

UNDER THE HUNTER'S MOON

By R. T. Bowersox

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NOTES ON SPECIAL TEXT MARKINGS:

A SLASH (/) means the character with the next line of dialogue should begin their speech at the point of the slash

A DASH (--) means that the character with the next line of dialogue should cut off the current speaker sharply by beginning their next line

AN ELLIPSE (...) means a slight pause, or in the case of a phone call, listening

A WORD OR WORDS IN ITALICS (*like this*) means that word or words should be given a slight emphasis

A WORD OR WORDS IN ALL CAPS means that word or words are given a STRONG emphasis.

TWO CHARACTERS ON THE SAME LINE means they both speak their line simultaneously

CHARACTERS:

ROBERT GREY:

Late 50's; a Hollywood megastar on the order of a Cruise, Ford, Crowe, or Depp; handsome, but showing emotional and psychological fraying around the edges, including exhibiting a diva attitude, and frequently needing Barleycorn fortitude to face what has become tiring and no longer fulfilling for him. In Gilead, Maine to shoot his latest film, *The Hunter's Moon*.

NANCY BENHAM:

50's; quiet, intelligent, private; works for Sam and Maggie in the Gilead General Store; a woman deeply wounded by a troubled past who finally has managed to find solace and peace in the small town; was Robert Grey's first love in college, but has not seen him in 35 years.

BLAKE HAWTHORNE:

late 30's; a beautiful actress and Robert Grey's co-star in *The Hunter's Moon*; romantically linked with Robert since the beginning of the filming; practical and realistic, she knows the score, but feels that as long as circumstances promote her career, she will pursue them; may seem air-headed at times, but she is far from it.

SAM QUINLAN:

40's; along with his wife, Maggie, owns and manages the Gilead General Store; affable to a fault; a simple man, with simple needs, he's happy where he is and with what he does.

MAGGIE QUINLAN:

40's; Sam's wife; a woman filled with exuberant energy that could be considered almost childlike if not for the fact that she's sharp as a tack and always in control of what's happening around her; probably the town gossip, but she'd never accept the title.

ARI KANTER:

50's to 60's; Robert's high-powered Hollywood agent; been with him from the start; a no-nonsense businessman who cloaks a cutthroat heart with a warm, friendly approach -- until his own interests are threatened...then the knives come out; knows all the in's and out's of the Hollywood "serpent's den".

JOHN HUNT:

20's; a production assistant on *The Hunter's Moon*; not naive, but completely inexperienced in dealings with such high-powered stars and movie people; copes with Robert and Blake as best he can.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

The Gilead General Store, Gilead, Maine.
Rustic, out of another time. A belled entry door just off USR, out of sight behind a flat of shelves with sundries. A magazine rack USC. A long wooden counter, angled SL, with an old cash register, a landline phone, various items of business, racks of candies and sundries.

Behind the counter, a stack of shelves with products of all kinds on them. Part of these shelves is populated with liquors and wines. At the end of the shelves, DSL, a hallway leads off stage, ostensibly to the back of the store and the stairway to the apartment upstairs.

DSR is the classic potbellied stove, around which sit various types of chairs. On the SR wall is a small bay window. It displays various products. Above and surrounding the window are several original oil paintings of varying sizes.

At rise, NANCY BENHAM enters USL, carrying a small/medium box. She stops at a row of shelves, and places a couple of products on a shelf, then she goes to the magazine rack, and begins to rack some new issues she pulls from the box. After a moment...

SAM (O.S.)

(loudly)

Maggie!

(beat)

Maggie!

NANCY

(loudly to offstage)

Maggie's not here, Sam!

SAM (O.S.)

(loudly)

Well, can *you* come out back a sec?

NANCY

(loudly to offstage)

Sam, I'm busy! I'll be there in a minute!

After a moment, SAM QUINLAN appears from the back area of the store, a Bill of Lading in his hand.

SAM

Sorry, but I just need to ask you--

NANCY

Jeez, Sam. What's so important it can't wait two minutes?

SAM

Did you order...

(looks at bill of lading)

...fifteen cases ... of ...

(looks at bill again)

...Depends? Extra Large?

NANCY

(continuing with the mags)

Fifteen cases? Why would we need fifteen cases of anything, especially--?

SAM

My thought exactly.

NANCY

Somebody know something we don't know?

SAM

Hope not. But a guy just dropped fifteen cases of them on the loading dock. You think Maggie ordered them?

NANCY

(back to racking mags)

She's your wife, Sam. Ask her.

SAM

She upstairs?

NANCY

She went down to Manny's for a cup of chai.

SAM

Well, something's fishy here.

NANCY

She'll only be a minute, Sam.

SAM

(goes behind counter)

If she's got a special order or something, she really should run it by me, you know.

NANCY

Sam. Please. Talk to Maggie. I just work here.

SAM

Yeah. Right. Okay.

Sam picks up a ledger, starts to look through it, trying to reconcile the bill of lading. Nancy racks the magazines until one of them catches her eye. She looks at the cover a long moment, then opens the mag and finds what she's looking for. The cover shows a shot of a handsome older man with a striking younger woman. Nancy stands and reads several beats before...

NANCY

Hmmph.

(a beat, then disgusted)

Oh, my God!

SAM

What?

NANCY

Such bullshit. He's not like that.

SAM

Who? Like what?

Nancy holds up the magazine so Sam can see the cover. Sam shrugs with non-recognition.

NANCY

Robert Grey? You don't know Robert Grey?

Nancy moves to Sam at the counter.

SAM

He some movie fella?

NANCY

Yes, the "movie fella". Only the biggest star of the last thirty years. Where have you been?

SAM

I read books. Don't go to movies. What'd he do?

NANCY

Nothing, probably. Yellow journalism. They're saying he's sold out, just taking any role for the paycheck because he can't act anymore.

SAM

Pretty girl on the cover there.

NANCY

Yeah, well, that's probably crap too.

SAM

You know him or something?

Nancy's reading.

SAM

I mean you said he wouldn't do that ... like you know him--

NANCY

Knew him. Years ago.

SAM

Really? You know a movie star?

NANCY

I said *knew* him. We were in college together at Delaware ... and ... after ... for a while...

SAM

After? Like, you date him or something?

NANCY

Something ... for a year or so.

SAM

Really? You and a movie star?

NANCY

He wasn't a movie star then.

(closes magazine)

Forget it, Sam. It's ancient history.

SAM

Well, maybe he's changed, you know? How do you know whatever they're saying isn't true? Where there's smoke...

NANCY

Sam. Stop. You still believe Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone because somebody told you so.

SAM

(emphatically)

I *know* he--

NANCY

(throws the magazine on the counter)

You're corrupting the culture of this country selling this shit, you know.

She exits to the back of the store.

SAM

(in her direction)

I'm disseminating information, Ms. Benham. A free and open press is...

(turns back to his receipts)

Oh, forget it.

After a beat, Sam goes to the end of the counter and drops the receipts in a file folder, his back to the front of the store

The entry door bell clinks. Without looking..

SAM

Good, you're back. Darling, did you order--

During the above line, ROBERT GREY has entered. He's older, still movie star handsome, but disheveled, slick leather jacket, but shirt tail out, tie loose, hair mussed. He's fairly drunk, unsteady on his feet, searching through his pockets.

ROBERT

(a bit slurred)

Darling? Don't think I know you that well, friend. (as an aside...) But in this business, who the hell knows...

SAM

Sorry... I thought you were my--

BLAKE HAWTHORNE, a striking beauty, blows into the store. She's struggling mightily with a fashion scarf and clasp around her neck.

BLAKE

Goddamn it!

(then notices surroundings)

This is where we're filming today? I didn't think it was supposed to be a...

(actually sees)

Oh, wow. How quaint. It's like a little, bitty Walmart.

Sam suddenly notices the magazine ... the light bulb turns on...

SAM

Oh, Jeez ... you're--

ROBERT

(ignoring him, to Blake)

You have any cash, Blake?

BLAKE

(still struggling with scarf)

Huh-uh. I left all my stuff in my trailer on the set .

ROBERT

Great.

BLAKE

(struggle, struggle)

Goddamn this thing!

Robert spins on his heel, staggering, almost falling into the magazine rack, goes O.S. to the door...

ROBERT (O.S.)

John! ... John!... Come in here, will you?

Robert comes back, mumbling..

ROBERT

Good kid, but Jesus, he's either up your ass or totally MIA.

(he waits a beat, then...)

Well, damn it.

(goes toward door again)

John! Where the hell are--?!

JOHN HUNT, production assistant, headsets around his neck, fanny packs on each hip, runs into the store, startling Robert, running into him. Robert barely maintains his upright condition.

ROBERT

My God, boy!

JOHN

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, Mr. Grey. Oh, Jeez. You all right?

ROBERT

Yes, yes, I'm all right. Stop fawning.

(beat, then...)

Do you have any cash on you? I'm a little short...

JOHN

In the car, maybe....

ROBERT

Well, don't just stand there! Let's go find it.

And Robert's out the door. John stands and looks sheepishly at Sam and Blake, not knowing what to do, then he turns and runs out after Robert.

Blake, still struggling with the scarf, finally gives up in frustration.

BLAKE

Screw it.

(looking up at Sam)

Where's wardrobe?

SAM

Sorry?

BLAKE

The wardrobe trailer. They parked out back or something?

SAM

I don't think we have a...

(he points at her scarf)

Can I help you with that?

BLAKE

Not unless you're from wardrobe. Why they want me to wear this stupid thing is beyond me. We're *supposed* to be in the *wilderness*.

(she moves to one of the chairs near the
stove)

Can I sit here? Can I touch this?

SAM

(perplexed)

Uh ... sure. Why not?

BLAKE

I don't want any trouble with the unions, that's all. That bitch from production design doesn't want you to even breathe the air on her sets.

Sam comes out from behind the counter, moves
to her. He's still holding the magazine.

SAM

I'm sorry... uh, Miss ... uh...

(he looks at the magazine)

Hawthorne, is it?

BLAKE

Yes, honey. If you're from the studio. But you don't look like one of those jerks.

(realizing, worried)

Oh, Jesus. You're not, are you?

SAM

I don't think I am, no....

BLAKE

Then just call me Blake, okay?

SAM

Sure, but ... I think there's been a misunderstanding. Oh...
(extends his hand)

I'm Sam, by the way.

BLAKE

(offering her hand)

Nice to meet you, Sam. So, where's the crew? Are we early?

SAM

This is the Gilead General Store, Miss ... uh, Blake. It's not a movie ... kind of thing..

BLAKE

Really? What kind of "thing" is it?

SAM

Just a little general store. Been here twenty-seven years. We've owned it for twelve.

BLAKE

No kidding? It's real? Wow. It looks a set on the Warner's back lot.

SAM

Oh, it's real. Mortgage and all. So ... You're doing a movie? Here in Gilead?

BLAKE

Well, near here. In a forest ... somewhere ... I'm not sure.

SAM

White Mountain, probably. Down South Oxford way.

BLAKE

I just get in the car and some guy drives us. He calls himself "Sugar", if you can believe that.

SAM

Sweet guy, is he?

BLAKE

Ha. Good one.

(as she folds the wayward scarf, then
checks her makeup)

The picture's called "The Hunter's Moon". It's a Paramount thing. Maybe you read about it in the trades?

SAM

Can't say I have.

BLAKE

Oh. Well, it's about a guy and his mistress...

(leans into him, throws her thumb toward
the front door, meaning Robert)

... go figure ... Anyway, they're from New York ... he's a big-wig money guy who thinks he's hot shit and can fly his own plane ... but he flies them into a storm and crashes the plane in the middle of a nowhere wilderness, and they're trying to survive. Bears and wolves and shit. A little too true to life, if you ask me ... the wilderness part, I mean. There's not a Starbucks within 50 miles of there, for God's sake.

SAM

Oh ... would you like a cup of coffee? I can--

Robert blows into the store, waving a single bill.

ROBERT

After all of that, he only had ten dollars!

BLAKE

He's a production assistant. You're lucky he had that.

Robert goes to the counter, slaps the bill down.
Sam joins him.

ROBERT

Hopefully this will cover a half-pint of Chivas, my good man.

SAM

Johnnie Walker be all right?

ROBERT

Red or Black?

BLAKE

Does it really matter at this point?

SAM

Just the Red, I'm afraid.

ROBERT

Well, when in Rome...

Sam moves to get the booze. Robert turns to Blake.

ROBERT

(to Blake)

And yes, it matters. The Black is a finer, aged blend. Like me.

BLAKE

Mm-hmm. Well, maybe you shouldn't, you know. We have a shoot in half an hour...

ROBERT

(kind of to himself)

All the more reason. A fire in the belly will suffice when there's no fire in the heart.

BLAKE

Stop it, Robert...

ROBERT

(to Sam, taking the scotch)

You have a honey wagon in here?

SAM

A what?

ROBERT

A honey--

BLAKE

He means a bathroom.

SAM

Oh. Yeah, sure. Down the end of that row of shelves to the right there.

Robert starts opening the scotch as he unsteadily exits. Blake rolls her eyes. Sam smiles.

SAM

Wow. Robert Grey. Right here in my store.

BLAKE

(touching up her lipstick)

Yup. That's him. Robert Grey, in the somewhat pickled flesh...

Nancy enters from the back of the store, another stack of magazines in her arms. She notices Blake. Her eyes go wide as Sam surreptitiously points to her picture on the magazine.

Suddenly, the entry door bursts open and MAGGIE QUINLAN explodes into the store, going right for Sam and Nancy, not noticing Blake.

MAGGIE

Oh, my God, you two!! You're not going to believe this!! Guess who's staying over at the Cedar Lodge! Go on, guess! You'll never guess. But guess. Come on, guess!

SAM

Honey, I don't--

NANCY

I couldn't...

MAGGIE

No, guess! You gotta guess. You'll pee yourself! Belinda Sykes -- she works there, you know -- I ran into her coming out of Rita's Salon, gettin' all dolled up, and don't I know *why* now! -- But guess who Belinda told me is staying there! I mean, in a *room* and everything!

SAM

They don't usually put 'em in the kitchen, Maggie.

MAGGIE

Yeah, yeah, okay, but guess who's there ... in a *room* ... and for a couple of weeks! Oh, my God, guess! You'll never guess.

They say nothing. Nancy moves to the magazine racks.

NANCY

Look, I've got to get these--

MAGGIE

Okay, I'll tell you ... Robert...

Sam holds up the magazine with Robert Grey on the cover.

MAGGIE

(seeing it)

Grey! Yes! How did you --?

Nancy looks up quickly at his name. As this is happening, Robert enters from the bathroom in the back, carelessly and unsuccessfully stuffing his shirt back into his pants, his fly open. Nancy's partially hidden behind Maggie and Sam. Robert takes no notice of her.

ROBERT

Nice loo. Better than the one in my trailer ...

Maggie's eyes dart from magazine to Robert.

MAGGIE

(gobsmacked)

OH, MY GOD!!

(grabs the magazine from Sam, looking from it to Robert)

OH, MY GOD!!

BLAKE

He's far from that, honey.

(pointing at his crotch)

Your fly's open, darling.

Robert looks down at his fly, which causes him to almost fall over. He starts tugging at the zipper as ...

ROBERT

(amused, to Blake)

You know, I played God once, in that awful Easter thing Fox did a few years back...

(he staggers, still tugging)

...and Judas once, too, in that sand and sandals thing over at MGM ... Remember this...?

The zipper finally goes up, and Robert immediately assumes an “actorly” pose, affecting a melodramatic tone..

ROBERT

“Don’t you understand, my Lord?! You broke my heart! Sometimes I curse the day I ever met you! We held the world in our hands! But you came to me and cried in my face ... Betrayal, Betrayal, Betray--...”

(his eyes fall on Nancy, recognition hits)

Nancy?

NANCY

Hi, Bob--

ROBERT

Nancy! My God. What are you doing here ?

NANCY

(to Robert)

I could ask you the same thing.

SAM

They’re filming a movie here.

NANCY

Really?

ROBERT

Close by, yeah. I just stopped by for some ...

(indicates the liquor)

and I turn around and you’re standing there ...

MAGGIE

(to Nancy, even more gobsmacked)

You two *know* each other?

NANCY

Kinda, yeah...

SAM

(to Maggie)

College chums. Well, maybe a little more / than tha--

NANCY

(cutting him off quickly)

Yes. University of Delaware. Long time ago.

ROBERT

Seems like yesterday right now. Doesn't it? Very Rod Serling..

Robert's eyes haven't left Nancy. He is suddenly aware of his state ... he stands unsteadily, tries to straighten his clothes, but he's not doing much good.

ROBERT

I can't believe you're--

Blake sees their eyes haven't left each other. She takes Robert's arm possessively, but also to hold him up.

BLAKE

Aren't you going to introduce me to your friend, honey?

ROBERT

(pulled out of his near-trance)

Sorry... Uh ... Nancy Lewis --?

NANCY

It's Benham now.

(extends her hand to Blake)

Nancy Benham.

BLAKE

Blake Hawthorne.

NANCY

Yes. I recognize you. Nice to meet you.

BLAKE

(tucking into Robert even tighter, to
Nancy)

So! You were in school with Robert, you said? You act too? Did you two do ... anything ... together?

Maggie sees Nancy's uneasiness, steps in quickly, takes Robert's arm, literally pulls him from Blake to the chairs by the stove, sits.

MAGGIE

Oh, this is so exciting! Sit with me, Mr. Grey.

SAM

Maggie --

Robert sits with her, but he still glances back at Nancy now and again.

MAGGIE

(ignores Sam)

So. You're making a movie here! How exciting!

SAM

Maggie, maybe under the circumstances, we ought to let them ...

MAGGIE

(to Sam)

In a minute, in a minute.

(to Robert)

I just *love* your movies, by the way. Especially *River of Life*. God, I cried like a baby. Are you doing one like that?

ROBERT

(trying to keep up, but his eyes keep drifting to Nancy)

It's an action/adventure thing, I guess. It's called ... uh...

BLAKE

(wearily)

The Hunter's Moon.

ROBERT

Yeah.

(rolling his hand)

....*The Hunter's Moon*....

MAGGIE

(pushing on)

And what's it about?

ROBERT

About? It's about ... uh--

BLAKE

It's a survival thing. Man and woman against nature. Bears and wolves...

John suddenly enters, nervous.

JOHN

I'm sorry, Mr. Grey, Miss Hawthorne. I don't mean to interrupt...

ROBERT

(a bit pissily, pulling himself together,
the diva returning)

Well, then you shouldn't, should you? We're making some new friends here...

(looks at Nancy, smiles)

And running into old ones ...

BLAKE

(to Robert)

Robert. Be nice.

(to John)

What is it, honey?

JOHN

Ridley just called from the set. They're losing the light, and the crew's been on set two hours already, and --

ROBERT

(pissily)

They're being paid.

JOHN

Yeah, but ... he said if I don't get you there right away, it'll be me that--

ROBERT

That what? They'll fire you? I won't let him. And directors are always in a hurry. He'll wait as long as I want them to wait. Who else is he going to get? Cruise? Crowe? Depp, for God's sake? They've already passed on this piece / of--

BLAKE

(interrupting, to Robert)

Let's not get into that, darling.

(to John)

It's alright, honey. We'll be right out.

John turns to exit.

BLAKE

(to John)

And call ahead and have a pot of hot coffee put in my trailer, will you?

(taking Robert's arm, pulling him to his feet)

Come on, Robert. I don't want to get in trouble.

ROBERT

Yeah, yeah. Okay. Watch the jacket, will you?

They move toward the door. Robert stops, turns back to Sam.

ROBERT

(turns back, to Sam)

Thanks for the...

(pats the bottle in his pocket)

SAM

No worries. Come back anytime.

ROBERT

(to Nancy)

And ... wow ... you ... so unexpected. You around here much?

NANCY

I kind of work here.

SAM

Couldn't do without her, actually.

ROBERT

Well, good. Maybe I'll stop back while we're here. We could ... catch up, you know?

She hesitates.

NANCY

I'm pretty busy...

Blake gives him a tug.

BLAKE

Come on, Robert.

ROBERT

(to Blake, though still looking at Nancy)

Okay! Okay!

He turns to go, then turns back to Maggie.

ROBERT

(to Maggie)

You know, you asked about the film ... it's funny, but it just occurred to me ... it's ... well, in an odd way it could be about a guy who finds himself somewhere strangely familiar but not, you know? And being there ... seeing things ... and people ...

(he looks at Nancy)

... a strange feeling comes over him ...

BLAKE

What are you rambling about?

ROBERT
(again, to himself)

How very odd...

John's phone rings.

JOHN
(into phone)

John Hunt ... Yes, sir, I have them. We're on our way.

(clicks off, then to Robert)

Uh ... That was Ridley again. We really need to go.

ROBERT
(a little frustrated)

Okay! God forbid he loses his precious damn light!

Robert, Blake, and John leave. The moment they're gone, both Sam and Maggie immediately look at Nancy. She stares back at them.

NANCY

What?

MAGGIE

You know what.

SAM

Maggie...

NANCY
(firmly, not having any of it)

I'm due at the shelter. I'll finish the restock later.

She grabs her coat, moves toward the door, stops, turns to them.

NANCY

You guys need to get a grip.

Nancy exits. Maggie suddenly looks at herself.

MAGGIE

Oh, my God!! I looked a mess! Why did you let me stand here in front of him looking like this?

SAM

When was the last time I *let* you do anything?

Maggie exits while shouting..

MAGGIE

Wait 'til I tell Belinda Sykes about THIS!!

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

Morning a couple of days later. Nancy leans on the counter, flipping through an art magazine.

Robert enters. He's dressed nicely, neatly, in stylish leather jacket and slacks. John follows him.

JOHN

We're due on set in...

(checks his watch)

... twenty minutes. What shall I tell him this time?

ROBERT

I don't know. Be creative. Tell him ... tell him I needed to stop at the drugstore for some B-12 caps. My energy's down or something.

JOHN

We told him that yesterday.

ROBERT

We did? Well, then tell him I needed some Vitamin C. I feel a cold coming on. That should scare him into patience.

John doesn't move.

ROBERT

Don't hover, John. It's fine. Go run lines with Blake in the car or something.

John looks at his watch again, sighs, then exits.

Robert looks at Nancy behind the counter.

ROBERT

Hi.

NANCY

Hi, back. Vitamin C, huh?

ROBERT

(sheepishly)

Uh, yeah ... got any?

NANCY

You really want it?

ROBERT

(laughing)

No.

NANCY

Sam said you've been in the last two days, hanging around a bit.

ROBERT

Well ... Needed some things, you know?

NANCY

Things.

ROBERT

Yeah. You know... this and that...

NANCY

Uh-huh. You look real spiffy.

ROBERT

Thanks. I ... uh ... wasn't at my best the other day.

She smiles.

ROBERT

So. Benham. You're married, then?

NANCY

I suppose I still am. Never got any papers. I just liked the name, kept it when things ... you know.

A beat...then...

NANCY

Not filming today?

ROBERT

No, no ... the production machine grinds on.

NANCY

They don't need you?

ROBERT

Well, yeah, but ...

(looks at her)

... it's more interesting here.

NANCY

(not taking the bait)

So you're playing hooky.

He shrugs.

ROBERT

Guilty as charged.

He moves to her.

ROBERT

You haven't been around.

NANCY

Not always here. I put in a lot of time at the Women's Shelter.

ROBERT

Oh? Doing what?

NANCY

Counseling ... sort of.

ROBERT

Really? You go back to school for that ... psychology or something?

NANCY

God, no. Just ... experience.

(shifting gears, not wanting to linger on
this subject, moving to put the art mag
back in the rack)

So. How's the movie going? When you're there, I mean.

ROBERT

(wandering, touching things)

All right, I guess. Messy. Takes me an hour to wash the mud off.

NANCY

That's backwoods Maine for you. It's exciting, though, right?

ROBERT

(sadly, almost to himself)

Used to be.

NANCY

Better than cleaning out septic tanks for a living.

ROBERT

That's true.

NANCY

I imagine it's a fun job ... everybody calling you "Mister" and "Sir". Limos, red carpets,
premieres...

(picks up the fanzine with Robert and
Blake on the cover)

... a beautiful girl on your arm.

(Robert snorts a laugh)

So what's the story there? Is it true what they're saying?

ROBERT

What are they saying?

NANCY

(opens mag, finds page, reads)

“Though neither Grey nor Hawthorne will go on the record, word on the set is that the two lovebirds are rocking a trailer between scene takes. Oo-la-la.”

ROBERT

They actually wrote that?

NANCY

Even have it in italics.

ROBERT

God. Where do they get that crap? Blake’s a nice girl, a very good actress. We’re ... friends, that’s all.

NANCY

Uh-huh. With benefits?

ROBERT

You know how those stories get started. We had a drink after a shoot one day, and the rumor mill gets all wound up.

NANCY

Lot of smoke, then? No fire?

ROBERT

Does it matter?

NANCY

Maybe it doesn’t.

ROBERT

(picking up on something)

But maybe it does?

Nancy tosses the fanzine on the counter, says nothing.

Robert smiles at her. She looks away.

ROBERT

This place has a real nice feel to it. I noticed it the other day. You know what it reminds me of? The Deer Park Tavern back at Delaware. Remember that place?

NANCY

I remember stumbling out of it a lot.

ROBERT

Oh, yeah. With you usually holding *me* up.

(looks at her a beat, then...)

Simpler times.

NANCY

I guess.

ROBERT

Funny how this place brings all that back. It feels like I've been here before, you know? It's familiar. Every breath seems to calm, like there's Valium in the air.

NANCY

Maybe I should breathe more deeply.

He smiles at her a beat, liking the easiness
between them.

ROBERT

Things are simpler here, too. Nothing I'd need a manual for. And slower ... I feel like I have time to think.

NANCY

Some folks around here call it "boring".

ROBERT

(smiles)

I'd call it peaceful. Nobody knocking on my trailer door, ringing me on the phone, telling me where to be, what to do, what to say. I haven't had that in a long time. Didn't realize how much I missed the freedom of it.

(turns to her)

But this place ... seeing *you*...

Nancy is uncomfortable with where she feels this is going. She deflects again -- turns the cover of the fanzine to him and takes it to him.

NANCY

True story or not, it's a nice picture.

ROBERT

(laughing, looking at it, sitting in stove chair)

God. I've never gotten used to this shit.

NANCY

Part of the big star deal, isn't it?

ROBERT

(turns mag to her)

Do you think I look constipated?

NANCY

I think the more pertinent question is whether you look happy.

ROBERT

Huh. Well, then, what do you think? Do I look happy?

(off her shrug)

No. Really. What do you think?

NANCY

It doesn't matter what I think anymore.

ROBERT

(leaning in to her)

It does to me.

NANCY

Then ... I think it looks like you got what you always wanted.

ROBERT

Certainly not stardom, fame, fortune. Never asked for any of that...

NANCY
(a heavy beat)

Validation.

Her bluntness stops him.

Wow...

ROBERT

You asked.

NANCY

Yeah. I forgot you never pull your punches.

ROBERT

They sit silent a long moment, staring at one another, then, out of the blue...

I blew it, didn't I?

ROBERT

What?

NANCY

I blew it. With us.

ROBERT

Bob--

NANCY

I took us for granted and I let things get out of hand--

ROBERT

Don't.

NANCY

No, I did. I know it. It should never have happened. You and me, we were--

ROBERT

That was thirty-five years and a dozen lifetimes ago.

NANCY

ROBERT

I know, I know, but doesn't it feel like yesterday to you right now? Like time has shifted somehow? Does to me.

NANCY

Not really. That's your actor's imagination.

ROBERT

Maybe. Maybe not. But I felt it the first day I came in here and saw you. It almost knocked me over.

NANCY

That was something else, I think--

ROBERT

Hear me out. What if I told you I haven't been able to get it out of my mind since that moment?

She moves away.

NANCY

I'd say you should spend your time thinking about something more productive. Like making a movie.

ROBERT

But that's what I'm talking about! Making movies. Being a damn movie star.

(beat, as he thinks...)

I barely remember what I said in the scene we shot yesterday. Bullshit words without meaning. For me, anymore, I mean.

(beat)

It hasn't been fun for a long time, Nance. I sometimes wonder why the hell I'm doing it. But coming in here, us ... it's like ... something turned over inside of me. I--

NANCY

(not at all liking where this is going)

Don't make me an excuse for whatever it is you think is happening in your life.

ROBERT

That's just it. It's not so much what's happening *now*, but what the hell happened *then*? All I've been thinking about the last couple of days is, how the hell did I end up *here*? Robert Grey, movie star? That's not what I was aiming for back at Delaware. What we talked endlessly about at the Deer Park. Far from it.

NANCY

You did some acting.

ROBERT

(throwing it away)

That was nothing. I needed some Humanities credits and it was easy ... no labs, no exams. I was in Pre-Med, remember?

NANCY

Bob...

ROBERT

Neurosurgery. That's what I really wanted to do. Help people, make a difference in their lives. So how did I end up being ... *this*?

Nancy's really uncomfortable now. Where's he going with this? She humors him.

NANCY

Well, what happened is you took that role as Abraham in that E-52 theater thing, and--

ROBERT

My first role.

NANCY

Uh-huh. You were great. Then that show at The Arden ... one thing led to another ... fast track to the top, and now you've got Oscars and Golden Globes and God knows what else, right?

ROBERT

Dumb luck.

NANCY

They don't give those things to hacks, Bob. You're an artist. You've done some great work. Own that.

ROBERT

Yes, but now I'm thinking ... is it what I *should* have done? At the heart of it, surgery's mostly an art form, right? What might I have done developing *that* art?

NANCY

You're going down a rabbit hole.

ROBERT

Am I? What about you? You wanted to write, didn't you? And not the pulp commercial stuff. You wanted to pen *literature*. Pulitzer level.

(he smiles)

So have you? Written anything, I mean?

NANCY

(deflecting)

We're not talking about me.

ROBERT

Uh-huh. See? My point exactly.

(after a long beat)

How is it we never end up where we were aiming? I mean ... this whole experience ... it all comes back, and makes me realize how far from where I wanted to be that I am.

NANCY

You have a great life. Don't complain.

ROBERT

But has it been the *right* life? I mean--

NANCY

If you want to spitball philosophy, talk to Sam. I'm sure he'd love it. He's always reading that stuff. Kierkegaard, Sartre--

ROBERT

I don't want to talk about it, Nance. I think I want to *change* it.

(looks at her)

And I want to--

NANCY

(cuts him off sharply)

Look ... I'm sorry, but I need to get going here. You do too, right?

Robert looks at her a long moment, then rises and walks to her.

ROBERT

Listen ... I had a thought of ... maybe ... staying here. In Gilead.

NANCY

What?

ROBERT

Getting a place here. Maybe we could--

NANCY

There's no 'we' anymore, Bob. Be serious. We're long past that.

ROBERT

Why? Maybe this is that second chance people get. Like that picture I did a couple years back ... *Rewind?* Where the guy goes back and--

NANCY

"Don't look back, you can never look back." Bob Dylan. It was our mantra.

ROBERT

What if we were wrong? What if you can? Go back, I mean? I know this sounds nuts, but I swear, I think this is--

NANCY

Bob! Stop! You're not thinking clea--

John suddenly appears, phone in hand, holds it out to Robert.

JOHN

I'm sorry, Mr. Grey. I'm sorry. But you have a call. They said it's urgent.

ROBERT

Tell Ridley I'll be there when I get there! Or take Blake over and tell them to shoot her reverses or something. I'm busy.

JOHN

It's not Ridley.

ROBERT

Who is it?

JOHN

(he holds the phone out further)

A Mister Kanter?

Robert looks at Nancy, then his head drops. He knows he's lost the moment. He holds his hand out. John gives him the phone.

ROBERT

(flatly, into phone)

Hello, Ari ... Hello? ... Hello? ... Wait a minute, I can't hear. Let me try something..
(punches the phone to speaker)

Go ahead.

ARI

(on speakerphone)

Bobby! How's it going up there? How's the picture?

ROBERT

It's fine, Ari. We're making most of the days, I think...

ARI

(on speakerphone)

Uh-huh, uh-huh. Well, look Bobby, I've got some time, I'm going to take the jet out there, see how my favorite client's doing.

ROBERT

Oh, you don't have to do that, I'm good.

ARI

(on speakerphone)

It's no trouble. I have to come anyway. Those studio suits up there are crying over some foolishness. I got a call, your name came up. I'm going to fly out, calm them down. We'll have lunch.

ROBERT

Foolishness? What foolishness?

ARI

(on speakerphone)

See you Saturday!

Ari! Ari!
ROBERT

But he's clicked off.

Great.
ROBERT

Robert sits a moment, deflated.

Trouble?
NANCY

Agent. Manager. Whatever.
ROBERT
(hands phone to John)
Go out to the car. I'll be there in a minute.

John looks at his watch, then to Nancy, then
back to Robert.

Really. Just a minute.
ROBERT

John exits. Robert looks up at Nancy.

So ... this is what I'm thinking--
ROBERT

I've got to go. I'm due at the Shelter.
NANCY

Can it wait a minute? I'd like to--
ROBERT

No, Bob. Whatever it is you're going through, it doesn't ... it can't ... involve me. I'm
sorry.
NANCY

Before he can answer, Sam comes from the back.

SAM

(to Nancy)

There you are....

(noticing Robert)

Oh, hi, Robert. Need something?

ROBERT

No. Thanks. We're just ... catching up.

SAM

Cool.

(to Nancy)

Can you help me inventory some new merchandise ? Maggie says we need to get it inside today.

NANCY

I've got the Shelter. We can do it when I get back.

SAM

But--

NANCY

When I get back, Sam. Bye.

(to Robert)

I've got to go. Try and climb out of that rabbit hole.

And she exits.

Robert looks at the space she used to occupy,
then turns to look at Sam.

SAM

Always running somewhere, that one.

ROBERT

Always was ...

Beat.

SAM

Well ... If you don't need anything, I'd better ... (throws a thumb toward the back) ... you know.

ROBERT

Sure. Yeah. Go ahead. I'm fine. Need to get to it myself.

SAM

Okay, then

And Sam exits to the back.

Robert looks around the store a moment, then glances toward the back where Sam just went.

ROBERT

Sam? On second thought...

(no answer)

Sam?

(still no answer)

Well ... I'm just going to grab...

Robert goes behind the counter, grabs a half-pint of Johnnie Walker. He throws a bill on the counter, then opens the bottle, and takes a long pull.

ROBERT

Shit.

The front door bell tinkles. Blake enters.

BLAKE

Hey. What are you doing? We need to go. John said / you...

She sees Robert take another pull on the pint.

BLAKE

Jesus. You think that's a good idea? We're already late, and showing up smelling like a distillery won't help matters.

ROBERT

That's what mouthwash is for.

BLAKE

(almost an aside)

Mouthwash won't help sloppy acting.

ROBERT

Sloppy acting!?

She sits with him.

BLAKE

Sorry. I didn't mean that ... It's just--

ROBERT

What?

BLAKE

You don't seem yourself lately. You okay?

ROBERT

(a little irritated)

Yes. I'm *okay*. Don't worry about / me--

(beat)

BLAKE

People are talking, Robert.

ROBERT

What people? Talking about what?

BLAKE

Ridley. And that producer guy ... what's his name? Watkins?

ROBERT

Wilkins. And he's not a producer. He's a glorified accountant.

BLAKE

Whatever. John overheard them arguing in the production trailer yesterday. He said Wilkins was pretty pissed about something. Said he was going to "pull the plug" if Ridley couldn't get his "divas" in line. He was talking about you, I'm pretty sure. And by extension, me.

ROBERT

So what? Wilkins is a numbers cruncher. There's one on every movie. It's his job to be a pain in the ass.

BLAKE

Well, it's not mine. I can't afford to be. I'm not the ingenue anymore, in case you haven't noticed. It's taken me a long time to get this far. I don't want it to screw up now, you know?

(beat)

I don't want *you* to screw it up. For either of us.

She puts out her hand. Robert places the half pint in it.

ROBERT

Nothing's going to get screwed up. It's all good...

(she stands)

Hey ... you don't have to go--

BLAKE

Yeah, I do. We were due on set thirty minutes ago. I'm going, with or without you. I don't want any more trouble.

She moves toward the door, then stops and turns.

BLAKE

Whatever this is with you, I hope you work it out soon.

And she exits.

Robert moves to the door.

ROBERT

Blake. Blake ... Goddamn it.

And he exits.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE

Sam is at the counter, writing checks and putting them in envelopes, stamping them. Maggie sits with Robert in the chairs at the stove. They sip tea.

ROBERT

Really? Why *River of Life*? I've done, what, fifty pictures?

MAGGIE

Oh, my God ... It's so good, that one! I mean, the part at the end where you pick up the little kid from his mom and you two walk along the bridge? And you finally get the courage to tell him that you're his father? And the kid says, "Why did you leave me if you're my Dad? Didn't you want to be with me?" That just breaks my heart. But then you say, "You see that tree in the water down there? The water flowed fine until that tree fell into it one day, but now the water has to flow in different directions around the branches." The little kid nods, and then you say -- and oh, my God, this breaks my heart every time too -- you say, "Well, our lives were like that river. But something got in the way -- like that tree -- and it changed things. You and your mom flowed in one direction and I flowed in another. It didn't mean I didn't want to be in the same river with you -- it just meant that where my water flowed went a different way than yours." And the kid says, "But we're in the same river now, right?" And you look at him...

(she wipes a tear from her eye)

... and say, "All the way to the ocean, son. All the way to the ocean." And he puts his arm around you and you both look out at the sunset. Oh, my God...

ROBERT

That's amazing ... you memorized the lines?

MAGGIE

No, but--

SAM

Don't believe her. She knows 'em all by heart.

ROBERT

Really?

MAGGIE

Well ... it's such a beautiful story.

(she wipes another tear)

I'm sorry.

ROBERT

Don't be, Maggie. It's nice to know you liked the picture. To be honest, I never saw it ... I rarely watch my own stuff. Usually just hang out at the bar during the premieres.

MAGGIE

(excitedly)

Oh, well, we'll just have to have a movie night, then, won't we? I'll make some popcorn, we can invite Nancy over ... and Belinda. You'll *love* Belinda.

SAM

Maggie, I don't think--

MAGGIE

(rising)

I think I even have the DVD upstairs. Let me go check...

(as she heads to the back)

Sam, see if Mr. Grey needs more tea. Wait'll I tell Belinda ... she'll have a cow.

She exits.

SAM

Sorry. She's been like a little kid since you showed up.

ROBERT

(smiling)

It's okay. Happens a lot.

SAM

No filming today?

ROBERT

Night shoot. Not looking forward to it. Already cold out there.

SAM

That's Maine for you ... three temperatures: cool, cold, and Holy Shit.

ROBERT
(after a beat)

Nancy coming in today?

SAM
Supposed to. Not sure when, though. The shelter called her early. Someone new came in in the wee hours. Sometimes takes a while if it's been ugly.

ROBERT
She said she does counseling there?

SAM
I suppose that's what you'd call it. Talking to the women who come in. Or *listening* is more like it. Letting them know they're heard. And safe. Kind of a "been there, done that" sort of thing for her.

ROBERT
"Been there"? You saying Nancy was ... you know...?

SAM
Don't know the in's and out's of it. What little I do know isn't a fairy tale. She ran into some bad people is how I understand it. One guy in particular...

ROBERT
Here? In Gilead?

SAM
No. She just showed up here one day, broke and pretty much a mess ... running from whoever, whatever. Took a bus as far as her money would take her, I figure. Said she'd been in Phoenix, I think. Somewhere out West.

ROBERT
Huh.

SAM
You could tell she was carrying some wounds deep down underneath the ones you could see. Maggie saw that part right away ... took her to the shelter, got her set up there. She's stayed two years now.

ROBERT
She say what happened, who it was that ...?

SAM

Not to me. She keeps pretty much to herself.

ROBERT

So you really think she was --?

SAM

Meaning no disrespect ... I've probably said too much already. Prefer to let it go now, if you don't mind.

ROBERT

Yeah. Sure.

This news doesn't sit well with Robert. He silently sips his tea. When he looks up, his eyes fall on the paintings hanging on the wall. He stands and looks closer at them.

ROBERT

Maggie mentioned these are yours.

SAM

Mm-hmm.

ROBERT

She said you started painting as a kid.

SAM

Yeah. My mother was a painter. I just sorta picked it up.

ROBERT

They're pretty good.

SAM

Ah ... just pushing paint around.

ROBERT

No, I'm serious. They're damned good. You still pick up a brush?

SAM

Other things to do these days. You know how it goes.

ROBERT

(contemplatively)

I do. Did you love it, though? Painting, I mean?

SAM

Suppose I did, yeah.

ROBERT

Something draw you away from it?

SAM

Not really. Took a different path, is all. Met Maggie. Found this place. Just sort of went with what was set in front of us, you know?

ROBERT

But if you'd kept on with the painting, maybe...

(looks at the painting again)

You ever wish you'd stuck with it?

SAM

(looking at the paintings)

I like the memories of doing these. Could I have done more with it? Yeah, maybe. But I like to think they were what they were meant to be: an exploration that taught me something I was supposed to learn. Maggie'll tell you it was patience, but she doesn't think the lesson took.

They laugh, then...

ROBERT

Ever thought of going back to it? I mean, you were good ... you could probably--

SAM

(turning to Robert)

I like who I am now, Robert. It works for me. However I came to this point I figure is what was meant to be.

ROBERT

(rising)

What if you're wrong? Maybe you were *meant* to paint, and just got sidetracked.

SAM

It's better I don't dwell on it. I want those paintings to be a fond memory, not a regret. Too little time in life for regret, you know?

ROBERT

Maybe regret is life's way of reminding us of something we need to look at again, maybe change.

Sam moves to the counter.

SAM

Sounds like an idea for a movie. More tea?

ROBERT

No. Thanks.

SAM

Something with a little more authority, maybe?

ROBERT

(smiling)

I'm okay. Anyway, I should probably get--

The door bell tinkles. Nancy enters. She sees Robert and smiles mechanically.

ROBERT

(brightens)

Oh, hey, there....

NANCY

Morning.

Nancy moves behind the counter, stashing her purse and coat underneath. She sighs heavily, like trying to shake off stress.

SAM

Rough one?

NANCY

Which ones aren't?

SAM

Right.

NANCY

(to Robert)

No filming today?

ROBERT

Tonight.

NANCY

Uh-huh.

ROBERT

Been chatting with Maggie and Sam, warming up with some tea.

NANCY

Tea?

ROBERT

Red Zinger.

NANCY

Ah. The hard stuff.

Sam picks up the envelopes he was working on,
grabs his coat.

SAM

I need to get these to the post office before the afternoon truck.

(to Nancy)

Maggie's upstairs, probably on the phone with Belinda ... planning a movie night. You're invited.

NANCY

Yeah? What are we watching?

SAM

One of Robert's old movies. What's it called?

ROBERT

River of Life.

SAM

Yeah. That one. Well, gotta go.

(smiles at Robert)

Enjoyed the conversation. You be in Gilead much longer?

ROBERT

A bit. Still have some scenes to shoot.

SAM

See you around, then.

ROBERT

Count on it.

Sam exits through front door. Nancy and Robert look at one another a beat, she behind the counter, he near the chairs.

NANCY

Tea, huh?

ROBERT

Yup.

NANCY

Just tea. No, uh ...

(makes a hand gesture of pouring something into a cup)

ROBERT

Nope. Trying to cut back on that.

NANCY

Good for you.

Robert takes a step toward her. He holds out his hand to her.

ROBERT

Come over here a minute, will you? I want to talk to you about something.

She's wary of what's coming.

NANCY

Bob...

ROBERT

Please.

Nancy finally comes around the counter but doesn't take his hand. She moves to the chairs and sits. He sits with her.

ROBERT

Listen. Yesterday, when I was talking about my life and all --

NANCY

It's okay. I get it. You're under a lot of pressure. Makes you think goofy about stuff sometimes--

ROBERT

No, you don't understand. I was serious.

NANCY

(realizing)

Oh, Bob, this isn't--

ROBERT

Let me finish. (beat) I don't know what brought *you* here. It's none of my business. But I can understand why you stayed. It feels safe ... and peaceful. And me ... I wasn't even supposed to be in this state. The plan was Pennsylvania, but something about tax credits, and we ended up shooting here. Now, I'm thinking there was a reason you and I both--

NANCY

You're going down that rabbit hole again. It's nothing but coincidence.

ROBERT

I don't believe in coincidence. If anything, I believe in synchronicity, and I've never been surer of what it's telling me now.

(he stops a moment, considers, then...)

I'm going to stay here, Nancy. I'm going to make some changes in my life / or...

NANCY

Oh, Jesus, Bob.

ROBERT

...maybe a better way of putting it is, I want to *correct* my life. Re-aim it. I'm thinking of leaving the business altogether, and I want us to see if we can't--

Nancy springs up, moves away.

NANCY

Oh, for God's sake! You've been here -- what? -- a week? And you're going to tear up thirty-five years of--

He rises too.

ROBERT

It didn't take a second, Nance! Not a heartbeat. The instant I saw you, standing in front of me, in this place ... Something happened. I suddenly felt at home and naked at the same time. Because you're the only person on this planet who knows who I *really* am. Not the guy on that magazine cover over there, but the *real* me. The one you loved back in--

NANCY

Those people are gone, Bob.

ROBERT

I wish they weren't. And maybe they aren't. Because in that same instant, I was overcome with a real sense that who I had become was a lie. Or at least a mistake. I mean, I never wanted to be *this*...

(points at magazine)

...*that* guy. And I suddenly knew that the Robert Grey of the past thirty-five years was somehow peeled away ... that I ... the *real me* ... was still there and was being given another chance / to--

Nancy whirls on him, grabs him by the upper arms and shakes him.

NANCY

Bob! Stop! You're talking crazy!

ROBERT

Try to see it the way I'm seeing it ... as a gift, an opportunity. For both of us. To get it back, to be who we *really* are supposed to be--

NANCY

(exploding)

This IS who I really am!! Not some imagined myth you've put on a pedestal in your memory! *This is me!* A damaged woman who's found a cocoon to hide in! And there's only room enough in me for *me* right now. That's all I can handle! I'm not that naive girl staggering home with you anymore! You aren't that sweet boy I loved once! This isn't the fucking Deer Park! A lot of dark shit's gone down since then, and it's left me ... hollow. You understand?

(she looks hard at him)

Life claimed us long ago, Bobby, led us where it did. There's nothing to *correct*. There are no do-overs.

ROBERT

There are *always* second takes. Even thirds, and fourths. Somebody once said, "Every minute that passes is a chance to turn it all around". Don't you see? Nothing's in the can until you say / so--

NANCY

This isn't a fucking movie, Bob! You can't rewrite the scene if you don't like it! I'm not an actress playing a part!

(looking hard at him)

I'm not in your script anymore, Bobby. Can't you hear me? I ...I can't ... be ...

Her expression of pain stops him. He looks at her. He drifts back to the stove chairs, slowly lowers into one. After a long beat...

ROBERT

I just thought / I was so sure ...

NANCY

I'm sorry.

She senses his sudden loss of solid ground,
moves to him.

NANCY

Bob ... I know it seems like those times were somehow better -- filled with promise and endless horizon. I look back at them and ... I agree with you, I do. But I also know they're gone. (*beat*) We were young. Stupid. We weren't careful and we hurt each other's hearts. But we moved on. What choice did we have? You went to the bright and starry top of the world, I went to ... well, let's just say I explored the other side ... for a long time.

ROBERT

Was it me? Did I make--

NANCY

No. You were the least of it. In a lot of ways, the best part. I know that now. But I won't talk about the rest other than to say, things happened, Bob ... I trusted the wrong people, made some bad choices, went to some really bad places for a very long time. I barely made it out.

ROBERT

But you did, and now we're here and--

NANCY

I know what you want. But it isn't possible ... at least not with me. That part of me is broken. It's all I can do to get up every morning, and if I can help someone else just a little bit, well, then that's one more day that ... well, it's ... it's one more day.

ROBERT

Maybe I can help. If I'm not doing the movie--

NANCY

Maybe you shouldn't make that decision right now. Maybe take a day or two / to--

ROBERT

I don't want to wait another minute, Nancy. I know what I want and--

The front door suddenly opens. ARI KANTER strides in, followed closely by Blake and John. Ari opens his arms wide, the serious look in his eyes belying the broad smile on his face.

ARI

Bobby! How's my favorite client?

He moves to Robert, takes him in a bear hug,
slapping his back.

ARI

You look healthy, Bobby! This clean air is good for you. Not like that *drek* we breathe in Los Angle-eeze. "City of Angels", my ass. The angels were chased away long ago. Serpents live there now. Serpents!

(looking at Nancy)

And who is this lovely lady?

(to Robert, indicating he should introduce
them)

Don't be rude.

ROBERT

Sorry. Ari Kanter, Nancy Benham. Very old colleague, very old friend.

ARI

(shaking her hand)

She is not very old, Bobby. *We* are old. *She*, however, is very lovely. A pleasure.

NANCY

Nice to meet you, too.

ARI

(he looks around)

Ah! Such a place! Very vintage! You know, it reminds me of that soundstage set on the back lot at Warner's--

BLAKE

See? What did I say that first day I came in here? Just like Warner's, right?--

ARI

(loudly, firmly)

So!

(shoots a meaningful look at Blake)

We talk a bit. Sit with me, Bobby.

As Robert moves to the chairs by the stove, Ari draws John aside, whispers something to him. John nods and exits.

BLAKE

(looking from Ari to Nancy)

Um ...Listen... do you have any delicate things I can take a look at?

NANCY

Delicate things?

BLAKE

You know...

(makes gesture of a bra, another of panties)

Lacy things.

NANCY

(pointing)

Yeah, sure. They're in the far corner area in the back of the store.

Blake starts to move in the direction Nancy pointed, puts her arm through Nancy's arm as she passes and pulls her with her.

BLAKE

Oh, good. Can you show me some of them, honey? The ones in wardrobe are so scratchy. I swear they wash them in pumice.

And they exit. Ari moves to Robert at the chairs.

ARI

So. What is this bullshit I'm hearing -- you making trouble in the woods. There are nervous people calling me, making *me* nervous! You not happy with the director? The script? We'll make changes!

ROBERT

No. It's nothing like that.

ARI

What then? People are talking, Bobby. I got a call from Olbermann's secretary at the studio in California. His *secretary!* Twenty years he calls me direct, and now he has his secretary call me and tell me *I* should call *him!* And then he brings up dollars to me. He *never* talks dollars to me.

ROBERT

What dollars?

ARI

Big dollars. Overrun dollars. Crews being paid to play pinochle because you're not there where you're supposed to be.

(beat)

What's going on, Bobby? Talk to me.

ROBERT

Nothing you need to worry about, Ari.

ARI

How long have I known you? You pay me to worry. I'm thinking this is not nothing.

Robert looks a beat at Ari, deciding, then...

ROBERT

Let me ask you something. You ever wonder if you're doing what you were supposed to be doing?

ARI

You mean right now?

ROBERT

No, I / mean --

ARI

Right now, I'm supposed to be making this *mishegas* go away. Cameramen playing pinochle is not a good thing.

ROBERT

(glances at Sam's paintings)

No, I mean, doing what you were *really meant* to be doing.

ARI

We're *doing* it! We've been doing it thirty-five years! I make the deals, you make the pictures. We all make money. Everybody's happy.

ROBERT

What if I told you I'm thinking it's all been kind of a mistake. Me, I mean ... as an actor.

ARI

Mistake?! With Oscars and Globes, ten billion in box office, and what -- maybe two hundred million cash your bank account ... thirty million in mine? This is no mistake, Bobby! That kind of success--

ROBERT

Yes, I know ... but that's only one *kind* of success ... the kind of success that's measured by the same people who define it. By you, and Olbermann, and Variety and the Hollywood Reporter...

ARI

There's another kind?

ROBERT

My kind! *Me!* How *I* see *me* ... and what I've done with my life.

(beat)

I'm beginning to believe I really fucked it up.

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT ONE.

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

The back of the store. Can be a small thrust far downstage left or a scrim on wheels rolled onto the DSL section of the stage, obscuring the counter. Lighting isolates the scene.

Blake and Nancy enter.

NANCY

You asked for lacies. This is what we have.

Blake begins looking through the selection.

BLAKE

These are nice. Very soft.

NANCY

(not really engaging)

Mm-hmm.

BLAKE

I like the styles, too.

NANCY

Pretty basic. People aren't too fancy around here.

BLAKE

Still. They're very up-to-date.

(off Nancy's weary smile and nod, as she
looks through the lingerie)

So. You and Robert. Back in the day.

NANCY

Yeah. College ...

BLAKE

How'd you meet?

NANCY

Don't really remember. Probably at this tavern everybody went to.

BLAKE

Drinking buddies?

NANCY

We did a bit of that, yeah. Mostly we studied.

BLAKE

Theater?

NANCY

Actually, no. I was English Lit, he was Biology.

BLAKE

You're kidding. How did those two intersect? Science and the Humanities, I mean.

NANCY

Opposites attract, I suppose.

BLAKE

Where did the acting come in?

NANCY

Mutual friend. Who *was* a theater major.

BLAKE

Ah, the genesis connection.

NANCY

More like Revelations. Things completely changed the day Bob walked into that theater.

BLAKE

Overnight sensation, huh?

NANCY

Not really. He was uncertain for awhile, but the bug finally got him. Intoxicating new opportunities can be seductive.

BLAKE

Oh, you're not telling me anything. That's what Hollywood's built on -- always demanding to see the new.

NANCY

Wouldn't think that played well for longevity.

BLAKE

You learn that being perceived as something new is better than being something old, so you do what you have to. You get good at re-invention.

NANCY

Uh-huh.

BLAKE

(beat, as she looks over more lingerie)

And ... New things always seem to fit better, don't you think?

NANCY

Sometimes. Not always.

BLAKE

Well, yeah, we get kind of sentimental about our old things, sure, but after a while, they lose the ability to help where we need it. They're still nice, but they're old, you know? Too many washings...

NANCY

Might be more comfortable, though. And perhaps better for the overall outfit.

BLAKE

Maybe it's better to let them go when their usefulness is past, though, right? Let some new ideas spruce things up. New colors, new looks.

NANCY

I don't think there's anything wrong with an older look. Nothing wrong with vintage style.

BLAKE

Unless the dance you're going to doesn't call for vintage. Maybe it calls for something more up-to-date. Image is everything, you know, particularly in our business.

NANCY

Your business --

BLAKE

Robert's and mine, yes.

NANCY

Uh-huh.

BLAKE

Anyway ... maybe we ought to dress things up the way they really need to be these days. Better for everybody.

(hands Nancy a couple of lacies)

I'm sure you understand.

NANCY

Oh, I understand perfectly. But a word of caution: sometimes the new things we add to an outfit can make us look -- how shall I put this? -- well, let's just say ...

(looks Blake hard in the eyes)

cheap and completely inappropriate.

(holds up the lacies)

I'll ring these up for you.

BLACKOUT.

ACT TWO, SCENE TWO

Continuous from the end of Act 1. Ari suddenly realizes this is something much deeper than not liking a director.

ARI

You think you fucked it up? Fucked *what* up, Bobby? What are we talking here? This is not a good way to think.

ROBERT

I ever tell you I wanted to be a doctor?

ARI

You *were* one. That picture ten, twelve years back, with Pacino. Or was it DeNiro? No matter. You were terrific. You want to do it again, I'll make some calls--

ROBERT

I mean, a *real* doctor, Ari. A surgeon.

ARI

A surgeon? Hmph. Let me see your hands.

ROBERT

What?

ARI

Your hands...

(Robert shows his hands)

Hmph. Good palm width. Slender fingers. Maybe. But so what? That other is just ... well, take me. I can talk anybody into anything. Was thinking about politics as a younger man-- the *real* power. But then one day I'm walking on Madison Avenue and I'm seeing this beautiful figure in a red two-piece in front of me, with curves in all the right places and curly black hair down to here, and I'm in love in a heartbeat. And she goes into this place called William Morris, and I'm thinking, I don't know who these people are or what they do, but if this kind of beauty works in here, then *this* is for *me*. And *bam, boom*, a year later, I'm an agent with a client who becomes the biggest star of his generation. Life takes us where it wants to, Bobby. We are what we are.

ROBERT

But maybe not what we *should* have been. Maybe you *should* have been a politician.

ARI

Bobby. What is this? Doctors, politicians? We make pictures. YOU make PICTURES. And we have a picture here that needs you to get your head in the game.

ROBERT

Maybe my *heart* isn't in it anymore, Ari. Maybe I want to get back to --

ARI

(stands, firmly)

It's not about what *you* want, Bobby.

ROBERT

Sure it is.

Ari's tone suddenly turns no-bullshit serious.

ARI

Bobby. Listen to me. It's *never* been about what you want. This is something you've never had to worry about because you had me.

ROBERT

What are you saying? Make sense.

ARI

It's always been about what *they* want, Bobby. What. THEY. Want.

ROBERT

Bullshit.

ARI

You don't think so?

ROBERT

I could call up Olbermann at Paramount right now and tell him I want off this picture and he'll say "Go with God" before I've finished the sentence.

ARI

That right?

ROBERT

The name Robert Grey still means something in Hollywood.

ARI

Oh, no doubt. We've both become very rich on that name, haven't we? But you think Olbermann's going to swallow whatever he's got into this *Moon* thing so far? We're talking millions, Bobby.

ROBERT

I've made him billions.

ARI

Which means *nothing*. If it was a single dollar, he would want it back. You're not thinking right about this.

ROBERT

Then why don't you straighten me out.

ARI

Okay, you ask, I'll give to you straight, no cream.

(beat)

What's important to remember, sweetheart, is that YOU is US. And US, in the situation we're talking about now, is ME. Because, Bobby, as great an actor as you are, as much money as you've made everybody, *they* won't talk to *you*. *Really* talk. Oh, they'll talk *about* you. They'll talk *with* you. But they won't talk *to* you. You hear what I'm saying? Because you're not *them*.

ROBERT

Bullshit. I could--

ARI

You're an *actor*! A means to an end. A necessary means, but that's as far as it goes. To be brutal about it -- you're part of the *equipment*. If they're going to do something they're going to do it. They just plug in the best piece of equipment they can find. And what has made them do it with *you*, is *me*.

Robert stares at Ari. Nobody's talked to him like this before ... even Ari.

ARI

Think about it: whatever we've done, you and me, who made the deal? *Who* talked to *them*?

Robert sits.

ARI

And I'll tell you this, my old friend: there's not a thing we've done -- not ONE -- that hasn't been something *they* wanted to do. Trust me. And this *Hunter's Moon* thing? They want this done. And they were happy to have it done with *you*, because I helped that along ...for you, for them. That's what I do. But you are now making problems. And they are calling *me*. Not you. *Me*. And they are asking *me* why my boy isn't playing ball. They are telling *me* to fix this. They are making *your* problem *my* problem.

Ari focuses his eyes hard on Robert's eyes.

ARI

So ... listen to me closely, Bobby. If you fuck this one up, they aren't going to be happy. And the next time I call, they'll be in a meeting, or riding around the golf course, or on fucking Mars. But I'll hear from their attorneys. Oh, you can bet on that. And those millions in our bank accounts? Pffft!

(beat)

You understand now, Bob? This *isn't* just about you or what you want. It's about *me*. I've loved you like a brother, but don't you for one minute think I'll let you fuck things up for *me*.

(Ari lets that sink in a few beats, then he smiles broadly and stands, arms wide)

So! Why don't we drive over to the set and we'll sit down with Ridley and we'll figure out what we need to do on this picture. What do you say?

Nancy comes out from the back and goes to the cash register. Blake follows her.

BLAKE

I'm ready to go now. I'll be in the car.

And she beelines out the front door.

ARI

Good! We'll all go together!

He puts on his coat as he walks to the door.

ARI

(to Nancy)

Nice to meet you, beautiful lady. You know, You could have done well in pictures. Trust me, these things I know.

(to John)

Come on. Let's go make a movie!

John rises and follows Ari out the door.

Robert rises slowly, starts to move toward the door. He stops and looks at Nancy, an obvious pallor of defeat on his face.

NANCY

Bob? Are you all ri--?

Robert shakes his head, then turns and strides out the door without a sound.

Nancy stands a moment watching the empty space, then suddenly and emphatically slams her fists hard on the counter two or three times just as Maggie enters, carrying some things she puts on a shelf.

MAGGIE

Nancy? You okay?

Nancy crosses her arms, a bit embarrassed.

NANCY

Yes. Just ... Sorry, didn't mean to--

MAGGIE

(coming to Nancy)

What is it? Can I do something?

NANCY

Not unless you can make me twenty-three again.

MAGGIE

(with a laugh)

If I could, I'd do it for both of us.

(beat)

Why twenty-three?

NANCY

So I could erase the thirty-five years that followed.

MAGGIE

Ah. Seeing Robert's churned some waters.

NANCY

Mm-hmm. Muddied them up pretty good.

MAGGIE

Those bad years weren't all his fault, you know.

NANCY

No, I know that. We each damaged the other deeply when we split. Difference is, he hid from the wounds in movie characters. I hid from them in a bottle and a long string of losers.

MAGGIE

But you made it out, Nance. You're okay.

NANCY

Am I? That darkness still feels awful close, Maggie. Too close. And...

(studies Maggie a moment)

He 's talking about wanting to "go back" ... wanting us to get back together.

MAGGIE

You're kidding!

(off her head shake, excited)

Wow. You think you might? I mean ... jeez ... Robert Grey...

NANCY

Maggie, I've barely found solid ground here. You know this. It's one day at a time for me and very, very real. And you've seen *his* life ... and him in it. It's all make-believe, chaotic, unpredictable. He stands on sand. Even he doesn't know what's coming tomorrow. He's so caught up in it I doubt he's even considered that there's no way I could go back.

MAGGIE

Then you need to tell him that.

NANCY

I know ... I know I do.

(beat)

But the damned part of it is, part of me still...

She stops herself, looks at Maggie, smiles weakly, then turns to go. Maggie stops her with...

MAGGIE

What? Still what?

Nancy stops, turns to Maggie.

NANCY

Nothing. I was just ... nothing.

And Nancy exits.

BLACKOUT.

ACT TWO, SCENE THREE

Maggie stands at the counter, flipping through a fanzine, sipping a cup of tea, a phone to her ear.

MAGGIE

(into phone)

Well, I've been trying, Belinda, but ... No, I told you, he ... He hasn't been in here the last few days, so I haven't been able to ... Shooting the movie, I guess. I think they're trying to finish it ... Well, yeah, I'd like to find a night we could watch it, but if he's ... I could ask her, sure, but she's in the movie too, so if *he* can't make it, *she* probably ... Belinda, I don't manage their social calendars! I doubt very much if sitting between you and me on my lumpy couch upstairs swooning at his old movies is high on his list of priorities right now ... Yes, I will. I promise. If I see him, I'll --

The front door dings. Robert enters. He's in a cardigan-style sweatshirt, with a bloody bandage around his head, and a make-up smudge or two on his face that look like cuts or bruises. Maggie looks up and sees him...

MAGGIE

(jumping up)

Oh, my God!

ROBERT

What?!

MAGGIE

Are you all right? What happened?!

ROBERT

What?!

(realizing he's got the makeup on)

Oh ... It's makeup, Maggie! Makeup! It's okay, it's not real.

MAGGIE

(into phone)

Call you back, Belinda ...

(clicks off phone)

Sweet Jesus, I thought --

ROBERT

I'm sorry. I forgot. I'm so used to it, you know?

Maggie walks close to him, examines the
makeup.

MAGGIE

Wow.

ROBERT

Yeah, looks pretty real, doesn't it? It's from the scene we filmed this morning... easier to keep it on for this afternoon than sit in the makeup chair another two hours.

The door bell dings and Blake enters, followed
by John. She, too, has similar makeup on.

MAGGIE

Whoa! You too, huh? You guys look a real mess.

BLAKE

(cooly)

Plane crashes will do that to you.

(moves to the counter)

You have any Marlboro Reds?

MAGGIE

(going behind counter)

Sure. Sure.

(to John)

Hi, John.

JOHN

Hi, Maggie.

MAGGIE

(to John)

You want a Coke or something?

JOHN

No, thanks. Maybe some of those M&Ms.

Maggie hands Blake the cigarettes and John the candy. John is about to pay, but Blake waves him off -- she's got it. John nods his thanks then head for the door.

JOHN
(to Robert)

I'll be in the car.

ROBERT

Okay.

MAGGIE

Plane crash, huh?

ROBERT

Yeah. We crash in the wilderness. Sort of sets up the rest of the story.

MAGGIE

Well, you certainly sold me.

ROBERT

Kinda cold outside. Thought we'd come down and warm up with some tea while they move the cameras and stuff -- takes a couple of hours. Some of that Red Zinger sure would be nice.

MAGGIE

Oh, jeez ... sorry. I'm all out of the Zinger. I have some others...

ROBERT

Forget it then.

MAGGIE

But I think they have some Zinger down at Manny's.

ROBERT

Well, I don't want to put you out--

MAGGIE

No bother! You make yourselves comfortable. I'll pop down and get a bag or three.
(she moves to the door)

Watch the store for me, will you? Nancy's at the shelter. Sam's in the back if you need anything.

She exits.

Robert sits in a stove chair. Blake starts to pack the cigarettes against her palm.

ROBERT

Probably shouldn't smoke in here.

BLAKE

(looking right through him)

Probably shouldn't do a lot of things.

(beat)

Guess your girlfriend's out saving souls, huh?

ROBERT

Not my girlfriend.

BLAKE

Ex, then.

ROBERT

Even that's expired, it seems. And she doesn't "save souls". She helps--

BLAKE

I know what she does. (with a little spleen) And what she tried to do.

ROBERT

(wearily)

I'm sure she didn't try to do anything, Blake.

BLAKE

She was rude as hell!

(a little hurt shows through)

Called me "cheap and inappropriate".

ROBERT

She said that?

BLAKE

Her exact words. I was just trying to help her understand --

ROBERT

Look ... this isn't her problem. It's mine.

BLAKE

Well, *your* problems seem to be *everybody's* problems these days.

ROBERT

(after a beat)

Yeah. Well ... (dismissively waves his hand)

Blake drops moves to him.

BLAKE

I'm serious here. I don't think you know how much you're messing things up for everyone. Especially for me.

ROBERT

For *you*?

BLAKE

Jesus, Robert ... I've been working at this a long time. ... since I was a kid. And it hasn't been easy like it was for you . You never had to fight for it when you first started out, not like the rest of us. Clawing at anything, anywhere, looking for a crack in the system to squeeze through -- a line here, three lines there, hoping someone will see you and think you've got talent and put you in something else.

ROBERT

I got lucky, I know. Got *Cool Hand Luke* with Newman right out of the gate.

BLAKE

Right! And it made you. All doors open after that. Well ... you're my Paul Newman. This is my *Cool Hand*. But if *Hunter's Moon* sucks -- or worse, folds -- the stain will stick with me forever. I'll lose it all--

ROBERT

It's not going to fold.

BLAKE

It sure feels like it. Everybody's on edge. Ridley, the crew. Everybody. You're moping around the set like a kicked puppy... phoning it in ...

ROBERT

Phoning it in?! I'm not phon--

BLAKE

You are! I'm sorry, but you are. And I can feel all the eyes on *me*, Robert. I feel like they're blaming *me* for all this. "The Girlfriend That Fucked Up *Hunter's Moon*" --

ROBERT

Blake, no--

BLAKE

(sits next to him)

And it's not even *me*. You're not in this store every day chasing *me*. Now Ari's here, watching *every* move anybody makes, like some kind of Mother Superior Godfather or something. Jesus. It's totally fucked up.

(a sob catches in her throat)

All I ever wanted to do was be in the movies ...

Robert looks at her, reaches out for her.

ROBERT

Blake, darling--

Blake stands quickly.

BLAKE

I'm not blind, Robert. I can see the way you look at her. And I know what this is between us. Happens all the time, right? A little "show-mance" during the shoot? Then production's over, and suddenly there doesn't seem to be time for each other anymore, and the next thing you know, I'm just a footnote in your memoirs--

ROBERT

I would never--

BLAKE

I guess we're both getting something out of it, though, right? I got a shot in a big movie, you get ... (she indicates herself head to toe) ... *this*. Fair trade, I suppose.

But I tell you one thing: if you screw this movie up for everyone -- for *me* -- it won't be fair anymore, you know?

Blake turns for the door, then stops and looks back at him.

BLAKE

You're not a bad guy underneath it all, Robert. And I like you, I really do. But you need to get your head on straight, 'cause if you don't, you're going to screw things up for a whole lot of people who don't deserve it ... (she turns and moves to the door) ... I'll be in the car. I'd appreciate it if we weren't late to the set again.

Blake exits. Robert watches her go, then sighs heavily.

John enters. Robert thinks it's Blake, but then sees it's not.

JOHN

Miss Hawthorne says we're leaving.

ROBERT

Better we give her a little space, John.

(long beat, as JRobert rises)

Let me ask you something. Is it true? Are people saying I'm screwing things up on the set?

John shrugs.

JOHN

I'm probably not the right guy to ask, Mr. Grey ... it's my first big studio gig, you know, and--

ROBERT

And the magic still obscures the blemishes.

JOHN

I guess.

ROBERT

So I haven't soured you on the movie business, then?

JOHN

Not at all. I'd like to direct, actually.

ROBERT

Better get used to this shit, then. (beat) Direct, huh? Films? TV?

JOHN

Any of it. I've always wanted to direct. Went to NYU for it, so ...

ROBERT

Then why not get on Ridley's staff? Second Unit Third Assistant AD or something.

JOHN

No openings. But they said I could take the Assistant thing on the Production side. A glorified go-fer, really. But I figured why not? It's cool. I'm learning things.

ROBERT

That's how it happens, I guess.

JOHN

What's that?

ROBERT

Life. One small, insignificant thing ... even one degree of difference ... whether we mean it or not or notice it or not ... and the path is changed forever.

JOHN

Not sure I follow --

ROBERT

You aim for something, but circumstance moves the compass needle. You go somewhere you never meant to. Like you. You wanted to direct, but now you're producing. It might seem a small step right now, but who knows down the road? One degree becomes a hundred and eighty in a heartbeat.

JOHN

Not sure it matters to me.

ROBERT

Maybe not now. But someday. If you don't pay attention. If you let life take you instead of you taking it.

JOHN

It always takes you, doesn't it? And nothing's ever set in stone, the way I see it.

ROBERT

No?

JOHN

"Every minute that passes ...

ROBERT AND JOHN

... is a chance to turn it all around."

JOHN

Right!

ROBERT

Where do I know that ...?

JOHN

Vanilla Sky. The climatic line in the movie. You see it?

ROBERT

I read the script...

JOHN

Cool movie. So ... anyway ... I figure I'll be happy wherever I end up.

ROBERT

And if you're not?

JOHN

(smiling)

"Every minute ..."

ROBERT

(a bit distracted)

Yeah. "Every minute ..."

Beat, then John rises.

JOHN
Speaking of which...
...we should probably...
(points to watch)

ROBERT
Right.

JOHN
I'll wait for you in the car.

ROBERT
Be right there.

John exits.

Robert gazes at one of Sam's paintings a moment, then turns and exits.

BLACKOUT.

ACT TWO, SCENE FOUR

Night. It's dark. Maggie is closing up, putting the day's receipts in a bank bag.

The front door bell dings, scaring her. Robert enters.

MAGGIE
Whoa! Kinda scared me there.

ROBERT
Sorry, Maggie. Didn't mean to.

MAGGIE
You're out a bit late.

ROBERT

Couldn't sleep. My mind won't turn off. Thought a walk would help. Just sort of ended up here.

MAGGIE

Well, you just caught me closing up. You need something? Some Zinger, maybe?

ROBERT

Any of that Walker Red back there?

MAGGIE

Uh ... sure, I think so. Let me get the lights here..

ROBERT

Leave them off, if you don't mind.

MAGGIE

Sure.

ROBERT

Not feeling all that bright tonight.

As she gets the bottle from behind the counter,
Robert slumps into one of the stove chairs.

Maggie brings the half-pint to Robert.

MAGGIE

Thought you gave this up.

ROBERT

How about tonight we just consider it medicinal.

He takes a long pull on the bottle.

MAGGIE

(indicating the bottle)

Feel like sharing?

ROBERT

Well, technically, it's still yours. I haven't paid you yet.

They laugh. Maggie takes a pull on the bottle, hands it back to Robert. She shivers.

MAGGIE

Ooh. Hot in the belly.

ROBERT

I've always thought it felt friendly. Especially when things are cold, you know?

MAGGIE

Uh-huh. (she eyes him knowingly) They cold right now, are they?

He looks at her a beat.

ROBERT

Yeah, Maggie. They are.

He takes another long pull on the pint.

ROBERT

Can I ask you something? Just between us?

MAGGIE

Shoot.

ROBERT

Nancy. You think she's happy here?

MAGGIE

I think she's found balance.

ROBERT

You think that's enough?

MAGGIE

For her that might be all there is right now.

ROBERT

But could there be more? Is it possible to find your way back ... to something ... more.

MAGGIE

We're not really talking about Nancy here, are we?

Robert looks at her, then smiles. She's sharper than he figured.

ROBERT

No. Well, yes and no. I'm beginning to think it's all mixed up together...

MAGGIE

I'll tell you how I feel about it, for what it's worth. I think we have to negotiate with life every day. It's always asking for compromises. I think Nancy's learned that. I don't believe we end up anywhere we shouldn't be if we're paying attention.

ROBERT

This where you figure you should be? In a little general store in tiny Gilead, Maine?

MAGGIE

(laughs)

Me? You'll laugh. I've got an MBA, if you can believe that. Wanted to run a big corporation, make the beaucoup bucks, lord it over a lot of people. But I learned quickly that I'm built on a simpler chassis. The day I gave it up, I met Sam. And here we are.

ROBERT

No regrets?

MAGGIE

None. We end up where we are for a reason, I figure. Takes a bit longer for some -- sometimes years -- with some side roads here and there, but eventually, I think we get to where we should be. I think it's up to us to decide what to do with things once we arrive wherever it is. That's the trick.

ROBERT

What if the bag of tricks feels empty?

MAGGIE

I guess that's where character comes in.

ROBERT

Character.

MAGGIE

Mm-hmm. You've played a lot of great men in your movies. Even the flawed ones have had character, otherwise we in the audience wouldn't cheer for them, right? I mean, you've built those men out of nothing but words on a page. You know how to find it.

ROBERT

Not sure its the same thing.

MAGGIE

What's that old saying? "If you want to be a thing, act that thing."

ROBERT

That may be true on a movie set, Maggie, but in real life, I'm beginning to believe it's not that easy.

MAGGIE

Maybe not. But "easy" can't be the criteria. Since you asked about Nancy, I'll tell you this: there are a lot of women in that shelter right now who wouldn't be healing if she hadn't gone through the hell she did and learned what she had to. Yeah, life was tough on her, but there's real character there, and it got her through. It might not be what she wanted to do, but there are a lot of people sure glad she's doing what she's doing and not something else. We should all be so lucky to have that kind of impact.

Robert offers the pint to Maggie, who declines.
Then she slaps Robert's knee and stands.

MAGGIE

Time for me to get upstairs. Sam'll be wondering where I am. Wait'll I tell him I was snuggled up to Robert Grey, drinking whiskey in the dark.

Maggie laughs and moves toward the back area.

MAGGIE

Turn the switch on the doorknob. It'll lock when you leave. Goodnight.

ROBERT

Maggie...

She stops and turns to him.

ROBERT

Thanks.

MAGGIE

That's what friends are for, right? You're creative, Robert. What would a guy like you do in your situation in one of your films? If he had a lot of character, I mean.

Maggie exits.

ROBERT

Good question.

He takes another long pull on the pint, thinks a moment. Then he puts the cap back on the pint, sets it aside. A moment later he pulls out his cell phone and looks at it. He looks at his watch.

ROBERT

What the hell.

He flips through his contacts, finds what he's looking for and punches the call. A beat ... maybe two.

ROBERT

Yes. Paramount? Sidney Olbermann, please. It's Robert Grey calling ... Robert Grey ... Yes, *that* Robert Grey ... I know it's after hours, but it's very important ... Well, can you patch me through to his home or his mobile? I think he'll want to talk to me. ... Yes, it's *very* important ... You might say it's an emergency ... Yes, I'll wait.

Robert stands quietly. He runs his hand through his hair. He looks out the window. He puts his head down, phone to his ear, hand on his hip. Then...

ROBERT

Sidney!... Yes, it's Bob Grey ... Yes ... Fine, fine. Thanks for taking the call. I hope I'm not catching you at a bad time ... Oh, good, good. Listen, you somewhere you can take a minute? I have something I'd like to talk with ... to ... you about.

BLACKOUT.

ACT TWO, SCENE FIVE

The store. Sam sits in a chair by the stove, sketching with pastels on an artist's pad. Maggie enters from the back of the store with a large carton of Depends XL, drops them on the counter.

MAGGIE

Is there any reason we have fifteen cartons of these things sitting in the back room?

SAM

(looking up)

Oh, jeez. I meant to ask you about those last week. Did you get a special order or something?

MAGGIE

I didn't order them.

SAM

Then who did?

MAGGIE

Did you bother to look at the Bill of Lading?

She shows it to him.

SAM

Sure. Gilead General ... *Hospital*. Oh, jeez. How did I miss that?

MAGGIE

Pretty easily, looks like.

(she puts box under counter)

You scared me, Sam. I thought you weren't telling me something.

SAM

Well, in my defense, it was right when the movie stars showed up and I --

The front door bell dings, and Robert enters. He's bright and animated.

SAM

Speak of the Devil ... morning, Robert.

ROBERT

(in somewhat high spirits)

Morning! But you know, I never played the Devil, Sam. God, Judas, an Egyptian pharaoh, an alien king, several bad guys with hearts of gold, and a priest more than once, but never the Devil. Think I'm evil enough for it?

MAGGIE

You can be whatever you want to be, I'm sure. Red Zinger?

ROBERT

That would be great. Thanks, Maggie.

MAGGIE

No filming today?

ROBERT

Oh, they're shooting. Not far from here, actually.

SAM

Didn't need you, huh?

ROBERT

Oh, no. They were expecting me an hour ago. So I suspect we'll be having visitors any time now. Nancy around, by any chance?

MAGGIE

Supposed to be in a little after noon. I'll get that tea.

She exits to the back.

Robert settles into one of the stove chairs,
notices the easel and painting.

ROBERT

(pointing)

What's this?

Sam comes around the counter to Robert.

SAM

Oh! Well ... our chat the other day started an itch, I guess. That's me scratching it a little.

ROBERT

That's great, Sam.

SAM

Recognize it? That's a Hunter's Moon. From your movie

ROBERT

No kidding.

SAM

You know about 'em, right? Early settlers used to hunt at night by them. The light was so bright they could see things in the fields that were normally hidden.

ROBERT

Kind of appropriate.

SAM

Thought it might be. Not expecting too much, but ... we'll see.

ROBERT

Wish I could stick around to see how it turns out.

SAM

You're leaving soon, are you?

ROBERT

Today, actually.

SAM

Today?!

ROBERT

Flying out of Portland at four this afternoon.

Maggie enters with a mug of tea.

SAM

Robert's leaving today, Maggie. Our time with the stars is about over.

MAGGIE

(handing Robert the tea, moaning with
disappointment)

Oh-h-h, really? We didn't get our movie night in.

ROBERT

Sorry about that, Maggie. Couldn't be helped. But I'll need to come back for a scene or two in a couple of weeks. Or better yet -- why don't you two come to the premiere when *Hunter's Moon* opens in New York? You can be my guests.

MAGGIE

The premiere!? Oh, my God, Sam! A premiere! Oh, jeez ... what'll I wear? And my hair ... I'll have to --

At that moment, the front door opens and Ari
stomps in, followed closely by Blake and John.

Ari sees Robert, flings a finger at him.

ARI

There he is!

(striding to Robert, standing over him)

What the hell have you done?!

ROBERT

(calmly)

Hi, Ari. Cup of tea?

ARI

You can't do this! This is the stupidest thing I've ever heard!

ROBERT

Calm down, Ari. You'll give yourself a heart attack.

BLAKE

(to Robert)

He's been like this for the last hour. What's he talking about?

ARI

Calm down, he says. How am I supposed to deal with *this*, now?

BLAKE
(looks to Ari)

What?

ARI
(to Robert)

Tell her.

BLAKE

What?

ARI

Tell her, Bobby. The words won't come out of my mouth.

Ari turns away and paces. Robert pats the chair next to him.

ROBERT
(to Blake)

Sit with me.

(to Maggie)

You have another cup of tea for Blake, Maggie?

MAGGIE

Absolutely.

She turns to go, but ...

BLAKE

I don't want any, thanks.

(to Robert, very concerned)

What's going on? Is *Hunter's Moon* cancelled? Am I fired--?

ROBERT

You're fine. Everybody's fine.

BLAKE

Then what --?

ROBERT

It's just me. *I'm* leaving the film.

ARI

Ridiculous!

BLAKE

You're *leaving*? How can we finish it without --?

ROBERT

You're going to finish it, Blake. It's going to be *your* film now.

BLAKE

(taken aback)

What?

ARI

He bought the film! Can you believe this? And those *putzes* at Paramount let him!

ROBERT

(to Ari)

I thought you wanted *me* to tell her...

BLAKE

Somebody tell me!

Robert takes her hand.

ROBERT

Ari's basically right. But I didn't really *buy* the film. I took a financial interest in it--

ARI

Controlling interest ...

ROBERT

I *invested* in it. Enough to have final say. Basically I'm exec-producing it now.

ARI

Producer!

(to Robert)

You're an *actor*, Bobby! You should be happy with that! Producer! A gambler, maybe!

(to Blake)

A seventy million dollar bet he's made. Without talking to *me*!

BLAKE

When? When did you --?

ROBERT

Last night. I thought about what you said the other day and realized you were right.

(looks up at Maggie)

And I talked to a good friend who suggested I think and act “creatively”. So I picked up the phone and called Olbermann at Paramount.

(he looks hard at Ari)

We talked ...

(back to Blake)

... He listened.

BLAKE

Talked to him about what?

ROBERT

I told him I wasn't happy and felt I wasn't doing a decent job with the film but that I thought there might be another way to go with it and I'd be willing to back it financially if he'd make the changes I had in mind. We made a deal.

ARI

He's the big deal maker, now...

BLAKE

What other way?

ROBERT

I told him I believed in the story -- or *part* of it, anyway. *Your* part.

BLAKE

My part?

ARI

Such a gamble, Bobby ...

ROBERT

(to Ari)

I don't think so, Ari.

(looks at Blake)

I think we might make a so-so movie into a real winner. With a new star on top of it.

BLAKE

What are you talking about? How--?

ROBERT

With a little rewriting -- which is already being done -- they're going to focus the story on you. My character is going to die in the plane crash instead of surviving with yours, leaving your character-- and *only* you -- on screen for the bulk of the film: "The heroic young woman who finds her inner strength while overcoming the insurmountable odds of surviving a violent and unforgiving wilderness". Like that Tom Hanks *Castaway* thing, or DiCaprio in *Revenant*. Both got Oscar nods, you know.

BLAKE

You're kidding.

ROBERT

It's all yours, beautiful. In gorgeous thirty-five millimeter Panavision widescreen. It's a starmaker role.

BLAKE

Oh, my God! I can't believe this is happening!

ARI

Oh, it's happening! Believe me, I tried. But when I called, Olbermann was --

ROBERT

On the golf course?

ARI

(softening a bit)

Twelfth hole.

Robert laughs. Blake jumps into him, throwing her arms around his neck in a bear hug.

BLAKE

Oh, Bobby! I can't believe it! Thank you! Thank you *so much!*

(she sits back and looks at him seriously)

You'll still be around, though, right? If I need some advice or --

ROBERT

All the way to the ocean, darling.

(looking up at Maggie)

All the way to the ocean.

Maggie chokes up, recognizing the line.

MAGGIE

(dabbing her eyes with her sleeve)

Oh, my God ... *River of Life!*

John's phone chirps. He touches it on.

JOHN

John Hunt ... Yessir, they're here ... (long listen) ... Okay... Okay ... Got it Yes, right away... Yes ... Yes, I'll tell her....yes, I will.

He touches off the call.

ROBERT

That sounded like a Ridley call.

JOHN

(to Robert)

It was, but not for you...

John turns to Blake.

(to Blake)

Sorry, Miss Hawthorne. Ridley's at the production office. He wants to see you as soon as possible, to talk about the new script. And makeup and wardrobe want some time with you too. And ... (remembering the long list) ... Paramount is sending someone over with a new contract. And ... a writer from *Star Magazine* wants a few minutes this afternoon. *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* too. There's a couple other things. But I'm to get you over to the office right now.

Robert looks at Blake.

ROBERT

(to Blake)

And so it begins. Welcome to the A-list, Blake.

Blake hugs Robert again, then kisses him gently on the lips and looks into his eyes and smiles.

BLAKE

Guess I shouldn't do that, huh? You're my boss now, you know.

(beat)

Hope I live up to all this.

ROBERT

You'll be fine. You're ready. I'll come over and get things started with you.

Blake smiles at him again, then jumps up, grabs her coat, and heads for the door.

BLAKE

Ready to go, John?

JOHN

With pleasure, Miss Hawthorne.

Blake turns to Maggie and Sam.

BLAKE

Bye, Maggie, Sam. See you again soon, I hope.

Blake and John move toward the door, grabbing their coats. Ari looks at them a second, then moves to Robert.

ARI

Hope you know what you're doing.

ROBERT

We'll see, won't we?

ARI

We're okay? You and me?

ROBERT

Been with you too long to make any changes now, Ari. Yeah, we're fine.

ARI

Good.

(he puts his hand on Robert's shoulder)

But just so we're clear ... actor, producer, no difference. It's still fifteen percent off the top.

ROBERT

(laughing)

I figured as much.

Ari turns to see Blake and John exiting. He quickly runs after them.

ARI

(as he exits)

Blake! Darling! We should talk. You're going to need some serious representation here. Trust me. These things I now. There are serpents out there. Serpents!

And they're gone.

Robert laughs, shakes his head. Maggie moves to him, takes his hand.

MAGGIE

That was real nice of you.

ROBERT

Playing against type?

MAGGIE

Maybe. But I like the character.

They laugh.

MAGGIE

So ... What about you?

ROBERT

Maggie, I honestly have no idea. For the first time in a long time, I feel like a man with nothing but open road in front of him.

SAM

Feeling an itch you're thinking about scratching, are you?

ROBERT

(smiling)

Yeah, Sam. Kinda like that. Not sure how to go about scratching it, though. But maybe shifting to this producing thing ... helping people like Blake get the shot they deserve. I could enjoy that, I think.

SAM

Looks like you've already started.

ROBERT

Or maybe I started thirty-five years ago, and I just finally got here.

MAGGIE

There you go.

Robert smiles and shrugs, then kisses Maggie's hand and shakes Sam's.

ROBERT

Thank you both. For everything. See you in a couple of weeks.

Robert moves for the door.

MAGGIE

What should we tell Nancy?

ROBERT

(thinking a moment)

Tell her ... Tell her I think she was right.

MAGGIE

About what?

ROBERT

(smiling)

Validation.

(off Maggie's quizzical look)

She'll understand.

As he says this, the door bell tinkles. Nancy enters.

MAGGIE

Well. Just in time.

NANCY

For what?

MAGGIE

To say goodbye. Robert's leaving.

NANCY

Due on the movie set?

SAM

No. *Leaving* leaving. Our moment in the spotlight's over.

NANCY

Really? The movie done?

ROBERT

No, but my part is.

NANCY

Oh. Well, that's good, I guess.

ROBERT

Might be.

An awkward moment of silence. Then Maggie taps Sam's arm.

MAGGIE

I could use a hand in the back with that thing, Sam.

SAM

I'll be there in a minute ... want to--

MAGGIE

(firmly)

In the back, Sam. That thing.

SAM

Oh. Yeah. Sure.

(to Robert)

Nice meeting you. See you at that premiere.

ROBERT

Absolutely.

Sam and Maggie exit to the back of the store.

NANCY

So. How do they say it in the movies? That's a wrap?

ROBERT

(smiles a laugh)

Yup. Have a plane to catch in Portland in a couple of hours.

NANCY

Wow. Cutting it a little close. That's a ninety minute drive.

ROBERT

It's Paramount's private jet. They'll wait.

NANCY

Must be nice.

ROBERT

Being Robert Grey has its perks.

Nancy leans on the counter, arms crossed.

NANCY

Back to Tinseltown?

ROBERT

(beat)

At first ... a little business to attend to. But after that ...

(he shrugs)

NANCY

She going with you?

ROBERT

No. Blake's staying another couple of weeks, finish this part of the film. Then I think they're heading to New York for a few weeks of additional scenes. Got a new script they're working from.

NANCY

Uh-huh. So ... how does that work out? Cross-continental relationships can be tough ...

ROBERT

Well, things have changed on that front. Need to establish a more professional dynamic, under the new circumstances.

NANCY

Mm-hmm. She okay with that?

ROBERT

She's fine. Blake has more important things to focus on now than me.

NANCY

And you?

Robert looks at her, then around the room, then back to her.

ROBERT

How'd you like to take a ride in a Lear jet?

NANCY

Excuse me?

ROBERT

They're pretty cool. Big comfy chairs, champagne and caviar ...

NANCY

Not a big fan of caviar.

ROBERT

Peanut butter and jelly, then.

NANCY

You're not serious.

As if on cue, his tone gets deadly serious.

ROBERT

I'm asking you to come with me, Nancy.

Her mouth opens to say something, though no words come, but her head is shaking "no".

ROBERT

Don't say no yet. Hear me out.

(beat)

I was reminded recently of a line from a movie that's stuck with me: "Every minute that passes is a chance to turn it all around." Such a simple thought. So simple, in fact, we don't allow ourselves to believe it's possible to *do* just that. We come up with as many excuses as we need to deflect the thought in the moment, to push it away, to bury it. It's safer to stay where we are because we've managed to achieve some kind of balance there. We're breathing ... maybe not as deeply as we might or we'd like to, but at least we're somewhat functional, if immobile.

(beat)

But how much of that inertia is just fear?

(beat)

Look, I know I can't go back to the way it was. Once innocence is lost, it can't be regained. But maybe we can get *essence* back, you and me. Maybe we can retrieve the *spirit*, retouch the *marrow* of it. You may never write a Pulitzer-winning novel. But the conversations you've had with those women in that shelter has changed their lives, like a Pulitzer novel might. And I'll never be a surgeon ... I know that. But I know how to repair a bad script and make a movie work better. Maybe all that's happened through all the years, between then and now-- to you and to me-- only served to bring us here, to this moment, and will eventually fade as we trace out new steps ... be replaced with whatever it is we can share from here on out. "Every minute that passes..."

Robert's words drift off. He looks at Nancy.

ROBERT

So ... If I say ... come with me ... right now ... will you?

Nancy's arms tighten around herself.

NANCY

Aw, Bobby ... I told you ... that's not possible.

ROBERT

Anything's possible. You just have to want --

NANCY

My energy doesn't sync with the larger world anymore.

ROBERT

We'll find a smaller one.

NANCY

I'll lose myself again. I know it.

ROBERT

You wouldn't be alone this time.

She looks up at him.

NANCY

I'm always alone.

ROBERT

You don't have to be.

NANCY

This is the only place in thirty-five years I've felt safe. I don't think ... I can't ... leave.

ROBERT

Then I'll stay here.

NANCY

No. There are too many people out there that depend on you. You're an industry now, like it or not.

ROBERT

I could give it all --

NANCY

I would never ask you to do that.

ROBERT

But what if I could? Would you have me back?

NANCY

Bobby ... please. Don't put this on me. Not again. I barely trust myself every day. I can't be responsible for you too.

(beat)

This is just ... not ... Please. Understand. Can you?

His eyes hang with hers a moment. There is palpable understanding and acceptance in their gaze. Then his eyes drop to the floor and he slowly nods his head.

A beat later, her arms unfold from her body. She takes a tentative step toward Robert, reaches out slowly and takes his hand and puts it on her heart.

NANCY

(quietly, almost a whisper)

You have always been right here. You always will be, no matter where you are. Can that be enough?

ROBERT

I don't--

Nancy reaches out with her free hand and touches a finger to his lips to silence him.

Robert looks at her a moment, then gently puts his arms around Nancy. They stand quietly in a hug for several beats, then Robert separates, though he still holds her hand. He begins to back away, his eyes on hers, their arms stretching until their fingers finally separate.

Then Robert abruptly turns to the door and walks straight out.

Nancy looks at the empty doorway for several beats, then she falls back against the counter, her shoulders beginning to shake, her hands move to her eyes as she begins to sob.

She cries silently for several beats before the door bell dings. Nancy quickly wipes her eyes and looks up, expecting a customer, her arms wrapped tightly around herself.

Robert is standing there. He looks at her several beats, then he slowly raises a hand, opens it to her. Nancy stares at him a long beat, then unwinds her arms from her body and looks back at him.

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY