

MANUSCRIPT

by

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EXT. THE STRAND BOOKS -- DAY

FINGERS move carefully along the spines of books: A shelf-full of TATTERED, USED HARDCOVERS. Row after row of "Buck-a-Book" bargain racks on the sidewalk. The shopper is --

DAVID LEWIS, 25 -- smart, brainy, cagey -- browses the hardcovers. He wears an off-brand overcoat; a hand-me-down scarf knotted at his neck.

Behind David, BUSTLING LIFE of New York City in winter -- PEDESTRIANS, TOURISTS, traffic -- Union Square in b.g. A CHRISTMAS WREATH on a HOT-DOG CART spells the season as --

Finally David stumbles upon -- TWO HARDCOVERS of interest. He looks surprised-annoyed. He pulls them from the shelf -- both show the author as: "WILLIAM ALLEN BANKS." The AUTHOR PHOTO is a 1980's Ettlinger portrait. As David turns the books over in his hands --

DAVID (V.O./PRE-LAP)
These shouldn't be on the bargain rack...

INT. THE STRAND BOOKS -- DAY

Moments later. David stands before a haggard, middle-aged CASHIER at the register. As the Cashier rings up THE TWO BANKS HARDCOVERS on the counter --

DAVID
(re: the books)
... they belong inside. On the real
shelves. It's a tragedy, really.

But the Cashier has seen it all -- isn't interested --

CASHIER
(deadpan)
Ain't the world full of pain and shit.

David shakes his head, takes out A COUPLE BUCKS to pay.

INT. MADISON AVENUE BOUTIQUE -- DAY

A PRICE TAG attached to a DROP-DEAD BLACK DRESS says it all: Think Badgley Mischka, think a lot of money.

ELIZABETH HAWKINS, 21 -- pretty, sharp, ambitious -- holds the dress: Her face says she loves it; her head says she can't afford it. She's dressed modest-nicely.

A LARGE WINDOW in b.g. looks out on Madison Avenue holiday-shopping frenzy. HIP, NON-HOLIDAY MUSIC plays.

SALESWOMAN (O.S.)
May I help you?

Elizabeth turns, sees a sexy young SALESWOMAN. Model-ish.

ELIZABETH
I need help. I'm in love with a dress.

SALESWOMAN
(smiles)
I know. It's gorge. Will you try it on?

Elizabeth looks guiltily at the price tag. Considerers.

PRE-LAP the sound of FOOTSTEPS RUNNING on dirt --

EXT. CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR TRACK -- DAY

CHRIS WOLCOTT, 25 -- confident, trim, WASP-y -- runs hard. He wears high-end Nike winter running gear. His two-hundred-dollar sneakers bang the dirt. Catch THE GLINT of an expensive watch. Heavy breathing, assured stride -- he's sprinting now -- running faster --

From the opposite direction, TWO CUTE FEMALE JOGGERs glance and check him out, smile and giggle as they pass -- but Chris doesn't even look their way. He runs on.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- DAY

David exits the subway station at Clark & Henry Streets. He holds the iconic shopping bag from The Strand. It's a quieter part of the city out here. Can actually see sky.

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / DAVID'S BEDROOM -- DAY

David stands at his bookshelves. The room's kind of a mess. Old paint job -- old radiator -- this place speaks for the rest of the brownstone: Seen better days.

PHOTOS of male authors are tacked to the bookshelves: Salinger, Vonnegut, Mailer, Roth, Bellow. One AUTHOR PHOTO is prominently placed: William Allen Banks -- recognize it from the back of the hardcovers. Then -- David takes the TWO HARDCOVERS from the Strand Books bag and maneuvers them onto their shelf spaces --

In a row of Banks titles, they slide next to double- and triple-copies -- different editions -- of the same books. Perfect. As David admires his handiwork, his collection --

SALESWOMAN (V.O./PRE-LAP)
It's beautiful...

INT. MADISON AVENUE BOUTIQUE / DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

Elizabeth stands before THREE HUGE MIRRORS wearing THE BLACK DRESS. She looks amazing. The Saleswoman admires her. Elizabeth admires herself -- looks for an excuse --

ELIZABETH

I don't know... I mean, I do want to impress my boyfriend's parents...

SALESMAN

Can't go wrong with this.

Elizabeth never takes her eyes off herself --

ELIZABETH

(it's killing her)

It's a little steep for my budget.

SALESMAN

Honey, forget a budget. Look at you.

IN THE MIRROR -- Elizabeth does. She smiles. Sold. PULL BACK from the mirror into --

INT. WOLCOTT DUPLEX / CHRIS'S BEDROOM -- DAY

IN A TALL MIRROR -- Elizabeth, in the black dress (price tag still on), admires herself. It's a Spartan-spare room. Large bed. No bookshelves. The high-end opposite of David's bedroom. As Elizabeth checks herself out --

Chris enters, stripping off his sweaty running gear. To show off the dress, Elizabeth spins seductively. Chris smiles -- apparently he likes what he sees. As he walks towards her -- puts his hands on her waist --

CHRIS (V.O./PRE-LAP)

People who commit suicide, jumpers, off buildings and things...

EXT. BROOKLYN HEIGHTS PROMENADE -- DUSK

Blue-light time of day. Chris and Elizabeth stand at the railing looking out over the East River -- at the skyline of lower Manhattan -- at the BROOKLYN BRIDGE, prominent.

ELIZABETH

(re: the Brooklyn Bridge)
Bridges.

CHRIS

Yes.

Chris wears an Armani tuxedo beneath a topcoat. Elizabeth shivers a touch in her new dress and coat. Scarves. PEDESTRIANS pass, walk dogs. Chris looks at the bridge --

CHRIS (CONT'D)
What they say, if they live, people who do that sort of thing --

ELIZABETH
Who do that sort of thing and survive.

CHRIS
Right. What they say, these people, is that as soon as they stepped their second foot off the ledge, the bridge, what have you -- they wished they could go back.

ELIZABETH
Go back and live.

CHRIS
They regret their choice. Yes.

ELIZABETH
Cold feet.

CHRIS
The ones who survive. A huge percentage of them. That's what they say.

Elizabeth turns to him, places her hands on his face.

ELIZABETH
(with care)
Baby, you don't have to think about that right now.

CHRIS
(pause)
My father told me today -- the Tribeca apartment... he's gonna buy it for me.

ELIZABETH
That's great. Isn't that great?

CHRIS
We can move in this summer, and I'll commute to New Haven for my classes in the fall. It'll just be for a year.

ELIZABETH
("you're amazing")
You'd do that for me?

CHRIS
Yeah, so... New York. Us. If you want.

ELIZABETH

Of course I want. Don't you? Is that why
you -- wait -- what you were saying --
are you having second thoughts about us?

CHRIS

It's not that exactly, No. I just -- I
want it to work. I've never had... quite
these feelings for anyone before.

ELIZABETH

Neither have I. We're gonna be great.

(then)

No cold feet. You won't regret a thing.

She leans in, kisses him. He kisses back. Finally
Elizabeth pulls away, sweetly breaks it --

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I should get going.

CHRIS

Have fun at the book thing.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry I couldn't get another invite
for you.

CHRIS

No worries.

ELIZABETH

I'll only be an hour.

CHRIS

See you at David's, then. You have the
address?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

CHRIS

I did want to meet your sister, though.

ELIZABETH

(a winning smile)

Next time.

INT. BROOKLYN BAR -- NIGHT

Elizabeth holds a NEW HARDCOVER BOOK, turns it over in
her hands. Stacked on a table are MANY COPIES OF THE
SAME. A PROMOTIONAL PHOTO of a Male Author propped up.

It's a book-release party in the heart of hip Brooklyn.
INDIE ROCK MUSIC and lively chatter fill the bar.

Elizabeth is overdressed -- and a few years young for THIS CROWD. Across the room --

CAROLINE HAWKINS, 28, stands with NIKOLAS, the Male Author from the promotional photo. They talk, laugh.

Then -- Caroline catches Elizabeth's eye. With a wave she BECKONS HER OVER. Elizabeth moves through the crowd to --

Caroline, drink in hand, is a little cool, removed here.

CAROLINE
Are you having fun?

ELIZABETH
What?

CAROLINE
Are you having fun? I said.

ELIZABETH
Oh -- yeah, of course, yeah.

CAROLINE
Nikolas, this is my sister Elizabeth.

NIKOLAS
(meek; an *artiste*)
Hey.

ELIZABETH
(to Nikolas)
Congratulations. Can't wait to read it.

NIKOLAS
Oh my God you're really nice thank you.
We'll be saying the same to your sister
next month at her book-release. Hell yes.

CAROLINE
(tipsy)
Aw, shucks.

NIKOLAS
(to Elizabeth)
Yeah wait -- you wrote that young adult
book, right? The boarding school one?

ELIZABETH
Yeah.

NIKOLAS
My little cousin read that. She liked it.

ELIZABETH
(strained)
Oh -- thank you. Thanks a lot.

NIKOLAS
How's your next one coming?

Elizabeth smiles, nods blankly in response. Off that --

TIME CUT --

AT A TWO-TOP IN THE BACK -- Elizabeth and Caroline sit, drinks in front of them. A WAITRESS arrives, places a fresh drink in front of Caroline -- takes up her empty.

CAROLINE
(to Elizabeth)
You sure?

ELIZABETH
I'm good.

Caroline puts a ten on the tray. Waitress departs. Place is packed -- occasionally they're jostled as they talk.

CAROLINE
(big-sister stern)
So, I'm a little pissed at you.

ELIZABETH
What?

CAROLINE
Roxanne called me today.

ELIZABETH
(figured this was coming)
Okay. Okay, well --

CAROLINE
How could you do that? Go behind my back?

ELIZABETH
Let me just... Peter's a junior editor. I think I should be -- I want to move up. That's why, a meeting with your editor --

CAROLINE
Really, Lizzie --

ELIZABETH
-- but hang on a second --

CAROLINE
We're at the same house -- that's enough. Right? Have I not done a lot?

ELIZABETH
Of course you have.

CAROLINE

Because I kind of feel like that's a lot.

(pause)

An editor -- that's a personal relationship. You and I wouldn't share a therapist.

ELIZABETH

No.

CAROLINE

And you lied to her. I never said I'd organize a thing for us all to sit down.

ELIZABETH

I figured you would, though, if I asked.

CAROLINE

But you didn't ask, which is the problem.

ELIZABETH

I know.

CAROLINE

(sips her drink)

You don't have to be in such a rush. Relax -- you're already way ahead. I mean, you graduate college in six months. Worry about that, then worry about this.

ELIZABETH

I'm perfectly capable of worrying about two things simultaneously.

CAROLINE

You've got to see how crazy that was. As an idea, it's... it's unreasonable.

ELIZABETH

(pause)

I think I'm gonna lose my deal.

CAROLINE

Did Peter say that?

ELIZABETH

I'm six months past due on a first draft.

CAROLINE

Don't you have any pages to show them?

ELIZABETH

I told them I do.

CAROLINE

And you don't?

(off her look)

That's not good.

ELIZABETH

I don't know what to do here.

Caroline, though annoyed, looks for an angle, a way in --

CAROLINE

Well. Maybe there's a reason you're having trouble this time around.

ELIZABETH

I'm just blocked.

CAROLINE

Okay. 'Blocked.' Okay. But can I say something? And really think about it, really consider, you know: What if there is no second book? What if you do something else? Would that be so bad?

The hard look in Elizabeth's eyes says: "Yes. It would."

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- NIGHT

Outside the bar. Elizabeth and Caroline. Cold out here. Sounds of the book-release gathering audible from inside.

CAROLINE

I wanted to meet your new boyfriend. You could have brought him, you know.

ELIZABETH

He doesn't like book stuff. Anyway, I thought it'd be better if I came alone.

CAROLINE

(checks watch)

We're gonna be late. I'm drunk. I hate being drunk.

ELIZABETH

How long is the flight?

CAROLINE

Counting the stopover in L.A., twenty-three hours.

ELIZABETH

Holy hell.

CAROLINE

And you cross the time line, or the date line or some kind of line, which basically means you fly into the future.

ELIZABETH

That's insane.

CAROLINE
(pause)
I've never spent a holiday away from Mom
and Dad.

ELIZABETH
They're gonna miss you.

HONK. A HATCHBACK pulls up, its backseat crammed with luggage. The driver is JOEL, 30s, schlubby-handsome. As he leans across the front seat to roll down the window --

CAROLINE
Look at all those bags. He packs like a
girl.

JOEL
(Australian accent)
I know, I know I'm late -- but there
won't be any traffic.

Caroline hugs Elizabeth, climbs into the car.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Merry Christmas, Lizzie.

ELIZABETH
Thanks, Joel. You, too.

CAROLINE
Kiss Mom for me.

Caroline rolls up the window as Joel speeds away.
Elizabeth stands on the curb, alone, watches them go.

BLACK SCREEN.

SUPERTITLE "MANUSCRIPT" over the SOUND OF TIRES in city traffic --

INT. TAXI (TRAVELLING) -- NIGHT

Lights wipe over Elizabeth's face as she stares out the window. DRIVER checks her out a little in the REAR-VIEW.

Elizabeth quickly pulls her cell phone from her purse. She selects a number, hits "call." As the taxi stops at a red light, hear FILTERED RINGING. Then Chris answers --

CHRIS (PHONE/OVER)
My darling Clementine. You on your way?

ELIZABETH
(into phone)
I want to stop and get David something.

CHRIS (PHONE/OVER)
You really don't have to.

ELIZABETH
They're called 'manners.' I'm doing it.
(a practical princess)
I've never been in this neighborhood, and
I don't want to get lost -- come meet me.

CHRIS (PHONE/OVER)
(pause)
Hang on...
(long beat; then)
I'll meet you at the liquor store.

ELIZABETH
(semi-annoyed)
What liquor store?

EXT. MICHAEL-TOWNE WINES & SPIRITS -- NIGHT

Chris waits outside as holiday CUSTOMERS come and go.

ELIZABETH'S TAXI pulls up to the curb. Chris approaches the passenger side, pays the Driver through the window. Chris opens the door, helps Elizabeth out to the curb.

INT. MICHAEL-TOWNE WINES & SPIRITS -- NIGHT

Cash-register DINGS and piped-in HOLIDAY MUSIC, the score. Crowded, a sense of claustrophobia in the place. Chris has two bottles of Famous Grouse. They're in line.

ELIZABETH
(re: the bottles)
I'm not showing up with cheap booze.

CHRIS
It's not a housewarming, you don't have to show up with anything.

Their turn. Chris plunks the two bottles on the counter, then hands I.D. and A PLATINUM AMEX CARD to the CASHIER.

ELIZABETH
I want to make a good impression.

CHRIS
("if you insist")
There's a bookstore up the street...

ELIZABETH
Better.

The Cashier hands over a credit card slip. Chris signs, picks up the bag containing their bottles. Then spots --

CHRIS

Hey, look: There's mistletoe hanging over
the Pinot Blanc... you're coming with me.

Chris puts one arm around Elizabeth's waist, push-carries
her towards the mistletoe. Already kissing. She laughs.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- NIGHT

Elizabeth and Chris walk, hold hands.

INT. BOOKSTORE -- NIGHT

POV OUT THROUGH THE WINDOW -- Chris and Elizabeth walk up
on the sidewalk. Something in the window display catches
her eye. She points to a pair of DECORATIVE BOOKENDS. She
enters the store. Chris checks his watch, then follows.

PRE-LAP the sound of a DOORBELL --

EXT./INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / ENTRYWAY -- NIGHT

THE FRONT DOOR OPENS to reveal David -- dressed in casual
contrast to his polished, elegant guests. Hear in b.g.
from another room: LIVELY MUSIC plays. Chris holds the
bag of liquor bottles. Elizabeth holds A SMALL GIFT BAG.

CHRIS

Sorry it took so long.

DAVID

Are you kidding me? Come on in --

They enter, then David shuts the door behind them.

CHRIS

(proudly)

David, this is Elizabeth.

David pauses at the introduction --

ELIZABETH

And here's the famous David. Chris has
told me so much about you.

CHRIS

(off David's silence)

Dave?

DAVID

(snapping out of it)

Elizabeth, nice to meet you. Welcome!

ELIZABETH
Wow! Volume! Thank you!

DAVID
She's good -- already -- she's funny!
Funny chick, man.

As they walk to the kitchen --

A HALLWAY --

OVERSTUFFED BOOKSHELVES abound on either side. Far from spotless -- no cleaning lady here. MUSIC gets louder as they walk. Elizabeth thrusts the gift bag at David --

ELIZABETH
Here.

DAVID
What's this?

ELIZABETH
It's for you and your parents. I'm in your home. You don't show up to someone's home without a gift.

DAVID
I didn't expect this one.

ELIZABETH
Open it.

David pulls a pair of DECORATIVE BOOKENDS from the bag.

DAVID
What are these?

ELIZABETH
Bookends.

DAVID
My parents will love them.

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / KITCHEN -- NIGHT

WHISKEY SPLASH-POURS INTO ROCKS GLASSES on a Formica counter. An EMBOSSED INVITATION is tossed down. Legible sections: "BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC -- WINTER GALA -- THE PALM HOUSE -- BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN." Over which --

DAVID (O.S.)
What time to you have to be at the thing?

CHRIS (O.S.)
Eight-thirty. Nine, the latest.

The MUSIC is loudest now -- it plays on a stereo in here. MELODIC, CUTTING-EDGE INDIE ROCK. David hands out drinks.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Still time to change your mind, come along.

DAVID
(sarcastic)
My penguin suit's at the cleaners.
(raises his glass)
To good friends, pre-party narcotics, and
the fact that my old buddy cradle-robbed
such a lovely gal.

ELIZABETH
You're gonna make me blush.

They toast and drink. Chris takes off his tuxedo jacket --

DAVID
Jesus, man, you're wasting away. How much
weight have you lost since Thanksgiving?

CHRIS
What?

DAVID
When a person is too thin, it reflects
poorly on the people who love them. Just
how lonely is the Long Distance Runner?

CHRIS
Oh, he gets so lonely he could die.

ELIZABETH
(to David)
He goes running twice a day.

DAVID
You want a rugelach? I'll order Chinese.

CHRIS
Not hungry, thanks.

DAVID
It's sad. You go off to business school,
now I can't take care of you anymore. You
don't call, you don't write...

As Chris takes a seat, kicks his feet up on the counter --

CHRIS
Knock it off. I'm fine.

DAVID

'You're fine.' Fine. But if you lose
another pound I'm staging an
intervention.

CHRIS

Stage away.

DAVID

(sarcastic; faux self-help)
You're hurting. I get it. You're in pain.
But also you're in luck -- 'cause I can
think of something that will help you...

Chris lights up, an old routine beginning -- stands --

CHRIS

A certain something from the Orient --

DAVID

That's racist.

CHRIS

You're right. And it's unlike me. I
apologize.

DAVID

Accepted. A certain something from --

CHRIS

The Far East. Asia. Asia?

David nods with a grin. Elizabeth sits down, watches
closely, takes in the buddy-buddy show.

ELIZABETH

(nervous)

I've never smoked it before.

CHRIS

But I said to you: It's just like pot.

DAVID

If, say, that pot was laced with happy-
juice and horse-tranquilizer.

CHRIS

But other than that it's the same.

ELIZABETH

Who even smokes opium? This day and age --
who does that?

DAVID

Lucky people.

ELIZABETH

Exotic. I'll try anything once.

CHRIS
That's the spirit.

DAVID
When I get word, I'll go pick it up.

CHRIS
(puzzled)
I thought we were all gonna go.

ELIZABETH
Yeah. I'd kind of like to come along.

DAVID
(abrupt change of subject)
Who wants a tour?

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / STAIRCASE -- NIGHT

Elizabeth, David and Chris ascending. FAMILY PICTURES on the walls. David holds the open bottle of whiskey.

ELIZABETH
(to David)
What's all this noise about you're not coming to the party with us?

CHRIS
First of all, it's a 'gala.' There is value in lingo.

ELIZABETH
This noise about you're not coming to the gala with us.

DAVID
Chris invites me to these things every year, I never go.

CHRIS
At least this one's at the Botanic Garden so we can hang with your curmudgeonly ass beforehand.

ELIZABETH
How do you know if you like them or not, you never go?

DAVID
I don't like crowds. I lose control.

CHRIS
David loathes holiday season in the city.

DAVID
Shoulder-to-shoulder sardines in Midtown. It's disgusting. You can't breathe.

CHRIS
(to Elizabeth)
You'll see tomorrow.

ELIZABETH
I don't mind a crowd.

DAVID
Plus, these galas of which your boyfriend
and his ilk are so fond? Too many rich
people. And, well, you've seen my house.

ELIZABETH
I'm in your house...

THE SECOND-FLOOR LANDING --

As they walk -- the three of them enter --

INT. FATHER'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

A psychologist works in here. Dusty books. A Jung shelf.

ELIZABETH
... it's very nice.

DAVID
We could never buy it now. My mother's a
poet; my father's a shrink.

They bounce back out to --

THE SECOND-FLOOR LANDING --

ELIZABETH
Chris tells me they're away. I forget --

DAVID
Utica. My aunt's house.

As they ascend stairs to the top floor --

ELIZABETH
That's right. 'Utica.'

CHRIS
The armpit of New York State.

THE THIRD-FLOOR LANDING --

ELIZABETH
You always spend the holidays alone?

DAVID
No, but it's tough to get any writing
done up there...

He's hoping she'll ask. And, sure, she'll bite --

ELIZABETH
What are you working on?

DAVID
A short novel about alcoholism and God.

Elizabeth, raised eyebrows, suppresses a smile. Chris grins. As they enter a dark room, LOW LIGHT FLICKERING --

INT. TV ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The TV's ON, "muted" -- Turner Classic Movies is showing "Out of the Past." Mitchum, Douglas and Greer seated at the breakfast table.

ELIZABETH
How is it... living at home?

DAVID
(deadpan)
Free.

ELIZABETH
Well, it's cool your parents are gone so we can party here.

DAVID
Oh, we'd be here anyway.

CHRIS
This whole floor is David's. They never come up.

ELIZABETH
That's amazing. You must have been up here all the time.

David grabs a remote, shuts OFF the TV. Elizabeth inspects FAMILY PHOTOS. She picks up a PHOTOGRAPH OF: YOUNG DAVID AND YOUNG CHRIS at the Central Park Reservoir Track -- in prep school phys. ed. uniforms, post-run sweaty brows, smiles, arms around each other's shoulders.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(re: photo)
Is this you two?

DAVID
The annual Reservoir Run in third grade. Torture for yours truly -- and the beginning of a love affair with the sport for Prefontaine, over here.

CHRIS
Yeah, yeah...

DAVID
(to Elizabeth)
If your boyfriend wasn't such a pansy,
he'd tell his dad to screw himself, then
go be a track coach like he actually
wants.

CHRIS
You try having a father like mine.

ELIZABETH
(to Chris; the truth?)
Sweetie, you could be a garbage-man and
I'd love you the same.

CHRIS
Well, anyway. The job and everything --
it didn't work out for my... but I'll
make it different with me.

An awkward, heavy beat: The sense of loss. Elizabeth, to
occupy herself, over-closely studies the photo. David
spots that and pushes for a much-needed change of topic --

DAVID
When we were kids, Chris was over so
much, he kept things here. Clothes...

ELIZABETH
(eagerly)
That's adorable.

CHRIS
(coming out of it)
You know, a toothbrush. No big deal.

DAVID
We were never at your place. Were we?

CHRIS
As infrequently as possible.

ELIZABETH
Why?

CHRIS
My parents.

ELIZABETH
Ohh... I thought your mother was sweet.

CHRIS
She was probably buzzed.

DAVID
They give you money, though.

CHRIS
So? Fuck that.

DAVID
No, I know -- I'm just saying. Money is
good.
(then)
C'mon, my room's down the hall.

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The three of them enter. Still ultra-messy -- books and magazines everywhere -- a vintage Harvard pennant not-so-subtly hung on the wall.

DAVID
The end of the line -- my humble abode.

ELIZABETH
(re: the mess)
I like the style -- pig-sty *chic*.

DAVID
I call it 'Neoclassical Nagasaki.'

Elizabeth bee-lines for the bookshelves. She checks out titles for a beat, then --

ELIZABETH
Oh! "The Nun." Diderot -- nice.

DAVID
Yeah, well.

She stops at a shelf full of VINTAGE WRESTLING FIGURES.

ELIZABETH
What are these, a bunch of dolls?

DAVID
Boys don't call them 'dolls.' We call them 'action figures.'

CHRIS
Or 'figurines.'

DAVID
Or 'action figurines.'

ELIZABETH
(pause)
So, these are your dolls?

DAVID
Those are my dolls, yeah.

ELIZABETH

What are you, like, totally into
professional wrestling?

DAVID

It's the only innovative form of modern
dance we've got left.

As Chris lies down on the mattress, rolls his eyes --

CHRIS

Oh, here we go...

ELIZABETH

(to David)

Somebody read their Roland Barthes.

DAVID

Have you ever watched pro wrestling?

ELIZABETH

You went to Harvard, probably think it's
ironic or something. And, No, I haven't.

DAVID

If by 'ironic' you mean beautiful and
completely fuckin' genius, then yes.

ELIZABETH

What's beautiful about a bunch of
hardbodies oiled up and pretending to
beat the shit out of each other?

During David's sermon, Chris gets up, refills glasses.

DAVID

All production values aside -- and we're
putting aside many incredible production
values when we do that -- it's the
choreography of the fights themselves
that makes professional wrestling into
not only a legitimate form of dance but
the most commercially successful
choreographed form in history.

ELIZABETH

You haven't answered my question. What's
beautiful about --

DAVID

(gets into it)

The charade is beautiful. The ladders,
splintering chairs, the blood -- all
employed for calculated effect. And, my
God, the audience participation. Tens of
thousands of people -- the audience is
the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

ELIZABETH

Screaming crowds? That's what you find beautiful?

DAVID

Those people make the event. The whole charade, the whole lie is right there in front of them the whole time. And yet they scream and chant in ways that would put Bacchans to shame. They're not being duped -- just the opposite. People believe what they want to believe. These fans of pro wrestling, they make believing look active, sexy. It's their choice to believe the charade. As a result, they're part of the action -- and to borrow the root of that word, they're part of the act. It couldn't exist without them.

ELIZABETH

I never thought about professional wrestling that way.

DAVID

Give the W.W.E. ten minutes, they'll give you the world.

Chris claps for effect. Elizabeth joins in.

ELIZABETH

Bravo. That should be your novel.

DAVID

I wish it was. Kind of run dry there.

ELIZABETH

It happens. A dry patch.

David crosses to the window, leans on the sill --

DAVID

It's tough. Maybe I should have gone to grad school. I got into an M.F.A. program...

ELIZABETH

Why didn't you go?

DAVID

Hard to say. Guess I kind of felt like it was a waste of money. Like: I can write here, make my own grad school. But...

He turns back from the window, looks a little defeated.

DAVID (CONT'D)
 ... hasn't quite panned out that way.
 (pause)
 I mean, I've never had anything
 published.
 (then; nervous)
 Anyway, I'm embarrassed to be talking
 about it with you... the whole young
 adult novel thing --

ELIZABETH
 Oh... come on. It's just a book. Anybody
 can write one.

Chris clears old magazines from a chair, takes a seat.

DAVID
 (to Chris)
 You didn't tell me she was --

CHRIS
 What? I should have sent you her resumé?
 I'm her boyfriend, not her agent.

DAVID
 I know, I know. When you walked in, I
 mean -- I recognized you from the press
 you got -- your sister and stuff -- when
 your young adult novel came out.

ELIZABETH
 (with a tight smile)
 You can just call it a 'novel.' Feel free
 to drop the 'young adult' qualifier.

DAVID
 Okay -- sorry. No disrespect. It's still
 a book! Anyway -- sorry -- okay -- I'm
 not gonna make a big deal out of this.

CHRIS
 Then maybe skip the intro.

DAVID
 Right.
 (to Elizabeth)
 I... I really love your sister's writing.

ELIZABETH
 (pained)
 Ohh. Oh, thank you so much.

He gets up, crosses to Elizabeth -- really gets into it --

DAVID
 I mean I admire it. Her books are just --
 like "Song of the Silent Bird"...

ELIZABETH

That's a good one. Isn't she amazing?

DAVID

Do you ever feel any pressure to --

ELIZABETH

I get that question a lot? And my answer is: Not at all.

DAVID

Wow.

ELIZABETH

We're totally different writers. There's a market for her and a market for me.

DAVID

I feel like I remember -- didn't you have some article in the "New York Times" magazine?

ELIZABETH

A few years back, yeah.

CHRIS

My girlfriend is so smart.

DAVID

(recalling it...)

It was an amazing piece. I'd never seen boarding school captured like that. You were kind of a... drugged-up, female, Mini-Me version of John Knowles.

ELIZABETH

High praise. Thank you.

DAVID

(re: the article)

Did your sister help you get it off the slush pile?

ELIZABETH

Well... good work gets itself off.

CHRIS

(all innocence)

Didn't she give it to them herself, like, personally?

ELIZABETH

Um, that's not exactly how it happened.

DAVID

What are you, the youngest author of a cover article for them -- ever?

Elizabeth and David share a couple of friendly smiles.

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / FATHER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Later. Elizabeth and Chris, seated on the couch, hold drinks. David opens a desk drawer, removes a METAL LOCK-BOX, places it on the desk. He leans down, feels around on the underside panel for something hidden there. Then --

DAVID
Ah -- got it --

David pulls a "hidden key" from a spot he clearly knows -- uses it to open the lock-box. From inside, he removes HIS FATHER'S BAG OF POT AND GLASS PIPE. After setting them down, he removes the other item secreted away --

A .38 REVOLVER. LAMP-LIGHT REFLECTS off the chrome. David places it on the desk, calm as can be -- the casualness of this gesture is eerie. Chris ignores the gun: "Seen that thing before." But Elizabeth is shocked --

ELIZABETH
Whoa. Whose is that?

DAVID
My dad's got a very antiquated idea of
'protecting the homestead.'

David packs the bowl, lights it. During the following, they all pass and smoke. Getting stoned...

DAVID (CONT'D)
He bought it off a buddy from the Old Neighborhood, some Meyer-Lansky-wannabee.

ELIZABETH
Can I touch it?

DAVID
(holds it out to her)
Thirty-eight special. Jimmy Cagney shit.

Elizabeth takes it from him, marvels at the object. Chris comes to her side -- feeds her a hit from the pipe.

ELIZABETH
I never held a gun before.

DAVID
It's no big deal. You'd be surprised how many people own them.

ELIZABETH
It's lighter than I would have thought...

Elizabeth handles at the .38. David takes it from her --

DAVID
Show-and-tell's over.

He puts the gun away. Chris exhales a huge hit, then quickly makes for the door --

CHRIS
Okay, now I'm hungry. Who wants Chinese?

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- NIGHT

David, Elizabeth and Chris walk. Chris has his arm around Elizabeth. David walks apart.

DAVID
So the article led to your young adult --
sorry -- to your novel?

ELIZABETH
Yeah.

DAVID
I'm so interested in this.

ELIZABETH
Come on, it's boring.

DAVID
Not to me. I want to be like you.
Published, out there, articles and stuff.

As they walk past storefronts, a pizza joint, delis --

ELIZABETH
("if you insist")
Fall of Freshman year at Yale, the
"Times" published me. That's how I got my
agent. I already had a few chapters of my
novel by that point -- book came out when
I was a Sophomore. The end.

DAVID
How's your second book coming?

ELIZABETH
(uneasy; covers okay)
I'm a little behind my publisher's
schedule. Everyone is. Industry standard.

Finally they hit the spot, arrive at the door of a
BUSTLING CHINESE RESTAURANT. A dive-y, local favorite.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Later. David, Elizabeth and Chris seated at a curved, red-pleather booth. JAM-PACKED and FUN-CHAOTIC in here.

Every table full; it looks like it smells delicious in there. A WAITER stands table-side. Only David holds an open menu --

DAVID
(to the Waiter)
... cold noodles -- scallion pancake --
chicken and broccoli -- eggplant with
garlic -- shrimp with black bean sauce.

He shuts the menu, hands it over. Chris chimes in --

CHRIS
(to Waiter)
Two whiskey-sodas and a glass of white
wine.

The Waiter nods, goes. Chris dips a crispy noodle in a dish of hot yellow mustard -- eats it quick.

ELIZABETH
(to David)
I'd love to hear some of your work --
from your novel, when we get back.

As Chris grabs for his glass of ice water -- downs it --

CHRIS
(re: mustard)
Holy shit -- that's hot...

DAVID
(over him; to Elizabeth)
I thought we gathered this evening to get
wasted on a ridiculously rare narcotic,
not edit my half-baked fiction.

ELIZABETH
I'm sure it's fully baked.

Chris, who's CHEWING ICE CUBES as a coolant, chimes in --

CHRIS
It is fully baked.
(then)
I gotta take a leak.

Chris kisses Elizabeth on the cheek, stands up from the table. He walks off through the swirl of restaurant activity to A HALLWAY IN THE BACK. In his tux, he stands out sharply from this local crowd. David and Elizabeth watch him go -- until he's gone -- silence between them.

Elizabeth and David stare at each other. Tense. Then --

ELIZABETH
(sotto)
Before you say anything --

DAVID
(sotto)
Fuck you.

ELIZABETH
Real writers don't need to use profanity
to express anger.

DAVID
How dare you show up at my house. And
this 'perfect strangers' act for Chris's
benefit? I'm gonna be sick.

ELIZABETH
I'm having fun with it, you know you are,
too, don't lie. You're on fire tonight.

The RESTAURANT PULSES WITH NOISY LIFE around them. David
and Elizabeth truck through this secret conversation in a
kind of frenzy -- racing the clock of Chris's return --

DAVID
(looking off at hallway)
He'll be back any second --
(then)
What the hell are you doing here?

ELIZABETH
(all confident calm)
You really aren't happy to see me.

DAVID
Not in the least.

ELIZABETH
You're a good actor.

DAVID
Oh, please. You deserve an Oscar for the
shit you were slinging earlier.

ELIZABETH
'This is for my fans. I want to thank all
my wonderful fans.'

DAVID
He has no idea we know each other.

ELIZABETH
And clearly you want to keep it that way.
I don't blame you -- Chris is a good kid.

DAVID
'Kid'? He's four years older than you.

ELIZABETH
You know what I mean. He's not old inside
like us.

DAVID

What? You're insane. How could you not tell him about the writing program? That whole summer, you and me --

ELIZABETH

Three and a half years ago. Chris and I met in September. I didn't know who he was to you at first --

DAVID

No... no --

ELIZABETH

-- we're going out for a couple weeks when, hello! -- he tells me about his best friend David, wow, David Lewis from Brooklyn, and the blah blah blah. I almost fell over on Grove Street.

DAVID

(re: himself, their past)
You've always been a fan of older men.

The Waiter arrives -- delivers their three drinks, goes. David gulps his whiskey-soda.

ELIZABETH

You never told him.

DAVID

I never told anyone. It was embarrassing for me.

ELIZABETH

'Embarrassing.'

DAVID

That was my article.

Elizabeth sips her wine. Cool as hell.

ELIZABETH

Funny, I could have sworn I saw my name underneath the title.

DAVID

What a joke.

ELIZABETH

No, I'm serious. Right between the 'by' and the first word of the piece. My name.

DAVID

That was the most heartless thing I've ever seen.

ELIZABETH
I like to set records. Sue me.

CLANG! O.S. of a dropped tray -- SHATTER! of glasses, plates. David's startled, but he stays in it, focused --

DAVID
So, what, you're here to torture me now?

ELIZABETH
I haven't told him. You haven't told him. There's gotta be something in that --

DAVID
You came to my home...

ELIZABETH
David, honey, I've been planning this for longer than you think.

ELIZABETH'S POV -- THE HALLWAY IN THE BACK
No sign of Chris. Yet. So there's still time for --

Elizabeth slides on pleather, presses close to David --

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Do you want to kiss me, or hit me?

DAVID
Both.

Elizabeth leans in, kisses him hard. He kisses back. She pulls away -- then cocks her chin out --

ELIZABETH
("c'mon, hit me")
Well?
(off his nothing)
You pussy.

She slides away from him -- takes a sip of her wine. David napkins his mouth clean of kiss evidence as --

Chris rounds the corner from the back hallway, re-enters the dining room. As Chris approaches the table with a goofy, oblivious smile --

DAVID
(sotto)
How do you know I won't tell him everything right now?

ELIZABETH
(sotto)
Because this is a game. Because playing it is turning you on.

They hold eye contact -- Chris sits down in the booth.

CHRIS
(re: his waiting drink)
Refreshment.

Chris drinks down half his whiskey-soda.

ELIZABETH
You might want to slow down, Tiger.

CHRIS
Oh, sweetheart.

Then -- the Waiter's back. With HEAPING PLATES OF FOOD. Sets them on the table, goes. Chris serves Elizabeth as --

BEEP -- David's cell phone announces an incoming text. He takes his cell from his pocket, reads the screen --

DAVID
(re: text message)
The stuff is ready. After we eat, I'll head out.

CHRIS
Well, wait, hang on --

ELIZABETH
I'd like to ride along.

As David accepts a plateful of dinner from Chris --

DAVID
I'd rather go myself --

ELIZABETH
Come on -- it's not every day I get a chance to meet William Allen Banks.

That lands like a bag of bricks. A tense beat.

DAVID
(through gritted teeth)
Chris?

CHRIS
That's a secret? What?

Three full plates sit before them. No one touches a bite.

DAVID
I don't believe this...

CHRIS
That we know him? You didn't tell me not to say anything...

DAVID

(sotto)

I didn't think I had to. He's our dealer.

ELIZABETH

I didn't know it was top secret for the boys' club in the tree-house.

DAVID

It's not -- but it is the man's home and he's serious about his privacy.

(to Chris; pointed)

Something I thought you respected.

(to Elizabeth)

It's a very kind of exclusive place and it's taken me -- it's taken us -- I don't know, a long time to cultivate a relationship with William. Trust.

(an admission)

For the first time in years I'm actually writing again -- because of him. And, hey, look, I know you're already a celebrity and have books and shit --

ELIZABETH

I have a book, David.

DAVID

-- but for those of us who are struggling. Right? Trying to establish ourselves in the real world -- a relationship like the one I've developed with William can be very valuable.

ELIZABETH

I know that. I completely understand that.

(with gravity)

He's William Allen Banks...

CHRIS

And that still means something?

David and Elizabeth shoot him looks: "Are you kidding?"

CHRIS (CONT'D)

(off their looks)

What? I'm honestly asking. Hasn't it been, like, fifteen years since he put a book out?

No response. Averted gazes, heavy silence at the table. David SIGNALS FOR THE CHECK. Guess they're done here.

PRE-LAP the SOUNDS of a Brooklyn street, with --

DAVID (V.O./PRE-LAP)
I don't expect you to understand. William
changed the game...

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- NIGHT

They walk. David holds a RED PLASTIC BAG OF LEFTOVERS.

DAVID
(to Chris)
... none of those authors in the Nineties
would have had readers without Banks's
work from the Eighties. Post-post-modern
before it was cool on campus -- but
confident enough to write real scenes,
real emotion --

ELIZABETH
He did everything all together -- first.
Blew the roof off in terms of how much
you could mess with plot and voice, even
naturalism, and still have a best-seller.

CHRIS
(pause)
You guys lost me at 'he changed the
game.' I just think he's a really cool
guy with good drugs.

David gives the leftovers to a HOMELESS WOMAN huddled for
warmth on a subway grate. She mumbles a genuine "Thanks."

ELIZABETH
Is he working on new stuff?

DAVID
I've never seen any.

ELIZABETH
No? Thought you were pals.

DAVID
He never shows anything 'til it's done.

ELIZABETH
Because you asked...

DAVID
Of course I asked. What am I, foolish?
But that's his thing: Total lock-down.
Just him and his 1965 Underwood...

They round a corner -- approach a gleaming, new LAND
ROVER, parked. The damn thing is top-of-the-line, tricked
out. Chris digs in his pocket, takes out a set of keys.

ELIZABETH
He still works on a typewriter?

DAVID
He's old-school like that.

CHRIS
David, can I jump in here? I don't get it. We can all head over there, he won't mind, but you don't want us to go. Why?

David and Elizabeth trade looks. That's why. Finally --

DAVID
("fuck it")
In and out -- we come right back.

ELIZABETH
(smiles)
Shotgun.

Chris hits a button, BEEP-BEEP unlocks the Rover.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- NIGHT

Elsewhere. Later. CHRIS'S LAND ROVER pulls up outside a brownstone in Brooklyn Heights.

PRE-LAP the BEEP of an incoming text message --

INT. LAND ROVER -- NIGHT / SAME

RAP MUSIC on the stereo. In the backseat, David holds his cell phone, reads the screen --

DAVID
(re: text on his cell)
Change of plans. William's not feeling well. He only wants one of us to go in.

CHRIS
Be quick about it. I want to smoke.

David and Elizabeth make EYE CONTACT IN THE REAR VIEW. She's touching up -- a MAKEUP COMPACT in hand. As she sets the compact down on the dashboard --

DAVID
(to Chris)
Go ahead.

CHRIS
What?

DAVID
You haven't seen him since Thanksgiving.

CHRIS

You sure?

DAVID

We'll be fine here.

ELIZABETH

We'll talk about wrestling.

CHRIS

(cheerful)

I knew you two would hit it off. Back in a flash.

Chris gets out, leaves the car running: The heat, the MUSIC. Not half a second after THWAP! the door shuts --

DAVID

Seriously, what are you doing here?

ELIZABETH

How did you get to be friends with Banks?

DAVID

Couple summers ago, just started hanging out at the coffee shop.

As they talk: In b.g. Chris walks up the steps, knocks on the door. THE DOOR OPENS, Chris is admitted. Elizabeth TURNS DOWN the RAP MUSIC --

ELIZABETH

Then graduated to drug buddies. Very impressive.

DAVID

I'm not introducing you -- you'll probably steal him, too.

ELIZABETH

Well. It would have been nice to meet Banks, but I'll settle for seeing you.

DAVID

The hell do you want to see me? I don't want to see you.

ELIZABETH

To thank you.

DAVID

You want to thank me.

ELIZABETH

I want to say something: Thank you.

DAVID

Go fuck yourself.

Elizabeth turns fully in her seat, now facing David --

ELIZABETH
The customary response is, 'You are welcome.' However, given the circumstances, I'll accept your version.

DAVID
You stole from me. I showed you my notebook -- the only copy.

ELIZABETH
That was careless.

DAVID
(a bitter memory)
The look on your face when I confronted you... how smug.
(still in disbelief)
Then you threaten to call the cops on me!

ELIZABETH
(faux-innocent)
How can you blame me? I was only seventeen. Not to be crude, but... you were fucking a kid.

DAVID
(shakes his head)
You're sick. Sociopathic, really.

ELIZABETH
(ignoring him)
It was so exciting... every day that went by and Chris didn't come to me with, 'Who the hell are you, you're a thief and all the rest of the blah blah blah,' that was me getting one day closer to you.

DAVID
Fuck you.

ELIZABETH
You still want to.

DAVID
I want to do something to you, but I'm not sure that's it.

ELIZABETH
Frown.

DAVID
I thought I was going to fall over. When you walked in.

ELIZABETH
You played it off. Admirably. I admired
you.

The tension mounting -- they're trapped in this space --

DAVID
At the risk of sounding blurb-y: I looked
back on those years and wrote about my
experience, that of a young, Jewish male
going to a WASP-y prep school.

ELIZABETH
(sarcastic)
Oh, the hardship.

EXT. LAND ROVER -- NIGHT / SAME

It looks like David and Elizabeth are having a perfectly
calm conversation. Body language unremarkable, unheated.

DAVID (FILTERED)
And you stole it. You rewrote it and made
it about being a girl.

INT. LAND ROVER -- NIGHT / SAME

DAVID
The whole point was me looking in on a
thing from the outside. And you're the
one who rips it off? You're an insider,
you epitomize that, with your
Philadelphia debutante pedigree, Aryan
fuck-you eating clubs, Cape Cod bullshit.
The irony of that is lost on you?

ELIZABETH
I couldn't have done it without you,
David. Is that what you want me to say?

DAVID
I want you to say a hundred Hail Marys,
get cancer and croak.

Elizabeth smiles. There's mischief in it. She opens her
door -- cold air rushes in -- she gets out of the Rover --

David watches her through the window -- Elizabeth comes
to his door -- opens it -- David sweats a little as
Elizabeth climbs into the backseat next to him -- she
forces him to slide over, make room.

She shuts the door. A silent beat. Close quarters. Tense.

ELIZABETH

Let's agree on one thing: I wrote a
halfway decent book --

DAVID

(with disdain)

'Young adult.'

ELIZABETH

(over him)

-- let's agree on another: I may never
have had it published if it wasn't for
the article.

DAVID

My article. You're a thief.

ELIZABETH

No, I'm not. I rewrote it. I was a
facilitator. I don't need to facilitate
anymore. I got a two-book deal.

DAVID

I might kill you in this car. I literally
might strangle out your life-breath.

Elizabeth puts her hand on David's knee, holds it there.
He glances down, then up to the come-hither look on her
face. He's turned on, despite his best efforts not to be.

ELIZABETH

Half of me took your article on
principle.

DAVID

(quiet; melancholy)

But I shared it with you. I trusted you.
I actually cared...

ELIZABETH

You don't hand over something that good
like it's a shopping list or a baseball
card.

DAVID

I was in love with you. Like an idiot.
You knew I was. The whole summer
program... and I was your mentor!

ELIZABETH

You have a piece like that, you better
protect it 'til someone snatches it up.

DAVID

(pause)

You'll never be your sister.

ELIZABETH

Oh, please. Who wants to be her? She's a hyper-realist.

DAVID

Okay, this has been super. I'm gonna fake a stomach flu and beg off for the night.

ELIZABETH

You can't shake me.

DAVID

(checks the time)

I'll go see what's taking him so long.

ELIZABETH

I'm coming with you, clearly.

DAVID

No, you're not.

ELIZABETH

No? So I sit out here -- stay out here like your dog? Not likely.

David considers his options.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Best behavior. You have my word.

DAVID

That's entirely reassuring.

ELIZABETH

You get out, I get out. Up to you.

David thinks, decides. Then -- he leans forward, SHUTS OFF THE IGNITION, GRABS THE KEYS -- then opens his door and gets out. Elizabeth opens hers, steps out onto --

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- CONTINUOUS

David and Elizabeth close doors, approach the brownstone.

ELIZABETH

You don't have my book on your shelf.

DAVID

I don't have your book at all.

ELIZABETH

I know you've got the book.

DAVID

You think I'd read your book?

ELIZABETH
Cover to cover.

As they ascend the steps --

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(studies him)
I like your hair longer.

DAVID
Thanks -- got scissors in your purse?

Then -- SWOOSH! -- the brownstone door opens fast --

CHAOS. FOUR PEOPLE -- TWO GUYS, TWO GIRLS -- flee the brownstone, blow past David and Elizabeth on the stairs. She's knocked off balance -- David catches her --

ELIZABETH
Whoa, Jesus...

DAVID
What the --

GUY 1
Go go go...

GIRL 1
(overlapping)
... out of my way --

GIRL 2
Get out of here -- fast -- now --

GUY 2
Dave, man, go -- seriously --

DAVID
(to Guy 2)
Teddy, what's going on?

GUY 2/TEDDY
It's not okay -- fuck -- it's all fucked up in there...

DAVID
(calls after Teddy)
What the hell?

But Teddy's gone -- the four people have scattered fast in the blur of confusion -- all of them heading different directions at varying speeds down the quiet street.

ELIZABETH
What's happening?

Chris, freaked, worried, rushes out of the brownstone --

CHRIS
Get in the car.

ELIZABETH
What?

CHRIS
Get in the car, I said.

DAVID
What's going on --

Chris turns, shoots David a chilling look --

CHRIS
David. Now.

Running -- Chris to the driver's side -- David and Elizabeth race to climb into their seats. Doors SLAM shut -- then A LOW ROAR as Chris starts the engine --

INT. LAND ROVER (TRAVELLING) -- NIGHT

FRENETIC; BOUNCING AND HURLING with the Rover. High speed -- Chris navigates the STREET TRAFFIC and DOUBLE-PARKED CARS best he can. A mess of overlap --

CHRIS
Shit -- everything -- shit --

ELIZABETH
Chris?

DAVID
What happened?

CHRIS
William -- William, he's --

DAVID
What? He's what?

CHRIS
He's dead.

ELIZABETH
No --

DAVID
What? No, he's not. No, he's not.

CHRIS
I saw him --

SWERVE -- HONK! -- Chris almost tagged another car --

ELIZABETH

Calm down -- watch the street --

DAVID

Fuck you -- turn around -- go back --

CHRIS

(pounds the steering wheel)

He's in a chair! Eyes open! David!

EXT. BROOKLYN ALLEY -- NIGHT

The Land Rover is parked, three doors splayed open, HEADLIGHTS reflecting off a brick wall. Elizabeth, David and Chris around the Rover -- trying to catch their breath -- still overlapping, frantic --

CHRIS

It couldn't have been just opium. He must have had a lot of other stuff in there.

ELIZABETH

He could just be having some kind of attack or bad reaction.

DAVID

No way -- no way...

CHRIS

(in his own world)

Did anybody see us? Someone could have seen us. My car -- my license plate --

ELIZABETH

You can't worry about that -- baby --

CHRIS

They could call me in for -- I could go to jail.

DAVID

There's no way William is dead.

CLOSE ON ELIZABETH -- panicked curiosity in her eyes --

ELIZABETH

(to Chris)

What did it look like in there?

Chris takes a beat before responding.

CHRIS

(chilled by the memory)

William was alone in his office -- door cracked open...

OFF CHRIS'S EYES, to his vision of the description...

INT. BROWNSTONE / OFFICE -- NIGHT

... shadowy, LOW LAMP-LIGHT in this crowded office -- seasoned-shabby decor of a library -- spines of books, thousands of them -- lit dimly, also lit by MOONLIGHT.

CHRIS (V.O.)

Teddy and them must have taken one look at him and split -- I went in alone. Then I saw William's legs from around the other side of his chair --

APPROACH A FIGURE -- not fully visible -- only A MAN'S LEGS SPLAYED OUT FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF A CHAIR. In b.g. AN OPEN WINDOW -- COLD AIR pushes at a tattered curtain.

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

As I got close, I saw that his eyes were open --

CLOSE ON THE MAN'S EYES -- open wide -- LOW LIGHT reflected on the glassy, lifeless surface --

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

His mouth was open, too, not breathing --

CLOSE ON THE MAN'S MOUTH -- frozen there, gaping -- neglected teeth -- dried saliva caked on the lower lip --

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

There was a stack of pages in his lap...

CLOSE ON A STACK OF PAGES IN THE MAN'S LAP. Just then --

DAVID (V.O.)

Shut up! --

EXT. BROOKLYN ALLEY -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON ELIZABETH, listening, coming out of it. WIDEN TO REVEAL DAVID as he rounds the Rover, charging at Chris --

DAVID

-- excuse me, but shut the fuck up please. Fuck you and this prank --

CHRIS

It's not a prank.

David grabs Chris by the collar, throws him hard BAM! against the Rover door. They grapple for the upper hand --

DAVID

Yes, it is. Say it is. Say it is!

Chris spins David -- pins him hard to the wall -- puts a gloved hand over his mouth --

CHRIS

Listen: Listen: Listen to me! I tried to
revive him. I tried to bring him back. I
couldn't. He's gone. David. He's dead.

Chris holds David's face for a beat -- until David begins
to settle down. Chris removes his hand. Silence. Then --

ELIZABETH

It's so awful, someone dying. Especially
when they're famous...

(then)

So, wait... you said there was a stack of
pages. He has a new book?

CHRIS

Had a new book.

ELIZABETH

Was there a pub date on it?

DAVID

What do you care?

ELIZABETH

I just want to know when it's coming out.

CHRIS

It's not coming out.

DAVID

Why not?

CHRIS

Well, first of all, he's dead.

ELIZABETH

So, that happens all the time.

CHRIS

And the second thing is --

Chris reaches into the inside pocket of his overcoat,
pulls out a MANUSCRIPT -- creased pages, a mess. A hollow
THUNK as he tosses it on the hood of the Rover --

CHRIS (CONT'D)

-- we have the only copy.

They stare at the manuscript, trade looks. David walks to
it -- slowly -- traces his fingers along the page edges.
ON THE WRINKLED COVER PAGE, the title: "GRIEVING CITY" --

ELIZABETH (V.O./PRE-LAP)

*"Gazing down at the cracked prairie
highway that tongued out of the grieving
city was sickening because of the
movement there."*

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Two hours later. ON THE PAGES of the Banks manuscript -- typed, wrinkled, a booze-stained pile. Elizabeth holds the manuscript, THE PAGE with the words she reads --

ELIZABETH (O.S.)
"Dan Percy made a complete and total about-face."

David and Elizabeth alone. He paces; seated, she reads. O.S. FOOTSTEPS are audible as Chris climbs the stairs.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 (reads)
"Of course the view was different from where he now stood, above Winnipeg more so than in it."

Elizabeth stops reading, looks up from the manuscript.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 What do you think?

DAVID
 It's kind of a mess.

ELIZABETH
 Needs work. But it's really very good.

He takes the manuscript from her, reads the cover page --

DAVID
 (reads)
"Grieving City." I can't believe this...

Chris enters, takes off his overcoat.

ELIZABETH
 Everything okay?

DAVID
 What took you so long?

CHRIS
 A cab from Park to come back out here...?

DAVID
 (annoyed)
 Like I live in East Serbia...

ELIZABETH
 Did you call 9-1-1?

CHRIS
 From a payphone in the city, yeah.

Chris hands Elizabeth her MAKEUP COMPACT from before --

CHRIS (CONT'D)
You left this in the front seat.

ELIZABETH
Thanks.

CHRIS
(re: manuscript)
How is it?

Elizabeth puts down the manuscript, stands. She crosses to David's bookshelves -- peruses titles --

ELIZABETH
Well, everyone needs an editor.

CHRIS
I don't need an editor.

ELIZABETH
You're not a writer.

CHRIS
("my point exactly")
That's what I'm saying.

From the bookshelf, Elizabeth takes down a well-thumbed copy of "SONG OF THE SILENT BIRD." She turns over the book -- see HER SISTER'S AUTHOR PHOTO, labeled with her name; a short bio listing credits and awards.

PRE-LAP the sound of RUNNING WATER --

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / ADJACENT BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Moments later. Elizabeth studies herself in the mirror -- opens the door of the medicine cabinet -- inspects David's stuff in there -- toiletries, prescription pills.

Then Elizabeth shuts the cabinet door. Washes her hands. Dries them. Fixes her hair. Something in her eyes --

INT. BROOKLYN BAR -- NIGHT -- M.O.S. (FLASHBACK)

Familiar. The book-release party, from ANOTHER ANGLE. Elizabeth, by the hardcovers on display, stares across the room at -- CAROLINE AND NIKOLAS. They talk, laugh.

CLOSE ON ELIZABETH as she seethes with jealousy bordering on resentment -- a contested border. In her eyes, see the kind of deep envy that can sink a person, or push them...

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Elizabeth enters. Chris absentmindedly thumbs through the Banks manuscript as David paces.

CHRIS

What are we gonna do with this
manuscript?

ELIZABETH

Do you think anyone's seen it?

DAVID

No. I told you, he doesn't show word one
until it's finished.

David crosses to the window, looks out. Chris goes to the desk, pours himself a fresh whiskey.

ELIZABETH

What about colleagues? Agent... editor.

DAVID

He told me he hasn't spoken to his agent
in years. And there is no editor --
Farrar red-lined his deal after he handed
them a translation of a Ukrainian
cookbook. They said he was cracked up.

CHRIS

Damn...

DAVID

In the publishing world, the guy no
longer exists.

A quiet moment passes in the room.

CHRIS

Okay. So. What do we do now?

DAVID

(re: manuscript)

There's a phone number scribbled on the
back here -- maybe William was about to
reestablish industry contact with
someone. I'll call...

David enters the numbers on his cell phone. Elizabeth
watches. But before he can hit "call" --

Elizabeth crosses to him -- fast -- swipes the phone --

ELIZABETH

Hang on.

DAVID

Pardon me?

ELIZABETH

Why call?

DAVID

What do you mean, 'why'? To give it back.

ELIZABETH

You want to give back the manuscript.

DAVID

What else would we do with it?

ELIZABETH

Well, that's what I want to talk about.

(careful pause)

I don't think we should make any rash decisions.

David and Chris -- both confused -- stare at Elizabeth.

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / FATHER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Elizabeth paces, intense focus. Chris sits. David stands by the door. All drink -- only David and Chris smoke pot. On the desk in b.g., the METAL LOCK-BOX sits wide open.

ELIZABETH

I'm only trying to say that we should talk about this.

DAVID

We should talk about the best way to give it back.

CHRIS

That's why I took it.

DAVID

Chris rescued it, is more like it, from E.M.T.'s, whatever, would have used it to mop up his vomit or feces or, you know?

ELIZABETH

So, we're not even gonna talk about alternatives?

CHRIS

I don't see how there can be alternatives to, like, the only sane and reasonable course of action.

Puff, pass... puff, pass... Elizabeth abstains.

ELIZABETH

I'll show you. Play this out with me. You call the agent, somebody --

CHRIS

Or not even, we could just, you know --

DAVID

We could just drop it off.

CHRIS

Exactly. A completely anonymous thing.

ELIZABETH

So, no one gets credit.

DAVID

Credit for what?

ELIZABETH

For returning the manuscript.

DAVID

Who needs credit for that? Like it's a Cocker Spaniel?

CHRIS

It's not a missing person, Elizabeth, it's a man's work.

ELIZABETH

Clearly he cared so much about it.

DAVID

What is that supposed to mean?

ELIZABETH

Oh, I'm sorry. Have I spoken ill of your junkie mentor? My apologies.

DAVID

You were being sarcastic. I want to know what you meant.

ELIZABETH

That he would O.D. is a disrespect to the craft of writing and he doesn't deserve this book. He abandoned this book.

DAVID

He wrote it.

ELIZABETH

And Chris saved it. Now it has a chance for a new life.

CHRIS

What's wrong with the old one?

DAVID

(to Elizabeth)

We lost a friend, first of all.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)
I think you're being insensitive to,
like, an absurd degree.

ELIZABETH
We're only talking.

DAVID
It's what you're talking about. The book
is his, even if it is a mess.

ELIZABETH
Such a mess no one's ever gonna see it!
Is that what you want for your friend's
work? It becomes some curiosity, never
published? The stuff of myth? Or legend?
(then; a pace-change)
So, I'm saying: What if the book could be
more than that? I think it can. And I
think someone has to help it get there.

CHRIS
You're saying, you put your name on this?

DAVID
Unfortunately, yes, she's -- that's what
you mean?

ELIZABETH
That's what I want to discuss with you.
Yes.

PRE-LAP a loud DING! --

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / KITCHEN -- NIGHT

THE OVEN DOOR OPENS -- David's oven-mitted hand pulls out
a TAKE-AND-BAKE PIZZA -- he cuts it into rough slices.
David and Chris are a bit more stoned -- all still drink.

CHRIS
I can't be a party to this. David?

DAVID
(to Elizabeth)
Scratch what I said before. This is now
the most heartless thing I've ever seen.

CHRIS
(oblivious)
What did you say before?

During the following, David and Elizabeth take occasional
bites of the food, pick at the crust; Chris doesn't.

ELIZABETH
I know you probably want to talk about
the best way to go about this.

DAVID
Absolutely not.

ELIZABETH
What do you mean, 'absolutely not'? Like
it's yours already? Who the fuck are you?

DAVID
No one to you, clearly, and I didn't have
my first novel published in college.

ELIZABETH
But with this manuscript you could have
your first novel published in months.

DAVID
Oh, so now I'm taking the book.

ELIZABETH
Well, do you want it?

DAVID
I didn't write it.

ELIZABETH
He was your friend.

DAVID
All the more reason --

ELIZABETH
You had a relationship with him.

DAVID
That's the reason I wouldn't put my name
on the man's work.

ELIZABETH
Someone's got to clean it up, get it out
there.

DAVID
Why you?

ELIZABETH
Should it be you?

DAVID
I would never do that!

ELIZABETH
Fine. I would.

CHRIS
Honey?

ELIZABETH

(to David)

For the good of the book. I'm asking you to think about that.

DAVID

'For the good of the book.'

ELIZABETH

I've been in the publishing business for three years. Okay? I know how things work. Even with Banks's name, no one's going to publish a scorched-earth mess.

DAVID

It's not that bad...

ELIZABETH

No? Yes -- you said it is. So, then what? Some cut-happy editor comes in with a red pen and Gordon-Lish-es the life out of it? How is that justice?

CHRIS

You've got to be kidding me...

Elizabeth stands, rounds the counter, homes in on David --

ELIZABETH

But I think it's good. I want to help it. We have to help it if people are going to see the work. The text, in my opinion, deserves that.

DAVID

Oh, I see. You're in it for the welfare of the art.

CHRIS

You're saying: It's about the art?

ELIZABETH

I'm saying everybody wins.

DAVID

Everybody except the two idiots who let this thing happen and are now so racked with guilt they can't sleep.

ELIZABETH

No. They win, too.

CHRIS

How do they win?

ELIZABETH

Your silence will not go unnoticed by me.

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Later. David and Chris are on the opposite side of the room from Elizabeth, who touches the manuscript pages --

ELIZABETH

Think about it: The great wide open, the world is a scary place. Don't you want to have a little security out there in the unknown? I know I do. This... is that.

(emphatic pause)

This is gold.

(to David)

I will facilitate this book into the world. I can. Then -- I will help you.

DAVID

You're gonna help me.

ELIZABETH

I will pull every string within reach to get your work out there. An article, a short story, a novel, anything. You wash my hand, I will scrub yours spotless.

(then)

It's your career, David. Get it while you're young.

David lets this land. He crosses away from her, circles --

DAVID

Well... but Chris rescued it.

Technically, in our presently fucked system of logic, the manuscript is his.

CHRIS

It's not mine.

ELIZABETH

That's right. It's ours. Three of us.

CHRIS

Well, no, I mean, I didn't rescue it for us. I rescued it from them. The E.M.T.'s, I don't know, I didn't know what they'd do. How the hell was I supposed to know?

ELIZABETH

You weren't, baby. You did the right thing.

CHRIS

William's in the chair. I saw it, it was a spur-of-the-moment kind of thing.

DAVID

I'm not saying you did a bad thing by taking it.

CHRIS
I know you're not. At least I hope you're not.

DAVID
Chris, I'm not.

CHRIS
Okay.

ELIZABETH
Neither am I, sweetie.

David picks up the manuscript --

DAVID
Your first novel was young adult. Will anyone believe you produced this?

ELIZABETH
After I rewrite it, they will. Everybody grows up sometime.

CHRIS
You would do that?

Elizabeth sets down her WHISKEY GLASS, lipstick on the edge, on David's bedside table --

ELIZABETH
Given the circumstances, I have no choice but to utter a resounding Yes.

CHRIS
Well, I think it's bullshit.

A long beat. Finally -- because it pains him to say it --

DAVID
I think she's right.

CHRIS
What? ELIZABETH
You do? What?

CHRIS
How stoned are you?

DAVID
If she puts her stamp on it -- who's to say?

CHRIS
But it's not her book, Dave.

David and Elizabeth step into a private moment --

DAVID

And you promise there's something for me
on the other side of this.

ELIZABETH

Oh, I promise.

DAVID

Because that could make up for a lot of
things.

Chris, frustrated, throws up his arms -- turns his back
on them, crosses to the window --

CHRIS

(innocent-oblivious)

What the hell are you guys talking about?

ELIZABETH

(to David; loaded)

A lot of things.

DAVID

If I can trust you.

Elizabeth traces her hand along the side of his face --

ELIZABETH

You can trust me.

David's hooked. Chris turns back to them -- didn't see --

CHRIS

I'm standing here, I'm shocked and amazed
by this. David? Are you being serious?

DAVID

I'm thinking... it is a mess, really,
when you look at it. But there's
something there.

CHRIS

Yeah -- William's work.

ELIZABETH

But if it changes? What even is that?

DAVID

(to Chris)

She's already established, it would be
easier --

CHRIS

No...

DAVID

I've been spinning my wheels for years.
And then now it's, you know, she'll help
me get my novel published. How else could
I do that? Me? Who I am?

Fed up, Chris grabs his coat and the GALA INVITATION, storms out. David and Elizabeth follow him out to --

THE THIRD-FLOOR LANDING --

Chris races downstairs -- David and Elizabeth shout down over the bannister --

DAVID (CONT'D)

Chris, wait --

CHRIS (O.S.)

Fuck you both very much.

DAVID

Where are you going?

CHRIS (O.S.)

The Botanic Garden thing.

ELIZABETH

What about me?

CHRIS (O.S.)

What about you?

SLAM! of the front door O.S. Now they're alone together.

ELIZABETH

Get your tux.

DAVID

You think I own a tux?

INT. TAXI (TRAVELLING) -- NIGHT

Lights of Flatbush Avenue wipe over Elizabeth and David. David, in a suit now, adjusts his tie. Thinks he's all set -- but Elizabeth thinks differently --

She slides across the seat to him -- too close -- and adjusts his knot. Brushes off some lint. Cleans him up.

EXT. BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN, PALM HOUSE -- NIGHT

Establishing. A GLASS HOUSE structure lit gorgeously inside and out. A banner announces: "BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC -- WINTER GALA."

EXT. BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN, PALM HOUSE / ENTRY -- NIGHT

David and Elizabeth step out of a taxi to the sounds of MUSIC -- of high-end nightlife. David pays the DRIVER.

Parked LIMOS. A red carpet set-up is broken down by TIRED WORKMEN. One last Press PHOTOGRAPHER, mid-20s, is left packing up his gear. As David and Elizabeth pass him --

PHOTOGRAPHER
Who are you? Should I know you?

David and Elizabeth stop.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)
(impatient)
Should I know you? What's your name?

ELIZABETH
Elizabeth Hawkins. I'm a novelist.

The Photographer speaks into a recorder attached to the base of his camera --

PHOTOGRAPHER
Elizabeth Hawkins. Novelist.
(to David; more impatient)
You?

DAVID
David Lewis. I'm, uh...

PHOTOGRAPHER
Fuck it. Smile.

Elizabeth smiles. David edges up next to her --

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)
Not him -- just you.

Elizabeth shoots David a silent, half-assed apology. He steps back. She poses with a smile. POP! FLASH! as the Photographer SNAPS shot after shot. David watches. FLASH!

INT. PALM HOUSE / GALA RECEPTION ROOM -- NIGHT

David and Elizabeth enter -- they SWIPE DRINKS off a tray held by a passing CATERER. A FEW HUNDRED PEOPLE party. A BAND plays AGREEABLE MUSIC. The dance floor is packed with SOCIETY WOMEN in expensive dresses propped up by WEALTHY MEN in tuxedos. David's the only guy in a suit.

ELIZABETH
(scans the room; wide-eyed)
Holy shit, this is... that guy --

As she points out VARIOUS PEOPLE to David --

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
That guy's the Publisher at Farrar...
(nods elsewhere)
And those women -- two of the top editors
at Random House. One on the right has her
own imprint. Wow, there's Binky Urban...

From across the room -- BINKY URBAN waves to Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(looking around)
Drop a bomb here and there wouldn't be a
book published in America for years.

DAVID
How do you know these people?

ELIZABETH
(playing it cool)
Everyone does.

An EDITOR approaches, says "Hello" to Elizabeth... kiss-kiss... industry nice-making. As the Editor moves off --

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(scanning the room)
And there are musicians, movie people...
(an afterthought)
Do you see Chris?

DAVID
There's his mom. No.

ELIZABETH
Where?

ELIZABETH'S POV -- MRS. WOLCOTT
A striking beauty in her early 60s, she moves on the
dance floor to the beat of two too many Chardonnays. She
dances sloppy-close with a GENTLEMAN, also early 60s.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I haven't met Chris's dad yet.

DAVID
That's not Chris's dad.

ELIZABETH
("yikes")
Oh.

DAVID
(nods across the room)
Over there.

ACROSS THE ROOM -- Chris stands with his father, MR. WOLCOTT, 60s, overworked world-beater, titan of industry. Chris sees David and Elizabeth -- then turns his back.

DAVID (CONT'D)
This is going awesome so far.

ELIZABETH
(sips drink; re: Chris)
I'll go talk to him.

DAVID
What am I supposed to do?

ELIZABETH
I don't care. Find a cougar to woo.

TIME CUT --

ACROSS THE ROOM -- Elizabeth cautiously approaches Chris and Mr. Wolcott. Mr. Wolcott looks up from an active PDA.

CHRIS
(semi-cold)
Dad, this is my girlfriend, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
So nice to meet you, sir.

MR. WOLCOTT
Likewise. Are you feeling better?

Chris shoots her a look: "Just go with it."

ELIZABETH
(quick pick-up)
Yes. Oh, yes, much. Thanks.

Elizabeth eyes Chris with interest, some concern --

ELIZABETH (V.O./PRE-LAP)
(CONT'D)
Tell me, though, in a nutshell, what your main problem is...

INT. PALM HOUSE / DANCE FLOOR -- NIGHT

Later. Elizabeth and Chris dancing amid PARTY GUESTS.

CHRIS
There is no nutshell on earth big enough to contain the multitude of my problems with this. I don't know where to begin.

ELIZABETH
Start anywhere. I'm listening. I'm here for you, really, to listen, hear you out.

Elizabeth, distracted, turns, sees --

ELIZABETH'S POV -- DAVID
Standing alone by the dance floor. He sips his drink.

CHRIS
I mean, if we do this, am I guilty by
association because I sleep with you?
(no response)
Elizabeth? Did you hear me?

ELIZABETH
What? Yes. No -- what?

David approaches, drink in hand --

DAVID
(gently)
Hey, man.

CHRIS
(re: his suit; a dig)
Nice tux.
(then)
You know this is crazy. We can't do this.

Suddenly -- their private conversation is interrupted --

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Elizabeth?

Elizabeth -- along with David and Chris -- turns to see --
JONATHAN ROE, late 30s, in a tux. A book critic. Snarky.

ELIZABETH
Jonathan!

MALE VOICE/JONATHAN
You look great.

ELIZABETH
Aw, shucks. And check you out, all dapper
and 'James Bond'...

Elizabeth makes no move to introduce David and Chris.
Jonathan schmoozes with sizeable professional bullshit --

JONATHAN
Anyway, everyone at Publishers Weekly is
downright salivating for your next book.

ELIZABETH
I'll finish the damn thing if you promise
to give me another good review.

David tries to hide his envy. He seethes in the failing.

JONATHAN
We shall see. You done with school yet?

ELIZABETH
May.

JONATHAN
We'll grab lunch when you finish -- call
me after graduation.

ELIZABETH
(flirtatious)
The ink on my diploma will still be wet.

David and Chris trade looks as -- Elizabeth and Jonathan
cheek-kiss goodbye. Jonathan walks off. Elizabeth turns --

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Sorry about that.

When Chris is sure they're alone, out of earshot --

CHRIS
(ignoring her; to David)
What happens, we get caught doing this?

DAVID
("too many people around")
Not here.

EXT. BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN / PATH -- NIGHT

Secluded. Elizabeth -- Chris's coat draped over her own -- shivers. Chris and David steel themselves to the freeze. Muffled sounds of the gala audible from O.S.

CHRIS
(to David)
We're talking about William. Someone renowned. Took you under his wing, over a year ago, he didn't have to. Who are you?

DAVID
It's me. Still me.

ELIZABETH
I am too freezing. I can't be out here.

DAVID
Jesus Christ -- here --

David takes off his overcoat, shoves it at her. Elizabeth puts it on. She's big now, oversized in all three coats.

DAVID (CONT'D)
(to Chris; an earnest plea)
I'm not you, man. I'm not set. But what we're talking about -- with her doing this, then helping me in return -- that's a guarantee of something. I need that.

Elizabeth watches David work. She loves it.

DAVID (CONT'D)
(loaded)
If anyone can make it work, she can make
it work.

David and Elizabeth exchange a private glance.

CHRIS
I still don't know if someone saw the
car, the plate --

ELIZABETH
No one saw.

CHRIS
Were you there? Up in every window of
every brownstone, peering down through
the curtains with the old Jewish ladies?

ELIZABETH
No, I wasn't, but I'm sure you have
nothing to worry about.

DAVID
'Old Jewish ladies'?

CHRIS
Oh, please.

DAVID
Wait, no, why is it important that the
women in the windows are Jewish?

CHRIS
Because they're nosy!

DAVID
Pardon me?

ELIZABETH
Okay, this is not productive.

DAVID
(to Chris)
You'd better watch your mouth.

CHRIS
I need another drink...

ELIZABETH
He didn't mean anything by it. Relax.

DAVID

You think you know someone -- your whole life you consider them a brother -- then one night they start goose-stepping around the Botanic Garden!

CHRIS

Oh, fuck you.

DAVID

Fuck you, you Aryan fuck!

ELIZABETH

David. Stop. It was a detail he mentioned, it meant nothing. You live in Brooklyn. It's not like the women are gonna be Mormon.

DAVID

(pause)

Fine.

ELIZABETH

Chris, why don't you apologize?

CHRIS

In English or in German?

DAVID

Oh, that's it --

David lunges at Chris -- they hit the deck, wrestle like ten-year-olds. Elizabeth tries to break it up but her mobility is compromised by the bulk of three coats. David locks Chris in some kind of wrestling hold. All tangled.

INT. COPY SHOP -- NIGHT

Late-night deserted. Elizabeth stands between David and Chris, both dirty from the fight. A COPY CLERK manual-feeds their pages into a Xerox machine out of earshot. Even so, all three of them talk sotto and restrained --

CHRIS

Why would she send it tonight? I don't see what the rush is.

(to Elizabeth)

Shouldn't you wait, do some work on it?

DAVID

But you said yourself they're waiting on your second book. It's not like you'd be coming out of the blue with this.

ELIZABETH

(to David; dismissive)

You don't know how publishing works. I can handle it from here, thanks.

DAVID

That's a nice attitude. Isn't this whole thing for my benefit as well? Aren't you trying to help me?

ELIZABETH

Of course it is. Of course I am.

DAVID

Then listen to me, because I'm trying to help you, too.

ELIZABETH

Okay.

CHRIS

I'm going to buy beer.

ELIZABETH

Will you get me a water, please?

Chris, no response, exits the copy shop. When he's gone --

DAVID

You've got to get this thing in before people -- and they might not even do this, but also they might -- before people start sniffing around for every stack of pages that smacks of Banks's work. You've got less than a day to beat that. Two days, tops.

(then)

If you go in with it now, go in confident and strong, then there's nothing to be suspected by anyone at any time. This way -- you're less likely to get caught.

ELIZABETH

This is what you think.

DAVID

Shouldn't it be? If you get caught, then I'm fucked, as well.

(pause)

Just send the first three chapters. Give them a taste.

(then)

It's covering all your bases, even the ones, in the end, you didn't have to.

Elizabeth thinks it over. She can see his point.

TIME CUT --

David and Chris sit in silence -- empty chair between them -- sipping TALL BOYS IN BROWN PAPER BAGS. Elizabeth stands outside on her cell phone. She ends her call, then enters the copy shop, BOTTLE OF WATER in hand.

ELIZABETH

Okay: Yay. My agent's waiting, soon as we can get the chapters over to her place...

DAVID

Where?

ELIZABETH

That's the bad news. Jersey City.

David -- expectant -- turns to look at Chris --

CHRIS

The car's in Manhattan, so why don't you eat a bag of dicks.

ELIZABETH

Honey, come on...

CHRIS

I'm not getting the car. I'm not driving the car -- I don't want to be involved.

ELIZABETH

Well, what the hell?

CHRIS

Use a messenger service.

DAVID

I don't know about that.

CHRIS

Why not?

DAVID

(extra sotto)

I think it might be a mistake to involve other people than the three of us.

Chris calls off loudly to the Copy Clerk --

CHRIS

Do you guys have a messenger service you recommend?

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- NIGHT

ON A DECAL READING: "BROOKLYN MERCURY MESSENGERS." WIDEN TO REVEAL THE DECAL on the door of A PARKED, IDLING CAR. CLASSIC ROCK dribbles from the tinny speakers. THE MESSENGER, a late-40s burn-out, fills out a form as --

Elizabeth, David and Chris stand on the curb. Elizabeth holds a MANILA ENVELOPE -- David grips a copy shop bag.

CHRIS
How can you possibly explain showing your agent a type-written manuscript? You don't write on a typewriter.

ELIZABETH
Now I do. I'm going back to my roots.

CHRIS
Your 'roots'?

ELIZABETH
The roots, I mean. The roots of writing. When writing was typewriting.

CHRIS
Oh, my God...

ELIZABETH
She probably won't even notice. I say it's a font. Whatever. I'm gonna have to re-type the whole thing eventually, so who cares?

The Messenger hands the form to Elizabeth --

MESSENGER
Initial the middle line, sign the bottom.

ELIZABETH
(initials, signs)
When will this get there?

MESSENGER
Within the hour.

Elizabeth hands over the clipboard. Then the manila envelope. The three of them watch this transaction with interest: The point of no return. The Messenger tosses the envelope on the passenger seat -- just another package. He TURNS UP the FREEDOM ROCK jams, drives away.

DAVID
So, that happened.
(then)
You guys want to get a drink?

But Chris has already stepped into the street --

CHRIS
(calls out)
Taxi!

A TAXI stops across the street. Waits.

DAVID
All righty, then.

CHRIS
I hope you're happy with yourself.

DAVID
Eventually I'll find the peace of mind to
sleep again.

Chris walks to the taxi.

DAVID (CONT'D)
(calls out)
What about all the stuff we're supposed
to do tomorrow? With your family? Do you
still want me to come?

Chris gets into the taxi, no response. He leaves the door
open for Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
(sotto)
I want you to come.
(then)
It'll look weird if you're not around. He
invited you -- they'll ask questions.

DAVID
He invited me. His *largesse*...

ELIZABETH
Come.

DAVID
He's disappointed in me.

ELIZABETH
He'll get over it.

DAVID
I might be disappointed in myself.

HONK HONK. The taxi horn. But neither of them moves. Not
an inch. They hold eye contact as --

ELIZABETH
Good night.

DAVID
Is that what it was?

A flirtatious look passes between them. Then Elizabeth
goes to the taxi, gets in. As it drives away, David waves
-- Chris gives him the finger -- David watches them go.

INT. TAXI (TRAVELLING) -- NIGHT

Chris and Elizabeth stare out the windows as their taxi crosses back into Manhattan over the Brooklyn Bridge. Then she places a hand on his leg. Looks at him. After a moment, he takes her hand in his. Grips it tight.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET -- NIGHT

David walks, hands in his pockets. Alone.

INT. WOLCOTT DUPLEX / CHRIS'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

In the large bed, where Chris and Elizabeth are currently having sex -- but she's distraught --

ELIZABETH
(whispers)
I'm sorry... I'm sorry... don't worry...

INT. THE GUTTER BAR -- NIGHT

Williamsburg, Brooklyn. HIPSTERS and LOCALS in this bowling alley bar. Crowded lanes visible in b.g. -- balls rolling -- CRASH! of pins -- CHEERS of groups --

David, seated on a bar stool, sips a whiskey neat. A CUTE HIPSTER CHICK bellies up to the bar, eyes David, smiles. He smiles back weakly, uninterested. He downs the rest of his stiff drink -- then gets up to leave. Another CRASH!

INT. WOLCOTT DUPLEX / CHRIS'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Chris and Elizabeth. In bed. Post sex. His back to her; she leans up on an elbow, peers down over his shoulder.

ELIZABETH
Look at me: Look --
(turns his face to hers)
Just this once. I'm sorry -- I am. Then
I'll be out in the world, and -- okay?

Chris turns away. Elizabeth gets out of bed -- goes off into the ADJACENT BATHROOM.

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

David. Sitting on the edge of his bed. Alone. Can't sleep. Holding something -- can't make it out just yet. He looks over at his bedside table, sees --

ELIZABETH'S WHISKEY GLASS, her lipstick still on the edge, sits parked where she placed it. He stares at it.

Then David looks down -- he's holding THE .38 from the lock-box. He turns it over in his hands, and turns over something in his mind again and again.

INT. WOLCOTT DUPLEX / ADJACENT BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Elizabeth sits on the closed toilet -- she cries. Faucet RUNNING WATER to mask the sound. Something in her eyes --

INT. BROOKLYN BAR -- NIGHT -- M.O.S. (FLASHBACK)

Familiar. The book-release party, from ANOTHER ANGLE. At a two-top in the back -- Elizabeth and Caroline sit. As Caroline berates her kid sister, says how pissed she is --

UNDER THE TABLE -- CLOSE ON ELIZABETH'S HANDS as she angrily intertwines fingers, WHITE-KNUCKLES STRAINING to keep her lid on. It's all she can do to grip the fucking tablecloth and grip it hard. Frustrated, jealous as ever.

INT. WOLCOTT DUPLEX / ADJACENT BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Back again. Elizabeth tears off some toilet paper, wipes her face: "Get your shit together." Shuts off the water. She peers into the bedroom through a crack in the door --

ELIZABETH'S POV -- CHRIS

Seated on the edge of the bed, hunched, his back to her.

PRE-LAP the familiar sound of FOOTSTEPS RUNNING on dirt --

EXT. CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR TRACK -- DAWN

THE FEET OF SOMEONE RUNNING HARD in blue, pre-day light. Sneakers bang the dirt. It's the next morning. Hear heavy breathing, see white breath in the cold -- it's Chris in his winter running gear. Sprinting -- running faster --

INT. BROOKLYN COFFEE SHOP -- DAWN

David pays for a cup of coffee. Grabs that day's "New York Times" -- pays for that, too.

INT. WOLCOTT DUPLEX / CHRIS'S BEDROOM -- DAWN

Elizabeth wakes up -- gets her bearings. As she turns over, REVEAL -- she's alone. Chris is gone. In his place: A NOTE. She picks it up, reads the words: "GONE RUNNING."

INT. WOLCOTT DUPLEX / KITCHEN -- DAWN

Elizabeth FILLS A GLASS OF WATER from a freezer-door fountain. The fridge-door is open -- Elizabeth inspects everything in there. She closes the door, walks into --

A HALLWAY --

Decorated with expensive art. Fine tables. Sculpture. Neoclassical touches. Her "tour" is the first glimpse of the scale of the family's wealth: Large. She walks into --

THE SITTING ROOM --

Elizabeth pads over to a Biedermeier chair, the BANKS MANUSCRIPT ON THE SEAT where she had been reading. In the corner: A LARGE, EXPENSIVELY DECORATED CHRISTMAS TREE. Elizabeth sits down and continues reading.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR TRACK -- DAWN

Chris runs hard -- fast. Towards something? Away from it?

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / KITCHEN -- DAWN

David, cup of coffee in hand, has that day's "New York Times" spread out on the counter. He flips through pages, searches for something. Sips his coffee, scans articles.

INT. WOLCOTT DUPLEX / SITTING ROOM -- DAWN

Elizabeth reads the last page, the last sentence of the manuscript -- closes it in her lap. Takes a deep breath.

INT. "21" CLUB / BAR ROOM -- DAY

Lunch. Elizabeth sits between David and Chris. They look tense -- guilt and worry. Mr. and Mrs. Wolcott are there with Chris's GRANDMOTHER, 80s, frail, dressed to the nines. The Wolcott party is squeezed at a table -- loaded with food -- by the kitchen amid quite a scene. Place is packed with New York's WEALTHY and eager-rich TOURISTS. Chris and Elizabeth in new outfits; David the same suit.

DAVID

(to Elizabeth; sotto)

Have you heard from your agent?

ELIZABETH

(sotto; on edge)

Not yet -- but she'll call.

DAVID
(reassuring; also on edge)
She'll call.

MRS. WOLCOTT
(chipper; buzzed already)
Christopher, isn't it nice to have your
best friend -- and your special lady --
joining us for the first time this year?

CHRIS
("not so much")
Yes. Very.

MRS. WOLCOTT
Elizabeth, we're so happy to meet you.

ELIZABETH
Thank you for having me.

Mr. Wolcott keeps his head down, ignores his hamburger
and his companions -- glued to his PDA, thumb-typing,
clearly stressed. Mrs. Wolcott, hating her husband,
drinking to drown him, hasn't touched her steak Diane.

MRS. WOLCOTT
(condescending)
And David -- I'm just so pleased when we
can bring you to places like this.

DAVID
("ouch")
Me, too. Thanks.

MRS. WOLCOTT
(to Mr. Wolcott)
Aren't you pleased? Bill -- Bill?

MR. WOLCOTT
(looks up)
What? Yes. Oh, yes.

Then -- right quick -- he goes back about his business.

MRS. WOLCOTT
(overdoing it)
Ooh! Exciting -- both of you are new to
our holiday ritual.
(sips wine; re: Mr. Wolcott)
This has been a tradition since Bunny was
a little boy -- 'Hamburgers and Handel' --
isn't that right, Mother?

The Grandmother says nothing, cuts away at her hamburger.

MRS. WOLCOTT (CONT'D)
(to Elizabeth)
I have a little something for you.

Elizabeth looks down, sees MRS. WOLCOTT'S HAND SLIDING A SMALL TIFFANY & CO. BOX across the table. Bow tied on it.

ELIZABETH
Mrs. Wolcott, you didn't have to.

David and Chris look on. Curious. Elizabeth unties the bow, opens the box to reveal -- a BROOCH OF GOLDEN ROPES INTERTWINED in a round knot.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(holds it up)
It's beautiful. Thank you.

MRS. WOLCOTT
You are entirely welcome. Maybe you'll wear it tonight.

As Elizabeth fastens it to her dress --

ELIZABETH
I'll wear it now. Oh, I love it.

MRS. WOLCOTT
(with a song-lilt)
'Tonight'... The Condé Nast holiday party is one of the best of the season.

ELIZABETH
(re: brooch)
There -- perfect.
(dramatic pause)
Mr. and Mrs. Wolcott, if you'd allow me just a moment to say a few words...

Everyone -- except Mr. Wolcott -- checks in. David listens closely, hangs on every word and it shows --

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
... your son -- my Chris -- means the world to me. I couldn't be happier about this relationship.

David sinks a little in his seat. Uncomfortable -- jealous? -- it looks like it's killing him. Chris listens coolly to Elizabeth's speech.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
We have wonderful things ahead. Living together here in New York -- that Tribeca apartment... you're so generous.

Mrs. Wolcott gulps her wine, smiles enthusiastically. She eyes her husband as Elizabeth takes Chris's hand --

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Now, he's probably too shy to admit it, but I know how much Chris is looking forward to finishing the M.B.A. and coming back to work at the firm.

Mr. Wolcott doesn't look up as he speaks --

MR. WOLCOTT

(to Chris; cold)

Maybe you're more serious about grown-up work than I thought. It'd be a good thing to stop harboring childish fantasies.

Chris reacts as -- CLUNK! Mrs. Wolcott sets down her wine glass. As she signals the SERVER for another large pour --

MRS. WOLCOTT

A new job, the company, yes. But if the Feds keep knocking on the firm's door...

That gets Mr. Wolcott's attention. He looks up, annoyed, puts down the PDA. During the following, Mrs. Wolcott is drunk, inappropriate. Mr. Wolcott comes to a boil. The kids are uncomfortable. The Grandmother's in space.

MRS. WOLCOTT (CONT'D)

Who knows if I even want our son going through that, day to day for a living.

(then; to Mr. Wolcott)

My Matthew couldn't handle it -- couldn't handle you. What on earth makes you think his little brother can?

MR. WOLCOTT

(stern; pissed)

Enough.

PRE-LAP the busy SOUNDS OF MIDTOWN MANHATTAN --

EXT. MANHATTAN STREETS -- DAY

As Elizabeth, David and Chris walk uptown -- the city seethes with stressful, joyous, seasonal life. A MONTAGE:

-- FIFTH AVENUE
where PEDESTRIANS are forced to walk in the bus lanes of the streets because the sidewalk passed capacity --

-- FIFTY-FIFTH STREET, 5TH AVENUE
where the Disney Store actually has a line outside and dogs nip at shopping bags dragged wearily by TOURISTS --

-- FIFTY-SEVENTH STREET, BETWEEN 6TH AND 7TH AVENUES
where MASSES come from all directions towards the building on the corner -- visible ahead -- old New York -- CARNEGIE HALL -- off the BLEAT of a taxi's LOUD HORN --

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / STERN AUDITORIUM -- DAY

THE BRASS SECTION of the Masterwork Orchestra blows out a rousing section of Handel's "Messiah."

IN A FIRST TIER PRIVATE BOX -- Elizabeth, wearing the gold brooch, sits between David and Chris. Their minds are far from here. Mrs. Wolcott and the Grandmother are lost happily in the Handel. Mr. Wolcott has finally put away his PDA, relaxed a bit.

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / SHORIN CLUB ROOM -- DAY

Intermission. Mingling PATRONS at the bar sipping drinks in b.g. Elizabeth is on her cell with her literary agent, ANNA, listening at first --

ANNA (PHONE/OVER)
I read the chapters. Love it. I don't even really think it's young adult --

ELIZABETH
I was hoping you'd say that.

ANNA (PHONE/OVER)
-- anyway, I wanted to get these pages to Peter Sablone a-sap -- he's been fully up my rear about you -- but I just found out he's leaving town at four, so --

ELIZABETH
Today?

ANNA (PHONE/OVER)
-- so, we'll do it after the holidays.

ELIZABETH
I'll get him the pages today.

ANNA (PHONE/OVER)
Nah, no, it's not that bad of a rush.

ELIZABETH
Are you my agent or my mother? I'll get him the pages, I said. He in the office?

ANNA (PHONE/OVER)
(pause)
I talked to him, he was at home. Packing. Said he's leaving Grand Central on a four o'clock train. That's an hour from now.

ELIZABETH
I'll be there -- I'll get it to him.

Elizabeth hangs up. Turns -- David stands behind her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(startled)
Jesus. Lurk, much?

DAVID
(re: her phone call)
All good?

ELIZABETH
I have to get the pages to my editor.
He's leaving Grand Central in an hour.

DAVID
Shit. Chris won't go.

ELIZABETH
Will you?

DAVID
(pause; wheels spinning)
Let me talk to him. Wait here.

David walks off, joins Chris in b.g. Mrs. Wolcott, big glass of scotch in hand, approaches Elizabeth --

MRS. WOLCOTT
(ugly-drunk by now)
You enjoying the classical music?

ELIZABETH
Oh, yes.

MRS. WOLCOTT
I'm relieved... that Chris found such an attractive girl. You've made his father and me very happy, young lady.

Elizabeth forces a smile and nods. Uncomfortable.

Mrs. Wolcott wobbles away to join A FRIEND, calling out her name too loud as she goes. Chris and David approach --

CHRIS
I'm not going. My family is here.

ELIZABETH
I know. I feel bad. But, can I explain?

CHRIS
You two want to run around, frolic, fine.
But I don't want to play.

He walks away, joins his father and grandmother across the room. LIGHTS FLICKER ON and OFF. Intermission's over.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET (VANDERBILT AVE.) -- DAY

David -- so chivalrous -- holds Elizabeth's AGENCY ENVELOPE as she grips her overcoat closed against the winter wind. They walk towards Grand Central Station. As they navigate PEDESTRIANS, PRETZEL VENDORS and traffic --

DAVID
I liked your speech at the lunch table.

ELIZABETH
Thanks.

David feigns a bowing prayer, imitates her ass-kissing --

DAVID
'All hail the mighty Wolcott family...'
(then)
Don't blow this meal-ticket.

ELIZABETH
(mock-offended)
How shallow do you think I am?

DAVID
(endless possibilities)
Kiddie pool... rain puddle... spilled
milk... should I go on?

Smiles. Through glass-paned swinging doors, they enter --

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION -- CONTINUOUS

A NOISY RUSH of life here. COMMUTERS and TOURISTS swarm. The iconic CLOCK -- cameras FLASH! -- BOARDING NOTICES post and change. Elizabeth and David survey the teeming scene -- DINERS and DRINKERS in the second-level bar.

DAVID
You know how many people showed up to see
Grand Central the day it opened? The
throngs? Hundred and fifty thousand.
(genuine reverence)
This is a palace.

ELIZABETH
(unimpressed)
Yeah? Then who's the king?

DAVID
It's not for a king. It's for everyone.
It's for us.

ELIZABETH
Yawn.
(scans the bar)
There he is.

ELIZABETH'S POV -- PETER SABLONE
Seated at a table. He's Elizabeth's editor. Late 30s,
wearing wire-rims. He reads galleys on a hand-held SONY
READER; valise at his feet. Glass of water on the table.

DAVID
You gonna introduce me?

ELIZABETH
Next time.

Elizabeth tries to take the envelope from David. He holds it out, then pulls it back -- away from her, over his head. As she steps close -- too close -- to get it...

A charged moment between them: This is a transaction, professional and sexual. Finally -- David hands it over.

TIME CUT --

AT PETER'S TABLE --

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Peter.

PETER
Elizabeth. Merry Holidays. Have a seat.

ELIZABETH
(sits)
You, too.

In b.g. David takes a seat at the bar.

PETER
Anna gave me the heads-up you were
burning to get something into my hands.

As Elizabeth hands him the agency envelope --

ELIZABETH
First three chapters. My new novel.

PETER
What a pleasant surprise.
(re: the bar)
Do you want anything?

ELIZABETH
No, thanks. Or, water's fine.

PETER
(re: waitress)
Let's see if I can get her. Zoo in here.

ELIZABETH
(looks around)
Yes.

Peter opens the envelope, slides out the pages.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I don't think it's young adult this time.

PETER
What's it about?

ELIZABETH
Male protagonist, mid thirties. Dan Percy
-- his parents are killed in a robbery.

PETER
Like Batman.

ELIZABETH
(embarrassed)
Yeah, but, y'know. This is different.

PETER
I'm kidding.
("go on")
'Killed in a robbery'...

ELIZABETH
After the two-casket funeral Dan spirals
out, becomes obsessed with tracking down
a girl -- the One Who Got Away. She left
town, moved to Winnipeg in, like, the
ninth grade.

PETER
Winnipeg -- Canada.

ELIZABETH
Canada, yeah. So the book is Dan getting
there, a kind of a... Walkabout. Buses.
And what happens when he finally arrives.

PETER
What does happen?

ELIZABETH
You'll see. I'm cleaning all that up now.

PETER
(flipping pages)
'You can't go home again.'

ELIZABETH
That sort of thing.

PETER
Have a title yet?

ELIZABETH
"Grieving City."

PETER
(re: the pages)
Are you working on a typewriter?

ELIZABETH
It's a font. I'll probably change it.

PETER
Huh. Well, okay. Thanks, Elizabeth.

Peter checks his watch.

ELIZABETH
Thank you. Hope you like it.

PETER
I'll read it on the train, then we'll see
where we are.

PRE-LAP a thunderous CLACK CLACK CLACK! --

INT. SUBWAY CAR (TRAVELLING) -- NIGHT

CLACK CLACK CLACK! The 2/3 express -- COMMUTERS and TOURISTS, shopping bags, luggage -- David and Elizabeth are packed in tight. She looks dazed. He looks at her.

INT. MICHAEL-TOWNE WINES & SPIRITS -- NIGHT

Same as before. But now it's David and Elizabeth at the counter. He places two bottles of Famous Grouse up for tally -- then also --

David grabs a BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE from a rack display next to the register -- PLUNKS that down next to the whiskey. The Cashier rings it all up. David pays CASH -- no Platinum AmEx cards for him.

INT. BOOKSTORE -- NIGHT

Same as before. POV OUT THROUGH THE WINDOW -- but now it's David and Elizabeth walking by on the sidewalk. She stops, looks into the bookstore. He wants to keep moving. Elizabeth enters the store. David waits outside.

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / FATHER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

David and Elizabeth. He sits at the desk. Full glasses -- an open bottle of whiskey on a table. In David's lap --

A PAPERBACK BOOK surrounded by torn wrapping paper, ripped ribbon: "GOOD FORM, BY ELIZABETH HAWKINS." On the back cover: Elizabeth's AUTHOR PHOTO is a sexy headshot.

DAVID
(staring at the book)
So nice of you.

ELIZABETH
You mentioned you didn't have a copy.
Also I signed it.

DAVID
Yes, you did.

ELIZABETH
I hope you like it.

DAVID
Thank you, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
Thank you, David.
(pause)
It'll go nicely with the bookends.

DAVID
Oh, well, it'll go right in between.

David sets the book aside. Off his attitude --

ELIZABETH
You're upset. You miss William?

DAVID
It sucks, yeah. I do. It's depressing --
there was nothing in the papers this
morning. And, come here, look at this...

Elizabeth crosses to the desk where -- David types on the computer keyboard. He spins the monitor so she can see --

ON MONITOR SCREEN: A Google News search page. In the search window David types: "WILLIAM ALLEN BANKS" -- then hits the "enter" key -- and nothing comes up. Only the stark words: "YOUR SEARCH DID NOT MATCH ANY DOCUMENTS."

ELIZABETH
(re: screen)
Nothing new...

DAVID
That's the biggest tragedy of all.
Fifteen years ago it would have been front-page news.

Elizabeth lets that land. Then --

ELIZABETH
How are you... feeling about all this?

DAVID
(studies her; deadpan)
My mentor died of a drug overdose and
we're stealing his unpublished
manuscript. So, you know. I feel great.

ELIZABETH
I'm proud of you.

DAVID
You're 'proud of me.'

ELIZABETH
This is gonna be good for both of us.
(then)
Try Chris again.

DAVID
He's not picking up.

ELIZABETH
I should go to his apartment...

DAVID
Let him cool off.

David stands, paces. Elizabeth circles him like prey.

ELIZABETH
It's not just that I'm proud of you. I'm
grateful.

DAVID
(loaded)
How grateful?

She leans in close, kisses him. David doesn't stop her.

ELIZABETH
We're a team now. So... a few months
pass, we'll talk again, make a plan.

DAVID
That's it for you gracing me with your
presence?
(then)
I was actually starting to enjoy having
you around.

ELIZABETH
Well, then, think of me fondly.

David gets close to her, his hands on her waist --

DAVID

Listen, there's this hotel in New Haven I heard about, very anonymous kind of a thing, name is something with a 'D.' They make you pay by the person in the rooms, even if it's only for a couple of minutes, but I could come up there.

ELIZABETH

Sounds nice, but we should maybe not have any contact at all. That way, even my agent can't suspect anything -- I want her to sign you when this is over.

DAVID

Okay, but what if we just --

Then quickly -- she reaches down for his belt buckle. That shuts him right up. Elizabeth starts to work the belt open -- she pull-presses her body tight to his --

CLOSE ON THEIR FACES, just inches apart. Breathing together. As Elizabeth slowly unbuckles David, her version of "dirty talk" sounds like career counseling --

ELIZABETH

David, we both want careers, we're trying to have long ones. Before, and even though you were older, we weren't at the same place. So all of that ugliness with the article -- but I completely feel you've caught up to me now. And now we understand each other. This thing -- it'll be our lie. We're not like everyone else. We're advanced. We're old inside.

Then -- see DAVID'S PANTS HIT THE FLOOR. Elizabeth KICKS OFF HER SHOES -- steps out of them, even closer to him --

Elizabeth pushes David down on the couch -- pants around his ankles, waiting, watching. He looks up at her, expectant as... using only one hand, Elizabeth UNDOES THE DRESS -- it flutters to the floor behind her as she straddle-steps over him, settles her body onto his. She kisses David back into the cushions. All wrapped up now.

EXT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / STEPS -- NIGHT / SAME

Meanwhile, down on the street outside: Chris is back. He ascends the front steps quickly, enters --

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / ENTRYWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Chris enters, shuts the door behind him and calls out --

CHRIS
Hello?

Chris walks to THE STAIRCASE, climbs. STAY WITH HIM as he arrives at --

THE SECOND-FLOOR LANDING --

Where just then -- Chris hears O.S. NOISES from the Father's Office -- approaches the door, pushes it open --

INT. FATHER'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

David and Elizabeth are standing too close -- by a few inches. Her dress is a little off -- a few stray strands of her hair... Chris is in the open doorway wondering --

CHRIS
The hell is going on here?

ELIZABETH
We were just figuring out who should call you, baby...

DAVID
To see if you still wanted to go to that party...
(then; concerned)
How are you, man?

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Moments later. David hands Chris a full whiskey.

CHRIS
I don't feel much like partaking tonight.

Elizabeth moves to his side -- she really wants to go --

ELIZABETH
Oh, but the Condé Nast thing? Your parents are expecting us.

CHRIS
(to David)
Are you gonna come?

DAVID
You want me to come?

CHRIS
(pause)
I'll go but I want to get high first.

DAVID

Before lunch I went to that dealer chick
in Fort Greene -- got some good stuff.

(then)

It's okay. This is gonna be okay.

Silence. Doesn't feel okay. Just then --

RING. Elizabeth's cell. They all trade looks. RING.

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / STAIRCASE -- NIGHT

Later. Elizabeth and Chris, who holds the bottle of
Champagne and three glasses, ascend behind David.

ELIZABETH

(elated)

He said it needs some cleaning up --

DAVID

What does he mean, 'cleaning up'?

ELIZABETH

He means it's a first draft. Like that.

THE THIRD-FLOOR LANDING --

They walk towards David's bedroom.

DAVID

Oh. But he liked it.

ELIZABETH

Yeah. That's what he said. 'You've got
your second book' -- that's what he said.

CHRIS

Congratulations.

ELIZABETH

Thank you. We did it. I feel like I'm
exhaling for the first time all day!

DAVID

Speaking of exhaling...

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

David crosses the room, opens a floor-level cabinet.

DAVID

... I'll set up the lab.

From the cabinet, David removes an impressive-looking
display of drug paraphernalia.

ELIZABETH

One cabinet door opens, this guy turns
into an apothecary.

DAVID

I believe in having the right tools for
the job.

From his pocket, David produces a plastic bag -- TWIST-TIE at the neck. The bag contains a SMALL, BROWNISH CUBE.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Tell us some of the details, what your
editor said.

ELIZABETH

You heard. It worked.

DAVID

Come on.

ELIZABETH

Look, I told you: It's in. We did it. End
of story.

DAVID

Indeed.

(then; smiling)

Can't believe we made it happen.

CHRIS

(to Elizabeth)

You're really gonna pull this off.

Elizabeth sits on the bed, holds court from there --

ELIZABETH

And I'm telling you: Sometimes you have
to have the guts to make the bold move.
It may seem like the scary one, but you
just have to do it. The rewards can be
ridiculous.

As David tosses the plastic bag onto his desk --

DAVID

One thing about last night is bugging me,
though -- now that I think about it...

(re: Elizabeth)

... she and I never went inside, into the
brownstone. We stayed on the steps.

CHRIS

So?

David takes a beat here, lets the tension build before --

DAVID
We didn't see the body.

CHRIS
(faux-oblivious)
What are you driving at, pal?

Elizabeth has a bad feeling -- something's wrong here --

ELIZABETH
You guys...?

DAVID
(ignoring her; to Chris)
I mean -- you were inside the house. You
saw William's body, saw him dead, right?

CHRIS
Of course I did.
(pause)
At least, I think I did...

Elizabeth stands, speaks up louder this time --

ELIZABETH
Hey -- what's going on?

David and Chris, both intense, focused, turn to face her.

DAVID
The chapters: Which part did your editor
like best?

ELIZABETH
(pause)
I don't know.

DAVID
Because I like the middle of chapter
three.

ELIZABETH
Good for you.

CHRIS
How did it go again?

As David paces, remembering --

DAVID
Let me see... 'Gazing down at the cracked
prairie highway that tongued out of the
grieving city was sickening because of
the movement there.'

ELIZABETH
Yeah, I think that's the part.

DAVID

'Dan Percy made a complete and total about-face.'

ELIZABETH

Someone takes their gingko-biloba.

David picks up the Champagne bottle, unwires the cage --

DAVID

'Of course the view was different from where he now stood, above Winnipeg more so than in it.'

ELIZABETH

(with a nervous laugh)

Did you make a copy of the manuscript and fucking memorize it?

DAVID

Not exactly.

As Elizabeth -- slowly -- starts to back away from them --

ELIZABETH

Wait -- hang on...

CHRIS

Is it all starting to come together?

ELIZABETH

I don't understand...

DAVID

Elizabeth, honey, we've been planning this for longer than you think.

ELIZABETH

What do you mean, 'we'?

POP! of David opening the Champagne. An eye-opening beat.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

No.

DAVID

Yes.

ELIZABETH

No way.

DAVID

(quoting her)

'I have no choice but to utter a resounding Yes.'

ELIZABETH

No, no, no...

DAVID
(to Chris)
See, I told you the Champagne would be a
nice touch.

CHRIS
I think it's a little stagey.

DAVID
We'll agree to disagree.

ELIZABETH
It's your manuscript?

DAVID
It's mine, yes.

ELIZABETH
You wrote it?

DAVID
I did write it.

ELIZABETH
Whatever. No one's gonna believe you.

DAVID
I can't imagine why they wouldn't. Want
to see the typewriter?

David goes to his closet -- rummages -- emerges with a
late-model Underwood. Parks it on the table.

DAVID (CONT'D)
The letter 'K'? It sticks.

ELIZABETH
You don't even know William Allen Banks.

DAVID
No, but I sure would like to.

ELIZABETH
He's not dead...

DAVID
God, I hope not. Guy's one of my heroes.
(then)
It really was the perfect set-up -- a
temperament like yours -- you find out
we're pals with Banks -- there's no way
you can resist the pull to come here and
rub shoulders with a legend.

ELIZABETH
No...

DAVID

People will believe whatever they want to believe.

CHRIS

It's like pro wrestling.

Elizabeth drifts across the room away from them --

ELIZABETH

This is not happening...

DAVID

It has been a weird twenty-four hours, hasn't it? Starting with the road trip to pick up the drugs...

EXT. TEDDY'S BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

CHRIS'S LAND ROVER pulls up outside -- been here before. But this time, in a first-floor window is a YOUNG MAN --

DAVID (V.O.)

Off we go. To the house where our friend Teddy grew up...

INT. TEDDY'S BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT / SAME (FLASHBACK)

The Young Man (Teddy) watches the Rover pull up -- types an outgoing text message on his cell. The words on the screen read: "SEND CHRIS INSIDE" --

DAVID (V.O.)

He sends word that William isn't feeling well... at least that's what we tell you.

Teddy hits "send" on his cell --

TIME CUT --

The FRONT DOOR OPENS -- Teddy admits Chris, who enters -- the Rover visible in b.g., Elizabeth and David inside --

Chris spots -- THE BANKS MANUSCRIPT sitting ready on a table by the front door.

IN THE LIVING ROOM -- Chris sees THE SAME PEOPLE who ran out of the brownstone -- they drink drinks, play Wii on a flat-screen TV, or maybe "Guitar Hero III" on Xbox 360.

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

You'd come to know Teddy's house as the home of William Allen Banks -- site of Brooklyn's finest opium den...

But there's no opium anywhere in sight. Not a puff.

TIME CUT --

THROUGH A FRONT WINDOW -- see David and Elizabeth ascend the front steps. Chris turns from the window --

CHRIS
(sotto; to the group)
Go.

Chris opens the front door -- Teddy and the three others flee the brownstone -- muffled voices O.S., the FAMILIAR, OVERLAPPING, PANICKED DIALOGUE -- been here before --

Under this, Chris calmly picks up the manuscript -- tucks it into his coat -- takes a breath -- then darts out into the night, towards David and Elizabeth on the steps --

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

David wheels on Elizabeth --

DAVID
And we were off to the races. So we come back here and do the thing, read the thing, you have your idea --

CHRIS
I storm out.

DAVID
He's the noble one. The true-heart.
(then)
So we gotta follow him. Right? If we're gonna pull this off?

David leans in close to her --

DAVID (CONT'D)
Because you and I got together on this -- 'teammates.' That was my favorite part.

She shrinks from him, squirms away, crosses the room.

DAVID (CONT'D)
To the gala!

CHRIS
Our buddy Taro is a great photographer, by the way, went to RISD...

EXT. PALM HOUSE / ENTRY -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

THE PHOTOGRAPHER (Taro) takes note as David and Elizabeth approach from the taxi -- been here before --

PHOTOGRAPHER/TARO
Who are you? Should I know you?

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

David tosses her THREE PHOTOGRAPHS, snapped last night --

DAVID
You photograph well. I'll give you that.

Elizabeth stares at the photographs in disbelief.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I wanted to make sure you had a record of
your last red carpet moment ever.
(re: the photos)
They will be published. We can no longer
say that of you.

CHRIS
So, we go into the gala -- then there was
the tussle outside. A distracting fight.

DAVID
For the record, I made him say that stuff
about the 'old Jewish ladies.' He's no
anti-Semite -- I just needed to spark
some conflict.

CHRIS
Two old pals divided!

David throws his arm around Chris's shoulders, smiles --

DAVID
What would this world be without good
friends? A world of pain and shit.

ELIZABETH
Please...

DAVID
(loving this)
Your head's gotta be all twisted up.
Seeing everything in a new light -- from
a new angle. Well -- allow me to keep
untangling things. After the Xerox place,
we said our goodbyes...

CHRIS
'G'night, asshole.'

DAVID
'Fuck you, buddy.' All the tension!

CHRIS
Can these guys ever bounce back?

DAVID

Their friendship? And, plus, there's a girl in the middle. It's so much worse when there's a girl in the middle.

CHRIS

So we're at lunch... barely speaking...

DAVID

Then the concert -- and something came up. Because you can't plan for everything. I didn't know we'd have to make that run to Grand Central --

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / SHORIN CLUB ROOM -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

David and Chris in tense conversation. Elizabeth and Mrs. Wolcott have their exchange in b.g. -- been here before.

CHRIS

... you go with her.

DAVID

And you stay here -- so come over now, tell us to screw off, go frolic. Then kill some time after, make her sweat before you show up at my place again --

CHRIS

How long?

DAVID

I don't know -- a couple hours...

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / DAVID'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Elizabeth looks at Chris --

ELIZABETH

(small)

Where did you go?

CHRIS

(matter-of-fact)

The movies.

She deflates, reeling -- settles into a chair.

DAVID

And we went to Grand Central. For the handoff. It became official. It was in. And just now... your editor called --

CHRIS

He liked it -- 'You've got your second book.'

DAVID

But you've also got a problem.

ELIZABETH

David, please...

DAVID

You're finished. You submitted this to a publishing house -- as your work -- when it is not your work -- it is my work. I've got the early drafts, notes and Writers Guild registration numbers to prove it. And now there's the story of how we bamboozled you -- plus I have a three-year-old motive for why we did it. I'm gonna write an article about you.

ELIZABETH

Please. I didn't know it was yours. I thought it was Banks, and he was dead.

DAVID

You can't go back now. You can't un-ring this bell.

ELIZABETH

Please call it off. Please...

DAVID

All the stuff you had -- industry in-roads -- your sister's reputation, that connection -- I had none of that. But I wrote something pretty good, something coulda gotten me noticed. And you took it. You fucked me. But in the last twenty-four hours I fucked you back. Hard.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry. Okay? Time out for a second --

DAVID

(stern; adamant)

I was in love with you. Remember that.

(then)

How fuckin' stupid I was... shit, I remember that every day.

Elizabeth can see the personal and professional betrayals woven together in David's rage. Then Chris jumps in --

CHRIS

(genuinely asking)

What made you think you could do something like this twice -- twice -- and get away with it?

Elizabeth hunts for the response she doesn't have.

DAVID

Oh! And she wants to, holy shit, man I haven't told you -- she wants to stop in the same bookstore --

CHRIS

Out here? From the bookends?

DAVID

Yes! So she could -- she gave me this. Look at this --

David tosses Chris the PAPERBACK COPY OF "GOOD FORM" --

DAVID (CONT'D)

Look at the inscription.

CHRIS

(flips a page; reads)
Huh. Little did she know.

David lifts up his mattress -- from underneath he pulls out a HARDCOVER COPY OF ELIZABETH'S BOOK. Been there all along. Elizabeth sees this, sinks. Right under her nose.

Then -- she moves quick, goes to Chris, touches his arm --

ELIZABETH

Chris, please --

CHRIS

(shakes her off)
Get away from me. Jesus, the last month --
I could barely stand to be around you.

ELIZABETH

Running every day, twice a day.

CHRIS

I was tense. I found it helpful.

ELIZABETH

We were together -- four months --
nothing? You felt nothing?

CHRIS

(re: David)
He may still be in love with you --

DAVID

Ha! Fatty fuckin' Arbuckle chance.

CHRIS

-- but I assure you, I am not. Never was.

ELIZABETH

No. When I was starting to really care --

CHRIS
That was a mistake.

ELIZABETH
You kissed me.

CHRIS
I had to.

ELIZABETH
We made love.

CHRIS
Ooh. I wouldn't call it that.

ELIZABETH
But you did. During it. Sometimes.

CHRIS
Therein lies the Oscar-worthiness.

ELIZABETH
(in disbelief)
Wait, did you come to Yale, go to grad
school just for this?

Chris nods Yes.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(coming undone)
So -- what? -- so -- no -- your tight-ass
parents? They're gonna kill you.

CHRIS
Kill me? They don't even know me.
(then)
Besides, my getting an M.B.A. is, like,
Daddy Wolcott's wet dream -- fuck him.
(getting worked up)
My brother jumped --
(kicks over a chair)
... because that fuckin' prick is un-
pleasable. That ain't gonna happen to me.

David crosses, puts his hand on Chris's shoulder --

DAVID
Amen to that.

Elizabeth takes a step back.

ELIZABETH
Oh, my God --

DAVID
We should maybe stop here.

ELIZABETH
Sure. Sure...

CHRIS
I don't think you should say any more --

ELIZABETH
(to Chris)
You fucking queer. You faggot.

A head-shaking beat.

DAVID
It would have to be about that, wouldn't it? For you? Not about actual friends...

CHRIS
Not about friendship -- that we'd do anything for each other -- of course not.

DAVID
You couldn't wrap your mind around something like that. Because you're friendless -- and selfish -- and done.

CHRIS
You poor, sad thing.

Elizabeth rushes to Chris -- kneels -- begs --

ELIZABETH
I didn't mean that. I'm sorry. I love you. I do.

CHRIS
Jesus Christ...

DAVID
Pathetic.

Elizabeth tries to tune out David. She corners Chris --

ELIZABETH
Listen to me: I think -- together, we were starting to have something special. You can be more than his accomplice, in your life, you can be more than that.

CHRIS
(calm)
Stop begging. It's ugly.

Ouch. Elizabeth freezes.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
You did this. I wish you hadn't -- but you did.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)
All we brought to the table was a stack
of white pages, a bunch of black words.
You brought everything else.

But David's way past calm -- he gets worked up on her --

DAVID
It was your choice to believe the
charade. You were a part of the action.
You were the action. You were the act.

Elizabeth takes a deep breath, composes. Then --

ELIZABETH
Wait. I have an idea. Wait. I can
straighten everything out with one phone
call.

DAVID
That so?

ELIZABETH
Yeah. This is easy -- yes. Listen. One
phone call -- I go to my agent, my
editor, I say: 'Guys, I pulled one over
on you. I knew you wouldn't read
something unsolicited. So I slipped you
my friend's work and said it was mine.
You loved it. So sign him. Publish him.'

DAVID
Then what?

ELIZABETH
Then you're in. Easy. It'll work...

David and Chris take a beat, check in with each other.
David turns back to Elizabeth --

DAVID
You'd do that? You'd do that for me?

ELIZABETH
(desperate)
Yes. David. Yes -- of course. Please...

DAVID
Well... maybe we can work something out.

ELIZABETH
We can.

CHRIS
What? You're gonna trust her now?

DAVID
Shut up, let me think for a second. It's
a big offer -- it could be huge for me...

As David crosses the room to his desk -- opens a drawer -- Elizabeth watches -- eyes full of hope, seeing a way out.

ELIZABETH

Spare me, David. You can, you can choose to be merciful. Spare me and I'll make it worth your while. You have a choice.

DAVID

No -- but you do.

From the desk drawer, David produces -- THE CHROME .38.

He carefully places the gun on the desk in front of her.

ELIZABETH

What the hell are you doing?

DAVID

Presenting your options.
(calm; collected)

One: You walk out of here and we tell the world about your perfidious, conniving bullshit. You'll be shamed into oblivion.

(pause for effect)

Or... option number two: Kill yourself and we say the book is yours. All yours.

A heavy beat.

ELIZABETH

What?

DAVID

(how it could be spun)
"A tortured young artist produces her best work to date, only to become depressed and suicidal at the achievement." Or something like that...

Elizabeth backs away from the desk, the gun, the idea --

ELIZABETH

You can't be serious.

CHRIS

(as a heart-attack)
Two options. Walk out and be exposed, or leave a beautiful corpse. Just like Kurt Cobain... only not talented.

DAVID

Take your own life and we'll lie for you. You'll be dead, but famous and acclaimed.

ELIZABETH

You actually expect me to commit suicide?

DAVID

I don't know what I expect you to do. All I know is -- these are your two options.
(then)

You're more than welcome to leave. You'll just have to face the consequences of what you've done here.

CHRIS

(faux-supportive)

Don't rush a decision. This is important.

Elizabeth eyes the boys -- eyes the gun -- considers --

David and Chris focus on her -- watch intently as --

ELIZABETH PICKS UP THE GUN. Holds it all wrong in her nervous hand -- stares at the violent, alien object --

DAVID

I think you're making the right choice.

Elizabeth is losing control of her breathing -- the shaking of her arm -- the gun weighs a thousand pounds --

DAVID (CONT'D)

(the final push)

And just imagine... what a breathtaking eulogy your sister will write.

At that -- Elizabeth looks up, dead into David's eyes. She raises the gun to David's chest --

DAVID (CONT'D)

(nervous)

Put it down -- hey. That's not the idea.

ELIZABETH

(raising her voice)

No? What is the idea, David? What's the Big Idea?

DAVID

You are -- the choice you have to make...

ELIZABETH

And you think I haven't already made it?

Elizabeth aims -- levels the gun more squarely at him --

DAVID

Hang on, no, wait a second, wait --

RIP! of a gunshot EXPLODING in the room. Smoke -- BLOOD SPREADS AT DAVID'S CHEST -- frightened disbelief in his eyes. Elizabeth watches as if from twenty miles away as --

David THUDS hard to the ground. Chris crawls to his side.

CHRIS
No, no... David... fuck... fuck!
(to Elizabeth; worked up)
How could... are you fuckin' psychotic?

Elizabeth has to think fast -- scrambling for an "out" --

ELIZABETH
(with purpose)
We can still do this together. Together.
Make it like it was a robbery. Like it
was about the drugs -- that someone came
here, and... Will you? Chris?

David lies in POOLING BLOOD on the floor.

CHRIS
David... oh, fuck... no...

As Chris stands, races across the room to his coat --

ELIZABETH
What are you doing?

CHRIS
Calling the fuckin' cops...

Chris rifles through his coat pocket -- pulls out cell --

Elizabeth runs hard to Chris -- KNOCKS THE PHONE FROM HIS HAND. As she lunge-reaches down to pick it up --

Chris grabs her, they tangle -- it's CLOSE, PHYSICAL, FRENETIC. Then, to break free, needing to get the cell --

CHRIS PUSHES HER AWAY -- she reels, trips back over the chair, but she holds on to the gun as she hits the deck.

Chris picks up the cell -- determined. Elizabeth, ground-level, her back against the wall, utters one final plea --

ELIZABETH
Chris, please! Don't... no, don't...

Screw that: Chris dials 9-1-1 into his cell. Before he hits "call" -- RIP! of a second shot RINGS OUT from the gun -- the cell drops -- CHRIS CLUTCHES HIS BLOODY CHEST.

Chris hits the floor. More blood. The gun's in her hand. Elizabeth stands up from the floor slowly...

CLOSE ON ELIZABETH as her breath quickens, then slows as she surveys -- Chris and David on the floor -- blood -- the manuscript pages -- the typewriter -- the whiskey bottle and tumblers -- the bottle of Champagne and glasses -- her books, the bookends -- wrapping paper -- ribbon -- all the detritus of the con, the past day...

Beat. Then -- Elizabeth throws on her coat, STUFFS THE GUN IN HER COAT POCKET, leaves the room lightening-quick.

INT. LEWIS BROWNSTONE / ENTRYWAY -- NIGHT

Moments later. Elizabeth composes herself by the door. All set. She opens it and exits out to the steps, the street. She leaves the door open behind her as she goes.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Been here before. Far less busy than last night. A few PATRONS scattered at tables. Quieter, more subdued vibe.

Elizabeth is seated in the same red-pleather booth from the night before. She takes out her cell -- nervously calls someone. Hear FILTERED RINGING. Then --

CAROLINE (PHONE/OVER)
Hello -- Lizzie?

Insisting on a happy, casual tone --

ELIZABETH
(into phone)
Caroline. Hi! How was your flight?

CAROLINE (PHONE/OVER)
Don't get me started. Hellacious delay at L.A.X. We just got to Joel's family's place. I was gonna call you after lunch.

ELIZABETH
You were?

CAROLINE (PHONE/OVER)
Listen: I was thinking about you a lot on the plane. I want to help.

ELIZABETH
'Help.'

CAROLINE (PHONE/OVER)
I called my editor. She's gonna read you.

CLOSE ON ELIZABETH as sadness wells up fast, mixes poorly with the anxiety she carried here from the brownstone.

CAROLINE (PHONE/OVER)
(CONT'D)
And I set up a lunch. For after I get back, after New Year's. The three of us.

ELIZABETH
Caroline...

CAROLINE (PHONE/OVER)
I was a bitch to you in the bar.

ELIZABETH
No...

CAROLINE (PHONE/OVER)
I was. But there, I called her, and let's
see if we can make this happen for you.

ELIZABETH
Thanks. Hey, listen -- things are a
little weird here. Do you have a sec?

CAROLINE (PHONE/OVER)
What do you mean, 'weird'?

ELIZABETH
This friend of my boyfriend's, he's
making me kind of nervous: David. I think
he's a bad influence on Chris -- drugs,
all these different dealers. And then...
(sotto)
... yesterday he was waving a gun around.

CAROLINE (PHONE/OVER)
Jesus -- really?

Elizabeth sets up an alibi here, a story, more lies --

ELIZABETH
Yeah. They asked me to go get some take-
out while one of their dealers came by.
Frankly, the whole thing freaks me out. I
kinda want to get home to Mom and Dad...

CAROLINE (PHONE/OVER)
Go home, then. What's keeping you there?

THUNK! -- A BOTTLE OF BEER is placed down on the table.
Elizabeth, surprised, looks to see who dropped it off --

WIDEN TO REVEAL DAVID -- he stands table-side with fake
blood on his shirt and a real smile on his face.

DAVID
(re: the beer)
Refreshment?

Elizabeth stares at David, then monotones into her cell --

ELIZABETH
Hang on, Caroline --

CHRIS (O.S.)
Oh, is that your sister...?

Elizabeth turns, sees -- CHRIS behind her. Same fake-blood caked on his shirt, same grin on his face. As he reaches out for the cell --

CHRIS (CONT'D)
... I want to say Hi.

Elizabeth lets the phone slip from her fingers. As Chris steps away from the table, cell in hand, out of earshot --

CHRIS (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hi, Caroline? It's Chris Wolcott here...

David, gripping TWO MORE BOTTLES OF BEER, slides into the booth opposite Elizabeth. A nice, satisfying beat.

ELIZABETH
(struggling for words)
What... what did --

DAVID
Because we wanted to see how far you'd go. I gotta admit, there was a part of me that doubted you could be this soulless.
(then)
But you've always been full of surprises.

Chris approaches the table, tosses down the cell --

CHRIS
(to Elizabeth; re: Caroline)
She had to hop off -- lunch was served.

Chris slides into the booth next to David, sips a beer.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Is she surprised?

David leans across the table towards Elizabeth --

DAVID
Remember the wrestling? The ladders, splintering chairs... the blood. People believe because they want to believe.

CHRIS
(very pleased)
She looks really surprised.

DAVID
(to Elizabeth)
I have something for you.

David reaches into his coat pocket and produces --

The knock-out: David takes out a GALLEY -- tosses it to Elizabeth. She fumble-catches it and reads the words --

ON THE COVER: "GRIEVING CITY, BY DAVID LEWIS -- ADVANCE UNCORRECTED PROOF -- NOT FOR SALE." The COVER IMAGE is CRACKED HIGHWAY BLACKTOP. Elizabeth tries to keep it together. The galley slips from her fingers to the table.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Book comes out in the fall.
(pause)
Guess I left that part out before. Sorry.

CHRIS
He's excited.

DAVID
What can I say? I'm excited.
(to Elizabeth)
But I'm not sure about the cover art.
What do you think -- too "Easy Rider"?

Elizabeth, broken, leans on the table. To maintain.

ELIZABETH
(to herself)
Okay... I see... I see...

DAVID
You can keep the gun. Only fires blanks.
(off her look)
Cost me two hundred bucks online.

CHRIS
Worth every penny.
(then)
You were an awesome die-er.

DAVID
Are you kidding? You died so much better
than I did.

They're having a genuine blast with it.

CHRIS
I deem your thud-landing superior.

Elizabeth is speechless.

DAVID
(turns sharp)
You see, Elizabeth -- there's a price on
things. There's a price for everything.

CHRIS
And you're about to pay a big one.

DAVID

(full-on ranting now)

I'm going wide with this -- publish an article, go on the news -- America eats this stuff up -- someone like you, stealing -- willing to pull the trigger --

CHRIS

(re: David)

He was a victim, now he's a hero.

David changes gears, lightens the tone, turns to Chris --

DAVID

Can I just say something? You're a soldier.

CHRIS

Yeah?

DAVID

Can't believe you spent four months in New Haven for me.

CHRIS

(smiles)

I like having a sense of purpose, as it turns out.

DAVID

(smiles)

Thank you.

(remembers something)

Oh -- check it --

From his coat, he pulls out the plastic bag -- TWIST-TIE at the neck. The bag contains the SMALL, BROWNISH CUBE.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(to Elizabeth)

The 'opium.' If you feel like a hit...

CHRIS

What did you put in there?

DAVID

I wasn't gonna light it.

CHRIS

No, I know, what did you put in the bag?

DAVID

A cube of beef bouillon.

Chris laughs. Elizabeth shakes her head, rueful, pissed.

Then -- the Waiter arrives with A LARGE, RED PLASTIC BAG OF TAKE-OUT.

WAITER
 (to Elizabeth)
 Cold noodles, two orders of black-bean
 shrimp, three rice, and three egg rolls.

The Waiter leaves the bag, walks off.

CHRIS
 (to Elizabeth)
 Ordered for all three of us -- and left
 the door open when you bailed. Not bad.

DAVID
 No one said she was stupid -- just greedy
 and morally bankrupt.

On that note, David and Chris -- lifelong friends --
 exchange a look. Both smiling. A sense of accomplishment.

DAVID (CONT'D)
 (to Elizabeth; faux-sweet)
 Enjoy your dinner.

Chris and David stand, get out of the booth. ON THEIR
 BACKS as they walk out of the place.

CLOSE ON ELIZABETH in shock, the "*I'm-fucked*" kind.

PRE-LAP the SOUND OF HIGH-SPEED CARS in city traffic --

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE -- NIGHT

Later. Elizabeth stands by the railing. Over the water.
 Alone. The Brooklyn Heights Promenade visible in b.g. --
 where she talked with Chris yesterday. Bright city lights
 on all sides. CARS AND TAXIS WHIP BY noisily behind her.

She looks down at the cold water of the East River. She
 looks end-of-the-line despondent. She shivers. Thinking.

CLOSE ON HER FOOT -- down low by the ground. Just
 slightly -- her foot begins to slip out of her shoe --
 slowly, just inches -- then a voice from behind her --

TOURIST WOMAN (O.S.)
 (Midwestern accent)
 Excuse me?

ON ELIZABETH as she turns, sees -- a TOURIST WOMAN, 50s,
 dressed up. Out on the town; dinner and a Broadway show.

TOURIST WOMAN (CONT'D)
 Are you -- oh, jeez, I hate to be a
 bother -- my daughter recognized you.

The Tourist Woman indicates -- her daughter BRENDA, circa
 12, standing back, shy, a few paces off.

TOURIST WOMAN (CONT'D)
 (to her daughter)
 Brenda?

BRENDA
 You wrote the book "Good Form"?

ELIZABETH
 Yeah, I did.

TOURIST WOMAN
 She loves that book.

BRENDA
 I read it three times.
 (hesitates)
 Will you sign me an autograph?

Elizabeth nods Yes. The Tourist Woman digs in her purse for a pen. Finds one. Shoves it to Elizabeth as Brenda hands over a "Playbill" from some Broadway spectacle.

ELIZABETH
 What's your name?

BRENDA
 Brenda.

ELIZABETH
 (her mom just said that)
 Right. Sorry.

Elizabeth scribbles a note, signs it. Hands it back.

TOURIST WOMAN
 (a parental nudge)
 Whaddaya say, Bren?

BRENDA
 Thank you.

ELIZABETH
 You're welcome.

BRENDA
 (musters all her courage)
 When I grow up, I want to be just like
 you.

Elizabeth attempts a smile. She could break under the weight -- she's drowning in something. The Tourist Woman and her daughter Brenda walk away. Then, ON ELIZABETH --

ELIZABETH
 (sotto)
 No, you don't.

Elizabeth watches them go, then looks down at the water.

BLACK SCREEN.

Beat. SUPERTITLE "THE NEXT FALL" over SOUNDS OF THE CITY.

EXT. THE STRAND BOOKS -- DUSK

Been here before. David -- stylish in a nice Freemans Sporting Club suit -- stands on the sidewalk outside the display windows. Behind him -- BUSTLING LIFE of Manhattan in the fall. He looks in the store window to see --

A PROMINENT DISPLAY OF HIS NOVEL -- "GRIEVING CITY, BY DAVID LEWIS." Among the other books on view, there's his: A STACK, MANY COPIES OF THE SAME -- complete with NEW, IMPROVED COVER ART: THE OLD-SCHOOL UNDERWOOD TYPEWRITER, vintage keys arranged to spell the title of the novel...

A PLACARD boasts QUOTES FROM GOOD REVIEWS. ON A POSTER: DAVID'S PROMOTIONAL PHOTO and the words: "BOOK-RELEASE PARTY TONIGHT." GUESTS arrive, enter through the front door. David exchanges nods, greetings.

David turns, looks up and down the street -- but doesn't see what he's looking for. He checks his watch. Notices --

AT THE DOOR -- LITERARY CELEBRITIES going into the event, David's event. Think Michael Chabon entering while chatting with Jhumpa Lahiri. RECOGNIZE a few EDITORS Elizabeth kiss-kissed at the Botanic Gardens -- and Binky Urban -- and see the P.W. critic, Jonathan Roe. Even so --

David checks his watch again. Shit. Then he looks up --

CHRIS APPROACHES from up the block. David smiles. Chris has filled out a bit -- looks healthy and good. Slung over his shoulder, Chris grips A GYM BAG emblazoned with the words: "STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL." On his NAVY BLUE POLO SHIRT, Coach-issue, are the words: "CROSS COUNTRY."

CHRIS
Sorry I'm late.

DAVID
(re: his clothes)
That you are -- and you didn't even
change for the occasion...

CHRIS
Yeah, about that -- I can't stay.
(off David's look)
We're practicing late all week.

David understands. Not pissed at all, but curious --

DAVID
Then what's so important -- you showed up
to wish me luck?

CHRIS
And that's a crime?

DAVID
(smiles)
Thanks, man.
(then; re: Elizabeth)
I invited her.

CHRIS
(smiles; relishing it)
You taunting bastard.

A beat as they look in the window, at the fruit of their labor. THEIR REFLECTIONS visible in the glass. Finally --

DAVID
Sent her an e-mail -- never heard back.

CHRIS
(re: the arriving guests)
And she didn't show. Big surprise there.

DAVID
(genuine)
I wonder where she ended up.

CHRIS
Well, after every law school rejected her...

DAVID
And we know what high moral standards they have.

CHRIS
Exactly. Bottom line is: No more fame.
She's completely off the radar.

DAVID
(with finality)
And that's the ballgame.

David lets it land. Then -- they both smile big, laugh.

ON THEIR REFLECTIONS in the store window as -- Chris's cell phone BEEPS WITH AN ALARM. He takes it out, checks --

CHRIS
I gotta go.

DAVID
Run 'em ragged, Coach.

CHRIS
See you Friday -- Teddy's birthday thing?

DAVID
Yeah, I'll be there.

CHRIS
(re: David's books)
They look great. I'm glad you changed the
picture on the cover.

DAVID
(agreeing)
It was too "Easy Rider" before.

CHRIS
(re: the bookstore)
Good luck in there.

DAVID
Thanks.

Chris walks off -- disappears into the flow of
PEDESTRIANS down the street. David watches him go, then --

David glances back at the window, at his books on
display. Then, without hesitation -- he goes to the front
door, opens it -- the RUSH OF PARTY NOISE from O.S.
sweeps him in. He enters the crowded bookstore -- his new
life waits inside. All eyes on David. As the door shuts
behind him...

FADE OUT.

END.