Perfect Couples

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The Couples:

**Dave & Julia**
The cool, regular couple you see yourself in. They realize they have their flaws, but they’re trying. And more often than not, they manage to get it right.

**Vance & Amy**
The “too much passion” couple. They thrive on the drama, and the highs are high, but the lows are low. Basically, a pair of soulmates whose lives would be much simpler if they’d never met.

**Rex & Leigh**
The “perfect couple” with big quotation marks, they hold themselves up as ideal partners. They’ve read all the books, taken all the seminars and can’t wait to share what they’ve learned with anyone within earshot.

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**Dave**
30, middle-American good looks. Quick with a joke, definitely not looking to dirty his hands with confrontation. A no-drama guy who thoroughly enjoys his needier friends' quirks. Think Matt Damon.

**Julia**
28, smart, sexy and cool. Easily riled, but quick to forgive. Though comfortable speaking her mind, Julia prides herself on being low-maintenance in her relationship. Think Tina Fey.

**Vance**
30, intense. A guys’ guy who manages also to be very sensitive. Vance is opinionated and feels he’s doing everyone a service by bluntly sharing his opinions. He’s wrong. Dave’s best friend, he’s high maintenance, but a ton of fun. Think Vince Vaughn.

**Amy**
29, attractive and kind, but flighty and unfocused. Amy has trouble with life's details: lots of lost keys and stoves left on. Though gentle, Amy taps into an inner tiger when provoked by Vance, which happens often. Think Leslie Mann.

**Rex**
30, handsome, successful, but way more self-assured than is warranted. Back in college, he was the third in Dave and Vance’s group of two. He’s also Julia’s brother. A party guy and ladies’ man until he met wife, Leigh, Rex now approaches coupledom and monogamy with the zeal of the converted.

**Leigh**
24, very put-together. The youngest of the group, but easily the most mature. Asian-American, but the biggest Burberry-wearing, Pasadena WASP you ever met. Considers it her responsibility to mold the other couples in the successful image of Rex and herself.
COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

DAVE (30, middle-American good looks) approaches the bed where JULIA (28, smart & sexy when awake) SLEEPS sprawled out, taking up most of the bed. Dave sighs.

INT. VANCE AND AMY’S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

VANCE (30, amped-up, even now at bedtime), reaches the bed to find AMY (30, hot & scattered) sprawled out. He seethes.

INT. REX AND LEIGH’S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

REX (30, confident, handsome in a “fratty” way) finds wife, LEIGH (24, very put together, Asian-American) hogging the bed. Rex GOES TO SAY SOMETHING, then reconsidered and consults a book entitled “Communication for Couples”.

REX
(off book)
Cherished Partner. I honor your need to be comfortable. Yet, when you leave me so little room, it makes me feel “less than”. It makes me feel unloved.

LEIGH
(beat, same tone)
Cherished Partner, I hear you. And now I know that when I leave you so little room, it makes you feel --

INT. VANCE AND AMY’S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Vance leans in close to Amy with CONTROLLED RAGE.

VANCE
Hey, sweetheart? I see you’ve chosen to take up ninety-five percent of the bed.

Amy starts to move.

VANCE (CONT’D)
Oh no no no -- don’t get up. Clearly your comfort is the only thing in the world that matters, so please take the other five percent, too. I’m just going to sleep on the floor like a dog.
AMY
You want more room?
(springs out of bed)
You want more room?!

VANCE
Oh, here we go!

INT. REX AND LEIGH’S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Leigh and Rex HOLD HANDS, reciting in UNISON...

LEIGH/REX
... And by being brave enough to
share our needs, we forge a bond,
two becoming one --

INT. VANCE AND AMY’S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Amy THROWS all the PILLOWS AND COMFORTER off the bed.

AMY
Are these taking up too much
space?! Are the things on my night
table in the way?!

She BRUSHES THEM OFF. Vance EMPTIES TWO BOTTLED WATERS onto
the ground.

VANCE
Please! I belong on the floor!
(dumps out flower vase)
The wet floor!

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dave stews, crowded, as Julia snores. Still asleep, she
jerks. Her hand LANDS ON HIS FACE. Dave gets an idea...

DAVE
(“worried” whisper)
Honey, there’s a huge, gross bug on
your back. The kind that freaks
you out.

Julia SHRIEKS, and JUMPS to the far end of the bed,
HORRIFIED. Dave slams his hand down “KILLING” it.

DAVE (CONT’D)
Got it.

JULIA
Oh, thank you, so much. I love
you. Was it hairy?
DAVE
(hero)
Doesn’t matter now. It’s over.

Content, Dave SETTLES IN to his big chunk of bed.

INT. REX AND LEIGH’S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Close on Rex. He beams.

REX
You’re right about that book. I feel heard and validated. Good night, Cherished Partner.

WIDEN TO REVEAL: Rex squeezed onto the edge of the bed.

LEIGH DIDN’T MOVE ONE INCH.

LEIGH
Good night, Cherished Partner.

She KILLS THE LIGHTS.

INT. VANCE AND AMY’S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Anger has turned to passion as they ROLL AROUND on the floor, KISSING, on the way to crazy love-making.

INSERT TITLE CARD: “PERFECT COUPLES”

INT. REX AND LEIGH’S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Still dark. REX FALLS out of bed and lands with a THUD.

FADE OUT.

END OF COLD OPEN
ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INSERT CARD: “GAMES”

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S BEDROOM – FRIDAY EVENING

Dave and Julia dress. A worked-up Julia buttons her top. Dave loves her like this, but tries to calm her.

JULIA
What were you thinking?

DAVE
Have your breasts grown?

JULIA
Don’t try to compliment me. And that’s not a compliment.

DAVE
Look, we were in a terrible situation, I made a call.

JULIA
Game Night? With our friends? I mean, I love them, but --

DAVE
(laughing)
No, it’s going to be a nightmare.

JULIA
There’s a reason we’ve resisted Game Night all these years -- it intensifies personalities. It’s like couples’ cocaine.

DAVE
Hey, I freed up our anniversary. You heard your brother the other night. If I hadn’t suggested this, our anniversary would have become --

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. REX AND LEIGH’S PATIO – EVENING (A FEW NIGHTS AGO)

Julia and Dave sit around a fire pit with REX and LEIGH.
... You two, us two, a boat, some kick-A Napa Cabernets, my business associates... the ultimate party.

JULIA
(beat)
There’s no way we said yes to this.

Leigh pulls out her planner.

LEIGH
It’s on the books. See, September ninth. We bought the tickets. We’re so excited.

REX
You owe us three hundred dollars.

JULIA
(clearly this is an “out”)
Wait. September 9th is our anniversary.

REX
Oh my God. That’s perfect. Family celebrating family.
(to Leigh)
It’s happening.

LEIGH
(to Rex and Julia)
Your mother’s dying wish. She made me promise to bring you two closer.

REX
God, she loved you, Leigh.

Dave and Julia share a look.

DAVE
Can you excuse us a second?

Julia and Dave move off.

DAVE (CONT’D)
So here’s what we know: Anniversary at Sea ain’t gonna happen.

JULIA
Right? How can they think we agreed to this?
DAVE
Because we did. They did it again.
Trapped us with the “far off plan”.

INSERT CARD: “LIKE, 8 OR 9 MONTHS AGO”

INT. INDIAN RESTAURANT - EIGHT OR NINE MONTHS AGO

A QUICK POP of the two couples together.

LEIGH
What are you guys doing the second Saturday in September?

DAVE/JULIA
(caught)
Uhhhhhhhhhh...

EXT. REX AND LEIGH’S PATIO - EVENING

Julia and Dave continue discussing the “far off plan”.

JULIA
Uch, I hate the far off plan!
It’s so manipulative. Well, it ends now -- this is unacceptable!

A riled-up Julia STARTS OFF. Dave HOLDS HER BACK.

DAVE
No. This is when bad things happen. You’re this sweet, lovely person, someone does something "unacceptable," and you go "Red Julia". Look at you: the big eyes, the attack stance. You’re Hulk-ing out here, honey.

JULIA
(crazy-eyed, panting)
I’m fine. I just want to talk.

DAVE
(enjoying her)
You’re nuts. It’s like Nic Cage is playing you.

JULIA
We spend so much time with our friends. All I want is one night alone. Dinner, some wine, sex or too much pie, whatever feels like the right call...
DAVE
And we’ll have that. We can get out of Saturday with no tears, we’ll just give them something in exchange. They can have Friday.
(musing)
So Friday... What’s something that would excite both them and Vance?

JULIA
(pulled up)
Vance? Who’s talking about Vance?

DAVE
I have plans with him Friday.
(off her eye-roll)
You know I can’t cancel on Vance. He’s far too needy.

INT. DAVE AND VANCE’S REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY (MAY 2008)
Dave sits with a very worked up VANCE.

VANCE
You want to cancel on me? On this of all nights?

INSERT CARD: “NIGHT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO SEE ‘IRON MAN’”

VANCE (CONT’D)
What did I do to you to make you hurt me this way?

EXT. REX AND LEIGH’S PATIO - EVENING
As we left them. Dave ponders a Friday plan.

DAVE
(snaps, eureka)
I got it. The thing that will make everyone happy: Rex, Leigh, Vance. Not you.
(calling)
Guys, we actually made anniversary plans Saturday, but we’re free Friday, and we remembered there’s something you’ve been wanting to --

LEIGH
(hoping against hope)
Game Night?
INT. DAVE AND VANCE’S REAL ESTATE OFFICE – THE NEXT DAY (THURSDAY)

VANCE
Game Night? You never let me have
Game Night. Thank you!

We’re in a GUY’S DREAM OFFICE: Sports and music memorabilia,
pics of Dave and Vance having great times from the ages of
ten ‘til the present. Vance stands on the desk. He
addresses a nearby autographed picture of a WRESTLER.

VANCE (CONT’D)
Jimmy “Superfly” Snuka, look down
on us from above on this Game
Night. Bless us with awesomeness.

DAVE
I don’t think he’s dead.

Vance JUMPS OFF the desk, KNOCKING DAVE onto the couch WWF-
style. Dave tries to throw him off. ISABELLA, 22, the guys’
pretty, Latina, Texan assistant enters. VANCE DISENGAGES.

VANCE
(“scolding” Dave)
The wrestling, the constant
touching. It’s a little gay, man.

Isabella drops some papers on the desk.

ISABELLA
I know you wanted to show the lot
on 11251 Morningside, but the
demolition crew didn’t come, so the
tear-down is still there.

VANCE
Thanks, Isabella. That’ll be all.

She exits.

DAVE
What are you doing?
(off innocent look)
I saw that. You lifted your sleeve
and slightly flexed your tricep.

Dave DEMONSTRATES. Vance is in fact exposing the muscle.

DAVE (CONT’D)
Do you not have enough drama in
your relationship already? Maybe
don’t flex for the secretary.
VANCE
You know what I’m gonna flex: my
hint giving and receiving muscles
on...
(falsetto sing-song)
Game Niiliili--

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S BEDROOM - FRIDAY EVENING

Dave and Julia continue dressing. [We pick up where we left
them at the top of Act One.]

JULIA
(shakes her head)
Game Night. Not my idea, babe.
Whatever happens tonight is on you.

DAVE
Everyone’s looking forward to it.

JULIA
Really? Amy despises games. She’s
terrified of people thinking she’s
stupid, she hates being timed.
Poor girl. How did Vance get her
to say “yes” to this?

INT. VANCE AND AMY’S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

VANCE is putting on a shirt. Amy wears a SEXY COCKTAIL DRESS
and isexcitedly loading on WAY TOO MANY BRACELETS.

AMY
(thrilled)
I can’t believe you’re taking me
dancing.

VANCE
(prims in the mirror)
Yep. I’m taking you dancing.

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

As we left them. Julia starts to undress.

JULIA
You know what? Let’s have sex now.
We’re not going to want to after
Game Night.
(off his hesitation)
What?
DAVE
If we’re going to be competing, I feel like I should have my edge.

JULIA
Your sexual edge? You feel that your clue-giving is infused with a particular sexual energy?

DAVE
Your tone is mocking, but when I play there is a certain vigor I don’t care to compromise.

We hear a DOOR OPEN downstairs.

LEIGH (O.S.)
We’re here! Are we the first to arrive?!

JULIA
That happens when you’re forty minutes early!

DAVE
Relax. Tonight will be fine. And it’s gonna buy us a nice quiet “us” anniversary tomorrow. Let me do this for you.

He KISSES her. She SMILES. She walks to the door and lets out a LONG DEEP BREATH, not quite ready for this.

REX (O.S.)
What’s taking so long?! Are you steeling yourself?! It sounds like you’re steeling yourself!

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S LIVING ROOM – AN HOUR LATER

Dave and Julia suffer as Rex and Leigh drone on...

LEIGH
But if I had to name our most remarkable relationship skill? Probably our ability to meet each other in the middle, and make life choices that suit us both.

REX
Take the church Leigh found for us.

POP TO:
INT. KOREAN ORTHODOX CHURCH - LAST SUNDAY

Rex sits with Leigh, a LONE WHITE MAN amidst a CONGREGATION OF KOREANS, taking in the Korean liturgy.

KOREAN MINISTER (O.S.)
Kydo kyo korin do jin zsha shi bo--

Rex understands not one word. He nods, moved.

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As we left them, LISTENING TO REX. Vance and Amy ENTER.

AMY
Sorry we’re late! Everybody ready?

LEIGH
Yep. Just pick a number out of this hat.

AMY
(terrified)
Why?

REX
Don’t you know what tonight is?

Amy LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM: veggies, dip, beers, pads, pens, an easel with a marker, a mini hourglass.

AMY
(realizing)
Is that an egg timer?!
(to Vance)
You son of a bitch!!

She starts beating his chest. He envelops her in a bear hug and strokes her hair.

VANCE
Baby, baby, baby. Shhhh. Shhhh.
(to group)
She’s fine. Give her a minute.
This is very fresh.

INSERT CARD: “THE GAMES BEGIN”

INT. LIVING ROOM - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

People draw numbers out of a hat. Everyone’s drinking wine, having fun. Even Amy’s more relaxed. Dave draws a number as Vance looks on, nervous.
VANCE
Be a one, be a one, be a one.

Dave looks at it, then looks at Vance sadly. Vance deflates.

DAVE
Sorry, Vance. Looks like you and I aren’t gonna be on a team... *with anyone else!*

Dave holds out the number ONE. Vance is elated.

VANCE
Ah! You “Seacrest-ed” me!

REX
Aww, these two guys! Feels like we’re back in college again. Who wants to get wasted?

LEIGH
Alcoholics do, Rex.

REX
(calmed, genuine)
I love it when you contain me.

Practicing, Vance hits Dave with rapid-fire clues.

VANCE
America’s Mayo--

DAVE
Rudy Giuliani!

VANCE
Die H--

DAVE
Bruce Willis.

VANCE
Looks like your uncle.

DAVE
Uh, oh, wait. Paul Giamatti!

VANCE
What took you so long? You’re off. *(accusing)* Did you have sex?

DAVE
No.
VANCE
What about yesterday?
(off non-response)
Oh my God. Did you forget we had
Game Night? You’re a sex addict.
What are you chasing, man? What
void are you trying to fill?

Julia offers more wine to Leigh, who’s been observing the
guys.

LEIGH
Thanks, hon.
(beat)
Say, does it ever bother you that
Dave and Vance are so tight?

JULIA
It can be complicated.

LEIGH
Rex and I don’t have that. It’s
the upside of us being best
friends. The downside, of course,
being his truly weird bachelor
party.

Julia crosses to Amy and pours her more wine.

JULIA
So what did Vance tell you we were
doing tonight? Cooking class?
(notices, sympathetic)
Oh, honey, you’ve got on your
dancing bracelets.

AMY
He even made up the name of a club.
“Ovations.”
(admiring)
God, he’s a good liar.

Vance comes up from behind Amy and gives her a tender kiss.

VANCE
Thanks for doing this, baby. It
means a lot to me.

AMY
(whispers)
I’m getting a little drunk.

VANCE
Do that. ‘Cause then I get sexy.
They kiss. Rex and Leigh, competitive, start making out hotly. Dave and Julia look at their friends and chuckle.

DAVE
See? We’re having fun.

JULIA
You’re right. This is good.

INSERT CARD: “THREE MINUTES LATER”

Chaos. “Celebrity” has broken down. Amy SCREAMS AT VANCE as she THROWS HER MANY BRACELETS AT HIM.

AMY
You bastard! You liar! I hate you!

VANCE
I never want to see you again!

REX
(re: bottle of wine)
I just killed this Pinot. What else do you have?

INSERT CARD: “ONE MINUTE BEFORE THAT HAPPENED”


REX (CONT’D)
(to Dave re: bottle)
Mind if I open this Pinot?

AMY
(nervous, overwhelmed)
Uh, he’s a Muppet. He’s a frog.

JULIA
Frog’s part of the name, hon. You can’t say that.

AMY
I’m sorry, Leigh.

JULIA
Amy, sweetie, I’m your teammate. Stop apologizing to Leigh.

AMY
She’s just so pretty.
(grabs another card)
(MORE)
AMY (CONT’D)
First name is like the guy in the bike store who I introduced you to? He loaned me that DVD.

JULIA
Alan.
(guesses)
Alan Alda!

AMY
Yes! I got one!

VANCE
(suddenly jealous)
Alan? You’re still talking to that guy?

AMY
Mama’s on a roll.
(off new clue, pumped)
This next person is Martin Lawrence—
(hears self)
Dammit!

VANCE
(getting worked up)
Alan gave you a DVD?

AMY
(rattled, to Vance)
Great. You ruined my turn! You can’t stand to see me succeed. This is why you wouldn’t let me take the bar exam on a lark!

VANCE
Yeah, I’m sorry I ruined your dream of crying and walking out of a five hundred dollar test!

LEIGH
Vance, at this point you might want to ask your partner—

VANCE
How many times did you sleep with Alan?

LEIGH
Not that.

AMY
Nothing happened with him! You’re so insecure.
(MORE)
AMY (CONT'D)
Let’s say what this is really about! We’re all thinking it. Ten years ago, before any of us were couples, I slept with Dave.

DAVE
No one was thinking that.

VANCE
You always go to the Dave thing ‘cause you want to hurt me. It’s not enough Julia and I have to live with the image of you two rolling around naked. Am I right, Julia?

JULIA
If we could remember this moment next time someone suggests Game Night...

VANCE
But it’s not Dave. It’s all the Daves. And Mikes... and Erics...

AMY (piling on)
And Larrys. And Chris’s, and three Todds.

VANCE
Oh yeah? Well I just added an Isabella to mine.

AMY
Your hot assistant?! You slept with her?

A silent BEAT.

DAVE (scoffs)
No, you didn’t.

AMY (realizing)
Of course you didn’t. You sick son of a -- You’re just saying that ‘cause you think it’ll hurt me!

VANCE
We did it. It was great.
(pointed)
And she’s good at Celebrity.
Amy starts REMOVING HER BRACELETS AND THROWING THEM at VANCE. [We’re now at the meltdown we’d teased a moment ago.]

AMY
You bastard! You liar! I hate you!

VANCE
I never want to see you again!

REX
(re: bottle of wine)
I just killed this Pinot. What else do you have?

AMY
Good-bye! We’re over!

She heads for the door.

VANCE
Send my mail here! I’m moving into Julia’s dead mother’s room!

LEIGH
(jumps up)
This doesn’t count as Game Night!

REX
It’s fate! Wine Cruise anniversary!

VANCE
Sounds great! Count me in!

AMY
Me too! I’ll bring Alan!

Amy exits, slams the door. Vance exits to the next room, slams the door. Julia stares at Dave.

DAVE
(re: Egg Timer)
And... time.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. MASTER BATHROOM - NEXT MORNING (SATURDAY)

Dave brushes his teeth. Julia enters, having just woken up, and starts brushing next to him.

DAVE
So Game Night was perhaps not the cure-all I’d hoped.

JULIA
I know you feel bad. We don’t need to talk about it.

DAVE
(blown away)
Alien civilizations will one day study you as the pinnacle of earthling wifedom.

JULIA
Happy Anniversary, baby.

DAVE
Happy Anniversary.

They SPIT, smile, then MOVE IN FOR A KISS. VANCE busts into their bedroom. He’s wearing a WOMAN’S HOUSECOAT.

VANCE
Ready to be shocked by somebody’s rudeness?

JULIA
Unacceptable!

She MOVES TO CONFRONT Vance, Dave HOLDS HER BACK.

VANCE
... Rex and Leigh are here.

JULIA
Are you wearing my mother’s housecoat?

VANCE
The coat provides warmth and Olivia’s spirit brings me peace.
LEIGH (O.S.)
(calling)
Where did you go, Vance? We need to talk.

VANCE
Emotional vultures. Whenever a relationship anywhere is in crisis, they swoop in, feast on the drama. Then they wanna “fix” everything.

POP TO:

INT. REX AND LEIGH’S KITCHEN - MARCH 2009

Rex is on the phone on hold as Leigh reads “US Magazine”.

REX
(beat, to Leigh)
They don’t have a listing for Jennifer Aniston.

LEIGH
Have them check “John Mayer”.

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dave, Julia and Vance enter. Leigh and Rex are there.

LEIGH
Vance, sweetie, let us take you to Amy now. A fight is a wound. If you wait too long to apply medicine you’ll be left with a scar of emotional distance --

VANCE
Oh, God.

REX
Dude, don’t dismiss this as some “chick psychobabble”. I believe it, too. Me. Rex. The guy you and Dave look up to. The leader of our group.

Vance looks to Dave, “Can you believe this guy?”

DAVE
Maybe you should talk to Amy. You’re gonna eventually. We all know how this goes.

FLASHBACK POPS:
THREE SEPARATE SHOTS FROM THREE SEPARATE BREAKUPS.

Amy THROWS her PURSE at him, removes and throws her BIG, CHUNKY EARRINGS.

AMY
We’re done!

Amy THROWS Vance’s CLOTHES at him.

AMY
We’re through!

At a meal, she THROWS FOOD at him.

AMY
This is over.

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S LIVING ROOM – DAY

They’re as we left them.

DAVE
Then, miraculously...

FLASHBACK POPS:

THREE LOVING, KISSING PASSIONATE REUNIONS:

VANCE
AMY
We’re back! And we got matching tattoos!

Gleefully running in with a HUGE, ANGRY DOG.

AMY
And we bought a dog!

AMY
And we’re having a party and Smashing Pumpkins are gonna play!!

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S LIVING ROOM – DAY

As they were, discussing the break-up.

VANCE
Okay, I admit there’s a pattern, but I can’t go yet. I go back too soon, I look weak, give her all the power. It’ll be a disaster.

LEIGH
You two play so many games. And games are relationship poison.
REX
They prevent you from truly communicating.

VANCE
(turning on Rex)
No. You don’t get to be Mr. Relationship. I knew you in college. I know how many girls you slept with. I know what you named your bedroom.

REX
I’ve changed. And I have way more fun now than I ever did in “The Grotto.”

LEIGH
(to Rex, re Vance)
Is that your mother’s coat?

JULIA
Her spirit is “comforting him”.

VANCE
I feel faint. What’s going on?
(spasms, as if possessed)
Uh. My son sucks. His wife thinks she controls him but he hides pornography and weed in the garage.
(then, “coming out of it”)
What just happened? Did I say something?

VANCE EXITS to “his room”. Leigh shoots Rex a look.

REX
(changing the subject)
So, Happy Anniversary, you two.

LEIGH
(remembers)
Oh, right.

She produces a WRAPPED GIFT from her bag.

LEIGH (CONT’D)
Dave, you forgot this at our house. The gift? Complete with the card? (hands gift to Julia) Julia... from Dave.
DAVE
I got her a gift. But thanks.
That’s wildly condescending.

REX
So about tonight’s Wine Cruise; I
hate to be the, “Don’t dress like a
lesbian, Julia” Guy, but --

JULIA
Unacceptable!

DAVE
(“what the hell”)
Yeah, go for it.

JULIA
Rex, we’re not spending our
anniversary at sea with your stupid
associates! And starting now, we
will not accept any more “far off
plans”. Or plans made at any time
that involve boats or other things
that suck. That’s it. End of
discussion.

A beat as Rex and Leigh absorb this.

LEIGH
Thank you for your honesty.

REX
I feel so much closer to you right
now.

LEIGH
It is happening.

JULIA
(pushing them out)
Yep. Big breakthrough. We did it.

She SHUTS the door.

DAVE
That was amazing. We are gonna
have a great “us” night tonight.

JULIA
Do we feel we’ve done everything to
ensure that?
DAVE
Vance, right. We don’t want him in the way. So I’ll just tell him he stays in his room and he’s quiet. We bring him a plate, he eats it there. Screw ‘em. It’s our night.

JULIA
I don’t think he should be here at all tonight. And I think you should tell him that.

DAVE
(very uncomfortable)
Sure. Done.

INT. DAVE’S CAR - MOMENTS LATER
Dave drives, DREADING THE CONVERSATION. Vance SCROLLS THROUGH THE car stereo IPOD.

DAVE
(tentative)
So listen, about Amy --

VANCE
Can’t talk about her. Too much pain, it’s too raw. It’s like...

He HITS PLAY on the iPod. A melancholy COLDPLAY SONG BEGINS.

DAVE
(turns off stereo)
We don’t need the soundtrack.

VANCE
I want to underscore the emotional--

DAVE
Let the words sell it.

INT. DAVE AND VANCE’S REAL ESTATE OFFICE (ANTEROOM) - A FEW MINUTES LATER
Vance and Dave enter the ANTEROOM. Isabella is at her desk.

ISABELLA
Hey, guys. The demolition team didn’t show at Morningside again.

VANCE
(sotto to Dave)
Wow, this is awkward.
DAVE
It’s not awkward.

VANCE
Because I slept --

DAVE
No one thinks you slept with her.

INT. DAVE AND VANCE’S REAL ESTATE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

They enter. Dave closes the door. He braces himself.

VANCE
You know what we’re doing tonight after Julia goes to sleep? Morningside property. We’ll knock the damn thing down ourselves. It’s perfect. I got all this anger. Let’s throw stuff through windows, sledgehammer a toilet. They have this crappy, thin room divider, I’m gonna run through it like the Kool-Aid Man!

DAVE
You can’t be around tonight.

VANCE
What? Why??

DAVE
It’s our anniversary!

VANCE
Did this come from Julia? It’s your house, you’re the breadwinner. You can have whoever you want --

DAVE
She makes, like, double what I do.

VANCE
(total reversal)
So that entitles her to be boss?!

DAVE
Look, Julia’s awesome, she’s always giving me more than I give her. Tonight she gets the night she deserves.

VANCE
But where am I gonna go?
DAVE
Where do people go? Go to a hotel.

VANCE
(spiraling)
A hotel?! What am I gonna... check in? Order a club sandwich...?

DAVE
Please don’t list normal things like they’re bad.

VANCE
(barrels through)
Watch “The Proposal” on Pay Per View? Go downstairs to “Finnegan’s” and have a Bud Light?

DAVE
This is done, okay? One night. Don’t make me feel bad about it.
(off look)
Vance?

VANCE takes his iPod, puts it in a dock, hits play and EXITS, leaving Dave alone with the POIGNANT STRAINS OF COLDPLAY.

INSERT CARD: “AN ‘US’ NIGHT”

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (SATURDAY NIGHT)

Julia happily sits in front of the TV. Dave enters with two full Champagne glasses and sits next to her.

DAVE
Oh my God, what a meal. The oysters, the truffles, and the presentation...

JULIA
If this guy doesn’t win “Top Chef” I’m writing Bravo a letter.

They both take big bites of delicious looking pizza.

JULIA (CONT’D)
What a perfect night.

DAVE
It’s just getting started.

He hands her a champagne glass and toasts with the other.
DAVE (CONT'D)
Happy Anniversary, babe.

JULIA
Ooh, Champagne.

DAVE
Technically, to be called Champagne it needs to be from the “Champagne” region of France. This is... beer.

She takes a sip. They kiss. It gets heated. She rises, crosses off and motions for him to follow.

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S BEDROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Dave sits on the bed. Julia emerges from the bathroom wearing a SEXY NEGLIGEE. She looks amazing.

DAVE
Wow.

JULIA
I like it. It’s a little creepy that Leigh and Rex picked it out.

DAVE
If that creeps you out, don’t read the card they wrote from me.

They fall onto the bed. They kiss for a beat, then the phone RINGS. Dave checks the CALLER ID.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Isabella? She’s not one of our friends. Why is she ruining our anniversary?
(hits speakerphone button)
Isabella, is everything okay?

VANCE (O.S.)
It’s drunk. I got reeeeally Vance.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ISABELLA’S BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Vance is holed up with Isabella’s portable phone.

VANCE
(drunk, beside himself)
I messed up, man. I went to a hotel. It was worse than I thought.

(MORE)
They made me sign up for a rewards program... I watched some movie with Kate Hudson and a guy whose Australian accent kept comin’ out --

DAVE
What happened, Vance?

VANCE
I went to Amy. It was too soon, she rejected me, so I came here for revenge. Isabella was not on board. Here’s what you gotta do...

DAVE
(to Julia)
This is where he asks me to make what he did my fault.

VANCE
Come tell Isabella we were playing Truth or Dare. You dared me to hit on her as a joke. I said, “No that’s rude,” but you forced me. (then)
It’s two minutes away. Just...

Vance continues. Julia turns to Dave.

JULIA
(mouths)
Go.

Dave looks at her, “Are you sure?” She nods. A beat. Dave is torn. He turns to the phone.

DAVE
Vance? Can’t do it, buddy. I’m sorry.

VANCE
Dave --

Dave hangs up the phone. He takes a beat, shakes it off.

JULIA
If you don’t go, you’ll be miserable. It’ll be quick.

DAVE
No. I already did the hard part. (taking shirt off)
Now, I skipped lunch, so don’t be frightened if you notice some “ab.”
JULIA
(thinks, then)
If we’re really doing this, I’m gonna change out of my brother’s lingerie.

DAVE
I think that’s for the best.

Julia EXITS. Dave stares at the phone, feeling guilty.
INT. ISABELLA’S BATHROOM - TEN MINUTES LATER

Vance is there, not knowing what to do.

ISABELLA (O.S.)
Come out, Vance. You’re just making this more awkward.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Vance sighs, relieved. He opens the door a crack to watch Dave’s performance.

INT. ISABELLA’S LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Isabella opens the door. It’s not Dave. IT’S JULIA.

ISABELLA
Julia?

JULIA
(so half-hearted)
Is Vance here? We dared him to come hit on you. We forced him. Because we’re jerks.

Vance enters and heads for the door. He turns to ISABELLA.

VANCE
Try not to hold this against them.

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S BEDROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Dave is UNDER THE SHEETS, expectant. Julia walks in.

DAVE
Where did you go?

Vance enters. Dave reacts, surprised.

VANCE
What, are you naked? You’re insatiable. Are you, like, gay, so you feel the need to prove something? You can tell me.
DAVE
You went to get him? But tonight was about us. We didn’t want the drama.

VANCE
(put off)
Drama?

AMY STORMS IN, with her ARMS FULL, surprising everyone.

AMY
You monster!

Amy THROWS her things at Vance: CLOTHES, CD’S, etc.

VANCE
My pants? You brought throwing stuff from home?

AMY
To get back at me you drag sweet, young Isabella into our mess?

VANCE
How do you know about Isabella?
(realizing)
No. Is this because I called --

REX and LEIGH ENTER.

REX
Hey, guys.

VANCE
Vultures! You told her?!

AMY
(shakes her head)
I was there when you called. After your drunken visit, I needed the help of a true relationship genius.

Leigh BEAMS as Amy PUTS HER ARM AROUND HER.

REX
Leigh had it handled, so I went to the garage for my carpentry.

LEIGH
(to Dave and Julia)
We asked Amy not to come, but now that we’re here, let’s fix this.
(to Vance and Amy)
(MORE)
LEIGH (CONT'D)
You two love each other. Stop playing your games and start being honest about what you need.

REX
C’mon, Vance. Don’t you want a partner who really gets what you’re all about?

POP TO:

INT. KOREAN ORTHODOX CHURCH - LAST SUNDAY

Rex stands and sways with Korean congregants who sing a joyous song in their native tongue. He mumbles gibberish.

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As they were.

DAVE
Okay. Everybody out!

VANCE
No, Dave. You need to moderate this. You have unique insights into my psyche and Amy’s.
(beat, to Amy)
Because he slept with you.
(to room)
I’m sorry. We’re all thinking it.

DAVE
(to Julia, pissed)
You had no right going to get him.

JULIA
Wait -- you’re mad at me?

DAVE
Yes. I finally step up and do the right thing and you don’t let me have it. Why?

JULIA
I was trying to be nice.

DAVE
Nah, you’re nice, but you’re not that nice. You begged me to get rid of him. What possible reason could you have to pick him up?
LEIGH
What an interesting relationship challenge.
   (to Rex)
I think we need Dr. Dahlquist.

REX
I agree. This is a situation where she’d want us to ignore her request to stop calling her at home.

JULIA
Nope. Not interested in this. Happy Anniversary, everybody!

She STOMPS out. Dave follows.

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dave follows Julia. She keeps walking, trying to lose him.

DAVE
We were having a good time. Why did you choose to ruin it?

JULIA
It was already ruined once Vance called! You were either gonna go, or stay and worry about him.

She enters a room. He follows.

INT. JULIA’S MOTHER’S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A small guest room, full of clothes and knick-knacks left over from Julia’s mom. Dave shuts the door.

DAVE
(putting it together)
I think I get it. The night’s ruined, so you might as well get something out of it. You pick up Vance, you pick up a chit.

She scoffs.

DAVE (CONT’D)
It keeps happening. I goof up -- with Game Night, with Vance -- you say it’s okay, but really, you hold on. You earn a chit, squirrel it away. It’s a little game you play.

From the other side of the door WE HEAR:
LEIGH (O.S.)
Games!

JULIA
Really? And where do I redeem my “chits”?

He gestures around at all the MOTHER’S BELONGINGS.

DAVE
Here. In my...
   (air quotes)
   Home office.

Julia takes this in.

DAVE (CONT’D)
Two years, your mother was around. And she was not a kind woman. But I couldn’t say anything. Because of your chits, you kinda own me.

JULIA
   (beat, realizing)
   That’s my game.
   (slumping on bed)
   It’s unacceptab--

   DAVE
   (sits with her)
   No no, don’t do that. It’s my fault too. I know when I’m getting away with something I shouldn’t.

   JULIA
   Leigh was right. These games. They mess with you.

They sit there a little lost. A beat.

LEIGH (O.S.)
Now make her feel safe so she knows she can be honest about her needs!

DAVE/JULIA
Go away! / Enough!

   DAVE
   (beat, re: Leigh)
   I do give you what you need, right?

   JULIA
   You usually do.
Not the answer he was hoping for.

JULIA (CONT’D)
I mean tonight, you could have asked Vance to leave without me forcing you.

DAVE
Yeah. I should have.

JULIA
I sometimes wish you’d do the right thing without me asking. To know what I want before I say it. It’s an awful lot to ask, but you do it for Vance. I wish sometimes you could do it for me.

DAVE
Of course I can. I want to give you that.
(beat, re: clock)
So tonight. There’s forty minutes left. No more games.
(musing)
What do you want that you’re not asking for?

JULIA
No, I think we’re done for tonight. It started so great and we just blew it. I want it to end. I’m disappointed, I’m angry...

DAVE
(gets an idea)
Angry, huh? I’ve actually got something for that.

He takes Julia’s hand and leads her out.

MUSIC CUE: WILCO’S “YOU AND I”

EXT. DILAPIDATED HOUSE – A LITTLE LATER

Dave and Julia drive up to a mess of a house, the mailbox reads 11251 Morningside Drive.

QUICK POPS: The couple tears into what’s left of the home. They THROW THINGS through windows, SLEDGEHAMMER a TOILET, JULIA CRASHES through a rice paper wall like the KOOL-AID MAN. It’s cathartic. JOYOUS. Julia turns to Dave, gives him a HUGE KISS. Then back to the SMASHING.
INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S BEDROOM - 4:53 AM

Dave and Julia enter, both messes, clothes tattered, covered in plaster dust. They’re just SPENT. Two zombies.

JULIA
God, that felt good. Thank you.

DAVE
I hope it was the right house.

They collapse on the bed. A beat. The PHONE RINGS. Julia checks the caller ID.

JULIA
That’s weird. It’s someone named “Vance”.
(sighs)
Do you think there’s any way those two end up together?

DAVE
I just want them both to be happy. So hopefully, no.

Dave hits the speaker button.

DAVE (CONT’D)
Hey, buddy. Whose bathroom you in?

VANCE
Not this time. We’re 40,000 feet over Ohio. We’re going to Paris!

INT. PLANE - SAME TIME

Vance and Amy share the airplane phone.

AMY
We’re getting married!!

INT. DAVE AND JULIA’S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Dave and Julia, exhausted, both stare at the ceiling.

DAVE/JULIA
(small)
Unacceptable.

Dave takes Julia’s hand. The two drift off, as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW