

PAUL. No. I want to go out and have a great time with Ben and Janice and Phil.

SUSAN. All right. We'll talk about it now. What are we going to do?

PAUL. I don't know.

SUSAN. Well, we're going to have to do something, aren't we?

PAUL. Like a divorce, you mean?

SUSAN. Is that what you want?

PAUL. Do you?

SUSAN. Well, I hadn't exactly been thinking about it a whole lot. Not today. Are you serious?

PAUL. Isn't that what's going on here? Can you think of anything else we could do?

SUSAN. Well, well, happy birthday.

PAUL. I meant it to hurt, Susan.

SUSAN. Yes. We'll call a lawyer in the morning.

PAUL. Lawyer? (Pause.) O.K.

SUSAN. Fine.

PAUL. Jesus. (*Plane flies over. They look at each other. Backcut.*) **END**

## SCENE 8

*Slide: 1979. The cabin, winter, snow outside. Early evening. Open pot-belly stove with fire. Old couch with crocheted-square afghan covering it. PAUL and SUSAN wrapped in blankets, naked beneath. PAUL sits on couch. SUSAN showing slides on wall from projector with a carousel. Slide of DOUG and MARAYA and three children standing proudly in front of construction firm's office building. Then the carousel is at an end leaving white square on wall.*

PAUL. Wait a minute. Go back. Let me see the last

one again. (SUSAN backs up to DOUG and MARAYA and family.) DOUG and MARAYA. He shaved off his beard.

SUSAN. Yeah, a couple of months ago. That's his office. I used it for background on a job. (*Turns the lights on.*) I think he's a little upset you haven't been in touch.

PAUL. It's the first time I've been back east.

SUSAN. You could've called. Written a letter.

PAUL. Hey.

SUSAN. What?

PAUL. This is real nice. I'd sort of forgotten. Well, I hadn't forgotten, but I hadn't remembered with total accuracy if you know what I mean.

SUSAN. I think I know what you mean.

PAUL. So you actually went and bought this place.

SUSAN. Yeah, nostalgia. I got a good deal. The Pearsons let me have it cheap because we'd been married here. They're sentimental.

PAUL. Opportunist.

SUSAN. How come you haven't been in touch with anyone? Selina was asking about you. Gary and Linda. Even Lawrence. You hiding in San Francisco?

PAUL. No, I just . . . it didn't feel real until the divorce came through. I don't know. I just didn't want to think about all that.

SUSAN. Who's Edie?

PAUL. Edie? (SUSAN exits into bedroom, keeps talking.)

SUSAN. (Off.) Yeah. I called you in San Francisco a couple months ago and someone called Edie answered the phone.

PAUL. Oh. She never said anything.

SUSAN. (Off.) What?

PAUL. I said she never said anything.

SUSAN. (Off.) I didn't tell her who I was.

PAUL. More secrets, huh.

PAUL. Well, if it would then what the hell is it we have, that's so great?

SUSAN. Oh, so now we have nothing . . .

PAUL. Well tell me, Susan, what do we have? Tell me what we have . . .

SUSAN. Everything you've done. Everything I've done. Everything we've got. It's all nothing? None of it means anything to you? My god, Paul, how you must be suffering.

PAUL. We really hate each other, don't we?

SUSAN. Babe, I don't hate you. I just don't understand why we always make everything so complicated for each other. Hasn't this been a good time? I mean, I was under the impression we were more or less happy. In fact, I was even thinking if Greg and Francine get divorced we'll be the longest couple of all our friends.

PAUL. Except for Doug and Maraya.

SUSAN. That doesn't count. They're not married.

~~PAUL. What?~~

PAUL. ~~What?~~

~~Susan. I'm smoking. (They smile.)~~

PAUL. I don't know what it is, Susan. I mean, yes, I want all this. Sometimes. Sometimes I'm really amazed it's me that's doing all this. There's been whole weeks when I went around thinking, "hey, this is a pretty good deal. I'm happy." I mean, this is it, right? This must be it. I must be happy. But then one day I'll come home, I'll go in there and try to get comfortable, read or something and for some reason I just can't concentrate. Try to watch TV, can't even manage that. So I start walking around the apartment and I see all the stuff we have. All this stuff. And I start thinking about what we do to get it. You pick up a little box and go click. I tape together pieces of film. Presto. We have everything we want. We're so

good at doing these little things that make us able to have all this stuff, but we can't get it together to have one stupid little baby. Us. The two of us. Together. Doesn't that ever seem strange to you? You know, sort of intuitively wrong? Absurd. Something like that?

SUSAN. No, Paul. I'm sorry, it doesn't. The only thing I find strange is the way I keep feeling like I have to have a baby to be enough for you. I mean, what if I decide a baby isn't as important to me as a lot of other things? What happens if I decide that all I want is you? And our life together? And our work? I mean, couldn't that be enough? Paul. (Pause.) Paul. Paul, answer me. Am I enough for you without a baby? (Pause.) I see. And you wanted to know why I couldn't tell you.

PAUL. I don't know. I don't know. Why didn't you say something before this?

SUSAN. Maybe I didn't want to know what I just found out. Well, Paul, I'm sorry. I'm sorry you feel so badly about your accomplishments because I'm feeling pretty good about mine and I can't see any reason why I shouldn't. Doug starts doing well, you laugh about it. You think it's funny. You do well and suddenly it's wrong. I don't get it. You can't have it all ways, babe. We're not children any more. You have what you have. If you want it, keep it and stop making excuses for it. And if you want to be a saint, go back and dig outhouses for the Ngilele.

PAUL. Oh boy.

SUSAN. What?

PAUL. We're in a lot of trouble, aren't we?

SUSAN. I guess we are.

PAUL. So now what?

SUSAN. I don't know. Should we be talking about this now?

Susan. I don't know anything else. I didn't mean not to tell you.

PAUL. That's very illuminating. That really makes me feel like this is something we can work out. I mean what are we, Susan? Remind me because it's getting kind of vague in my mind. Are we married? Something like that? Is there some kind of unique relationship here? Something that might be worth looking into? Are you saying you didn't tell me because it isn't an interesting fact, or it's just not a very important thing for me to know about? Or it's an unpleasant topic of conversation or it's none of my business? I mean, what is this shit???

Susan. Stop it . . .

PAUL. SUSAN!!!!

~~BEN. (Appears on terrace.) Hey, is everything.~~

~~PAUL. GET OFF!!!~~

~~BEN. I'm just inside if . . .~~

~~PAUL. GET THE FUCK OFF OF HERET!!! (BEN ~~sees~~ ~~glances~~ It hurts, Susan. It just hurts. All this silence between us. All this unknown stuff. You know how much I want a kid. You know that. I mean what've I been doing for the past three years? Running my ass off building up a business—working twelve hours a day? Am I supposed to have been doing that for the deep satisfaction it gave me? Do you think I'm a mental defective or something? I mean at very worst, I thought this was all some kind of weird test I was going through—some bizarre nest-building ritual to prove I was worthy of fertilizing your eggs. That was the only way I could look at it and still feel marginally sane.~~

Susan. I don't believe this. Are you saying you did everything you did so I'd let you make a baby? Is that what you're saying? Because if it is . . . well,

nice to know what you're keeping me around for. Thank you.

PAUL. Susan, you know that's not what I meant.

Susan. All I know is it's a pretty shitty thing to lay on me. Nobody forced you to do anything you didn't want to do. So what's this thing like it's all been some kind of terrible ordeal? Jesus, Paul, what's the matter with you? You are allowed to enjoy it, you know. There's no law that says you have to feel terrible about it. You earned it, for god sake. You deserve it. And I'm proud of you, babe. I really am. I just want to see you be happy with it.

PAUL. Ah, so that's why you had the abortion. That's why you didn't tell me—because you wanted me to be happy. You were doing it all for me. Gee, why didn't I see it that way? We really are wonderful people, aren't we Susan? We just do everything for each other.

Susan. All right. I didn't tell you. I was wrong—mea culpa. What can I say, Paul? I'm sorry? Because I am. But that doesn't have very much to do with anything right now, does it?

PAUL. But why? Why?

Susan. Babe, you don't get a whole lot of time to think about what you should do when there's this thing growing inside you. And it's not getting smaller. And the more you think things over the less small it's getting. It's not like I just popped down to the friendly neighborhood abortionist. I did think it over just a little bit before I went through with it.

PAUL. But why didn't you say anything?

Susan. (Quietly) Paul, I like what we have. I guess I just don't want anything to change it all.

PAUL. And telling me would have changed it all.

Susan. I don't know. Wouldn't it?

like a museum and the lady that shows you around says things like "Now here's an unusual little figurine . . . very rare T'ang Dynasty, perhaps you'd like me to take it out for you." I mean, that's what I call shopping. Do you like it? (*Susan holds up figurine of a horse. It has a space in its back.*)

Susan. It's beautiful.

Pavv. Isn't it nice? Genuine Ming Dynasty. There's only about twenty of them in the world. That's what the lady said. They were only for the royal family. That's why I thought it was a nice idea. What they'd do is if the Emperor had a son that died before he was old enough to rule they'd cremate the body and put the ashes in that hole in the back and then they'd bury the whole works. I guess that's why they're so rare. But listen to this. This is the great part. It's shaped like a horse because they had this belief that the horse would take the child's spirit on a ride where it'd see its whole life passing by . . . the life it would have had if it hadn't died. And that way it could go to its final resting place in peace. At least that's what the lady explained.

~~Ben. Jesus, guy, this must've set you back a few pennies.~~

Pavv. ~~Oh yeah. But like I said-~~ I wanted to get something really special and I think I got a pretty good deal. They were asking ninety-seven thousand, but I got 'em down to ninety-three. Not bad.

~~Ben. A steal at twice the price. (They're still in a hurry.)~~

Pavv. Still, I had to sell the business, all the editing machines, the office equipment, the lease on the building and I had to cash in my stocks and take out all my savings, but I finally scraped it all together.

Susan. Paul . . . ?

Pavv. I just thought it was worth it. We need some-

thing in this apartment for all the ashes. The unborn embryos. Isn't that what they do after they take 'em out. Don't they burn 'em, or did you have one of those guys that just pops it in a baggie and into the trash can . . . ?

Susan. Would you leave us alone, please.

Ben. Hey, guy, what is this?

Susan. Just leave us alone. All of you. Please. (*Ben, Phil and Janice exit inside.*)

Pavv. You mean you don't like it after all that?

Susan. Paul, is this for real?

Pavv. Is what for real?

Susan. This. (*Phil comes (he leaves)*)

Pavv. Oh, yes. *That's* for real. . . . I thought you meant the embryo and I was going to ask you about that because it seems to have slipped your mind.

Susan. Is that what this is all about?

Pavv. I just thought it might be worth bringing up.

Susan. Who told you? Selina?

Pavv. Oh, is that what's important? Who told me? It wasn't you, that's for sure. And it's a pretty god damn weird thing to find out about from someone else. That you wife had an abortion six months ago and didn't bother to tell you about it. I guess I must just be one of those naturally curious people because when I found out it made me want to know all kinds of things, Susan. Like just what the fuck has been going on in our life? All these wonderful little human dramas going on under my nose and I didn't know a thing about it. Was it mine?

Susan. Yes.

Pavv. Why didn't you tell me?

Susan. Paul, I don't know. I really don't know. I meant to. I wanted to.

Pavv. I see. Anything else, or is that sort of the full explanation?

with my folks for another day. We've already taken advantage of them.

JANICE. Sweetie, they love taking care of her. They'll spoil her rotten.

PHIL. Well, I guess we could call.

JANICE. We'll stay.

PHIL. Never argue with a lady.

BEN. I'll drink to that. O.K. Now I suggest we open the champagne, cut the cake and embarrass the hell out of Susan by watching her open all her presents.

All in favor say nothing. Motion passed.

PAUL. Ben, you're really great, you know that.

BEN. Aw shucks, guy . . .

PAUL. No, really. I mean how many people would come all the way from England for a birthday? And this is the man who's broken every sales record in the history of Randle and Lane Securities. And, not only that, he's also managed to set up permanent offices in Spain, Greece, Italy, in East Germany. Where else, Ben? Have I missed any? Haven't you managed to break into a few other countries?

BEN. Let's get the presents.

JANICE. Phil, come on.

(BEN exits into apartment. PHIL and JANICE follow.)

PAUL starts out.)

SUSAN. Paul . . .

PAUL. Huh?

SUSAN. Don't do that to Ben. He means well.

PAUL. I have to get the present.

SUSAN. Paul.

PAUL. What?

SUSAN. What's going on?

PAUL. Nothing. (Exits. Jet passes over. SUSAN watches.)

BEN. (Enters with two presents. Gives one to SUSAN.) For you, my dear. Happy birthday.

SUSAN. What's that one?

BEN. Oh, just a little even-Steven, old family custom. Didn't Paul ever tell you about this? We always used to get a little even-Steven when the other one had a birthday. Dad had a theory it would prevent sibling rivalry. So much for that theory.

SUSAN. I'm sorry about the way he's behaving. I don't know what's going on. I really don't.

BEN. I'm used to it. (Pause.) It's a watch.

SUSAN. Good thinking.

(Re-enter PAUL with PHIL and JANICE, bearing gifts.)

BEN. Ah, here it comes. O.K., guy, hand it over and face the music.

PAUL. Me?

BEN. You know what they say about presents—lovers first. Theirs are always the worst. Friends later. Theirs are always greater.

PAUL. Do they say that? I didn't know. Happy birthday. (Gives SUSAN present.)

SUSAN. (Surprised and delighted.) Thank you. (Sees

PAUL)

PAUL. I should explain this, by the way. I thought I'd get something really special this year and . . . there's these places midtown you never hear about. At least, I never did. They're shops, right, stores, like they sell things, but. Like where I found this thing. All they sell there is ancient Chinese treasures and you have to make an appointment to even get in the place. So . . . you're like the only customer. It's incredible. You get inside and you're in a different world. It's completely quiet. You can't hear any sounds from the street and all the stuff is under glass cases

STAY