

THE WIFE

Screenplay by
Jane Anderson

Based on the Novel
“The Wife” by
Meg Wolitzer

FADE IN:

1 INT. CASTLEMAN BEDROOM, CONNECTICUT -- NIGHT, OCTOBER 1992 1

CLOSE ON the rumpled empty, half of a bed. The bedside table holds a stack of novels, a pair of reading glasses, note pads, pencils.

All is silent except for the hum of a digital clock. We see the face of the clock click to **2:45 AM**.

Then we hear the creak of floor boards and the lumbering footsteps of a man returning to bed. The space in the bed is filled with the figure of the novelist JOSEPH CASTLEMAN, early 70's. He has the anxious, exhausted look of someone who doesn't have a prayer of sleeping. Joe is a handsome, aging Brooklyn boy turned literary giant. He has the beard and the bearing of a proper eminence grise but he is also an unapologetic sensualist. He embraces all that life has to offer with a greedy, passionate vigor -- which, the critics tell us, is what makes his writing so rich.

CRINKLE, CRINKLE, CRINKLE...Joe starts unwrapping a package of Hostess Snowballs which he's brought back to bed with him.

Next to him, JOAN CASTLEMAN, his wife of 40 years, is on her side, eyes shut, but awake, trying for sleep. She's five years his junior -- an elegant, educated, deeply self-possessed shiksa from the upper-east side who was bred to be a muse and helpmate to some brilliant, charismatic man.

CRINKLE, CRINKLE...

JOAN

Joe. What're you doing?

JOE

I'm hungry.

JOAN

Don't eat sugar, it'll keep you up.

JOE

Listen, if it doesn't happen I don't want to be around for any of those sympathy calls. Let's get out of here. Let's rent a cabin in Maine and stare at a fire.

JOAN

That sounds cheerful.

JOE

Oh fuck it.

Joe devours the Snowball then brushes the crumbs off and rearranges his pillows. Then he turns on his side and goes

about the business of seducing his wife. He searches the folds of her nightgown for a breast.

JOAN

Don't.

JOE

Don't what?

JOAN

Don't pretend you're interested in sex just because you're climbing the walls.

JOE

Come on, just a quickie. It'll help us sleep.

JOAN

I was asleep.

JOE

You shouldn't be. It's unnatural.

Joe starts fondling Joan's breast.

JOE (CONT'D)

You don't have to do anything. Just lie there.

JOAN

Darling, this is pathetic.

JOE

But in the best sense of the word. Pathos...eros...

JOAN

Fine. Go ahead.

JOE

Pretend I'm some young, inarticulate stud who's found you lying naked on a beach...

Joe slips his hand under her nightgown.

JOE (CONT'D)

His hand is big and tan, blond knuckle hair, middle-finger probing...

JOAN

Mmm.

JOE

And now he's pulling out his huge, swaying, tumescent cock.

JOAN

(laughs)

Oh God, Joe, enough!

Joan hikes up her nightgown and Joe moves on top of her. He enters her and they go about the business of fucking. He comes quickly with a furious yell.

Joe rolls off her and Joan rearranges herself and settles back down to sleep.

Joe lets out a huge sigh, fidgets.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Joe.

JOE

Sorry.

JOAN

Do you want a sleeping pill?

JOE

Nah, I don't want to wake up groggy, just in case. Fuck them, why do I care so much? I'm too old for this shit. Bastard fucks.

His vitriol spent, Joe nestles himself against Joan and takes her hand and places it on his head so she'll stroke his hair. She obliges him, running her hand through his hair to soothe him to sleep.

JOAN

G'night, Joe

JOE

Love you, Joanie...g'night.

1A EXT. CASTLEMAN HOME -- DAWN

1A

Birds are starting to chirp as dawn breaks on the Castleman home: a charming old Connecticut farmhouse, an appropriate residence for a famous novelist.

We hear a PHONE start to ring inside.

2 INT. CASTLEMAN BEDROOM AND HOUSE -- EARLY MORNING

2

Joe and Joan are fast asleep, each sprawled on their separate sides of the bed. Dawn is just breaking. We hear birds start to chirp outside. The phone rings.

On the second RING, Joe wakes up with a start and grabs the phone.

JOE

Hello?

We hear crackling on the other end and the voice of a man from a distant land.

ARVID ENGDAHL (ON PHONE)

Hello. Am I speaking to Mr. Yoseph Castleman?

JOE

Yes. Yes you are.

ARVID ENGDAHL (ON PHONE)

This is Mr. Arvid Engdahl calling from the Nobel Foundation in Stockholm, Sweden.

Joe presses his hand to his chest. Joan has woken up.

JOE

This is not a joke, I take it.

ARVID ENGDAHL (ON PHONE)

No, no, Mr. Castleman, I assure you. If you like I will give you the phone number here and you can call back to confirm.

JOE

Well thank you, that won't be necessary.

Joe nods to Joan that this is it.

JOAN

Oh my God...

JOE

Before you go on, can my wife Joan get on the extension?

ARVID ENGDAHL (ON PHONE)

Yes, of course, I'll wait.

Joe madly gestures to Joan to GO.

3

INT. OFFICE -- EARLY MORNING

3

Joan is now grabbing the phone on the desk. She's surrounded by book shelves, which are mostly housing all the various editions and translations of Joe's prodigious work.

She can hear Arvid and Joe chatting about the weather in Stockholm.

JOAN
(into phone)
Hello, I'm on.

ARVID ENGDAHL (ON PHONE)
Hello Mrs. Castleman, is that you?

JOAN
Yes it is.

ARVID ENGDAHL (ON PHONE)
Mr. Castleman, you are still on as well?

JOE ON PHONE
Yes I am.

ARVID ENGDAHL (ON PHONE)
It is my great honor and pleasure to tell you Mr. Castleman, that you have been chosen to receive this year's Nobel Prize in literature.

Joan lets out an involuntary gasp.

JOE ON PHONE
Well, thank you, thank you very much.

ARVID ENGDAHL (ON PHONE)
Mr. Castleman, we are so delighted to be giving you this prize. Your career has a truly remarkable span to it.

Joan grows very still as she listens to Arvid's praise.

ARVID ENGDAHL (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Not only do you write with extraordinary intimacy, wit and depth, you have also challenged the novelistic form in ways that will affect generations of writers to come.

JOE ON PHONE
Well, I should be getting something for all the grey in my beard.

ARVID ENGDAHL (ON PHONE)
(laughing at the great man's joke)
Ah! Indeed, yes! And thank you for doing so on the world's behalf!

Joan's eyes are closed, her hand on her heart as she continues to absorb this news.

ARVID ENGDAHL (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Mrs. Castleman --

JOAN
Yes.

ARVID ENGDAHL (ON PHONE)
You should know that your husband
will be fending off the press
today, so what I advise is that you
monitor his calls, as it does get
quite exhausting.

JOAN
(a slight pause)
Yes, I'll take good care of him.

ARVID ENGDAHL
Mr. Castleman, I'm sure you would
like to make a few calls of your
own, so I shall leave you to your
celebration. We will contact you
later with all the specifics.
Again, many congratulations to you.

JOE ON PHONE
Thank you very much. Good bye.

ARVID ENGDAHL
Good bye.

JOAN
Good bye.

STAY ON Joan. She's overwhelmed.

We can hear Joe shouting for her.

JOE (O.S.)
Joan! Joanie!

Joan doesn't move. She still needs a moment to herself.

JOE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Joanie! Where are you?!

4 INT. CASTLEMAN BEDROOM -- EARLY MORNING

4

Joan is coming back into the bedroom and she sees Joe
standing on the bed.

JOAN
What are you doing?

JOE
C'mon, get up here! Let's jump!

JOAN

What for?

JOE

For joy! C'mon, join me.

JOAN

We'll break the bed.

JOE

Quit being so middle class. Get up here.

Joan climbs up on the bed with Joe and stands unsteadily on the mattress. Joe starts to bounce. Joan lets out a little shriek. Joe takes her hands.

JOAN

I'm going to fall.

JOE

No you aren't.

He bounces a little more.

JOAN

Joe, be careful.

JOE

Screw careful. Come on, jump!

Joan starts bouncing with him, laughing, giddy.

JOE (CONT'D)

(in a silly sing-song)
I won the Nobel, I won the Nobel!
La-la, la-la la la!

JOAN

Joan stops bouncing.

JOE

What.

Joan doesn't say anything, just shakes her head.

JOE (CONT'D)

Joanie. Come on. I'm just being silly.

JOE (CONT'D)

JOAN

I need to take a shower. We have a long day. Come down.

Joan helps Joe down.

JOE
Joanie, I love you.

JOAN
I know, Darling.

Joan gives him a kiss and heads for the bathroom.

5 INT. CASTLEMAN HOME, LIVING ROOM -- SEVERAL DAYS LATER, DAY 5

A celebration party. FRIENDS and FAMILY are gathered in the well-appointed living room artfully furnished with good rugs and limited-edition black & white art photos.

Joe's New York publishing team -- his AGENT, EDITOR and PUBLISHER -- arrive. They've all come up from Manhattan in their good suits to lavish Joe with pricey bottles of wine. His agent and editor are younger than Joe -- he's outlived the last bunch. But his longtime publisher, HAL BOWER, 70's, is still vital and a dapper dresser. He gives his star writer a bear hug and booms his congratulations.

We see a motley collection of Joe's longtime WRITER FRIENDS bent over a table of catered food, consuming large amounts of Joe's food and liquor to make up for the fact that they didn't get the Nobel.

We see Joan with an icy glass of white wine in her hand, standing with the WRITERS WIVES who have the discarded look of muses of unsuccessful men.

DUSTY BERKOWITZ
...so you're going to Stockholm,,
when?

JOAN
December.

DUSTY BERKOWITZ
It's gonna be freezing there. Is
Joe buying you a fur?

JOAN
No, I think I'll be like any decent
First Lady and get by with a good
cloth coat.

JOE
Joanie! C'mere.

JOAN
Yes, Joe.

Joan joins Joe who's with Hal, his publisher.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Hello, Hal.

HAL

Hello there Joan! You're looking lovely as always.

JOAN

Thank you, Hal, that's very sweet of you.

JOE

The New York Times is here.
(to his publisher)
Tell her.

HAL

They're giving your husband the cover of the Sunday magazine. They're knocking out a story about Bill Clinton for him.

JOAN

Oh my God.

JOE

Is this like an Avedon shot? With all the pores showing?

HAL

Every brilliant one of them, my friend.

JOE

Joanie, am I clean?

Joan checks Joe's beard for crumbs.

JOAN

You're fine.

JOE

Nose hairs?

JOAN

All good.

Joe is trembling a bit, wired from adrenaline. He clutches Joan's arm and murmurs into her ear.

JOE

Tell me this isn't all some big fat joke.

JOAN

It's real, Darling. Breathe.

They give each other a quick kiss and Joe turns back to his people.

JOE

Okay, let's do this!

Joan watches Joe and Hal head to the library. We see them from Joan's P.O.V., through the open door as the TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER directs Joe to stand with his arms crossed, in the stance of a literary giant. She turns to go back to the party but she can't face the writer's wives who've been watching her with their sad, resentful faces.

6 INT. CASTLEMAN HOME, KITCHEN -- DAY

6

Joan has escaped to the kitchen where CATERERS are setting more food out on trays. She's poured herself a glass of wine. We see her daughter SUSANNAH (30), a capable young woman who's hugely pregnant, setting champagne flutes on a tray.

SUSANNAH

Mom, when do you want to bring out the champagne?

JOAN

Oh, I don't know. The sooner the better. Then they'll all go home.

Joan puts her hands on her daughter's big belly.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Hello my baby's baby, I'm ready for a nap.

SUSANNAH

Poor, Mommy.

Joan's son DAVID (28) wanders in with an expensive box of cigars tucked under his arm. He's a tortured young man, who has Joe's handsomeness and intelligence but none of his aplomb.

JOAN

Hello, Lamb, there you are.

DAVID

Yeah, sorry I'm late. I was looking for some decent cigars to give to Dad.

SUSANNAH

I didn't get him anything. Was I supposed to?

JOAN

No, Honey, he's been lavished enough.

Susannah gives her little brother a hug.

SUSANNAH

Hey monkey.

DAVID

Hey Sis.

(patting her belly)

Hello, Little Man.

JOAN

David, I wanted to tell you, your father showed me your short story.

DAVID

Yeah?

JOAN

I thought it was beautifully written.

DAVID

What did he say?

JOAN

We haven't discussed it yet.

DAVID

He hated it.

JOAN

No, not at all. It's a wonderful piece of writing, David. It's very astute. About the mother.

DAVID

Where is he?

JOAN

In the library having his picture taken. The Times.

DAVID

Ah.

David gets out his cigarettes.

SUSANNAH

David, you can't smoke next to me.

JOAN

Honey, are you hungry? Go get something to eat.

Joan watches her troubled son wander back out to the living room.

David walks by the buffet table, where Joe's writer friends are still pawing over the food. Dusty Berkowitz corners him.

DUSTY BERKOWITZ

David, hello. So how're your migraines?

DAVID

Who said I had migraines?

DUSTY BERKOWITZ

Parents talk. Listen, I know what you're going through. You want someone to talk to, I'm here for you.

DAVID

(never in a million years)
Sure.

David escapes her clutch and wanders over to the library.

7 INT. LIBRARY --DAY

7

Joe is with Hal and the Times photographer, having his photo session. He's posing next to a wall of book shelves lined with his prodigious output of the last several decades. He's holding his first novel, *THE WALNUT*, with its 1950's artfully simple book sleeve (very *Catcher in the Rye*).

A clutch of Joe's GRADUATE STUDENTS from Yale are also there, watching their beloved professor get photographed. David glances at these young acolytes of his father's, feeling just a tad of resentment.

Joe sees David watching him and he raises his eye brows a bit, trying to look bemused for his son's sake. The photographer takes a rapid series of shots.

Joe turns to David.

JOE

David! You just get here?

DAVID

Yeah.

(offering the cigars)
Here. Congrats, Pop.

JOE

What's this?

DAVID

They're Maduros.

JOE

My God, these are spectacular.
Thank you, David. What a lovely gift.

Joe starts walking him back to the living room. David gets out the cigarette he's been dying to smoke.

JOE (CONT'D)

You still smoking?

DAVID

You care?

JOE

Of course I care. I'd like to see you outlive me.

DAVID

So did you read my piece?

JOE

Yes. We'll talk.

DAVID

So is it a piece of shit?

JOE

Why do you do that?

DAVID

Because you're clearly avoiding the subject.

JOE

No, clearly I'm completely distracted at the moment. We'll talk when it's appropriate, all right?

Joe sees Joan coming out of the kitchen with Susannah, carrying a large tray of glasses which are filled with champagne.

JOE (CONT'D)

Joanie, you okay there? David, help your mother out.

The writers' wives are already on it.

DUSTY BERKOWITZ

Joan, let me do this.

The guests are starting to gather and Susannah's accommodating husband, MARK, is helping her distribute the champagne.

JOE

All right, let's do this. Joanie, come stand by me. Where's Susannah? Susannah!

SUSANNAH
(right in front of him)
Dad, I'm right here.

JOE
Get yourself a glass.

SUSANNAH
I'm not drinking.

JOE
A little champagne won't hurt the
baby, go ahead.

Everyone has organized themselves around Joe, their glasses poised, the champagne effervescing.

David has stubbed out his cigarette and he stands by Joan, who puts her arm around him and gives him a little squeeze. Susannah stands on the other side of Joan and Joan tucks her hand through her daughter's arm, wanting comfort of her kids by her side.

Joe, collecting his thoughts, shuts his eyes and waits for everyone to settle down. Once the shushing stops, Joe begins.

JOE (CONT'D)
To quote from The Meditations of Quixote, "I am I, plus my surroundings. And if I do not preserve the latter, I do not preserve myself." I want to thank you all for being here. I've been handed an enormous honor that I'm compelled to celebrate, but thankfully, I'm not compelled to celebrate alone. Tonight, I am the happiest of men. I have my health -- give or take a few bypasses--I have you, my wonderful friends, my ever-curious students, I have my son David, my beautiful daughter Susannah, a fine son-in-law and a future grandchild who at this moment is contentedly floating around in her mother's amniotic fluid.

Ahh's from the women.

JOE (CONT'D)
And finally, I have my beautiful wife, Joan, the love of my life.

Joan, who's not a public person, tries to turn away.

JOE (CONT'D)

Joanie, come back here. I'm not done. Without her I'd be nothing. My most proud achievement, I have to say, is succeeding in getting this woman to marry me.

JOAN

Someone please get him to wrap this up.

HAL

To Joseph Castleman, who, in my opinion, is the greatest living author of the twentieth century and now, God dammit, the rest of the world finally knows it!

A chorus of "here here's!" and clinking glasses while Joe waves everyone off. Joe slips his arm around Joan and murmurs into her ear.

JOE

Talk to me.

JOAN

Blah-blah-blah, Darling.

8

EXT. CASTLEMAN HOME, LIVING ROOM -- LATER, DUSK

8

The party is over and the guests have left. We see Joe standing at the buffet table picking over the leftover party food.

We see David sitting outside on the patio, smoking a cigarette.

Joan is lying on the couch with a wash cloth on her forehead.

Susannah and her husband Mark come in with their coats on.

SUSANNAH

We're leaving, Mommy.

Joan reaches up and gives Susannah's hand a squeeze.

JOAN

Good bye, my angel.

SUSANNAH

Call me if you need anything.

Joan gives her a tired smile.

JOAN

I'm doing fine.

Susannah goes to Joe and gives him a hug.

SUSANNAH

I'm so happy for you, Daddy.

JOE

I love you, Honey.

He gently touches her pregnant belly.

JOE (CONT'D)

Take care of this one, Sweetheart.

Joan is watching this, briefly moved by her husband's tenderness. Then she moves the wash cloth over her eyes and settles in for a nap.

DISSOLVE TO:

9

INT. CLASSROOM, SMITH COLLEGE -- DAY, FALL 1956

9

We see YOUNG JOAN, 19, a fresh-faced coed in a tartan skirt and matching blue sweater sitting at a desk with the other SMITHIES, all waspy, well-heeled girls like herself. While they wait for the professor to arrive, SMITHIE GIRL LORRAINE, who fancies herself a sophisticate, is holding court with the other girls.

SMITHIE GIRL LORRAINE

...when we were in France this summer I went off with this boy on his motorcycle. He was a diplomat's son but Mums and Daddy were still horrified. Gawd, when will it end!

The door flings open and young Professor Castleman enters, looking handsome and disheveled.

YOUNG JOE

Sorry I'm late.

He drops a pile of books on his desk. Even in his distracted state, he has a sexual energy that makes all the young women sit up.

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

I do have a good excuse, however.
My wife had a baby last night.

The girls react with "awww"'s. Except for Lorraine and Joan, who're both studying the professor, sizing him up.

SMITHIE GIRL LORRAINE

Is it a boy or a girl, Professor?

YOUNG JOE

A girl. Fanny. After Fanny Price.

SMITHIE GIRL LORRAINE
After the Jewish vaudeville
entertainer?

Joan can't help herself, she quietly corrects the girl.

YOUNG JOAN
That's Fanny Brice. Fanny Price is
the character from "Mansfield
Park".

YOUNG JOE
That's right. Extra credit to the
girl in blue.

The other girls look at Joan, resentful that she already scored a point with the professor. Joan averts her eyes -- she didn't mean to draw attention to herself.

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)
It's completely pretentious, giving
my daughter a literary name. But I
want her to know how important
books are. And when you girls start
having babies I expect all of you
to name your little girls Fanny,
too.

There is laughter in the classroom. Joan is offended by this remark and emboldened by the victory of her last remark, speaks up.

YOUNG JOAN
I don't intend to have babies until
I'm published. And maybe not even
then.

YOUNG JOE
Very admirable. And if any of you
want to write a nice little romance
or a book of love poems, there are
plenty of publishers out there who
will gobble you up. You're free to
do that on your own time but if you
bring any of that pap into my
class, I will flunk you outright.

Joe pulls a walnut out of his jacket pocket. He cracks it and quietly picks out the meat. All eyes are on him.

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)
A true writer does not write to get
published. He writes because he
has something urgent and personal
that he needs to say. He must
write as he must breathe and he
keeps on doing it despite the
loneliness and the poverty and the
(MORE)

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

piles of rejection slips and the parent or the wife who cry out, "you fool, why don't you get a real job!" A writer writes because if he doesn't, his soul will starve.

The professor sits back and pops the meat of the walnut into his mouth, allowing his words to sink in. Then gazes out of the window and recites:

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

"...His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead."

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

James Joyce. No more needs to be said.

The other girls laugh nervously, but Young Joan stares at Joe with a fierce look that catches his eye.

10

INT. SMITH COLLEGE, HALLWAY -- WINTER, 1956

10

Young Joan is anxiously sitting on a bench outside the professor's office. She can hear him talking to another student -- quick, dueling murmurs, then a shriek of female laughter.

The door opens and SMITHIE GIRL LORRAINE comes out, still laughing and aglow from her meeting with the professor. She glances at Joan, gives her a smug little smile. Joan watches her rival walk down the hall, certain that this girl now owns the professor heart and soul.

YOUNG JOE

Hello, Miss Archer.

Young Joan startles, looks up at Professor Castleman who's standing at his office door, watching her intently.

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

Please come in.

11

INT. PROFESSOR CASTLEMAN'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS, DAY 1956 11

Young Joan is now sitting across from Young Joe at his desk, which is littered with walnut shells. Joe has opened up a folder of neatly typed pages.

YOUNG JOE

So. Your story. I've read this twice, and frankly, both times I've found it to be quite good.

Joan blushes, is overwhelmed with gratitude.

YOUNG JOAN

Thank you, Professor.

YOUNG JOE

However, know that you still have a long way to go with this piece.

YOUNG JOAN

Yes, yes of course. I'm more than willing to make fixes.

YOUNG JOE

I'm not asking you to "fix" anything. I'm asking you to go deeper. You write with a lot of intelligence but you're detached.

YOUNG JOAN

Oh. But the characters are supposed to be detached. Especially the mother.

YOUNG JOE

But she wasn't always that way, was she? She was somebody's child once, somebody's lover. She has cravings, and fears and secret desires. I'm sure she even passes gas.

YOUNG JOAN

Yes, she does. But she blames it on the negro maid.

YOUNG JOE

(laughs)

Very good. I see I'm going to have to watch out for you.

Young Joan forces a laugh, wanting to sound like Smithie girl Lorraine.

YOUNG JOAN

Oh, I can be quite a handful, Professor.

Joe looks at her, kindly.

YOUNG JOE

Do me a favor, Miss Archer, don't try to put it on like the others.

(MORE)

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

You're charming enough just the way
you are.

YOUNG JOAN

(blushing wildly)

Yes...all right.

YOUNG JOE

Good girl.

Joe cracks a walnut and offers her some from the palm of his hand. Joan hesitates then takes some, but still doing her best to pick up the nut without touching his skin.

Joe smiles, finds this extremely endearing. He leans into Joan, his voice confidential.

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

Miss Archer, I want to ask you
something. I was wondering,
whether by any chance you would be
free Saturday night.

Joan is breathless. Is he asking her out?

YOUNG JOAN

Yes. Yes I am.

YOUNG JOE

Good. Would you be interested in
baby-sitting? My wife and I
haven't gotten out since Fanny was
born.

YOUNG JOAN

(a beat)

Sure.

(flatly)

I love babies.

12

EXT. PROFESSOR CASTLEMAN'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

12

Joan is standing in the freezing cold on the porch of a modest salt box house on faculty row. She can hear Joe and his wife Carol yelling at each other from different parts of the house.

CAROL (O.S.)

Joe, dammit, I asked you to heat
her bottle!

JOE (O.S.)

I did!

CAROL (O.S.)

When?! It's ice cold!

JOE (O.S.)
I don't know when I did it, I did
it when you told me to do it!

Joan rings the bell which gives a half-hearted BLAT.

Joe opens the door, looking distracted, his shirt half buttoned and his face still raw from shaving. We hear the baby crying. It's a messy house -- Carol is not a great housekeeper.

YOUNG JOE
Come in, come in. I'm warning you,
it's chaos in here.

13 INT. PROFESSOR CASTLEMAN'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS, NIGHT 13

As Joan steps inside CAROL CASTLEMAN calls from upstairs.

CAROL (O.S.)
Is that the girl?

YOUNG JOE
Yes. Her name is Joan.

Carol appears at the top of the stairs. She's small and frazzled, a young woman who already looks middle-aged.

CAROL
(to Joan)
Hello. The baby's up here.

Joan looks at Joe.

YOUNG JOE
Go on up. Carol, could you get me
my tie?

CAROL
It's on the bed.

YOUNG JOE
Yes, I know that, can you get it
for me please?

Carol makes an impatient sound. As Joan starts up the narrow stairs, we see Carol appear again with the tie and toss it down to Joe. It falls short and Joan picks it up and holds it out to Joe. To her surprise, he grabs her hand and murmurs into her ear.

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)
This is my life. God help me.

14 INT. PROFESSOR CASTLEMAN'S HOUSE, UPSTAIRS BEDROOM -- LATER,
NIGHT

Joan is now pacing the Castleman's bedroom with the BABY, who's slung over her shoulder in a pool of drool. While she's waiting for the kid to doze off she decides to take a little tour of the Castleman's things. She opens the closet and peers at Joe's shirts and jackets. She touches his clothes, briefly, careful not to disturb them. She closes the closet and wanders over to the bedside table.

She puts the baby down on the bed and picks up a book -- James Joyce's Ulysses.

She opens it up and sees Joe's name written inside the fly leaf. It's a bold, sexy, important-looking signature. She runs her fingers over it, her heart racing. She carefully replaces the book next to some walnut shells littering the top of the table. She sees a small, piece of walnut meat that the Professor must have missed. She picks it up and puts it in her mouth.

She looks down at the baby who's staring up at her in that dumb, unfocused baby way.

JOAN

Hello, you. I'm falling in love
with your Daddy.

Feeling reckless, she opens the drawer of the bedside table and looks in. There's a plastic diaphragm case and a tube of spermicide. Joan stares at it, horrified and fascinated. Next to the diaphragm is a whole walnut with something penned on it in Joe's distinctive script.

Joan picks it up: To Carol, I love you true, J. Joan touches the glossy lips of the nut...she's surprised by how sensuous a walnut can be. So this is why Joe likes to eat them.

15 INT. PROFESSOR CASTLEMAN'S OFFICE -- A WEEK LATER, DAY 15

Young Joan is seated across from Professor Castleman who's slowly rolling a walnut around in one hand while he leafs through Joan's latest literary effort. Joan is in agony, praying that she hasn't gone too far.

YOUNG JOE

So. "The Faculty Wife." You've shed
quite an interesting light on Mrs.
Castleman.

YOUNG JOAN

No, no, it's not about your wife at
all, it was just a character study.

Joe leans over and kisses Joan full on the lips. He finally releases her and Joan sits back in her chair, flushed and trembling.

YOUNG JOE

Miss Archer, I've already told you that your work is good. But I'm not sure that I got it through to you. Do you believe me now?

YOUNG JOAN

Yes. I think you've made it perfectly clear.

They continue to kiss. In their passion, they knock Joan's manuscript off the desk and the pages flutter to the floor.

16 INT. CONCORD JET -- SOMEWHERE BETWEEN NIGHT AND DAY, 1992 16

We're mid-flight on the way to Stockholm. We see Joan and Joe ensconced in their fancy Concord seats. In the seats behind them we see Joe's entourage -- his publisher, agent and editor. And David, who's curled up in a blanket, plugged into a Walkman.

Joan is doing the New York Times crossword puzzle -- with a pen, of course. Joe, in a nest of airline blankets and pillows and newspapers, his free sleep mask dangling around his neck, is busy writing down ideas for his next novel on a yellow pad. His tray table is littered with the remains of all the in-flight offerings of drinks and nut cups and jumbo shrimp.

A comely FLIGHT ATTENDANT, MONICA comes over to Joe and in a hushed tone, leans over Joan and offers him a basket of freshly-baked cookies.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT MONICA

Would you like a freshly baked cookie Mr. Castleman?

Joe looks up at the lovely Monica who's hovering over him.

JOE

Yes. Why not.

As the attendant leans over Joe and delivers his cookie with a pair of tongs, Joe watches with quiet pleasure as her breasts slide forward inside the silky blouse of her uniform.

JOE (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Joan is observing this little scene with well-practiced detachment.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT MONICA

(To Joan)

Mrs. Castleman, would you like a cookie?

Joan would dearly love to strangle the bitch. But her reply is faultlessly polite.

JOAN

Thank you, no.

The lovely Monica moves on. Joe is aware of Joan's annoyance.

JOE

You want a bite of my cookie?

JOAN

No.

JOE

You want one of my pillows?

JOAN

No thank you.

Joe holds his yellow pad up to her with his list of notes.

JOE

You want to take a look at this?

JOAN

I'd like to do my crossword.

Joan goes back to her crossword. Joe squeezes her knee and goes back to his notes.

They're interrupted again by flight attendant Monica.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT MONICA

Excuse me, Mr. Castleman, there's a gentleman in back who says he knows you and would like to say hello. Nathaniel Bone?

JOE

Oh Christ.

JOAN

(to the flight attendant)

Tell him that Mr. Castleman is asleep.

Joe starts fumbling with his sleep mask.

NATHANIAL BONE comes up from the rear of the plane. He's a tall, boyish man in his late 30's with a mop of hair and

stylish horn-rimmed glasses. He affects a self-deprecating manner that Joe finds unbearable.

BONE

Sorry to interrupt but I just wanted to say congratulations.

JOE

Hello, Nathaniel. So I take it you're not flying to Stockholm just for the pickled herring.

BONE

No, I wouldn't miss your award for anything. This is just an astounding achievement, Joe.

JOE

It's not about the prize, it's about getting up the gumption to write the next book.

BONE

Absolutely. That's why you are who you are. And Joan, congratulations to you as well. I don't think anyone gives enough credit to the spouse.

JOE

I give my wife credit, I give her plenty of credit.

BONE

I meant the rest of the world. The critics and the readers and especially us pesky biographers.

JOE

Listen, my friend, I know I'm supposed to be impressed that you've somehow wheedled your way onto this plane but I'm still not letting you write my biography.

BONE

Yes, you've always made that very clear.

JOE

Good.

Joe moves his sleep mask over his eyes, making it clear that he's done with Bone.

JOAN

Thank you for saying hello, Nathaniel.

BONE

Well, again, congratulations. To both of you. I truly mean it.

As Bone turns to go back to his row, he pauses at David's seat.

BONE (CONT'D)

Hey David, how's the writing going?

David, roused from his head set, looks up at Bone with a vague stare.

BONE (CONT'D)

Nathanial Bone.

JOE

Move on, Nathanial.

Bone leaves.

JOE (CONT'D)

Schmuck.

JOAN

You were rude.

JOE

I have to be blunt or he won't give up.

JOAN

You don't want to make enemies with someone like that. There's nothing more dangerous than a writer with hurt feelings.

JOE

He's the one who intruded on my space. Fuck him if he can't take a perfectly justified rejection.

JOAN

I'm just making an observation.

JOE

Noted.

Joe settles back for a nap.

JOAN

Don't forget to stretch your legs like Dr. Krentz said.

JOE

Mmm.

17

INT. GRAND HOTEL -- DAY

17

The Castlemans and Joe's entourage -- his editor, publisher and agent -- are arriving in the lobby of the Grand Hotel, a 19th century edifice of luxury and importance.

The DOOR MEN are bowing their heads to Joe, BELL MEN are scurrying to fetch the Castlemans' luggage. HOTEL STAFF smile at him, eyes shining with awe.

Joe a little ruffled and travel-worn from the plane flight stares at the phalanx of SWEDISH PRESS and the members of the NOBEL PRIZE COMMITTEE who are waiting for him up ahead. Joan squeezes his arm.

JOAN

Are you OK?

JOE

Yeah, thanks Joanie, I'm fine.

Joe walks into the embrace of the adoring Swedes, and reinvigorated by the attention, starts pumping hands with members of the prize committee.

Joan stands back with David and shifts Joe's heavy woolen coat to her other arm. She adjusts her expression to one of self-assured repose as they wait for the initial flush of Castlemania to die down.

JOAN

Do you want to know a secret,
Honey?

DAVID

What.

JOAN

I'm dying for a cigarette.

David laughs, which pleases Joan.

We see Nathaniel walking by lugging his suitcase and a plastic bag with his rented tux. He spots Joan and David.

BONE

Joan, Mrs. Castleman -- I'm sorry
if I intruded on you and Joe. I
didn't mean to make myself a pest.

JOAN

Well, I apologize for my husband's
rudeness.

BONE

Please, no need. I'm sure he's
been swamped by glad-handers.

The crowd around Joe is growing larger.

BONE (CONT'D)

Would you like me to say something amusing while you're waiting so you look like you're having a wonderful time?

JOAN

Thank you, Nathaniel, but I'm quite comfortable standing here in my own thoughts.

Joe, seeing Bone with Joan and David, calls them over.

JOE

Joanie --

JOAN

Take care, Nathaniel.

Joan is swept into Joe's magic circle. The head of the Nobel committee, Arvid ENGDAHL, an effusive, pink-cheeked man shakes Joan's hand.

ARVID ENGDAHL

Mrs. Castleman! Hello! I am Arvid Engdahl! I am the one who called you about the prize, waking you up at such an ungodly hour!

JOAN

Not ungodly at all, you added ten years to my husband's life.

Laughter from the Swedes, delighted that their laureate's wife is such a warm and witty lady.

Arvid turns to the press people.

ARVID ENGDAHL

(in Swedish)

[This is Mr. Castleman's wife.]

The photographers politely nod to her and take a few pictures for their B rolls.

ARVID ENGDAHL (CONT'D)

Mr. Castleman let me introduce you to Walter Bark who will be accompanying you on your engagements.

The highly efficient WALTER shakes Joe's hand.

WALTER

Mr. Castleman, it's an honor. We'll provide you with anything you need.

JOE

Thank you. But don't worry, I'm very low maintenance.

JOAN

Only when he's asleep.

Warm laughter all around -- oh these Castlemans are a fun pair!

ARVID ENGDAHL

Mrs. Castleman, this is Mrs. Lindelöf who looks after our laureate wives.

MRS. LINDELOF, an effusive matronly woman, greets Joan.

MRS. LINDELÖF

Mrs. Castleman, they'll be keeping your husband very busy so I can arrange for shopping and beauty treatments!

This couldn't interest Joan less.

JOAN

Thank you, we'll see.

Joe is watching LINNEA, 30's, a stunning young woman who's been taking his photo. As she pauses to adjust her aperture, she studies him with her with her fiercely intelligent eyes. Joe, already intrigued, nods to her and she smiles back -- an exchange not lost on Joan.

ARVID ENGDAHL

Mr. Castleman may I introduce to you Linnea Engwall who will be your personal photographer

LINNEA

This is my honor, Mr. Castleman. I am so very admiring of your work.

JOE

Thank you, you're very kind.

LINNEA

I'll be trailing you with my camera but please pretend that I'm not there.

Joan has to smile at this and Joe catches her look.

JOE

This is my wife, Mrs. Castleman.

LINNEA

Very nice to meet you.

JOAN
(faultlessly polite)
You as well.

JOE
Where's David?

He turns to David who's lingering on the edge of the crowd, smoking a cigarette.

JOE (CONT'D)
David! Come over here.
(to Arvid)
This is our son, David.

David ambles over and shifts his cigarette so he can shake Arvid's hand. Joe gives David a look to lose the goddamn cigarette.

ARVID ENGDAHL
Hello, David! We are so very glad you could come! We are always pleased to have the children of our laureates. In fact, we have found you to be just as engaging as your fathers!

DAVID
All right...okay.

JOE
Believe me, my son is very engaging when he's not in the throes of jet lag.

Kind laughter.

WALTER
Shall we take you to your room then?

JOE
Yes, that'd be terrific. Onward.

18 INT. CASTLEMAN SUITE, GRAND HOTEL -- DAY

18

Joe and Joan are now walking through the rooms of their luxuriously appointed suite. David is with them, checking out the grandeur that's being lavished on his father. Joe, his adrenaline still high, is keeping up a running commentary.

JOE
...Jesus, look at this place, you could house a family of ten in here. David, what do you need your
(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

own room for? You should stay here
with us.

DAVID

I don't think so.

Joe stops at a table laden with flowers, baskets of fruit and other welcoming gifts. He opens a card that's attached to a bottle of champagne.

JOE

I bet this is from my lawyer. He
always sends the same cheap brand.
Joanie you have my reading glasses?

Joan retrieves Joe's glasses from her purse.

Two uniformed BELLMEN appear, having just delivered the luggage. Joan hands them their tips and they leave.

JOE (CONT'D)

(the champagne)
Yep, I was right.
(to David)
You want this for your room?

DAVID

No, Pop.

Joe samples from a box of chocolates.

JOE

These are excellent. You want one?

DAVID

No.

JOE

(reading the note)
"Enjoy, enjoy. From Sylvia Fry."
Who the hell is Sylvia Fry?

DAVID

One of your characters. Jesus,
Dad.

JOAN

Leave him alone, David, he's tired.

JOE

My memory's turning to shit, it'll
happen to you someday, my Boy.
Sooner, perhaps, with your smoking.

DAVID

Sure, Pop.

JOAN
(the chocolates)
Don't eat all those, Joe. You'll
get heartburn.

Joe deliberately stuffs another chocolate into his mouth. He peers into a room that's a small library where a fire is already set.

JOE
Good Christ, there's a library --
come look. Jesus, they've even
stocked the shelves with my books.
Look at this -- they even have "The
Walnut" in fucking Arabic. Joanie,
did you know about this edition?

JOAN
Yes, it paid for the sub zero.

David picks up a china vase and a bit aggressively bounces it in his hands.

JOE
David, be careful with that.

David pretends to drop the vase then catches it.

JOE (CONT'D)
What're you doing? What's the
matter with you?

David puts the vase back on the mantel.

DAVID
I'm going back to my room.

JOAN
All right, Honey. Get some rest.

JOE
(calling after him)
Take some fruit with you.

David leaves. We hear the door close.

JOE (CONT'D)
He's in a mood. Let's hope he gets
laid while he's here.

JOAN
Don't be crude, Joe.

Joan brushes past him. Joe can feel a slight frost. He follows her to the master bedroom, a grand room dominated by an enormous bed covered with a snowy eiderdown.

JOE

Look at this bed. It's like a giant snow drift. I love this country. They've turned hibernation into an art form.

Joan, doesn't react to his quip. She moves to the bathroom with the toiletries. Joe, follows her in and starts examining the complimentary toiletries set out on the marble counter while Joan unpacks their things.

JOE (CONT'D)

Is something bugging you?

JOAN

No.

JOE

I wasn't attracted to that girl, by the way.

JOAN

I really don't care. Here, brush your teeth. Your breath is bad.

JOE

You think anyone noticed?

JOAN

No, Darling, they were all too busy being awed.

JOE

All this attention is giving me agita. Listen to my heart, I think it's skipping.

Joan listens to his chest.

JOAN

You're fine. Here, take your pills.

Joe suddenly yawns. He's worn himself out. He stares at himself in the mirror.

JOE

I'm getting too old for this.

JOAN

We both are, Darling.

JOE

So what're we doing now? Are we going out?

JOAN

No Joe, we're going to sleep.

JOE

Joanie.

JOAN

What Joe.

JOE

We need to enjoy this.

Joan pats Joe's cheek and we FOLLOW her back to the bedroom. She sits on the bed and starts undoing her watch.

She reaches over and puts her watch on the bedside table.

CLOSE ON the watch, an expensive gold thing. There's an inscription engraved on the back: **To J. in awe, J.**

19 INT. JOAN'S COLLEGE DORM HALLWAY -- DAY, SPRING 1957 19

CLOSE on a walnut which has the same inscription in pen: **To J., in awe, J.**

We see a hand swipe the walnut out of frame.

We see Carol Castleman holding the walnut and shaking it at Young Joan, who's standing in her dorm room, crying.

CAROL

"In awe"? He wrote to you "In AWE?"

YOUNG JOAN

I'm so sorry, Mrs. Castleman. I'm so sorry, I'm not a bad person.

Other COLLEGE GIRLS are standing in the hallway and peering out of their rooms watching this drama unfold.

CAROL

Yes you are! I let you into my house! I trusted you with my baby! And this is what you do, you little bitch?! You little Smithie bitch!

Carol madly stamps on the walnut, smashing it to bits.

19A EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE -- DAY, SPRING 1957 19A

Joan is following Joe who's carrying their luggage down a shabby Village street.

20 INT. WAVERLY ARMS -- DAY, SPRING 1957 20

Joan is following Joe who's schlepping their luggage up the stairs of a derelict rooming house in the Village. We hear

the sounds of the other tenants through the thin walls -- someone practicing their saxophone, badly...a couple arguing.

They have to step around a shaggy young man who's passed out on the stairs with a broken guitar in his lap.

21 INT. WAVERLY ARMS, JOE & JOAN'S ROOM -- DAY, SPRING 1957 21

We're now in a grimy little room with an airshaft view. Young Joan is sitting on the lumpy bed, crying her eyes out while Young Joe calmly inspects the hot plate.

YOUNG JOAN

I can't stay here! It's filthy!
This is a room for an alcoholic!

YOUNG JOE

Look, if you don't want to be here, then go back to Smith. I'm sure they'll take you back with open arms. You were victimized, after all -- the lovely young debutante raped by the oversexed Jewish professor.

YOUNG JOAN

I'm not a debutante! Screw you, Joe! I knew exactly what I was doing!

YOUNG JOE

I'm not your adoring mentor anymore, my girl. I'm now officially a struggling writer who has yet to write his first legitimate novel. We could be living like this for a very long time. If you can't take it, I understand. It would break my heart, but if you can't take this life, then I release you. Go, I release you, go.

22 INT. WAVERLY ARMS, STAIRWAY -- NIGHT

22

We see Joan carrying her suitcase down the stairs to the street. She stops at the bottom of the stairway where there's a grimy mirror. She stops and takes a look at herself: she's wearing one of her nice traveling outfits and a pair of white ladylike gloves and she has to admit that she does indeed look like a nice ex-debutante. This infuriates her. She peels off her gloves and flings them to the floor then marches back up the stairs, dragging her suitcase.

23 INT. WAVERLY ARMS, JOE & JOAN'S ROOM -- NIGHT, SPRING 23

Joan has returned. She's now standing at the open door of their tiny room, gazing at Joe, who's hunched over the table he's made into his desk. He has a note pad beside him with a few scribbles on it and he's staring at the empty page in his typewriter, his heart too broken to write.

Joe turns and looks at her with his beautiful, haunted eyes.

YOUNG JOE

You're back.

YOUNG JOAN

I love you, Joe. I believe in you.
I believe in you with all my heart.

Joe looks like he's going to weep. Joan goes to him and he pulls her onto his lap and buries his face in her neck.

YOUNG JOE

Oh Joanie, my girl. I love you,
don't ever leave me again...

They kiss madly and pull each other to the bed.

23A INT. CASTLEMAN SUITE, GRAND HOTEL -- NEXT MORNING 23A

We see Joe and Joan buried under the giant eiderdown fast asleep. We hear the gentle rustle of the drapes being pulled open. A cool light pours over them. More rustling, soft footsteps, whispers...and suddenly we hear a chorus of girls break into song.

Joe and Joan lurch out of their deep traveler's sleep and stare groggily up at a circle of angelic-looking SWEDISH GIRLS in white robes who are standing around their bed holding candles and singing some indecipherable Swedish song of celebration.

Joan and Joe, disoriented, sit up and groggily stare at the crowd in their room. Walter is standing by.

WALTER

Good morning Mr. Castleman. Today
is St. Lucia day and this is St.
Lucia who has come to pay her
respect to a great writer.

JOE

St. Lucia...

WALTER

(worried)
I believe I told you yesterday to
expect this...?

JOE

Yes, you probably did.

A GIRL PLAYING SAINT LUCIA approaches the bed, wearing a crown of lighted candles and shakily carrying a breakfast tray set with a coffee service and elegant pastries.

JOE (CONT'D)

This looks wonderful. Thank you.

Linnea is there. She crouches down by the bed and starts taking pictures. Joan, feeling puffy and unattractive, would rather she not.

JOAN

(slipping out of bed)

Excuse me...

JOE

Where're you going?

JOAN

I'd like to freshen up.

Joan goes into the bathroom and shuts the door.

WALTER

I'm so sorry, Mr. Castleman, is this an inconvenience?

JOE

No, no, I'm grateful that you woke me up. I was in the middle of a nightmare. I was back in Brooklyn, still living with my mother.

He gets a laugh. Joe takes a big bite of a pastry. Crumbs tumble onto the sheets.

JOE (CONT'D)

Delicious! This is fantastic.

23B INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

23B

Joan has shut the door and is hunched on the toilet, having one of those endless morning pees. She can hear the girls serenading Joe through the door. She starts to shiver uncontrollably. To calm herself, she starts quietly singing her own little song.

JOAN

I'm Mrs. Joseph Castleman,
Oh lucky, lucky me,
His brilliance shines through my
soul,
even when I pee.

24

INT. NOBEL FOUNDATION, RECEPTION HALL -- DAY

24

We're at a formal reception that's set up with a vast buffet of food and SERVERS circulating with trays of champagne.

Joe, with a plate of food in his hands, is regaling a group of NOTABLE SWEDES with one of his standard anecdotes.

JOE

...my father was a shoe salesman. He died of a heart attack when I was seven while he was fitting some pimply kid with a pair of saddle shoes.

Walter is rapidly translating this for the non-English speakers while Linnea takes pictures of Joe.

Joan is standing next to David with a glass of champagne, grateful to have her son for company.

JOE (CONT'D)

So when I come home from school that day, my mother grabs me, presses me to her substantial bosom and says, "Joe, I have something terrible to tell you." Before she can get it out, my tiny Russian grandmother, who's built like a footstool, screams at her, "not before dinner, you'll ruin his appetite!"

The English speakers laugh. While Walter translates for the rest of the Swedes Joe bites into a piece of bread that's piled with herring. He glances at Joan and she discreetly signals for him to brush off a crumb from his beard. He does so and Joan gives him a little nod that it's gone.

DAVID

Have you ever thought of letting him leave in the crumbs?

JOAN

Married people don't do that, Darling. Our job is to protect each other from humiliation.

Arvid comes over.

ARVID ENGDAHL

Excuse me, I hate to interrupt this wonderful exchange, but I'd like to introduce the Castlemans to another one of our laureate families.

JOE

Of course.

ARVID ENGDAHL

(to Joe)

James Finch is getting our prize in physics. A very brilliant man and nice as can be.

JOE

Terrific, can't wait to meet him.

Arvid ushers Joe, Joan and David over to JAMES FINCH who's standing with his wife CONSTANCE and the four FINCH CHILDREN (aged 15 to 25).

ARVID ENGDAHL

James Finch, may I introduce you to the novelist Joseph Castleman.

James, an Englishman and an alpha male like Joe shakes hands with him.

JAMES FINCH

Pleasure to meet you. I wish I could say that I've read all your books.

JOE

Please, I wish I could say that I understand your formulas.

Laughter. Finch's wife Constance, a jolly, toothy lady shakes hands with Joe.

CONSTANCE FINCH

I've read your books, and I promise you, they're a much better read than James's scribblings.

JAMES FINCH

My wife Constance is a scientist as well, and as you can see, she's quite critical of my work.

JOE

Well, my wife doesn't write, thank God, otherwise I'd have permanent writer's block.

More laughter. Joan extends her hand and introduces herself.

JOAN

Hello, I'm Joan.

JOE

Joan is the light of my life.

JAMES FINCH

Let me introduce you to my children
-- this is Peter, Sam, Ellen,
Chester...

The Finch kids, a cheerful, outgoing lot, say hello to the Castlemans and shake their hands. David is itching for a cigarette.

ARVID ENGDAHL

If I may brag for James for a moment -- his children are all quite remarkable. Ellen is doing work on the metabolism of neural cells, is that right?

JAMES FINCH

Yes, I'm counting on her to find the cure to Alzheimer's just in time for my own dementia.

Lots of good-natured chuckling. ELLEN FINCH, a socially awkward 19-year-old rolls her eyes to David, trying to bond with him.

ARVID ENGDAHL

Tell them please about your children's other wonderful studies!

JAMES FINCH

Sam here is working in conductive polymers. Peter is interested in prime factors. And Chester is trying to disprove the string theory -- he's a bit out of his league but we indulge him.

James ruffles his brilliant son's hair.

JOAN

Well aren't you a bunch of bright pennies.

JOE

David is a writer. He's developing quite a voice.

Walter comes over.

WALTER

Excuse me, Mr. Castleman, we must start proceeding to your lecture.

JOE

Terrific to meet you, James. We'll catch you later.

JAMES FINCH

Wonderful to meet you Joseph.
(to Joan)
A pleasure, Jean.

JOAN

Joan.

JAMES FINCH

Oh. My apologies.

JOAN

(lightly)
No matter.

As Walter starts to usher the Castlemans towards the door, David passes Linnea, who's reloading her camera.

LINNEA

Hello, David.

DAVID

Hey.

She and David exchange a look -- they clearly shared some aquavit last night. This is not lost on either Joan or Joe. Joe gestures to Joan to go through the door ahead of him.

JOE

Go ahead, Joanie.

Joan goes through the door, bundling her coat to her throat against the searing cold outside. As Joe follows, he makes eye contact with Linnea to re-establish his sexual dominion.

25

INT. LIMO -- DAY

25

Joe, Joan and David are on their way to the next engagement.

JOE

Well didn't Finch produce himself a brilliant bunch of nestlings. No doubt he donates his sperm as a service to humanity.

He expects to get a laugh from his family but David is staring moodily out the window and Joan is pouring herself a coke from the mini-bar to sober up from the lunch.

JOE (CONT'D)

(reaching for Joan's coke)
Can I have a little of that?
(he pauses to drink)

Listen, Boyo, do me a favor -- next time I introduce you, try to make a little more eye contact.

DAVID

And next time, don't refer to me as your son, the half-baked writer.

JOE

What're you talking about?

DAVID

"He's developing his voice?" What is that supposed to mean?

JOE

I don't believe in bragging, David. It's vulgar. And the fact is, you are developing your voice. It takes time just as it took time for me to develop mine.

DAVID

No it didn't. You had a hit novel right out of the gate.

JOE

I grew up hard, my friend. Live a little and let's see what you come up with.

David gets out his cigarettes.

JOE (CONT'D)

You're not smoking in here.

DAVID

I'll open my window.

JOE

Forget it, it's zero fucking degrees out there. You shouldn't be smoking anyway.

DAVID

And you shouldn't be stuffing your face with animal suet.

JOE

What the hell is your problem?

JOAN

Both of you stop.

JOE

Are you offended that I haven't discussed your story yet? Is that what's bugging you?

DAVID

I don't need to discuss something that you've been avoiding like some
(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)
steaming pile of shit that I
deposited on your desk.

JOE
I did read it as a matter of fact.
And my opinion is that it's a good
solid start. But that's not what
you want to hear. You want to hear
that it's a breathtaking work of
genius.

DAVID
(over him)
That's not what I want to hear,
Jesus fucking Christ, Dad.

JOAN
Stop. Both of you.

Joe and David both settle into a sullen silence.

JOAN (CONT'D)
David, would you like to be on your
own for the rest of the day?

JOE
He's going to miss my lecture.

JOAN
David, would you like that?

DAVID
Yeah, I would.

JOE
What're you going to do with
yourself?

DAVID
It's Stockholm. It's a major
European city.

JOE
Fine. Where do you want to be
dropped?

DAVID
I can get out here.

JOE
(looking out the window)
What's here?

DAVID
A street.

JOE
(to the driver)
Gustav, could you pull over when
you have a chance?

JOAN
(to David)
Let me give you some Krona. Do you
know how to get back to the hotel?

DAVID
Yes.

The limo has pulled over. David opens the door and scoots
out.

JOE
Listen, check in with us when you
get back.

DAVID
Yeah.

David slams the door. The limo starts up again.

JOE
I'm not going to let him ruin this
trip for us.

JOAN
It's not easy being your son, Joe.

JOE
Oh please, it's not easy being
anyone's son.

JOAN
You could act a little prouder of
him.

JOE
He needs to work a little harder.
It wouldn't be doing the kid any
favor to tell him that he's
brilliant.

JOAN
I think he has talent.

JOE
Then you should tell him.

JOAN
It doesn't mean anything coming
from me. He needs to hear it from
you.

JOE

He shouldn't need my approval to write.

JOAN

Everyone needs approval, Joe.

JOE

True.

Joe stares out the window. Joan kicks her high heels off.

JOAN

These shoes are killing me.

JOE

Gimme.

Joan leans back and Joe takes her feet in his lap and starts massaging them.

JOAN

Joe.

JOE

Mmm.

JOAN

Whatever you do, please don't thank me in your speech.

JOE

Why not? You should be thanked.

JOAN

I don't want to be seen as the long-suffering wife. You can understand that, can't you?

JOE

I have to, Joanie. Everyone thanks their wife. If I don't, I'll look like a narcissistic bastard.

JOAN

But you are, Darling.

JOE

Come on, one sentence, just one sweet little remark. I'll say it very fast.

JOAN

Please Joe.

JOE

It'll be painless

Joe starts to run his hand up Joan's leg.

JOAN
Joe, not here, stop...

JOE
Why not. Let's give these Swedes a thrill.

JOAN
I said stop.

JOE
Joanie.

JOAN
What.

Joe touches the back of Joan's neck, tenderly this time.

JOE
Are you okay...?

JOAN
I'm fine, Joe.

Joan extracts her foot from Joe and sits back up.

JOE
If you don't want me to thank you,
then I won't.

JOAN
Do what you need to do.

Joan settles back, and gazes out the window.

26

INT. SMITH COLLEGE, LIBRARY -- NIGHT, MARCH, 1957

26

Young Joan is sitting at the back of a small audience of STUDENTS and ENGLISH DEPARTMENT FACULTY while Joe stands behind her, discreetly running a seductive finger long the back of her neck.

A guest lecturer, ELAINE MOZELL, is standing at a podium, a cigarette in one hand and her novel in another. She's one of those tough, whiskey-voiced dames who's bursting with irony and bitter bon mots.

ELAINE MOZELL
This is from my novel, "Sleeping Dogs." I know most of you haven't read it because it's only sold a thousand copies, most of which were bought by my relatives who were paid handsomely by me.

There's scattered laughter.

ELAINE MOZELL (CONT'D)
So. Here we go. Chapter One. "The
Playing Field." Which is hardly
level, by the way.

27

INT. SMITH COLLEGE, LIBRARY -- LATER, NIGHT

27

The reading is over and Elaine Mozell is holding court with the faculty. She's drinking a scotch and has the handsome Professor Castleman tucked by her side, her chosen flirtation for the evening.

Joe sees Joan hovering nearby and pulls her into the magic circle.

YOUNG JOE
Elaine, I want you to meet Miss
Archer who is the promising young
writer I told you about.

Joan bravely offers her hand to Elaine.

YOUNG JOAN
I loved your reading. Your prose
is absolutely brilliant. It's
clean and vivid and bold.

ELAINE MOZELL
But you know what? The public
can't stomach bold prose from a
woman. Their loss. You're talented,
I hear.

YOUNG JOAN
(blushing)
Oh. Thank you. I love to write.
It's my life.

ELAINE MOZELL
Don't do it.

YOUNG JOAN
Excuse me?

ELAINE MOZELL
C'mere.

Elaine pulls Joan over to the stacks.

ELAINE MOZELL (CONT'D)
You know where your books will end
up?

She points her drink up at a small row of books on a top shelf.

ELAINE MOZELL (CONT'D)
Right there. On the alumni shelf.
Pick one, any one. Go ahead.

Joan slides a book out.

ELAINE MOZELL (CONT'D)
Open it up.

Joan opens the book and the spine gives off a stiff crack.

ELAINE MOZELL (CONT'D)
You hear that? That's the sound of
a book that's never been opened.
Don't ever think you can get their
attention.

YOUNG JOAN
Whose?

ELAINE MOZELL
The men who write the reviews, who
run the publishing houses, who edit
the magazines, the ones who decide
who gets to be taken seriously, who
gets to be put up on the pedestal
for the rest of their lives. Who
gets to be King Shit.

YOUNG JOAN
But a writer has to write.

ELAINE MOZELL
A writer has to be read, Honey.

Elaine sets her empty drink on the book shelf and walks off,
leaving Young Joan crushed. She reaches up and touches the
spines of all those tragically unopened books.

28 INT. WAVERLY ARMS, JOE & JOAN'S ROOM -- SUMMER MORNING, 1958

Young Joe is banging away at his typewriter.

Joan, dressed for her secretarial job, is finishing hanging
some laundry. She grabs her purse and coat and gives Joe a
passionate kiss goodbye.

29 INT. BOWER & LEEDS PUBLISHING -- DAY, SUMMER 1958

29

Young Joan is carrying in a tray of coffee into the office
conference room. She passes by another SECRETARY, an older
woman who's carrying out the remains of the men's lunch.
Neither of them look at each other as they're only there to
serve the men in the room.

We see the publisher Hal Bower who's now in his 40's (we saw him in his 70's at the top of the film) having a meeting with his editors, WHITE and LOVEJOY who are all pitching him manuscripts.

LOVEJOY

...I have a writer who I think is the next Henry Miller. He's a hopeless drunk and will probably self-destruct in a few years, so I suggest we grab him now.

HAL

All right, I'll give it a read.

Lovejoy holds his coffee cup up to Joan.

LOVEJOY

Honey, top me off, will you?

WHITE

I have a novel here by a lady writer. It's about an American family that spans three generations. It's great writing, kind of brilliant in parts. But I thought it was a little soft.

HAL

Soft?

WHITE

It's from the point of view of this woman. I don't know, just didn't grab me.

LOVEJOY

Is she good-looking?

WHITE

So-so.

HAL

How about Jewish writers. Anyone have any smart young Jewish writers? All the big houses have one. Where the hell is ours?

CLOSE ON Joan taking this in. She screws up her courage, and addresses this room of men with as much authority that she can muster.

YOUNG JOAN

Mr. Bower?

HAL

Hmm?

YOUNG JOAN

I think I may have what you're
looking for.

30 INT. WAVERLY ARMS, JOE & JOAN'S ROOM -- EARLY EVENING, WINTER
1957

Joan flings the door open to their sad little room,
breathless. Joe is cooking soup for their dinner on a hot
plate. He looks at Joan, afraid to ask.

YOUNG JOE

So what did he say?

YOUNG JOAN

Oh Joe, he loves it.

YOUNG JOE

They want to publish it?

YOUNG JOAN

Yes.

YOUNG JOE

C'mere. C'mere you.

Joe takes Joan's face in his hands and kisses her.

Then they both start screaming for joy. Joe pulls Joan up on
the bed and they start jumping up and down -- the origin of
this ritual.

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

(in a sing song)

We're getting pu-blished, we're
getting pu-blished!

31 INT. CASTLEMAN SUITE, GRAND HOTEL -- LATER, NIGHT 31

Joan, lying deep in the folds of the eiderdown, wakes up with
a gasp from some unpleasant dream. She turns over to Joe's
side of the bed and sees that he's not there. She looks at
the clock on the bedside table. It's 1:15 AM.

32 INT. GRAND HOTEL, DINING ROOM -- NIGHT 32

Joe is sitting alone at a table lit by a candelabra in the
middle of the darkened dining room having a late-night snack
of dense Swedish bread and fat-laden spreads.

He looks up and sees Linnea across the dining room taking his
picture. She lowers the camera and comes towards him,
looking like a Nordic sylph in this light.

LINNEA

What a beautiful shot. The candles...it's marvelous, like a Carravagio.

JOE

Would you like to join me?

LINNEA

No, I must go home to bed.

JOE

Is it still snowing out there?

LINNEA

Yes.

JOE

Then I'll send you out with this:
"His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead."

LINNEA

How beautiful. Did you write that?

Joe gives her a pained smile and shakes his head no.

Linnea sees Joan standing in the doorway wearing her coat over her nightgown. She's come down from the room, looking for him and has been listening to this exchange.

LINNEA (CONT'D)

(getting up)

It is time for bed. God natt sov gott. [Good night, sleep well]

JOAN

Yes, good night.

Linnea leaves.

Joe starts buttering a piece of bread.

JOE

I know you're going to tell me I'm going to kill myself, eating all this fat.

JOAN

Yes, you will.

Joan sits down at the table and stares at her husband through the candlelight.

JOE

What is we blow this whole thing off? What if we go hole up in some cabin on a fiord. We can drink ourselves silly and howl at the northern lights.

JOAN

If only.

FADE OUT.

33

INT. CASTLEMAN SUITE, GRAND HOTEL -- NEXT DAY

33

Joan, up and dressed for the day, is sitting in an arm chair, staring at Joe who's fast asleep under the eiderdown. Her face is unreadable.

There's a knock on the door. She gets up and goes down the hall and lets in the ROOM SERVICE SERVER who's pushing a cart elegantly set with breakfast.

JOAN

Mr. Castleman will have that in the library, thank you.

We FOLLOW Joan back to the bedroom where she gives Joe a little shake.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Joe...

JOE

Mmm?

JOAN

You need to get up. They're picking you up in forty minutes.

JOE

Jesus...all right, I'm getting up.

JOAN

Your lunch is here. Here're your extra reading glasses. And here are your pills.

JOE

You're not coming with me?

JOAN

I'd like some time to myself.

JOE

To do what?

JOAN

I don't know, maybe I'll take a tour of the city.

JOE

On some lousy tourist bus?

JOAN

Joe, please. I'll be in a much better mood if you let me go.

JOE

I just thought this was something we should be doing together.

Joan sets down Joe's heart pills.

JOAN

You need to take one of these at three. I'm setting the alarm on your watch.

Joan puts Joe's watch back on his bedside table and leaves.

34

INT. GRAND HOTEL -- DAY

34

Joan, freed of Joe's celebrity, is taking her own sweet time walking through the lobby. No one is bowing and scraping, no one is taking pictures, no one is hovering with awe in their eyes...

BONE (O.S.)

Mrs. Castleman...

Joan turns and sees Nathaniel getting up from one of the elegant sitting areas. He has a newspaper tucked under his arm.

JOAN

Nathaniel.

BONE

I'm not stalking you, I promise. But I have something for you -- I was going to leave it for you at the desk...

Bone pulls out an envelope and hands it to Joan.

BONE (CONT'D)

I found it at a bookstore at Smith when I was doing research on Joe.

Joan pulls out a hand-tinted post card, circa 1927, of some young college women doing a skit, the caption: Northrop House Follies, Smith College.

JOAN

Oh, Northrop House. That was my dorm.

BONE

I know. The picture's a bit before your time, but I thought you'd get a kick out of it.

Joan is impressed by the gift but doesn't entirely trust Bone.

JOAN

Thank you, Nathaniel, this was very thoughtful.

BONE

Well, you've always been very kind to me during my aborted attempts to woo Joe. Listen, there's a great bar here, very nineteenth century. You can imagine Strinberg getting hammered there. Can I buy you a drink?

JOAN

Oh, I don't know how appropriate that would be.

BONE

It's completely inappropriate. But we're in Sweden in the dead of winter and I don't think either of us should be left alone to our own brooding thoughts, do you?

Bone is actually flirting with her. Joan finds it rather enjoyable. Joe would be appalled. And that's why she says...

JOAN

One drink. No more.

Joan and Bone are now sitting in a quaint, wood panelled tavern. It's a cozy, intimate place, good for losing one's sobriety. They're both having icy, vodka-based drinks.

BONE

...listen, I want you to know that I've gotten an offer to write a book about Joe. I wanted to tell you so you don't think I'm doing anything behind his back.

JOAN

And is this going to be a scholarly work?

BONE

Yes and no.

JOAN

Meaning what?

BONE

Please don't take offense, but you might as well know that I'm aware of Joe's various indiscretions.

JOAN

(unruffled)

I'm sure you are. I imagine it's all very juicy material for a biographer.

BONE

To be honest, it's a little predictable. Most of your men of genius seem to have overactive libidos. And thanks to the worshipful tomes put out by us biographers, we're supposed to find it all very charming and forgivable. I don't, actually. I think that kind of behavior is rather appalling.

JOAN

Please don't paint me as a victim. I'm much more interesting than that.

BONE

Oh, I know you are. Look, I don't want to make the wrong assumptions about your relationship. So why don't you set me straight?

JOAN

Oh Nathaniel, you're so transparent. I can't believe I let you lure me here.

BONE

Of course you're free to get up and leave this cozy cafe and these excellent drinks and spend the rest of the afternoon in some drafty museum of obscure Nordic art.

Joan takes a careful sip of her drink.

JOAN

All right. You have an hour with me.

BONE

Thank you, Joan. I really do appreciate this. And if there's anything you don't want to talk about, feel free to tell me to fuck off.

JOAN

Oh, don't worry, I will.

36

INT. STOCKHOLM CONCERT HALL STAGE -- DAY

36

We're on stage where WORKMEN are arranging giant stands of flowers to frame the ceremony. A TELEVISION CREW is setting up for the broadcast.

James Finch and the other LAUREATES are gathered on stage for a rehearsal. They're all chatting amicably among themselves while the NOBEL ORGANIZERS and ASSISTANTS stand on the sidelines, watching them in delight.

Joe arrives with Walter in tow.

WALTER

Mister Castleman, let me introduce you to your fellow laureates. Gentlemen, this is Joseph Castleman who is to receive the Nobel Prize in literature.

The other laureates pause in their conversations and turn to Joe. They all shake hands as they're introduced.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Professor Finch, you have already met...this is Professor Chen Ling who's receiving the prize in chemistry...Doctor Karl Seigler, our esteemed laureate in medicine...and Sir Randall Meade who's receiving the prize in economics.

Joe, intimidated by all this brilliance, is grinning and hunting around for something pithy to say.

JOE

Well, to quote Groucho Marx, "I never want to be a member of a club that would have me." However, with this crowd I'd be an idiot not to make an exception.

Hearty laughter from the great men.

Linnea is there with her camera. She takes a few quick shots to capture this moment, then gives Joe a wink.

WALTER

I will turn you over to Mr. Lagerfelt who will instruct you on the protocol for tomorrow's ceremony.

The impeccable MR. LAGERFELT steps forward.

MR. LAGERFELT

Gentlemen, you will be entering from this side of the stage, in this order: Sir Meade, Professor Finch, Mr. Castleman, Professor Ling and Doctor Seigler. You will take your seats here, indicated, for now, by these signs with your names. When it is your time to receive your medal, you will walk from your seat, to here. And you will receive your medal from the King.

Mr. Lagerfelt demonstrates with an OLDER GENTLEMAN who's standing in for the king and gives him the medal box.

MR. LAGERFELT (CONT'D)

You shall then bow, making the three reverences. Like so. We will start with you Mr. Castleman.

Joe, feeling the other laureates' eyes on him, can't focus.

JOE

I'm sorry -- do I bow first?

MR. LAGERFELT

You approach the king and then you bow.

JOE

Ah -- sorry.

MR. LAGERFELT

No need to apologize. That is why we are practicing.

JAMES FINCH

It's not rocket science, Castleman!

The other laureates chuckle good-naturedly but Joe grimaces a bit. He approaches the gentleman playing the king who hands him a stand-in for the box with the Nobel medal. Linnea is clicking away, her camera feeling a little too close.

MR. LAGERFELT

And now the three reverences.

Joe awkwardly bows in the three directions as Linnea continues to take her shots -- click...click...click....

MR. LAGERFELT (CONT'D)

Very good Mr. Castleman, you may now return to your seat.

Joe is sweating.

JOE

If you'll excuse me for a moment...

WALTER

(hovering)

Are you feeling all right, Mr. Castleman?

JOE

I just need to take a break, excuse me.

WALTER

Can I bring you some water?

JOE

I'm fine, I'm fine. Thank you. Carry on!

Joe walks off the stage.

37

INT. GOLDEN ONION -- DAY

37

Bone is getting out his cigarettes -- foreign, of course. He offers one to Joan.

BONE

Do you smoke?

JOAN

Not officially.

BONE

I would guess that Joe made you give it up.

JOAN

Yes, he wants to keep me healthy.

Joan takes a cigarette. Bone lights it for her. There's a hint of seduction in the gesture.

Bone pulls out a notebook.

BONE

May I?

JOAN

Go ahead.

BONE

First fascinating query -- this is the publisher's not mine: "What does the Nobel Prize mean to Joseph Castleman?"

JOAN

Oh God.

BONE

What if I just quote what he said to me on the plane, "it's not about the prize, it's about getting up the gumption to write the next book."

JOAN

Perfect. Thank you.

BONE

And what about you? How do you get up the gumption?

JOAN

To get up in the morning?

BONE

To write.

JOAN

I'm not a writer, Nathaniel.

BONE

I beg to differ. When I was looking through the Smith archives I found some of your stories that were published in the college journal. I read "The Faculty Wife." It's a beautifully written piece.

JOAN

Thank you, but the fact is I had potential and nothing more.

BONE

And you don't regret giving it up?

JOAN

No, I had very low expectations of what I could accomplish as a female writer.

BONE

But there were plenty of successful women writers back then.

JOAN

A few. But I didn't have the right personality for it.

BONE

Really.

JOAN

I'm quite shy. I don't like to be looked at.

BONE

All right, I won't look at you.

JOAN

How kind.

Joan takes a sip of her drink.

JOE

Did Joe encourage you to keep writing?

JOAN

Yes, but as I said, I didn't choose to pursue it.

BONE

Because he was the writer of the family.

JOAN

Now Nathaniel, if you're trolling for nuggets of bitterness you'll find none here.

BONE

Speaking of bitterness, I've talked to his ex, Carol.

JOAN

How is she doing?

BONE

She's a psychiatrist.

JOAN

Oh. Good for her. And their daughter, Fanny?

BONE

She's a dentist. Carol forgives you, by the way.

JOAN

I'm glad. Joe tried to keep in contact with them...I urged him to. We both feel very badly about that chapter of our lives.

BONE

She said to thank you for taking him off her hands.

JOAN

She's welcome.

Joan takes a drag of her cigarette, taps the ash. Bone is watching her.

BONE

I hope you know that Joe's affairs don't have anything to do with you. It's a compulsion. I believe it's a part of his deep-seated fear of inadequacy.

JOAN

Well, aren't you the therapist.

BONE

Do you have anyone that you confide in?

JOAN

No. But I don't really care to.

BONE

And that's what makes you so attractive. Your mystery.

JOAN

My God, Nathaniel, are you flirting with me?

BONE

Oh, probably. Why not?

JOAN

You know I don't trust you.

BONE

Of course you don't. I'm a writer
on a deadline, why should you?

The waiter comes by and sets down a little plate of Swedish
meatballs.

BONE (CONT'D)

Would you like another drink?

JOAN

One is my limit, thank you.

BONE

Oh come on. I'm having another.

JOAN

No, Nathaniel.

Nathaniel signals to the waiter to bring two more.

38

INT. STOCKHOLM CONCERT HALL, CHAMBER ROOM-- DAY

38

Joe has wandered into a formal, re-carpeted chamber that is
surrounded on all sides by doors and mirrors. He looks
around it, disorientated.

LINNEA (O.S.)

Mr. Castleman?

Joe turns and sees Linnea. She holds her hands up to show
that she doesn't have her cameras with her.

LINNEA (CONT'D)

I come to you unarmed. I could see
that I was getting on your nerves.
All that clicking in your face. I
do apologize.

JOE

No apologies necessary, it's your
job.

LINNEA

They told me that if you wish, they
will release you for the day.

JOE

I wish that, yes.
(looking at all the doors)
Which one of these offers the
quickest escape?

LINNEA

Shall we try them and see? There
my be a secret passageway.

JOE
Or a dead end.

LINNEA
We must choose carefully.

JOE
Indeed.

They stand there together, playing this little game, the sexual tension between them palpable.

LINNEA
May I confess something.

JOE
Go ahead.

LINNEA
I am usually very objective about my subjects. But you move me. Very much.

JOE
Do I.

LINNEA
You have a wonderful face.

Linnea cups Joe's head in her hands and peers into his face, eyes shining. She touches his strong, high brow, the lines on his forehead, evidence of all that genius...

LINNEA (CONT'D)
Your mind...where does it all come from?

Joe can see that she wants to be kissed. How can he resist her luscious young lips or the comforting territory of a young acolyte's ass. BEE-BEE, BEE-BEE. The alarm on Joe's watch has gone off.

JOE
Oh shit.

He starts fiddling with his watch, trying to turn it off.

JOE (CONT'D)
Shit. My pills.

LINNEA
Your pills?

JOE
For my blood pressure.

LINNEA

Do you need to take them?

JOE

I think I should head back to the hotel.

LINNEA

Yes, all right.

Joe is dying. He wants to get out of there. He pulls a walnut out of his pocket and offers it up to her.

JOE

Here --

Joe gets out a pen and starts writing on it.

JOE (CONT'D)

To Linnea -- that's L-I-N-E-A..

LINNEA

No, two N's.

JOE

Two N's.

Joe tries to rub the letters out.

LINNEA

That's all right -- I should go. Do you know the way out?

JOE

Yes. I'm fine. Go ahead.

Linnea makes a hasty exit, leaving Joe holding the walnut, feeling like an utter fool.

JOE (CONT'D)

Aw shit.

39

INT. THE GOLDEN ONION -- DAY

39

Joan has made a healthy dent in her second drink. She and Bone are lighting up another cigarette.

BONE

You know, I'm curious about something. Off the record.

JOAN

Off the record -- we've all heard that one before.

BONE

On my honor.

Bone puts his note pad down.

BONE (CONT'D)

I've read some of Joe's early work -
- some short stories I dug up in a
couple of obscure literary
journals. I hate to say it, but
they weren't so great.

JOAN

Early work is rarely very readable,
I think you know that.

BONE

But there isn't even a hint of his
mature voice. In fact your piece,
"The Faculty Wife" reads more like
early Castleman than these do.

JOAN

That doesn't surprise me. Joe had
a very heavy hand as a teacher.

BONE

Fair enough, but when I talked to
Carol, she said it was odd how his
writing got so much better after he
met you.

JOAN

That's very generous of her.

BONE

With all respect, I think you're
tired of his affairs, tired of
being invisible, tired of putting
your enormous talent into creating
the Castleman legend. And for the
health of your family, this might
be something you'd want to do.
David seems like a very unhappy
young man.

JOAN

You have no business talking about
my children.

BONE

No, you're right. I apologize.

(gently)

I think you really do want to talk.
And I give you my word, I'll never
reveal my source. I'll be the bad
guy so you don't have to feel like
you're betraying Joe. The truth
will be out and then you'd be free
to write on your own.

JOAN

What a marvelous story, Nathaniel.
You really ought to write fiction.

Joan gets up.

BONE

You know where to find me. And
Joan, I want you to know -- I
really do enjoy your company.

Joan gives Bone one of her gracious, elusive smiles and she
leaves him there to stew over his drink.

40

INT. GRAND HOTEL, CASTLEMAN SUITE -- NIGHT

40

Joan, looking rattled, is now letting herself into the suite.
We hear Joe calling.

JOE (O.S.)

Joan?! Joanie?! Is that you?!

JOAN

Yes.

Joe appears, half-dressed in his boxer shorts and dress
shirt.

JOE

Where have you been? I've been
worried sick.

JOAN

Joe, it's only four-thirty.

JOE

But look how dark it is already!
Don't do this to me, don't
disappear on me like that.

JOAN

I didn't disappear. I was gone for
a few hours.

JOE

What did you do all day?

JOAN

I walked around, visited shops.

JOE

You've had a cigarette. I can smell
it on you.

JOAN

I stopped at a cafe. It was filled
with smoke.

JOE

You've been drinking too.

JOAN

I had a vodka.

JOE

In the middle of the day?

JOAN

Yes, Joe, in the middle of the day.

Joan makes her way through the suite to the master bedroom, Joe following.

JOE

You need to pace yourself. You shouldn't be showing up at these functions with alcohol on your breath.

JOAN

You're the one who's the star of the show, why would anyone possibly care?

JOE

What the hell's gotten into you?

JOAN

I don't like you lecturing me. I'm not a child.

Joe has left his pants and shirt in a heap on the floor. Joan starts picking them up.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Dammit, Joe, would you not leave your clothes on the floor? I'm sick of picking up after you.

JOE

Leave it. Here, lemme have it.

As Joe grabs his pants from Joan the walnut falls out of the pocket.

JOAN

What's that?

Joe moves in, picks it up.

JOE

I was hungry, I bought some walnuts.

JOAN

Let me see it.

JOE
Come on, Joanie.

JOAN
Let me see it.

Joan grabs at the walnut. Joe tries to keep it away. They wrestle over it like a couple of ten-year-olds.

JOE
What're you doing? You're acting crazy.

Joan pries the walnut out of Joe's hand. She stares at the half-completed inscription.

JOAN
So while I was out being the drunken lush, you, the picture of sobriety, were seducing the luscious young Linnea.

JOE
Nothing happened.

Joan hurls the walnut at Joe. It hits him smack in the middle of his forehead.

JOE (CONT'D)
Ow! Jesus, Joanie.

JOAN
Don't insult my intelligence, don't you dare.

JOE
Nothing happened! I was the one who stopped it.

JOAN
Well bully for you.

JOE
Yes bully for me! You know why I stopped? Because I was thinking about you sitting on some fucking tour bus, feeling neglected, with no one to talk to and I rushed back here so you wouldn't be sitting here all alone! And then I end up waiting for you!

JOAN
So sorry, Joe, I should've let you know I'd be late so you could finish screwing your photographer.

JOE

I wasn't going to screw her, God dammit. I'm not even attracted to the fucking woman. In fact all I could think about was getting back to you.

JOAN

I'm touched.

The phone is ringing.

JOE

You think I'm proud of my behavior? It sickens me. I'm too old for this shit! I'm done! I'm all yours.

JOAN

Well goody for me.

Joan picks up the phone.

JOAN (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hello?

SUSANNAH (ON PHONE)

Hi Mom.

JOAN

Susannah.

SUSANNAH (ON PHONE)

I had the baby.

JOAN

Oh! Joe! Susannah had her baby!

JOE

Oh my God!

JOAN

Get on the other line!

Joe runs to the library and grabs the phone by the toilet.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Oh Sweetie, when did this happen?

SUSANNAH (ON PHONE)

A couple of hours ago. I'm looking at him right now. He's beautiful. Mark is holding him. He's making little mewling sounds.

JOE

It's a boy?! You had a boy?!
What'd you name him?

SUSANNAH ON PHONE

Max.

JOE

Who does he look like?

SUSANNAH ON PHONE

Dad, I know you want me to say that
he looks like you, but right now he
just looks like a very sweet baby.

JOE

Put the phone next to his ear, I
want to say hello.

SUSANNAH ON PHONE

Hold on...Mark take the phone, Dad
wants to talk to the baby...

JOE

Is he on?

We hear snuffling on the other end.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hello Maxwell, how ya doing? It's
your grandpa Joe, whatta ya know?

JOAN

Hello, beautiful boy, it's Grandma.
Hello.

More snuffling.

JOE

He's talking to us, you hear that?

JOAN

You are the sweetest boy in all the
world. Oh I wish I had you in my
arms right now.

We hear the phone being handed back.

SUSANNAH (ON PHONE)

Dad, Mom, I have to go. Mark's
parents just got here.

We can hear the other grandparents gushing over the baby.

JOE

Give that Max a big kiss for us,
will you?

SUSANNAH (ON PHONE)

I will.

JOAN

We love you, sweetheart. We love you very much.

SUSANNAH (ON PHONE)

Love you too. Bye bye.

Joan and Joe hang up. Joe comes back into the bedroom. Joan is already starting to cry. Joe puts his arms around her.

JOE

Aw Joanie, it doesn't any get better than this. Say what you will about the crap we put each other through -- we still have a wonderful fucking life.

41 INT. GRAND HOTEL BAR -- NIGHT

41

The Castlemans and Joe's entourage are all in the bar which has been taken over by all the Laureates who are now all happily getting drunk.

Joe, still glowing from the news of his grandchild is sitting with David, full of affection for his son. They're both leaning together, deep in conversation while Joan sits back, sipping a cognac, glad to see the two of them making amends.

JOE

You're a gifted writer David, you are.

DAVID

Thank you, Dad. I appreciate that.

JOE

I liked your story. It's well structured.

DAVID

But...

JOE

There's always a but with a first draft. Come on, you know that. You want to hear this?

DAVID

Sure, yeah, go on.

JOE

I don't completely buy what you did with the couple -- the blowhard husband, the stoic wife with the
(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

repressed rage. We've seen it.
It's a cliché. You can do better.

DAVID

Okay...Jesus.

JOE

It's part of the process, David.
It's painful, I know. Writing is a
fucking agony.

JOAN

Yes Darling, it's dreadful. You
suffer enormously.

Joe gives Joan a curious look.

JOE

Time for bed. I'm taking your
mother to bed. Have a good night,
Boyo, don't stay up too late.

JOAN

Good night, Darling. Call your
sister. She'd love to hear from
you.

Joe and Joan leave to a chorus of ebullient good nights.

STAY ON David as he watches his parents walk away, his father affectionately supporting his elegant, tipsy mother, his hand squeezing her waist. They're going to have celebratory sex, no doubt.

David sees Ellen Finch sitting with her brother Sam at a table. She looks up expectantly to David, eager to have him join her. David can't face this girl with her crush on him and pretends not to see her.

He pats his pockets for cigarettes but he's all out. He goes over to the bar and mimes a cigarette to the Swedish bartender.

DAVID

Cigaretten?

BARTENDER

(in perfect English)

I'm very sorry Sir, we don't sell
them here.

BONE (O.S.)

Here, you can have one of mine.

David turns and sees Bone who's discreetly tucked himself in at the bar.

DAVID

Oh. Hey.

Bone offers David his pack of cigarettes.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Thanks.

They both light up and look over at a table where Ellen and Sam Finch are huddled together drinking beers.

BONE

I've been watching them. The girl chews her hair and the other one has a tic.

DAVID

Yeah, they're pretty screwed up.

BONE

Aren't we all. My dad taught at Yale. He made me recite the Iliad at the dinner table. In Greek.

DAVID

That's really fucked up.

BONE

You want to know what's really, really fucked up? He didn't understand a fucking word of it.

They laugh and light up.

BONE (CONT'D)

So what're you drinking?

42 INT. GRAND HOTEL, CASTLEMAN SUITE -- NIGHT

42

Joe is out cold, softly snoring in the billows of the eiderdown.

Joan, wide awake, is sitting in the library sipping a brandy, waiting to fall asleep. She stares at all the Castleman books that are displayed on the shelf. She pulls out THE WALNUT. It's a slim book, with a simple, classy cover design that says to the world, this is an IMPORTANT book. Joan opens it up to the dedication: **TO J., IN AWE. J.**

43 INT. WAVERLY ARMS, JOE & JOAN'S ROOM -- DAY, SUMMER 1957 43

EXTREME CLOSE ON young Joan reading something. We see the reflection of the pages in her eyes as her pupils flick from word to word.

She turns the last page over and lets out a long, despairing sigh. She taps the pages back together, into a neat stack.

CLOSE ON the title page: THE WALNUT.

Young Joe comes bursting through the door.

YOUNG JOE

Okay, I walked to Harlem and back, had five espressos, and made my way through a pack and a half of cigarettes.

He sits down on the bed with her, sees his manuscript. It's been read. Good.

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

So? What do you think?

Joan is in agony. She can't speak. Joe is hoping this means that she's struck dumb by his brilliance.

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

What. Tell me.

YOUNG JOAN

Look. You asked me to be honest.

YOUNG JOE

So talk.

YOUNG JOAN

I'm really, really sorry, Joe, but it doesn't work for me.

YOUNG JOE

What do you mean?

YOUNG JOAN

Somehow...it never really comes alive. I wanted more than anything to be moved. But I wasn't. I'm sorry.

YOUNG JOE

It's because the subject is too close to you. I should get a more objective opinion.

YOUNG JOAN

The characters are wooden, Joe. No offense, but you haven't made them real.

YOUNG JOE

That doesn't mean anything. Get specific.

YOUNG JOAN

Well the dialogue, for one thing
...Um, it's stilted.

(nervously flipping
through the pages)

Let me see if I can find an
example...

YOUNG JOE

Fuck this. This isn't going to
work.

YOUNG JOAN

What isn't?

YOUNG JOE

This whole thing. You and me.
This love affair of ours, whatever
you want to call it.

YOUNG JOAN

Joe, just because I don't like your
novel doesn't mean that I don't
love you --

YOUNG JOE

Of course it does. How can you love
me if you think I'm a hack?

Joan is starting to cry.

YOUNG JOAN

Joe, please!

YOUNG JOE

How can I be with someone who has
no respect for me?

YOUNG JOAN

I do respect you! I respect you in
all kinds of ways!

YOUNG JOE

"All kinds of ways"?! Fuck that!
Tell me that you believe in me as a
writer!

YOUNG JOAN

It's only your first draft, Joe!

YOUNG JOE

Screw it, Joanie, it's over.

Joan is now a sobbing wreck.

YOUNG JOAN

Oh God! No, Joe, it can't be over!

YOUNG JOE

This relationship is doomed!

YOUNG JOAN

We're not doomed!

YOUNG JOE

What am I supposed to do, go back and teach English at some second-rate college? Since obviously I just blew it with the Ivy Leagues by screwing one of my students.

YOUNG JOAN

I'm not just one of your students!

YOUNG JOE

No, you're the girl with the golden touch! You'll go on to be the literary sensation while I stay at home grading papers and cooking the pot roast!

YOUNG JOAN

I'm not going to be a literary sensation, you bastard! Not ever! No one will ever publish my books! And if they do, no one will read them! I'll end up like Elaine Mozell, bitter and angry and drunk!

This declaration somehow calms Joe down a bit.

YOUNG JOAN (CONT'D)

I'm not full of big ideas the way you are! You're the brilliant one! You're the one who has something to say, not me! Please don't leave me, please. If I lose you, my life is over!

Joe sits on the bed with Joan and holds her. He starts crying as well.

YOUNG JOE

I'm not going anywhere, shush.

YOUNG JOAN

I don't want to live without you!

YOUNG JOE

I don't want to live without you either. Oh Joanie, life is so fucking unfair

They both hold on to each other for a beat madly kissing and weeping.

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

Okay, okay, let's try to calm down.
We'll be okay.

Joe gets out his hankie. They both share it, wiping off their tears.

YOUNG JOAN

What are we going to do?

YOUNG JOE

I dunno. Lemme think.

Joe gets out the cigarettes and hands one to Joan. They both light up.

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

So you think it hopeless, this piece of shit I wrote?

YOUNG JOAN

It's not a piece of shit, Joe.
It's a really compelling story.
The ideas are all there. I know how to fix it. I can see it.

(a beat)

Do you want me to fix it?

A long beat.

YOUNG JOAN (CONT'D)

Do you Joe?

YOUNG JOE

Go ahead. Make it yours.

44

INT. GRAND HOTEL, CASTLEMAN SUITE -- DUSK

44

Joan and Joe are dressed and ready to go -- Joe in white tie and tails and Joan in an elegant evening gown with jewels at her throat. She's touching up the maturing walnut bruise on Joe's forehead with base from her compact.

JOE

Where the hell is he?

JOAN

Joe, relax.

JOE

If he doesn't show up, that's it.
We're going without him.

The buzzer is ringing.

JOAN

You see? There he is.

JOE
(the bruise)
How do I look? Can you tell?

JOAN
It looks fine. Don't touch it.

Joan goes to the door and lets David in, who's dressed in a tux.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Hello, Darling. Look how handsome you are.

JOE
You're late. We better get going.
(nervously patting his pockets)
...where're my glasses? Joanie, you have my glasses?

JOAN
They're in my purse.

JOE
You have the invitations?

JOAN
I don't think we'll need them.

JOE
You never know.

David is rummaging in one of the fruit baskets.

JOE (CONT'D)
David, c'mere, your bow tie is all wrong, let me fix it.

DAVID
No, I have it.

JOE
You don't know how to tie it. C'mere.

David starts moving away.

JOE (CONT'D)
Come on, stand still.

Joe pulls David's bow tie apart and starts to re-tie it. He sniffs at David's collar.

DAVID
(pulling away)
What're you doing.

JOE

You've been smoking pot.

DAVID

No I haven't.

JOE

Yes you have, you reek of it!

JOAN

Joe, calm down.

JOE

No, I won't! Look at him. He's completely stoned!

(to David)

What the hell is the matter with you?

DAVID

I guess I'm a real embarrassment to you, huh Pop?

JOE

What kind of hostile crap is that?

JOAN

Joe.

(evenly)

David, what's going on?

David starts trying to fix his tie.

DAVID

I don't know, Mom, I'm trying to figure out if I've been worshipping at the wrong parental shrine.

JOE

What the hell are you talking about?

David just shakes his head, stays focused on the tie.

JOE (CONT'D)

(to Joan)

He's a mess. What are we supposed to do with him?

DAVID

I'm not a pronoun, Pop, I'm standing right here.

JOE

Then talk to us, for Chrissakes!

JOAN

Joe, don't shout at him.

JOE

Yes I will. We're late! We're supposed to be in the limo right now and he's already spoiling my night with this bullshit.

DAVID

Is it?

JOE

Is it what?

DAVID

Your night. Because according to your biographer this could all be some brilliant fraud.

JOE

What biographer?

DAVID

That guy on the plane, with the glasses and the hair, Andy Warhol with pigment.

JOE

Nathaniel Bone? He's not my fucking biographer! What're you talking about?

DAVID

He was in the bar last night.

JOAN

David, what did he say to you?

DAVID

He said I shouldn't measure myself against my venerable father's success because there's a theory that you, my mother, are the real genius of the family.

JOAN

David, that's ridiculous.

DAVID

Why would he make such a twisted thing up?

JOE

Don't be an idiot, David. He's out to get me because I won't authorize his hack-job on my life.

DAVID

I'm not an idiot! Why would you call me that?

JOE

All right, calm down.

DAVID

But of course, if what he said is true, then I'd really be a fucking idiot wouldn't I?

JOAN

You're not an idiot, David.

JOE

I don't mean to state the obvious, but I think the pot is making you paranoid.

DAVID

I'm not fucking paranoid!

JOAN

Honey, Nathaniel Bone is an unscrupulous man and he had no right to tell you these things.

DAVID

He said he had a drink with you. Did you?

The air very briefly goes out of the room. Joe looks at Joan.

JOAN

I did. He approached me in the lobby and I didn't think it was wise to rebuff him.

DAVID

He said that you confessed.

JOAN

Confessed what?

DAVID

He said that you ghostwrite dad's books.

JOAN

I never said that.

DAVID

Do you?

JOAN

No, David, I don't.

DAVID

I don't believe you.

JOAN

(with great calm)

I can't make you believe me, Honey.
It's up to you what you believe.

JOE

David, these are lies. It's fucking outrageous.

DAVID

Okay. But let me just ask you something, Dad. Why were the two of you always closing the door on me with her inside? What the fuck was she doing in there?

JOE

What're you talking about?

DAVID

The fucking door to your office! It was always being slammed in my face! With the two of you inside --

JOE

Your mother was proofreading.

DAVID

I DON'T FUCKING BELIEVE YOU!

David grabs the gift card from the box of chocolates.

DAVID (CONT'D)

YOU ASKED MOM WHO THE HELL IS SYLVIA FRY! YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR OWN FUCKING CHARACTERS!

David kicks over a table, sending Joe's gift baskets and chocolates flying.

JOE

That's enough now, David, that's enough!

David starts shoving Joe against the wall.

DAVID

FUCK YOU! YOU'RE A MONSTER! YOU'VE MADE A SLAVE OF MY MOTHER!

JOE

(scared now)

Okay...okay...

JOAN

David, stop, you have to calm down. Your father doesn't control me. I'm fine.

David starts sobbing.

DAVID

This is all so fucked up...I'm
sorry...

JOE

Listen, I know it's not easy being
my son. I know that.

DAVID

Ma...

JOAN

It's all right, Darling.

Joan puts her arms around David and he sobs against her
chest.

JOE

Look, we've all been under a lot of
pressure. And you're exhausted.
You haven't slept in what, three
days?

Joe pats David's back.

JOE (CONT'D)

Listen, why don't you skip the
ceremony, get some rest. Take the
night off, order up some food.
That sound good to you?

Joe looks at Joan in agony but she can't meet his eyes.

45 INT. LIMO -- NIGHT

45

Joe and Joan are sitting apart from each other in silence.
There's still a slight wet spot on Joan's gown from David's
crying fit.

JOE

We're not bad people, Joanie.

Joan has nothing to say to this. They drive on.

46 INT. CASTLEMAN HOME, OFFICE -- DAY, 1968

46

We see Young Joan sitting at her large wrap-around desk in
front of a typewriter while Young Joe stands behind her,
massaging her shoulders. The two of them are looking down at
her pages that Joe has marked up with red pencil.

YOUNG JOE

This part where you describe her folding his clothes, it goes on too long.

The office door opens and THREE-YEAR-OLD DAVID slips in carrying a little stuffed giraffe.

YOUNG JOAN

It's deliberate, Joe. It's about her boredom while she's waiting for him to show up.

David goes over to Joan and leans against her and starts bouncing the giraffe around her desk.

YOUNG JOAN (CONT'D)

There's a rhythm to it. Do you see? It's an endless list of the prosaic.

YOUNG JOE

I see it. It's good. If that's what you're doing, you need to take it further then.

Joan holds her hand up to Joe.

YOUNG JOAN

I have it.

Joan starts typing. David, wanting Joan's attention, wags the giraffe in front of her face.

YOUNG JOAN (CONT'D)

Sweetie...

YOUNG JOE

(to David)
C'mere, Kiddo.

Joe picks David up and walks him back to the door. He calls out to the hall.

YOUNG JOE (CONT'D)

Melinda...?

Through the door, we see Joe hand David off to their nanny, MELINDA, a young woman who's not beautiful but pleasant enough that Joe might feel compelled to seduce her. He shuts the door behind him and we hear David crying in protest.

Joan looks up from her typing as the sound of David's cries fade as he's being led away. She stares at the closed door for a beat -- was that my child crying? Joan returns to her typing...

PRELAP:

DR. EKEBERG (V.O.)

Mr. Castleman, you have given us a vast, restless and brilliant body of work...

47

INT. STOCKHOLM CONCERT HALL -- NIGHT

47

We see Dr. Ekeberg standing at the podium on the grand Nobel stage delivering his ode to Joe. On one side of the stage is KING GUSTAV OF SWEDEN, QUEEN SYLVIA, and the elderly CROWN PRINCESS VICTORIA who are in their full royal regalia -- medals, ribbons, tiaras and all.

On the other side We see Joe sitting with his fellow laureates, along with the solemn MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMY who are there to bear witness to his lionization.

DR. EKEBERG

With each book, Mr. Castleman, you have challenged the novelistic form and reinvented the very nature of storytelling and of prose. You are a master of style, yet your characters are intensely real, their journeys heartbreaking, their portrayals intimate and deep.

We see Joan, sitting with the other LAUREATE FAMILIES. Next to her is David's empty seat. She's staring at the stage, listening to this man talking about *her* work, *her* voice, *her* gift.

Up in the peanut gallery we see Nathaniel Bone in his rented tux madly taking notes in his pad with a gleeful little grin on his face.

DR. EKEBERG (CONT'D)

The humanity in your writing transcends the boundaries of class and gender. You are a master of words, but more importantly, you are a master at portraying the human condition in all its complexities.

CLOSE ON Joe. We see that he's dying inside but trying to maintain an expression of quiet dignity.

DR. EKEBERG (CONT'D)

Mr. Castleman, I would like to convey to you the warm congratulations of the Swedish Academy as I now request you to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature from his Majesty the King.

As Joe rises from his seat all the notables on stage rise with him, including the royals.

Everyone in the concert hall rises as well, in a great whoosh of tuxes and gowns.

Constance Finch who's so pleased and proud for all of them, reaches over to Joan and give her hand a little squeeze.

There's a reverent hush as Joe makes his way across the stage to King Gustav.

Joe bows his head to the King. King Gustav says a few laudatory words to him then hands him the Nobel medal which is housed in a flat leather box. As they shake hands, a FANFARE sounds and Joe numbly makes his three reverences. And Joan joins the audience in applauding her husband's great achievement.

48

INT. STOCKHOLM CITY HALL, THE BLUE HALL -- NIGHT

48

We're now at the Nobel banquet which is housed in a vast, glittering, two-story hall. Rows of mile-long tables have been elaborately set with flowers, candelabra, and crystal wine glasses to accommodate the plethora of toasts. Seated at the tables are SWEDISH and INTERNATIONAL VIP'S and their patient WIVES, all talking loudly, intoxicated by the event and the generous amount of wine being served.

We see Joan and Joe sitting across from each other at the table of honor with King Gustav and Queen Sylvia. Joe, just trying to get through the night, has slipped back into his role as the charming raconteur. He's been across the table from the two royals who are both hanging on to his every word. Joan is between the King and a DIPLOMAT who's conversing with the WOMAN on his other side. Having no one to talk to, she's staying engaged with her wine.

JOE

...so you brown the brisket in the pot and then you add two cups of water, some ketchup, some garlic salt, and here's the secret ingredient -- a tablespoon of instant coffee.

KING GUSTAV

Really. This is a typical recipe of the American Jewish culture?

JOE

No it's a typical reflection of what a terrible cook my mother was.

The King guffaws.

Joan smiles, drinks down her wine. A uniformed SERVER comes by and Joan gratefully lets him refill her glass.

A NOBEL HOSTESS approaches Joe and the King with great deference.

NOBEL HOSTESS
Excuse me, Your Majesty, if I may
lead Mr. Castleman to the dais.

KING GUSTAV
Yes, of course.

JOE
(to his table mates)
Excuse me. I shall return.

KING GUSTAV
Yes, bravo, please do.

As Joe gets up, he stares across the table at Joan. They lock eyes for a beat and it's possible, just possible, that he's ready to tell the world.

Joe moves off without another word, leaving Joan breathless. She takes a healthy gulp of her wine to possibly prepare herself.

King Gustav politely turns to Joan.

KING GUSTAV (CONT'D)
Tell me about yourself Mrs.
Castleman. Do you have an
occupation?

JOAN
Yes I do.

KING GUSTAV
And what is that?

JOAN
I'm a king-maker.

A beat. The king finally gets it.

KING GUSTAV
You know, my wife will tell you the
same thing.

They both share a jolly chuckle.

Up in the balcony, four TRUMPETERS play a fanfare.

The Nobel Hostess is standing at a podium that's set at the top of a grand staircase. She addresses the guests in Swedish and then again in English:

NOBEL HOSTESS

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highness, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a great honor to introduce the Nobel prize winner in literature, Mr. Joseph Castleman.

To great applause, Joe mounts the stairs to the podium. He stares down at all the expectant faces: his proud team beaming up at him, Linnea with her camera ready, his fellow Laureates looking at him with their deeply intelligent eyes. Joe's mouth has gone dry. He licks his lips.

JOE

Good evening and thank you to the Swedish Academy and Your Majesty for your kind welcome and this magnificent feast. I am deeply grateful for this honor you have given me.

Joe pauses.

JOE (CONT'D)

But really this honor belongs to someone else. My wife Joan.

There's a great rustling as everyone in the hall shifts in their seats to look at Joan. Joan girds herself.

JOE (CONT'D)

Joan is truly my better half. She has made it possible for me to find the stillness, as well as the noise, to create my body of work. Without her, I am certain I would not be standing up here tonight. I would instead be at home staring at a blank piece of paper with my mouth open in stupification.

Warm laughter.

JOE (CONT'D)

She has been my sanity, my conscience, the inspiration for every decent impulse that I've ever had. Joan, you are my muse, my love, my soul. And I share this honor with you.

King Gustav stands, cuing the guests to all rise to their feet to applaud the lovely Joan. Joan can't believe that Joe just reduced her to the wife yet again. She's livid but she maintains her cool and obligingly mouths her thank-you's to the adoring crowd.

49

CUT TO:

49

Joe now returning to the table. The King and all of his jolly table mates give him a round of applause.

Joe goes over to Joan and gives her a kiss. She can't bear to look at him.

We hear another trumpet fanfare and the lights in the hall are dimmed. An orchestra starts playing a processional as a column of SERVERS enter, carrying enormous platters mounded with an elaborate concoction of sherbets and spun sugar.

Joan picks up her purse and gets up from the table.

JOE

Where're you going?

JOAN

I'm leaving.

Joe starts following Joan as she makes her ways between the rows of tables and diners. Joe takes Joan by the elbow and tries to steer her away from servers who are now marching on either side of them with their giant dessert trays.

Joan trips a little in her heels. Joe catches her.

JOE

Joanie, slow down.

Joan jerks away from Joe and stumbles into one of the servers causing his tray to upend, spilling the dessert, sherbets and all, on Joan's gown.

JOE (CONT'D)

Oh Christ.

The server, aghast, starts making mad apologies in Swedish. Diners are turning around. A few GENTLEMAN jump up and offer Joan their napkins.

An army of STAFF swoop in to attend to Joan and the mess on the floor.

Joe is speechless with humiliation.

Mrs. Lindelof appears and starts ushering Joe and Joan out of the hall.

MRS. LINDELÖF

Come, my dear, come, I will take you to the powder room.

JOAN

I want to go back to the hotel.

JOE

I think my wife would like to change. Where is our car?

MRS. LINDELÖF

This way...

50

INT. STOCKHOLM CITY HALL -- CONTINUOUS, NIGHT

50

Joan, walking ahead of Joe and Mrs. Lindelof, is now making her way down the snow-blown steps of the City Hall to where the limos are waiting.

JOE

Joanie, wait up, you're gonna freeze out here

Joe pulls off his tuxedo jacket and throws it over her shoulders.

MRS. LINDELÖF

Mrs. Castleman, if you tell me your dress size, I can have a clean gown delivered to you.

JOAN

Thank you, but I'm done for the night.

Walter breathlessly joins them, carrying the Nobel medal in its box.

WALTER

Mr. Castleman. You left this on the table!

JOE

Ah. Thank you.

WALTER

Mrs. Castleman, we're so very sorry this happened.

JOE

I think I'll ride with her.

WALTER

Of course. But you'll be coming back, yes?

JOE

We'll see.

Gustav is jumping out of the limo and opening the door for the Castlemans.

Joe gets in the car with Joan. Gustav slams the door and runs to his side. We watch the limo take off.

51 INT. LIMO -- CONTINUOUS, NIGHT

51

Joan is shivering. Joe is rubbing her arms.

JOE

Gustav, would you turn up the heat?
And can you give us a little
privacy? Thank you.

The privacy screen glides up. Joe turns back to Joan.

JOE (CONT'D)

Listen, we'll go to the hotel,
you'll change, we'll go back, make
a quick appearance and then we'll
be done with this whole fucking
thing.

JOAN

I'm leaving you Joe.

JOE

What are you talking about?

JOAN

I can't do this anymore.

JOE

Come on, this is crazy. You're not
going to leave me.

JOAN

Please don't act furious, or
heartbroken, or shocked, none of
which you could possibly be.

JOE

Look, I know you didn't want me to
acknowledge you in my speech. But
do think what I said up there was
all for show? I meant every word
of it. Give me some credit.

JOAN

For what?

JOE

For loving you.

JOAN

God, Joe.

JOE

What.

Joan just shakes her head and stares out the window.

Joe takes the Nobel medal out of the box offers it to Joan.

JOE (CONT'D)

Here.

JOAN

I don't want it.

JOE

It belongs to you.

JOAN

No.

JOE

Quit being so stubborn. Take it.
Take it!

JOAN

It's yours Joe, all yours.

JOE

I don't want the fucking thing!

Joe takes the medal and throws it out the window.

They look at each other in brief, delighted, shock. Then Joe bangs on the partition.

JOE (CONT'D)

Gustav -- stop the car.

52 EXT. STREET, STOCKHOLM -- NIGHT

52

The limo is pulled over and we see Joe and Gustav walking up the busy boulevard digging in a snow bank for the medal.

53 INT. CASTLEMAN SUITE, GRAND HOTEL -- NIGHT

53

Joe and Joan are now walking into their hushed suite. The voluminous curtains have been drawn making the place feel a bit like a funeral parlor.

Joan throws her evening purse on a table and Joe flings the Nobel medal next to it. Joan starts heading down the hall.

JOE

Joan. Joanie...

Joe catches her and pulls her into the library.

JOE (CONT'D)

Joanie, c'mere. Sit so I can look at you. Do you want a drink?

JOAN

No.

JOE

Listen to me. There's nothing horrible or shameful or immoral about what we do. We're writing partners. We've created a beautiful body of work together.

JOAN

You edit, Joe, that's all you do. I'm the one who's sits at the desk six hours a day.

JOE

That's how you see it? Really? You're saying that all these years you've been sitting in some giant stew of resentment. Okay, and how about all the years I've been rubbing your back and bringing you tea and cooking your dinner and watching the kids so you could work without distraction -- you don't think there were times when it fucking killed me that you were the one with the golden touch? You think I wake up every morning feeling even remotely proud of myself? But have I ever said to you, I'm done with this marriage, I'm walking away?

JOAN

No, you had affairs.

JOE

And I've regretted every fucking one of them!

JOAN

Oh yes, you'd sob in my lap and beg me to forgive you, and I always would because somehow you convinced me that my talent made you do it. And if I felt too hurt and furious to write, you'd give me one of your famous back rubs and say, "use it, Joanie, use it."

JOE

I never said that.

JOAN

You did Joe! And lucky me, I had somewhere to put it. The critics loved the image of Sylvia Fry scrubbing the tear stains out of her good silk dress after a fight with her lover. "Another Castleman masterpiece." And your chest swelled, it actually swelled, and instead of being outraged and saying "enough I can't do this anymore!", I remember thinking to myself, "how can I describe that." And you know what? I did!

Joan pulls a Castleman book out of the bookshelf.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Here it is in another Castleman masterpiece!

Joan tosses the book at the floor and pulls out another book.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Oh and look. This one I wrote after you screwed our, what was it? Third nanny!

JOE

That book has nothing to do with the fucking nanny!

JOAN

Oh yes it did!

JOE

Bullshit!

(grabbing the book from her.)

These are MY stories, MY culture, MY family, MY ideas!

JOAN

MY words! MY pain! MY hours of sitting alone at the desk, neglecting our children and turning your appalling behavior into literary gold!

JOE

Fuck you, Joanie, fuck you! What did you ever have to say that was so goddamn compelling? You were nothing but a privileged, prissy little co-ed. The only decent story you ever wrote on your own was about Carol! You stole from my life even then.

JOAN

Shame on you, Joe.

Joan shoves past Joe and heads for the bedroom.

JOE

(following her)

You wanted this! You loved holing up in the Village with the big, bad Jew. You loved making your parents squirm. You love that you got the literary life and still get the house by the sea and the nice clothes and the travelling and all the privileges without having to marry some schmuck at a brokerage firm. You got it all, my girl.

JOAN

Take it back, I don't want it.

Joan is packing her suitcase.

JOE

What're you doing?

JOAN

I'm spending the night in David's room. And when I get home I'm calling a lawyer.

JOE

Joanie come on, you're not leaving me. We have our kids and a grandson and friends we've known forever who will start dying on us one-by-one and where will you be? Living alone? Being brave? Is that what you want?

Joan pushes past him and heads to the bathroom.

JOE (CONT'D)

Don't walk away from me. God damn it, Joanie.

JOAN

Leave me alone.

JOE

No we're going to fucking talk this out.

JOAN

I can't do it anymore Joe. I can't stand the humiliation of holding your coat and arranging your pills and picking the crumbs out of your
(MORE)

JOAN (CONT'D)

beard and getting pushed aside with the other wives to talk about god damn shopping trips, while you tell the gathered psychophants that your wife doesn't write! Your wife who just won the Nobel Prize!

JOE

You never told me you were so fucking unhappy.

JOAN

You should have fucking known. How could you possibly not see it!

JOE

So, if I'm such an insensitive and talent-less piece of shit. Why the fuck did you marry me?

JOAN

Oh God Joe. Again. It's all about you.

JOE

No answer me, I'd like to know. Why did you marry me?

JOAN

(exhausted by him)

I don't know Joe, I don't know. I can't think anymore. I just want to get out of this goddamn gown.

JOE

Here. Turn around.

Joe unzips the back of her dress for her. Then he starts kissing the back of her neck, expecting that they're going to have makeup sex.

JOAN

Joe, no.

Joan pushes him away. Joe is too grieved to speak. He backs away and Joan closes the bathroom door on him.

Joe stands at the door for a beat, utterly crushed.

JOE

Aw fuck it...fuck it.

53A

INT. CASTLEMAN SUITE BATHROOM/CASTLEMAN SUITE -- CONTINUOUS
NIGHT

Joan has shed her gown and is changed into a robe. She's staring at herself in the mirror, still furious. Then she

starts throwing her things into her toiletries bag. She opens the door. Joe isn't there.

We FOLLOW Joan back to the bedroom where she goes straight to her suitcase and drops her toiletries in. She avoids looking at Joe who's lying on the bed and starts getting the rest of her clothes out of the closet.

JOE

Joanie...

JOAN

What now.

Joan turns and sees that Joe is clutching his chest, grimacing. She immediately goes to his side.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Oh my God!

Joe nods.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Stay very still. I'm going to call for a medic.

Joan grabs the phone and dials up the front desk.

JOAN (CONT'D)

(into phone)

This is Mrs. Castleman, I think my husband is having a heart attack.

Joan hangs up and sits on the bed with Joe and rubs his chest, trying to soothe him.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Joe you'll be all right...stay with me, keep looking in my eyes...

Joe stares at her with a terrified, helpless expression.

JOE

Joanie do you love me?

JOAN

Oh my Darling yes I love you very much.

Joe stares at Joan with a look of unspeakable sorrow on his face.

JOE

You're such a good liar, how will I ever know?

Joe is leaving her...

JOAN

Don't leave me Joe...
Joe? Don't leave me.

We hear people coming through the front door.

The HOTEL MANAGER rushes in with the HOTEL DOCTOR and the HOTEL NURSE, carrying paramedic equipment including defibrillator.

HOTEL MANAGER

Mrs. Castleman...?!

HOTEL DOCTOR

Mrs. Castleman could you move aside please.

HOTEL MANAGER

Ambulansen är på väg.

HOTEL DOCTOR

Mr Castleman can you hear me?

The HOTEL DOCTOR feels for a pulse and listens to Joe's breathing.

HOTEL DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Han andas inte, han har
hjärtstillestånd.

The NURSE puts the defibrillator leads on Joe as the Hotel Doctor puts the assisted breathing mask on Joe.

HOTEL DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Vi startar HLR.

The HOTEL DOCTOR gives two breaths to Joe and the NURSE compresses his chest 15 times.

HOTEL DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Vi har en defibrilleringsbar puls.

The NURSE takes out the pads and hands them to the Doctor.

HOTEL DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Everyone stay clear.

The Doctor shocks Joe with the defibrillator and his body jumps.

54

INT. CONCORD JET -- DAY

54

Joan, her eyes puffy with grief, is staring out the window. Is that heaven out there? Will Joe be flying by wearing a pair of wings?

David is curled up beside her, dozing.

We hear the tinkle of ice -- the flight attendant is delivering Joan a scotch. It's the same attendant who we saw on the plane ride over.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT MONICA
(softly)
Here you go, Mrs. Castleman.

JOAN
Thank you.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT MONICA
I don't know if you remember me,
but I served you on the flight
coming over.

Joan glances at the attendant's breasts which Joe had so admired.

JOAN
Yes, I remember.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT MONICA
I'm so very sorry for your loss.

JOAN
Thank you.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT MONICA
You know, I see a lot of couples on
my flights, and you and your
husband -- I just want to say that
I could tell that you had a
wonderful relationship.

JOAN
How?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT MONICA
It was just something about the way
you were with each other. I could
tell that he so respected you.

Another FLIGHT ATTENDANT touches Monica on the shoulder.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT MONICA (CONT'D)
(to Joan)
Excuse me...

Monica confers with the other attendant then comes back to Joan.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT MONICA (CONT'D)
(in a lowered voice)
There's someone here who says he
knows you -- Nathaniel?

JOAN

Oh.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT MONICA

Should I tell him that you're
asleep?

JOAN

No, it's all right.

Monica lets Bone in. He comes over to Joan, looking properly solemn. He sees David sleeping and lowers his voice.

BONE

Joan. I don't know what to say.
I'm just stunned. How are you
doing?

JOAN

We're still in shock.

BONE

We all are. It's impossible to
process.

JOAN

Nathanial...

BONE

Yes?

David stirs in his seat. Joan gestures for Bone to get closer. Bone crouches down next to her.

JOAN

What we were talking about the
other day...

Bone tries very hard not to look too eager.

BONE

Yes...?

JOAN

I want to say that what you implied
isn't true. And if you malign
Joe's talent in any way, I will
take you to court.

Joan extends her hand.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Good luck, Nathanial. I'm sure it
will be a fine book.

Bone numbly shakes Joan hand and leaves. Joan touches David.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Did you hear any of that?

DAVID

Yes.

JOAN

When we get home, I'm going to sit
down with you and your sister and
I'm going to tell you everything.

David stares at his mother for a beat.

DAVID

...okay, Ma.

David puts his headphones back on, needing to shut down.
Joan tucks a blanket around him.

Joan reaches into her purse and takes out Joe's yellow note pad. She stares at Joe's strong, bold handwriting and his endless list of ideas waiting for Joan to turn them into literary gold. She tears this page off the pad and carefully folds it and gently tucks it in her bag. She stares at the note pad, it's vast blank page, hers to fill by her alone. It's too much to think about right now, just too much. Overwhelmed, she leans back and shuts her eyes, we hold on her for a beat.

Then her eyes pop open. Already a story is starting to fill her head. It's not over. She's a writer still.

FADE OUT

THE END