

Homer

FADE IN

INT CAR - PRESENT DAY

CLIFF, 35, handsome, a man's man, the kind of guy who can attract a beautiful woman and keep her interested. His wife JULIA, also 35, is that woman.

Cliff looks over at Julia who stares out the passenger side window. Cliff takes one hand from the wheel, reaches over and grabs Julia's hand.

CLIFF
Hey. It's going to be alright.
We're going to get good news today.
Trust me. I can feel it.

Julia nods, although not convinced. Outside her window a row of cookie-cutter homes whizz by when suddenly...

JULIA
Cliff. Pull over!

CLIFF
What is it?

JULIA
Pull over!

Cliff complies with Julia's order and steers the car gently to the curb.

JULIA
Back up.

CLIFF
What is it?

JULIA
Just back up.

Cliff throws the car in reverse.

JULIA
Stop.

Their car stops and Julia exits.

CLIFF
Julia... Julia! Where are you going?

JULIA

Come on.

CUT TO:

EXT SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

Julia stands before an ELDERLY WOMAN seated in a folding chair. The woman, an immigrant with gypsy heritage, wears layered, colorful clothing and an abundance of jewelry. To her left sits a sign "PUPPIES TO A GOOD HOME" and to the right, TWO FULL GROWN, BEAUTIFUL YELLOW LABRADOR RETRIEVERS. In front of her sits a LARGE CARDBOARD BOX.

JULIA

Can I see?

ELDERLY WOMAN

(thick Russian accent)

Of course my dear.

Julia leans over. ANGLE ON the bottom of the box where four adorable yellow labrador retriever puppies, only two months old, scurry about.

JULIA

They're adorable. Cliff come look at them.

CLIFF

Honey. Come on. We're going to be late.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Would you like to hold one?

JULIA

Oh. I'd love to.

CLIFF

Honey.

JULIA

Just for a minute.

The elderly woman reaches down and after careful consideration, selectively picks up one of the puppies. As she is about to hand the puppy to Julia, she stops. A gentle WIND picks up. The nearby trees RUSTLE. A BURST OF BRIGHT SUN shines down. A sense of divine intervention fills the air. The elderly woman looks up to the heavens and then to Julia.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Come here. Come closer.

Julia locks eyes with Cliff.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Come on. Don't be afraid my dear. I
won't bite you. I promise.

Julia moves closer.

ELDERLY WOMAN
I want you to listen to me
carefully. This dog here. He is a
VERY special dog. He's the runt of
the litter and that alone makes him
special. But there is MUCH more to
it than that. For he was the fourth
dog born on the fourth day of the
fourth month of the year. Just like
his mother here.

One of the adult yellow labs looks over.

JULIA
April 4th. I was born on April 4th.
That's really weird. Isn't it
honey?

CLIFF
Yeah. Weird. Let's go. She's just
trying to get you to buy a dog.

ELDERLY WOMAN
(insulted)
This dog is not for sale.
(a beat)
I give him to you.

The elderly woman holds the tiny puppy out to Julia but Julia
backs away.

JULIA
Oh no. I can't take him. I just
stopped by to look. That's all.

The elderly woman moves even closer, smiles sadly and then
places her hand gently on Julia's cheek.

ELDERLY WOMAN
You are SO pretty. And so young. It
is such a shame... Now I want you to
do as I tell you.
(MORE)

ELDERLY WOMAN (cont'd)

I want you to take this dog home with you. And remember. He is a very special dog. He will watch over you and all of those that you love... You'll need that.

CLIFF

Thank you anyway. But we don't want a dog.

Two beats and Julia lifts the puppy out of the elderly woman's arms, turns and walks straight past Cliff.

CLIFF

What are you doing? Julia?

(following after)

Honey. We can't take care of a dog. Not now.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Miss.

Julia stops and turns.

ELDERLY WOMAN

I hope you don't mind. But she's already taken the privilege of naming them... And his name
(dramatic)
is HOMER.

JULIA

Who named them?

ELDERLY WOMAN

Why his mother here of course. Adrienne.

The adult yellow lab looks towards Julia.

JULIA

Don't you worry Adrienne. I'll take good care of your Homer.

Adrienne turns back to the elderly woman.

ELDERLY WOMAN

She says she KNOWS you will.

Julia hops in the car, Cliff right behind.

CUT TO:

INT CAR - CONTINUOUS

Julia holds the squirmy Homer.

CLIFF

What are we going to do with a dog?

Homer licks Julia's face.

JULIA

I don't know. But we'll figure it out. Don't worry honey. Everything is going to be fine.

CLIFF

Homer. What a name.

Cliff throws the car into drive and pulls back out onto the road.

CUT TO:

EXT SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

The elderly woman sits watching as their car drives past. Julia looks out the window and waives. Adrienne looks up to the elderly woman.

ELDERLY WOMAN

I know my dear. You are right.
It is HOMER who will take care of
THEM.

Their car drives down the street and out of view.

CUT TO:

EXT HOSPITAL - A SHORT TIME LATER

A parking lot and adjacent hospital. (CU.) Sign - PATTERSON
MEMORIAL HOSPITAL.

CUT TO:

INT HOSPITAL - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff and Julia navigate the long hallway, Homer asleep in Julia's arms. Cliff opens one of the many office doors that line the hallway and Julia enters. Around them, the hospital buzzes with nurses, doctors and patients moving about.

(CU.) Glass portion of office door.

In black painted on type - DR. Simon Friedman - Oncologist
And below...

CANCER UNIT - OUTPATIENT

CUT TO:

INT WAITING ROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Chairs line the interior and perimeter of the room, a variety of people filling the seats. Cliff and Julia sit quietly in the back, a well behaved Homer rests in Julia's arms. A NURSE pokes her head out from behind the partitioned counter.

NURSE
Mrs. Thompson.

Julia hands Homer to Cliff, braces herself, then walks towards the counter.

CUT TO:

INT WAITING ROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

The door next to the counter swings open and Julia steps out. Cliff desperately searches for an indication of the news. And then has it. Julia's face tells the tale. She has been given bad news. Cliff's heart sinks. He stands, hands Homer to Julia, gently places his arm around Julia and the three turn to leave.

FADE OUT.

INT UPSCALE RESTAURANT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cliff hunches over the island, a Styrofoam container in front of him. The kitchen deserted, he wears a white chef's uniform soiled with food stains. ANGLE ON the containers contents. Breaded veal covered in sauce and melted cheese. He secures the lid, sheds his uniform and discards it in a nearby linen basket.

CUT TO:

INT RESTAURANT FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The restaurant is spacious and elegant. An antique, ornate carved bar off to one side, chandeliers and potted plants scattered about. RUBY, the restaurant's elegant, elderly hostess, stops Cliff at the door.

RUBY
Cliff...How is she doing?
(off his look)
Will you please tell her I asked
about her? And if there's anything
I can do. Please. Let me know.

Cliff manages a smile then pushes through the front door.

CUT TO:

EXT RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Cliff prepares to cross the street when...

RUBY
Cliff!

Cliff turns.

RUBY
Here. For your dog.

Ruby hands Cliff a PAPER BAG from which Cliff pulls out a
RIDICULOUSLY LARGE HAM BONE.

CLIFF
Ruby. He's just a puppy. This thing
is twice as big as him.

RUBY
Would you rather him chew your
furniture? Is that what you want?
Take it home to him. Trust me.
He'll love it.

Cliff smiles, then turns and crosses the deserted street.

CUT TO:

INT CLIFF AND JULIA'S HOUSE - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff climbs the front stairs to the second floor.

CUT TO:

INT UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Cliff stands with GLADYS, the home nurse taking care of
Julia. Gladys, in her mid-fifties, wears a white nurse-like
coat, a stethoscope hangs from its pocket.

GLADYS

I have her set up in her room. I'll sleep in the bedroom next to her if that's alright. In case she needs me during the night.

CLIFF

That's fine.

GLADYS

She just asked for Homer again. He's kept her company all day. Pets are such wonderful therapy. I prescribe them to all my patients. I just let him out back to do his business. Let me go get him.

Gladys turns and disappears down the hall. Cliff enters Julia's room.

CUT TO:

INT JULIA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Julia, the cancer advanced, is bedridden and suffers from a profound weight loss.

CLIFF

I brought you something.

Cliff sits on the bed and pops open the container.

JULIA

Ooohhh. Veal. Did I ever tell you your Veal was the reason I married you? It looks wonderful.

(a beat)

Set it on the table. I'll eat it later.

(off his look)

I promise.

Deflated, Cliff sets the container aside.

JULIA

What's in the bag?

CLIFF

Oh. Just a bone. Ruby sent it home for Homer.

JULIA

That's so sweet.

Cliff pulls the bone from the bag.

JULIA
(laughing)
Oh my word.

As Julia enjoys a hearty laugh, Cliff watches in awe. Eventually her laughter subsides and the two lock eyes. As with soulmates, there is no need for words.

CUT TO:

EXT BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

The yard lit by the back porch light, Homer scampers throughout the yard, stopping to sniff nearly everything in his path. The yard is lined by a wood picket fence, the posts four inches apart and four feet high. At the front of the yard, Cliff's neighbor maintains an impeccable flower bed directly opposite Cliff's fence. Homer trots over and lifts his leg on the fence next to the flower bed sure to water the bed through the posts.

With leg in mid-air, Homer catches sight of ALICE HICKEY, Cliff and Julia's elderly, wheelchair bound next door neighbor. Alice is mean and looks it. She looks down at Homer from her lighted back porch through squinted eyes, a true descendent of the Wicked Witch of the West.

Homer wastes no time. He drops his leg, turns and runs up the back stairs and onto the porch. He looks over at Alice who continues her evil, intimidating stare. Homer turns back to the door and scratches furiously, desperate to be let back in. The door opens.

GLADYS
You ready to come back in?

Homer darts past.

GLADYS
I guess so.

Gladys closes the door and shuts off the back porch light.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Homer follows Gladys through the swinging door off to the side of the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT JULIA'S BEDROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

The door opens and Homer scampers in and over to the bed. Julia lights up at the sight of the tiny Homer.

JULIA

Homer!

Homer reaches his paws up and onto the side of the bed, too small to jump up. Julia reaches down and scoops him up.

JULIA

You being a good boy? Huh? You
being a good boy for Gladys?

Cliff, feeling the odd man out, stands and walks to the door. At the door, Cliff turns. Completely unnoticed, Cliff turns and walks from the room.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Cliff stands over the trash can. He steps down on the lever and the lid springs open. He takes one last look at the untouched veal before depositing it with the rest of the days trash.

FADE OUT.

INT JULIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Cliff enters carrying a CARDBOARD SIGN. "WE MISS YOU" emblazoned in crayon, personal notes scribbled by young children cover it. Julia is asleep, Homer at the foot of the bed. Julia's eyes open.

CLIFF

Hi. I'm sorry. I tried to be quiet.
I didn't want to wake you.

JULIA

What do you have there?

CLIFF

It's from your students. The school
dropped it off. Where do you want
it?

JULIA

Bring it to me. I want to see it.

Cliff hands the sign to Julia.

JULIA

Oh. That's so nice. They're such good kids. I had such good kids.

Julia hands the sign back and Cliff sets it aside. He turns to leave.

CLIFF

I'll let you get some rest.

JULIA

No. Don't go. Stay with me. Please. Stay with me for awhile.

Julia slides over and pats the bed aside of her.

JULIA

Lay down. Lay down and hold me... Please.

Cliff lays down next to his beloved Julia. Julia rests her head on Cliff's chest and Cliff holds Julia in his arms.

FADE OUT:

INT UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cliff and Gladys huddle outside Julia's door, the door partially ajar.

CLIFF

How is she tonight?

GLADYS

The same.

The two peak in Julia's bedroom. There, propped on her side, is Julia. Homer lays next to her, an open CHILDREN'S BOOK in front of them. Julia points to a page then looks to Homer. Homer stares steadfast at the book.

CLIFF

What's she doing?

GLADYS

I'm not quite sure.

(a beat)

But if I didn't know any better, I'd swear she's trying to teach that dog how to read.

CUT TO:

INT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Julia points to the page.

JULIA

OK. Now what's this word here?

(a beat)

Good job Homer! OK. Now let's try something a little harder. What's this word?... Sound it out first... That's good. You're close. Now try again... Oh. Good job Homer. Good job.

Homer's tail wags and Julia rewards her student with a hug. At the door, Gladys and Cliff turn to each other and exchange a mutual look of confusion.

CUT TO:

INT GLADYS' S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Gladys is sound asleep, a soft whistling snore emanating from her open mouth. The alarm on the night stand BEEPS. Gladys sits up, shuts off the alarm, grabs her robe and bends down to put on her slippers. On the floor, pacing nervously, is Homer.

GLADYS

I'm coming. I'm coming.

CUT TO:

INT UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Gladys walks the length of the hallway with Homer right behind. At the end, Gladys heads down the stairs. Homer still following.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Gladys pushes through the swinging door, Homer right behind. Homer runs to the back door and begins the "trying to hold it in dance", the ritualistic dance of the bladder-filled pup.

GLADYS

Hold your horses.

Gladys opens the door. Before even daring to venture out, Homer looks over to the Hickey's back porch. The coast clear, he darts down the steps and relieves himself against a bush.

GLADYS
Go some place else for a change. Oh
that poor bush. It's a goner.

Homer runs back up the steps and into the house. Gladys shuts the door.

CUT TO:

INT JULIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Outside Julia's door, Cliff spies on Julia and Homer. Julia lays on her side, the CARDBOARD SIGN laid on the bed in front of her. Homer sits next to Julia looking down at the sign.

JULIA
OK. Now what's this word?

Homer looks up at Julia.

JULIA
Very good.

Cliff's eyes narrow.

JULIA
And this word...
Take your time...
Sound it out.

Homer moves in closer, his nose practically touching.

JULIA
That was close. The word is
happily. You forgot to pronounce
the i. Now put it together and read
the whole sentence.

Two beats and then.

JULIA
Very good Homer. Very good.

Homer's tail wags and Julia gives him a congratulatory hug. Cliff turns away from the door and scratches his head.

CUT TO:

INT JULIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Julia, her skin pale, dark circles surrounding both eyes, is at the end.

A DOCTOR, an elderly man with wispy grey hair, takes her pulse. He closes his black medical bag then walks to the door. He turns before leaving.

DOCTOR
I'll send Cliff in.

JULIA
(labored)
No.
(a beat)
Send Homer in. I want to talk to
him first.

DOCTOR
Julia. Cliff is right outside.

JULIA
I know. I want to talk to Homer
first. Please.

The doctor turns and heads into the hallway.

CUT TO:

INT UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

There sitting on the floor holding Homer is Cliff.

CLIFF
Can I go in?

DOCTOR
Not yet. It seems she wants to talk
to HOMER first.

Homer's tail starts wagging.

DOCTOR
She was very specific.

Cliff sets Homer on the floor and Homer quickly scampers into
Julia's room.

CUT TO:

INT JULIA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Homer walks to the side of Julia's bed. Julia reaches down
and scoops him up and on to her chest. Homer and Julia are
face to face.

JULIA

Now Homer. I need you listen to me.
I'm going to need your help. It's
going to be up to you to take care
of him for me. Will you do that for
me? Huh?

CUT TO:

INT UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Cliff and the doctor watch from the hallway.

DOCTOR

Has she been talking to the dog a
lot?

CLIFF

All the time.

DOCTOR

Perhaps I should have cut back on
her morphine.

CUT TO:

INT JULIA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

JULIA

Now remember Homer. I'm counting on
you.

(braces herself)

Now go and get him.

Homer leans in and licks Julia's face. Julia smiles and
dispenses a last hug. Homer jumps from the bed, walks to the
door and then takes a last look back.

JULIA

I love you Homer.

Homer turns and walks into the hallway. Two beats and the
grief stricken Cliff stands in the doorway. Julia smiles
sweetly as Cliff closes the door.

FADE OUT.

INT LIVINGROOM - DAY

The house is full of guests, the re-pass following Julia's
funeral. In the center sits Cliff, managing smiles as
friends and relatives pass by only to touch his shoulder,
none of them knowing quite what to say.

All alone in the corner of the room sits Homer. Cliff's AUNT BETTY, a large woman in an outdated polka-dotted dress, takes a seat beside Cliff.

AUNT BETTY

So what are you going to do with that dog?

CLIFF

I don't know. I haven't really thought about it.

AUNT BETTY

Well. If you ask me, I think you should get rid of him. You don't need all the mess and clean-up that comes along with a dog. It's a lot of work. A dog needs somebody home with him during the day. A home with kids. I'll make some calls. See if I can find someone who will take him.

Cliff looks towards Homer and Homer stares back. Aunt Betty stands and walks away and her seat is quickly filled by Cliff's mother, RUTH. A pretty woman, late 50's, Ruth is the proverbial mom. She puts her arm around Cliff and Cliff rests his head on her shoulder.

CLIFF

Hi Mom.

RUTH

Hi honey... So what was your Aunt Betty going on about?

CLIFF

She asked me what I was planning on doing with Homer.

RUTH

And?

CLIFF

She said she'd make some calls. See if someone will take him.

RUTH

Julia loved that dog. Give it some thought. You might be surprised. You might grow to love him too.

Homer lays down on the floor with a simultaneous sigh.

CUT TO:

INT HOUSE FOYER - LATER THAT DAY

Cliff and Ruth stand at the front door.

RUTH
You're going to call me tomorrow.
Right?

CLIFF
I'll call you tomorrow. I promise.
Now go.

Heartbroken, Ruth eventually turns and leaves. Cliff turns and finds Homer sitting directly behind him. Cliff walks straight past him. Homer turns and watches him go.

CUT TO:

INT UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - THAT NIGHT

Cliff walks to the end of the hallway and looks in the two empty bedrooms, both beds neatly made. He closes both doors and turns to find Homer.

CLIFF
Go downstairs. Go on.

Using his foot, Cliff gives Homer a gentle nudge towards the stairs. Homer looks up.

CLIFF
You can't sleep up here anymore. Go
on. Go downstairs.

Homer turns, then stops and looks back. Defeated, Homer turns and scampers down the hallway and down the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT BEDROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Wide awake, Cliff lays in bed staring at the ceiling. Eventually, he sits up and grabs his robe off a nearby chair.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Cliff descends the front stairs, the livingroom lit only by the outside streetlight. He crosses the room to the dining room.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

In the corner lays Homer, curled in a ball. When the door swings open, Homer pokes up his head. Cliff crosses the room and sits Indian-style on the floor next to him. He picks up a small, PLASTIC BALL and lightly pitches it across the room.

CLIFF

Come on Homer. Go get it.

Homer stands, retrieves the ball and drops it in Cliff's lap. The whole exercise a big effort. Homer walks onto and curls up on Cliff's lap. Cliff, lost and seemingly alone, leans back against the counter.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - THE FOLLOWING MORNING

Cliff lays on the kitchen floor, his bed for the night. Directly next to him, Homer paces nervously. He has to go out. BAD.

HOMER

(singsong)

Excuse me. Excuse me. I hate to
bother you but I gotta go. I gotta
go bad. Excuse me.

One of Cliff's eyes pops open. Homer moves in to only an inch from his eye.

HOMER

(singsong)

Excuse me. Excuse me. But I gotta
go. I gotta go bad. Hurry. I gotta
go.

Homer dances around. Cliff sits up and backs up as far away from Homer as possible.

CLIFF

What did you say?

HOMER
 (singsong)
 I said I gotta go. I gotta go out.
 Hurry! Hurry! I can't hold it any
 longer. Hurry! I GOTTA GO!

Homer runs to the back door. Cliff jumps to his feet and follows him. Cliff opens the back door and Homer runs out...

CUT TO:

EXT BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Homer stampedes down the steps and on to the lawn where he quickly lifts his leg against the now deceased bush and relieves himself.

HOMER
 AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

Homer prances back up the steps. On his way past Cliff...

HOMER
 (4 year old boys voice)
 That was a close one.

Cliff watches Homer nonchalantly walk by and then follows him into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Homer sits down and stares up at Cliff.

CLIFF
 Did you just... talk?

HOMER
 Uh. Huh.

CLIFF
 No you didn't.

HOMER
 Yes I did.

CLIFF
 That's impossible.

HOMER
 No it isn't.

CLIFF
Stop that!

HOMER
Stop what?

CLIFF
Stop talking to me. Please. Just stop.
(a beat)
I don't believe this. I've lost my mind.

HOMER
I don't think so.

CLIFF
Oh yeah. Says who?
(collecting himself)
OK. OK. Maybe I'm asleep. Maybe that's it.
(to himself)
But I don't really feel like I'm asleep. But would I feel like I was asleep...if I was asleep? I probably wouldn't. I would probably feel like I was awake...if I was asleep. But then how would I know that I was asleep?

Homer cocks his head to the side.

HOMER
(interrupting)
Excuse me. But we need to get on a schedule. I need to go out as soon as I get up. I have trouble holding it in. That nice lady Gladys used to open the door for me but she's not here anymore. And I usually go again after breakfast which that nice lady Gladys used to give to me right about now. That nice lady Gladys used to set her alarm so if you start setting your alarm to make sure you're up then that should be good. Can I have my breakfast now?

CLIFF
Hold on.
(a beat)
First of all.
(MORE)

CLIFF (cont'd)

I don't care WHAT that nice lady Gladys used to do but I can tell you there will be no setting of alarms or serving of breakfast. Or anything. Not until I know what's going on here... Oh my God... I can read animal's minds. That's it. Isn't it? I'm like one of those pet psychics I saw on tv. I am. Aren't I?

HOMER

I don't think so.

Cliff turns and runs to the back door. Homer follows him.

CUT TO:

EXT BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Cliff runs down the stairs and out into the middle of the yard and looks around. THE HICKEY'S CAT sits on the Hickey's picnic table next to the fence. Cliff gets up close to the cat, making the most intensely concentrated face possible. The cat stares back. Homer sits behind him on the porch watching.

CUT TO:

EXT HICKEY'S BACKPORCH - CONTINUOUS

Alice and husband HAROLD HICKEY also watch Cliff, both anxiously waiting to see what unfolds. Alice sits in her wheelchair, her trusty cane by her side. Harold, 70, bald with thick, black glasses, sits next to her.

ALICE

What's he doing?

HAROLD

(upon consideration)

I think he's trying to read the cat's mind.

Alice lifts her cane and bops Harold on the head with it.

ALICE

Oh don't talk stupid Harold.

Harold rubs his head and frowns.

CUT TO:

EXT CLIFF' S BACKPORCH - CONTINUOUS

Homer sits watching Cliff.

HOMER

Hey. Can you come back in here
please?

CUT TO:

EXT BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Cliff and the cat are now engaged in what appears to be a
staring contest.

CLIFF

No. I haven't read its mind yet.

CUT TO:

EXT HICKEY' S BACKPORCH - CONTINUOUS

Alice looks over at Harold who smiles back a big, smug grin.
Alice lifts her cane and again clunks him on the head. As
before, Harold rubs his head and frowns.

CUT TO:

EXT CLIFF' S BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

HOMER

I don't think you can read minds.
I think you can only hear me.

Cliff walks back to the porch.

CLIFF

(sarcastic)

Oh is that so? OK then. Tell me
this. If you're talking to me then
why isn't your mouth moving? Huh?
How come?

HOMER

I can't talk like people do. You
can only hear what I'm saying. Now
come back in please and
I'll...es...esplain it to you.

Cliff climbs the stairs.

CLIFF

Good. You do that. You explain it to me.

Cliff glances over and spots the Hickey's.

CLIFF

Good morning Mr. and Mrs. Hickey.

Harold waves.

HAROLD

Good morning Cliff. Feeling OK?

CLIFF

Fine. Thank you. Have a nice day.

Cliff bristles into the house, Homer following behind.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Cliff looks down and Homer looks up through big, brown eyes.

CLIFF

This ought to be good. OK. Go ahead.

HOMER

My mom told me people probably wouldn't understand at first. But then they would and they would get used to it. And they would like talking to me. Because I have a good perso. person. . personal. . it. . y.

CLIFF

Oh really. And your mom told you this?

HOMER

Yeah. My mom told me lots of stuff.

CLIFF

Really?

HOMER

Uh. Huh.

CLIFF

What else did she tell you?

HOMER

She told me I wasn't a cat.

CLIFF

Uhhh? I don't really understand that. But that's not what I meant. Anyway. So tell me. Can you talk to anyone? Or is it just me?

HOMER

No. Just one person. That's all.

CLIFF

So it's just me. Lucky me. I'm the only one that gets to hear you.

HOMER

Yup. My mom said that I should pick one person to talk to and that I should pick someone good. Make sure they were nice and that they would be my friend and take care of me.

CLIFF

Only one person. And it's me. Great. Just great.

HOMER

Well actually she said I could talk to three people.

CLIFF

Three people. So you CAN talk to other people. Who else do you talk to?

HOMER

No. I can talk to three people but not at the same time.

CLIFF

You're confusing me.

HOMER

(frazzled)

NO. YOU'RE confusing ME!

CLIFF

OK. Tell me again. Slowly.

HOMER

OK.

(a beat)

(MORE)

HOMER (cont'd)

My mom said that I would be able to pick three people to talk to. Only three people as long as I lived. But as soon as I talked to someone new...it would count as one of the three people and I could only talk to THEM. I couldn't talk to who I used to talk to. Did that make sense? I think I said it right.

(off Cliff's look)

It's OK. My mom had to tell me a couple times too. Actually she had to tell me five times. Do you want me to tell you again?

CLIFF

OK. So if...for example...you start talking to let's say...Mrs. Hickey next door...then you wouldn't be able to talk to me anymore?

HOMER

Uh. Huh.

CLIFF

OK then. I know what I want you to do. I want you to go next door and talk to Mrs. Hickey.

HOMER

I don't want to talk to Mrs. Hickey. I want to talk to you.

Cliff rubs his forehead.

CLIFF

I don't feel well. I think I need to lay down.

Cliff pushes through the swinging door and Homer trots after.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cliff staggers to the sofa and plops down. He looks over at Homer who now sits only a foot away... staring.

CLIFF

I'm imagining all of this. I must be.

HOMER

No you're not.

CLIFF
Stop that. Stop talking to me.

HOMER
It'll be OK. My mom said that people will be upset but then they wouldn't be upset. So maybe if you wait a little while you won't be upset anymore.

CLIFF
Oh really?

HOMER
I promise I'll be good and I promise I won't talk a lot.

CLIFF
Is that so? Well your mom sure seemed to talk a lot.

Two beats and then.

HOMER
I don't know how to tell you this.

CLIFF
What?

Homer starts "the dance".

HOMER
(singsong)
I gotta go again. I gotta go. I gotta go bad! HURRY!

Homer takes off running and Cliff jumps up and gives chase.

CUT TO:

EXT BACK DOOR - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff has just finished installing a doggy door.

CLIFF
There. Now there won't be any need for any more of those mad dashes. Just use this door to let yourself in and out.

HOMER
Thank you.

CLIFF

You're welcome. Now I need to go lay down for awhile. Go play by yourself in the yard. Chase a squirrel or something. I'll be down later.

HOMER

OK.

Cliff heads in the house as Homer scampers out into the yard.

CUT TO:

INT BEDROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff lays in bed.

CLIFF

(muttering)

This can't be happening. I didn't even want a dog. And not only do I get a dog that I didn't want but I get a dog THAT TALKS. And not only do I get a dog THAT TALKS but I get one that never STOPS talking. A fifteen pound chatterbox. A motor mouth with a tail. This is crazy.

Cliff smashes his face with a pillow.

CUT TO:

INT BEDROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Cliff's eyes open and attempt to focus. He sits up and throws his legs over the side of the bed. He looks at the (CU.) ALARM CLOCK on the night stand.

CLIFF

Four o'clock? It can't be. I've been asleep all day?

(a beat)

It was a dream. It must have been. It was only a dream.

HOMER

No it wasn't.

Cliff is startled by Homer who sits at his feet.

CLIFF

Homer. You scared me.

HOMER
I'm sorry. You were in bed all day
and I got worried.

CLIFF
Worried? What were you worried
about?

HOMER
She was in bed all day too...
before she went away.

Cliff picks up Homer and sets him on his lap.

CLIFF
Oh Homer. It's OK.
(a beat)
It's alright. I'm not going
anywhere.

HOMER
Are you sure?

CLIFF
I'm sure.

Homer hangs his head.

CLIFF
What's wrong Homer? What is it?

HOMER
(looks up)
Why did she have to die?

CLIFF
Oh wow. Homer. Uhhh. That's a tough
one. That's not a very easy
question to answer. No one really
knows the reason why. I certainly
don't.
(off his look)
But I'll tell you what I do know.
(a beat)
I know that there's a beginning and
an end to EVERYTHING in life.
Everything that's living right
around us. Flowers. People... EVEN
DOGS.

Homer's ears perk up.

CLIFF

(continuing)

They all have a beginning and an end. And the fun stuff is what comes between. Only not all of it is fun, is it? But I believe that when you reach the end ...you start a new beginning someplace else. And the people you left behind...well they're just supposed to carry around your memory in their hearts. And that's what we'll do with her. And one day we'll reach the end too and we'll start OUR new beginning. And do you know the best part?...She'll be right there waiting for us when we do.

Homer reaches in and licks Cliff's face.

CLIFF

Come on. Let's go downstairs and get you something to eat.

HOMER

Can I have hotdogs for dinner?

CLIFF

I guess. If we have them.

HOMER

We have them. I'll show you where they are. That nice lady Gladys got them for me. Cause she knew I liked them. I liked her. She was nice. She liked me too. She brought them into the kitchen and I watched where she put them. She had two packs of hotdogs. She cooked one of them. But one of them is still there. And she got me some other stuff too. She got me bones. And she got me...

CLIFF

(interrupting)

Homer.

HOMER

(looks up)

What?

Cliff puts his finger to his mouth and makes a gentle, shushing gesture.

HOMER

Sorry.

Cliff and Homer proceed into the hallway. Two beats and then...

HOMER (O. C.)

Do you like hotdogs? They're my favorite food. I like gravy on my dog food. Do you know how you make gravy? You pour water on it. That's how.

CLIFF (O. C.)

Argggg.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff fries hotdogs, Homer sits waiting patiently beside him. The phone RINGS. Cliff sets down the spatula and grabs the phone.

CLIFF

Hello.

(a beat)

Hi Aunt Betty...I'm fine.

(a beat)

Yes I remember.

(trying to interrupt)

Aunt Bett...Aunt Bet... I appreciate that. I do.

Cliff looks at Homer who stares up at the hotdogs, oblivious to the world around him.

CLIFF

(continuing)

But I changed my mind. I'm going to keep him.

(a beat)

I know. I know. Thank you anyway.

Thank... Goodbye.

Cliff hangs up the phone and returns to preparing dinner. Homer licks his chops.

CUT TO:

EXT SIDE PORCH - THAT EVENING

Cliff, in shorts and a T-shirt, lays on a chaise lounge, Homer on his lap. The two lazily stare out at the beautiful sunset. A (CU.) of Homer shows him yawning and gradually falling asleep. When Homer's eyes open and a full view gradually comes back into view, Homer is now 6 months old and Cliff wears a sweatshirt and jeans.

CLIFF

Come on Homer. Let's go inside.
It's getting too cold to be out
here.

Homer jumps off. Cliff rises and Homer follows him to the sliding glass door leading into the house.

FADE OUT.

EXT BACK YARD - FALL DAY

ANGLE ON the Hickey's flower bed as seen through the fence from Cliff's yard. Autumn leaves slowly fall onto the bed and gradually pick up in number until the bed is completely covered. Homer runs into SHOT and lifts his leg by the fence.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

The front door opens to reveal four trick or treaters, each dressed in traditional Halloween costume attire.

TRICK OR TREATERS

(in unison)
Trick or Treat!!

Next to Cliff sits Homer, DRESSED AS A PIRATE. A black patch covers one eye, a red bandana covers his head, a plastic sword slung around and over one shoulder and a fake parrot attached to the other. All adding up to quite an unusual pirate.

Cliff drops candy in each of the children's bags. Each says "thank you", turns and leaves except for one child who lingers. A young boy dressed as ninja.

TRICK OR TREATER

Did you dress that dog up?

CLIFF

Yeah. Yeah I did.

TRICK OR TREATER

That's pretty sad. You need to get
a life.

Embarrassed, Cliff quickly closes the door and looks down at Homer.

CLIFF

I told you I didn't want to do it.
And don't look at me like that. I
told you. You're not going. Dogs
don't trick or treat.

Cliff walks out of view and Homer turns his head and whimpers.

FADE OUT.

EXT BACK YARD - DAY

ANGLE ON the Hickey's flower bed as seen through the fence from Cliff's yard. The leaves raked away, snow flakes gradually fall and increase in intensity until the flower bed is covered. Homer, now 8 months old, runs into SHOT and lifts his leg by the fence. When Homer runs out of SHOT, a steamy, rising fog takes his place.

CUT TO:

EXT CLIFF'S STREET - NIGHT

ANGLE ON Cliff's street. Christmas Time. Each home lit up festively. The lights, the wreaths, the street covered in snow, a Christmas post-card.

ANGLE ON Cliff's home. No lights or decorations. ANGLE ON the front window. Cliff inside, his Lazy-Boy fully reclined.

CUT TO:

INT CLIFF'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Cliff on his chair, Homer, now 8 months old, on the rug sleeping. No Christmas tree, no decorations. The yule log burning away on the television the only sign of the time. Their first Christmas without Julia.

FADE OUT.

EXT BACK YARD - DAY

ANGLE ON the Hickey's flower bed as seen through the fence from Cliff's yard.

The snow is gradually burned away by the sun. Heads of flowers peak through the ground and shoot up to full bloom. A full grown Homer runs into SHOT and lifts his leg by the fence ready to give Alice's flowers their first spring watering.

He looks up to the Hickey's back porch and Alice stares back. Her glare so intense its sure to burn a whole straight through him. Homer drops his leg, turns, runs up the stairs and bolts through the doggie door back into the house.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Cliff and Homer lay side by side on the floor. A pizza box discarded to the side, paper plates with pizza crusts in front of them. Cliff and Homer each gnaw on a slice.

CLIFF

Oh. I can't eat anymore. I'm stuffed.

Cliff throws his half eaten piece of pizza onto his plate. Homer rolls over and onto his back, paws in the air.

CLIFF

Homer. Not now.

HOMER

(10 year old's voice)
Please.

CLIFF

No. Not now. Maybe later.

HOMER

Come on. Please.
(low voice)
RUB DA BELLY!

CLIFF

Knock it off Homer. You're not funny.

HOMER

(louder and lower)
RUB DA BELLY!

CLIFF

(laughing)
You are such a pain. Do you know that?

Cliff gives in and Rubs Da Belly. Homer's eyes roll up in his head and his tongue hangs out to the side.

CUT TO:

EXT HOUSE DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

A car pulls in and extinguishes its lights. The driver's door opens and Ruth emerges carrying a covered dish and heads to the house.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cliff continues to rub Homer's belly.

CLIFF
(mi mi ci ng)
RUB DA BELLY!

HOMER
RUB DA BELLY!

Cliff points his nose towards the sky and closes his eyes.

CLIFF
(attempting to howl)
AWWWO0000000!

HOMER
(j oi ni ng i n)
AWWWO00000000!

CUT TO:

EXT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Ruth walks to the door. About to knock, she stops. Her eyes narrow as she strains to hear the noises from with-in.

CLIFF (O. C.)
RUB DA BELLY! RUB DA BELLY!
AWWO00000! RUB DA BELLY! AWWO00000!

HOMER (O. C.)
AWWO00000! AWWO00000!

Ruth crosses the porch to the front window. There on the floor, laying spread-eagled on his back, is Homer getting da belly rubbed.

CLIFF
AWWOOOO! RUB DA BELLY!
AWWOOOO!!!

Ruth shakes her head and marches back to the door and knocks.
Two beats and the door opens.

CLIFF
Mom. What are you doing here?

Homer sticks his head out the door.

RUTH
I need a reason to visit my son?
(a beat)
Here. I came to give you this.

Ruth presents her covered dish.

RUTH
It's meatloaf. Your favorite.

Homer lifts his nose for a sniff.

RUTH
Do you think I could come in?

CLIFF
Sure. Come on.

Cliff and Homer back up as Ruth enters the house.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ruth takes a look around.

RUTH
So it's just the two of you in
here?

CLIFF
Yeah. Why? Who were you expecting?

RUTH
By the sound of it I thought you
might be having a party.

CLIFF
No. It's just us two.

RUTH

Pizza. Are you feeding that dog pizza for dinner?

(long pause)

Look. I don't know how to say this so I'm just going to say it. I've been talking to some of your friends.

CLIFF

OK. The real reason you're here. Let's have it.

RUTH

They tell me you never call them anymore. They never hear from you. They leave messages but you never call them back. Since Julia died it's like you want nothing to do with them.

CLIFF

Mom.

RUTH

It's Saturday night. You should be out with your friends. And instead you're doing what? Sitting at home sharing a pizza with Homer. How long are you going to spend hiding away in this house with that dog? Huh?

CLIFF

Mom. Please.

RUTH

I just don't want you to miss out on anything. You're a special young man. And I'm not just saying that because you're my son. You ARE special. I don't want you to be alone.

(a beat)

Honey. It's been a nearly a year.

CLIFF

I know how long it's been.

(a beat)

And I'm not alone. I have Homer.

RUTH

Yes. Homer.

Ruth looks towards Homer who at the moment is busy stealing Cliff's half-eaten slice of pizza from his plate.

RUTH

Just promise me that you'll think about what I said.

CLIFF

Sure.

RUTH

And give your friends a call. They'd like to know your OK.

(a beat)

OK. I'll leave the two of you to get back to whatever it was you were doing... Now make sure you heat that meatloaf at 350 degrees for about fifteen minutes. I've already cooked it so all you have to do is heat it. I put the cheese in the center just like you like it.

Homer looks up and licks his chops. Ruth walks to the door.

CLIFF

Thanks mom.

RUTH

And don't feed my meatloaf to Homer. I made that for you. I may not be a chef but my meatloaf is definitely too good to feed to a dog.

Homer whimpers.

RUTH

Well... maybe he can have a taste.

Ruth puts her hand gently to her son's cheek.

RUTH

Call me?

(turns)

Good night Homer.

Cliff opens the door and Ruth departs. Cliff turns, walks back and sits back on the floor. Cliff looks at his plate and the missing piece of pizza and then to Homer. Homer looks away.

CUT TO:

INT CLIFF'S HOUSE - DAY

Cliff trudges down the stairs, grabs his car keys and looks to Homer.

CLIFF
Come on Homer. Let's go for a drive.

HOMER
Where are we going?

CLIFF
Always with the questions. Just come on.

Cliff opens the front door and Homer heads outside. The door shuts behind.

CUT TO:

EXT CEMETARY - DAY

Cliff drives the narrow roads that wind through the cemetery. Homer's head sticks out the passenger side window. Eventually, Cliff parks.

CUT TO:

EXT CEMETARY - CONTINUOUS

Cliff and Homer stand before a beautiful headstone carved in the shape of a rose. Cliff bends to touch it.

HEADSTONE (CU.)

Julia Blakely April 4, 1968 - June 25, 2003

HOMER
I miss her.
(a beat)
She's been gone so long.

CLIFF
One year. One year today.

Cliff walks back to his car, opens the backseat door and takes out a bouquet of red roses which he lays before Julia's stone. Finally, Cliff breaks his stare.

CLIFF
Come on Homer. Let's go home.

Homer jumps in and Cliff climbs in soon after. Homer pokes his head out the window and looks back as their car drives out of view.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Cliff comes barreling into the kitchen.

CLIFF
I'm late. I'm very late. My keys.
Where are my keys?

HOMER
They're on the microwave.

With keys in hand, Cliff delivers a quick pat and kiss to Homer's head.

CLIFF
Have a nice day.

At the door, Cliff turns.

CLIFF
Stay off the couch.

Cliff goes out and then immediately comes back in.

CLIFF
And remember...the garbage is not a
super-sized happy meal so stay out
of it.

HOMER
I will.

Cliff leaves and Homer lays down.

CUT TO:

EXT BACKYARD - LATER THAT DAY

Homer moseys about the yard. In the background, the Hickey's cat takes a short-cut through Homer's turf.

CUT TO:

EXT BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

The Hickey's cat leisurely walks through the yard. Suddenly, the cat stops.

The cat turns as Homer tears across the lawn after her. The cat takes off and is quickly over the fence. Homer runs full speed and jumps, clearing the fence and landing quite unexpectedly in the Hickey's back yard.

EXT HICKEY'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

The cat takes refuge up a tree. Homer looks around and then up to the Hickey's porch. The porch empty, Homer sets about sniffing and exploring his new terrain. Eventually he comes to THE flower bed, a variety of exotic flowers all in bloom. Homer lifts his leg and then stops perfectly still. He slowly turns around only to come face to face with...

Alice, in her wheelchair, right behind him. She lifts her cane high in the air and SWOOSH, brings it down. Homer scampers, but the swat connects square with his butt. Homer backs up and Alice motors after him. Homer ducks to the side and with a running start, jumps the fence back to safety.

ALICE

And stay out of my yard!

Homer runs through the yard and up the back stairs...

HOMER

Oh she is SO gonna get it!

And through the doggy door into the house.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - EVENING

Homer, asleep on the couch, wakes to the sound of Cliff's car turning in the driveway. Homer jumps off the couch to continue his nap on the floor. Cliff walks into the room.

CLIFF

Hi Homer. Were you a good boy today?

HOMER

Uh. Huh.

CLIFF

So what did you do all day? Tell me.

HOMER

Nothi ng.

CLIFF

You know Homer. You need to get out more during the day. You should go out in the yard and get some exercise. You shouldn't be lying around in here all day.

HOMER

There's nothing to do outside.

CLIFF

(off his look)
What's the matter?

HOMER

I wish there were some kids to play with.

CLIFF

I know. I know you do Homer. I wish there were some kids in this neighborhood too. But there aren't.

(a beat)

But guess what? The house two doors up from us just went up for sale. Maybe someone with kids will buy it. Wouldn't that be great? You'd like that. Wouldn't you?

Homer lays down, his chin resting on his front paws.

CLIFF

Hey. Hey. It's going to be OK.
We'll find you some kids to play with. I promise.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Cliff crosses the kitchen and opens the back door.

CUT TO:

EXT BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Cliff stands on the back porch, the entire back yard is pitch black.

CLIFF

Homer. You out here?

Cliff flips on the lights.

EXT BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

In the middle of the yard, in full squat position, is Homer.

HOMER
Uhhh. A little privacy please.

CLIFF
Sorry.

Cliff shuts off the lights and heads back inside.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Two beats later Homer comes through the doggie door and lays down on the floor. At the sink, with his back to Homer, Cliff smiles and then quietly breaks into muffled laughter.

CUT TO:

INT BEDROOM - MORNING

Cliff gets dressed with Homer providing an audience.

HOMER
Do you have to go to work today?

CLIFF
Nope.

HOMER
Good. I want to go somewhere.

CLIFF
How about a long walk? How does that sound? Huh? Are you up for it? Just give me a minute to finish getting dressed and we'll go.

HOMER
I don't want to go for a walk. I want to go to a PARK.

CLIFF
A park huh? Any park in particular?

HOMER
I don't know. I saw one on TV and there were lots of kids and other dogs there. I want to go to a park like that.

CLIFF
Well...there is a park I know of.
And it's not that far away. I guess
we could go there.

(CU.) Of Homer's tail wagging.

HOMER
Will it have kids there?

CLIFF
It should.

HOMER
How many?

CLIFF
I don't know. A lot I guess.

HOMER
Will it have other dogs?

CLIFF
Probably.

Homer follows Cliff into the hall.

CUT TO:

INT UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Homer and Cliff proceed down the hall.

HOMER
What kinds of dogs?

CLIFF
Probably all different kinds of
dogs.

HOMER
Does it have swings?

CLIFF
I think so.

HOMER
How long does it take to get there?

Cliff stops short.

CLIFF

Homer. How about we make a deal? No more questions and you just wait and see for yourself.

Cliff starts down the stairs and Homer hurries to catch him.

HOMER

Can we bring my ball?

CLIFF

Yes.

HOMER

And the frisbee?

CLIFF

Yes.

HOMER

Can we take a blanket?

CLIFF

Yes.

HOMER

Can we...

CLIFF

Arggg.

CUT TO:

EXT PARK - THAT DAY

The park is filled with kids and dogs. A beautiful day, the sun shines bright. Cliff opens Homer's car door and Homer shoots past.

CLIFF

Homer. Wait for me!

Cliff quickly gathers his belongings and runs after Homer.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE OF CLIFF AND HOMER'S DAY AT THE PARK

Cliff throwing a tennis ball and Homer retrieving it.

Homer lifting his leg on a bush.

Cliff throwing a frisbee and Homer's dynamic mid-air catch.

Homer lifting his leg on a tree.

Homer interrupting an intimate lovers picnic.

Homer lifting his leg on a bench.

A group of young children chasing Homer out of view and then Homer chasing them back into view.

END OF MONTAGE

CUT TO:

EXT PARK SWINGS - CONTINUOUS

An adorable, four year old boy stands alone by the swings. Homer walks into SHOT. He stands next to the little boy and looks up at him. The little boy pats his head.

LITTLE BOY

Nice doggie.

Homer lifts his leg over the little boys leg. The boys face collapses into tears and he WAILS. The little boys mother comes into SHOT and shoos Homer away. She drags the crying boy away as Homer runs off.

CUT TO:

EXT PARK - LATER THAT DAY

Cliff lays stretched out on the blanket with Homer beside him.

CLIFF

We should probably get going soon.

HOMER

No. No. Please. Just a little longer.

Cliff looks past Homer to where, in the distance, an attractive woman on her bicycle stops for a rest. He looks at her for only a second and then looks away. Homer, having noticed, looks in the woman's direction. He hesitates and then takes off running across the park towards her.

CLIFF

Homer!

Cliff stumbles to his feet and gives chase.

CUT TO:

EXT PARK - CONTINUOUS

JEAN pets Homer as Cliff approaches.

CLIFF
I'm sorry. I really should keep him
on a leash. A TIGHT leash. He's
usually pretty good about not
bothering people.

JEAN
He's not bothering me. I love dogs.
What's his name?

CLIFF
Homer.

JEAN
He's a beautiful dog.
(extends hand)
I'm Jean.

CLIFF
(shyly shakes her hand)
Cliff.

An awkward pause and then...

CLIFF
Well Homer. Come on. We better get
going.

HOMER
I don't want to go. I want to stay
here. With Jean.

CLIFF
It was nice meeting you Jean.

JEAN
It was nice meeting you Cliff. You
too Homer.

CLIFF
Come on Homer. We're going.

Cliff turns and walks away and eventually Homer follows.
Jean, disappointed, watches them go.

CUT TO:

INT CAR - MOMENTS LATER

In silence, Cliff throws it in gear and drives off. Homer quietly stares out the window.

FADE OUT.

EXT BACKYARD - DAY

Homer stands on his hind legs, his front paws atop the gate. The gate gives way, swings open and Homer jumps down. Homer walks back to the center of the yard and looks up at the Hickey's back porch. The porch deserted, Homer scampers through the gate and hangs a left into the Hickey's yard.

CUT TO:

EXT HICKEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Alice maneuvers her wheelchair past the front of the house, stopping to inspect the flowers and shrubbery that line the house next to the porch. At the end she turns the corner and begins up her driveway that is opposite Cliff's driveway and leads to her backyard. In the background, fifty feet in the distance, is Homer by her flower bed.

CUT TO:

EXT HICKEY'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

It's pay back time. Homer lifts his leg over Alice's flower bed and releases the flood gates. Behind him Alice moves closer and closer up the driveway, inspecting the trees and shrubs that line the side of her house.

CUT TO:

EXT HICKEY'S DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alice continues down the driveway. In the distance, Homer, his back to her, relieves himself on her flower-bed. Eventually Alice turns and spots Homer. Her eyes turn to saucers and her teeth clench. She backs up, points her wheelchair towards Homer and takes it up to "Mach 3".

CUT TO:

EXT HICKEY'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Oblivious, with leg still lifted, Homer looks over his shoulder and up. Alice, in her wheelchair, cane held high, is directly behind him.

HOMER

Gul p.

The cane comes down square on Homer's butt. Homer lets out a yelp and takes off running. He rounds the fence and bolts up the stairs...

HOMER

How does she keep doing that?

And through the doggie door into the house.

FADE OUT:

INT HOUSE - DAY

Homer waits impatiently at the door.

HOMER

Come on! Come on!

CLIFF

Hold on. I'll be there in a minute.

Cliff comes to the door and the two leave the house.

CUT TO:

EXT PARK - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff pulls into the parking lot. Another beautiful day and the park is crowded.

CUT TO:

EXT PARK - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff lays out the blanket as Homer runs off.

CLIFF

Don't go too far.

HOMER

I won't.

CLIFF

And don't bother anyone.

HOMER

I won't.

CLIFF
(yelling after him)
And remember. Children aren't chew
toys with arms.

HOMER
(yelling back)
I remember.

Cliff plops down on the blanket and pulls a book from his
duffel bag.

CUT TO:

EXT PARK - A SHORT TIME LATER

Homer comes prancing back.

CLIFF
Did you have fun?

HOMER
I met some kids over by the slides.
I climbed the steps and went down
the slide with them. It was really
cool.

CLIFF
(raised eyebrow)
Cool huh?

HOMER
Can we get one?

CLIFF
One what?

HOMER
A kid.

CLIFF
It's not that easy Homer.

HOMER
Why not?

CLIFF
Well. In order to have kids...it
takes two people...

HOMER
(interrupting)
I know. I know. You already told
me.

Homer walks over to Cliff, lays down and flips onto his back,
his paws in the air.

CLIFF
Not now.

HOMER
Please.
(low voice)
RUB DA BELLY!

CLIFF
Knock it off Homer.

HOMER
RUB DA BELLY.

Cliff relents and Rubs Da Belly and then stops. Homer rolls
over and turns. Nearby, all alone, is Jean on a blanket
reading a book. Cliff looks at Homer.

CLIFF
Don't even think about it.

Two beats and then.

CLIFF
I don't need your help.

Cliff stands up.

CLIFF
I can do this myself.

Cliff, his courage mustered, walks over to Jean. Homer
watches, his tail wagging. After a few seconds, Cliff turns
and walks back.

CLIFF
Come on Homer. Let's go.

Cliff folds up the blanket and grabs their belongings.

HOMER
Where does she live?

CLIFF
In town.

Cliff and Homer walk towards the parking lot.

HOMER
Does she have any kids?

CLIFF
I don't think so.

HOMER
Did you ask?

CLIFF
That's not something you ask
someone right when you meet them.

Cliff opens the door and Homer jumps in. Cliff goes around
and gets in beside him.

CUT TO:

INT CAR - CONTINUOUS

HOMER
Does she have a dog?

CLIFF
I don't know.

HOMER
Is she coming to the house?

CLIFF
Homer.

Cliff puts his finger to his mouth in a shushing gesture.

CUT TO:

EXT CAR - CONTINUOUS

Cliff's car drives off. Two beats and then.

HOMER (O. C.)
Did she ask about me?

CLIFF
Arggg.

CUT TO:

INT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cliff buttons his sleeve collars and splashes on cologne.
Homer lays on the bed watching.

HOMER
Why isn't she coming here?

CLIFF
Because we're going out. That's
what people do on a date.

HOMER
Can I come?

CLIFF
Homer. I answered that question the
first ten times you asked it. Now
please. I'm nervous enough.

Cliff heads out of the bedroom and down the stairs. Homer
follows behind.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cliff grabs his keys.

CLIFF
Don't wait up.

Cliff leaves and Homer lays down at the door.

FADE OUT:

INT LIVINGROOM - LATE THAT NIGHT

The front door opens and Cliff walks in. He flips on the
light to immediately find Homer.

HOMER
I waited up anyway.

Cliff walks over and scratches him behind the ears.

HOMER
Did you have a good time?

CLIFF
It was alright.

HOMER

Is she gonna come and live with us?

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cliff enters and sits on the couch.

CLIFF

I don't think so.

HOMER

Why not? Don't you love her?

CLIFF

No Homer. I don't LOVE her. I LIKED her. She was nice. But...I don't know. It wasn't right between us. Not all people fall in love Homer.

Homer cocks his head.

CLIFF

(continuing)

Love is something very special. And it takes time.

(lost in thought)

It takes time to find that one special person. That one person who makes you happy each and every day. Just happy that you get to spend the day with them. When you find someone that makes you feel that way then you know you've found love.

Two beats and then.

HOMER

Well...then I love you.

Cliff smiles.

CLIFF

Come on. It's late. Let's go to bed.

Cliff rises and Homer follows him to the stairs.

FADE OUT.

INT KITCHEN - DAY

Cliff scrambles to get out of the house. He turns at the door.

CLIFF
Please try not to get into any
trouble today.

Cliff shuts the door and Homer walks to and pushes through the swinging doors.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Homer heads straight for the couch, jumps up and settles in for a nap.

FADE OUT.

INT LIVINGROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Homer takes a good stretch and jumps off the couch.

CUT TO:

EXT HICKEY'S BACK PORCH - DAY

Alice, her head slumped down, "saws wood" in her wheel chair, her trusty cane on the floor only inches away.

CUT TO:

EXT CLIFF'S BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Homer's head pokes through the doggy door and turns toward Alice. With Alice safely asleep, Homer continues down the steps.

CUT TO:

EXT BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Homer looks up at Alice and then looks around. Clearly up to no good, Homer tip-toes through the open gate and around the fence.

CUT TO:

EXT ALICE' S BACK STAIRS/PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Slowly, quietly, cautiously... Homer advances up Alice's back stairs. Now on the porch, he tip-toes towards Alice. So far, so good. So close he could touch her, with the utmost precision he picks up her cane in his mouth. Alice rustles... but stays sleeping. Homer turns, struggling to balance the cane. It totters...and then again. Each time coming within a hair of hitting the floor. His balance recovered, Homer walks to the end of the porch and proceeds down the steps.

Halfway down the stairs the cane once again totters, only this time the end collides with the step. CLUNK. Homer freezes and then slowly turns around. Alice stares back wide-eyed at the thief in her midst. Homer hustles down the rest of the stairs and runs out into the center of Alice's yard.

EXT ALICE' S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Homer, balancing Alice's cane in his mouth, walks back and forth taunting her.

CUT TO:

EXT ALICE' S BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

And then, much to Homer's surprise and dismay, Alice stands straight up from her wheelchair. One at a time, she kicks both of her foot rests to the side, then marches across the porch and down the stairs. Homer backs up further and further into the yard.

FAST MOTION SEQUENCE

Alice moves in, her arms outstretched as that of a defensive tackle. Homer weaves back and forth and then around. His escape only temporary. Alice turns and quickly traps him in a different section of the yard. The same scenario plays out over and over. The two move about the yard, each time Homer trapped by the mobile Alice. Finally Homer drops the cane, fakes to Alice's left and then goes to her right. The fake a success, Homer runs around the fence and onto safe ground.

BACK TO NORMAL TIME

EXT CLIFF' S/HICKEY' S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Homer looks back. Alice holds her cane in both hands triumphantly over her head. And then Alice brings down the cane and cracks it over and over in the palm of her hand, a clear message to Homer. Homer runs up the stairs and through the doggie door and into the house. On his way in ...

HOMER
What a faker! Wait until I tell
Cliff!

CUT TO:

INT CLIFF'S HOUSE - THAT NIGHT

Homer relays the days events to Cliff.

CLIFF
So you're telling me that she
chased you? That little old lady
chased you around the yard?

HOMER
Yes. And man can she run. She can
run fast!

CLIFF
And why did she chase you again?

HOMER
No reason. No reason at all.

CLIFF
Uh. Huh...Homer is there anything
you want to tell me?
(a beat)
Now I doubt Mrs. Hickey chased you
for no reason. There had to be a
reason. And remember what I told
you about lying.

HOMER
I remember...I...I took her cane.

CLIFF
You what?!!!

HOMER
Well someone had to. She could hurt
someone. One day I saw her hit Mr.
Hickey with it and I didn't see him
for two days after that. I think he
was unconscious.

CLIFF
Homer. I want you to listen to me.
I want you to stay out of her yard.
Do you understand?

HOMER

Yes.

CLIFF

Homer?

HOMER

I'll stay out of her yard. I
promise.

Cliff shakes his head, sits back and flicks open a newspaper. Homer moves in close to the back of the paper, his nose practically touching it. ANGLE ON Cliff's vantage point from lowering the newspaper. Homer's face right behind the paper staring back at him.

CLIFF

What are you doing?

HOMER

Nothing.

Cliff raises the paper. Homer moves even closer. ANGLE ON Cliff's vantage point from lowering the paper. Once again he comes face to face with Homer.

CLIFF

Homer. What are you doing? I'm
trying to read.

HOMER

So am I.

CLIFF

Very funny. Now go lay down.

Cliff raises the paper but Homer doesn't budge.

CLIFF

Homer. Go lay down. You can't read.

HOMER

Yes I can.
(a beat)
Local man wins...

Cliff turns the paper around.

(CU.) Headline - Local man wins state lottery

CLIFF

How did you do that?

HOMER
I told you I could read.

CLIFF
How?

HOMER
She taught me.
(a beat)
She said I was a good reader.

Cliff points at an article.

CLIFF
What does this say?

(CU.) Headline - School board approves increase

HOMER
School... board...

CLIFF
Oh my God.

HOMER
I told you I was good.

Cliff gives Homer a hug and struggles to fight back the tears.

FADE OUT:

INT KITCHEN - NIGHT

The phone RINGS.

CLIFF
Hello.

Long pause.

CLIFF
Uh. I appreciate the thought Aunt Betty but I don't think...
(a beat)
No. No. I understand that...it's just that...
(trying to interrupt)
No. It's just...
(giving in)
OK Aunt Betty... Sure... Sure...
What night?
(MORE)

CLIFF (cont'd)
 (a beat)
 Alright... You're welcome. Bye.

Cliff hangs up the phone.

CLIFF
 We're having company.

(CU.) Homer's tail wagging.

CLIFF
 (continuing)
 The daughter of one of Aunt Betty's
 oldest and dearest friends is in
 town and she's coming for dinner.
 Aunt Betty did however make a point
 of telling me that it's NOT a date.

HOMER
 What does that mean?

CLIFF
 It means it's a date.

CUT TO:

INT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cliff sits on the couch nervously awaiting his dates arrival.
 The doorbell RINGS.

CLIFF
 She's here. Now behave yourself.
 Do you hear me? I mean it.

Cliff opens the door. CHERYL, very blonde, the model type,
 all looks and not much else, stands before him. She's over-
 dressed in a skin tight, BLACK SUEDE DRESS.

CLIFF
 Hi. I'm Cliff.

CHERYL
 Hi. Cheryl.

CLIFF
 Come on in.

Cheryl stops short.

CLIFF
 (off her look)
 This is Homer.

Homer's tail wags.

CHERYL
Oh. You have a dog.

CLIFF
Yes.

CHERYL
He doesn't jump up or lick or sniff
or do any of that stuff does he?

CLIFF
Well he IS a dog.

CHERYL
I just don't want ANY hair or dog
spit on my outfit. It's suede.

(CU.) Homer's tail stops in mid wag.

CHERYL
Does he have a bed or something
that he could go lie down in?

CLIFF
You'll be OK. He won't bother you.
I promise.
(to Homer)
Homer. Go lay down.
(to Cheryl)
Come on in. Have a seat.

CHERYL
There isn't dog hair on this couch
is there?

CLIFF
I don't think so.
(looks at Homer)
At least there shouldn't be.

CHERYL
You're sure?

CLIFF
Yes. I'm pretty sure.

CHERYL
OK.

Cheryl sits on the couch.

CLIFF
Homer. I said go lay down.

HOMER
Gladly.

CLIFF
Can I get you something to drink?

CHERYL
White wine would be nice.

CLIFF
I'm not sure if I have any. It's
been so long since I entertained.
Let me go check. I'll be right
back... Homer. Behave yourself.

Cliff walks from the room and out of view. Homer gets up and moves directly to in front of Cheryl. Homer and Cheryl stare at each other, each sizing the other up.

CHERYL
Go lay down.
(a beat)
Go lay down!!

Cheryl grabs a newspaper out of the nearby magazine rack, rolls it up and swats Homer on the nose.

CHERYL
Go on. Get out here. You stupid
mutt!

Homer backs up. Cheryl reaches forward and delivers a parting swat on the butt then quickly returns the newspaper to the stand. Cliff returns.

CLIFF
I don't have any white wine but I
have a bottle of red.

Homer approaches Cliff.

HOMER
Cliff. Can you please come in the
kitchen with me for a minute?

CLIFF
Homer. Why don't you go lay down?

HOMER
I need to talk to you.

Homer motions for Cliff to follow.

CLIFF
I'll be right back.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Cliff stands above Homer, his arms crossed.

HOMER
Tell her to leave.

CLIFF
What?

HOMER
Go in and tell her she has to leave.

CLIFF
I will not.

HOMER
I don't like her. She's not nice.

CLIFF
She just got here. You don't even know her yet.

HOMER
I don't want to know her...OK. I didn't want to have to tell you this because I knew how upset you'd get but I think I'm going to have to tell you. She hit me.

Cliff stares back.

HOMER
Hello? Did you hear what I just said? She hit me.

CLIFF
Oh I heard you.

HOMER
Well what are you going to do about it?...She hit me with the newspaper. She rolled it up and she HIT me with it. On my NOSE AND my BUTT.

(MORE)

HOMER (cont'd)
And you know...I have to tell you.
I REALLY didn't appreciate it.

CLIFF
And what did YOU do to her first?

HOMER
Nothing.

CLIFF
I doubt that. Come on. What did you do?

HOMER
Nothing. I walked over to her and
just looked at her. That's it.
(indignant)
SHE HIT ME!

CLIFF
If she bothers you so much then why
don't you just stay in here?

Cliff pushes through the swinging doors.

HOMER
I don't believe this.

Eventually, Homer follows.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cherly sits innocently on the couch.

CLIFF
I'm sorry about that.
(a beat)
Now about the wine. Is red alright?

Cheryl wrinkles her nose.

CHERYL
No thanks. I only like white.

CLIFF
I'm sorry. It's all I have. Can I
get you something else?

Homer strolls by Cliff.

HOMER
Yeah. Like her coat.

CHERYL
No. That's alright.

Awkward silence.

CLIFF
I made pork chops for dinner. I
hope you like them.

CHERYL.
No. Not really.

HOMER
Oh my God. Did you hear that? She
doesn't like pork chops. Tell her
to leave this very minute! There's
something wrong with her!

CLIFF
Oh. I'm sorry again.
(trying to recover)
So... Cheryl. Tell me. What do you
do for a living?

CHERYL
I just got a new job at the mall.

CLIFF
Doing what?

CHERYL
I'm a perfume spritzer.

CLIFF
Perfume spritzer. What exactly is
that?

CHERYL
You know. When women walk by I
spray them with perfume and try to
get them to buy it.

HOMER
HOW annoying! I bet she's VERY good
at it.

CHERYL
Can you do me a favor and put him
in another room? He keeps staring
at me. And I can smell his breath
all the way from here.

HOMER

Oh my God! Did you hear what she just said? Are you going to let her get away with that? Well. Are you?

CLIFF

I'd rather not.

CHERYL

Excuse me.

CLIFF

This is his house too. He has as much of a right to be in here as we do.

CHERYL

Dogs don't belong in the house. They should be tied up outside or kept in the basement.

HOMER

I can't believe my ears. I can't listen anymore.

(pacing and singing)

LALALALALALALALALALALALALALA!

CLIFF

You must never have had a dog.

CHERYL

Oh I had a dog. My parents brought IT home one day for my little sisters birthday. This big smelly, hairy thing that drooled all over. One day I got up early and I helped it run away. I left the back gate open and you know...we never saw that awful creature again.

HOMER

THAT'S IT!!!

With a running start, Homer leaps square onto Cheryl's lap.

CHERYL

(shrieking)

Get him off me! Get him off me!

CLIFF

Homer. Get off! Get off her!

Homer jumps off and Cheryl stands.

CHERYL
Look at my dress!

Her black suede dress is COVERED IN DOG HAIR.

CHERYL
It's ruined.

As Cheryl turns for the door, the ENTIRE BACK OF HER DRESS IS ALSO COVERED IN DOG HAIR. Cliff shoots Homer a look. Busted, Homer looks away.

CHERYL
Thanks a lot you loser. Thanks for a great night.

Cheryl storms out, slamming the door behind. Cliff looks at Homer and then finally..

HOMER
Can I have her pork chop?

Two beats.

CLIFF
Come on.

The two friends head for the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT GROCERY STORE - DAY

Cliff pushes his over-filled cart, intermittently stopping to throw items in and check them off his list. Eventually, he reaches the deli department where he tears off a number. SARAH, mid-thirties, blue jeans and tight sweater, ash blonde hair swept up in a bun, is one of three customers waiting their turn. Sarah discreetly checks out Cliff. The other two customers are helped and then..

DELI GUY #1
Number 62.

SARAH
That's me.

Sarah heads to the counter.

DELI GUY #2
63!

Cliff approaches.

CLIFF
(to deli guy)
Two pounds of roast beef.

DELI GUY
You got it.

SARAH
Small army of kids at home?
(off his look)
Your cart. It looks like you have a
lot of mouths to feed.

CLIFF
No. Just a dog. A very hungry dog.

SARAH
(laughing)
What kind?

CLIFF
A yellow lab.

SARAH
Nice. They're wonderful dogs.

CLIFF
Oh yeah? Says who?

Sarah laughs again.

SARAH
Boy. Mushrooms... zucchini... A man
with vegetables in his cart. I'm
impressed.

CLIFF
They're for a dish I'm making.

SARAH
A dish you're making. I'm even MORE
impressed.

CLIFF
Actually it's what I do for a
living. I'm a chef.

SARAH
Really? Where at?

CLIFF
Rogini's over on Maple.

SARAH

Oh. I love that place. You're the chef there. Really?

(a beat)

I love their chicken francaise. It's unbelievable.

CLIFF

It's my specialty.

SARAH

Get out.

CLIFF

I'm serious... Maybe I could make it for you one night?

SARAH

I'd like that.

Sarah smiles.

CLIFF

Maybe I could make it for you tonight?

SARAH

I'd like that even better.

SARAH

I'm Sarah.

CLIFF

Cliff.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - DAY

Cliff enters carrying grocery bags.

HOMER

Can we go for a walk?

CLIFF

Sorry. You're going to have to take yourself for a walk. I don't have time. I've got a date tonight.

HOMER

A date. Really?

CLIFF

Don't sound so surprised. We just met at the grocery store. We were standing at the deli and we started talking and before I knew it I had asked her out. She's gonna be here in a couple hours.

(a beat)

I can't believe I asked her out. It's just a date. Right? It doesn't mean anything.

HOMER

Yeah. She might not even like you.

Cliff shoots Homer a look.

CLIFF

You're going to be good tonight. Right?

HOMER

I promise. I'll be good.

CLIFF

I have so much to do. I have to get these groceries away. Get dressed. Get dinner started. I'm never going to be make it. I'm never going to be ready on time.

CUT TO:

INT HOUSE FOYER - NIGHT

SARAH has just arrived.

CLIFF

Hi. Come on in.

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLIFF

Have a seat. Make yourself comfortable. I have to check on dinner. It'll only take a second. Would you like a glass of wine?

SARAH

Sure. That would be nice. It smells great. Do you need any help?

CLIFF
No. That's ok. I have it under
control. I'll be right back.

Cliff crosses the room to the dining room.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Cliff enters and grabs two wine glasses out of the cupboard and a cork screw and begins the task of uncorking the bottle. Homer stands by the swinging doors trying to get a peak at Sarah through the crack.

HOMER
I want to meet her.

CLIFF
Not yet. I told you. You can meet
her later.

HOMER
I want to meet her now.

CLIFF
Homer. She just got here. In a
little while I'll bring her in and
you can meet her.
(a beat)
Do you remember what happened with
Cheryl? Do you? I don't need a
repeat of that performance. Now
please just stay in here for a
little while like I asked. And
then...when the time is right...
I'll introduce you. I promise.

HOMER
I don't want to wait. I want to
meet her now.

CLIFF
I said later. Now Homer. That's
enough. I don't want to hear any
more about it.

Homer walks around Cliff and stands by the refrigerator. Sensing Homer is up to something, Cliff watches him carefully. Homer looks at Cliff and then lifts his hind leg over the corner of the fridge.

HOMER
(slow and distinct)
I SAID I want to meet her NOW.

CLIFF
What do you think you're doing?

HOMER
Go get her.

CLIFF
You've got to be kidding. You better not.

HOMER
I want to meet her NOW.

CLIFF
Well you're not going to.
(a beat)
I mean it Homer. You better not.

(CU.) of Homer's eyes shift to a (CU.) of Cliff's eyes.
WESTERN WHISTLING GUN FIGHT MUSIC begins to play. (CU.) Back and forth between Homer's and Cliff's eyes, each expression more dramatic as their eyes eventually turn to full squints. And then...

HOMER
I think you should know. It's loaded and I'm NOT afraid to use it.

CLIFF
Put it away Homer. Put it away now and no one gets hurt.
(a beat)
You wouldn't dare.

HOMER
Oh wouldn't I?

Two beats and Homer cocks his head to the side and then lets loose.

CLIFF
(pure disbelief)
Oh my God! You are so going to get it!

The chase is on. Homer scoots across the kitchen, unable to stop the floodgates. He pees the entire time, leaving a splattered, yellow trail behind.

Cliff runs at him but slips on the wet floor, goes down and slides straight into and collides with the bottom cabinets. He scrambles to his knees, reaches out and grabs hold of Homer and wrestles him to the ground. Homer lays on his back and Cliff pins Homer's paws to the floor.

SARAH (O. C.)

What is going on in here?

Cliff and Homer look up. At the swinging door stands Sarah, arms folded. Homer seizes the opportunity to let out a sympathetic HOWL.

SARAH

Cliff! What are you doing to that poor dog? Get off him!

Cliff releases Homer and gets up. Sarah rushes to Homer's side. Homer whimpers pathetically.

CLIFF

Oh. He's fine.

SARAH

You poor baby. What did he do to you? Did he hurt you?

Sarah bends down, her back to Cliff, Homer's head over her shoulder. Homer grins.

SARAH

Come on baby. Let's go in the livingroom and leave him alone. What's the matter? Did you have to go pee-pee and he wouldn't take you out? Shame on him.

Sarah passes Cliff and shoots him a look. Homer cheerily follows. Cliff looks at the wet floor, his soiled clothes and eventually to the stove where tonight's dinner smolders. He rushes to the stove and flips the frying pan into the sink, then looks around defeated.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cliff enters as a love-fest is played out between Homer and Sarah.

SARAH

(baby talk)

Yes you are. Yes you are. You are such a big boy.

CLIFF

If the two of you will excuse me.
I'm going to go upstairs and get
changed.

Ignored, Cliff heads up the stairs and out of view. Sarah's
cell phone RINGS and she grabs it out of her purse.

SARAH

Hello... Hi Michael.

Sarah stands and Homer is unceremoniously pushed away. Sarah
walks past and Homer's attempt for continued affection is
denied.

SARAH

I know. I know.

(a beat)

No. No. It was all MY fault... No.

No. It was... I miss you too.

(sexy laugh)

Oh. Michael. You're so bad.

(looks around and then
whispers)

I can't. I'm at my girlfriends
having dinner... I can't do that. I
just can't leave. She'll never talk
to me again. Dinner's almost
ready... But I'll tell you what.
I'll get out of here RIGHT AFTER
DINNER. I'll meet you at my
apartment...

(looks at her watch)
in an hour.

(sexy laugh)

Michael. Stop. You are horrible.

(devilish smile)

Michael. Stop.

HOMER

Yeah. Stop.

SARAH

I'll see you in an hour. Chow.

HOMER

Chow? Oh brother.

Sarah pockets her phone, sits back and anxiously looks at her
watch. Cliff comes down the stairs.

CLIFF

Good as new. Now let me get you that wine.

SARAH

That's alright. I don't feel like wine anymore. How long until dinner?

CLIFF

Look. If this is about what happened in the kitchen. I'm sorry. We usually get along pretty good.

SARAH

Don't be silly.

(looks at her watch)

It's just I promised my mother I'd stop by later to look in on her. She hasn't been feeling well lately. We're VERY close.

HOMER

I bet.

CLIFF

I hope it's nothing serious.

SARAH

No. It's not serious. But she goes to bed early so I can't stop by too late.

CLIFF

If you'd like. I could go with you and...

SARAH

(interrupting)

NO... That's alright.

(pointed)

I have some other things I have to do tonight.

Homer softly snarls.

CLIFF

Well then...let me go get a move on dinner.

Cliff crosses to the dining room. Homer lingers behind.

SARAH
(big smile)
Homer. Come here boy.

Homer looks to Sarah, then turns and leaves the room. Sarah shakes off Homer's diss.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Homer pushes through the door. Cliff stands at the stove re-doing dinner.

CLIFF
What are you doing in here? Why aren't you out there with your girlfriend?

Cliff reduces the heat, grabs the table settings and walks from the room. Homer goes to the stove and looks up. On the wall, above the stove, hangs a spice rack. ANGLE ON a bottle of CRUSHED RED PEPPER.

Homer jumps up onto the counter, leans in and picks up the bottle in his mouth.

(CU.) of the chicken softly sauteing.

CUT TO:

INT LIVING ROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff sits across from the now disinterested Sarah, the quiet between them almost painful. Sarah looks at her watch and then rolls her eyes.

SARAH
Cliff. How much longer till dinner?

CLIFF
Just a few minutes. I'll go check on it now.

SARAH
Thanks. I'd appreciate that.

With Cliff out of the room, Sarah whips out her cell phone and dials.

SARAH
Hi. It's me. I'm running a little late.

(MORE)

SARAH (cont'd)
 (sexy laugh)
 Don't start without me...
 (annoyed)
 I know. I know. In a minute I'm
 going to ask for a doggie bag.

CLIFF (O.C.)
 Dinner is served.

SARAH
 (into the phone)
 Oh. That was just my girlfriend's
 boyfriend. I'll see you soon...I
 love you too.

Sarah quickly crosses the room.

CUT TO:

INT DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah sits down and immediately begins filling her plate.

CLIFF
 Boy. You must be hungry.

SARAH
 Starved.

Cliff takes his seat. His reach for the potatoes is thwarted as Sarah snatches the bowl away from him a split second ahead. She flicks several potatoes onto her plate.

SARAH
 (passing the potatoes)
 Sorry.

Cliff fills his plate as Sarah sets to work. She over stuffs her mouth with red potatoes, chews quickly and then swallows. Next, Sarah gorges herself with heaping teaspoons of vegetables. From the rug, Homer watches intently.

SARAH
 (through a stuffed mouth)
 It's very good.

Sarah cuts her chicken into four large pieces and then jams all four in her mouth at once and begins chewing. She smiles at Cliff. Her smile is short-lived and quickly turns to one of alarm as she spits the chicken back on her plate.

CLIFF
 What is it? What's wrong?

Sarah struggles to swallow while frantically reaching for her water glass. With flushed cheeks and bugged out eyes, she downs her entire glass in one continuous gulp. She grabs Cliff's water glass and does the same. And then she lifts the water pitcher above her head and begins to chug.

Cliff sniffs his chicken and then tastes it with his finger. He looks over to Homer who looks away. Sarah continues to chug water from the pitcher.

CUT TO:

INT FOYER - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff holds the door as, again, his date huffs out.

SARAH
Some chef you are.

Cliff closes the door behind her.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - A SHORT TIME LATER

(CU.) HOMER'S DOG DISH. The left-over chicken is scraped into his dish.

CLIFF
Looks like tonight's your lucky
night.

Homer looks at Cliff and then back to his dish.

CLIFF
Go on.
(a beat)
Go on. What are you waiting for?

Homer is about to eat when Cliff pulls the bowl away. Homer looks up and Cliff holds the empty bottle of crushed red pepper.

CLIFF
Homer. Why did you do it? Are you
mad at me? Is that why?

HOMER
No.

CLIFF
Then why did you do it? I thought
you liked her.

HOMER

Do you know how you told me to
never lie?

CLIFF

Yes.

HOMER

No one ever told her.

FADE OUT.

EXT FRONT YARD - DAY

Cliff throws a tennis ball and Homer runs and returns it.

CLIFF

Aren't you bored yet?

HOMER

I'm a retriever. It's what I do.

As Cliff winds up and throws, a large MOVING VAN drives past and parks two doors down. The Hickey's house to the right of Cliff's, the new neighbors to the left. A SOLD SIGN implanted by the curb in front of the house. A car, a few seconds behind, follows and parks behind.

CLIFF

Looks like we're getting our new
neighbors.

Cliff and Homer look on as the moving men go to the back of the truck and throw open the doors. The access ramp is dropped and blankets thrown on the ground.

The cars driver door opens and BETH, beautiful with thick, brown hair, gets out. The passenger door opens and Beth's 10 year old son, KEVIN, gets out. Homer's tail goes wild. Kevin, chubby and introverted, stands with slumped shoulders and a permanent scowl. Cliff and Homer exchange looks.

Beth goes to the back of the car and opens the trunk.

BETH

Come on. Grab something on your way
in. Kevin. Come on.

Kevin plays a hand-held video game.

BETH

Come on Kevin. Give me a hand.

Cliff and Homer walk up the street.

CLIFF
Hi. Welcome to the neighborhood.

BETH
Thanks.

CLIFF
I'm Cliff.

BETH
Beth. And this is my son Kevin.

KEVIN
(forced)
Hi.

BETH
And who do we have here?

Beth leans down and makes a fuss. Homer looks to Kevin but Kevin pays no attention, his only interest his video game.

CLIFF
This is Homer.

BETH
Hi Homer. You are such a handsome dog. Look at you. Such a handsome dog.

Homer looks up at Cliff.

HOMER
I like her Cliff. I like her ALOT.

BETH
So where do the two of you guys live?

CLIFF
(pointing)
Right there. Only two doors down. I'm practically on top of you.

Beth smiles uncomfortably.

HOMER
Smooth... Real smooth.

CLIFF
(flustered)
Uh. . can I help you carry something?

BETH
Sure. Thanks. Did you hear that
Kevin? Some people like to help.
It's called being a gentleman.

Kevin walks empty handed towards the house as Homer intently watches him go. Cliff and Beth each grab matching glass lamps and head to the house.

BETH
It's sad. All of my valuables fit
exactly into the trunk of my car. I
guess I should have asked for more
in the divorce.

CLIFF
Oh. You're divorced.

BETH
Yeah. Just add me to the
statistics.

Cliff follows Beth to the house, Homer right behind.

CUT TO:

INT BETH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The moving men make their way in and out of the house. Kevin sits on the bare floor playing his video game.

BETH
Set it down anywhere. Thanks.

CLIFF
I'll go get some more.

BETH
No. That's alright. I'll have the
guys bring it in. That's what
they're getting paid for right?

CLIFF
Well... Welcome to the neighborhood.
You'll like it here. The people are
real nice.

Homer pokes his head through the door.

HOMER
No they're not.

CLIFF
So where did you guys come from?

BETH
We're from Florida. I work for a company with corporate offices up here. A really good job opened up and it meant a promotion and a good raise so I applied for it and I got it.

CLIFF
Congratulations.

BETH
Thanks. But I have to be honest. I'm scared to death. A new job. New town. New house. A new school for Kevin. It's a little overwhelming.
(whispers)
For both of us.

CLIFF
Just think of it as a new beginning.
(a beat)
I know this might be kinda sudden but if you're not doing anything this Saturday night. Homer and I would love it if you and Kevin came over for dinner. Sort of a welcome to the neighborhood thing.

BETH
Sure. Yeah. We'd like that. Does that sound good to you Kevin?

KEVIN
Whatever.

BETH
We'll be there.

CLIFF
Great. Around six?

Beth and Cliff smile, chemistry and attraction starting to form.

CLIFF

Come on Homer. Let's go home and let them get settled. If you need anything. Remember. We're only two doors away.

Homer takes a last look at Kevin who still shows no interest.

CUT TO:

EXT CLIFF'S BACKYARD - A SHORT TIME LATER

Homer has his nose poked through the picket fence watching Kevin who sits Indian style on the grass in his back yard playing his video game. Kevin stands and walks out of view.

Homer paces along the fence, trying to get Kevin back in his line of sight. And then he sees Kevin clearly. Kevin stares right at him, a SLING-SHOT loaded with a BERRY stretched back as far as it will go and aimed straight at Homer. Kevin lets it rip and the berry is hurled straight towards Homer. The berry comes straight between the pickets and connects with Homer's butt.

HOMER

Owwwwww!

Homer licks his wound and then looks back between the posts. The slingshot stares back, already reloaded and aimed. Homer takes off for the stairs and on his way up...

HOMER

What is WRONG with the people in this neighborhood?

The berry ricochets off the top stair as Homer bolts through the doggie door. (O.C.) Kevin can be heard laughing.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Homer walks in, head hung low and tail between his legs.

CLIFF

What's wrong?

Homer lies down and licks his wound.

HOMER

Nothi ng.

CLIFF

Come on. Tell me. What's wrong?

HOMER

That little boy down the street.
Kevin. I thought maybe we were going
to be friends. And he just shot me.
He shot me in the butt with a
berry.

CLIFF

Did you do anything to him?

HOMER

Why do you always think that I did
something?

(on the verge of tears)

I didn't do anything.

(crying)

I don't even want to be his friend
anymore. Even if he wants to be
friends. I don't want to be his
friend.

CLIFF

I'm sorry Homer. Give it some time.
He just moved here. He left all his
friends behind. I'm sure it's gotta
be rough for him. Being the new kid
and all.

HOMER

I don't care. I don't care about
that. He's nothing but a BIG BULLY.

CLIFF

They're coming over for dinner
Saturday. Maybe then you guys can
make up and become friends. I'm
sure once he gets to know you he'll
want to be friends.

HOMER

I doubt it.

Homer returns to licking his wound.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN - SATURDAY NIGHT

Cliff inspects dinner, roast beef and all the trimmings. Several pots simmer on the stove, the sink already full of pots and pans. Cliff rips off his oven mitt and throws it on the counter.

CUT TO:

INT FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Cliff comes up behind Homer who sits at the front door waiting, his tail sliding back and forth on the floor.

CLIFF

Now Homer. Don't get your hopes up too high. Not all kids are going to like you. And if how the other neighbors feel about you is any indication... well...

Homer turns his head and bares his teeth.

CLIFF

I'm just saying. Not ALL kids like ALL dogs.

HOMER

Yes they do. And anyway. I'm not waiting to see Kevin. I'm waiting to see Beth. She likes me.

CLIFF

Is that so? Well just take it slow with Kevin. Don't try too hard. If it's meant to be... then it's meant to be.

The doorbell rings and Homer becomes an instant nervous wreck.

HOMER

Oh my God. They're here. How do I look?

CLIFF

(laughing)
You look fine.

INT HOUSE FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Cliff opens the door. Beth wears a white turtleneck and sweater with nicely fitting blue jeans, a casual beauty.

Kevin stands next to her, his shoulders slumped, staring at the floor, an unwilling participant in tonight's events.

CLIFF

Hi. You look great...Hi Kevin. How are you?

KEVIN

Fine.

CLIFF

Thanks for coming.

BETH

Hello Homer.

(face to face with Homer)

I love yellow labs. I think they are the most handsome and beautiful dogs in the world.

Homer turns back and looks directly up at Cliff.

HOMER

(smug)

She's right you know.

BETH

I always wanted one but our last house didn't have a yard. Maybe with the new house. Would you like that Homer? Would you like a friend to play with?

Homer looks off to the side where Kevin stands completely disinterested. Homer wanders in Kevin's direction.

BETH

You have a lovely home.

CLIFF

Thanks. My wife decorated it. Uhhh... She died.

BETH

Oh. I'm sorry.

CLIFF

Come on in. Make yourself comfortable.

Homer brushes against Kevin and Kevin responds with a discreet kick to Homer's butt. Homer scurries away.

CUT TO:

INT DININGROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Dinner just completed, the remaining roast and half empty bowls still scattered about on the table. Homer lays on the rug.

BETH

That was probably the best meal
I've had in...I can't remember
when. You're quite the cook.
You know you better be careful or
we might just start dropping in on
you every day around meal time.

CLIFF

With Homer that's just about any
time of the day...And that would be
fine...Kevin. Do you want any more
to eat?

KEVIN

No. I'm done.

BETH

No thank you. Really Kevin.
Remember your manners. I brought
you up better than that. I'm sorry.
He's not himself lately. He's not
too happy with the move.

KEVIN

Mom!

BETH

Well you're not.

CLIFF

I imagine it has to be hard. To
move away from your friends. To a
new school and a new house. But
I'll tell you what. Homer makes a
good friend. He could be your first
new friend here.

Homer lifts his head and shakes it side to side.

CLIFF

I have an idea. Why don't the two of you go out back together? Out in the yard. I'm sure Homer would love it if you'd play a little ball with him? Wouldn't you Homer?

HOMER

No. I wouldn't.

BETH

That's a great idea. Honey. Why don't you go out back and play with Homer?

KEVIN

I don't want to.

BETH

Come on. It'll be good for you. You've always said you wanted a dog. I'm sure Cliff wouldn't mind sharing Homer with you.

KEVIN

My own dog. And definitely not THAT dog.

HOMER

You see. I told you.

BETH

Kevin. You apologize to Cliff and Homer right now.

CLIFF

That's alright. If he doesn't want to play with Homer that's ok. We shouldn't force him.

Kevin stands.

KEVIN

(forced)

Come on Homer. Let's go outside.

CLIFF

Go on Homer. Go outside with Kevin.

HOMER

No thank you.

CLIFF

Homer.

Kevin walks to the sliding glass door.

KEVIN

Are you coming or not?

Homer gets up and slowly walks to the sliding glass door. Before venturing out, Homer turns back and looks at Cliff.

CLIFF

Have fun you guys.

Homer and Kevin walk onto the side porch and out of view.

BETH

I'm sorry about that. Since his father and I got divorced he's been impossible. It seems the divorce was all MY fault. At least that's what he seems to think. You would think that after a year he would have forgiven me.

CLIFF

Where does Kevin's father live?

BETH

Texas. He got remarried a couple months ago and they moved to Texas. Her father owns a company there and my ex-husband went to work for him. They just had a baby so his new family keeps him pretty busy. He's still a part of Kevin's life and he always will be. Just not as much as Kevin would like.

(a beat)

I just want Kevin to settle in and be happy. He's been so miserable lately. And with school starting next week. I'm a nervous wreck.

CLIFF

Give it time. I'm sure he'll be fine.

(a beat)

Homer has been going through a rough patch of his own lately.

(MORE)

CLIFF (cont'd)
It would be nice if the two of them
could become friends.

CUT TO:

EXT BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Homer walks behind Kevin. At the back stairs, Kevin sits down and Homer walks up to him.

KEVIN
Go away you stupid dog. Go on.

Homer sits and stares.

KEVIN
OK. You want to play so bad. Then
let's play. Here.

Kevin picks up a stick and throws it.

KEVIN
Go fetch.

Homer hesitates but then runs to retrieve. With Homer gone, Kevin walks over and picks up a GARDEN HOSE. Kevin twists the water valve completely open then walks back grasping the nozzle in his hand.

Homer returns only to find the nozzle pointed directly at him. Homer drops the stick just in time to be pelted with the first blast of water. Homer takes off with Kevin right behind dousing Homer with a steady stream of water all the way.

CUT TO:

INT DININGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Beth and Cliff talk leisurely over coffee.

CLIFF
We got Homer right before Julia got
really sick. She fell in love with
him the minute she saw him. We were
planning on having kids...when
Julia got better...
(a beat)
I'm sorry. Feel free to stop me at
any time. It's just that this is
probably the first real date...at
least the first good date
since...Oh I'm sorry. Is this a
date?

Beth laughs and then smiles.

BETH
Yeah. Sure. It's a date.

Cliff returns the smile.

CUT TO:

EXT BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Homer, soaked from head to toe, runs in large circles trying to escape Kevin and the hose. Kevin keeps pace and the drenching continues.

CUT TO:

INT DININGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cliff enters from the kitchen carrying an apple pie in one hand and the other hand hidden behind his back.

CLIFF
Desert?

BETH
Did you bake that yourself?
(laughing)
Will you marry me?

CLIFF
You know what the only thing better
than apple pie is don't you?
(a beat)
Apple pie with vanilla ice cream.

Cliff reveals a quart of ice cream.

BETH
Mmmmm. My favorite.

Cliff sets down the pie and ice cream and begins serving.

BETH
Do you think we should check on
them?

CLIFF

Nah. I'm sure they're fine. They probably need some time alone to bond. Homer's probably loving every minute of it.

CUT TO:

EXT BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Homer sits perfectly still perched on the seat of a plastic chair, a green apple in his mouth.

KEVIN

Now don't move. You have to stay perfectly still.

Kevin backs further and further away. Homer looks out the corner of his eye to see what Kevin has planned. Kevin takes from his pocket his dreaded sling shot. Homer's tail goes straight down and curls underneath the chair.

KEVIN

(shouting)

I said don't move.

Kevin raises the sling shot, puts a berry against the rubber band and points. Homer remains still, his eyes closed tight. And then the berry is airborne, connects square on the apple and the apple breaks apart. Homer drops its remains and takes off running. Kevin picks up the hose and takes off after him.

CUT TO:

INT DININGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Beth and Cliff relaxed at the table. Directly between them, Homer can be seen running up to the sliding glass door. He jumps up at the door and then pounds on the door with his paws, barely making a noise. Beth and Cliff talk and laugh, oblivious to Homer's predicament. And then Kevin comes up from behind Homer. Homer's paws slide down the glass door as Kevin drags Homer away by his back paws.

CUT TO:

INT DININGROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Beth finishes a good laugh and then looks deep into Cliff's eyes and then...

BETH
I better get going. It's getting late.

CLIFF
I'm glad you came. I had a nice time.

BETH
So did I.

CLIFF
I'll go get the boys.

BETH
I hope they had fun.

Cliff pokes his head out the sliding doors.

CLIFF
Come on guys. Time to come in.
Kevin is the first to appear.

BETH
Did you have fun out there with Homer?

KEVIN
Hmm. Hmm.

CLIFF
Homer! Come on Homer!

Homer trudges up to the sliding glass door. He is soaking wet, muddy from head to toe, his hair tousled this way and that, and heavily panting.

CLIFF
What the heck happened to you?

BETH
Oh my God!

Cliff looks to Kevin and Kevin looks at the floor.

BETH
Kevin. What happened out there?

KEVIN
Nothing. We were just playing.

Homer looks up at Cliff and then dramatically collapses on to his side. From Homer's vantage point, he looks at the deeply concerned Cliff and Beth and the devilishly smiling Kevin beside them.

CUT TO:

EXT SIDE PORCH - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff cleans and dries Homer with a towel. Homer rests his head on his front paws.

CLIFF
What is it? What's wrong?

HOMER
Why doesn't he like me?

CLIFF
He's ten years old. He doesn't like anyone. Give him time. He'll come around.

Homer responds with a deep sigh.

CUT TO:

EXT CLIFF'S HOUSE - DAY

Kevin walks home from school, a book bag slung over his shoulder. Two bullies, the same age as Kevin only taller and big for their age, follow closely behind. The bullies confront Kevin directly in front of Cliff's house.

BULLY #1
Hey stupid. I heard you wet your bed.

KEVIN
No I don't. Go away you jerks.

BULLY #2
Bed-wetter.

KEVIN
Leave me alone.

Bully #1 tugs on Kevin's book bag in an attempt to pull the bag off his shoulder.

KEVIN
Stop it! Leave me alone!

BULLY #1
 (mi mi ci ng)
 Stop it. Leave me alone.

BULLY #2
 What a baby.

KEVIN
 Leave me alone!

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Homer lays sprawled on the couch. Kevin's cries can be heard from outside. Homer jumps up. With his paws on the back of the couch he looks out the front window.

CUT TO:

EXT CLIFF'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bully #2 has now joined the attempt to get Kevin's book bag.

BULLY #1
 Why don't you go home and cry to
 your mommy?

KEVIN
 Go away!

Bully #2 reaches in and grabs for the bookbag but misses.

KEVIN
 Stop it!

And then Bully #1 grabs and gets hold of the bookbag, pulls hard and the straps break. Kevin's bookbag falls to the ground and his books and papers fall out and scatter about the pavement. Both bullies immediately start kicking his books out of reach.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON Homer watching from the window.

HOMER
 Hmmmm... Let's see how HE likes being
 picked on for a change.
 (a beat)
 Serves him right.
 (MORE)

HOMER (cont'd)
(a beat)
He deserves it.
(a beat)
Good for him.

ANGLE ON Kevin on his hands and knees attempting to pick up his books. Each time he reaches for one of his books the bullies kick it out of reach.

HOMER
(becoming nervous and then
giving in)
Ohhhhhhh.

Homer jumps off the couch and races from the room.

CUT TO:

EXT CLIFF'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The two bullies stand hovered above Kevin.

BULLY #2
You're not going to wet your pants
are you?

KEVIN
(verge of tears)
Stop it!

BULLY #1
Boo. Hoo. The little baby is going
to cry.

Kevin turns and watches as Homer runs down the driveway full speed to the rescue. Both of the bullies watch as well. With a fierce growl and teeth fully bared, Homer gets right in between the bullies and Kevin.

BULLY #1
Get out of here you dumb dog.

Homer stands his ground and barks.

BULLY #2
Go. Go away. Go on! Get out of
here.

Bully #2 picks up a small rock, turns and throws it at Homer. The rock hits Homer on the back and Homer lets out a yelp. Bully #2 bends down to pick up another rock and that's when it happens. Homer looks at the boy bent over, his butt just asking for it. Homer charges in and CRUNCH, he bites the boy square on the butt.

The boy stands straight up, Homer still attached to his pants. Homer lets go and backs up to Kevin's side. Bully #1 backs off. Bully #2 stands rubbing his butt as the tears come.

BULLY #2

You are so dead. And so is that stupid dog of yours. When I tell my mom...you're both in trouble. Just wait.

BULLY #1

Come on. Let's go.

BULLY #2

Just wait until I tell my mom.

Both boys turn and run down the street.

BULLY #2

(yells back)

You're dead. Tomorrow at school.
You're dead.

The boys run out of view. Homer looks up at Kevin and Kevin stares back. Eventually, Homer turns and runs back up the driveway. Kevin watches him go.

CUT TO:

EXT ALICE'S FRONT WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON the Hickey's house. At the front window, having watched the entire scene unfold, stands Alice.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Homer enters, lays down and licks his wound.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - THAT EVENING

Homer sleeps on the floor, Cliff sits on the couch reading the paper. The doorbell RINGS. Homer's eyes open.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

BRENDA, a middle-aged woman dressed professionally in a jacket and slacks, stands at the door. She carries a clipboard and appears serious.

BRENDA
Mr. Cliff Thompson?

CLIFF
Yes.

BRENDA
Do you own a yellow labrador retriever?

Behind Cliff, Homer sneaks quietly from the room.

CLIFF
Yes.

BRENDA
My name is Brenda Charles. I'm with Animal Control. There was an incident reported today that took place in front of your house. A little boy was bitten by a dog. The little boy said that the dog lived here.

CLIFF
There has to be a mistake. My dog would never hurt anyone. Least of all a little boy. He loves kids.

BRENDA
We got a complaint from the boy's mother and it says...
(looks at clipboard)
That the incident took place at 444 Cherokee Lane in front of the dog's residence.

From behind Brenda, BULLY #2's MOTHER, a large woman dressed in a moo-moo with two over-sized curlers planted on her head, walks towards the house with her son.

BULLY'S MOTHER
It was his dog that bit my boy.
That guy. Right there.

Cliff turns.

CLIFF

Homer! Come here! Homer! Come here
NOW!

Homer walks to the door.

BULLY'S MOTHER

(to Brenda)

Aren't you going to do anything?
Aren't you going to take the dog
away? God knows who that dog will
hurt next.

BRENDA

I need to hear his side of the
story. Now please. Give me a
minute. Let me do my job.

CLIFF

Homer. Did you bite this boy?

BULLY'S MOTHER

It was him. He did it. What are you
asking the dog for? I just told
you. Your dog bit my boy.

BRENDA

Please ma'am.

CLIFF

Now I'm asking you a question. Did
you bite this boy?

Homer looks up.

BULLY'S MOTHER

Who the heck is he talking to? The
dog? What the heck is going on
here?

HOMER

Yes.

CLIFF

Why Homer? Why did you do it?

BULLY'S MOTHER

This is crazy. Look at him. He's
talking to the dog.

HOMER

They were picking on Kevin. They
were calling him names.

(MORE)

HOMER (cont'd)

They ripped his book bag and they kicked his books. And when I came outside, he threw a stone at me.

Homer licks his wound and Cliff inspects the cut.

CLIFF

It seems your son was picking on a neighbor boy that lives a couple houses down. My dog tried to defend him and your boy here hit him with a rock.

Cliff shows Brenda Homer's cut.

BULLY'S MOTHER

Oh really. And I suppose your dog there told you that. Your dog bit my boy and I want him taken away and destroyed. He's dangerous.

From behind the Bully and his mother, Alice wheels up the walkway.

ALICE

Hogwash. That dog isn't dangerous. It's that over grown monkey that you call a son that's the problem. I saw the whole thing from my window.

(to Bully #2)

You should be ashamed of yourself. Teasing that boy the way you and your friend did. And to throw a rock at a dog. Why that's just mean. Everybody knows that if a dog gets out of line, you give 'em a good swift whack on the behind.

(smiles at Homer)

You're just lucky that dog didn't bite you clear around on the other side. That would have taught you.

CLIFF

Ouch.

Cliff squeezes his legs together. (CU.) Homer crosses his back legs.

ALICE

And so help me if I see you picking on that boy again you'll wish you only had that dog to worry about.

BULLY' S MOTHER

Oh. Don't listen to her. She's crazy. She doesn't even need that wheelchair. The other morning she forgot to put her trash out and I seen her running up the street with it. She caught that garbage truck and it must have been doing 40 miles an hour at the time.

Homer looks up at Cliff with an "I told you so" look and the two nod knowingly to each other.

BULLY' S MOTHER

(to Brenda)

Aren't you going to do anything?
Well?

BRENDA

I'm sorry. But I don't have enough to file a report.

BULLY' S MOTHER

Not enough? You gotta be kidding me. Didn't you see the scratch on my boys BEE-HIND. Do you want to look at my boy's bee-hind again? Maybe take a picture?

BULLY #2

Moooooooooooo.

BRENDA

It sounds to me like the attack was provoked. If I wanted to I could probably write up a report on your son. That's a bad looking cut that dog has.

BULLY' S MOTHER

This is crazy.

(a beat)

I'll sue. I'll sue you. That's what I'll do.

ALICE

You do that. Go ahead and sue all you want. And I'll testify for the dog. Who do you think they're going to believe? You and that bully kid of yours? Or a helpless, crippled old lady.

BRENDA

I'm sorry to have bothered you.

Brenda walks down the steps. Defeated, the bully's mother grabs her son by the hand.

BULLY'S MOTHER

Let's go. We're going home.

(over her shoulder)

Going home to call a lawyer.

(to her son)

And remind me when I get home. I have to rub that cream the doctor gave us on your bee-hind.

BULLY #2

Moooooooo.

The bully and his mother disappear up the street.

CLIFF

Thank you Mrs. Hickey.

ALICE

Just keep that mutt out of my flower beds. He pees one more time on 'em and he'll be resting under 'em.

Alice motors down the walkway as Cliff and Homer turn and go inside.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Homer lays down and tends to his cut. Cliff grabs a tube of ointment from a drawer.

CLIFF

OK. Let's take care of that cut.
Put some cream on your BEE-HIND.

Cliff applies the ointment and plants a big kiss square in the middle of his head. Homer rests his head on the floor.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - MORNING

Cliff descends the front stairs dressed in swim trunks and tank top and carries a duffel bag.

CLIFF
Come on Homer. Let's go.

HOMER
Where are we going?

CLIFF
It's one of the last warm weekends
we'll see for awhile. We're going
to the lake.

HOMER
The lake. That sounds like fun.
(a beat)
Will there be kids there?

CLIFF
Yes Homer.

HOMER
Will there be dogs there?

CLIFF
Yes Homer.

Cliff opens the door and Homer follows. On the way out the door...

HOMER
Lots of kids?

CLIFF
Yes Homer.

CUT TO:

EXT HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The two approach Cliff's car. Suddenly, Homer stops. Standing by the car are Beth and Kevin, both dressed in lake attire. Cliff kisses Beth. Kevin looks at the ground.

CLIFF
Come on. Everyone aboard.

Kevin and Homer stand still.

BETH
Come on Kevin. Get in.

CLIFF
You too Homer.
(a beat)
(MORE)

CLIFF (cont'd)
Come on. The two of you. Get in. We
want to get there early and get a
good spot.

Both grudgingly climb into the backseat.

CUT TO:

INT CAR - CONTINUOUS

Kevin sits on one side, Homer as far away as possible on the other. Both stare out their respective windows.

CUT TO:

INT CAR - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff looks straight ahead, his car stopped at a (CU.) RED LIGHT. Cliff begins to sniff. At first slow and then faster. And then wrinkles his nose. Next to him, Beth starts to sniff as well and eventually makes the same face. They look towards each other and then in unison, both look back at Homer. Homer stares back.

HOMER
Oh sure! Blame it on the dog. It's
always the dog. It wasn't me.
(gestures towards Kevin)
It was him.

Cliff and Beth slowly turn around. Cliff looks at Kevin in his side mirror.

KEVIN
What?

CLIFF
Nothing.

Cliff hits a side panel button and all four windows finish electronically rolling down. The light turns (CU.) GREEN and Cliff floors it.

CUT TO:

EXT HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Cliff's car speeds down the highway.

CUT TO:

EXT LAKE - DAY

Cliff and Beth lay blankets on the sandy shore. Kevin immediately sits down. Homer walks about inspecting the beach. Various people, all ages and sizes dressed in swimsuits and carrying towels, walk about.

BETH

Aren't you going to go swimming?

Kevin looks up and straight ahead at a group of four children, all close to his age, who splash about in the lake.

KEVIN

Nah. Not right now. Maybe later.

Cliff looks at the helpless Beth. Homer wanders towards the water, sniffing everything in his path. And then the same group of children spot Homer.

KID #1

Hey look. Look at that dog.

The four children stampede out of the water and descend upon Homer. Homer is overwhelmed, albeit a dream come true. And then Homer catches sight of the dejected Kevin. Suddenly, Homer grabs one of the boys swimming goggles from his hand and runs off.

KID #2

Hey! He took my goggles. Get him.

The kids break into laughter as they begin to chase Homer as a pack. Homer darts back and forth, eventually ending up before Kevin. Kevin looks up. A moment is shared and Homer drops the boys goggles into Kevin's lap.

KID #3

Hey that kid has the goggles. Get him!

The pack approaches Kevin and Kevin jumps to his feet and takes off running. The children and Homer all give chase. One of the boys eventually catches up to Kevin and snatches the goggles from his hand. And then Kevin turns and joins in the chase. From the blanket, Cliff and Beth watch. Beth relieved and delighted.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - KEVIN AND HOMER'S DAY AT THE LAKE

Kevin and his new friends compete to see who can hold their breath the longest.

They take turns performing cannonballs off the wooden pier that juts well out into the lake.

They walk along the shore, Homer right beside.

One child throws a stick into the lake and Homer paddles out and back to shore. He drops the stick at Kevin's feet.

KEVIN
Good boy. Good boy Homer.

Kevin reaches down and pets Homer. Behind them, the sun starts its nightly descent.

END OF MONTAGE

CUT TO:

EXT BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Cliff and Beth on the blanket, propped up by their elbows. They look out at Kevin and Homer who run along the beach. Cliff reaches over and gently takes hold of Beth's hand.

CLIFF
It looks like Kevin made a new friend. And knowing Homer, that's a friend for life.

CUT TO:

EXT BEACH - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff and Beth pack the trunk.

BETH
Kevin. Come on. You too Homer.
We're going.

Kevin sits Indian style in a circle with his friends, towels draped over their shoulders, Homer under Kevin's arm.

KEVIN
Come on mom. Just fifteen more minutes.

BETH

No. It's getting late. We have a long drive back. Say goodbye to your friends and let's go. Move it.

Kevin makes his good-byes and then walks back to the car, Homer by his side.

CUT TO:

INT CAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Cliff looks in the rear view mirror and then motions to Beth. Beth turns. ANGLE ON Kevin and Homer, both sound asleep, Homer's head resting on Kevin's lap.

FADE OUT:

EXT NEIGHBORS FRONT PORCH - HALLOWEEN NIGHT

A front door swings open and a woman stands with a bowl of candy. She looks at Kevin who stands before her dressed as a ghost.

KEVIN

Trick or treat.

The woman smiles and drops a piece of candy in his bag.

(OC.) the distinct sound of someone clearing their throat can be heard.

The woman looks next to Kevin and then looks further down. There on the porch is Homer dressed as a convict, a black and white striped prisoners outfit with matching hat. He carries a plastic pumpkin in his mouth. The woman grudgingly drops a piece of candy in Homer's pumpkin.

KEVIN

Thank you.

The two high tail it quickly off the woman's porch and move on to the next house.

CUT TO:

INT CLIFF'S HOUSE - CHRISTMAS MORNING

The house tastefully decorated. A big tree with an abundance of beautifully wrapped presents beneath. Beth and Cliff sit on the couch watching Kevin tear through his gifts.

Next to him, Homer rips through wrapping paper with his teeth to uncover A RUBBER BONE. Homer carries it over and drops it on the pile with his other gifts. All bones.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

Kevin walks into the kitchen and Homer follows him in.

Kevin walks into the livingroom and Homer follows him in.

Kevin walks down the street and Homer follows him.

Kevin walks into the bathroom. Homer's attempt to follow him in is met quickly with a closed door.

END OF MONTAGE

CUT TO:

INT BETH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Beth separates the lace curtains and peers through the front door window. She opens the door.

BETH
What's wrong?

CLIFF
Nothing.

BETH
You look so serious.

CUT TO:

INT LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cliff walks straight past Beth and then turns back to her.

CLIFF
Do you remember me telling you
about my wife?

BETH
Of course.

CLIFF
That's not what I meant to say.
This isn't coming out right... God.
(MORE)

CLIFF (cont'd)
 I practiced this...My wife and
 I...We had something that for
 reasons I'll never
 understand...wasn't ours to keep.

BETH
 Cliff.

CLIFF
 No. Let me finish. For awhile after
 she died I gave up. I did. I never
 thought I would find someone
 special like that again. That I'd
 be that lucky. But I was wrong.
 (a beat)
 I love you Beth.
 (two beats)
 Will you marry me?

CUT TO:

INT CLIFF'S HOUSE - A SHORT TIME LATER

Homer paces nervously at the door. Cliff enters.

HOMER
 Sooooo? What did she say?

CLIFF
 She said.
 (a beat)
 Yes.

Homer stands on his hind legs and jumps up. After a
 celebratory exchange, Homer lays down and rolls on his back.

CLIFF
 What do you think you're doing?

HOMER
 (low voice)
 RUB DA BELLY! RUB DA BELLY!

Cliff laughs, drops to the floor and Rubs Da Belly.

CUT TO:

INT CHURCH BACK ROOM - DAY

Homer enters dressed in a doggy tuxedo, a bow-tie slipped
 around his neck. Beth, in the center of the room, stands in
 front of a full length mirror. She is dressed in a beautiful
 light blue dress.

BETH

Look at you Homer. Why aren't you even MORE handsome? I didn't think that was possible.

Beth reaches down to take Homer's face in her hands.

BETH

Look at that bowtie. Oh. You are the most handsome dog I've ever seen.

Beth returns to the mirror.

BETH

How's Cliff? You keeping an eye on him for me? You're a good friend to him Homer. He's lucky to have you.

(a beat)

Go check on him for me. OK Homer? He could probably use your help.

Homer turns and trots out the door.

CUT TO:

INT CHURCH BACK ROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Cliff stares at a wallet sized (CU.) PHOTOGRAPH - Cliff and Julia on their wedding day. Homer comes up beside him and sits.

HOMER

I loved her. She was nice to me.

(a beat)

I love Beth. She's nice to me too.

Distant organ music begins to play. Cliff stands and places the photo back in his wallet.

CLIFF

Come on Homer. We have people waiting.

Cliff opens the door and the organ music becomes louder. Cliff and Homer exit the room.

CUT TO:

EXT GROUNDS - LATER THAT DAY

The wedding reception in full swing. The location a country club with sprawling greens. Several tents scattered about.

Under the main tent a band plays, people dance and fill dinner plates at the numerous buffet tables.

Homer walks amongst the crowd. He bumps into Ruth and Aunt Betty, both dressed up beautifully.

RUTH

Hi Homer. You being a good boy?

Homer continues on and eventually turns down a table-lined isle. Halfway down the aisle and headed in his direction, is Alice, pushed in her wheelchair by Harold, her mighty cane in her lap. Alice gives Homer her signature glare and Homer carefully backs up. At the end of the isle, Homer turns and runs out of the main tent.

Homer comes to and sits at the top of a hill adjacent to the main tent. Homer looks back towards the tent. Through the crowd, he spots Cliff and Beth standing at a table greeting their guests. Beth rests her hand gently on Cliff's back. Homer turns back and looks down the hill.

At the bottom of the hill, all alone, sits Kevin. A group of children stand twenty feet away. Homer turns and takes an affectionate look back at Cliff before running down the hill towards Kevin. At the bottom of the hill, he hesitates and then yells...

HOMER

Kevin!

Kevin looks up and around.

HOMER

Over here!

Kevin looks in Homer's direction, only above him.

HOMER

Down here.

Kevin walks towards Homer.

KEVIN

Who said that?

HOMER

I did.

Kevin drops his eyes down and Homer looks straight up.

KEVIN

Homer. Did you just say something?

HOMER

Yes. Now come down here. I want to talk to you.

Kevin drops to his knees.

KEVIN

When did you learn how to talk?

HOMER

That's not important.

(a beat)

You see that girl over there?

Homer motions to a tall, blonde girl who is Kevin's age. She stands a few feet away from the other children.

KEVIN

Yes.

HOMER

She's been watching you.

The young girl catches Kevin's eye and smiles.

KEVIN

Really?

HOMER

Yes. Now go over there and talk to her.

KEVIN

I can't.

HOMER

Of course you can. Go on. Go over there.

Homer nudges Kevin with his nose.

KEVIN

But how did you. . .

HOMER

I'll explain it all to you later. It's very complicated. Now go.

KEVIN

Alright. But don't go anywhere.

HOMER
 Don't worry.
 (pointed)
 I'm not going anywhere.

Kevin walks towards his admirer. Homer watches as Kevin and the young girl begin talking, then he turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT MAIN TENT - A SHORT TIME LATER

Homer stands outside the entrance as Cliff and Beth greet their guests at its perimeter. Cliff excuses himself and walks outside the tent.

CLIFF
 Are you having a good time Homer?

Homer stares back.

CLIFF
 Homer?

Homer turns his head. In the distance stands Kevin talking with the blonde girl. Cliff follows Homer's lead and looks towards Kevin then looks back to Homer. Two beats and then it sinks in. Cliff's eyes cloud over.

CLIFF
 Well. I gotta say Homer. He
 couldn't have asked for a better
 friend.

Cliff bends down and plants a kiss on Homer's head. Homer licks Cliff's face and then turns and runs towards Kevin. Half-way there he stops and looks back. Cliff smiles, holding back tears. Beth sneaks up from behind and kisses Cliff's neck. Cliff turns and the two walk back into the tent.

CUT TO:

EXT GOUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Homer and Kevin sit side by side in the grass. Kevin talks non-stop and then laughs. Homer gives a big lick on the nose, which Kevin wipes away. The two continue talking and laughing as the screen fades to black.

The credits roll and then..

EPILOGUE

INT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kevin walks through the kitchen and out on to the back porch.

EXT BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Kevin looks out at the yard. It's pitch black.

KEVIN

Homer. Are you out here?

Kevin turns on the back porch light. Homer, in the middle of the yard, is in full squat position.

HOMER

Uh. A little privacy please.

KEVIN

Sorry.

Kevin flips off the lights and the screen goes back to black. The credits being rolling.

THE END

