

INT. KITCHEN (LATE 1960S/EARLY 1970S) - NIGHT

AMANDA, teen babysitter, cleans the kitchen while JESSE, 4, and ANNIE, 9, finish dinner.

By all appearances, they are your ideal upper-middle class American family. Nicely dressed and well behaved, with a large tidy home.

MIRANDA, 40s, perfect hair and skin, well manicured- enters from the basement/den and begins clearing the children's not-quite-empty plates.

MIRANDA

Alright, kids, time to brush.

JESSE

But I'm not done.

MIRANDA

We both know that I could give you another hour and you still wouldn't be done with your vegetables.

ANNIE

What about dessert?

MIRANDA

You do not need sugar every night, now off you go.

ANNIE

If I can't sleep, can I come downstairs and join the party?

MIRANDA

Annie, sweetie, I already told you that this is a very important party for your father and me. Children are not invited.

Annie sulks away with Jesse in tow.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

JOSEPH, silver-fox, confident, charismatic- straightens out the oriental rug then looks around for anything he missed.

He runs a finger along the mantle- dust free.

Pleased with himself, he grabs a stack of coasters from the bar.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Miranda puts the final touches on the h'ordeuvres.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Joseph pushes a bookshelf aside, revealing-

a HYDRA POSTER: 'Hydra-Your Forever Family'.

He then removes a piece of artwork from the wall, revealing another poster: 'Join Hydra, Save Humanity'.

Miranda, fashioning a Hydra brooch, hurries downstairs and passes him a Hydra lapel pin.

AMANDA(O.S)

Mrs. Smith, I think guests are starting to arrive.

MIRANDA

Already?

She quickly fixes Joseph's pin, then heads over to the stairs- only to find STEVE, the town drunk, pushing past Amanda.

STEVE

Thanks, kid.

Amanda silently apologizes to Miranda, who nods in return. Miranda joins her husband as Steve stands off in the corner of the room.

MIRANDA

I thought we decided he wasn't invited.

JOSEPH

We did, but this was the only way Shelly would agree to come.

MIRANDA

Why does he insist on making everything a problem?

JOSEPH

We'll keep him away from the bar. It'll be fine.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Party guests, all single, are chatting and having a good time- while Steve is still sulking, unnoticed.

Joseph, a true believer in the Hydra way, and WILLIAM, 30s, are having a conversation by the "Save Humanity" poster.

JOSEPH

-- therapy with me, and even got a job working for Hydra's promotional materials department. That poster saved my life.

WILLIAM

That's incredible. To think it all started with four words in a stranger's home.

JOSEPH

That's why I love this department so much. How often do you get to see the impact you're making, on such a personal level?

Miranda approaches them.

MIRANDA

Hello, William. Joseph, sweetie, it's time for your speech.

Joseph checks his watch.

JOSEPH

Would you look at that. Enjoy the party, William.

Joseph pauses momentarily, admiring the work he and Miranda have done, before starting his speech.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Welcome, friends, to the annual Hydra Singles' Mixer.

Steve, now animated by the room's silence, raises his brown paper bag in a toast.

STEVE

Hail Hydra.

Miranda glances warily over at Joseph as the other party-goers hail Hydra.

JOSEPH

If you couldn't guess through the months of correspondence leading up to tonight, hosting this event is a great honor for Miranda and myself. As many of you know, Miranda and I met years before we discovered Hydra- but it wasn't until we joined, that our marriage reached its full potential.

STEVE

Well, praise the almighty, all powerful Hydra.

The guests are now starting to get a bit uncomfortable with Steve and his comments.

Steve stands up, stumbling a bit. A nearby GUEST tries to help steady him- but Steve shakes him off.

JOSEPH

Looks like Steve's been hitting the sauce again.

The guests laugh at Steve's expense.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Shelly, I think you need to keep your brother on a shorter leash.

SHELLY makes her way over to Steve, humiliated.

STEVE

Laugh all you want, but when they do to you, what they did to my Julie, don't come looking to me for sympathy.

Shelly tugs at Steve, trying to get him to leave with her- but he angrily shakes her off too.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I'm going.

As they leave the room, Shelly looks over apologetically at Miranda, who ignores her.

JOSEPH

And that, my friends, is how to make an exit.

WILLIAM

He lasted longer than the last party he was invited to.

GUEST

Oh, yeah, the fireman's fundraiser.

WILLIAM

Next time, we should just start a pool. I could make some good money off that guy.

GUEST

I can finally buy that new tv I've been wanting.

JOSEPH

Well, now that Steve's out of the way, let's say we finally have some fun.

He raises his glass in a toast.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

To Hydra and to finding our soulmates.

GUESTS

To Hydra.

They return to mingling, Joseph meets Miranda.

MIRANDA

Next time, Shelly can stay home.

She walks away.