

CASTLE DRIVE

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based on a true story.

FADE IN:

EXT. 544 CASTLE DRIVE - DAWN

Rain blankets a brick house, where the red and blue lights of a parked ambulance illuminate a crime scene.

SUPER: 544 CASTLE DRIVE, NORTH CAROLINA FEBRUARY 17, 1970

Hazy through the rain, TWO PARAMEDICS roll JEFFERY MACDONALD (26, white) through a crowd of NEIGHBORS and NEWSMEN towards a waiting ambulance.

Sticky with blood and wearing only a pair of blood-soaked blue pajama pants, Jeff thrashes in agony.

INT. JOE'S CAR - DAY

JOE MCGINNISS (37), cigarette dangling from his lips, keeps one hand on the wheel and the other on a map.

His army jacket has a "Vote for Nixon" button on the lapel.

SUPER: HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIFORNIA NINE YEARS LATER

JOE (V.O.)

Bullshit!

EXT. BOB'S BIG BOY/INT. STERLING'S OFFICE - DAY

Outside Bob's Big Boy, Joe smokes and talks on a pay phone to STERLING LORD (59), in his posh New York Office.

JOE

All of them. Every single publisher. They all passed?

STERLING

All the ones that matter.

JOE

You for real?

(incensed)

I'll tell you what matters, Sterling. *President* selling 100,000 copies matters.

(beat)

Topping the New York Times best-seller list matters.

STERLING

That was ten years ago!

JOE
So? *Touch of Evil* came out
seventeen years after *Citizen Kane*.

STERLING
You're not Orson Welles.
(cleansing breath)
Joe, your last two books were
critical AND commercial failures.

Joe holds the phone away so he doesn't have to listen--

STERLING (CONT'D)
And yet, you still think you have
the clout to sell a book about you
daydreaming through Alaska?
(calm and rational)
Look, the columns you've been
writing for the *Examiner* are fun.
Plucky. And people seem to like
them, which is good, because it's
keeping your name out there.
(beat)
But you're either a novelist or a
columnist. You can't be both.

Joe puts the phone back to his ear.

JOE
How bout neither?
(beat)
I'm a journalist.

STERLING
So be a journalist! Get embedded
with the Reagan campaign, and--

JOE
--be thought of as a one-trick
pony. Fuck you, Sterling.

STERLING
You'd rather be a no-trick pony?

JOE
No trick -- wait, is that a threat?
Are you threatening to drop me?

A telling pause before--

STERLING
I need something I can sell.

Joe takes a flask out of his pocket and takes a big swig.

JOE
I can't process ultimatums right
now. I gotta get to Long Beach.

STERLING
Long Beach? Fuck's in Long Beach?

INT. JOE'S CAR - DAY

Joe parks at the base of a gorgeous condominium, clocking a Maserati (vanity plate "JRM-MD") parked out front.

He grabs a travel bottle of mouthwash from the glove compartment and knocks it back like a shot of vodka.

He checks himself in the rearview, then lights a fresh smoke.

He exits, but we stay in the car.

After a beat, Joe doubles back for a SMALL RED NOTEPAD sitting on the passenger seat.

EXT. JEFF'S CONDO - DAY

It's blinding out.

The door opens for--

CANDY KRAMER (20s, all curves). She greets Joe in a white leotard. Joe struggles to maintain eye contact.

CANDY
You must be Joe. I'm Candy. Jeff's
just finishing up. Come on in.

She gestures towards his cigarette.

Joe awkwardly extinguishes it on the sole of his shoe.

INT. JEFF'S CONDO - DAY

Large windows overlook the Pacific Ocean and a docked yacht, christened "Recovery Room".

Rock music plays from behind a closed glass door, where a shirtless Jeff (now 35) is finishing a set of sit-ups in a home gym.

He sees Joe and turns off the music.

Rushing over, Jeff smiles wide and wipes his hand against his shorts before extending it.

Joe shakes it.

JEFF
You're taller than I thought.
Jeffrey MacDonald.

JOE
Joe McGinniss.

They keep their hands locked.

JOE (CONT'D)
Strong grip.

JEFF
Guy comes in for a life-saving
procedure, he wants his surgeon to
have a strong and steady hand.
(they release)
Drink?

JOE
I'd love one.

JEFF
Water or scotch?

JOE
Little early for water.

Jeff laughs and places the order with Candy--

JEFF
One scotch and one water.

Joe immediately feels like he ordered the wrong thing. He
follows Candy's ass to the bar with his eyes.

JEFF (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Nice view, huh?

JOE
Excuse me?

JEFF
The ocean, Joe.

He laughs as he slaps Joe on the back and moves to the
bedroom, leaving Joe in the living room--

JEFF (CONT'D)
Know how many reporters have been
hounding Bernie? Begging for an
interview? I told 'em all to go to
hell. But when Bernie said Joe
McGinniss called--

He rummages around his room.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Man, I got all tingly inside. Like
a virgin on prom night.

Jeff finds what he's looking for and glides back into the living room with a copy of Joe's book, *The Selling of the President*, firmly clutched in both hands, along with a pen.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Forgive me if I'm a bit star-
struck, but -- THE Joe McGinniss --
in my living room? Man.
(holds out a pen)
You mind?

Eyeing the book like a rancid tuna sandwich, Joe takes it and flips through the pages, stopping at his own picture on the back flap -- a younger Joe McGinniss with a promising future.

He pulls his thinning hair to the side, then flips back to the first page and signs it.

He hands it back, and Jeff reads--

JEFF (CONT'D)

To Jeff, Truth never lies. Joe.
(closes the book)
Far out.

Candy comes back with the drinks.

JEFF (CONT'D)

I gotta admit. I was a little
surprised to find out you were
slumming it as a columnist for the
Examiner, though.

JOE

Guest columnist. I'm not--
(beat)
I'm doing a favor for the editor.

Jeff nods, accepting Joe's answer without fully believing it. He raises his water and turns to the bedroom.

JEFF

I'll take mine in the shower. I
know this great place down the road
that serves the best huevos
rancheros this side of the border.

He leaves for the bedroom again.

Joe turns to Candy--

JOE
I'm not a columnist.

INT. JEFF'S CAR - DAY

Jeff (tight shirt, sunglasses, and lots of gold) speeds down the PCH in his Maserati, hyper-focused.

He hugs the turns, in complete control. Meanwhile, Joe clings to the "oh-shit" handle for dear life.

EXT. MEXICAN BISTRO PATIO - DAY

Joe smokes and takes notes in the last few pages of his red notepad, a beer in front of him.

Jeff sits opposite, sipping water, sunglasses still on.

JOE
My editor says half the Long Beach
Police Department'll be at your
fundraiser tonight.
(beat)
Any of them testifying for you as
character witnesses?

JEFF
Oh, yeah. Them. College buddies.
Other doctors. My mom.
(beat)
An avalanche of honorable people,
all swearing under oath that
there's no way in hell I'm the type
of person who could do the things
I'm accused of doing.

JOE
That's a lot to overcome -- if
you're the government.

Joe coughs and rubs his temples, exhausted.

JEFF
(re: Joe's struggles)
We're not in our twenties anymore.
(beat)
Drink half a gallon of water before
bed. After all, a hangover's
nothing more than dehydration.

Jeff takes off his glasses and hooks them into his collar.

JEFF (CONT'D)

But all the water in the world
isn't gonna even out all your other
bad habits.

(beat)

Remind me later to prescribe you a
low dose of Eskatrol. Or
dextroamphetamine. Just until we
get you on a solid diet and
exercise routine.

Joe gives a closed-lip smile and jots *Eskatrol* down in his
notepad next to some bored doodles.

SOPHIA (20s, Hispanic) arrives with their food. Greasy bacon
and sausage for Joe. Huevos rancheros with avocado for Jeff.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Joe, you're gonna love this place.

Sophia smiles as she places the food down. Jeff takes her
hand in a semi-flirtatious way, keeping her at the table.

JEFF (CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

I'd never eaten here before. Walked
by it dozens of times but never
actually stopped in.

(beat)

Then, one day, I'm passing by and I
hear screaming. I rush in to find
Sophia wailing and thrashing around
over her dad's body.

(beat)

Joe, it was straight out of a
telenovela. The passion. The drama.

(squeezes Sophia's hand)

Well, lucky for her dad, I'm as
good a doctor as he is a cocinero.
Now, Sophia never lets me pay. That
right, Sophia?

SOPHIA

Sí, Dr. Jeffé.

Joe looks over the table of food. Jeff releases Sophia, and
she politely leaves them to their meals.

JEFF

Dr. Jeffé. Cute, right? I don't
usually go for Mexicans, but--

Joe stubs out his cigarette, staring at the butt as he talks.

JOE

At the house, you told me you'd
turned down other reporters. Why?

Jeff starts methodically cutting up his eggs.

JEFF

Why what? Why'd I turn 'em down, or
why'd I TELL YOU I turned 'em down?

JOE

Both.

JEFF

Well, I turned 'em down because
those pricks can't be trusted. It's
all "gotcha journalism" now.
Anything to sell a paper.

(beat)

If I sat down with them, all they'd
see is my car. My house. My girl.

(beat)

They'd write that I got away with
murder back in '70, and I'm finally
being brought to justice.

(beat)

That's what they'd write because
that's sexier than the truth. Joe,
it's shameful. The truth has lost
all relevance.

JOE

Okay. So, why'd you tell me?

JEFF

(taking a bite)

Because I wanted you to know.

Joe makes a note of something in his notepad.

Jeff puts his fork down and leans in.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Okay okay okay. Enough foreplay.
Let's start fucking.

(beat)

What do you think about the case?

JOE

Honestly, I don't know enough about
it to have an opinion.

(beat)

I was on my book tour for *President*
in '70, so I was focused on that.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

(eats some bacon)

All I know is that your family was brutally murdered, and you were the lone survivor.

(beat)

Army didn't buy your story about a bunch of Manson wannabes doing it, so they charged you with murder.

(bet)

Then Bernie got you off, and--

Jeff puts his fork up to stop him--

JEFF

I gotta correct you there, Joe. Bernie didn't "get me off". Colonel Rock said himself that the charges were bullshit. So--

JOE

Either way, you got off.

(beat)

And since "Rock" called bullshit before a jury was sworn in, jeopardy didn't attach.

(beat)

So now, here we are, nine years later, and you're about to stand trial for triple murder.

He eats another piece of bacon.

JEFF

But you don't have an opinion.

JOE

Nope. But I don't have an agenda, either. My editor told me about the fundraiser. \$100 a plate? Woof.

(beat)

I thought it'd make for a good column, so I reached out to Bernie. That's it. No "gotcha journalism" here, Dr. Jeffé.

Jeff smirks, nods, and sips his water.

INT. JOE'S CAR - DAY

Joe absentmindedly drives down the PCH, lost in thought, until he nearly slams into the BMW in front of him.

His tires screech as he narrowly avoids the collision.

INT. LOS ANGELES HOTEL - DAY

Joe walks into the hotel with a handful of mail. One piece gives him pause--

MAIL: A COLLECTION LETTER from Pennsylvania.

He's ambushed by the CONCIERGE.

CONCIERGE

Mr. McGinniss. You have a package.

(pause)

And we still need to discuss your bill. You're two months delinquent.

Joe looks up and starts walking towards the elevator.

JOE

Of course. Of course. Not a problem. I'll stop by as soon as I check in on my wife.

CONCIERGE

Yes, but--

Joe slips past another TENANT into an open elevator.

JOE

Have the package brought up, okay?

The doors shut.

ELEVATOR

Joe sighs and massages his forehead with his free hand.

He notices a stain on the otherwise pristine floor.

He looks at the collection letter again before folding it in half and shoving it in his pocket.

He takes out a pack of smokes -- one left.

He lights one up, crumbling the empty pack and dropping it on the floor near the stain.

HOTEL ROOM

Joe's hotel room doubles as an office.

NANCY MCGINNISS (pretty, pregnant) marks up a manuscript on the bed. She lovingly strokes her baby bump.

Smoking, Joe enters.

NANCY

Good fiction should read like non-fiction. This is not good fiction.

Joe finds a half-empty bottle of scotch next to a clean glass. He almost pours himself a drink, but doesn't.

He puts the bottle down and takes the glass to the bathroom.

NANCY (CONT'D)

How'd it go with the murderer?

BATHROOM

He tosses his smoke in the toilet and flushes, then fills the glass with tap water at the sink.

JOE

Interesting guy, once you get past the fact that he's a living, breathing Ken doll.

NANCY (O.S.)

Good.

(beat)

Squeeze a couple of extra columns out of it. We need as many as you can write until someone bites on the Alaska book.

The mention of Alaska gives Joe pause.

HOTEL ROOM

Joe reenters with the water and takes a sip like it's whiskey, drawing an odd look from Nancy.

JOE

What? I'm not in my twenties anymore. MacDonald says I need to stay hydrated.

NANCY

I didn't realize this was an interview AND a physical.

JOE

Back at his place, he fished around his bedroom for a copy of *President* for me to sign?

(beat)

Thing is, the spine was too crisp. He probably bought it this morning.

NANCY

Why? To make you like him?

JOE

That's what I'd do. Good thing I'm
not that easily manipulated.

He takes another sip of water, which draws an "oh, really"
look from Nancy.

The phone RINGS and Joe goes to the desk to answer it.
Meanwhile, Nancy goes back to her manuscript.

JOE (CONT'D)

McGinniss.

STERLING (PHONE)

You owe me another 100 bucks.

JOE

What?

INTERCUT HOTEL ROOM/STERLING'S OFFICE

Sterling multitasks while he talks.

STERLING

The murderer. His lawyer called and
invited you and Nancy to his thing
tonight. Still charged me the full
price for a plate, though.

JOE

Why'd Bernie go to you instead of
the *Examiner*?

STERLING

I had the same question. So I made
some calls. Turns out, they
approached Joe Wambaugh to write a
book about the trial.

(beat)

Dell offered up a \$500,000 advance.

JOE

A book? You're shitting me.

Nancy looks up from her manuscript at Joe.

He empties the water into the waste basket and fills the
glass with scotch from the half-empty bottle.

He takes a long swig.

STERLING

Settle down. The deal fell through.

(beat)

Dell wanted MacDonald to sign a waiver promising not to sue if he doesn't like the book. He refused, so Wambaugh walked.

JOE

And what? They want me now?

Nancy gets out of bed to stand with Joe. He holds the phone out for both of them to hear.

STERLING

The lawyer--

JOE

Bernie.

STERLING

Whatever.

(beat)

He was very careful not to offer anything. All he said was that Jeff wants you to bring Nancy.

JOE

Why Nancy?

KNOCK KNOCK.

Nancy peels away to answer the door.

STERLING

My guess is, they're on the eve of trial without a writer, and they know how desperate you are.

JOE

Fuck you.

STERLING

Having your pregnant wife with you is a pretty good reminder that you have money issues.

(beat)

They'll try to use it as leverage to control the narrative.

JOE

Okay. Well, hypothetically, let's say they do come to me. What's Dell willing to offer?

STERLING

150. Assuming you get Jeff to sign
the waiver.

Joe scoffs.

Nancy opens the door for the BELLHOP, who comes in and places
a large box on the bed. She brings Joe the attached card.

CARD: *Truth never lies -- JM, MD*

STERLING (CONT'D)

Can't blame 'em for lowballing you.
Wambaugh cranks out a bestseller
every year, and everyone in town
knows we can't do shit with your
Alaska thing.

(beat)

Frankly, I'm surprised they didn't
come in at 75.

JOE

Tell Dell I'll get their waiver.
But it'll cost them 300.

He hangs up and looks at Nancy, who is taking binders and
other materials out of the box.

She holds up a Betamax video tape and reads the label--

NANCY

Cavett. 12/15/70.

LATER

Scotch in hand, Joe puts the Betamax into a player by the TV
as Nancy sits on the floor with a pint of ice cream.

NANCY

Of course he wants you. He wouldn't
send all this just as background
for one article in the *Examiner*.

JOE

No. There are no half-measures with
this guy, Nance. He'd have sent me
this box even if all I was writing
was a poem.

Joe presses play and joins Nancy on the floor.

She feeds him a spoonful of ice cream.

TELEVISION: DICK CAVETT'S interview with Jeff.

JOE (CONT'D)
You remember this?

NANCY
Not really.

We watch Joe and Nancy watch Jeff's introduction.

CAVETT (TV)
My next guest is Dr. Jeffery
MacDonald.

TELEVISION: Jeff enters and shakes Cavett's hand, then his
two guests, before sitting down.

CAVETT (TV) (CONT'D)
Uh, I call you Dr. MacDonald now,
don't I?

JEFF (TV)
That's right. It's ex-captain. I'm
a doctor.

CAVETT (TV)
Yeah. Yeah. Well, I hope this isn't
too painful for you. I feel like
the -- the journalist who asks the
gory question but, uh--

Joe is enthralled. Nancy is put off.

JEFF (TV)
It still at times feels like a
dream. Uh, a nightmare is a very
mild term, really.

CAVETT (TV)
Could you talk about what happened
on that night -- uh -- on that
night last February?

JEFF (TV)
Well, um, I can skim through it
briefly. To get deep into it, uh --
does produce a lot of emotion on my
part. But uh --- very briefly, my
wife came home and we had a, uh,
before bedtime drink, really. And
uh, watched the beginning of a late-
night talk show.

TELEVISION: Jeff smirks as the audience laughs.

LATER

The interview ends.

The tape cuts to static, and Joe gets up to turn off the TV. He stares at the blank screen.

Nancy puts the ice cream down to grab a binder from the box.

JOE

Man, he was polished. Like Bob
Hope, the way he played the crowd.

Nancy clears her throat and opens the binder.

She flips through crime scene photos, each one more terrible than the last.

She isn't fazed, but she does reflexively rub her belly.

NANCY

If I'm ever slaughtered by hippies,
you'd better be an inconsolable
wreck and not -- Bob Hope.

JOE

(re: the photos)
Bad?

NANCY

They're kids, Joe.

Joe finds a fresh pack of smokes and unwraps the cellophane.

He takes one out and lights it before sliding to the floor to be closer to Nancy. She shuts the binder, and he takes her hand, tenderly stroking it.

NANCY (CONT'D)

A \$300,000 advance would solve a
lot of problems.

Joe exhales, deep in thought.

JOE

1970. Jesus. He was on Cavett the
same year I was.

(beat)

I had no idea.

(beat)

When I was on, I got so excited, I
threw a huge party at the hotel.
Wanted to share the moment with the
entire world.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

And then, in walks this beautiful young thing. Fresh new photographer at the *Inquirer*. And suddenly, I didn't want to share the moment with the entire world. I only wanted to share it with her.

NANCY

Too bad the only reason we shared that moment was because your wife stayed home to care for your kids.

JOE

Hey, you want me to spend the rest of my life apologizing to my mistress for making her my wife?

Nancy does a bad impression of him before kissing him and lying in his arms.

NANCY

Think MacDonald threw a party, too?

The question hangs in the air as Joe smokes.

LATER

An overflowing ashtray.

Remnants of another glass of scotch.

Remote in hand, Joe keeps rewinding and re-watching Jeff smirk on Cavett -- entranced by the man's smugness.

He pours the last bit of scotch into his glass and feels something poking him from inside his pocket.

He reaches in and takes out the folded-up collection letter.

The clock reads 3:30am.

He huffs as he rips open the letter and struggles to read it. Then he looks at the phone.

He picks it up and has trouble resting the receiver between his shoulder and his ear. He has equal trouble dialing a phone number.

After a few RINGS--

CHRIS (PHONE)

Hello?

JOE
A collection agency?

CHRIS (PHONE)
You've been drinking.

JOE
You should've called me.

CHRIS (PHONE)
I have. And I've written.

JOE
So, if I don't pay up, I'll be held
in contempt of court and arrested?

CHRIS (PHONE)
I have lunches to make. Call me
when you sober up.

Joe tosses the envelope aside.

JOE
They tried to get me to run for
Congress after *President*. I'd have
won, too. Funny. Where do you think
we'd be now if I were the junior
senator from Pennsylvania?

CHRIS (PHONE)
The kids need to get to school.

JOE
Nancy's pregnant.

Behind him, Nancy opens her eyes.

She's awake and listening, but she'd never let Joe know.

JOE (CONT'D)
She's barely gained any weight. You
should see her. She looks amazing.

CHRIS (PHONE)
I'm excited for you.

JOE
I wonder if it'll look like ours.
Like yours and mine. They all look
like me anyway, right? I mean, me
more than you. But I wonder if
they'll look like each other. Think
they'd recognize each other if they
ever met? I think they would.

CHRIS (PHONE)
You can be cruel when you're drunk.

JOE
I was called a columnist today.

Nancy continues staring at the back of Joe's head.

CHRIS (PHONE)
I have to go.

She hangs up.

He sits there, staring at the letter.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

All dressed up, Joe lifts a stiff drink to his lips.

Nancy is with him, elegantly dressed.

The room is packed with SUPPORTERS, all laughing and dancing.

It feels like a political rally, which elicits a "this has a weird vibe" look between Joe and Nancy.

They spot Jeff giving every GUEST equal time.

NANCY
He's taller than I thought.

Joe insecurely stands up straighter.

She kisses him on the cheek--

NANCY (CONT'D)
Go, be a journalist.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Joe interviews guests about how much Jeff means to them.

At first, he takes notes in his red notebook, but he quickly abandons the idea in favor of drinking.

He clocks Candy laughing with Nancy.

LATER

Jeff, flute of champagne in hand, addresses the crowd.

Joe sits at Jeff's personal table with Nancy and Candy.

JEFF

It's easy to support someone when
they're doing well. I know that.
And it's just as easy to give up on
someone when they're not.

(beat)

But you, the people in this room,
never gave up on me. Even when I
gave you every reason in the world
to do so.

He looks at Candy, smiling wide with pride.

He and Joe share a momentary glance that makes Joe squeeze
Nancy's hand tightly.

JEFF (CONT'D)

And so--

He raises his glass.

The guests follow suit.

JEFF (CONT'D)

As success comes and goes, and as
fame rises and falls like the tide,
I will always be grateful for the
love and loyalty of my family and
friends. Cheers!

PRE-LAP: *Nights on Broadway* by the Bee Gees plays.

LATER

Joe is at the bar.

Just as he's about to order, a hand comes down hard on his
shoulder. It's Jeff, all smiles.

JEFF

Pretty wild, huh? All these people.

JOE

Too bad they can't all fly out to
North Carolina with you -- fill the
gallery with friendly faces.

JEFF

Or the jury.

(smiles)

Let's step outside. I could never
compete with Barry Gibb.

EXT. PARTY - NIGHT

The sounds of the party are muted in the background.

Jeff isn't as grandiose here.

He walks to the railing and gazes into the night as if he can see the scene he describes.

JEFF

Colette and I went to the Rialto Theater once and sat way up in the balcony. We held hands all night and watched *A Summer Place*. Have you ever seen--

JOE

I have.

JEFF

Man. Troy Donahue and Sandra Dee -- we sat through that movie twice.

(pause)

We felt like we were the ones falling in love up there on that screen. So the theme to *A Summer Place* became our song.

(beat)

I take the record with me everywhere. When I can't sleep, I listen to it. Over and over. Then I shut my eyes and I think about Colette and the girls, dancing on the beach. The sun setting behind. It's perfect. That perfect song and those perfect little girls.

The nostalgia doesn't impact Joe in the slightest--

JOE

Am I here because the deal with Wambaugh fell through?

Jeff sighs and drops his shoulders, turning back to Joe.

JEFF

You heard about that.

JOE

I heard about that. So--

(beat)

You buttering me up to get me on your side? Take Wambaugh's place and write a puff piece about you?

JEFF

Have I asked you to write anything about me?

JOE

No.

JEFF

I never liked Wambaugh. Arrogant prick. But he's hot shit, and Bernie says a book'll help pay for the defense. I mean--

(gestures inside)

You don't think the money in that room is last, do you?

JOE

No. But your condo. The car. You don't seem to be struggling.

JEFF

\$250,000, Joe. Minimum. Without factoring in appeals, if--

(pause)

I don't need to be struggling for that to still be a struggle.

Jeff turns away and looks back out over the balcony.

JEFF (CONT'D)

I wasn't lying about how excited I got when Bernie told me you called.

(beat)

After Wambaugh, meeting you felt like destiny. Not coincidence. Still, I've been burned too many times, so I wanted to meet you in person. See if I could trust you.

JOE

Trust me to do what?

JEFF

Tell the truth.

His choice of words hit Joe hard.

JOE

And?

JEFF

I think you will.

Joe mulls over the answer.

He lights a smoke and sips his whiskey--

JOE

You know how I got Nixon and his handlers to voluntarily dig their own graves for *President*?

(Jeff shakes his head)

I let them believe I was one of them. See, they were so excited to be in a book that none of them stopped to ask me if I was a registered Democrat.

JEFF

If they had, would you've said yes?

JOE

I can't answer that because it didn't happen.

JEFF

Do you think I killed my family?

JOE

I can't answer that because I don't know. Yet. Look, Jeff--

(pause)

Flannery O'Connor once said, "I write because I don't know what I think until I read what I say."

Joe looks back in at the party.

From the crowd, Nancy's eyes find their way to Joe's.

JOE (CONT'D)

I want the same deal as Wambaugh. Total access to you and your team.

(beat)

I'll treat you fair and honest. You have my word. But trust is a two-way street, Jeff.

(beat)

Sign the fucking waiver.

Jeff thinks it over.

Joe stays patient, unflinching. Finally--

JEFF

The weather in Raleigh was 92 today with 90 percent humidity.

(beat)

Bring a linen suit.

PRE-LAP: The sound of an airplane taking off

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Headphones on, Joe sits alone in a first-class row, papers and photos spread out on the empty seat next to him.

Also on the seat is a new BLUE notepad with a "1" written in Sharpie on the cover.

Joe has a hand-drawn diagram of 544 Castle Drive in his lap.

As he listens to his cassette, he consults the diagram:

- Turned over coffee table in the living room.
- Bloody footprints down the hallway.
- The shape of a child's body in bed in the north bedroom.
- Another child in bed in the south bedroom.
- Two adults embraced on the floor of the master bedroom.

CLICK.

Side A ends, jolting Joe.

He takes his headphones off and looks over the diagram and his notes, exhaling hard.

JOE
(to a flight attendant)
Excuse me. Ma'am -- yeah. Another
double. Thanks.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT takes away an empty glass, and Joe turns a cassette labeled "4/6/70 CID INTERVIEW" over to Side B.

He has to ready himself before putting his headphones back on and pressing play.

EXT. RALEIGH-DURHAM AIRPORT - DUSK

A commercial airliner lands on a runway.

EXT. RALEIGH-DURHAM AIRPORT - ARRIVALS - DUSK

Joe, duffel bag slung over his shoulder, walks with the other PASSENGERS through the front entrance of the airport.

He spots a TAXI-DRIVER with a name card that reads "McGinniss". He flags him over for help with his bag.

INT. TAXI CAB - DUSK TO NIGHT

Joe smokes and takes in the breeze from the open window.

The cabbie pulls up in front of A LARGE FRATERNITY HOUSE with two large letters "KA" on it.

INT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe, haggard from the heat, enters with his duffel bag slung over his shoulder.

We follow him through the house as KYLE and BILLY (20s, legal assistants) mix it up with a few FRATERNITY BROTHERS -- barbecue, drinks, guitars, etc...

Off to the side, Jeff shoots pool with WENDY ROUDER (20s).

Jeff notices Joe and intercepts him in the hallway.

Wendy stays behind, her expression souring.

JEFF
(re: his appearance)
You walk from the airport?

JOE
You weren't kidding about the heat.

JEFF
(catching Billy)
Billy, hey. Take Joe's things to his room for me. Okay?
(to Joe)
Got you set up in a single. Big desk. Lots of room. Other side of the house from me, but still--

Billy grabs Joe's duffel bag.

JOE
Everyone's staying here?

JEFF
Yup. Local counsel set it up. Most of the kids are gone for summer, so the place is all ours.
(beat)
You, me, the team. Witnesses when they fly in. Oh, and over there--

He waves to Wendy.

She's in no hurry, so she finishes taking her shot at the felt before heading over.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Wendy Rouder. An associate at
Bernie's firm in San Francisco. And
one helluva distraction.

She reaches them, and Joe offers his hand.

JOE

Joe McG--

She doesn't shake it.

WENDY

I know who you are, Mr. McGinniss.

JEFF

Wendy was instrumental in picking
our jury. Same process that got
Joan Little acquitted back in '75.

A tight-lipped smile is all Wendy can muster.

WENDY

I'll see if Bernie has a minute.

She excuses herself, leaving Jeff and Joe alone.

JOE

Something I said?

Jeff leads him towards the bar.

JEFF

Wendy's great. But, between us,
giving a girl a law degree is like
handing a monkey a gun.

(beat)

Slightly funny, but unpredictable.
And potentially deadly.

He pours two whiskeys, neat.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Her lawyer brain's got her
paranoid. Won't talk to you.

Joe's demeanor immediately changes.

JOE

We agreed on this. Total access--

JEFF

Don't get your panties in a bunch.
Bernie'll figure it out.

Jeff nods towards Bernie's "office" across the common area. Wendy is at the door.

She nods to Jeff to come over.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Take your drink. Try to relax.
Hardest part was getting you here.

He hands Joe the whiskey.

BERNIE'S OFFICE

BERNIE SEGAL (70s, knows he's brilliant) stands behind a desk, a large pipe dangling from the corner of his mouth.

Seated in front of his desk are MIKE MALLEY (40, brawny) and WADE SMITH (50s, congenial).

All three men turn to the door as Joe enters, followed by Wendy. Joe immediately senses tension.

JOE
Mr. Segal--

BERNIE
Bernie, please.

Wendy shuts the door. Bernie makes introductions--

BERNIE (CONT'D)
This is Wade Smith, local counsel
here in Raleigh.

WADE
Mr. McGinniss.

Joe nods.

BERNIE
And this is Mike Malley -- Jeff's
roommate at Princeton before going
off to Harvard for law school. Been
with us since the Article 32.

MIKE
Joe.

Another nod.

Bernie takes off his glasses and looks around his desk for something. Joe fills the silence by sipping his whiskey and sizing up the room.

BERNIE

We got the waiver from Dell.

MIKE

We're not happy.

Joe stops drinking.

WENDY

Thing is -- Jeff puts a lot of faith in people he admires, even after getting burned on Cavett.

(beat)

He just doesn't appreciate how dangerous it is to trust you.

Bernie jumps in to soften the insult--

BERNIE

Not you, like Joe McGinniss. You, like the industry.

(beat)

I know you're a straight shooter. I wouldn't have recruited you if I didn't.

Joe winces at the word "recruited".

MIKE

But what about your publisher?

WADE

Maybe Dell thinks it's easier to market a book about Jeff being a monster than it is a book about him being wrongfully accused.

JOE

You're assuming I think Jeff was wrongfully accused.

(to Bernie)

I'm here to cover the trial. And the trial hasn't even started.

BERNIE

Of course. Of course. But--

WENDY

That document offers our client zero assurances that you won't defame him to sell more books.

JOE

He has my word.

BERNIE

What kind of lawyers would we be if
we relied on that?

He hands Joe the document to read.

MIKE

Paragraph three--

Joe scowls before reading the types portion aloud--

JOE

*I understand you're writing a book
about my life, centering on my
current trial for murder. In order
that you may feel free to write the
book in any manner that you may
deem best, I agree that I will not
make or assert against you, the
publisher, or its licensees or
anyone else involved in the
production or distribution of the
book, any claim whatsoever based on
the ground that anything contained
in the book defames me.*

Joe pauses.

The next line is handwritten in the margin.

JOE (CONT'D)

*Provided the essential integrity of
my life's story is maintained.*

(looks up)

Fuck is this? Essential integrity?
What does that even mean?

WENDY

It means you can't lie.

JOE

This is bullshit.

WENDY

(to Bernie)

I told you.

JOE

Told him what?

BERNIE

You don't have to sign it right
away. Talk to Sterling. Dell. Do
whatever you need to.

(MORE)

BERNIE (CONT'D)

But we can't let you stay here
until it's signed.

(off Joe's scoff)

You can attend the trial. It's open
to the public. But you'll have to
stay in a hotel. And you can't talk
to Jeff or anyone else.

JOE

Is this a joke?

BERNIE

I'm sorry, but it's non-negotiable.

They stare at Joe as he processes the demand.

JOE

Wow. What a colossal waste of my
fucking time. Good luck to you, Mr.
Segal. Wendy. Gentlemen. I'll show
myself out.

He polishes off his whiskey, claps it down on the bookshelf
next to him, and leaves, slamming the door.

WENDY

You see? True colors.

EXT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe rushes out the front door without his duffel bag,
followed immediately by Jeff.

JEFF

Whoa, whoa. Joe -- what the fuck?

JOE

You can ship my things back to LA.

JEFF

Ship your -- Joe, take a breath.
Talk to me. What's going on?

Joe stops walking. He turns to confront Jeff--

JOE

Are you for real? What's going on
is I dropped everything to be here.
I left the paper. My pregnant wife.
Flew all the way across the fucking
country. For what? To have my
integrity questioned?

(accusatory)

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

You purposely waited until I was here to pull this shit because you thought I was SOOOOO desperate for a hit that I'd just bend over and let you fuck me. Well, guess what? Turns out, I'm not that eager.

Joe starts walking away from the house.

Jeff follows, keeping a respectful distance.

JEFF

What, the waiver? We didn't wait until you were here. It came in the mail yesterday. It's nothing. They're just protecting me.

JOE

And handcuffing me.

JEFF

Hey, stop for a second. Come on. You came all this way. Just stop for a second and talk to me. You can always storm off after.

He stops and huffs.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Have I tried to convince you of anything? Give you a song and dance about the injustice of it all? Cry to you about Freddy Kassab, my own father-in-law, stabbing me in the back? Anything? No.

(Joe lights a smoke)

And I'm not gonna do that now, either. I'm not gonna stand here and tell you I'm an innocent man.

(pause)

I'll let the facts do that for me.

(pause)

That document means nothing. Lawyers being lawyers. This, right here, is men being men. And I know, as sure as I'm standing here, that when this is over, you'll be convinced BY THE EVIDENCE of my innocence. And the book?

(laughs)

It'll be a goddamn bestseller. Joe McGinniss. Back on top. Where he belongs. Bigger than Wambaugh. Bigger than Capote.

The bravado forces a laugh from Joe.

JOE

You really are something, Jeff. I honestly can't tell if you're being confident, arrogant, or naive.

JEFF

I'm the only person in the world who knows the truth about what happened that night, Joe. And it's like you said. Truth never lies.

(pause)

So sign the fucking paper.

HOLD ON Joe.

INT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - GAME ROOM - NIGHT

Black and white pictures of BRIAN MURTAGH, the government prosecutor, are pinned to dart boards.

Joe enters with Jeff, finding Bernie and Wendy among the others. A simple nod from Jeff is enough to say "he's in".

Jeff claps as he sees Murtagh's picture on the board.

JEFF

Look at this! A dream come true!

Mike hands Jeff two darts. Jeff hands one to Joe.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Let's hit the bastard right between his beady little eyes!

Joe spins the dart in his fingers.

JEFF (CONT'D)

On three, ready? THREE!

Only Jeff throws his dart, hitting Murtagh in the face. Everyone cheers.

Wendy sees Joe spinning his dart in his hands.

They lock eyes.

HOLD ON the black and white photo of Murtagh, the dart stuck right in his forehead.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Real-life BRIAN MURTAGH (40s, small and intense) stands in the same position as the photograph.

He addresses the jury--

MURTAGH

Facts don't lie. And the facts in this case are as clear as they are unfathomable: in the early morning hours of February 17th, 1970, the lives of Colette, Kimberly, and Kristen MacDonald came to an abrupt and violent end.

(beat)

Mutilated, stabbed, beaten. The word "PIG" written in Colette's blood. Four weapons, three victims, two children, and one survivor. Jeffrey MacDonald.

(beat)

You will be shown pictures during this trial that--

(holds back his emotions)

Will haunt you just as they have me. But you must look at them. Absorb them. The damage done to these fragile beings.

Jeff and Bernie watch from the defense table.

Wendy and the team watch from the first row of the gallery.

Joe, seated near the back and off to the side, watches while taking notes in a blue notepad.

Joe has "OPENING STATEMENT" written on the page.

Under it, a doodle of Murtagh and, "Murtagh -- punchable bookworm."

Looks to Jeff to gauge his reaction. Adds, "Jeff agrees."

Looks to the jury. Adds "Jury?"

Scanning the gallery, he finds FREDDY and MILDRED KASSAB (elderly), holding hands in the second row.

Freddy is stoic as Mildred softly sobs into a tissue.

MURTAGH (CONT'D)

The defendant claims that hippies broke into his house while he was sleeping on the couch. That one of them held a candle and was chanting "Kill the Pigs, acid is groovy."

(beat)

That a struggle ensued and he was knocked unconscious. And that, when he awoke, his family was dead and the attackers were gone. It's quite the story. But that's all it is.

(beat)

A story.

(beat)

The physical evidence in this case proves there were no attackers. There was no struggle.

Joe watches the Kassabs.

Adds to his notes, "Freddy Kassab -- Judas?"

MURTAGH (CONT'D)

The evidence proves beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant butchered his pregnant wife and two small daughters. That he read an article about the Manson family in Esquire, that he inflicted wounds upon himself, and that he staged the crime scene.

(pause)

Now, we will not try to explain why Jeffrey MacDonald committed these heinous crimes.

Murtagh lets the remark sink in and lets the murmurs from the audience die down.

Joe looks to Jeff, who whispers with Bernie and tries to conceal a smirk.

MURTAGH (CONT'D)

Truth is, we may never know why Jeffrey MacDonald stabbed his two year old daughter to death in her sleep. But it doesn't matter. The why doesn't matter. All that matters is the how. Because--

(one final pause)

Facts don't lie. People do.

Murtagh takes a seat.

Joe draws an arrow next to "punchable".

Adds, "don't underestimate".

Bernie stands.

Joe spots Jeff reclining in his seat a bit, like he's getting ready to watch a movie.

BERNIE

Mr. Murtagh knows that appealing to your emotions is his only hope. He's relying on you to get filled with so much rage over the tragic loss of innocent life that you'll rule with your hearts and not your minds. This is crucial because he knows he cannot prove this case beyond a reasonable doubt.

Joe looks to the Kassabs. They are no longer holding hands.

Mildred sobs, but Freddy looks ready to pounce.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

The government must prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that Dr. MacDonald, a man with no history of violence, who spends his days saving people and not killing them, stabbed his wife 40 times, broke her arms, and mutilated her body and the bodies of his children.

(pause)

And this burden cannot be satisfied by words like maybe or possibly. They cannot prove that Dr. MacDonald may have stabbed Colette 40 times. That he possibly staged the crime scene. To convict on maybes and possiblities would be a colossal miscarriage of justice.

Joe writes, "Settle down, Bernie".

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Now, to Mr. Murtaugh's chagrin, you cannot simply ignore the why because he says it's not important. In fact, the why is the most important part of this story.

Joe reaches the lat page of his notepad.

He stops taking notes to listen. Watches Jeff with curiosity.
Bernie's tone becomes combative.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Jeffrey MacDonald loved his family dearly. They were looking forward to the future. To the addition of their first son. Jeff loved his family so much, in fact, that even though his position as a Green Beret surgeon was a full-time job, he held a second job so that Colette could stay home with the kids and be a full-time mother. Jeffrey did this so that his family could live. Not so they could die.

(pause)

When the military police found Jeffrey and Colette that horrible night, they were embraced on the floor of the master bedroom. A lovers' embrace. This is the story of a family shattered. And when the time comes, we will ask you to allow Jeffrey the space and freedom he deserves to grieve. To mourn. And continue living. Thank you.

Bernie sits.

Jeff whispers to him and then looks back at Joe, who avoids eye contact.

INT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - NIGHT

Billy enters with boxes of pizza and two salads.

Jeff sits, flanked by Wendy and Joe.

Across the table, Mike and Wade sit with Bernie, who munches on the stem of his pipe.

Joe takes out a smoke, but before he can light it, Jeff puts a hand over his forearm, stopping him.

Whispering, fatherly--

JEFF

Give those lungs a break, yeah?

Joe nods and puts his pack away, feeling chastised.

Billy places the salad in front of Bernie, inducing a dissatisfied grunt.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Cholesterol, Bern. Can't have you
keeling over mid-way through a
cross-examination.

Bernie begrudgingly grabs a plastic fork from Billy while Kyle passes pizza out. Billy gives the other salad to Jeff.

MIKE
As soon as Murtagh said they
weren't gonna even try to establish
a motive. Man, oh man. I almost
busted out laughing.

WADE
There was an audible gasp.

BERNIE
(pushing lettuce around)
No juror in his right mind is gonna
convict you without a motive.

Jeff digs into his salad.

JEFF
Then why put it out there?

MIKE
Shine a spotlight on your
weaknesses. I get it, but--

Joe picks onions off his slice of pizza.

JOE
I don't know. I thought it was
pretty genius, actually.

They all turn to him.

He picks a couple more onions off to milk the moment.

JOE (CONT'D)
Your entire trial strategy is
centered around the "why".
(beat)
By dismissing the "why", he cut you
off at the knees before you even
had a chance to stand up.

JEFF
That's a bit overstating it.

BERNIE

No. He's right. Murtagh's got our witness list. He knows we're going all-in on the "why".

The air in the room feels heavier. Bernie puts his fork down.

Frustrated, Jeff stands and moves to the window.

Wendy leans over to Joe--

WENDY

I thought you were here to cover the trial, not comment on it.

JOE

Moment of weakness.

He takes a bite of his pizza.

Wendy can't tell if she's being played. Bernie takes a deep breath to refocus--

BERNIE

Okay. We still push the "he had no motive" angle. Force Murtagh to keep telling the jury to ignore it. No one likes being told what to ignore. Human nature. But--

WENDY

We pivot. Drive home how inept the investigation was. How sloppy they were with the evidence. Who's on the stand tomorrow?

MIKE

One of the MPs. Sergeant Tevere.

WADE

We're gonna need more coffee.

Jeff stares out the window at the media camped out front.

JEFF

I need fresh air.

(to Joe)

Bring your gym shorts like I asked?

(off Joe's nod)

Good. Change so we can reintroduce your lungs to the world.

JOE

Should we go out the back?

JEFF

Nah. We'll go out the front.

They exit, and Bernie immediately grabs a slice of pizza.

EXT. NORTH CAROLINA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - NIGHT

In shorts and t-shirts, Joe and Jeff jog through campus.

Joe struggles, drenched in sweat and wheezing from all his smoking and drinking.

Jeff never stops moving, even when Joe gestures that he's got a cramp and needs to stop.

He hacks up some phlegm.

JOE

Stop. Stop. I'm gonna throw up.

JEFF

You'll thank me when you look young and fresh for the book tour.

(hands him water)

When I did the rounds back in '70, I couldn't believe how much makeup people wore on TV. Even the men.

Joe dry heaves.

JOE

It's the lights. Make you sweat.

JEFF

Made me think of a bodybuilder getting ready for a competition, standing in front of the mirror shaving his chest and legs and armpits. So weird. Doesn't really scream "masculine" you know?

JOE

That's important? Being masculine?

JEFF

Is that a bad thing? Men being men? Women being women?

JOE

Not to me. Look, Nancy's a great photographer. Editor. Writer.

(beat)

But if she ever made more money than me, I'd leave her.

Jeff laughs.

JEFF

Colette never cared about any of that. She was happy just being a mother and a wife.

JOE

Then why was she taking night classes at the University?

JEFF

How did you -- that's not really -- I'd rather not get into that now.

Jeff takes on a more serious air than we've seen before.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Come on. Get moving. I don't want the cameras to see us walking back.

Joe nods and starts his slow jog again.

INT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is dark and silent.

Freshly showered and sore from jogging, Joe prepares a drink at the bar. He catches the light still on under Bernie's office door.

The theme from *A Summer Place* starts to softly play from a nearby room. Abandoning the bar, Joe follows the music to Jeff's door and knocks lightly, causing it to open.

Jeff is sitting on the floor, topless and lost in the music. His eyes are red. A handle of scotch beside him.

JOE

Gonna chase that scotch with half-a-gallon of water?

JEFF

Not tonight.

JOE

Wanna be alone?

Jeff shakes his head "no".

JEFF'S DORM ROOM

Joe enters and sits on the floor, opposite Jeff.

The song ends, and the portable turntable shuts itself off.

Jeff passes Joe the bottle.

JEFF

She was ashamed.

(off Joe's confusion)

Colette. She had a temper.

Sometimes. I -- it's not something

I like to talk about.

Joe takes mental notes and a swig.

JEFF (CONT'D)

I'm not saying she was violent.

Just -- it's one of the only things

we bickered about. Like, the

general annoyance of kids, you

know? The whining--

(looks at turntable)

You asked why she was taking night

classes. That's why. Child psych.

She wanted to be better -- for the

new baby.

JOE

How'd that make you feel?

JEFF

Hopeful.

(takes bottle back)

It doesn't feel like ten years.

Joe acknowledges Jeff's pain with a sad smile.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

From the gallery, Joe writes "5" on a fresh notebook and watches Murtagh examine MILITARY POLICEMAN RICHARD TEVERE.

A LARGE MODEL OF 544 CASTLE DRIVE sits before the jury.

SUPER: SGT. RICHARD TEVERE - MILITARY POLICE

MURTAGH

Please tell the jury what happened
on February 17, 1970.

TEVERE

Well, it was wet that night--

CASTLE DRIVE

Tevere arrives in a jeep with two MPs.

He leaves them stationed at the front door while he goes around back.

Another jeep arrives with SPECIALIST KEN MICA. Tevere returns and screams for the MPs to get on their car radios.

COURTROOM

Tevere uses the model to show the jury how he and Mica ran around back to enter the house from the rear.

CASTLE DRIVE

Mica follows Tevere into the master bedroom, where he finds Jeff, topless, draped over Colette on the floor.

His blue pajama top covers her chest, and a blood-smeared white bath mat covers her abdomen.

COURTROOM

Crime scene photos of the pajama top and bath mat are projected on a large screen.

CASTLE DRIVE

Off to the side lies a bent Geneva Forge paring knife.

On the headboard of the bed, "PIG" IS WRITTEN IN BLOOD.

Mica leans over Jeff, who moans in pain.

COURTROOM

Joe watches Bernie whisper to Jeff, a crime scene photo of "PIG" on the screen behind them.

CASTLE DRIVE

Gun drawn, Tevere moves down the hallway with Mica staying behind to tend to Jeff.

He looks into Kimberly's bedroom. The light from the hallway illuminates the room just enough to hint at what took place there.

Tevere's reaction is a mix of sadness and horror.

COURTROOM

Tevere needs a moment to collect himself.

CASTLE DRIVE

Tevere moves to the opposite side of the hall--

Kristen's bedroom.

More glimpses of the crime.

COURTROOM

Crime scene photos:

- A pool of blood on the sheet and the floor.
- A large stuffed doll, staring dead-eyed at the bed.
- Three bloody footprints leading to the hallway.
- A baby bottle.
- A rocking horse.

Joe checks in on the jury. Some have difficulty looking at the photos. Others can't look away.

Murtagh sits.

Bernie stands and buttons his suit. Wendy leans forward from the gallery to hand him a note.

They whisper before Bernie addresses the witness.

BERNIE

There was a woman on the corner
that night, wasn't there? Standing
alone. In the rain.

TEVERE

Yes, sir.

BERNIE

Can you describe her?

CASTLE DRIVE

It's all hazy through the rain.

Hard to make out what Tevere describes.

TEVERE (V.O.)

She was on the side of the road,
Ten or twelve feet away. Caucasian,
mid-twenties. Shoulder shoulder-
length hair, wore a dark-colored
raincoat, and a pair of boots.

COURTROOM

Bernie presses Tevere further.

BERNIE
And a floppy hat?

TEVERE
Yes.

Joe perks up.

Bernie turns to Wendy--

BERNIE
Ms. Rouder -- Exhibit 64.

Wendy moves to the court's projector. While she does--

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Dr. MacDonald described the
intruders to investigators and
they, in turn, did sketches of
those intruders, isn't that right?

TEVERE
I believe so, yes.

Wendy places the exhibit on the projector--

ON THE SCREEN: Sketches of the "intruders" are displayed.
THREE MEN (two white and one black) and ONE WOMAN (white).
The woman wears a floppy hat and has long blonde hair.

BERNIE
A white woman, mid-20s, with long
hair, rain boots, and a floppy hat.
(points to the sketch)
That's the same description Dr.
MacDonald gave to investigators,
isn't it?

TEVERE
More or less, sir.

BERNIE
Are you familiar with a woman by
the name of Helena Stoeckley?

MURTAGH
Objection.

JUDGE DUPREE
Overruled. You can answer.

TEVERE
Um, yes. Local girl. Drug addict.

BERNIE

Isn't it true that she's confessed,
several times, to being in Dr.
MacDonald's house that night with
some of her friends?

Joe scribbles in his notebook. We can't see what he's
writing. He looks up, silently questioning Bernie's tone.

MURTAGH

Objection! Hearsay. Your honor, if
Mr. Segal wants to call Helena
Stoeckley as a witness, he can.

BERNIE

I'd love to, your honor. We've
subpoenaed her, but she's in the
wind. FBI can't find her anywhere.

JUDGE DUPREE

It's still hearsay. Objection
sustained. Move it along.

Bernie sucks his teeth.

BERNIE

Okay. To your knowledge, Sergeant
Tevere, did anyone ever investigate
the woman on the corner?

TEVERE

Not to my knowledge. No, sir.

Bernie refers to the note Wendy passed him--

BERNIE

Now, by the time Dr. MacDonald was
taken out of the house, there were
you, Paul, Morris, Mica, Dickerson,
D'Amore, two paramedics, the
Marshall, two photographers, Ivory,
and all the CID men.

(beat)

In and out of the house through the
mud and grass and rain. That's a
lot of people.

TEVERE

I suppose.

BERNIE

And you were asked on direct if you noticed any grass or mud or wet footprints in the house. And you said no. Do you remember that?

TEVERE

Yes.

BERNIE

And you were asked those questions because Mr. Murtagh wanted to imply that the absence of such evidence indicates there were never any intruders in the first place.

MURTAGH

Objection! I don't think Mr. Segal is in any position to tell the witness what I was implying.

JUDGE DUPREE

Mr. Murtagh, we all know what you were implying. Overruled.

TEVERE

I guess that's what he meant, yes.

Joe looks at Wendy.

This was her note. For the rest of the exchange, Bernie's tone is sarcastic and indignant.

BERNIE

After all that running in and out of the rain, the wheeling in and out of a gurney, two separate photographers, dozens of officers -- do you recall seeing ANY grass or dirt or muddy footprints?

TEVERE

No, I do not.

Bernie subtly looks back at Wendy, proud of himself.

Wendy stays stoic. The exchange is not lost on Joe.

Bernie moves uncomfortably close to Tevere.

BERNIE

And in the hallway, you stated that nothing was touched.

TEVERE

That's right.

BERNIE

And yet, you ALSO said Dr. MacDonald was fighting the paramedics to get to his daughter's room, clawing at the door. Well--
(looks to jury and back)
How did that happen without anyone so much as touching a wall?

TEVERE

We -- may have touched a wall.

BERNIE

And you may have kicked around some items in the hallway?

TEVERE

It's possible.

BERNIE

Spread fibers?

TEVERE

Not intentionally.

BERNIE

Tainted evidence?

MURTAGH

Objection!

BERNIE

This crime scene wasn't contained at all, was it?

MURTAGH

Objection!

BERNIE

You were a herd of elephants stampeding through that house!

MURTAGH

Your honor!

JUDGE DUPREE

That's enough, Mr. Segal. The next question out of your mouth had better be substantive.

BERNIE

That's all right, your honor. No more questions for this -- witness.

Joe realizes he's been holding his breath. He looks around:

-Wendy: stoic.

-The Kassabs: still teeming with fury.

-The jury: visibly overwhelmed by Bernie's theatrics.

-His notepad: a caricature of Bernie screaming.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

On opposite sides of the courthouse, Bernie (pipe in hand and Wendy by his side) and Freddy (Mildred by his side) give dueling statements to the press.

BERNIE

Based on today's testimony, I don't see how any rational juror could take this investigation seriously--

FREDDY

All the fancy lawyering in the world won't save Jeffrey MacDonald. He's a monster. He killed my daughter and granddaughters. He will face judgment.

Wendy sees Joe talking on a pay phone.

INTERCUT COURTHOUSE AND NANCY'S HOME

Joe talks to Nancy on the phone.

She makes tea in their small New Jersey home, noticeably more pregnant. Joe fidgets with an unlit cigarette.

JOE

Tell her thanks but no thanks. Use the advance. That's what it's for.

NANCY

Can't. We've already burned through half of it.

JOE

What? How is that possible?

NANCY

300. Jeff got 20% of the first 150. Then 10% to Sterling. 5 to the lawyer. Taxes on the whole thing--

JOE

Okay. Okay. I don't care about that. My son's not getting pushed around in some used stroller that smells like Cheryl's kid's old vomit. Hear me?

NANCY

Fine. But you'd better be sitting on a bestseller, Joe.

(pause)

How's it going? What's he like?

JOE

How's it going? I don't know. This is North Carolina, Nance. Not San Francisco. Bernie may have a bit too much -- personality -- for this jury. Honestly, he may be the first Jew any of them have actually seen out in the wild.

(off her laugh)

And Jeff? Whenever he's about to open up, he flips the conversation to be about me or something on-message. It's gonna take time.

NANCY

You'll get there.

JOE

I gotta be honest, though. He's charismatic. Bigger than the room but still approachable. Boundless energy. We've been jogging at night, getting to know each other--

NANCY

Wait. Jogging? You?

JOE

Maybe it's all just a show, but, I don't know. I'm starting to root for him. Is that--

FREDDY (O.S.)

Mr. McGinniss.

Joe looks up to see Freddy, alone, right in front to him.

NANCY

Who's that?

JOE
Mr. Kassab.

Freddy reaches out to Joe, a card in his hand.

FREDDY
If you're serious about getting to
the truth, you'll need perspective.

Joe spots Wendy watching them.

He takes the card, and Freddy walks off to meet Mildred at
the corner.

INT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - DAY

Breakfast.

Bernie is being forced to eat the same breakfast as Jeff --
eggs and avocado. Everyone else gets bacon.

Jeff reads the paper while Joe drinks coffee.

JEFF
You've been identified.

Joe takes the paper and reads aloud.

JOE
*The defendant arrived this morning
dressed in a sharp double-breasted
pinstripe suit alongside acclaimed
journalist Joseph McGinniss.*

JEFF
When's the last time anyone called
you acclaimed, huh?

Joe smirks and continues to read the article. Bernie gets up
and nods towards Mike and Wade.

BERNIE
Time to review the autopsy photos.

JEFF
Yikes.

MIKE
(to Wendy)
You coming?

Wendy shakes her head.

They head for Bernie's office, leaving Joe with Wendy.

WENDY

You gonna talk to Freddy Kassab?

JOE

Eventually. I need to know how he could go from being Jeff's most vocal advocate to leading the crusade against him.

(referring to his notepad)

I mean, I've been keeping a running list of blunders: The garbage was emptied. The toilet was flushed. The bloody footprint was destroyed--

(puts down his notepad)

It goes on and on like that. No juror, let alone twelve, could take that investigation seriously. So why does Freddy Kassab?

WENDY

You haven't seen the really bad pictures yet.

JOE

(unfortunately)

I've seen them.

WENDY

Well, then you know.

(beat)

If those were my grandkids, I'd want to crucify someone, too.

Joe checks to make sure Jeff's out of earshot.

JOE

You should've done the cross on Tevere. Bernie's righteous indignation isn't playing with the jury as well as he thinks it is.

WENDY

He's first chair. I'm just a--

JOE

You're not "just" anything.

Wendy sips her coffee instead of engaging.

JOE (CONT'D)

You still don't trust me.

WENDY

I've been on a lot of first dates,
Mr. McGinniss. It takes more than
simple flattery to get me in bed.

Suddenly, Joe is distracted by laughter from Bernie's office
as Jeff and Bernie share a joke.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

DR. GEORGE GAMMEL testifies before a projected slide of
Colette's autopsy photo.

SUPER: DR. GEORGE GAMMEL - PATHOLOGY

GAMMEL

Colette suffered multiple traumas
to her head and severe defensive
wounds to her upper extremities.

MURTAGH

Did she fight back?

GAMMEL

Until her arms were broken and her
head was bashed in.

MURTAGH

Were there any stab wounds?

GAMMEL

Along with the 16 deep knife
wounds, Colette sustained 21
puncture wounds to her chest that
are consistent with an ice pick.

Jeff looks back at the gallery, searching for Joe, but he
isn't there.

Jeff accidentally makes eye contact with Freddy, who stares
at him with biblical fury.

Next slide -- Kimberly.

GAMMEL (CONT'D)

Kimberley was killed by a vicious
blow to the head, causing her
cheekbone to penetrate the skin.

EXT. NORTH CAROLINA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Joe, satchel draped over his shoulder, walks through campus.

GAMMEL (V.O.)
She was also struck several times
after the fatal blow. These, along
with the stab wounds to her neck,
occurred postmortem. Overkill.

Joe finds what he's looking for -- a campus bookstore.

COURTROOM

Next slide -- Kristen.

GAMMEL
Kristen was stabbed a total of 17
times with a knife and an ice pick,
through her chest and back, deep
enough to penetrate her heart.

INT. NORTH CAROLINA UNIVERSITY BOOKSTORE - DAY

Joe scans a bookshelf until he finds a copy of his book, *The Selling of the President*.

The spine shows decent wear.

He checks to make sure he's not being watched.

Satisfied, he takes a copy of his memoir, *Heroes*, out of his satchel, breaks the spine in, and places it on the shelf.

He catches the attention of the CASHIER, but a courteous smile and a head nod are enough to cover his movements.

GAMMEL (V.O.)
Kristen was the only victim not to
sustain blunt force trauma.

MURTAGH (V.O.)
Did she have any defensive wounds?

GAMMEL (V.O.)
Yes. Multiple cuts on her hands,
including one that exposed the bone
on her right ring finger.

COURTROOM

Murtagh continues.

MURTAGH
So she fought back?

GAMMEL
As hard as a 2-year-old could.

LATER

DR. SEVERT JACOBSON testifies.

DR. SEVERT JACOBSON - ARMY MEDICAL DOCTOR

JACOBSON

When I examined him at Womack Army Hospital in Fort Bragg, Dr. MacDonald's wounds were all superficial. The worst was a slight pneumothorax. A collapsed lung.

MURTAGH

Could the defendant's wounds have been self inflicted?

JACOBSON

Yes. In fact, the incision between his ribs was very surgical. You see, if you grab a knife carefully, by the handle and part of the blade, the blade goes only up to your thumb.

(beat)

You can control the depth of the incision. Here, the wound was just deep enough to cause the pneumothorax.

JUDGE DUPREE

This is a good place to break for the weekend. I don't know about you, but I could use a drink. Or four. Go home, and if you have children, hug 'em tight, 'cause we visit the crime scene next week. Back here Monday morning.

The gavel comes down. Jeff looks back at the gallery once more for Joe.

He's still not there.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Jeff and Wendy trudge through a herd of REPORTERS to Bernie's car. Jeff finally finds Joe -- at a payphone, clearly yelling at whomever is on the other end of the line.

The reporters start to crowd around Jeff.

Bernie pulls him into the car as Joe continues to argue on the phone.

WITH JOE

Once Bernie's car is out of sight, Joe's demeanor changes.
The drone of the dial tone can be heard through the receiver.
There's no one on the other end.
Joe hangs up.

INT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe and the defense team watch a sitcom without laughing.
Jeff is noticeably absent.

EXT. NORTH CAROLINA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - NIGHT

Jeff, sweaty and lost in thought, jogs around the track.

JOE (O.S.)
I can't imagine how hard today
must've been for you.

Jeff snaps back into focus to find Joe walking up on him.

JEFF
How would you know?

JOE
Sorry -- it was Nancy.

JEFF
Everything all right? The baby?

Joe feigns more frustration.

JOE
Baby's fine. Nancy's just -- now's
not the time.

Jeff nods, not looking to test boundaries.

JEFF
Got anything in your back pocket?

Joe gives a small chuckle as he pulls his flask out and hands it to Jeff.

Jeff takes a snort and leads Joe over to a bench on the side of the track.

They sit.

JEFF (CONT'D)

I've been focussing a lot of energy
on caring for the team lately.
Bernie's health. Wendy's dad--

JOE

Wendy's dad?

JEFF

He's dying. Pulmonary fibrosis.
Same thing that took my dad. I've
been giving her advice. Trying to
keep him comfortable.

JOE

I'm sorry to hear that.

JEFF

It's fine. It's what happens when a
life comes to its natural end.

They share the flask.

JEFF (CONT'D)

I care for the team because I care
about the team. But today, I
thought -- maybe there's another
reason, too.

(Joe gives him time)

You know, it's easier for me to
accept what happened to Colette
than the -- than Kimmy and Kristy.

(beat)

She was a grown woman. Already
experienced the ups and downs of
life. But the girls--

(organizes his thoughts)

I can still hear Kimmy screaming
Daddy, Daddy. By the time I tried
mouth-to-mouth, it was too late.

(pause)

I think I put so much effort into
caring for other people because, at
the end of the day--

(pause to emphasize)

I failed to save my family.

The line strikes Joe as familiar, but he masks it.

Jeff hands back the flask.

For a moment, it looks like Jeff may break down. Chin
quivering, tears beginning to well in his eyes. But then he
shakes it off and stands, jogging off without another word.

Joe doesn't follow, choosing instead to sip his flask.

INT. JOE'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Lying in bed, Joe can't sleep.

He finally gets up and opens the desk drawer to reveal several blue notebooks, all numbered.

He flips through them, tossing them, one by one, on the bed until he finds what he's looking for in book "21".

NOTEPAD: "HE FAILED TO SAVE HIS FAMILY - DEVELOP FURTHER."

The clock shows 12:15am.

He looks around, halfway expecting Jeff to be watching him.

He locks the bedroom door.

LATER

Still awake and staring at the ceiling.

He turns to the clock: 3:00am.

He groans, knowing sleep is futile.

He looks at the phone, lifts the receiver, and dials.

NANCY (PHONE)
Joe? Everything okay?

JOE
Yeah.

NANCY (PHONE)
You drunk?

JOE
Yeah. Hey--
(pause)
Something strange happened today.
Jeff was opening up to me and
confessed that, at the end of the
day, he failed to save his family.

NANCY (PHONE)
Jesus. I can't imagine living with
that kind of guilt.

JOE

Sure. But here's the thing -- I'd written that exact phrase -- failed to save his family -- in my notes.

NANCY (PHONE)

Hmmm.

(beat)

Well, it's a pretty natural thought to have, isn't it?

(beat)

Or are you thinking it's more than just a coincidence?

JOE

I won't know what I think until I read what I say.

EXT. NORTH CAROLINA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Joe and Jeff jog through the campus.

Joe struggles less than before but still sweats profusely.

They break for water.

INT. NORTH CAROLINA UNIVERSITY BOOKSTORE - DAY

Joe and Jeff, still in their jogging clothes, browse the shelves. Jeff stumbles upon Joe's book, *Heroes*.

He holds it up triumphantly. Joe feigns embarrassment with a modest bow.

Jeff takes the book to the register.

He shows the CASHIER Joe's photo on the back cover and then points to Joe at the back of the store.

This is the same cashier as when Joe planted the book.

Joe looks away.

EXT. NORTH CAROLINA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Joe and Jeff walk back through the campus in shared silence.

INT. BERNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Joe enters and looks over a chalkboard behind Bernie that has two columns: "Them" and "Us". Wade, Mike, and Wendy all have their legal pads out.

Under "Them" are the following names:

-Mica Connolly
-Gammel Ramage
-Hancock Hawkins
-Murray Turbyfill
-Newman Cooper
-Ramage Jacobson

Wade adds two names: Ivory and Stombaugh.

Under "Us" -- nothing.

Bernie, rage-munching on his pipe, is on the phone.

BERNIE
--it's a little late for this
revelation. You told me--
(pause)
What am I supposed to do with that?
(pause)
Great. Thanks. No. No, you don't
need to take the trip.

He hangs up. Everyone waits in silence.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Judith's out.

Shock.

MIKE
What do you mean out?

BERNIE
Out. Like not getting on the plane.
Says she agrees with that fucker,
Stombaugh. She won't testify.

WADE
We've already paid her.

JOE
Who's Judith?

Wendy looks at Bernie and shakes her head.

BERNIE
It's fine Wendy. He's one of us.
(to Joe)
There's some blood evidence that
suggests Colette bled on Jeff's
pajama top before it was torn.

JOE
So? There was blood everywhere.

Wendy is seething at Bernie's openness.

She shoots daggers at him as she excuses herself.

BERNIE

Don't worry about Wendy. The woman
barely trusts ME.

JOE

(accepting it with a nod)
What's the issue with the blood?

MIKE

Jeff has always said -- even as far
back as the Article 32 -- that his
shirt was torn during the fight.
Before he found Colette. So--

JOE

If Colette's blood was on the shirt
BEFORE it was torn, Jeff's whole
story falls apart.

BERNIE

And our blood expert just told me
she agrees with their blood expert.

Bernie plops down in his chair and rubs his temples.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Don't tell Jeff.

Joe holds up three fingers -- "scout's honor".

GAME ROOM

Jeff reads *Heroes* while Joe shoots pool by himself. They are
alone in the room, and both are drinking.

JEFF

You were still married when you and
Nancy hooked up.

JOE

Fidelity was never my forte.

JEFF

I always hid my indiscretions. You
wrote about yours. Why?

JOE

I'd rather point out my own flaws
than wait for someone else to do it
for me.

Joe sinks a ball in the corner pocket and takes a break to sniff a cigarette, wanting desperately to light it.

JEFF

Go ahead.

JOE

(like a little kid)

Yeah?

JEFF

Just this once.

Joe lights up and basks in the nicotine.

He exhales a long stream of smoke and chases it with a long snort of whiskey.

JOE

(talks to his cigarette)

I've missed you so much.

(to Jeff)

Know what else I missed? My kid's birthday. Third year in a row.

JEFF

I'm sure he understands.

JOE

Nah. He's nine. Know what I got him last year?

JEFF

A pack of Marlboros.

JOE

A typewriter. Know what an 8-year-old does with a typewriter?

(pause)

Nothing.

JEFF

I'd have liked to have a son.

Joe takes another long drag.

JOE

Nancy isn't coming down.

JEFF

Why?

JOE

She thinks you're guilty.

It hits him like a ton of bricks.

JEFF

Oh. Is that what you were fighting about the other day?

JOE

I told her I didn't want her here if she can't put her hormones aside and just look at the evidence. I mean, I like you, Jeff, don't get me wrong. But you being you didn't convince me. The evidence did.

JEFF

Wait, convinced you--

JOE

What? Like you couldn't tell?

JEFF

I didn't want to presume--

JOE

(circling back to Nancy)
Listen, I get it. Nancy's about to be a mother and these are kids, but she can't tell me what to think.

JEFF

The smart ones can be such a pain in the ass.

JOE

Twenty years ago, no self-respecting man would ever let his wife tell him what to think. The moment bras became discretionary, the whole world went to hell.

JEFF

Back then, if you beat your wife, the neighbors would blame her.

Jeff flips to a flagged page of the book and reads--

JEFF (CONT'D)

And my dreams were bad. I dreamed of going back to my wife and finding her old and horribly wrinkled. And I dreamed terrible dreams about the maiming and destruction of my daughters--

Joe takes a drink.

JOE
I wrote that?

Jeff nods.

Joe huffs and takes another sip. A long pause as Jeff decides whether or not to go further.

JEFF
If this happened to you -- how
would you feel?

Joe considers the question for a while.

JOE
I ever tell you I watched that tape
of you on Cavett?
(Jeff shakes his head)
Well, I did. You know, I was on
Cavett that year, too? Yeah. For
President. The night before, I
threw this crazy party at my hotel.
Out of nowhere, this hot piece of
ass walks in. Fresh new hire at the
paper I was working for. Suddenly,
the world disappeared, and all I
could see was her.
(beat)
Nancy.

Jeff nods.

JOE (CONT'D)
We fucked all night.
(beat)
Of course, Chris was home with our
two girls. Pregnant with our son.
(epiphany)
Jesus -- that's -- I didn't even
realize it until just now. That's
the same as you and Collette when--
(clears his throat)
Man. That's a lot of baggage for a
kid in his prime. I hate to say it,
but if it happened to me, I'd have
felt relieved. And then I'd have
hated myself for feeling that way.

JEFF
Who do you think's spent more money
since 1970? You on child support
and alimony, or me on Bernie Segal?

They chuckle.

JOE
Maybe I should host a fundraiser.
\$200 a plate.

JEFF
This is bad. We're bad people, Joe.
(sad laugh)
Maybe I am a monster.

JOE
If you're a monster, then so am I.

INT. 544 CASTLE DRIVE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON "PIG", written in Colette's blood on the headboard.

It has turned brown with age.

REVEAL: The jury, most of whom are on the verge of tears, crowds around the doorway, looking into the room.

Behind them, staying out of the way, are Joe and Jeff.

Joe watches Jeff (sunglasses on) stare at the backs of the jurors' heads.

IVORY (V.O.)
I can't say what happened. But I
can say what the evidence supports.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

INVESTIGATOR BILL IVORY testifies.

He holds a long pointing stick in one hand and a projector remote in the other.

SUPER: BILL IVORY - LEAD INVESTIGATOR

Joe takes notes: "Forensic evidence + field trip = trouble".

On a large screen behind Ivory is a projected diagram of 544 Castle Drive, with outlines of all four MacDonalds drawn in the rooms where their bodies were found.

The letters "A, B, AB, and O" are written all over it.

MURTAGH
And does the evidence support the
Defendant's version of events?

IVORY

Not even close.

(points to living room)

To begin with, there is no way that pajama top was torn in the living room. If it were, there'd be fibers everywhere. But not a single fiber was found there.

MURTAGH

Where were the fibers found?

Ivory points his stick at the bedroom.

544 CASTLE DRIVE - MASTER BEDROOM

The jury stares at a large pool of dried blood.

IVORY (V.O.)

Under Colette's body in the bedroom, which would indicate the top was torn there.

COURTROOM

MURTAGH

Is it just the fibers, or is there other evidence that calls the defendant's story into question?

Ivory clicks the remote, and a photograph of Jeff's reconstructed pajama top pops up on the screen -- a large single stain of blood clearly visible on the front of it.

IVORY

Well, when we put the pajama top back together, we found four contiguous blood stains on the front, all matching Colette.

MURTAGH

Contiguous?

IVORY

Yes. Ummm -- touching. It was really just one big stain, with the tears slicing through it.

(off Murtagh's nod)

The only way that stain could exist in that pattern is if Colette bled ON the shirt before it was ripped.

Joe's eyes find Jeff, whom he imagines sitting at the defense table TOPLESS, IN HIS BLOODY BLUE PAJAMA PANTS.

He imagines Jeff turning to him and giving a thumbs-up.

Joe blinks, and Jeff is sitting properly in his suit, paying attention to the testimony.

544 CASTLE DRIVE - MASTER BEDROOM

The jury continues surveying the room as if they can see the specters of Jeff and Colette arguing.

Joe catches Jeff yawning into his fist and then pressing his tie down under his suit jacket.

IVORY (V.O.)

The most likely scenario is a strike to the nose during an argument, as noses tend to bleed pretty bad at first. After that, she probably grabbed his top by the V neck. As he pulled away, the top tore down the front, and fibers shed here in the bedroom, precisely where we found them.

COURTROOM

Bernie shoots out of his seat--

BERNIE

Objection! This is clear speculation and highly prejudicial!

JUDGE DUPREE

The man is saying that the evidence suggests these things, not that it proves them. Overruled.

Bernie sits.

Murtagh stands by the evidence table and lifts each weapon up as he references it.

Joe looks to Jeff, expecting some sort of reaction. Jeff remains unemotional.

MURTAGH

What about the weapons? The defendant claims the intruders brought their weapons with them. That the ice pick, the two knives, and the wooden club did not come from inside the house.

IVORY

There's absolutely no doubt that
the wooden club came from inside
544 Castle Drive.

544 CASTLE DRIVE

We follow Joe, Jeff, and the jury through the house,
focussing on the areas that Ivory speaks of--

IVORY (V.O.)

The grain on that club matches the
grain on a wooden slat found under
Kimberly's bed.

MURTAGH (V.O.)

And what do you make of the claim
that he was hit with the club in
the living room?

IVORY (V.O.)

Just like with the fibers, not a
single splinter was found there.

PRE-LAP: BANG BANG BANG.

COURTROOM

Judge Dupree bangs his gavel to end the day's session.

JUDGE DUPREE

That's a good place to break for
the day, gentlemen.

MURTAGH

May we approach before you retire?

UP AT THE BENCH

The jury is ushered out as the three men whisper.

MURTAGH

Your Honor, I'd like to discuss the
psychiatric testimony. If the
defense is going to put on
psychiatric evidence, we should
have the opportunity to have one of
our people assess him, too.

JUDGE DUPREE

I think it's a fair request--

BERNIE

How is it fair? We're in the middle of the trial. It's too late.

MURTAGH

We have a psychiatrist ready to do it. As early as tonight.

JUDGE DUPREE

Hmmmm -- makes sense to me. If you want your shrinks to testify, it's only fair Mr. Murtagh's shrink gets a chance to testify, too.

BERNIE

And if I refuse?

JUDGE DUPREE

Then none of it comes in.

Bernie knows he's trapped.

BERNIE

Fine. Have your man come to the house around nine o'clock.

JUDGE DUPREE

Good. Now, if there's nothing else, I gotta take a piss.

INT. JOE'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

In the closet, Joe drinks and talks to Nancy on the phone. He's staring at a page in his notepad.

NOTEPAD: "dissociation".

JOE

It's like he was a bored realtor, lazily showing newlyweds the layout of a starter home.

(pause)

Made me think of how war correspondents talk about Vietnam being responsible for turning wholesome kids into nightmarish psychopaths? As if the war somehow absolved them of their sins. But "war" doesn't stop flesh from being flesh. Blood from being blood. To be capable of--

NANCY (PHONE)
Joe, we're all capable. Given the
right circumstances.

Joe nods in agreement. A long pause.

JOE
All three networks are here.

NANCY (PHONE)
I know. I've seen you on the
evening news. Behind Jeff, in your
three-piece suit. Jogging looks
good on you, McGinniss. You'll be
in great shape for the book tour.

He smirks, still staring at "dissociation".

INT. BERNIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Seated at Bernie's desk, DR. JAMES BRUSSEL (slow moving and
very old) reads questions off a piece of paper to an
irritated Jeff, seated across from him.

After each question/answer, Dr. Brussel writes notes on his
legal pad and Jeff gets more and more annoyed.

DR. BRUSSEL
How do you explain the baby's blood
spots on the pajama top?

JEFF
I have no idea and I doubt the Army
was accurate anyway.

DR. BRUSSEL
Who tore your pajamas?

JEFF
It could have been torn in the
struggle. I have no idea.

DR. BRUSSEL
Who wrote on the mirror?

JEFF
You mean the headboard?
(off Brussel's nod)
I presume one of the assailants.

DR. BRUSSEL
Why was there no evidence of any
intruders?

JEFF

There was plenty! Mud and debris, hair in my wife's hand, the neighbors being awakened by the dog, lost fingerprints from the back door, the headboard--

DR. BRUSSEL

Who, if not you, put those fibers all over the house?

JEFF

Contamination from--

DR. BRUSSEL

Was your pajama top on when you saw your babies?

JEFF

No. I first went to Colette, but--

DR. BRUSSEL

Who wiped the scene?

JEFF

Wiped the -- if you mean the fingerprints, the critical ones were destroyed by the CID. If you mean the phones, the MP's used them, so I presume they wiped them clean once they realized they shouldn't have.

DR. BRUSSEL

How do you account for the lack of footprints under the windows?

JEFF

The MPs didn't leave any either. I have no answer to that.

DR. BRUSSEL

How could your wife and children have been overkilled and you have suffered -- just one laceration, 2/5 of an inch deep?

JEFF

That's just wrong. I had multiple puncture wounds, stab wounds, several blows to the head and was found unconscious by the MP's.

INT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - NIGHT

Bernie fidgets with his pipe as he sits with Wendy in the common area. Mike and Wade mill about.

Everyone has their gaze planted firmly on the closed door to Bernie's office.

Joe joins them, drink in hand. Checks his watch.

JOE
Still in there?

The door opens, and Jeff storms out, furious.

He passes everyone without a word. Joe follows him out the front door.

Back in the room, Dr. Brussel shuffles about with a disorganized folder full of loose paper.

EXT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - NIGHT

Jeff stands with his arms folded, struggling to understand what just happened.

Joe listens.

JEFF
Guy's off his rocker. I swear, he didn't even know where he was half the time. Kept accusing me of stealing his hat!
(beat)
And when he DID ask me questions, they were all traps. I asked him who wrote them, and you know what he said? Brian Murtagh.

JOE
You shitting me?

JEFF
Didn't ask a single thing about my feelings or anything.

The front door opens, and Dr. Brussel exits with a polite smile -- but no hat. Joe and Jeff watch in dumbfounded amazement as he smiles and asks--

DR. BRUSSEL
Do you know what hotel I'm staying at? I think it's called the Royal something. Maybe. Or not.

The two men stare at him in amazement.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Joe watches DR. STOMBAUGH testify.

SUPER: DR. PAUL STOMBAUGH - FBI FORENSICS EXPERT

A mannequin with a blue pajama top draped on it lies before him. 21 needles stick out of it.

Behind him is a projection of a drawing, showing where the 48 puncture marks were on Jeff's pajama top.

STOMBAUGH

All 48 holes are circular, which proves that the pajama top was stationary at the time of impact. If the top had been in motion, the holes would be torn and oblong.

Joe's NOTEPAD: "48 = 21???".

MURTAGH

I don't understand, Dr. Stombaugh. Colette only suffered 21 wounds to the chest. And yet there are 48 holes. So -- how can 48 equal 21?

Joe circles what he wrote, proud to have been one step ahead of the questioning.

STOMBAUGH

Well, Mr. Murtagh, we used crime scene photos to replicate the placement of the pajama top on a mannequin and, using scientific techniques, we determined that, due to folds in the fabric, the holes did, in fact, match up.

MURTAGH

So, 48 really does equal 21.

STOMBAUGH

48 equals 21.

MURTAGH

Nothing further.

Bernie's turn, his frustration nearly boiling over.

Joe checks in on Wendy, who shifts in her seat, knowing Bernie's temper isn't doing them any favors.

BERNIE

How do you know the pajama top was folded in exactly the same way as on the night of the murders?

STOMBAUGH

It was an approximation.

BERNIE

Did you account for the holes in Colette's pink pajama top when you conducted this experiment? I mean, did you attempt to see if those holes matched the other holes?

STOMBAUGH

I wasn't asked to do that.

BERNIE

If you were asked to fit 18 rods into those 48 holes, could you?

STOMBAUGH

I wasn't asked to do that.

BERNIE

Of course not. Because that would have been exculpatory.

MURTAGH

Objection.

JUDGE DUPREE

Anything else, Mr. Segal? Questions about the contiguous blood stains, the wood coming from the house, the location of the defendant's pajama top fibers under Colette's body?

This catches Bernie off guard.

Joe leans forward, waiting for Bernie to explode.

He doesn't. Instead, he shrinks--

BERNIE

No, your honor.

Joe sits back and closes his notepad.

He looks at Jeff. For the first time in the trial, the heat appears to be affecting him -- he takes a handkerchief out of his pocket and dabs the sweat off his forehead.

JUDGE DUPREE

Then you accept the doctor's
findings regarding the blood, the
fibers, and the splinters?

Bernie fights back all of his aggression.

BERNIE

I have no more questions at this
time, Your Honor.

Jeff whispers to Bernie as he sits.

By Bernie's reaction, Jeff is pissed.

JUDGE DUPREE

Very well. Redirect, Mr. Murtagh?

MURTAGH

No, Your Honor. I think we're good.

JUDGE DUPREE

Dr. Stombaugh, you may step down.

The doctor collects his things.

Joe tracks the doctor as he gets off the witness stand and
exits, passing Freddy Kassab.

Freddy is staring right at Joe.

INT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jeff peels a cucumber, lost in thought. Salad ingredients are
spread out over the counter.

Joe enters.

Jeff grabs a knife and slices a tomato horizontally and
vertically, preparing to dice it.

The surgical nature of the slices grabs Joe's attention.

JEFF

It's all falling apart, Joe. If
Dupree lets that whack-job testify
about our interview--

Slice!

He dices the tomato into even cubes, scooping the chunks up
onto his knife and sliding them into a bowl.

JOE
Bernie'll handle it.

Jeff grabs a head of iceberg lettuce.

JEFF
Didn't look like Bernie was
handling much of anything today.

JOE
He was off his game.

JEFF
Christ. They're making me out to be
the world's greatest psychopath.

He SLAMS the lettuce on the counter to dislodge the core,
which he separates from the head and tosses in the trash.

Joe recoils at the brutality of the action before touching
Jeff on the shoulder.

Genuine--

JOE
All that'll change once they hear
our witnesses. They'll come around.

JEFF
Not if we don't get Helena
Stoeckley on the stand. Without
her, all they'll see is me sitting
at the defense table in a pair of
bloody pajama pants.

Joe looks off.

Jeff rips the lettuce into chunks, adding them to the bowl.
He grabs the peeled cucumber and readies it for his knife.

JEFF (CONT'D)
How inept can the FBI be? It's one
single broken-down junkie!

JOE
And what if they do find her? That
woman's a total mess. What if the
jury doesn't believe her? Or worse,
what if she denies everything?

Jeff points the knife menacingly at Joe.

JEFF

Who gives a fuck? They just need to see her. You said it yourself. She's a fucking mess. Know why? Because the guilt of murdering my family has been eating her alive for the last ten years.

(stabs the air)

Drug abuse, mental issues, a fucking stroke! And she confessed! Six fucking times. This is the type of behavior you'd expect from someone who was there.

(puffs out chest)

Now look at me. Do I look ravaged by guilt to you?

JOE

No.

JEFF

Do I look like I'm on a self-destructive downward spiral?

JOE

No.

JEFF

Without Stoeckley, what are we left with? A couple of assholes arguing over a pajama top.

He slams the knife down, exasperated. Wade enters.

WADE

Bernie wants to see everyone.

Jeff gives a defeated nod and follows Wade.

GAME ROOM

Bernie has the whole team assembled in the game room. He stands before the television with a BetaMAX tape in his hand.

Jeff sits next to Wendy on the couch.

Joe stands by the door.

BERNIE

It's been a rough week.

(beat)

Judge Dupree--

The group "BOOOOOS" the name, but Bernie stays serious.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

We were given a choice. Put on all the psychological testimony -- or put on none of it.

(pause)

Based on Dr. Brussel's reputation after his work on the Boston Strangler case, I decided--

Joe looks at Wendy, sitting with Jeff, visibly shaken.

She holds Jeff's hand to keep him calm.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

It would not be in Jeff's best interest to let him testify. So -- there will be no psychiatric testimony presented in this trial. And we can't admit Jeff's hypnosis session into evidence.

(off the groans)

I know. I know. The jury'll never get to see this, and that's a shame. But as we start Jeff's defense tomorrow, I thought we needed to see this tonight. To remind us of why we're here. To remind us that there were four victims that night.

Bernie puts the tape into the BetaMAX player.

Kyle turns off the main light as the TV kicks on.

LATER

TELEVISION: Jeff relives the attack and the murders. The pain is raw and brutal and convincing.

Riveted, Joe watches Jeff watch himself.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

DR. JOHN THORTON testifies for the defense.

SUPER: DR. JOHN THORTON - FORENSICS

BERNIE

And what is your opinion about Dr. Stombaugh's pajama top experiment?

THORTON

It was a bit silly.

BERNIE

Silly?

THORTON

Yes, particularly the bit about how the circular holes in the garment indicate a stationary target.

BERNIE

Why is that silly?

THORTON

Because I took a piece of material, placed it in motion, and stabbed it with an ice pick. The resulting holes were all circular.

BERNIE

And did you form an opinion about how he was able to fit 21 thrusts into 48 holes?

THORTON

Yes. Again, it's really just--

JUDGE DUPREE

Silly?

THORTON

Yes.

BERNIE

Thank you.

Murtagh stands.

MURTAGH

I'd like to hear a little more about the experiment you conducted.

THORTON

I took a piece of cloth, similar to the pajama top, and wrapped it around an item that simulated the consistency and resistance of human flesh. That item was mounted on a board and moved about in a manner akin to what a human being is capable of. Once in motion, I stabbed it with an ice pick.

MURTAGH

That sounds pretty scientific. What was the item you used for this?

THORTON

A ham.

MURTAGH

A ham? Like a ham sandwich?

THORTON

Yes. Wrapped in a garbage bag.

Murtagh looks at the jury, shaking his head.

MURTAGH

Ham. Wrapped in a garbage bag.

INT. PIZZA PLACE - DAY

Joe and Jeff sit at a table, away from the rest of the defense team. Neither of them has much of an appetite.

Joe has been folding his napkin into a paper football. He nudges Jeff to show him. Jeff responds by making a goalpost with his fingers.

Joe flicks the football, missing wide right.

It's enough to break the tension.

JEFF

If only my dad could've seen this.
He'd have had a fit.

JOE

What? The injustice of--

JEFF

No. Not the trial. You and me.
Hanging out.
(chuckles)
He'd have fucking hated you.

JOE

Oh. Well -- then he'd have gotten
along great with my dad.

JEFF

Not just you. Bernie. Wendy. He
hated intellectuals. Always thought
they were looking down on him.

JOE

He must've loved that you went to
Princeton then, huh?

JEFF

You have no idea.

(beat)

He came up once and saw that we had the black help wearing these little white jackets. Man, he made a scene. Thought the whole thing reeked of elitism. Never came back.

JOE

Why was he so angry?

JEFF

He never went to school, so the most he could ever be was an electrical "designer", making half as much as the "engineers", even though he knew three times more than they did.

(beat)

When he came to Princeton, all he saw were "engineers".

Joe nods as the memory sits heavy in the air.

JEFF (CONT'D)

You should put that in the book.

(off Joe's confusion)

Kind of like a peek into my mind, you know? Help add context to why I am the way I am.

Joe nods again.

In the background, a SHERIFF comes in to talk to Bernie. Bernie excuses himself to leave with the sheriff.

JEFF (CONT'D)

When this thing is over, we should hit the open road. Just the two of us. Ride across the Midwest. Soak up as much Americana as humanly possible. Diners. Root beer floats. Minor League ball games. Take as much time as we want.

JOE

I'd like that.

Bernie rushes back in.

Nearly hyperventilating, he announces--

BERNIE
They found her.

INT. COURTHOUSE - MEETING ROOM - DAY

The room is small. Joe has to stand.

Seated at the table is HELENA STOECKLEY (28, slightly chubby, and very sickly).

Her left arm in a cast, she carefully spins her Diet Coke on the table with her right hand.

Wendy and Bernie sit to her sides. Bernie has a photo album in front of him. He talks in a calm voice.

She responds softly without making eye contact.

HELENA
I don't know what to say.

BERNIE
Just the truth, Helena. Nothing more. Just the truth.

HELENA
I can't help you.

BERNIE
You told six people that you were in the house that night. Are you saying they're all liars?

HELENA
I'm not saying that. I'm saying I don't remember. Do you realize how many drugs I've taken since 1970?

She stares at the photo album devoid of emotion.

BERNIE
No one is asking you to say you were involved. Just that you were there. With the others.
(pause)
You alone have the power to let an innocent man go home to grieve.

She seems to be considering something. Then--

HELENA
Can I get a sandwich?

Bernie sighs. He's lost his momentum. He turns to Wendy.

BERNIE
Stay here and keep her company.

Wendy nods.

Bernie taps Joe on the chest and they exit, leaving Helena and Wendy alone.

COURTHOUSE

Joe and Bernie walk to the elevators.

BERNIE
I should get her a ham sandwich.

The elevator doors open.

MEETING ROOM

Helena is flipping through the photo album as if it were People magazine.

A bit bored.

A bit tired.

Wendy just sits there, not knowing what to say.

Helena stops at a picture of the rocking horse.

HELENA
I wanted to ride it but--
(runs finger over photo)
It was broken.

Wendy looks around as if Bernie could rush in at any moment.

WENDY
You were in the house.

Helena finally makes eye contact.

HELENA
Why do you think I took all those
damn drugs?

COURTHOUSE

Wendy runs down the hallway, turning the corner and practically slamming into Bernie and Joe.

BERNIE
What?

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Helena is on the stand. Bernie's delivery drips of arrogance.

SUPER: HELENA STOECKLEY

BERNIE

Ms. Stoeckley, please tell the men
and women of the jury where you
were the night of February 16,
1970, around 3:30 in the morning.

HELENA

I can't remember.

Bernie's arrogance shatters.

BERNIE

You can't remember?

HELENA

I was probably high on mescaline at
the time.

BERNIE

(indignant)

You can't remember where you were
the night of the murders but you
can recall what drugs you were on?

MURTAGH

Objection. Asked and answered.

JUDGE DUPREE

Sustained.

Bernie has already lost his patience with the woman. He can
tell the jury has, too.

He assumes an aggressive posture.

BERNIE

Do you at least remember owning a
floppy hat, knee-high rain boots, a
dark rain coat, and a blond wig?

HELENA

Sure.

Finally, a small victory. Until--

HELENA (CONT'D)

But it was 1970. Everybody owned
those things.

BERNIE

Okay. Well, do you remember what you did with your wig?

HELENA

Burned it up in a fire. My boyfriend didn't like it.

BERNIE

Was your boyfriend with you in Dr. MacDonald's house that night?

MURTAGH

Objection!

JUDGE DUPREE

Sustained.

Bernie practically charges the stand as he talks--

BERNIE

You told William Poesy that you were in Dr. MacDonald's house at the time of the murders. That you and your boyfriend had to kill more people before you got married.

HELENA

No, I didn't.

BERNIE

You told Jane Zillioux and Red Underhill you wanted to teach Jeffrey a lesson because he wouldn't give you methadone.

HELENA

No, I didn't.

BERNIE

You told Officers Gaddis and Beasely the same thing.

HELENA

No, I didn't.

BERNIE

You told Ms. Brisentine, the polygraph operator that you were there, holding a candle.

HELENA

I don't remember.

BERNIE

You told my associate, Wendy Rouder, that you wanted to ride the rocking horse but it was broken.

HELENA

I don't remember that.

BERNIE

This was yesterday! You spoke with her yesterday.

HELENA

Yesterday? I drank a Diet Coke.

MURTAGH

Your Honor, I think this has gone on long enough.

JUDGE DUPREE

I agree.

(to Bernie)

Counsel, I'd like to see you and Mr. Murtagh in my chambers.

(to Helena)

Ms. Stoeckley, thank you for your time. You're all done here.

Throughout the testimony, Joe keeps his focus on Helena, trying to decipher secrets in her body language.

But there's nothing there.

She's a blank canvas.

INT. BERNIE'S DORM ROOM OFFICE - NIGHT

Jeff is in his gym gear, enraged.

Joe and the defense team are all in the room.

JEFF

You said, if we put her on the stand, we'd be able to put all the people she confessed to on the stand, too. You said that.

BERNIE

And we should be.

JEFF

Then what the fuck, Bern?!?

BERNIE

Dupree said she was so messed up.
So untrustworthy. That nothing she
says could have any probative
value. And therefore, all of her
confessions are considered equally
untrustworthy. He said allowing the
jury to hear them would be unduly
prejudicial -- to the prosecution.

JEFF

What?

BERNIE

He's thrown them all out.

JEFF

Oh, well, that's fucking swell.

BERNIE

He's wrong, Jeff. And we'll win
that point on appeal.

JEFF

Appeal?

BERNIE

I don't mean we're going to lose. I
just mean--

JEFF

WE aren't going to lose, Bernie.
Just me. Just fucking me!

He knocks a stack of papers off Bernie's desk and then turns
over an end table in anger.

Bernie takes a step back.

Wendy moves in and gently takes him by the shoulders.

WENDY

Jeff, you need to calm down.

He violently shrugs her off of him, leaving her with her
hands up in a show of acquiescence.

The room stares at him.

Jeff breathes hard and excuses himself, not wanting to lose
control any more than he already has.

Wendy turns to Joe.

WENDY (CONT'D)
He'll listen to you. If you're
really on our side, tell him that
if the jury sees him like that --
then that's all they'll see.

EXT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - NIGHT

Jeff is leaning against a railing, staring out into the dark forest behind the house, still seething.

Joe joins him.

JEFF
I could kill that fucking prick.

JOE
Listen, Bernie's--

JEFF
Not Bernie. Dupree. Bernie's just --
being a good lawyer. Preparing for
the worst-case scenario.

Joe says nothing.

JEFF (CONT'D)
What?
(no response)
You think I'm fucked, too.

Joe carefully measures his reply.

JOE
No.

JEFF
Yes, you do. You've turned against
me. You been talking to Freddy?

JOE
What? No.

JEFF
Whose side are you on, Joe?

JOE
Yours.

JEFF
Bullshit! I know you. People like
you. Spectators. Tourists.

JOE

You're angry. I get it. But your fight's not with me, Jeff.

JEFF

(disgusted)

Nothing about you is honest. Wendy was right. I thought you were harmless. A chameleon. But you're not. You're a fucking snake.

JOE

Jeff.

JEFF

Maybe it's something else. You're jealous. That's it, isn't it?

(beat)

You wish it were your family that was murdered. You're living vicariously through me.

JOE

Careful, Jeff.

JEFF

Careful what? You told me that you'd be relieved! And writing all that shit about wishing your family were dead. Writing it for the whole world to read.

(laughs)

Too bad the book was such a failure that no one did.

(gut punch)

We should've worked it out with Wambaugh. At least he wouldn't have pretended to be my friend.

Joe's ears are red with anger and adrenaline.

Jeff puffs out his chest in a way we haven't seen.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Look at you. Pathetic. Your ex-wife hates you. Your kids hate you. And history is about to repeat itself with Nancy and, what I can only assume, is your child.

JOE

Excuse me?

JEFF

What? She fucked you while you were still married to Chris, right? You think you're special? Some sort of big swinging dick? I'd get a paternity test if I were--

Joe takes an angry swing at Jeff.

He dodges it and punches Joe in the face, drawing blood from Joe's nose.

Joe pauses, then charges at Jeff, tackling him to the ground.

JOE

Stop, stop, stop.

They separate.

Joe wipes blood from his nose.

Jeff avoids eye contact.

Joe looks at him. He reeks of hopelessness.

JEFF

I'm sorry. I didn't mean any--

JOE

It's alright. I get it.

JEFF

Your nose okay?

Joe wipes off some more blood and looks at it.

JOE

If Stombaugh were here, he'd see this blood and testify that it's a scientific impossibility that I got punched in the face.

Jeff laughs. A good release. But then he gets quiet.

JEFF

If I were sitting in that jury box, and all I got to see was what Dupree was letting them see--
(pause)
I'm scared, Joe.

Jeff tries to hold in his emotions, but can't.

He cries into his hands.

Joe moves to him and hugs him, allowing him to continue crying into his shoulder.

They separate--

JOE

This is the Jeff they need to see.

HOLD ON Jeff, absorbing the advice.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

SAME ANGLE: Jeff, visibly upset, on the stand.

Each question elicits a progressively more emotional response. Joe watches from the gallery, notepad at the ready.

BERNIE

Tell us about Colette?

JEFF

She was beautiful and intelligent and warm. She was a great mother and wife. Totally devoted.

BERNIE

What about Kimberly?

JEFF

Inquisitive. I think exceptionally bright. And very loving. So loving.

BERNIE

And Kristen?

JEFF

She was the prettiest of all. A little ball of fire. My angel.

BERNIE

Dr. MacDonald, can you explain the inconsistencies in your recollections over the years?

Joe has his pen ready to write. Jeff wipes his eyes.

JEFF

I can -- I can try. Umm, well, first off, I never said I was certain of anything. That it was all just fragments. Confusing thoughts. Like the candle.

Something's off. An anger beneath the grief.

JEFF (CONT'D)

I never said it was a candle. I said it was a flickering light. It could've been a flashlight. The best I can say is that my memory is hazy. I'd been woken from a deep sleep after being awake for almost two days straight.

(beat)

I was viciously attacked. Knocked unconscious. I told the investigators everything, to the best of my recollection. But it's like trying to recall a painting you saw in a dream. You might not remember all the brush strokes, but that doesn't mean you didn't see the painting.

Jeff takes a sip of water as Bernie moves to the crime scene photos. He shows them to him, just out of frame.

BERNIE

When you awoke and found your wife, is this what you remember seeing?

JEFF

Yes.

Next picture.

BERNIE

And when you found Kimberly, is this what you remember?

The words barely escape Jeff's throat.

JEFF

Yes.

Next picture.

BERNIE

And when you found Kristen--

JEFF

Yes.

BERNIE

And what, if anything, do you recall doing when you found them?

JEFF

I remember patting Kimmy on the head and telling her it would be okay. Oh, lord. Excuse me.

Bernie lets Jeff sob for a long beat.

Joe has his pen ready to write, but doesn't. Softly--

BERNIE

Did you murder your family?

JEFF

Oh god, no.

Bernie hands Jeff a folded-up paper.

BERNIE

Dr. MacDonald, would you share with us a letter Colette sent you in the summer of 1969, when you were forced to spend some weeks apart?

Jeff looks as if the request was a surprise. Joe leans in, enraptured. Jeff slowly unfolds the paper and reads--

JEFF

Sunday night. Darling Jeff, what a difference a day makes - or even a few minutes - especially when you take me from the nadir of despair and return me to that happy full of love and life feeling.

(beat)

Thank you sweetheart, you really know how to handle me. In case you're getting ready to jump out of an airplane and need a little material for pleasant daydreaming, here are a few of my favorites: (1) Remember the night you and Ernie came to Skidmore in the snow for 'Happy Pappy Weekend' and stayed in the Rip Van Dam, the fashionable watering place of the New York jet set. (2) The night we came home from Paul and Kathy's and we decided to have something to eat in the city and we went to Manana after walking around a bit. This is one of my favorites because I think we were definitely on the same wavelength that night.

(MORE)

JEFF (CONT'D)

(3) When you were in the Infirmary at Princeton because you had dropped the weights on your chest, you wrote me an abstract story entitled 'the cool guy and the warm girl.' Do you remember that at all? I do, It was beautiful. (4) New Year's Eve this year - what could top that for a feeling of togetherness! (5) Cutting up onions and peppers together and planning for our giant Champagne Brunch and then, of course, the brunch itself. (6) The first time you came to Skidmore and the picnic we had in the woods. Four kisses.
(beat)
Colette.

He folds the paper back up and stares at it.

Joe looks down at his notepad, finding that he has forgotten to take any notes at all.

PRE-LAP: *Theme from A Summer Place*

INT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - DAY

Waiting.

No one speaks. With no motions left to write, Bernie and Wendy organize the office.

Wade and Mike play cards in silence with Billy and Kyle.

INT. JEFF'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Jeff is sitting on the floor, topless and lost in the music.

His eyes are red.

A handle of scotch sits next to him. The TV is on but muted and playing only static.

Joe is sitting on the floor next to him. They share the bottle and stare at the static together.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Everyone is assembled.

Judge Dupree nods to a bailiff, who opens the door to the deliberation room.

The jurors file in.

Some are openly sobbing. All are deeply affected.

JUDGE DUPREE
Has the jury reached a verdict?

The FOREMAN speaks up for all his fellow jurors.

FOREMAN
Yes, your honor.

JUDGE DUPREE
And how do you find?

FOREMAN
On the count of murder in the
second degree of Colette MacDonald,
we the jury find the defendant,
Jeffrey MacDonald -- guilty.

Jeff crumbles. Bernie holds him up.

Joe's lip quivers. He holds his hand over his mouth.

FOREMAN (CONT'D)
On the count of murder in the
second degree of Kimberly
MacDonald, we find the defendant,
Jeffrey MacDonald -- guilty.

Cries from the courtroom.

FOREMAN (CONT'D)
On the count of murder in the first
degree of Kristen MacDonald, we
find the defendant, Jeffrey
MacDonald -- guilty.

Commotion. Wendy rubs Jeff's back as Bernie whispers in his ear. Jeff looks like he's had the life sucked from his body.

JUDGE DUPREE
Does the defendant have anything
he'd like to say?

JEFF
Sir, I don't think the jury heard
all the evidence.

MARSHALS move in towards Jeff with handcuffs out. There is tremendous tension in the room.

He extends his arms, wrists together.

The Marshal handcuffs him and leads him out the back of the courtroom. Jeff looks back at Joe one last time.

Joe spots Freddy Kassab. He looks like a weight has been lifted from his shoulders.

Freddy puts his hat on and exits.

INT. KAPPA ALPHA HOUSE - DAY

Packing.

Crying.

Joe has his duffel bag with him, and he sports his fatigue jacket again.

He knocks on Bernie's door.

BERNIE'S OFFICE

Bernie reviews documents with Wendy, Mike, and Wade.

JOE

Already working on the appeal?

BERNIE

No time to waste. Every moment
going forward is another moment
Jeff spends in prison.

(beat)

Flying out?

JOE

Tonight.

BERNIE

Well, it's been more of a pleasure
than I would have expected. You
were a valuable member of the team,
and I know Jeff cherishes your
friendship very much.

Bernie stands and shakes Joe's hand. Wendy continues working.

JOE

Maybe it's not the best time to
bring this up, but -- you and
Sterling talked way back about what
we would do if Jeff were convicted.

BERNIE

Right. Right. I forgot.

JOE
About the access--

BERNIE
Yes. I spoke to Jeff about it. Not recently, but a while ago, when all this seemed so impossible.

He stops for a moment. Then continues.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
He wanted you to stay at his condo. He thought you could keep it warm for him while you wrote.

JOE
That would be great.

BERNIE
Wendy, make copies of everything and ship it to Jeff's condo.

WENDY
(annoyed)
That could take weeks.

BERNIE
Make it a priority.

Wendy huffs, but she'll do as she's told.

JOE
Thanks.

Joe starts to leave when Wendy stops him.

For the first time, she doesn't sound suspicious--

WENDY
Don't write the ending just yet.

He nods. Wendy gives a sad smile and returns to her work.

PRE-LAP: An airplane takes off.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Joe sits in first class.

The FLIGHT ATTENDANT hands him two travel bottles of whiskey and a glass with ice. He thanks her and empties the bottles into the glass.

INT. JOE'S CAR/PRISONER TRANSPORT VAN - DAY

Smoking, Joe drives through Huntington Beach, just as he did in Act One, only this time he doesn't need a map.

Meanwhile, a shackled Jeff is being transported in a very uncomfortable prisoner transport van.

Joe pulls up to Jeff's condo.

INT. JEFF'S CONDO - DAY

Empty and cold. Boxes are stacked in the office, ten deep.

Joe gives himself a tour of the house.

Jeff's closet is filled with fashionable clothes. The boat out back gently rocks against the dock.

Joe finds the copy of *President* that he signed.

He reads it: "Truth never lies."

He bends the spine back and forth to wear it in before putting it down.

Next, he approaches the wet bar in the living room. Stocked with top-shelf liquor.

Joe reacts as if he's opened a large bag of money.

INT. TERMINAL ISLAND - DAY

Joe waits in the visitor area.

Finally, a GUARD directs him to an empty room. Moments later, Jeff enters in shackles and an orange jumpsuit.

The GUARD uncuffs him and closes the door.

Jeff rubs his wrists and then gives Joe a long hug.

JEFF

Man, it's great to see you. It's been an absolute nightmare.

JOE

Well, I'm glad you didn't kill yourself. It would have been a bummer for the book.

They laugh a bit.

JEFF

I wouldn't give those bastards the satisfaction. How's the condo?

JOE

Perfect. Thanks again.

JEFF

Least I could do.

(takes a deep breath)

I'm a fucking mess, Joe. I feel dirty and soiled by the decision, and I can't tell you why, but I'm ashamed. I mean, the verdict just hangs there, screaming, "you are guilty of the murder of your family!" And I don't know what to say except that it's not true. And that I hope you know that and feel it and that you're still my friend.

Joe grabs Jeff's hands the way a lover would.

JOE

I am your friend, Jeff. When the verdict came down -- everyone knew instantly that you didn't get a fair trial.

JEFF

It still feels like some horrible dream, but I wake up in a cell, my bed only inches from my toilet. There's a stain on one of the cement blocks. It's my only piece of art.

(stands and paces)

I feel so much rage against Dupree.

(huffs)

I try so hard not to let it get me riled up, but the only thing to do in here is stare at the walls and replay the trial over and over again in my mind.

JOE

Howsabout I give you something more constructive to do?

Jeff sits back down, and Joe leans in as if it's a secret.

JOE (CONT'D)

I was able to convince one of the guards to sneak in a tape recorder.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

(pause)

Remember when we were talking about your dad? Stories, in your voice, peppered throughout the narrative, to add context to your life.

JEFF

That's a great idea, Joe. I'll start tonight.

Joe smiles.

BEGIN MONTAGE

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

Joe fills up a large corkboard in the living room with evidence photos, documents, handwritten notes, etc. There are about a dozen boxes in various stages of emptiness.

Joe combs through a pile of little blue notepads.

Joe and Jeff write letters to each other.

Joe meets with Jeff and takes notes. Jeff is very animated.

Joe receives tape after tape from Jeff in the mail.

Joe jogs on the beach alone. He stops to admire a sunset.

Joe on the phone with Nancy, alone and uncomfortable in her final weeks of pregnancy.

Lots of typing.

Lots of drinking.

END MONTAGE

INT. JEFF'S CONDO/INT. STERLING'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Joe stands over the numerous half-empty boxes with a drink in one hand and a phone in the other.

STERLING

Love the title. *Fatal Vision* is a huge improvement over *Acid and Rain*. But--

JOE

What?

STERLING

It reads like an appellate brief.
Chapter after chapter of what the
jury didn't hear and what the Judge
fucked up.

JOE

That's what happened, Sterling.

STERLING

"That's what happened" is boring me
to tears, Joe.

JOE

Well, I can't pretend like he got a
fair trial. We discussed this
before I went to Raleigh--

STERLING

Is he innocent? Is this book about
an innocent man wrongly convicted?

JOE

I don't know if he's innocent.

STERLING

Then he's guilty.

(pause)

Let Bernie Segal yell and scream
about what the jury didn't hear.
That's not what Dell paid you a
\$300,000 advance for.

JOE

They paid me to be a journalist.

STERLING

Don't be so god damn proud. You
want to be an investigative
journalist? Fine, investigate and
find me a motive for the killings.

JOE

The government couldn't do that and
they spent ten years trying.

STERLING

The government wasn't writing a
book, were they?

JOE

So what, you're telling me to make
something up?

STERLING

I didn't say that. But the MacDonald market is getting crowded and I can promise you that other writers won't have any issue establishing a motive and saying MacDonald got a fair trial.

JOE

Who? Tell me it's not Wambaugh.

STERLING

No. Mostly unknowns, but there is a small-time reporter who covered the trial named Keeler who's generating some interest. Know him?

Joe is worried.

JOE

A little.

STERLING

Well, if his book is released first, all those plans you have for your future disappear. You can't have the second book on the subject, Joe. Get me?

INT. TERMINAL ISLAND - DAY

Joe is upset.

JOE

Bob Keeler's talking to your mom.

JEFF

Bernie gave me the green light to cooperate with him. Thinks his article could generate some good press during the appeal.

JOE

Well, he's got bigger plans than just an article, Jeff.

JEFF

What do you mean?

JOE

He's using his Newsday piece as a book proposal. It's common practice. I don't expect you to understand the nuances.

Jeff doesn't appreciate the condescension.

JOE (CONT'D)

And honestly, I'm not sure what his attitude is towards you. I'm not saying he's convinced you're guilty, but how would I know?

JEFF

Hmmm.

JOE

For all we know, he thinks the jury heard all the evidence and you got a fair trial.

JEFF

I see your point.

JOE

I think it would be best if you did nothing to encourage or assist anyone else who might be planning to write a book on this. You gotta remember, you have a financial interest in our book, as well. If our book is released second, it'll look like a response to Keeler's and no one will give a shit.

JEFF

I didn't think of that.

Joe lights a smoke. They both calm down.

JEFF (CONT'D)

When do I get to see some pages?

JOE

Pages? Christ, I haven't even started outlining yet. There's at least thirty boxes of documents over at the condo, there's the trial transcripts, interviews to be done. This is going to take some time. I wouldn't expect any words to hit the page for a while.

JEFF

Just keep me in the loop, all right. It's one of the only things that keeps me from pounding my head into the cement.

(MORE)

JEFF (CONT'D)

You know, I can touch both walls of
my cell at the same time if I
stretch my arms out?

INT. JEFF'S CONDO - NIGHT

Joe is sitting on Jeff's deck, overlooking the Recovery Room,
whiskey in hand.

He has a telephone next to him.

He smokes and drinks and dials a number--

CHRIS (PHONE)

Hello?

JOE

Did he get it?

CHRIS (PHONE)

He got it. A radio-controlled plane
is much better than a typewriter.
He loves it. Thank you.

JOE

Is he there? Can I talk to him?

CHRIS (PHONE)

He's at a friend's house.

JOE

Oh.

(pause)

Can you be honest with me?

CHRIS (PHONE)

(hesitant)

Okay.

JOE

What's the worst thing about me?

CHRIS (PHONE)

(laughs)

What?

JOE

What is it about me that makes you
forget that you ever loved me?

She thinks it over.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hello?

CHRIS (PHONE)
I'm thinking.

JOE
Is it that long of a list?

CHRIS (PHONE)
You're a pathological narcissist.

Joe almost chokes on his whiskey.

JOE
A what?

CHRIS (PHONE)
You're so wrapped up in your own
power and glory and self-importance
that you don't give a thought to
anyone else or anything else.

JOE
Oh, okay. Wow.

CHRIS (PHONE)
You asked.

JOE
And you definitely answered.

Silence.

CHRIS (PHONE)
What's the problem?

JOE
I'm being pressured to pick a side
on this thing, and I'm torn.

CHRIS (PHONE)
What does Sterling think?

JOE
Sterling thinks I should give the
readers the boogie man they paid to
read about.

CHRIS (PHONE)
What does Nancy think?

JOE
That baby food is expensive.

CHRIS (PHONE)
And what do you think?

JOE

He might be guilty, he might not.
Only thing I know for sure is that
he didn't get a fair trial.

Chris takes her time formulating a response.

CHRIS (PHONE)

Well, here's what I think. I think
the man I married would chase the
truth. But the man I divorced would
chase the story.

Joe takes a deep breath.

CHRIS (PHONE) (CONT'D)

Good luck, Joe.

They hang up.

Joe contemplates his next move.

INT. TERMINAL ISLAND - NIGHT

Jeff lies in bed, his eyes open.

He fixates on the stain he told Joe about -- an abstract
pattern on a cement brick.

It changes shape, the hallucinogenic reality of confinement.

INT. JEFF'S CONDO - DAY

Joe stands at his corkboard, which is covered in evidence and
photos. One of them catches his eye in a way it hadn't
before. A crime scene photo of Kimmy in her bed.

Something occurs to him--

He re-pins the photo and stumbles around until he locates a
box of binders, folders, and blue notepads.

He flips through them until he finds what he's looking for.

EXT. NORTH CAROLINA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Jeff and Joe share a flask on the NCU campus.

JEFF

I can still hear Kimmy screaming
Daddy, Daddy. By the time I tried
mouth-to-mouth, it was too late.

RETURN TO PRESENT

Joe slowly walks back to the corkboard, repeating "mouth to mouth, mouth to mouth" on his way.

He confronts Kimmy's crime scene photo again.

JOE

If he gave you mouth-to-mouth, why
are you lying on your side?

EXT. 544 CASTLE DRIVE - NIGHT

The full moon gives the house a horror show quality. A MAN in a trench coat and hat is silhouetted in front.

It's cold, and the man's breath escapes him in short bursts.

A taxi carrying Joe pulls up. He pays the cabbie and gets out, approaching the man in the trench-coat.

It's Freddy Kassab.

FREDDY

Why did you call, Mr. McGinniss?

JOE

I'm ready for that perspective now.

FREDDY

First thing you need to know is
that Jeffrey MacDonald is a master
manipulator. It took me 20 years to
figure that out, and I'm nobody's
fool. Hell, I called that son of a
bitch my "son." So, don't presume
to know him just because you've
shared a beer together.

JOE

You turned on him after you saw his
interview on Dick Cavett?

Freddy begins to walk towards the house. Joe catches up.

FREDDY

Not just Cavett. The Article 32
hearing was closed to the public,
so I requested a full transcript. I
read every page. Multiple times.
You know what I found?

JOE

Inconsistencies.

FREDDY

Fuck inconsistencies. Yes, there were inconsistencies, but it was more than that. He testified that he volunteered for the army, but he told Colette he'd been drafted. It's a small thing, but it reveals something big. Jeff will be whoever you need him to be.

(pause)

He wanted Colonel Rock to think he was a patriotic American who signed up while everyone else was dodging the war. He wanted Colette to think he had no choice. That he had to spend time away from home because the Army demanded it. Who knows what the truth is? His testimony is full of that type of subtle manipulation. And it all points to one thing. Everything Jeffrey MacDonald says is a lie.

They reach the house.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

They gave me unfettered access to the house in case I thought of anything else they missed.

Freddy leads Joe around the back of the house.

INT. 544 CASTLE DRIVE - NIGHT

They enter the bedroom.

FREDDY

They kept the power on for me, too.

Freddy turns on a couple of lights, making the scene exactly as it was on February 17, 1970.

JOE

It looks different at night.

FREDDY

The government focused on what the physical evidence showed. Splinters here. Fibers there. How the blood collected on Jeff's pajama top. But the real story is in the void. The truth within the lies.

(pause)

(MORE)

FREDDY (CONT'D)

For instance, Jeff said he washed dishes that night because Colette had to rush off to class and the dinner plates were left in the sink. Mr. McGinniss, I've known Jeffrey a very long time. The man's never washed a dish in his life.

JOE

Why lie about such a small detail?

FREDDY

Because it made him look domesticated. Loving. And it made Colette look inattentive and cold.

They move down the hallway to the living room.

On the way, Joe peeks into Kristen's room and notices the large brown blood stain on the floor.

JOE

Jeff told me he gave them mouth-to-mouth, but the girls were found on their sides.

FREDDY

He also said he could see the air coming out of their chests, from their wounds.

Joe processes the information.

JOE

Wait. Kimberly didn't have any chest wounds.

FREDDY

And the lights were off.

JOE

You can't see anything in here.

They continue to the living room.

Freddy lies on the couch. He pantomimes as he talks--

FREDDY

He said he woke up to Colette and Kimberly screaming and saw three men and a woman standing over him.
(MORE)

FREDDY (CONT'D)

He sat up just as the Negro lifted the club over his head and struck him, causing him to fall back onto the couch. He got himself back up into a seated position and grabbed the club, at which point he was stabbed in the chest by one of the white men.

(beat)

Jeff dropped the club and tried to fight the white guys, who unleashed a reign of blows on him. At some point, his pajama top was pulled over his head and got bound up around his hands.

(beat)

He managed to push himself to the edge of the couch and was hit, losing consciousness. He never got up from a seated position, and the attack lasted 15 to 20 seconds.

(beat)

Now you be the negro.

Joe thinks before starting.

With Freddy lying beneath him--

FREDDY (CONT'D)

Jeff described him as 5'10", and we know the club was 30 inches long.

Joe slowly pantomimes the movements of the attackers.

JOE

The Negro raises the club over his--

Joe stretches his hands over his head. It's a low ceiling.

JOE (CONT'D)

The ceiling's too low. He'd have scraped it with the club.

FREDDY

And yet, there are no marks up there, are there?

JOE

And where'd the Negro go while the two white guys were hitting him?

FREDDY

I guess he decided to step back and wait patiently for his turn.

JOE

And how could his shirt have been pulled over his head if it was ripped down the front?

Joe's heart is racing.

JOE (CONT'D)

Show me more.

INT. TERMINAL ISLAND - DAY

Joe has trouble looking Jeff in the eye.

JOE

I'm flying back to Jersey at the end of the week to be with Nancy when the baby comes.

JEFF

Wow. Ready to pop, huh? Man, time just flies. Even in here.

JOE

Keep recording the tapes. They've been amazing. Just start sending them to Sterling's office, okay?

JEFF

Why? Don't want me knowing where you live?

JOE

I just want to make sure anything book-related is filtered through the office, that's all.

JEFF

Gotcha. When can I see pages?

JOE

As soon as they're approved by the editor at Dell. It's a process, but I promise, you'll get them.

The guard enters, ready to take Jeff back to his cell.

JEFF

Bernie thinks our chances on appeal are 70/30.

JOE

That's great.

They give each other a strong hug.

JEFF
(mid hug)
Give Nancy my best. And
congratulations on the baby.

Joe smiles, and they pat each other on the back.

As soon as Jeff is out of sight, Joe's smile fades.

PRE-LAP: Sounds from a delivery room take us to--

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Nancy gives birth with Joe beside her.

The doctors clean up their crying SON (MATTHEW) and hand him to an exhausted and sweaty Nancy.

NIGHT

Nancy is asleep.

Joe holds Matthew in a chair next to the bed. It's dark in the room, and Joe's eyes get heavy.

His head bobs a few times until he falls asleep.

PRE-LAP: Hank Williams' *Jambalaya*

INT. CADILAC - DAY (JOE'S DREAM)

Joe drives through the mid-west, Jeff in the passenger seat. Beautiful blue skies and farm land stretch out into infinity.

They are at ease with each other. Jeff rides the wind with his hand out the window.

He passes a flask to Joe.

They absorb the perfect weather.

EXT. DINER - DAY (JOE'S DREAM)

Joe and Jeff eat greasy hamburgers and drink root beer floats through the window of a 50's Diner.

They laugh and tell stories.

EXT. MID-WEST - DUSK (JOE'S DREAM)

Car parked on the shoulder, Joe lounges on the hood, smoking, while Jeff relieves himself just off the road.

INT. CADILAC - NIGHT (JOE'S DREAM)

Joe drives some more, Jeff having dozed off.

They get to a railroad crossing, and Joe stops the car. He turns off the radio, silencing Hank Williams.

Then, he slowly drives onto the track and parks.

The jerky motion of the car and the flashing lights of the railroad crossing sign wake Jeff up as the guardrails close in front of and behind the car.

Jeff laughs at first, thinking Joe is messing with him. Joe just stares at the steering wheel.

There's a train on the horizon.

Joe casually opens the driver's side door and walks away, but Jeff can't open the passenger door.

As the train nears--

JEFF

Joe! JOE!

Jeff pulls at his seatbelt, but it's stuck.

He can't escape.

Just as the train is about to collide with the Cadillac--

NANCY (V.O.)

Joe!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Joe wakes with a start.

Nancy is above him, snatching baby Matthew out of his hands.

NANCY

You can't fall asleep like that.
The baby can fall. I've heard
horror stories about--

JOE

Sorry. I just--

NANCY

No "I just" anything. You have to
be more careful.

Nancy "shushes" the now-crying Matthew.

Joe shakes off the nightmare.

He goes to light a smoke but thinks better of it.

JOE
I have to fly back to Long Beach.

NANCY
I thought you were done.

JOE
I was. But now -- I need to go back
and look at it all over again. See
if anything sticks out.

He starts to say something else, but stops himself.

NANCY
What?

JOE
Nothing.

NANCY
No secrets, Joe.

JOE
What if there's nothing there?

NANCY
Then you find something.

Matthew yawns in Nancy's arms.

INT. JEFF'S CONDO - NIGHT

Exhausted and slightly drunk, Joe stands at the back of the condo by the glass windows overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

No longer giving a fuck, Joe smokes.

Jeff's cassettes play over the sound system like muzak--

JEFF (V.O.)
There's just nothing that happened.
You couldn't hear the music on the
radio, you couldn't hear a song; if
it was an old song it's because I
heard it with them; if it was a new
song it's because they would have
loved to have heard it--

As Jeff drones on and on, Joe smokes and sips his drink,
looking out over the water. The yacht is gone.

Joe turns back towards the room -- every available inch of floor and wall space is covered with documents, photos, stacks of cassette tapes, etc...

It looks as if the entire interior of the condo has been papier mache'd.

He scans the terrain, unsure of what to do next. To stall, he polishes off most of his drink and jingles the remnants of ice and gin in the glass.

To get to the bar, Joe has to zig and zag his way through the documents so as not to step on any of them.

He makes it to the bar as Jeff continues to reminisce in the background. Cigarette dangling from his lips, he looks over his shoulder at the sound system while plopping a fresh cube of ice in his glass.

The cube hits the edge of the glass and falls to the floor.

In his haste to catch it, Joe knocks over his glass, spilling the remaining gin all over the documents.

JOE

Shit.

He bends to pick up the documents when something catches his eye -- stuck to the back of an old, and now soggy, police report is a handwritten note.

He peels it off and reads it--

JOE (CONT'D)

*We ate dinner together at 5:45pm.
It is possible I had one diet pill
at this time. I do not remember,
and do not think I had one, but it
is possible. I had been running a
weight-control program for my unit,
and I put my name at the top of the
program to encourage participation.
I had lost 12 to 15 pounds in the
prior 3-4 weeks, in the process
using 3-5 capsules of Eskatrol
Spansule.*

He looks up, something triggering him.

He races to the other end of the room now, not caring if he steps on a document.

He rummages through a box of blue notepads, tossing them around until he finds it--

THE RED NOTEPAD he used the day he met Jeff.

He opens it as if it's a religious artifact. There, among the doodles, is the word "Eskatrol".

JOE (CONT'D)

Fuck me.

INT. TERMINAL ISLAND - NIGHT

Jeff does pushups in his cell as we--

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - DAY

A nice split-level house, filled with books and boxes and baby toys.

Joe walks a four-month-old Matthew around as he talks to Nancy, who is cutting up vegetables in the kitchen as a sauce thickens on the stove.

NANCY

They didn't test for amphetamines?

JOE

Never occurred to them.

NANCY

So, he could've had god knows how much of this stuff in his system.

JOE

Yup. And you know what taking too much Eskatrol can do to you?

He shakes his head. Baby Matthew giggles and shakes his head, too. Joe talks in a baby voice--

JOE (CONT'D)

Neither do I. But it can't be good.

The baby giggles.

NANCY

Come here. Taste this.

Joe bounces Matthew to the kitchen. Nancy feeds Joe sauce.

JOE

Oooo. Hot.

NANCY

But good?

JOE

Good.

(gives her a kiss)

I'm not saying the pills made him
homicidal. But what if--

NANCY

They enhanced his mood?

They stare at each other like "I think you might be on to something".

RING RING -- the front bell.

Nancy goes to the door as Joe munches on a piece of carrot.

JOE

I mean, he was already so wrapped
up in the need to at least appear
masculine -- like his father. And
he fed off power. As a doctor. As a
Green Beret. And now Colette is
taking child psych classes and
what, questioning his parenting?

Nancy opens the door for the MAILMAN, and he's got a large
package for them.

Joe eyes the package with suspicion as the mailman brings it
inside. Joe places Matthew in a playpen and joins Nancy at
the door.

Matthew starts to cry as soon as he's put down.

The mailman exits, and Nancy opens the box.

A ROCKING HORSE, very similar to the one in Kristen's
bedroom. And a note.

Nancy reads it--

NANCY

Spoil him rotten -- JM, MD

The baby continues to cry.

INT. TERMINAL ISLAND - DAY

Jeff is on the phone with Sterling's office.

JEFF

What do you mean he's unavailable?
Do you have any idea how hard it is
for me to schedule a phone call?
No. It's been six months and I
haven't heard a fucking thing.

(beat)

No, I won't calm down. I'm rotting
in this fucking -- who is this
anyway? What's your name? Why am I
wasting my time talking to you? Put
Sterling on the -- Oh. Sterling
isn't available either? Bullshit!

The guard looks over, ready for Jeff to go ballistic.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Fine. Fine. Look, just leave
another fucking message for me.
Tell Joe that I still haven't
gotten any pages, and I feel like
he's shutting me out. Great. Yeah.
Thank you, too.

He hangs up violently, slamming the phone down on the
receiver three times for emphasis.

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK

SUPER: Eighteen months later

INT. TERMINAL ISLAND - DAY

The 60 Minutes crew prepares the visitors' area of Terminal
Island for an interview:

- GRIPS set up lights and run cables.
- CAMERAMEN check and clean lenses.
- THE SOUND CREW prepares boom mikes.

Jeff is tended to by a MAKEUP ARTIST, his demeanor proud, as
if he's getting ready for the Dick Cavett Show again.

Finally, MIKE WALLACE sits across from Jeff.

WALLACE

Dr. MacDonald, good afternoon.

JEFF

It's a real pleasure to meet you,
Mike. You're a fine journalist. No
nonsense. No holding back. Just the
truth. Unfiltered. Brilliant.

WALLACE

Thank you.

JEFF

Find the place okay?

This makes Wallace laugh

WALLACE

No problem. I'd like to jump right in, if that's all right?

JEFF

Of course.

WALLACE

What went wrong?

Jeff chuckles as he leans back.

JEFF

Wow, well -- more than you can know in just 60 minutes.

WALLACE

We'll edit it down.

JEFF

In short, the jury didn't hear all of the evidence. I mean, I don't blame them for convicting me. They only heard one side of the story. It's not their fault the government lied. How were they to know?

WALLACE

Does that anger you?

JEFF

Of course. But a friend once told me that truth never lies. And I believe that. So I'm confident that, eventually, people will know all the details. And when they do, there's no way anyone in the world could possibly believe I had anything to do with the murders.

WALLACE

And how do you plan on getting those facts out? By way of appeal?

JEFF

Well, naturally, we're appealing the verdict. I never got a fair trial. That's without question. And there are other legal issues at play as well. But you'd have to talk to Bernie Segal to get that information. No, what I'm talking about is something else.

WALLACE

Joe McGinniss's book.

JEFF

Yes. If you're familiar with his work, he's a top-notch--

WALLACE

I'm familiar. But let's return to that in a moment.

JEFF

Okay.

WALLACE

What I want to know is, did you have drugs of any kind in your system on the night of February 16th, 1970?

JEFF

(taken aback)

No. That's never been in dispute.

WALLACE

No drugs whatsoever?

JEFF

Taking drugs goes against everything I believe in.

WALLACE

What is Eskatrol?

JEFF

Eskatrol? It's a diet pill.

WALLACE

An amphetamine, isn't it? Speed?

JEFF

Yes. I suppose.

WALLACE

Did you use this Eskatrol substance to assist you in losing roughly 15 pounds at the time of the murders?

JEFF

I don't know what you're talking about, Mike.

Wallace reads from a piece of paper:

WALLACE

We ate dinner together at 5:45pm. It is possible I had one diet pill at this time. I do not remember and do not think I had one, but it is possible. I had lost 12 to 15 pounds in the prior 3 to 4 weeks, in the process, using three to five capsules of Eskatrol spansule. I was also--

JEFF

5 capsules for 3 weeks?

WALLACE

According to this.

JEFF

That's not possible.

WALLACE

Then why would you put it down here that there was even a possibility?

JEFF

These are notes given to my first attorney. He told me to bare my soul as to any possibilities, so we could always be prepared.

WALLACE

Did you lose 15 pounds in the 3 weeks prior to the murders?

JEFF

I don't think that I did.

WALLACE

It's in your notes.

(reading)

(MORE)

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I had lost 12 to 15 pounds in the prior 3 to 4 weeks, in the process, using 3 to 5 capsules of Eskatrol spansules. That's speed. And Compazine, to counteract the excitability of the speed. I was losing weight because I was working out with the boxing team and the coach told me to lose weight.

JEFF

Mike, there's a possibility I took the pill. But nowhere in there does it say I took it.

WALLACE

If you were on the boxing team--

JEFF

Right.

WALLACE

One has to say, look, why would he be taking off 12 to 15 pounds in the period of 3 to 4 weeks, again, in your own handwriting?

JEFF

But if I did take off those 12 to 15 pounds over that time period using 3 to 4 tablets of Eskatrol, that's not abnormal. That's a normal thing. The problem is you're making it sound like a person who's honest and writes honest notes to his attorney for any possibility is guilty of a triple homicide.

WALLACE

I'm not making the connection. This was discovered by Joe McGinniss.

Jeff is speechless.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Mr. McGinniss believes a personality disorder, pathological narcissism, in conjunction with Eskatrol abuse, sparked a rage in you that ultimately led to the murder of your family.

JEFF

Joe wouldn't say that.

WALLACE

This is from an advanced copy of
Mr. McGinniss's book, *Fatal Vision*--
(reading)

He had lost fifteen pounds in three weeks while taking a drug that can cause insanity. He was suffering from short-term physical exhaustion and longer-term emotional stress. His life, in fact, had been one extended period of stress. Financial, intellectual, psychological -- ever since Colette had accidentally become pregnant with their first child. Might it be too much to surmise that since early childhood he had been suffering also from the effects of the strain required to repress the boundless rage which psychological maladjustment had caused him to feel towards child or woman, wife or mother -- the female sex?

Wallace looks up briefly for a response but continues reading before Jeff has a chance to say anything.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

And that on this night, this raw and somber military-base February Monday night, finally, with the amphetamines swelling the rage to flood tide, and with Colette, pregnant Colette, perhaps seeking to communicate to him some of her new insights into personality structure and behavioral patterns -- indeed, possibly even attempting to explain him to himself, his defense mechanism, for the first and last time, proved insufficient? Would it be too much to suggest that in that one instant, whatever its forever unknowable proximate cause might have been, a critical mass had been achieved, a fission had taken place, and that by 3:40am on February 1970, the ensuing explosion of rage had destroyed not only Jeffrey MacDonald's wife and daughters, but all he had sought to make of his life? Perhaps.

Wallace puts the paper down. Jeff can only muster--

JEFF
How did you get an advanced copy?

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK

PRE-LAP: A bottle of champagne is popped. People cheer.

INT. FANCY NEW YORK RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The bottle was popped by Joe, smiling wide and laughing.

It's a party.

And it's all in his honor.

Nancy is there, as is Sterling. The rest of the crowd are high-class SOCIALITES and fellow JOURNALISTS.

Joe pours the bottle out over a pyramid of flutes.

Joe empties the bottle and grabs the flute off the top. He triumphantly takes a sip as everyone cheers.

LATER

Joe, still with his flute in hand, is at the hostess stand talking to the MAÎTRE D'.

JOE
Chris Schaeffer. With an S.

The Maître D' checks a list.

MAÎTRE D'
No, sir. She hasn't arrived yet.

JOE
Are you sure? Did you step away
maybe for a moment?

MAÎTRE D'
I've been here the whole time, sir.

Joe smiles and hands him a folded-up \$20 bill.

JOE
Let me know when she gets here.

MAÎTRE D'
Of course, sir.

Joe turns around and almost collides with JOE WAMBAUGH, who has a TROPHY DATE by his side.

JOE
Wambaugh! Hey, man. So great you could make it.

WAMBAUGH
Congratulations, Joe.

JOE
Thanks.

WAMBAUGH
Earned every penny of that advance.

JOE
Ah, yes, the advance. Spent half of it on whiskey and women--

JOE AND WAMBAUGH
And the other half I wasted!

They toast and drink.

TROPHY DATE
It really is awful, though. How did you live with that maniac?

Joe turns on the seriousness like a faucet.

JOE
It was a nightmare. I knew he was guilty, but I had a job to do. I had an obligation to get the story.

TROPHY DATE
You must have been terrified.

JOE
Every day. All I could think about were those girls. And my wife. I just wanted to get back to Nancy. I was so relieved when the verdict was read that I actually cried.

Trophy date puts her hand over her heart.

TROPHY DATE
Amazing. It really is riveting stuff. I couldn't put it down.

Sterling finds his way over.

STERLING
You and 100,000 other readers.

Sterling and Joe hug.

JOE
Looks like you're stuck with me for
another ten years, huh?

STERLING
I'd say so.

LATER

The flute is gone, replaced by a tumbler of whiskey.

Joe and Nancy are talking to another COUPLE. Joe keeps
looking past them, to the lobby and the Maître d'.

NANCY
I could hear it in Joe's voice when
he'd call. He was living so close
to all that rage, you know?

MAN
Amazing.

WOMAN
How'd you get through it?

Joe reengages after Nancy gives him a soft elbow to the ribs.

JOE
I just wanted to get back to Nancy.
I was so relieved when the verdict
was read that I actually cried.

He's won them over. Joe smiles and excuses himself when he
sees Sterling waving him over.

He kisses Nancy. They talk in the corner, quietly--

JOE (CONT'D)
Did you find out? Is she here? She
said she'd try to--

STERLING
She's not coming, Joe. She sent a
nice card, though.

He hands Joe a card: "Congratulations. We wish you all the
best. Always, C."

Joe shakes it off and puts on a brave face.

JOE
Oh well. Fuck it. I was just
inviting her out of respect.

STERLING
Of course.

He switches gears.

JOE
Any word on the Alaska project?

STERLING
Not yet. But I have gotten word
about a man named Robert Marshall.

JOE
Who?

STERLING
He's standing trial for hiring
someone to kill his wife. It could
be another Fatal Vision.

Joe sighs.

He polishes off his tumbler of whiskey.

LATER

Joe is standing in front of all his guests. They are all
seated at tables for his speech. He is back on his game.

JOE
It's easy to support someone when
they're doing well. I know that.
And it's just as easy to give up on
someone when they're not. But you,
the people in this room, never gave
up on me. Even when I gave you
every reason in the world to do so.

He looks at Nancy, smiling wide with pride.

JOE (CONT'D)
And so--

He raises his glass. The guests follow suit.

JOE (CONT'D)

As success comes and goes, and as
fame rises and falls like the tide,
I will always be grateful for the
love and support of my family and
friends. Cheers!

PRE-LAP: *Theme From A Summer Place.*

INT. TERMINAL ISLAND - NIGHT

Jeff sits on his bed and stares at that same spot on the wall. He closes his eyes, and we are transported to--

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Colette and the girls are dancing with Jeff on the sand. Laughing and twirling as the sun sets behind them.

The music continues.

It's a wonderful vision.

INT. TERMINAL ISLAND - NIGHT

Jeff has tears in his eyes.

The music plays on.

He opens his eyes to find that same spot, still frozen on the wall. The music takes us out.

FADE TO BLACK.