff.

NICKI

(handing her a robe)
Here-- Put this on--
(then calls into the hall)
Wayne?

Wayne steps forward and presents a box he holds in his pudgy arms to Margene:

WAYNE

This is a present from Mother.

Wayne opens the box and reveals a DELUXE STEREO CD PLAYER.

MARGENE

Nicki! No way. Really?

NICKI

You've been dying for a good sound system in your house.
(half-beat)
If Bill asks, you didn't get it from me. And better not mention it to Boss Lady, period.

MARGENE

Oh, Nicki, thank you so, so much.

Margene hugs Nicki.

OFF Nicki: a glint in her eye.

BARB (V.O.)

BEEP: Hon? It's me. Barb. Listen.

INT. DRY CLEANERS - DAY

Bill at the counter of a dry cleaners as the Owner presents two suits in plastic.

BARB (V.O.)

I couldn't pick up your suits this morning. Sorry. Last minute call.

INSERT: A CLASSROOM of students at their desks. Barb races in, setting down her things. It's ten after nine.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - EARLIER THAT DAY

Barb on her cell in the back of a crowded school cafeteria:

BARB

Math-- they have me teaching math,
if that's not a joke I don't know
what is. I'll probably have to be
here til 6 or so. That means
dinner'll be a little late...

INT. DRY CLEANERS - DAY

As before: Bill explains something to Owner; Owner nods,
presents another suit...

BARB (V.O.)

Also, you said it was three suits,
but the laundry ticket only says
two. Oh, and Ben made state. Isn't
that something?

CHIRP...

EXT. BARB'S HOUSE, LINDA VISTA LANE - DAY

Bill locks the Suburban, parked against the curb, carries his
suits, pinkies, jacket and attaché, and proceeds up the walk
and into Barb's house.

BILL (V.O.)

Our dear Father in Heaven.

INT. DINING ROOM / BARB'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ALL

Our dear Father in Heaven.

The entire family stands around a dining table, arms folded
in prayer, as Bill, head of table, recites. Barb's to his
right, Nicki's to his left. Margene, beside Barb, wears an
orange dress that barely contains her. Ben, Sarah, Teenie.
Toddlers are in high chairs, infants in nearby strollers.

As we PAN faces, the sincerity of prayer, eyes catching other
eyes with deep affection, we glimpse a deeply shared
intimacy: we get that this "extended family" works.

BILL

We offer thanks for blessings
bestowed.

ALL
We offer thanks for blessings
bestowed.

BILL
We offer thanks for this fine warm
weather.

ALL
We offer thanks for this fine warm
weather.

BILL
Please bless us with good health
and a successful store opening.

ALL
Please bless us with good health
and a successful store opening.

BILL
And bless dear Benny with success
at the state meet.

ALL
And bless dear Benny with success
at the state meet.

OFF Ben: proud of his father's acknowledgment.

INT. FRONT FOYER / BARB'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BILL (V.O.)
Though our trials are great, please
bless us all as your loving family.
Sealed together through time and
all eternity.

Smiling faces as Bill kisses Nicki... kisses Barb... puts arm
around Margene and leads her from the house.

ALL (V.O.)
Sealed together through time and
all eternity.

EXT. THE THREE HOUSES - CONTINUOUS

Bill leads Margene down the walk (in that orange dress!),
Margene pushing Aaron in a stroller, Bill carrying Lester.
Behind them, Nicki and Barb step out into the night, also.

BILL & ALL (V.O.)
Amen.

Bill, Margene and babes proceed to the house on the left.

Nicki, Wayne and Ray proceed to the house on the right.

Barb, Sarah, Ben and Teenie wave good night to all from their small porch, middle house, then return inside.

INT. BATHROOM / MARGENE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bill, naked, flossing. Margene, naked, on the toilet, peeing:

MARGENE

God, I missed you so much.
Sometimes three days can feel like
an eternity. I hate it when family
dinner falls on our night. Do you
think I'm dirty minded cause I
think of you so much, cause I do.

BILL

Honey, I miss you too. If I don't
say it, it's because I don't want
to make Nicki and Barb feel like I
miss them any less.

She flushes, rises, grabs his hand; leads him into bedroom.

INT. MARGENE'S BEDROOM / MARGENE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MARGENE

You mean you miss me more?

BILL

(winks)
Officially, I miss you all the
same.

He notes her new stereo on the floor.

MARGENE

Mom sent it as a kind of belated
house warming.
(half-beat)
After the store opens, I wish we
could just go away together for a
few days. Leave *everyone* behind.
Sleep in. God, just sleep in!

They climb between the sheets. She snuggles next to him, then rolls over, offering her rump:

MARGENE (CONT'D)

Let's do it this way. My boobs are really sore.

There's something hot about these two as a couple, older man, younger woman, real nice chemistry. Margene tosses her head back, kittenish, and savors his neck and cologne:

MARGENE (CONT'D)

Mmm. I love that smell, your smell.

SOUND OF BABY CRYING from the other room.

MARGENE (CONT'D)

It's Aaron. He'll stop. He will.

She reaches under the covers behind her and grabs his cock.

The look on her face: he's limp.

She massages his dick under the sheets:

MARGENE (CONT'D)

Shhhh, Shhhh, just close your eyes.

The look on his face: helplessness, humiliation.

She continues jerking him; but the look on both their faces says it's futile. Tension; an embarrassed beat, then:

MARGENE (CONT'D)

It's not me, is it? Bill?

BILL

(vainly covering)

Of course not. I don't even think it's me. It's just the store, the stress.

MARGENE

(believes him)

Okay.

SOUND OF THE BABY CRYING more.

MARGENE (CONT'D)

Shoot. I was wrong. Must be Lester.

She rises; pulls a robe around her; leaves to attend Lester.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Bill in a lawn chair in his robe, alone by the pool. A gust of wind pushes an inflatable toy across the surface of the water... ON Bill's face: "What the heck's happening to me?"

The lonely CLANKING of a chain on a flag pole.

SOUND OF A DOOR as it squeaks open.

Bill's POV: Barb places a bag of garbage in the can outside her back door; she glances up; sees him with a start.

They share a strange moment of intimacy. She, not wanting to impose upon his time with Margene. He, embarrassed and ashamed. Barb glances up to see Margene gazing down from her bedroom window. Barb reenters her house.

INT. LIVING ROOM / BARB'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sarah sits at a table with milk and cookies. Barb enters. Sarah fingers a big, fresh floral bouquet on the table, looks to Barb:

SARAH

Why does he send flowers every Monday?

BARB

It started, you know, after Nicki. For reassurance, I guess. And it just stuck.

SARAH

That was thoughtful.

BARB

Your Dad can be a very thoughtful guy.

SARAH

Do you think he sends flowers to Nicki, now?

BARB

I don't know. I never asked.

OFF Barb, eyeing Sarah, eyeing Barb.

DESERT MUSIC rises again, teasing...

EXT. THE THREE HOUSES / LINDA VISTA LANE - NIGHT

The three houses. Lights going out in various room. Just another Indian Summer night in Suburbia.

WHOOSH OF SPRINKLERS...

INT. KITCHEN / BARB'S HOUSE - WEDNESDAY MORNING

BRIGHT SUN floods the room as Barb, Sarah, Ben and Teenie share a hurried breakfast.

TEENIE

(to Ben)

What's that stuff you keep taking?

SARAH

Steroids.

BEN

(spooning it into his OJ)
Protein powder.

TEENIE

(re: her oatmeal)

Mom, can I have some raisins?

SARAH

You can get them yourself.

As Teenie rises and reaches up for a box of raisins, her short jumper hikes up over her cotton panties.

BARB

(laughing)

Teenie-- what are you thinking?!

TEENIE

What?

BARB

You can't wear that jumper! You've completely-- it barely covers your rump. Go change; go on!

A KNOCK on the back door.

NICKI

Hello?

Nicki enters carrying Ray, followed by Wayne. A whiff of strain between Barb and Nicki.

NICKI (CONT'D)
 (pecks Barb's cheek)
 Morning. I forgot to get milk.

SARAH
 All we have's skim. Not my idea.

BARB
 Wayne! What a handsome shirt.

WAYNE
 It's Land's End.

BARB
 Sweetie, you still have all your
 tags and stickers on it--

SARAH
 (rinsing her bowl)
 Here comes Dad.

Her POV: Out the window, Bill proceeds quickly down the sidewalk in suit pants and white shirt, bare feet, holding his jacket and his socks; talking on his cell...

EXT. THE THREE HOUSES - SAME TIME

BILL
 Kara, hello. Don there? Thanks.

A beat. Bill glances at the houses across the street. We sense he's aware of neighbors; careful who's observing.

BILL (CONT'D)
 Hey, Don. A heads-up: the lawyers
 just called and can fit us in at
 eleven. Great. See you in a bit.

He snaps shut his cell and proceeds into...

INT. FRONT FOYER / BARB'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ben meets his father at the door as Bill enters:

BEN
 Hey, Dad. What's up?

BILL
 Hey, Benny boy.
 (kissing Barb)
 Are my black shoes upstairs?

BARB
Did you leave them here?

NICKI
(kisses Bill, whispers)
Can I talk to you for a sec?

BILL
(races up the stairs)
Nicki, I'm late--

BEN
(runs to meet his father)
Dad. Quick question?

BILL
(stops on the stairs)
Yeah?

BEN
I need another gun.

BILL
What's wrong with your shotgun?

TEENIE
(down the stairs)
Morning, Daddy.

BEN
A rifle.

BILL
(mussing Teenie's hair)
Mornin', Rat-head.
(to Ben)
A 22?

BEN
30 ought 6.
(off Bill's blanch)
You know, for big stuff. Deer, Elk.

ON Teenie, jumping from the bottom step to the foyer landing:

TEENIE
(re: her changed dress)
Mom!

Barb, quickly collecting her things in the foyer:

BARB
Turn around. Okay. Come on, out to
the car. Sarah?

SARAH
(to Barb)
I have to get my stuff.
(to Nicki)
Do you want the milk, or not?

NICKI
No. I like whole milk for the boys.

Sarah catches Nicki peering up at Bill; they share a look.
Barb, next to Nicki, looks up at Bill and Ben.

BEN
(down the stairs)
Thanks, Dad.

BARB
(to Ben)
What were you two talking about?

BEN
Mom, come on, we're late.

As Barb and Ben head out the door, Nicki's eyes flash with
opportunity: she quickly slips up the stairs...

INT. BARB'S BEDROOM / BARB'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Bill sits on the bed, quickly tying his shoes. Nicki enters:

NICKI
Did you get my message yesterday?

BILL
Hon. I gave you all I could spare.

NICKI
A hundred dollars...?
(a big grin)
Isn't there, like, at least \$500
more you could slip into my--?

BILL
No. It's tight until after the
store opens.

NICKI
Barb reupholstered all her chairs
when we moved in here.

BILL
Barb's been working.

NICKI
That's not fair. We're living
united order. Everything goes into
the common pot. You *know* that.

BILL
You don't need to redecorate, least
not right now.

NICKI
You were the one who said to, and I
told the lady at the store--

BILL
Nicki! How many times--? For god's
sake, you're the only one I gave a
personal checking account to.

NICKI
Don't yell at me--

BILL
I'm not 'yelling'-- Look, I gotta
go. I'll see what I can do.

NICKI
When?

BILL
(down the stairs)
I'll call you later.

NICKI
Promise--?

INT. FRONT FOYER / BARB'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As Bill hurries down the stairs and into the foyer -- ON
Sarah, hoping to have a word with him:

SARAH
Daddy--?

Bill ignores her as he rushes out the door.

OFF Sarah, watching him run off, hurt.

INT. KITCHEN / BARB'S HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

AROUND THE KITCHEN TABLE. Barb hands out photocopied pages to Nicki and Margene:

BARB

Alright. Next month. It's Nicki the 1st, Margie the 2nd, me the 3rd, Nicki the 4th, Margie the 5th and so on. Margie, your birthday's the 21st, which is mine, but I'll give you Bill for the night.

MARGENE

We could trade.

BARB

Oh, sweetie, that just makes it more confusing. You take him both nights; I don't mind.

NICKI

What about Wayne's birthday? He turns four on the 17th.

BARB

Oh my god, that's right. Four already. I can't believe it.

NICKI

He should be with his father on his Birthday.

BARB

Looks here like the 17th is family home evening anyway.

NICKI

I want Bill to be with Wayne at our house all night, though. You don't mind Margie, do you?

MARGENE

Oh no. I don't mind at all.

NICKI

Got a problem with it, Boss Lady?

MARGENE

I get him an extra night, anyway.

BARB

Whatever works for you two is fine.
 (hands out envelopes)
 Here's household cash. A little
 short again, but we'll manage.

Nicki arches her brow and lets out the tiniest of SCOFFS.
 Barb catches it:

BARB

What's that supposed to mean?
 (off Nicki's shrug)
 Nicki, if you've got something to
 say-- This isn't just about
 logistics. It's about the spirit of
 openness that makes us a family.

Wayne and Ray come running into the room SQUEALING in the
 midst of a game of hide and seek.

BARB (CONT'D)

Boys! We told you to play quiet.

NICKI

Wayne, take Ray into the other room
 and stick that "fish movie" in the
 VCR. I'll get you some sandwiches.

Wayne grabs Ray's hand and pulls him out of the kitchen.
 Barb stares at Nicki, still waiting for a response. Nicki
 crosses to the fridge and pulls out jars, starts to make P&J
 sandwiches.

BARB

Nicki?

NICKI

(with a smile)
 You don't mind me using up the last
 of your Skippy, do you, Boss Lady?
 Cause we're fresh out at our house.

OFF Barb: just giving up.

INT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICES - DAY

Bill, Don around a conference table with LEE HATCHER, 50s,
 Bill's lawyer, and a Young Paralegal. The office is chrome,
 modern. The Salt Lake City Skyline, framed in the window.

Lee presents a series of legal documents for Bill's
 signature; his finger pointing to each dotted line:

LEE

Here, as CEO of Henderson Home Plus One Corp., granting franchise and loan-out of trademarks and logos to Henderson Home Plus Two Corp.

Bill signs and Lee lays down another document:

LEE

Here, as sole shareholder of Home Plus Two, authorizing payment of the franchise fee to Home Plus One.
(Bill signs, then another)
Here, President of Home Plus One.

Bill's CELL PHONE RINGS, he grabs it from his jacket pocket:

BILL

Do you mind?

LEE

No. Sure. Just sign here, acknowledging receipt of \$100,000 franchise fee from Home Plus Two.

BILL

(overlapping, into cell)
Bill, here.

Bill blanches, surprised, as we hear, faintly, a WOMAN'S VOICE coming through his earpiece:

BILL

(overlapping the VOICE)
Wanda--?
(The VOICE continues uninterrupted as)
Excuse me for a sec here, fellas?

LEE

Sure. You need to sign this one, Don, as secretary treasurer.

EXT. SINCLAIR GAS STATION / BIG SANDY COMPOUND - DAY

LONG ON the gas station, a retro Sinclair sign lonely amidst the pared down desert landscape. In the phone booth right in front of the station a woman can be glimpsed. In the distance, "the compound": a collection of cabins, trailers, trucks, crap, piles of tires, etc.

WANDA (V.O.)
 Hey-- Hello-- Bill-- Are you still
 there? Don't you hang up on me--

INT. PHONE BOOTH / SINCLAIR STATION - CONTINUOUS

ON WANDA, late 20s, in the phone booth; she's showing about 7 months pregnant. There's something "off" about her, overwound; paranoid at the very least about making this call, she keeps looking over her shoulder to make sure no one's watching. Behind her, behind the counter inside, a plump, Homely Girl of 25 eats a candy bar and reads a pulp magazine.

WANDA
 I wouldn't call less this wasn't an
 emergency.

INT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICES - SAME TIME

Bill, utterly off balance, turning back to the men and waving off the importance of the call, then back into phone:

BILL
 How'd you get this number?

INTERCUT:

WANDA
 Nicki gave it to me.

BILL
 Joey in trouble again?

WANDA
 No, you're brother's fine, it's
 your Daddy, he's all sick-- 'N Joey
 don't know I'm calling you-- He'd
 kill me if he knew I was callin'
 you behind his back.

ON Lee who waves another document:

LEE
 Just this last one, Bill. Sorry,
 but we have another meeting.

Bill moves to the conference table; aware of Don's staring:

BILL
 (calm, covering)
 Uh-huh. I don't understand why Joey
 can't deal with this, you see?

LEE

Articles of Incorporation; Bylaws.

WANDA

Your mother doesn't want anyone else involved, you see?

BILL

That's just fine, but... Look. This is not a good time for me, alright? I can't talk right now, okay? I'm busy.

TIGHT ON Wanda:

WANDA

(a manic outburst)

Well I'm busy too! Joey and me are havin' another baby-- we're married now. I'm just trying to do right by your family. Your Mom's acting crazy. Joey doesn't know what to do. None of us are "allowed" to call you--

TIGHT ON Bill smiling up at Lee as if he weren't hearing this tirade as he quickly signs the document -- then he turns from the men and a hint of his own repressed anger bursts forth:

BILL

Then don't. Tell Joey to take some responsibility for a change. I don't have time for any of his crap and you can tell him I said that.

Bill snaps his cell phone shut and turns back to Lee as if nothing just happened.

LEE

Well. That's it. Congratulations!

BILL

Super.

OFF Bill's glazed, distracted eyes and forced smile.

EXT. PHILLIP'S DRAPERIES PARKING LOT - DAY

ON the parking lot as Nicki's car pulls in.

INT. NICKI'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nicki turns off the motor, removes a rubber-band from a wad of credit cards in her purse, then sorts through the cards. She considers each one; trying to remember available credit.

INT. PHILLIP'S DRAPERIES - MOMENTS LATER

Nicki at a small table in the Suburban-Chic showroom. EILEEN, the over-made-up proprietress, presents swags:

EILEEN

These are super-- machine washable.
(another)
And this new fiber? Unbelievable--
the sun can't fade it. Comes with a
ten-year guarantee. Are you
thinking traditional or swag or--?

NICKI

What do you think?
(holds up a snapshot)
This is the room. It's in East
Lake.

EILEEN

Hmm. How about color?

NICKI

I don't know. Would red be okay?

EILEEN

Yes. I can see red.
(flips to another book)
Here. Feel this one.

OFF Nicki: eyes lit up, entranced with her new living room...

INT. PHILLIP'S DRAPERIES - LATER

Nicki and Eileen at the counter. Eileen rings up the total:

EILEEN

\$3,176.47. With tax.

NICKI

(tenders her credit card)
What the heck. Right?

I/E. NICKI'S CAR / PHILLIP'S DRAPERIES PARKING LOT - DAY

Nicki places a few bags into the back seat. She climbs into the car. She sits for a moment. Blank faced. Very still.

Suddenly, she begins to weep. Uncontrollably. Then, just as suddenly she stops and shakes it off.

She wipes tears from her eyes. Takes a deep breath, then smiles brightly as if nothing had just happened.

INT. BILL'S OFFICE / HOME PLUS - DAY

Bill, alone in his office. He types at his computer.

CLOSE ON the Google Search Query: "MALE IMPOTENCE."

ALTERNATE BETWEEN random search results on the screen, and Bill's increasingly distressed reactions as he scrolls down: "PENILE IMPLANTS" "MALE INADEQUACY SUPPORT GROUPS" "AMBIGUOUS GENITALIA" "PENIS PUMPS"...

Bill, startled, as Don KNOCKS and sticks his head in:

DON

Bill? Sorry to bother you. Channel 9's here.

THE NEWS BROADCAST ON TV...

INT. BARB'S BEDROOM / BARB'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ON THE TV as a SHOWER RUNS in the bathroom, off: a blonde, chatty, spacey newswoman, REBECCA TILLMAN, 30s, speaks to the camera in front of Henderson Home Plus:

REBECCA (T.V.)

This new store brings 80 new jobs to the Wasatch Valley.

ON Barb laying on the bed watching the TV.

ON THE TV: A to-the-camera interview with THIRD EMPLOYEE, 50s, lacquered beehive, in a red "Home Plus" apron:

THIRD EMPLOYEE (T.V.)

I couldn't be happier. I was hired just a week before being laid off from my old job.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM / BARB'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

ON Bill showering: the cares of the world on his face.

INT. BARB'S BEDROOM / BARB'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rebecca in front of store finishing her stand-up:

REBECCA (T.V.)
 You'll just have to wait until
 Saturday though to check out the
 sales and prizes. This is Rebecca
 Tillman, Channel 9, KSLC news.

Bill steps from the bathroom in his pajamas.

His POV: Barb lays on the bed in panties and tight, strapped
 tee-shirt, she clicks off the TV; glances up at him:

BARB
 Nice piece on the-- Oh? Pajamas?

BILL
 Thought I'd try them. For a change.

She knows why he's trying them. She lets it fall, sensing
 he's not prepared to talk about "his problem." He sits.

ON her face, beneath her smile and nod: a bit of tension,
 disappointment, and the concern that's eating at all of the
 wives that it might be "just her." After a moment:

BARB
 Benny has his first girlfriend, so
 says Sarah. He blushed when I asked
 him if it were true.

BILL
 Barb, I want you to sign over your
 check to me when it comes so I can
 put it into the family account.
 (off her look)
 Just this once. We all need to pull
 together. Things'll be better once
 the store opens.

He lays down, aware of her stare:

BILL (CONT'D)
 Why are you looking at me like--?

BARB
 Because I resent it when you just
 tell me what to do and don't ask.
 Well, you know I do. And I resent
 it that Nicki put you up to this.

BILL
 Leave her out, this has nothing to
 do with Nicki.

BARB

If she could just-- Why can't she just ask me outright?

BILL

We need the money is all. Do what I'm asking, will you?

BARB

You mean, do as you say?

BILL

Yes.

BARB

(after a beat)

Are you wearing pajamas to bed every night? Or just on ours?

OFF Bill: hurt, confused.

I/E. BRYNN'S CAR / LINDA VISTA LANE - NIGHT

BRYNN, 17, a frizzy haired girl, almost pretty, sorta raunchy, pulls to a stop. Ben, in his varsity letterman's jacket, is her passenger.

She reaches over; rubs the raised felt letter of the jacket; slips her fingers inside and pops its buttons one by one:

BEN

What are you doing?

BRYNN

Nothin' much.

She pinches his nipple through his shirt. He shuts his eyes and leans his head back while she massages his nipple:

BRYNN (CONT'D)

(off his MOAN)

Hurt?

He shakes his head no. She brings her other hand to his chest and now pinches both nipples -- harder. He WHIMPERS and nods, arching his back:

BEN

Whoa.

BRYNN

I never even noticed you last year.

BEN
How do you know how to do all this?

BRYNN
From my Mom.

BEN
(in eye-closed ecstasy)
You're really messing me up. I
better go in.

BRYNN
Wait, Ben. There's a concert thing
Saturday night. "Straight Edge,"
you know, skin heads. Wanna go?

BEN
We do family home evening on
Saturdays. Wish I could.

She leans in closer: and gives him a deep, full tongued kiss.

INT. BARB'S BEDROOM / BARB'S HOUSE - NIGHT

PHONE RINGING in the darkness. Bill turns his lamp on,
groggy, fumbling for it:

BILL
Hello? Joey?
(half-beat)
It's the middle of the night. I
thought I made it clear to you, you
were not in my life any more.

ON Barb, turning on her lamp, surprised at "Joey."

EXT. PHONE BOOTH / SINCLAIR STATION - NIGHT

JOEY, 34, beat up by life; nervous, now, in the phone booth.

Again in the b.g. Homely Girl on the stool behind the counter
of the station. In the eerie florescent light, she reaches
into the bin of a popcorn vending machine, eating handfuls of
stale popcorn as she reads the same pulp magazine.

JOEY
I know. It's Dad. He's really sick.
I don't know if he's gonna make it.
It's not the emphysema. Mom's like
in denial or something. Look, I
wouldn't call if it wasn't bad.
This isn't how I'd get back in
touch with you, you know?

BILL (O.C.)
What's wrong with him?

JOEY
He's throwing up blood. Right now
he's like in a coma or something.
He's been in a lot of pain, too. He
needs a doctor.
(off Bill's silence)
Mom won't listen-- I thought maybe
to you-- she would.

INTERCUT:

ON Bill's face: tortured by the family conflict.

JOEY (CONT'D)
Bill?
(after a beat)
It's really bad.

BILL
Jesus. Alright. Fine. I'll come up
in the morning. Sometime after 10.

ON Barb: now concerned.

BILL (CONT'D)
(as he hangs up)
Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

BARB
Joey?

BILL
Dad's sick.

BARB
What's wrong with him?

Bill shakes his head "I don't know."

BILL
Mom won't take him to a doctor. The
usual.

She SIGHS, then rubs Bill's arm for support. A beat, then:

BARB
It was nice while it lasted. I knew
it couldn't last forever.
(wistful)
Well. Maybe he'll just drop dead.

BILL

Yeah, right. (half-beat) Do you have a class tomorrow?

BARB

Oh, Bill, no. When we swore we'd never go back out there, I really meant it. I can't. I just can't do it.

She shuts off her lamp.

BILL

I so do not have time for this.

He turns off his lamp. In the TOTAL DARKNESS, Bill's eyes flashing. His breathing quickens.

BARB

Are you alright?

BILL

Yeah. Yeah. Fine.

INT. FRONT FOYER / BARB'S HOUSE - LATE THURSDAY MORNING

BRIGHT SUN on Barb and Sarah; Barb checks her purse and a small shopping bag for a day trip:

BARB

The abuse, the seediness, Sarah. Old men preying on young girls. "Prophets" my ass. Con-artists, all of them, I swear--

SARAH

Then why are you going with him?

Barb's POV: Nicki and Bill at the Suburban putting their things into the car, both of the car's front doors open.

BARB

Because he needs me. Your father's got too much on his plate already. Now this. *And* your Uncle Joey to boot. I can't let him go alone. With Nicki? All the emotional demands she makes on him. Oh god, you know how she upsets him.

Sarah's POV: Margene stands on the lawn nearby. Nicki's Wayne and Ray as well as Lester and Aaron with her.

SARAH

Why isn't she taking the kids?

BARB

I don't know what's going on with her. And Margene's afraid Nicki's jealous of her-- She's doing everything she can to pamper and please her. See if you can help her out with everything after you get off work.

SARAH

Why can't we just get a baby-sitter, like everyone else?

BARB

Because we're not everyone else.

EXT. BILL'S SUBURBAN / BARB'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bill returns into the house for a last minute item as Barb kisses Sarah then approaches Nicki. Tight smiles.

NICKI

Barb, you know, don't take this the wrong way--

BARB

Nicki, please, let's not get into anything unpleasant.

NICKI

I'm just saying you don't *have* to come. The fact is, you can make it so uncomfortable. It's crystal clear you don't like anyone up there. You don't try to fit in at all. You just scowl and make it hard on everybody else.

Bill returns and opens the back right passenger door.

NICKI

(territorially, to Bill)
Everything'll be fine once we get there.

ON Barb: irked by Nicki's solicitousness with Bill, she turns and climbs into the front passenger seat.

ON Nicki: irked at Barb's nerve, unilaterally commandeering the front seat and relegating her to the back.

EXT. BARB'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

ON Margene and Sarah on the lawn; kids all over them; running around them.

MARGENE

Have you noticed more tension
between them, lately?

SARAH

Regular. Just Mom and Nicki.

MARGENE

She's been saying "Boss Lady" an
awful lot.

SARAH

I think it's supposed to be light-
hearted.

MARGENE

Want to go to a movie this weekend?
You and me? I could use a night
out; Nicki or your mom could watch
the kids, maybe. I have your father
Sunday, the store opens Saturday,
but how about Friday?

SARAH

Okay. Maybe.

INT. BILL'S SUBURBAN - CONTINUOUS

Bill pulls on a pair of Oakley sunglasses as they pass a
house on the corner.

BARB

(to Bill, claiming her
territory now)

Have you noticed how pretty those
roses are?

NICKI

I think what we need's some music.

Nicki, asserting herself, leans forward over the seat and
pops a CD in the player.

ON Barb: aware Nicki's trying to trump her.

LYNN ANDERSON'S "TOP OF THE WORLD" kicks in.

OFF Bill: aware of the friction, as he accelerates.

I/E. BILL'S SUBURBAN / UTAH ROADS - DAY

LYNN ANDERSON takes us out of Suburbia; into Salt Lake City.

ON the women's faces in the car: their concerns.

TRAVELLING the Interstate. GORGEOUS UTAH SCENERY: steep red-rock canyons, narrow gorges, emptying onto flat desert floor. EXITING onto a two-lane country road.

ON Bill: approaching home, feeling vulnerable, masking fear.

LYNN ANDERSON fading out and that mysterious *DESERT MUSIC* rising up again, ominous and seductive... TURNING at the Sinclair Gas Station: proceeding slowly down a gravel road.

INT. BILL'S SUBURBAN / BIG SANDY COMPOUND - DAY

Sense of entering another world. Like going back in time: Ahead, the compound in mesquite and sage. The trailers and huge propane tanks, derelict cabins, some larger houses and what seems like hundreds of abandoned cars and trucks. A portrait of rural isolation, squalor and loneliness.

Women, with long hair, many in dowdy long dresses, gawking, line the road: suspicious, curious.

The otherness of these slightly old-fashioned, drably-garbed Women; this rural dystopia as the car slowly pulls in.

ON a Woman peering into the car as it passes; then waving at Nicki when she recognizes her; and Nicki waving back.

INT. KITCHEN / LOIS' CABIN - DAY

LOIS, 58, peers out the window of her trailer-cum-cabin: a woman who's seen a lot of road-wear and it all shows on her face. A bruise, almost healed mars her cheek; Her POV: Bill's Suburban rolling in.

EXT. FRONT PORCH / LOIS' CABIN - SAME TIME

The Suburban pulls up in front. Bill and his two wives climb out -- their clothes marking them as exiles from a strange, distant world. Women and Children peer out at them.

ON THE PORCH, Lois, in a timeless pants-suit, comes bustling out. Her hair falls half limply and half in floppy ringlets; her flightiness covers her nerves and her secrets:

LOIS

Well, well, well. There you are!
Look, I tried to do my hair but it
didn't have time to take.

BILL

Mom--

LOIS

(embraces Bill tightly)
Oooof. Barb. Sarah wrote me such a
nice letter last month. Did you
bring the children?
(back on Bill)
Well. Just look at you!

BARB

They have school, Lois.

LOIS

Of course they do, Barb. Look at
that windshield. How can you see
out of it? I'll wash it.

BILL

(glancing around what
passes for the "yard")
Where's Gumbo?

LOIS

(oddly, covering)
He's around. I don't know where he
went to. Chasing rabbits. Oh you
are such a sight for sore eyes.

BILL

Where's Dad?

LOIS

Inside.

BILL

Joey says he's sick.

LOIS

He is. How are you, Nicki? I
haven't seen you in a while either.

FOLLOWING them into...

INT. LIVING ROOM / LOIS' CABIN - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE: On FRANK, 62, a man with a definite mean-streak--laying on the floor beside the sofa. He looks bad: craggy, wind-burnt skin, oily, matted salt and pepper hair, a three-day stubble. He peers, frightened, delirious, at the visitors; His POV: Lois leading the trio away from him:

LOIS

He's better today. He's going to be fine. I don't know why everyone's so up in arms--

A LOUD MOAN from Frank turns everyone's attention to him.

Bill, slack-jawed, takes in just how sick his father is:

BILL

Dad--? Jesus--

Bill kneels beside his father; Frank gazes up at him with imploring eyes:

FRANK

(whispers)
Please. Don't let me die.

ON Lois, with Barb and Nicki, watching from a few feet off:

LOIS

He fell off the sofa. I couldn't lift him back.

BILL

(to Lois)
Where's Joey?

LOIS

He and Wanda got their own place. Next to the Walkers. Don't you lay into him, and I mean it. Barbara. You look thin. Are you thin?

Frank's breathing devolves into a PHLEGMY GURGLE, then a RACKING COUGH. Bill pulls Kleenex from a box; dabs his lips.

LOIS

I put sheets on the beds in Bill's old room and out back. You can work out your own sleeping arrangements.

BARB

We're not staying the night, Lois.

BILL

He's gotta get to a doctor.

LOIS

No. Remember that time he got his fingers caught in the fan? You said doctors: and he was fine.

BILL

He needed 23 stitches! Jesus, he's bleeding internally.

LOIS

No, no doctors! They only draw attention to us.

BILL

We see one in the City. It's only an hour from here. He's discrete and sympathetic, at Park Memorial. Mom, this is insane--

LOIS

Not a hospital! Once you go in, you never get out. Tests and more tests and finding new problems. No. Absolutely not. And I mean it!

A look of fear in her eyes. She turns and shuffles off.

JOEY (O.C.)

Bill.

IN THE DOORWAY, Joey gazes at Bill; Wanda holds Joey's hand, beside him, supporting her husband.

OFF Bill seeing his estranged brother.

INT. BURGER HEAVEN - DAY

ON Sarah, orange and brown work uniform, in the back of the downtown SLC fast food joint she works in. She holds a burger wrapped in foil in one hand, punches her time card with the other, then proceeds out a back door into an alley.

EXT. BACK ALLEY / BURGER HEAVEN - CONTINUOUS

She joins three other fair-haired Mormon teens, coworkers, on break, seated at a table, DONNA, JORDAN and HEATHER, all in orange and brown uniforms. She slides in next to Jordan:

SARAH

Mr. Woodcock says you guys have two more minutes.

JORDAN

Man, that name.

HEATHER

Who's closing tonight?

SARAH

I am.

(pointing to Donna's soda)
Diet or regular?

DONNA

Regular.

SARAH

Sip?

Donna indicates yes: Sarah sips. Jordan, eating fries, applies ketchup from packets on each fry individually, then pops them into her mouth. She eyes a clean-cut blonde family, Mother, Father, Four Children, proceeding into the drive in:

JORDAN

(deadpan, understated)
"We're the Mormon Congregation.
That should be an indication.
Heaven is our destination. Yea."

She pops a fry into her mouth.

DONNA

(rattling ice in her cup)
I was out with my boyfriend last night. We were at like first base heading to second and he goes--
"What's that smell?"
(half-beat)
It was me. Like a big vat of fries.

SARAH

Don't you hate it?

DONNA

Hello?

JORDAN

So did ya do second?
(off Donna's nod)
Third?

(MORE)

JORDAN (CONT'D)
 (off Donna's nod)
 How third?

DONNA
 I let him finger me.

SARAH
 (eating her burger)
 Donna, gross!

Heather gives Donna a reproachful look:

DONNA
 What?

JORDAN
 (the same throwaway irony)
 "We can wait. We can wait. We can
 wait to procreate. Til
 aaaafffffter marriage. Yea."

HEATHER
 Do you have a boyfriend, Sarah?

SARAH
 Uh-uh.

HEATHER
 What's your position on chastity?

SARAH
 Who wants to get pregnant or an STD
 or something? I don't think it's
 such a bad idea to get past your
 hormones and not screw every penis
 that will allow you to mount it.

The girls break into surprised LAUGHTER. Mr. Woodcock, the
 Manager, inside, RAPS on the window and points to his watch.

DONNA
 Back to the grease pit.

Heather, Jordan and Donna file back inside.

As Sarah eats she glances up and sees Heather, now inside,
 staring out at her with interest.

INT. BILL'S SUBURBAN / LOIS' CABIN - DUSK

Bill and Joey confer. Strained as they are with what's not
 able to be said yet, they're happy to have the current crisis
 to avoid their own issues.

BILL

We just have to overrule her.

JOEY

She doesn't leave him for a second--

Their POV: Lois sits on her porch gazing out over the property...

JOEY (CONT'D)

--she won't let any of the other wives near him.

ON several Wives standing on the perimeter of the property, gazing at the cabin, frightened by Lois staring them down.

BILL

"And I mean it"-- It's like a nervous tic. At the end of half her sentences. "And I mean it." This is crazy, her fears, her childishness. I have a store to open. I can't hang around here trying to convince her to join the 21st century.

JOEY

She opens the station tomorrow.

BILL

I say we just take him in then, whether she likes it or not.
(half-beat)
God. Nothing here's changed a bit.

OFF Lois, peering at Bill and Joey in the car: a hint of anxiety, extreme curiosity on her weathered face.

INT. KITCHEN / MARGENE'S HOUSE - DUSK

Margene and her SQUEALING INFANTS Aaron and Lester; Lester fusses in his crib while Margene changes Aaron's diaper on the kitchen table. Plus Nicki's two, Ray and Wayne. Wayne sits at the table with a jar of Best Food's Mayonnaise, spoons it into his mouth. Ray, little tee shirt, no bottoms, wee-wees on the floor in dribbles. Margene, a mess trying to care for and occupy them all, races to the peeing toddler:

MARGENE

Ray, no!

She startles Wayne, he drops the mayo jar -- it cracks open.

RAY CRIES. PHONE RINGS...

INT. LIVING ROOM / LOIS' CABIN - DUSK

In the b.g. Bill on his cell. And Barb on hers:

BARB

Hi, Margie. It's Barb. How's everything going?

BILL

(overlapping, into cell)
Well he's got to get the whole system up and running by tomorrow so we can test it.

BARB

That's good to hear.

ON Frank, on the sofa, as Lois, in a chair beside him, lifts a spoonful of steaming soup to his lips:

LOIS

(stern and private)
Frank. Frank.

He MOANS, shaking his head "no."

LOIS

Yes.

She ignores him, prodding the spoon. He WHIMPERS as it burns his tongue. He spits it down his front; glares at her. She glowers back.

BARB

Things are a bit up in the air here. Looks like we'll be staying over for the night-- I didn't hear you. Who's that crying?

Nicki enters from the kitchen, where Wanda is washing dishes:

NICKI

Is that Margene? Tell her Wayne needs to be in bed by eight or she'll be up all night.

BARB

(hand over the cell)
I don't want to overwhelm her--

NICKI

Fine! I'm just trying to help!

Bill continues overlapping into his cell as he notes the exchange and watches Nicki storm outside:

BILL

Tell him it's unacceptable. No way,
we can't open without a test run.

Bill's POV: THROUGH THE WINDOW, Nicki pacing; then ON Wanda in the kitchen, washing dishes, thumping a small B&W TV on the counter, which gets no reception, just makes static.

BARB

Margie, you're breaking up, but
just make sure Sarah helps you. Ben
or Teenie can watch Wayne and
Raymond, and Nicki says Wayne needs
to be in bed by eight or you'll
have hell to pay.

(half-beat)

Honey? You sure you're alright?

BACK IN MARGIE'S KITCHEN, Bedlam. Margene trying to clean wee-wee and mayo, stop Ray from crying. Lester also cries in her arms and Wayne now runs back and forth in a manic pattern:

MARGENE

Barb, I can't hear you, say it
again-- Barb?

BACK IN LOIS' CABIN, Lois lifts another spoonful of soup, blows lightly on it:

LOIS

(with determination)

Here.

BARB (O.C.)

I said we should be back tomorrow
afternoon.

Frank MOANS: this burns his tongue, too. And sets off a COUGHING SPELL.

ON Barb as she steps a few feet off to get away from FRANK COUGHING and WANDA THUMPING ON THE HISSING TV; Bill hangs up:

BILL

Damn. Excuse me, but damn it to H.

NICKI

(reenters, to Bill)

I'm going up the road to see my folks. I'll stay there tonight. But you better come see my Father.

BILL

Nicki, my hands are full here.

BARB

So you'll be okay, sweetie?

ON Margene: beleaguered, trying to keep it under control; she can't, but doesn't want Barb to know that:

MARGENE

We'll be fine, we'll be okay.
Everything's under control.

ON Nicki: leading Bill out the door trying to calm and claim him as Barb watches on.

BARB

Call me if you need anything, you hear me? Bye, bye.

Barb hangs up. Peers out the window.

Her POV: Nicki kisses Bill then walks off; other Wives gazing in from the perimeter of the property.

Inside, FRANK COUGHING; LOIS "COMFORTING"; WANDA THUMPING...

OFF Barb's face: the whole, entire yuck.

EXT. BIG SANDY COMPOUND - LATER THAT NIGHT

SOUND OF SEVERAL VEHICLES APPROACHING...

A motorcade, a Hummer between two other substantial pickups -- proceeds toward Lois' cabin, bouncing over the rutted road.

INT. HUMMER - NIGHT

In the back, ELDER RHULON GRANT, 72, in a short sleeved white poly dress shirt and black slacks. Beside him, RHONDA, 14, well-developed, lingering baby fat, mullet, cut-off jeans and long tee-shirt. ALBY, 40s, one of Rhulon's sons in a cowboy hat, rides front passenger; a Pimple-faced Teen drives.

THROUGH THE TINTED WINDOW, over the sage, the headlights bouncing over the rutted road pick out Lois' cabin, ahead.

ON Rhulon's watery eyes, keenly thinking; HIS POV: The cabin. Bill stepping out onto the porch. Rhonda COUGHS twice.

RHULON
 (with a proprietary
 devotion)
 Are you alright, Rhonda?

Rhonda nods, then ON their hands, their fingers entwined.

EXT. FRONT PORCH / LOIS' CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The caravan stops. Several men step from the pickups, but remain ominously by their trucks. Rhonda, Rhulon and Alby climb from the Hummer as Bill steps forward to greet them.

RHULON
 Well, well, well.

BILL
 Hello, Rhulon. Alby.

RHULON
 Look at this. Look who's here.
 Sister Lois.

Lois doesn't think much of Rhulon, but even she's respectful and a bit afraid of him. She nods to him.

RHULON (CONT'D)
 Frank still feeling poorly? Here.
 (hands Lois a pitcher)
 Harleen sent over another batch of
 this stuff. Tell him to drink it.
 Tell him I said so.
 (to Bill)
 Ever my job to minister to my
 people.

LOIS
 Thank you, Rhulon. Come on inside,
 Sister Rhonda. I got some mint tea
 on the stove.

Bill nods as Rhonda follows Lois into the cabin. Rhulon fixes his gaze at Bill:

RHULON
 Well, look at you. Looks good,
 don't he, Alby?

ALBY
 Yes he does, Papa. Yes he does.

RHULON

We've missed you up here, Bill.
We've had some tremendous growth.
4,000 attended Sacrament last week.
Did you know, we even hired a P.R.
firm? Since the Olympics. A "P.R.
firm"! Can you beat that?!

BILL

You know, Rhulon, I've been so busy
with the store.

RHULON

(first whiff of harshness)
I appreciate that. Of course we
hear things through Nicki. And I
appreciate you sending me those--
what do you call those papers?

BILL

K-1's.

RHULON

K-1's. Right. But seeing tax
statements can't substitute for
seeing family members in the flesh,
can it, Alby?

(off Alby's "no")

I've called you several times.
Five, six. How many times, Alby?

ALBY

Eight, Papa.

RHULON

Eight?!

(half-beat)

You're opening another store, I
understand?

BILL

Very soon, Rhulon.

(off Rhulon's "don't shit
on me" stare)

You remember Lee-- he incorporated
us five years ago? He sent out all
the papers to you yesterday. We're
a little late filing, but it's
squared away now.

Rhulon holds his stare; then steps in and slaps Bill's back:

RHULON
Well, I'm glad to hear it. Mighty
glad. So we've got no problems?

BILL
Totally squared away.

OFF Rhulon's oily CHUCKLE.

INT. BILL'S OLD ROOM / LOIS' CABIN - NIGHT

Barb, on the bed, thinking. She glances up: Rhonda stands in the door. One senses she has been silently studying Barb for several moments...

RHONDA
Did Sarah come, too?

BARB
No, Rhonda, she couldn't.

RHONDA
Why?

BARB
She has school.

RHONDA
Oh.
(then)
You can't have any more babies.

BARB
No, honey. I had a hysterectomy.
(off Rhonda's blank stare)
I had cancer. Six years ago.

Rhonda takes this in, then slips a taboo tube of lipstick from her pocket, brazenly puts some on her lips:

RHONDA
I'm married to the Prophet now.

Barb tries to find something encouraging to say, but can't. Rhonda, sensing disapproval, quickly turns and disappears.

OFF the frustration, compassion and rage on Barb's face.

FADE TO:

INT. FOOD COURT / GATEWAY MALL - FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Sarah and "new friend" Heather with Diet Cokes at the Cashier.

HEATHER
 Together.
 (to Sarah)
 I'll get it.

SARAH
 Thanks.

The Cashier smiles at Heather as she pays; Heather looks at her name tag: "Katie":

HEATHER
 Thank you, Katie.

INT. TOWER RECORDS / GATEWAY MALL - MOMENTS LATER

PAN STORE WINDOW: CD displays for SEAL, OUTKAST, THE MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR.

HEATHER (O.C.)
 What kind of music are you into?

ON Sarah and Heather gazing at the window.

SARAH
 Lot's of stuff. I like Jazz. I like Linkin Park.

Heather smiles and shrugs, then:

HEATHER
 I like Bobby McFerrin.

Heather catches her reflection in the glass and tugs her short skirt up higher.

They start walking THE BUSY MALL.

HEATHER
 When I'm 21, I want to do a Mission. I've decided I want to go to an Islamic country. My Dad's against it, but I think post 9/11, that part of the world needs our help the most, don't you?

SARAH
 I think the whole world needs help.

HEATHER

See. That's what I like about you, Sarah. You're so thoughtful. You're not boy-crazy or all screwed up.

(half-beat)

You don't talk about family much.

SARAH

Not much to talk about. They're just average.

HEATHER

Are they involved in Church activities?

SARAH

They used to be. They're pretty busy now. My Dad's a businessman and my Mom's a teacher. Substitute. She's taking classes to be full time accredited.

HEATHER

What about you? Are you in Young Women's? Mia Maids or Laurels?

(Sarah shakes her head)

What ward are you in?

SARAH

Fourteenth. But I'm not really into the Church. I mean, I think they're right-- their take on morals and honesty. But I think they spend too much time trying to convince everyone else they're the one true religion -- like underneath they kinda doubt it themselves.

An awkward beat.

HEATHER

No, I know what you mean.

(then)

Hey, you know what? Why don't you give me your phone number? I can call you next week. We can hang out some more.

SARAH

Okay.

(half-beat)

So, what do your parents do?

HEATHER

Mother's a homemaker. She served as
YW counselor in our old ward.
She's pretty active in Relief
Society. She's great.
(sips her Diet Coke)
Dad's a State Trooper.

OFF Sarah's nod: In her eyes, a tiny hint of trepidation.

INT. BILL'S SUBURBAN / INTERSTATE 15 - DAY

Bill and Joey speeding down I-15 at 85, silent, with Frank
very, very sick in the back seat. Joey looks back when his
father MOANS, tries to comfort him, then turns back:

JOEY

Did Mom tell you, he killed Gumbo?
Just came by and shot him. For no
good reason. I helped her bury him.
She actually cried.

A moment of strained silence.

JOEY (CONT'D)

Are we gonna talk or what?

BILL

(after considering this)
So what are you up to now?

JOEY

Wanda and me are doin' okay. I'm
diggin' a couple ponds. Gonna try
out fish farming.

BILL

Sounds promising.

JOEY

Look, Bill, I'm sorry, okay? I
messed up. But I'm okay, now. I'm
clean.

BILL

Why'd you move back to the
compound? Why?

JOEY

It's not like I had many choices.

BILL

All we wanted to do as kids was get the heck out. You were such a great athlete. Scholarships. BYU. Benny still has your Cowboys poster up on his wall. I don't understand how you could throw it all away.

JOEY

The doctors don't tell you when they give you the painkillers-- You just think the injuries don't hurt-- You say, hey, I feel great. *Really* great. Next thing you know, you're an addict.

BILL

It wasn't the doctors or the owners or the NFL that started knocking off pharmacies. They didn't clean me out, rob me blind.

JOEY

You're not the only one I'm askin' for forgiveness.

Joey gazes out the window at the landscape, then ruefully:

JOEY (CONT'D)

All the time, growing up, we were told we how superior we were to everybody, to the outside world.

BILL

Maybe you believed it. You were the golden boy. I just got tired of all the hiding. All the lies. I really did wash my hands of you, you know?

They both fall silent, staring at the highway ahead.

OFF Joey's eyes, turned away, flashing...

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

The Suburban at the Emergency Room entrance. Bill and Joey with Frank as Two Attendants wheel him in on a gurney.

INT. ER / HOSPITAL - DAY

Joey and Bill crowd the small cubical as DR. MCDUGAL examines Frank with some alarm. He checks Frank's fingernails, then to a Nurse:

DR. MCDUGAL
We need a toxicology.

EXT. RHULON'S HOUSE - DAY

A very nice, upscale split level home built into the desert; the Hummer out front. Sisterwives work in a nearby vegetable garden.

INT. LIVING ROOM / RHULON'S HOUSE - DAY

Rhulon at a messy desk in the front room slitting open mail with a letter opener; his shifty, beady eyes.

NICKI (O.C.)
It's gorgeous, Mama.

THROUGH THE KITCHEN DOOR, Nicki handling a Lladro sculpture as her mother, JANET, 50 -- sits at the table shelling peas.

INT. KITCHEN / RHULON'S HOUSE - DAY

ON the ugly figurine in Nicki's hand. Then ON Janet smiling:

JANET
For my birthday. Sisterwives
chipped in and got it for me. I
guess everyone knows how much I
love Lladro.

Nicki admires a shelf of five other Lladro figurines above the kitchen sink. THROUGH THE WINDOW, Sisterwives LAUGHING and working in the vegetable garden:

NICKI
They're so beautiful.

JANET
Why don't you take a couple?

Nicki shrugs, joins her mother at the table. A beat, then:

JANET (CONT'D)
What's going on?
(then)
You know you can't fool me.

MARLA, late 20s, a Sisterwife and her Little Girl come into the kitchen, open the fridge.

JANET (CONT'D)
Cold one's on top.

Marla gets a 12-pack carton of Mountain Dew from the fridge, mouths a silent "thank you" to Janet, returns outside.

JANET (CONT'D)

Is it Bill?
(off Nicki's "no")
What then?

NICKI

It's just so hard being second-wife. I can't shake it since Bill took Margene. I feel...

JANET

Down in the dumps? Low self-esteem? Honey, it's normal to feel that way. Happens all the time. It passes. You have to work at it, but it passes.

Nicki suppresses tears. Janet holds her, comforts her.

A trio of Sisterwives pass through the kitchen on their way to another room of the house, in the midst of a whispering conversation, barely taking notice of Nicki and her mom.

NICKI

It's like, down there, I'm the odd one out. They don't know what they're doing. Margene-- she doesn't even know what she is. And everything's so-- superficial. Fixing up your house. Your cars. I miss the sense of community up here. Working together. Down there, you don't know what it is you're supposed to do.

THROUGH THE WINDOW, Sisterwives taking a soda break.

NICKI (CONT'D)

I just like it here. I hate going back.

JANET

Nicki. You're married. To a good man. You have to accept the life God chose for you. Happiness can never come to a divided heart.

OFF Nicki, struggling, wishing it were that easy, admiring a happy, idealized Lladro figurine on the table.

EXT. LOIS' SEDAN / HOSPITAL - DAY

Lois drives an old White Sedan into the parking lot. Barb rides with her in silence. They climb from the car and step toward the hospital entrance. Lois suddenly stops.

Her POV: A security system and metal detector in the lobby.

She turns back to the car, opens the door, annoyed.

Barb's POV: Lois fumbling with stuff in her large bag. Then:

BARB

Lois?

Lois fishes a small pistol from her bag and pitches it into the glove compartment.

OFF Barb's face: speechless.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM / HOSPITAL - DAY

ON Bill, curtain pulled behind him, staring at his father.

His POV: Frank, unconscious, lies in a bed hooked up to IVs and monitors. Nurse plunges a hypodermic in Frank's stomach.

ON Bill's face: torn with unbidden feelings of compassion.

Lois sweeps the curtain aside, Barb following, then GASPS when she sees the Nurse:

LOIS

What are you doing to him? Stop!
 (off Bill's "Mom--")
 You, how dare you defy me!

ON Bill, throwing a "how could you tell her?" scowl to Barb.

LOIS (CONT'D)

I have some rights. You can't treat me like an old useless car ready to be scrapped. I'm taking him home!

BILL

Mom, no! He's really sick.
 (Lois shakes head "no")
 Yes. He has arsenic poisoning.

LOIS

Oh, Frank. Frank, I'm gonna get you out of here. I want him out of here.

(MORE)

LOIS (CONT'D)
 (panic setting in)
 I want him back home and I mean it--

Bill grabs her and puts her in a chair:

BILL
 Listen to me: he's full of arsenic,
 he's got to stay.

LOIS
 "Arsenic...?"

BILL
 The hospital's supposed to report
 it to the State, to the poison
 control center to investigate--
 (Lois GASPS)
 Our doctor's agreed not to, but Dad
 has to stay here and be treated.

LOIS
 Oh, dear Lord.

BILL
 Do you know if he was around any
 pesticides? Have there been any
 feuds going on, with wives or other
 clan stuff I should know about--?

Lois, hand cupped over her mouth in distress, reaches out and
 grabs Bill's hand.

Bill looks into her eyes; moved. She holds his gaze for a
 moment; then shyly, almost furtively, looks away.

INT. GYM / HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

ON a hand written sign taped to the door to the gym: "Health
 Lecture: Boys Only!"

BISHOP (O.C.)
 It's like you have this little
 factory inside you, Boys.

ON Ben sitting in the bleachers next to Jason Embry, amid 20
 other young male students. In front of them, Three Middle-
 aged Men sit facing them in folding chairs while a fourth, a
 MORMON BISHOP with a plastic name tag, addresses the boys:

BISHOP (CONT'D)
 And as you move closer to manhood,
 this little factory produces an
 abundance of the substance of
 creation.

(MORE)

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Now, the Lord's provided a way for release that requires no help from you. Perhaps, one night you may have a dream...

MOVING IN ON Ben and Jason's rapt faces.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

And during the dream the safety valve of your factory will open up, releasing your excess energy. The Lord intended that, it's part of becoming a man. But don't tamper with God's factory, Boys. Don't open your own release valve. This you must not do, for if you do, your factory will speed up. And you'll be tempted again and again to release the substance of creation. And this habit will leave you depressed and guilty of sin.

OFF Ben and Jason as they share a sideways glance -- both of them confused and a little scared.

INT. BILL'S SUBURBAN / INTERSTATE 15 - DAY

Bill, troubled, driving Barb back down to the City.

BARB

What a nightmare. Little Rhonda married off to Rhulon. What is she? His 11th wife? 12th? And Joey, with Wanda, trying to stay clean in the middle of that craziness--

BILL

Barb, I wish-- I wish for once you'd just leave them be.

BARB

Oh. I was under the impression we felt the same way about it all.

BILL

We do. But I wish you'd lay off and quit picking at them. They're not us, we're not them, okay--? Can't we leave it at that? And damn it, I want you to give me that check. It's not like I'm asking for the goddamn Grand Canyon. Jesus!

OFF Barb: indignant and stung by his tone.

EXT. BILL'S SUBURBAN / BARB'S HOUSE - LATER

Bill pulls up to the curb. Barb opens the door and steps out.

BILL
I gotta go by the store.

She nods, still hurt, gets out, goes up to the front door.

Bill's POV: Barb, turning back, recrimination in her eyes.

OFF Bill: sorry for having snapped, frustrated and contrite.

INT. BILL'S OFFICE / HOME PLUS - NIGHT

Bill, preoccupied, sitting at his computer, deep in thought.

CLOSE ON the Google Search Query: "ARSENIC POISONING"

INT. FRONT OFFICE / SINCLAIR STATION - NIGHT

The PHONE RINGS...

Lois, replacing a very old sticky yellow fly-strip hanging from the ceiling with a fresh one, climbs down to pick it up:

LOIS
Henderson Sinclair.

INTERCUT:

BILL
(now on the phone)
Mom. I wasn't sure you'd be there.
You got back okay?

LOIS
I'm not incompetent.

BILL
So, listen. Do you have any idea,
any idea at all about how Dad--?

LOIS
I'm putting in a new water tank and
having the hand pump tested.
(then disgusted)
Oh, I don't know. But there's
something I want to say to you.
(a DING DING as a car
pulls up to a pump)
We're sealed as family for
eternity.

(MORE)

LOIS (CONT'D)

You can't just waltz in and out whenever it suits you. Who knows when your brother'll have a spell and go off the deep end again.

ON Bill, frustrated, receiving his mother's fusillade.

LOIS (CONT'D)

No one is going to care for you like family. You learn that now or one day you'll regret it. Remember where you're from. You remember who you are. I got a car out front.

She abruptly hangs up.

OFF Bill: a million thoughts resonating in his head.

EXT. SINCLAIR GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

LONG: The Hopperesque gas station lit up in the darkness as Lois exits the office for the car at the pump.

ON Lois at the window of the car, full of TEEN tourists:

TEEN

We're lost.

LOIS

We don't sell any maps here.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

ON Barb's face, as the light from the lit-up water in the pool refracts and shimmers on her skin.

Another ANGLE: Barb, holding a skimming tool, cleaning the pool, still troubled, hurt by her earlier spat with Bill.

Muffled but *LOUD* '*LIMP BIZKIT*' drifts out to the back yard. Barb glances at Margene's back door, the source of the music, something not right. She approaches, *KNOCKS* at the door -- as if anyone could hear it over the music -- then opens it.

INT. KITCHEN / MARGENE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

FOLLOWING Barb through Margene's back entry-way, through the kitchen, music frighteningly loud, into...

INT. LIVING ROOM / MARGENE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Her POV: Margene sunk into the sofa, listening to the blasting music, obviously depressed.

Barb crosses and shuts the *MUSIC OFF*:

BARB
Margie? Honey?

Margene shakes her head "no." Barb sits beside her:

BARB (CONT'D)
What is it? What's the matter?

MARGENE
I try to contribute, do my part,
but I can't get it right, I can
never do enough. I can barely take
care of my boys, let alone Nicki's.

BARB
Honey. It's alright.

MARGENE
I'm a total fuck-up.
(Barb winces at the curse)
I can't measure up to you or Nicki.

BARB
You don't have to measure up. Just
be yourself, that's enough.

MARGENE
I can't please Bill.

BARB
I'm sure you do.

MARGENE
I'm not any good at this.

BARB
I don't think it's easy for anyone.
To tell you the truth, sometimes
I'm not convinced it's right for
me. But I'm not convinced it's
wrong yet, either. We're not
trapped. We're all here by choice.
We've chosen to be a family.

MARGENE
But I *am* trapped! I have two
babies! And I'm such a crappy
mother!

Margene feels Barb's given her permission and she turns and
sobs in Barb's arms.

BARB (CONT'D)

Oh, Honey, Motherhood's hard. It's just that no one tells you that part.

NICKI (O.C.)

Boss Lady's right, Margie.

ON Nicki, standing in the Hall, gazing on:

NICKI (CONT'D)

It's not easy. None of it's easy.

Barb looking up at Nicki; making an assessment.

OFF Barb and Nicki as their eyes meet, brought together by Margene's concerns, closer, but wary, still -- unresolved.

EXT. PARKING LOT / HOME PLUS - NIGHT

Bill steps from the store, locks the door. He turns, pauses.

His POV: The Hummer and two pickups parked in the empty lot; Six Men beside them; Rhulon and Alby step from the shadows:

RHULON

I gave your wife a ride back. You and I need to talk.

(waving several contracts)

What were you thinking, Bill? That I wouldn't read these, or that I wouldn't understand them if I did?

BILL

Rhulon.

RHULON

We staked you. We have 15% of the store. *Both* of them, as I see it.

BILL

The second store is another legal entity, Rhulon. It's separate.

RHULON

Bullshit.

BILL

You're entitled to 15% of the first store, which you receive. The other store is a franchise-- so you're entitled to 15% of the franchise fee it pays to the first store.

RHULON

Don't kid yourself. You can call it whatever way you want, have the lawyers arrange it any way you please, but we get 15% of anything you do. Listen carefully to me, son. There's man's law. And there's God's law. I think you know which side I'm on.

BILL

Sorry. That's not the way I see it.

Bill walks off to his car.

OFF Rhulon: steely eyes stare at Bill as the Suburban CHIRPS.

EXT. THE THREE HOUSES / LINDA VISTA LANE - SATURDAY MORNING

ANGLE: THE THREE HOUSES seemingly so peaceful, as the sun begins to shape shadows and highlights on their facades. And yes, the ubiquitous SPRINKLERS WHOOSH ON...

EXT. GRAND OPENING / PARKING LOT / HOME PLUS - DAY

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA plays on an outdoor PA system as huge helium balloons fly up from the large crowd.

A covered wagon full of pioneer-clad employees, rolls by as a small marching band parades through the parking lot.

ON Bill as he cuts the ribbon to LOUD APPLAUSE, then scans the crowd. His POV: Margene, Lester, Aaron in a clutch... Nicki, Wayne and Ray in another... Barb, Ben, Sarah and Teenie in another.

OFF Bill's face: his pride in his family.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM / BARB'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bill in white underpants, smiling as he flosses in the bathroom mirror. IN ON Bill's eyes...

INSERT: IN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE, Bill with Doctor McDougal. McDougal nods, pulls something from a drawer and slams it down on his desk. CLOSE ON a sample pack of "VIAGRA."

INSERT: IN THE BATHROOM, AN HOUR AGO, Bill still dressed, takes a Viagra and places the sample pack in the cabinet.

INT. BARB'S BEDROOM / BARB'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bill emerges from the bathroom in his underwear. Barb sits up in bed. He slips down his white underpants and prepares to climb into bed, then notes a check laying prominently on his pillow. He picks it up, then glances at Barb.

BARB

It's not because you asked. It's because I wanted to.

He smiles at her. He sets the check on the table; climbs next to her and kisses her, amorous. She remains distant, remote.

BARB (CONT'D)

I'd like to go to sleep.

She smiles as best she can; then shuts out her light. Bill rolls onto his back: confused. He stares down.

His POV: A massive erection sticking up like a tent pole beneath the sheets.

ON his face: Pleasure and pride at his virility and manhood. He glances up at the ceiling, thinking, his arms folded behind his head, contented. But the pleasure soon fades from his face, replaced in a moment of sobering recognition...

BILL

I think Mom's trying to poison Dad.

FADE TO BLACK.