

WINDS OF MORTALITY

Written by  
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**FADE IN:**

INT. BARB'S CAR - DAY

Summer - In a generic hospital parking lot, FRANK, 60's - 70's, gets in on the passenger side of a standard sedan as his wife BARBARA, 60's - 70's, slides in the drivers side.

They somberly sit for a few moments, staring straight ahead, not looking at anything.

FRANK

Well, that's a hell of a thing.

Without looking, Barbara reaches out to take his hand.

Frank takes hers and grabs it with both hands as he looks over to her, tears welling in his eyes.

She looks at him and bursts into tears.

BARBARA

We could still have a decade together!

FRANK

Or in six months I could be in diapers.

Barbara uses her free hand to wipe away her tears, squares her shoulders.

BARBARA

We'll plan for the worst, but hope for the best.

Frank nods. Looking over her shoulder, his eyes go unfocused. He begins to smile,

FRANK

We got to get home quick, so I can delete my browser history.

Barbara half smiles,

BARBARA

What about your collection of big butt, top heavy Italian women?

Frank stares at her in mock horror.

FRANK

You knew all along?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Solid middle class single-family house with an attached garage. Nicely decorated, but nothing over the top. Barbara is sitting on a sofa with a cup of tea, staring without seeing a TV on mute. On the coffee table are a number of travel magazines.

Frank walks into the room with a piece of paper in his hands.

She looks up at him,

FRANK

All the on-line things I could think of. I'll add to this if anything else comes to me.

BARBARA

Are you ready to start going over all the bills and what not?

Frank sighs, frowning.

Putting the paper on the coffee table, he sits next to her on the couch.

He stares at the TV as Barbara studies him.

He looks at her, pats her leg, then looks away expressionlessly. She covers his hand with hers, observing his profile.

FRANK

I'm confident you can handle it; just the whole thing makes me feel useless.

BARBARA

We don't have to do all this now. Or we could work on this together, so you'll still be part of it.

Frank turns toward Barbara and puts on a big smile and turns to her,

FRANK

No, I think a clean break is best. Finish your tea first?

She pats his hand and takes a sip.

INT. HOME OFFICE - DAY

A room that does multiple duty. It has lots of books on shelves as well as a desk with a computer and filing

cabinets. They're sitting next to each other looking at papers on the desk.

BARBARA

These are durable powers of attorney  
that give me control over, well,  
everything.

Frank picks one up and holds it in front of his face, but isn't really reading it.

She picks up another,

BARBARA

This will take you off the deed,  
(puts it in front of him,  
picks up another)  
And this will take you off the car.

Frank nods, looking at the papers one after another.

Barbara puts her arm around his shoulder,

BARBARA

Are you ready to give up your  
drivers license yet?

Frank stares off in the distance for a few moments, then turns to her.

FRANK

I need a few more days.

BARBARA

I'm not trying to rush you, just  
want to get an idea of how you feel.

FRANK

Just a few more days.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Summer - A small gathering of friends. JILL, late 50's to early 70's, sitting on a loveseat, glass of wine in her hand. She's smiling, a bit red faced from too much to drink.

HAROLD, late 50's to early 70's, sits in a chair with a small plate of appetizers in his hand. He has a neutral expression on his face.

FRANK

I'm thinking of the benefits.

Harold frowns slightly,

HAROLD  
Benefits?

Harold and Jill look intently at Frank.

FRANK  
Sure. Think of all the movies I can watch again for the first time. And all those great novels I haven't read in decades because I didn't want to ruin them.

They laugh nervously.

BARBARA  
We'll save so much on vacations - already canceled several. Why go on an expensive trip somewhere exotic just for him to forget before we've got back?

FRANK  
Yeah, we're experimenting with local places I really like. Pretty soon she'll know exactly how to entertain me for the whole day, day after day.

Frank and Barbara burst out laughing.

Jill smiles nervously.

JILL  
You're really serious?

BARBARA  
I'm sure there'll be sad days ahead, but no point in anticipation.

HAROLD  
You preparing for... what's next?

FRANK  
(best Aussie accent)  
No worries, mate!

Jill has a half smile on her face.

Harold regards Frank with skepticism.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Large bathroom with wide double sink. It's covered with the usual accouterments. Frank is picking things up, looking at them uncomprehendingly, then putting them back down.

Barbara looks into the room.

BARBARA  
Frank, are you OK?

Frank looks at her with a totally blank expression.

Barbara walks over to take away what's in his hand.

He swings at her and knocks her down.

Her head strikes the bathtub and she lies motionless on the floor.

Frank goes back to picking things up, studying them without comprehension, then putting things back down.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Comfortable, with a king-sized bed and plenty of elbow room to get around.

Frank abruptly opens his eyes and rapidly looks around.

He twists around to check on Barbara and relaxes slightly when he sees her sleeping soundly next to him.

He rolls onto his back, eyes open, concerned look on his face.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Late summer - Neat kitchen with all the usual appliances. Frank is pouring two cups of coffee, Barbara standing next to him.

He hands a cup to her, she takes a sip.

BARBARA  
It tastes so much better when you hand it to me.

FRANK  
As you wish.

They kiss.

FRANK  
I'd like to discuss agency.

Barbara raises her eyebrows.

FRANK  
Decision making.

BARBARA

I think I need to sit down for this.

They walk to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

They sit on the couch next to each other.

FRANK

I really want to be able to make decisions now that will be honored later.

BARBARA

I think we have a good long while before that becomes an issue.

Frank sets his coffee on the table and looks at her with a serious expression.

FRANK

Isn't it better to have this worked out now, when I'm most lucid?

Barbara looks at him over her cup, takes a sip and puts the cup down.

BARBARA

What do you have in mind?

FRANK

I don't want to be in diapers and not remember who you are.

Barbara starts to smile, realizes Frank is dead serious and studies his face.

BARBARA

Better or worse, rich or poor, sickness and health.

Without taking his eyes off hers, he hitches forward and takes her hands in his.

FRANK

It matters to me I know who you are, who I am.

Barbara leans toward him, touching foreheads,

BARBARA

I love you now. I'll love you no matter what.

Frank heaves a huge sigh, kisses Barbara and leans back, though still holds her hands and maintains eye contact.

FRANK

I don't want to put you through that.

BARBARA

Shouldn't that be my decision?

Frank continues thinking for a few more moments, then looks away.

FRANK

I guess if it goes on long enough it'll have to be.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Early fall, decorations of colored leaves, small pumpkin gourds, etc. - Entering the house are DAN, middle-aged son of Barbara and Frank, along with EILEEN, middle-aged woman - Dan's wife and SARAH, ten, daughter to Dan and Eileen. They're dressed for cool, but not cold, weather.

Hugs and kisses around.

As they take their jackets off, Eileen pulls out a tablet from her purse and gets Frank's attention.

EILEEN

I brought some of my latest, in case you want to take a look.

FRANK

(reaching for the tablet)  
Of course, of course.

Frank swipes through the images.

Eileen walks around to stand next to him.

They walk toward the kitchen.

Barbara is hanging the jackets in a closet.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Frank puts the tablet on the counter as they both look on.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sarah is turning the TV on.

Dan is setting up pieces on an elegant chess board table.

Barbara is clearing space on the coffee table, collecting several travel magazines into a stack to one side.



INT. KITCHEN - DAY

EILEEN  
(pointing at tablet)  
Back up.  
(Frank obliges)  
This is one I submitted to that  
contest we talked about.

Frank considers the image, blowing it up and moving it  
around.

FRANK  
The composition is excellent. I have  
every confidence you'll win.

EILEEN  
But yours are better. Why don't you  
submit a few?

FRANK  
Ignorance is bliss. As long as I  
don't enter, I can't lose.

EILEEN  
That's a cop out and you know it.

FRANK  
Well, it's got me this far. And I'm  
way too old to change.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

BARBARA  
(to Eileen)  
Dan's setting up the chess board,  
why don't we do a little shopping?

Sarah looks up with interest.

SARAH  
Yeah, mom, they're no fun when they  
play.

Eileen and Frank enter.

Eileen looks at Dan.

EILEEN  
Yup, he's got that glazed look.

Dan holds out his hands closed over a white and black  
piece and Frank picks one.

They sit down and immediately get into it, the pieces  
moving fast and furious at first.

The ladies are getting ready to go out,

BARBARA

You boys going to be OK while we're gone?

Frank looks up, smiles and nods.

Dan's focus doesn't leave the table.

Barbara gives Frank a kiss.

Eileen pats Dan on the back. Dan starts and looks up.

Eileen gives Dan a kiss and Dan's focus goes back to the board.

The women leave.

FRANK

I wonder how much longer I can hold my record.

DAN

Well, it's been over thirty years.

FRANK

Maybe, but I feel like things are evolving already.

Dan looks up sharply from the board.

DAN

You alright?

FRANK

The little things are accumulating.

Dan studies Frank's face closely, then looks back down to the board.

DAN

Then let them accumulate quietly.

Frank smiles and nods.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The board is down to a few pieces, the spoils lined up along the edge.

Dan studies the board intently.

Frank looks on with slight amusement.

The women sweep into the room, carrying some packages.

Frank looks up and kisses Barbara as she leans over.

Dan hasn't noticed and starts when Eileen puts her hand on his shoulder.

EILEEN  
Streak unbroken?

Dan sighs. Reaching into his pocket, he pulls out some folded cash and hands it to Frank as he tips his king over and shrugs.

Frank holds his hand up to his forehead with his fingers in an L shape.

DAN  
Another day older and deeper in  
debt.

FRANK/DAN  
(chorus)  
*St. Peter don't you call me, 'cause  
I can't go  
I owe my soul to the company store*

Frank and Dan stand and embrace.

Dan, with a frustrated face, looks over Frank's shoulder at Eileen.

FRANK  
One day, for sure. But today is not  
that day.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

TV on loud, Frank is wildly raging around the room.

FRANK  
(shouting)  
Turn it off!

He has the remote in his hand as he puts his hands to his head.

Barbara tries to calm him down, but he isn't aware of her.

She tries to take the remote from him and he bats her in the side of the head.

She briefly falls to her knees, then, avoiding him, turns the TV off.

Frank pauses, relaxes for a moment, then gets agitated again.

FRANK  
(shouting)  
I can't hear! What happened to the  
sound?

Barbara tries to sooth him.

In a rage, he throws her across the room.

Barbara lies motionless as Frank waves his arms around.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frank abruptly sits up in bed looking wildly around.

He sees Barbara sleeping and freezes.

He slowly reaches out to touch her. She makes some comfort noises, grabs his hand and pulls his arm around her.

He cuddles next to her, but is wide awake, staring into the darkness.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Fall, some colored leaves on the window sill - Frank is pouring coffee into two cups.

Barbara smiles as she walks in, puts her arms around him from the back and hugs him.

Frank puts his free hand on hers.

Cups full, Frank puts the coffee pitcher back, then stares out the window.

Barbara gets a concerned look on her face.

BARBARA  
Everything alright?

FRANK  
(distantly)  
I'd like to continue that earlier  
conversation.

Barbara hugs him tighter, sighs and puts her head on his back.

BARBARA  
I'll love you to the end, no matter  
what happens.

Frank continues staring out the window.

He rubs her hands with both of his.

He twists around in her embrace and hugs her tightly.

FRANK

How can you love a drooling imbecile  
that can't feed himself?

Barbara pulls herself away and holds him at arms length,  
studying his face.

BARBARA

Why do you have to be so  
pessimistic? Maybe things will never  
get that bad.

(smiles)

Maybe you'll get run over by a  
truck.

FRANK

(smiling)

Or slip on a bar of soap.

Barbara hugs him again.

Frank holds her tightly, expressionlessly staring over her  
shoulder.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Late fall, dried leaves gathered in corners, a few leaves  
with color still hanging on - Lovely garden with a number  
of sitting areas and an open grassy area - cut golf-course  
short - where a game of croquet is set up. To the side of  
the garden is a large sundial. Everyone is wearing light  
jackets.

Sitting on a bench, waiting their turn, are Frank and  
Barbara.

Standing are Dan, Eileen and Sarah.

Sarah has roqueted her dad's ball and is deciding what to  
do next.

She begins walking around the balls counter clockwise.

FRANK

Sarah, don't go widdershins. That's  
bad luck.

Sarah looks up in confusion.

Barbara is smiling openly.

Dan's confused and Eileen is worried.

SARAH  
What's widdershins?

FRANK  
The opposite of sunwise, of course.

Barbara hiding her smile.

Frank gets up from the bench and walks to the sundial, gesturing for Sarah to join him.

He takes her hand and walks clockwise around the sundial.

FRANK  
This is good luck.

Gestures in reverse.

FRANK  
That is widdershins. Bad luck.

Dan has his phone in his hand and shows it to Eileen.

DAN  
You scared me, dad, I thought you  
were having a stroke.

Barbara laughs out loud.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darkened bedroom, Frank and Barbara are sleeping in bed. Frank's face is troubled.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Frank is shambling around the darkened room, face blank.

He bumps into things, curses, pushes away and moves in a random direction.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Frank is wandering in the darkened kitchen, pulling drawers open, pulling things out and dumping some on the ground, some on the counter.

He picks up a whisk and stares at it uncomprehendingly. He drops it on the ground and goes to a knife block.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frank moans in bed, his face in shock.

His thrashing awakens Barbara, who looks on with concern.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

He picks up knives one at a time, smallest to largest, then takes the largest and starts to stab it onto the counter repetitively.

The lights go on and Barbara is standing in her night clothes looking at Frank with concern. She walks toward him.

He turns, knife at the ready, and stares at her without any recognition.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frank, tears in his eyes, makes 'UHN, UHN' sounds and he rolls back and forth.

Barbara gently reaches out to caress his face.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Barbara cautiously approaches him.

BARBARA

Please put the knife down.

Frank looks at the knife. There's a DRIP DRIP sound and Frank looks down to see drops of blood splashing on the ground.

He looks back to the knife and its dripping blood. He examines it, curious at the dripping.

Barbara, in the background, is lying on the floor, a growing pool of blood spreading out from her body.

Frank studies the blood that's now all over his hands.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Barbara turns on the light.

Frank abruptly sits up in bed.

FRANK

Look out!

He stares in bewilderment around the room.

Barbara goes to give him a hug.

He shies away from her.

FRANK

Don't! You'll get hurt!

Barbara pauses in confusion.

Frank starts to relax, then bursts into tears. He turns to her and hugs her tightly.

Barbara caresses his back.

BARBARA

It was just a nightmare.

Frank is sobbing uncontrollably.

Barbara hugs him tightly, he hugs her fiercely.

BARBARA

(matter of factly)

I can't breathe.

Frank abruptly releases her and leaps out of bed.

FRANK

It's happening!

BARBARA

(soothingly)

It was just a nightmare.

(pause)

Please sit down.

Frank slowly sits on the edge of the bed, avoiding her eyes.

Barbara gets out of bed and comes to sit next to him. Without touching him,

BARBARA

Would you like to talk about it?

Frank stares at her, then cautiously reaches out to touch her face.

She leans her face into his hand and cups it with hers.

Frank takes a deep breath and begins to relax. Looking at her,



FRANK

I was wandering around the house, no idea what was going on.

(shudders)

Then you showed up and I attacked you.

(mumbles, looking away)

Killed you.

BARBARA

That wasn't real. I'm here. I'm fine.

She studies him, then puts her arms around his shoulders. At first, he's rigid, then he relaxes.

He takes her hand and kisses it, then kisses her, then looks away.

FRANK

I stabbed you. Blood was everywhere. I didn't even notice.

Barbara caresses the side of his face. Cupping his face, she turns it toward him.

BARBARA

Just a dream. I'm totally fine.

(pause)

Can we get back under the covers?

Frank stares at her, his face wounded. He slowly nods and they slide under the covers.

She pulls him to lie back against the pillows.

FRANK

I don't want to become a mindless monster.

BARBARA

You're not. You're fine. Just relax and hold me.

He gathers her in his arms and she pulls the blankets to cover their waists.

Frank is staring at the ceiling.

FRANK

That's what can happen, you know. I become a night walker.

BARBARA

I read about sundowning. Kinda weird, isn't it?

FRANK

That isn't the worst of it. I didn't even know you.

BARBARA

It wasn't real. This is real. I'm real. Now is real.

Frank nods his head, gradually relaxing.

Barbara puts her hand alongside his face, gently turning it toward her. Frank heaves a huge sigh and finally relaxes completely.

Barbara takes his hand and puts it on her breast, where it sits passively.

She reaches under the covers to his waist.

BARBARA

I have this idea that might get you to relax.

FRANK

Oh? What might that entail?

His hand starts to gently massage her breast.

Her hand begins a rhythmic stroking under the blankets.

Barbara leans close to his ear,

BARBARA

It entails some physical activity, to tire you out so you can sleep.

FRANK

Mmmm. Please tell me more.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Late spring, fresh flowers in vases, small pots with flowering plants - Barbara greets Jill at the door. They hug and kiss.

Frank emerges from the hallway looking like a safari hunter, complete with hat, and carrying a nice camera with an expensive lens.

Frank and Jill hug briefly and kiss each other on the cheek.

BARBARA

You got your phone with you?

Expressionlessly, Frank pulls it out of his pocket and shows it to her.

BARBARA

And it's on?

Frank frowns darkly, then checks it. He blushes as he shakes his head and turns it on.

Barbara sighs, then gives him a warm hug and watches him head out the door.

Jill observes all the byplay with interest.

JILL

So it's really happening.

Barbara nods.

JILL

How you holding up?

Barbara shrugs as she sets out cookies and pours tea from the tray on the coffee table. Stacked to one side are several travel magazines and a couple of language dictionaries, e.g., English to German, English to French, etc.

BARBARA

With today's science there's no reversing this thing. Or even much in the way of holding it back.

Jill's eyes well up as she meets Barbara's eyes.

BARBARA

Don't worry. I focus on the good times. And there are still plenty.

JILL

What about when things get worse?

Barbara takes a sip of tea and looks around the room while Jill studies Barbara closely.

INTERCUT with Frank wandering around outside taking pictures.

BARBARA

We've had lots of long discussions. Way before this business started up. Advanced medical directives, that sort of thing. When to pull the plug.

JILL

I thought that was, you know, against your religion.

BARBARA

(meeting Jill's eyes)

There are a lot of... elements... in the church I don't agree with. And the Pope, you know, didn't follow the letter of his own law.

JILL

(frowning)

What do you have in mind?

BARBARA

Whatever happens, we want to ensure it's at home, under our own conditions. That depends, though, on having a will strong enough to avoid dialing nine one one when things get ugly at the end.

JILL

I have no worries about you in that regard. What's Frank think of all this?

BARBARA

Oh, he's all over it. Did all sorts of research on DNRs, to evaluate which was best. Ultimately deciding staying out of the hospital altogether is the right approach.

JILL

I don't like to think about these things. Besides, science and medicine get better every year. What might be a slow lingering death today might be totally recoverable in a few years.

Barbara sets her cup down, sighs, and looks at Jill.

BARBARA

It's about agency. Who's in control. Get to the hospital and things take on a life of their own.

JILL

You're looking at the worst possible case.

BARBARA

Of course. That's where the focus needs to be. You can't plan on passing in your sleep.

(slight smile)

Or getting run over by a truck.

Jill shudders.

BARBARA

Putting plans in place for the worst case ensures all the lesser ones are also taken care of.

Jill slowly nods.

JILL

What if it's painful? How do you get pain relief if you don't go to the hospital?

BARBARA

(shrugs)  
Hospice.

JILL

But that's only when there's no...

Barbara nods.

BARBARA

You don't have to accept treatment, you know. Chemo, for instance, does horrible things. Why endure that if there's little chance of the investment paying off?

JILL

That sounds rather... sterile and unfeeling.

Barbara gets a cookie and tops her cup off.

BARBARA

We think it's enlightened and forward thinking.

Jill also gets a cookie and tops off her cup. She nibbles at the cookie, takes a sip and stares at Barbara.

JILL

Is Frank expecting to be in any pain?

BARBARA

This isn't just about Frank and what he's dealing with. Back when we were young and invincible we didn't give any thought to growing old. That changed in our forties, though, when we realized what happens to your body as you age.

JILL  
I get that. But growing old sure  
beats the alternative!

Barbara studies Jill.

BARBARA  
Frank jokes - at least I think he's  
joking - that he's not sure about  
that.

JILL  
That's terrible.

BARBARA  
Yeah. After beginning to experience  
the reality of growing old, we  
started to take control very  
seriously. Researching living wills,  
things like hospice care, aging in  
place, that sort of thing.

JILL  
Research is fine, but acting on it?  
Doesn't every life have meaning?

BARBARA  
What meaning to a life spent in  
misery and pain, tied to machines -  
and with no agency left?

JILL  
It doesn't have to be like that.

BARBARA  
Of course. But that's where advanced  
planning is critical. Don't want to  
be making those decisions in a panic  
at the last second.

Jill shakes her head.

BARBARA  
You haven't even heard the  
cold-hearted element yet. Money. The  
cost of dying slowly is very high.

Jill considers this, her face getting strained.

BARBARA  
Once you get enmeshed in the  
healthcare system it can be hard to  
break out.

Barbara, who has been glancing out the window from time to time during her conversation with Jill, gets up and goes to open the door.

Jill's face is still strained.

Frank comes in with a relaxed, cheerful expression.

BARBARA  
How'd your hunting go?

A brief look of pain washes over Frank's face.

FRANK  
I clearly remember how to operate  
the camera, but can't remember a  
single picture I just took.

Barbara takes the camera strap from around Frank's neck  
and looks at the preview window.

Jill gets up to also look, her face neutral.

BARBARA  
Well, you still got an eye for  
composition.

JILL  
These are lovely, Frank. How come  
I've never seen these before?

FRANK  
(shrugging)  
It's like being an actor. For every  
one that gets recognition and makes  
money, there're thousands waiting  
tables. I wait tables.

Frank takes off his hat and lays it on a table, along with  
his camera.

FRANK  
I'm going to lay down for a little  
while.

Barbara gives him a hug and watches as he walks down the  
hallway.

Jill's face gets strained again.

Once he closes the door,

JILL  
Who's driving these decisions? You  
or him?

BARBARA  
Hunh?

JILL  
Is this just so you'll have more  
money later?

Barbara stares at Jill, aghast.

BARBARA  
How can you say such a thing?

JILL  
You're the one talking about the  
costs of dying.

BARBARA  
Frank and I have both been  
discussing this, since long before  
his diagnosis.

Jill points at the coffee table.

JILL  
I see those travel magazines. You're  
practicing different languages.

Barbara's shocked.

BARBARA  
What's that got to do with anything?

Jill swings her arms around.

JILL  
(louder than before, but  
not shouting)  
How can you put money ahead of  
someone's life?

BARBARA  
(making shushing motions)  
Quiet.

Jill opens her mouth for another statement that's clearly  
going to be louder than the last.

Barbara pushes Jill into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

JILL  
(quieter, but still  
intense)  
You'd throw away Frank's life to  
save a few bucks?

Barbara's forehead wrinkles up in disgust.



BARBARA

Of course not. This is about quality of life and maintaining agency, not money.

Jill, red faced, shakes her head.

Barbara reaches toward Jill, but Jill shakes her off.

Barbara looks at Jill in surprise.

Jill abruptly walks past Barbara to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jill grabs her purse and, without looking at Barbara, stalks out of the house.

Barbara, standing in the walkway from the kitchen to the living room, stares in slack jawed amazement.

Barbara walks toward the window.

Jill backs out of the driveway and zooms away.

Her surprised face hardens in anger

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Late spring - Frank and Dan are hunched over the chess board. Pieces are all over the sides of the board and there are just a handful left. The two study the board almost unmoving.

Barbara, Eileen and Sarah come in the door.

Dan quickly glances up, without expression.

Frank hasn't budged.

All three walk to look at the two men.

Barbara puts her hand on Frank's back and leans down to give him a kiss.

He starts and sits up so quickly Barbara has to jerk back to avoid being hit.

FRANK

You're back already?

BARBARA

A two hour movie, dinner and some shopping. Hardly 'already.'

Dan looks at Eileen, who's standing behind him, with slight concern.

She's rubbing his shoulders as she glances at the board.

EILEEN  
Is today that day?

Frank looks around, a brief expression of awakening.

He looks back at the board.

Reaching in his pocket he pulls out some folded cash.

Handing it to Dan, he tips his king over.

FRANK  
(appropriate gesture)  
Passing the torch.

Dan mimes taking the torch. He holds his hand up and waves the 'torch' around.

Looking toward Frank, Dan puts his hand in the same 'L' shape on his forehead and starts to caper about.

Frank looks on with a carefully schooled expression of amusement.

Eileen punches Dan in the arm.

Barbara shakes her head as she watches, a slight smile on her face.

SARAH  
Way to go dad!

Dan takes Sarah's hands and they dance around in a circle.

Barbara leans toward Frank's ear and whispers,

BARBARA  
You OK?

FRANK  
(whispering)  
The price of getting old. The young  
wolf wins out.  
(pause)  
I'm glad he's still willing to play.  
I think it helps.

INT. DAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Middle of the road sedan or minivan, Dan driving, Eileen in the passenger seat, Sarah in the back. Dan's euphoric expression slides off his face. Eileen looks at him with concern,

EILEEN  
You OK babe?

DAN  
I thought this day would feel more  
triumphant.

Sarah looks up at the conversation.

SARAH  
But you did triumph!

Dan stares somberly out at the road.

Eileen reaches out and rubs his arm and shoulder.

SARAH  
(holding her hand in an  
'L' shape on her forehead)  
Dad's no longer a looser!

Eileen looks at Sarah,

EILEEN  
Sometimes a victory can be bitter  
sweet.

SARAH  
(confused)  
Hunh?

EILEEN  
It's one thing to beat a peer in a  
contest, another thing to win  
because your opponent is getting  
old.

SARAH  
(dismissive)  
Grandpa's not old.

Dan smiles crookedly,

DAN  
Damn right. I earned that victory!

Eileen tries to smile for Sarah as she watches Dan's smile  
fade.

FADE OUT.

The End.