

Theses and Dissertations

2021

**Giving voice to everyday characters in extraordinary
circumstances**

Andrew D. Hasselbring

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd>



Part of the [Screenwriting Commons](#)

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Humanities and Teacher Education
Division Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

by
Andrew D. Hasselbring

December 2021

© 2021

Andrew D. Hasselbring

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

This thesis, written by

ANDREW D. HASSELBRING

under the guidance of a faculty committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

December 2021

Faculty Committee

Leslie Kreiner Wilson, Ph.D., Chairperson

Hans Rodionoff, MFA Faculty

Jarrett Golding, MFA Faculty

Michael E. Feltner, Ph.D., Dean

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ESSAY: Giving Voice to Everyday Characters in Extraordinary Circumstances.....	1-19
SCRIPT 1: Undesirable Donor.....	1-60
SCRIPT 2: Blowfish.....	1-40
SCRIPT 3: Behind the Lavender Door.....	1-104

Giving Voice to Everyday Characters in Extraordinary Circumstances

I. Introduction

Storytelling has long been the universal teacher of language, morality, and history, and integral to what makes us uniquely human. It links us to our past, and gives us the reins to harness our future. The stories that we tell awaken our creativity and contribute to the development of empathy by allowing us to experience life beyond our own perspective. This is a critical element to the inception of one's artistic voice, which is a complex combination of what we are exposed to, when we are exposed to it, and how effectively we are able to process those experiences and transform them into something beautiful that will reverberate in the souls of others. As a cultural storyteller, the depth and variety of emotion that can be explored is limitless. Narratives can be interwoven with tragedy while simultaneously underscoring the joy and triumph of the human spirit. We are defined not by our darkest moments, but rather by our vigilant pursuit of the light.

It is my hope to create screenplays that reflect honest characterizations of the delicate balance between human emotion and life's trials. Whether joyful or tragic, one's circumstance is temporary. It is merely the catalyst which reveals the true character of one's soul. This deeply personal unveiling of a character is what the audience yearns for and guides them to a better understanding of themselves and others. My greatest inspiration is found in everyday characters who find redemption in their flaws. Overcoming brokenness requires resilience, endurance, and inner strength, but never perfection. Through my writing, I will endeavor to give voice to the struggles of these unassuming heroes and indelibly emblazon the image of their well-fought battles, both won and lost, in the minds and hearts of an audience.

One's introduction to storytelling and literature is a deeply personal and intimate experience, as unique as it is influential. I was ten years old when I first saw William Goldman's *The Princess Bride*, a film that forever opened my mind to the thrill of witty banter and the realization of human heroes. It was years later, as a young teenager, when I watched William Wyler's *The Best Years of Our Lives*, riveted to the spot as its heroes lay bare the brokenness of their past to forge an even stronger future. A few years later, as a young man in my twenties, I discovered Albert and David Maysles' groundbreaking *Grey Gardens*, which confounded my expectations and challenged me to see the complexity of life that sometimes refuses to be neatly and easily understood. Each of these filmmakers displays a willful disregard for the traditional trappings of Hollywood in their artform, rebelling against conformity in the uncompromising quest for truth as they boldly pursue unparalleled stories of redemption that embody the resiliency of the human spirit. Following in the footsteps of these trailblazers, my artistic voice embraces the paradoxical nature of the Everyman in extraordinary circumstances. These three cinematic masterpieces continue to serve as an anchor for me, and have provided an endless well of inspiration while pursuing my MFA in Screenwriting at Pepperdine. As I have grown from my initial endeavors as an author, plunging into the complex depths of artistic development, I have come to understand that the components of creative expression are found not only in the experiences of our own lives, but in the voices of our storytellers. For me, it is without a doubt that these are the resounding echoes of Goldman's willful, innovative reinterpretations of traditional perspective, Wyler's unwavering focus on the Everyman hero and his beautiful flaws, and the Maysles' unflinching, brutal honesty and genre-defying authenticity.

II. William Goldman: A New Perspective

Enigmatic, elusive, and impossible to categorize, there is no doubt of William Goldman's place in screenwriting history. My introduction to the prolific screenwriter was by way of his family-friendly classic *The Princess Bride*. The film starred Fred Savage, a kid my age, featured professional wrestler Andre the Giant, the impossibly beautiful Robin Wright Penn, Mandy Patinkin, who oozed charisma, and a story that revolved around pirates, swordplay, and buffoonery. It's no wonder that it quickly became one of my favorites. It was like nothing I'd ever seen before. Like the film, Goldman himself was an outlier—breaking rules, bucking trends, and constantly flying in the face of the Hollywood norm. The author summed up his impression of Hollywood in three words, saying, “Nobody knows anything” (Debruge). One of Hollywood's unlikeliest success stories, Goldman blazed his own path, stubbornly refusing to dilute the human experience as he saw it, born of both joy and pain. By willfully disregarding the unspoken rules of the industry and rebelling against conformity, Goldman became one of the most accomplished writers in Hollywood and beyond. Along the way, he influenced countless thirteen-year-olds, changed the way that comedy was perceived, and turned traditional narrative on its ear.

“Some authors start out, no doubt, knowing they want to write screenplays. I am basically a novelist, and I fell into screenplay writing rather by misinterpretation” (Goldman, *Movie Business* 53). Goldman's flight plan to Hollywood screenwriter extraordinaire had been unconventional, much like my own. I began as a playwright, focused solely on the stage, and then fell in love with the possibilities offered by film. After a few minor triumphs, Goldman's career-making hit came in the form of a film that ostensibly invented the cowboy buddy genre,

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (Lavin). At the script's first auction, every studio passed except for one, which requested a significant change to the script. Goldman stuck to his guns and did a small rewrite instead, and a bidding war ensued before it sold for a record-setting \$400,000. Goldman knew even then that the traditional cowboy genre was played out, and it was time to breathe new life into the tired genre. It was a model that he would follow with each film that he touched moving forward. The decade following brought a string of successes, followed by a period of ostracism from Hollywood. His refusal to follow tradition and his desire to reinterpret would simply not allow him to bow to the Hollywood power structure. He had built a voice that was fresh, unique, and defied categorization. Over his career, his scripts ranged from westerns, to psychological thrillers, to dramas, to dark comedies, and everything in between. Shirking tradition was a way of life. He knew he could do things his way, provided that he made money for the studios. He was an architect, and like a brick-layer, he knew how to construct a story—any story. In a characteristically blunt assessment, Goldman said, “Screenplays are structure. Story is everything...” (Boone).

Goldman's approach to formatting a screenplay was another example of his defiance and of his values. While he admitted that certain criteria must be adhered to, he said, “... when you decide to do a movie about something, there's something in it that moves you. Whatever that is, you'd better protect that” (Argent). His ardently story-driven philosophy, the refusal to allow artistry to succumb to the arbitrary rules of an ever-changing industry, has taught me to identify and protect what I truly value. The eccentric author refused to follow traditional screenwriting format. In *Adventures in the Screen Trade*, as Goldman described his reaction to seeing his first screenplay, he recollected, “To this day I remember staring at the page in shock. I didn't know

what it was exactly I was looking at, but I knew I could never write in that form, in that language” (166). Further, in *The Movie Business Book*, Goldman unequivocally stated that, “The style is impossible and must be dispensed with...Instead, I use run-on sentences. I use the phrase ‘cut to’ the way I use ‘said’ in a novel—strictly for rhythm. And I am perfectly willing to let one sentence fill a whole page...I never want to let the reader’s eye go...” (53-56).

Fortunately, his narrative style and lighthearted, authentic communication made him a standout, regardless of formatting. He allowed no pretense to intrude upon his story or its characters. He quite literally invented a new form of dialogue. Debruge, in his article for *Variety*, says, “Long before Quentin Tarantino elevated the act of talking around a thing into being more pleasurable than the thing itself, Goldman had perfected the art of banter.” His dialogue was like no one else’s. Take, for instance, the sword fight between Inigo and the Man in Black in *The Princess Bride*. Goldman cheekily writes,

INIGO. Who are you?!

MAN IN BLACK. No one of consequence.

INIGO. I must know.

MAN IN BLACK. Get used to disappointment.

INIGO. Okay. (Goldman, *Four Screenplays* 309).

Following in his stead, a new generation of writers were free to make use of this verbal sparring. Beyond the characteristically untraditional formatting and narrative style implemented in Goldman’s work, one must consider the impact made on the film industry that stemmed from his choice of content. While humor had been established in the western genre, there were certain unspoken rules of dialogue that remained unquestioned...until Goldman. In *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, Goldman presented a complete departure from the heroic cowboys and deadly

fugitives from justice so common to the genre. Instead, he embraced the story of two bank robbers running from the law, waffling between their criminal past and the novelty of “going straight,” all the while cracking jokes at the unlikeliest moments and providing levity at the very point that most screenwriters seek to enhance the dramatic pretense. In a close reading of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, a faceoff between Butch and Logan highlights the humor that Butch finds even as he faces possible death:

LOGAN. Sundance—when we’re done, if he’s dead, you’re welcome to stay.

CUT TO

BUTCH AND SUNDANCE looking out at Logan. Butch speaks quietly to Sundance.

BUTCH. Listen, I’m not a sore loser or anything, but when we’re done, if I’m dead, kill him.

SUNDANCE. (This is said to Logan, but in answer to Butch.) Love to. (Goldman, *Adventures* 314).

In this brief interchange, in dialogue that would never have been uttered by John Wayne, Goldman firmly establishes an entirely new approach to the western genre. The looming confrontation is neither satire nor tongue in cheek, but it shows the complexity of characters that find humor and even joy in moments that audiences had come to expect rising tension.

Constantly standing in his shadow, I find that my characterizations and dialogue are forever changed by Goldman’s influence. I, too, am awed by the dimension that can be added to a script when the complexities and depths of human emotion are acknowledged and fully explored.

Rather than composing one-note melodies, Goldman demands symphonies, and I am in his debt.

A career path is forged, not followed. No one knew that better than Goldman. In forging his own path, he forever changed the landscape of film. He fearlessly broke long-held industry rules, building a career that seemed “inconceivable,” and crafting irresistible stories that were

rebellious in every way. He was so adept at telling a story that you simply couldn't turn away. This ferocious dedication to authentic storytelling and to crafting characters that ring true has forever changed me as a writer, and I have learned to ask more of myself than following the rule book—always lead with loyalty to the story. While the world may remember him for his defiant success and his affinity for the inflammatory, Goldman's true legacy is in the simple wisdom of his own words, that "...there are no unbreakable rules" (*Movie Business* 61). He was a giant, and those who come after must stand on his shoulders. The lessons that he taught me, however, feel deeply personal because of the ways that they have changed me as a writer - to be willful and always place story above all else, to appreciate those who led the way and continue to innovate, and, above all, to find new ways to reinterpret and reinvent in the name of discovery and artistry.

III. William Wyler: The Everyman Hero

Heroism takes on drastically different meanings as we age. From Superman, to soldiers, to my father, and to my artistic idols, one thing has always remained true. I believe that heroism lives inside all of us. I would venture a guess that William Wyler felt the same way, and it is his ability to shine a light on the heroic aspects of a flawed character, to highlight the resiliency of the human spirit and contribute to its healing, that I find most influential. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 during his filming of *Mrs. Minniver*, Wyler pursued a commission overseas to film WWII, beginning with his celebrated *Memphis Belle: A Story of a Flying Fortress* in 1943. Wyler's transformation from celebrated director into wartime documentarian reads much like a studio-approved, Golden Age Hollywood movie script. As Wyler continually turned his lens toward the realities of war, "Hollywood looked smaller and more unimportant to him than ever" (Herman 253). After completing *Memphis Belle*, Wyler

began filming on his next documentary, *Thunderbolt*, in 1944. Filming in a B-25 with the windows down in order to give the cameraman a better position for aerial shots, Wyler landed to discover that he had profound hearing loss. He returned from the war to find that the process of observing and documenting live combat had drastically changed his point of view. Reflecting on his time overseas, Wyler commented, “No one could live through that experience and come out the same...” (Herman 278). His involvement in the Second World War was transformative, forever influencing his priorities as a filmmaker and setting the stage for a film that would redefine society’s outmoded notions of heroism, *The Best Years of Our Lives*.

By the time he returned to Hollywood, Wyler had undergone a metamorphosis. Breaking through his wartime cocoon, he found a world completely unknown to him. As noted by Herman in his biography of Wyler, *A Talent for Trouble*, “Wyler came back from the war a changed man. Like millions of returning veterans, he had been permanently altered, not just physically, but emotionally. The experience of combat had thrown their lives into high relief, forcing many to question their values and transform their outlook...” (278). Wyler himself poignantly noted, “The war had been an escape into reality” (Herman 278). Wyler found himself a different man, a different director, and possessing a new perception of his craft and purpose. It was here, I believe, that Wyler felt a calling to expose the hidden strengths masked by the temporal frailty of human existence, to find the courage of the Everyman meeting brokenness with renewal and hope. Discharged from the Army and still owing Goldwyn one final film under his previous contract, Wyler was forced to pick a project. Worried about his deafness, but realizing that he must move forward somehow, Wyler recoiled from “Goldwyn’s proclaimed policy of making frivolous pictures to help the public forget the war” (Herman 279). Instead, the director

gravitated toward a novel in blank verse by McKinlay Kantor (who had flown missions as an overseas correspondent). It was a project that would become *The Best Years of Our Lives*, and Wyler was about to create the template for a new Hollywood narrative of realism (Miller 239-246). Foregoing escapism and propaganda, *The Best Years of Our Lives* opens the door to a new type of filmmaking where questions go unanswered, happiness no longer means perfection, and above all, realism constantly intrudes along the audience's journey. This plainly illustrated truth resonated with audiences, who connected with the complexities of the characters and the tenuous nature of their new circumstances. Accomplishing this, however, was not a simple task. With an insatiable desire for authenticity born of his own war experience, this film would not be built on glamorized close-ups with soft, diffused lighting, as the director relentlessly pursued a depiction of his characters in "dramatic honesty" (Herman 290).

Wyler's casting choices would prove integral in achieving the realism that he so desperately yearned for. Revolutionary from the beginning, director Wyler cast Myrna Loy, whose life and career forever changed the paradigm of femininity. A lifelong activist with liberal views, she advocated for women's rights and racial equality and was well-known for her refusal to back down from a fight over ethics. In *The Best Years of Our Lives*, Loy's Milly leads with her warmth and strength, openly grappling with the pain of her husband's absence and the honest awkwardness that she experiences upon his return. For the role of Homer, Wyler made an even more pioneering casting choice in selecting double amputee Harold Russell. A distinguished veteran of WWII, Russell had no previous acting experience and lost both of his hands to the war. Although Russell was a nonprofessional, Wyler was convinced that the authenticity that he would bring to the role far surpassed any other concerns (Miller 242-44). It is this decision—

possibly above all others—to prioritize an authentic portrayal over a polished one, which can be cited as the moment where the Golden Age of Hollywood ended and the modern Age of Realism and truthful social representation began. This truth is made more compelling as the newly-deaf director found strength in Milly’s resiliency and in Homer’s restoration of his life after the loss of his limbs. Wyler saw the value in their humanity and what they could overcome as he began to clarify his new understanding of everyday heroism.

Wyler saw the innate humanity in the injured, disabled, and disenfranchised, despite the social stigma, and sought to face its complexities head on. This is perhaps most evident in a close reading of Robert E. Sherwood’s *The Best Years of Our Lives* genre-defining screenplay, as Wilma and Homer openly confront the reality of their life together, and the way in which it will be affected by his disability. Wyler’s direction of the scene does not shy away from the painful and embarrassing conversation, refusing to sidestep the issue being faced by countless returning veterans and their families, and in doing so, shows a depth of character that spoke to film audiences’ demands for authenticity. Finally alone together, Wilma looks on as Homer prepares for bed, standing in total vulnerability. His hooks on the bed, he says:

HOMER. This is when I know I’m helpless. My hands are down there on the bed. I can’t put them on again without calling to somebody for help. I can’t smoke a cigarette or read a book. If that door should blow shut, I can’t open it and get out of this room. I’m as dependent as a baby that doesn’t know how to get anything except to cry for it. Well, now you know, Wilma. Now you have an idea what it is. I guess you don’t know what to say. It’s all right. Go on home. Go away like your family said.

WILMA. (She approaches him.) I know what to say, Homer. I love you and I’m never going to leave you...never. (She kisses him, puts the hooks away.)

HOMER. You mean you—you didn’t mind?

WILMA. Of course not. I told you I loved you.

HOMER. I love you, Wilma. I always have, and I always will.

Returning veterans with disabilities had come home to a new reality, having left as able-bodied, capable men, and returning with injuries that forced them to lean on others in a way that they had not experienced before. By the same token, the women that they returned to had changed as well, displaying a strength and force of will that forever changed the role of women in society as well as their depiction in film. Wyler led the charge for his peers to lean fully into presenting characters imbued with realism, allowing audiences to see the lives of everyday heroes on the screen. Noting the stark differences between his landmark work and the propaganda films that preceded it, Wyler mused, “A movie should not be an advertisement. Drama lies in the subtle complexities of life—in the greys, not the blacks and whites” (Miller 26). Entering my teenage years amid the backdrop of political turmoil and the Gulf War, I found my life full of subtle complexities. Right and wrong were, without a doubt, clear, but the pathway to reach either end was filled with incongruencies. As my worldview broadened, Wyler’s focus on daily struggles and modest valor provided me with a new template for understanding the every-changing world around me, and that has now inexorably ingrained itself in my voice as a storyteller. I remain indelibly impacted by Wyler’s heartfelt honesty as he shunned aesthetic perfection to introduce the world to the simple beauty of truth in a new era of humanistic expression.

IV. Albert and David Maysles: Cinematic Humanism and the Search for Truth

A cornerstone of documentary filmmaking, the Maysles’ 1975 opus *Grey Gardens* boldly explores the boundaries of the genre in its startlingly humanizing portrayal of the eccentric Beales—their fractured yet loving relationship, their desperate search for the spotlight, and a previously unprecedented discussion of mental health. In an era that viewed the documentarian solely as an observer, the progressive filmmakers challenged this accepted process by interacting

with their subjects. In doing so, they created an epic work that chartered the new waters of direct cinema. Certainly one of the most polarizing elements of their cinematic style, the Maysles' choice to interact with the Beales as active observers stems from their professional roots in the field of psychology. Psychology is precisely what drives our behavior during our teens and twenties. My first viewing of the film left me aghast at how beautifully they were able to capture the Beales' ugly world. Like Wyler and Goldman, they took everything I thought I knew to be true and revealed it to be only a springboard. The Maysles brothers naturally found themselves drawn to film subjects that provoked an emotional response and elicited questions about the nature of humankind. Consequently, their medium not only rooted itself in the reality of the documentary, but propelled the genre to push the boundaries of accepted practices in order to create more authenticity and awareness (Maysles and Beattie 126). In a 1976 interview with Calvin Pryluck, Albert Maysles clearly states their simple filmmaking philosophy, saying, "I always assume when I turn the camera on somebody, it's going to be good. Good for the film, good for them, good all the way around" (Maysles and Pryluck 11). In a letter to *The New York Times*, they further elaborated on this foundation of their work's focus, saying, "We have built our reputation by confronting the actual world... We have labored in each of our films to get as close to the truth as we could" (Kleiman). Like Wyler's postwar reinvention of himself, the Maysles pushed the boundaries of film to become a more truthful medium. *Grey Gardens* would become a definitive example of the documentary genre.

Approached by American socialite Lee Radziwill, the sister of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, to make a film about her family and life in the Hamptons, the Maysles were intrigued by the possibility of documenting this branch of one of America's most well-known families.

When much of the material included footage of two eccentric cousins, Big and Little Edie Beale, Radziwill abandoned the project. Encouraged by the trust and openness displayed by the Edies, however, the Maysles continued their own project, an uncompromising view of the “two women who broke with the system at the top” (Maysles and Beattie 75), refusing to conform to the accepted mold of those with aristocratic roots. The success of the film lies not in the portrayal of the unconventional pair as a curiosity or novelty, but emerges in that the Edies’ trust and unrestrained commitment to displaying their true selves was of more interest to the filmmakers (and their audience) than the perfectly styled image of Lee Radziwill and the Kennedy clan (Maysles and Beattie 81). What Wyler did in transitioning the industry from the Golden Age to the Age of Realism, and Goldman did when he elevated traditional dialogue from the conventional to the introduction of witty banter, the Maysles did when they took the documentary genre from detached, factual filmmaking to humanistic, unguarded explorations of the psyche—but it would not be an easy road. When charges of exploitation emerged from critics and the viewing public, the brothers were shocked and taken aback. They reasoned, however, that in order to exploit someone, someone must be hurt in the process. The Beales had repeatedly voiced their approval with their portrayal in the film. After evaluating the disparity between the creators’ intent, the subjects’ opinion, and the public’s reaction, Albert Maysles speculated that the negative responses stemmed from the unconscious insecurities in the mind of the viewer, and found the film to therefore serve as a good indication of the emotional maturity of its audience. (Maysles and Beattie 91-92). For me, the realization that affluence’s disappearance reveals humanity was earth-shattering. As a young man, particularly one in the entertainment industry, my goal was to gain—gain prominence, gain money, gain power—so that I could be more. The

pinnacle of the Beales' influence, however, came at their lowest point, and their heroism was the resiliency they showed, regardless of their circumstance.

Grey Gardens went on to be one of the most viewed films of the year, and continued to grow. Its social, cultural, and artistic impact spanned far beyond the purview of a traditional documentary. Little Edie herself became a counter-culture icon. Everything about her was copied, commented on, and analyzed in a way that was seldom before seen, and she reveled in it. Although her avant-garde fashion choices are the most obviously manifest of Little Edie's free-spirited artistry on display in *Grey Gardens*, even her uniquely-stylized speech offers clues to her desire to be seen by an audience. She uses her words as a way to attain understanding and a recognition of her unique point of view. Instead of speaking in simple and direct language, she carefully crafts her conversations, using her repetition of speech to perfect the manner of her expression rather than communicating a specific point. As if reciting lines from a script, her seemingly rambling monologues have a distinct goal, even if it is not obvious to the casual observer: to be seen and heard. As the Edies talk on their deck, sunning themselves as Little Edie espouses her love of freedom, we see the crux of her conflict. Big Edie explains that "you can't get any freedom if you're being supported," to which Little Edie sadly returns, "You can't? ...I think you're not free when you're not being supported...it's awful both ways" (*Grey Gardens*). After a lifetime of being kept at arm's length from the ranks of American aristocracy, searching for acceptance, Little Edie finally found her spotlight with the introduction of the Maysles into her life. The Edies' desire to be seen and the Maysles' desire to observe transmute into a story that is greater than the sum of its parts. More importantly, the Maysles' vision of honesty through truth transcends its simple genre and speaks to society as a whole.

Before the Maysles, documentary film was, at best, a loosely strung together collection of re-enactments that had the air of reality. For a moment in time, however, these two brothers captured people as they actually lived, in all its beautiful horror and alluring squalor. The Maysles understood that the Beales were everyday heroes, cast out by a world that could have softened them, but now filled with a deep humanity that reads in every frame of the film. Their resilience and the resilience of the Maysles changed the role of documentary film. Not only did they defy their genre, but they were utterly unwavering in their assertion that once you know someone's story in full, you can't help but feel something. With brutal honesty, they reveal two women in a house of horrors, and in the process, created a cultural icon, harshly commented on elitism, revolutionized society's views on mental health, and tangibly brought to life a nearly lost example of survival and the power of the human spirit to endure.

V. Conclusion

In a moment of poignant reflection, Little Edie contemplates, "It's very difficult to keep the line between the past and the present" (*Grey Gardens*). The Maysles clearly saw something in that moment of "accidental poetry and philosophy" (Rabin). One of my favorite David Milch-authored lines from *NYPD Blue* is, "The future keeps telling us what the past was about" ("Unembraceable You"). Time and again, I have found that to be true. We give our past experiences deeper meaning through how we use them. My life has taken me places that I've never expected or planned. In the process, I have deepened my understanding of myself and the world around me. More significantly, though, I have learned more about who I am in respect to God's purpose, and I have learned to approach my life with a different kind of humility. A screenwriter's voice must be created by their past, interpreted by the context of their

circumstance, and delicately crafted by the skill and retrospect of the human experience itself. Wyler's war experience, Goldman's tumultuous battle with the Hollywood establishment, and the Maysles' groundbreaking vision for a subject never before witnessed were all born of a deep desire to show everyday people in a new light. Their artistic expressions were a product of the life that they had in the past and the future they dreamed of for humanity, a future that is built in finding something beautiful where it is hard to see, and discovering something extraordinary where it hadn't been before. They have reinforced in me the concept that a screenplay is a living and breathing thing. It changes both its author, through the process of writing it, and hopefully the audience as well in the process of viewing it.

As I move forward in my career, I have begun to lay the groundwork for multiple avenues of professional development. First and foremost, I am building a portfolio of my own work in multiple formats. I have a wealth of original content in plays that were published earlier in my career, and I will be revisiting and reworking those properties as screenplays. Being part of the Pepperdine MFA Writers' Group has been invaluable to me, and I plan to continue using my gifted fellow writers and professors as a resource to share ideas and connect, in addition to building other professional networks. Secondly, I would like to work with a production company to further my knowledge in the industry and enhance my skill set. My internships allowed me to develop new professional relationships and gave me experience working in a collaborative writing environment that will serve as a foundation for my future endeavors. Building on that, I would like to pursue an opportunity to gain some experience in a writers' room. Finding a position with a production company could open that door for me and also broaden my professional network. Finally, I would like to expand the work that I am currently engaged in,

working as an independent editor for manuscripts. I have fallen in love with independent film and documentary, and would love to find a company that would allow me to research stories, develop plotlines, and work with dialogue.

The power of words cannot be underestimated, and is one of the greatest gifts bestowed on us by our Creator. Words have the power to inform, to uplift, to destroy, and to restore. This is a gift for which we bear great responsibility. My own pursuit of storytelling has paralleled my journey through life. I have learned to seek authenticity in both the fanciful and the plain.

Childhood superheroes have faded to the back, and I am now drawn to stories of people whose heroism is far less obvious, often appearing in deceptively humble circumstances. I love to challenge every line I write to see if it could be reimagined in a way that could bring more nuance, distilling the greatness of the simple, well-told truth. Goldman, Wyler, and the Maysles have forever influenced my journey. Likewise, the scripts that I read and the stories that I hear become part of me and help define my artistic voice. My creative expression has been built by experience and understood through collaboration and context. My growth and the growth of any storyteller is never-ending. It is a continual process of education and reinvention. The stories of our past connect us to our future, constantly reaffirming themselves as an intrinsic part of our humanity.

Works Cited

- Argent, Daniel. “‘Nobody Knows Anything’ – William Goldman.” *Creative Screenwriting*, 6 Mar. 2015, creativescreenwriting.com/nobody-knows-anything-william-goldman/.
- Boone, Christopher. “Spend 90 Minutes with William Goldman and Learn About His ‘Inconceivable’ Writing Career.” *No Film School*, 28 June 2013, nofilmschool.com/2013/06/william-goldman-inconceivable-writing-career. Accessed 27 Sept. 2019.
- Debruge, Peter. “With One Line, William Goldman Taught Hollywood Everything It Needed to Know.” *Variety*, Variety Media, 16 Nov. 2018, variety.com/2018/film/opinion/william-goldman-dies-appreciation-1203030781/.
- Goldman, William. *Adventures in the Screen Trade: A Personal View of Hollywood and Screenwriting*. Warner Books, 1983.
- Goldman, William. *William Goldman: Four Screenplays with Essays*. Applause Books, 1995.
- Goldman, William. “The Screenwriter.” *The Movie Business Book*, edited by Squire, Jason E., Prentice-Hall, 1983, pp 52-61.
- Goldwyn, Samuel, et al. *The Best Years of Our Lives*. Warner Home Video, 2012.
- Herman, Jan. *A Talent for Trouble: The Life of Hollywood's Most Acclaimed Director, William Wyler*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995.
- Kleiman, Dena. “David Maysles Is Dead at 54, Maker of Documentary Films.” *The New York Times.com*, The New York Times, 4 Jan. 1987, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/01/04/obituaries/david-maysles-is-dead-at-54-maker-of-documentary-films.html>.

- Lavin, Cheryl. "WILLIAM GOLDMAN STICKS BY HIS THEORY OF HOLLYWOOD: 'NOBODY KNOWS ANYTHING!'" *Chicagotribune.com*, Chicago Tribune, 29 Aug. 2018, www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2000-04-06-0004060115-story.html.
- Maysles, David, et al., directors. *Grey Gardens*. Maysles Films, 1975.
- Maysles, Albert, and Keith Beattie. *Albert and David Maysles: Interviews*. University Press of Mississippi, 2010.
- Maysles, Albert, and Calvin Pryluck. "Seeking to Take the Longest Journey: A Conversation with Albert Maysles." *Journal of the University Film Association*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1 April 1976, pp. 9–16.
- Milch, David. "Unembraceable You." *NYPD Blue*, season 4, episode 8, ABC, 10 Dec. 1996.
- Miller, Gabriel. *William Wyler: The Life and Films of Hollywood's Most Celebrated Director*. University Press of Kentucky, 2013.
- Rabin, Nathan. "Grey Gardens and the Tragedy of Short-Term Beauty." *The Dissolve*, 16 Sept. 2014, thedissolve.com/features/movie-of-the-week/755-grey-gardens-and-the-tragedy-of-short-term-beauty/. Accessed 12 May 2018.

UNDESIRABLE DONOR

PILOT

Written by

A.D. Hasselbring

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

OVER BLACK:

"TEN MONTHS AGO."

We hear FOOTSTEPS and WHEELS ROLLING down a hallway.

IN SEPIA:

NORA (23, patient, *Locked in* syndrome), on a gurney, is wheeled toward an O.R.

GARBLED VOICES from FACELESS PEOPLE speak in WHISPERS.

CLOSE UP ON Nora's eyes.

NORA (V.O.)
Wait. I'm here! Why can't you hear
me? I'm here! I'm here! Wake me up!

HOSPITAL LIGHTS above REFLECT in NORA'S EYES.

MORPH TO:

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

IN COLOR:

STARS GLISTEN above a hillside where DEB WORTH (30s) and RANSOM (20s) sleep on a blanket, clothed, huddled for warmth.

DEB
(asleep, mumbling)
I'm here! Wake me up! I'm here!

Ransom shakes her gently.

RANSOM
Hey - whoa! You're up.

DEB
What?

RANSOM
You're up. You were talking in your
sleep. You told me to get you up.

Deb quickly composes herself.

DEB
I just...I just wanted to see if
you could follow instructions.

RANSOM
Are you alright?

DEB
Of course. I'm fine.

Deb, shaken, stares into the distance, composing herself.

DEB (CONT'D)
What time is it?

RANSOM
I don't know. Late. We fell asleep.

Deb checks her CELLPHONE. 2 AM. She panics.

DEB
I have to go.

RANSOM
What?

DEB
I have to go. I'm sorry. I have to
get home. I'm sorry. I have to go.

EXT. DEB'S HOUSE - LATER

ESTABLISHING. Deb parks outside of her Indiana farmhouse, the oldest one on the middle-class suburban street.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Deb quietly creeps up the stairs, lined with family photos.

INT. SARAH'S ROOM - LATER

Deb sits beside her sleeping daughter, SARAH (7). She strokes her hair and kisses her goodnight.

DEB
(whispering)
Sweet dreams. Mommy loves you.

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM - LATER

Deb, in a camisole and pajama pants, slides in bed next to PRESTON (30s, her husband). He doesn't wake, but senses her presence, puts his arm around her. Deb stares at the ceiling.

PRESTON
(mumbling)
You OK?

DEB
I'm fine. Go back to sleep.

PRESTON
Glad you're home.

DEB
Me, too.

She runs her hand along his arm. He falls asleep. Her fingers move from his hand to a LARGE SURGICAL SCAR that stretches the length of her ribcage.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE SEQUENCE ROLLS.

INT. HOSPITAL PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM - DAY

KENDRA (40s) urges Deb on as she struggles to breathe.

KENDRA
Two more.

Deb winces in pain as two REHAB WEIGHTS fall to her side.

KENDRA (CONT'D)
I said two.

DEB
You got one.

KENDRA
You're the worst patient ever.

Deb laughs.

KENDRA (CONT'D)
How do you feel?

DEB
Fine.

Kendra stares at her for a moment.

DEB (CONT'D)
I'm tired. More than last time.

KENDRA
That's alright. A little regression
is normal every couple of months
after surgery. Don't stop working.

DEB
Would you let me?

Kendra smiles and transitions Deb onto a REHAB TABLE.

KENDRA
Alright. Let's check your scar.

Kendra examines Deb's surgical scar and range of motion.

KENDRA (CONT'D)
You're healing up fine. Are you
sleeping any better yet?

DEB
Maybe a little.

KENDRA
Same dream?

DEB
It's the same feeling. Ultra-vivid,
mumbled voices, and no one can hear
me. I wake up panicked.

KENDRA
How often?

DEB
A couple of times a week. What do
you think it means?

KENDRA
Hey, you're the psychologist. All I
do is heal the lowly body.

DEB
Sure. You do the easy part.

Kendra smiles and brings Deb to a resting position with an
ICE PACK on her lower back. Deb winces.

Kendra writes something on Deb's chart.

INT. LECTURE HALL CLASSROOM - DAY

Deb writes on a SMART BOARD, adding the word "RESPECT" to a list under the heading "The Psychology of Healing." A roomful of MEDICAL STUDENTS listen as she concludes her lecture.

DEB

It's the most important principle of therapy. Respect the patient and their journey in the healing process. Now. While I'm sure all of you took brilliant and copious notes, I will post this lecture for you again in case you need to reference it before your midterm. I'm letting you go five minutes early because I want Thai food. Anybody have a problem with that?

The students laugh.

DEB (CONT'D)

Good. Now get out of here and come back smarter.

As the students begin to file out, Deb looks up. At the back of the lecture hall stands Preston. He smiles.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER - DAY

Preston and Deb sit at a table.

PRESTON

So one kid is reaching for an otter, while the other one is literally climbing the glass partition into their pool.

DEB

Otters are too cute to resist.

PRESTON

I looked at the teacher, and she just shrugged. I'm gonna have to put up a secondary perimeter.

DEB

That should do it.

PRESTON

It'll kill the sight lines.

DEB

It's that or use an electric cattle prod on the children.

PRESTON

Oh! I vote for that! What time did you get home last night?

DEB

Late.

PRESTON

What happened?

DEB

I was with a patient.

PRESTON

How was PT this morning?

DEB

Fine. Hard.

PRESTON

Maybe instead of a second perimeter I can just reposition the signs. Not that the kids can read.

From the street outside, VIOLIN MUSIC drifts into the restaurant. Deb looks up, distracted.

Preston's voice FADES to the background. He continues.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

But if I put the signs up where the little gremlins are climbing at least people could still see the otters asleep in the log.

Deb stares out the window as a STREET MUSICIAN continues to play his violin. The MUSIC entrances her.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

'Course, if that doesn't work, I assume cattle prods would be a tax write-off, right?

Deb no longer hears him.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Too soon for tax humor? Hon? Deb?

Deb closes her eyes.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Deb in her bed, eyes closed. VIOLIN MUSIC PLAYS. Deb's eyes fly open. SILENCE. She looks at Preston, who's sound asleep.

INT. DEB'S BATHROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Deb leans over the sink and closes her eyes again. VIOLIN MUSIC fills her head and her eyes pop open. She looks down.

Her HAND TWITCHES on the counter. Her FINGERS MOVE in rhythmic fashion. She stares at herself in the mirror.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Deb packs lunches. Sarah runs down the stairs, grabs her LUNCHBOX, and starts to leave.

DEB

Hey!

SARAH

We're in a hurry!

DEB

I don't care, I want a hug!

Sarah runs back and gives Deb a hug and a kiss.

DEB (CONT'D)

Have a good day.

SARAH

You too, Mommy!

Sarah runs out toward the garage. Preston enters, kisses Deb, and picks up his sack lunch.

DEB

Have a good day at work.

Preston wears his INDIANAPOLIS ZOO MAINTENANCE CREW JACKET.

PRESTON

Ohhh, it'll be a zoo!

He turns to Deb with a giant grin. Deb can't help but smile.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Another long day today?

DEB
Yeah.

PRESTON
Don't push too hard.

DEB
That's the exact opposite of what
Kendra told me in PT.

PRESTON
You're still healing.

DEB
It's been a year.

PRESTON
Ten months.

SARAH (O.S.)
Daddy! We're going to be late!

PRESTON
I already got a glimpse of what our
life would be like without you. I
don't ever need to see that again.

She smiles. Preston kisses her and shuts the garage DOOR
behind him as he exits.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - TEN MONTHS EARLIER - DAY

IN SEPIA:

A waiting room DOOR OPENS. Enter NURSE. Preston, in a HARD
PLASTIC CHAIR, taps his foot nervously.

A WOMAN (30s) sits across from him and a little BOY (8)
stares at a vending machine.

NURSE
Mr. Worth?

Preston looks up and stands.

PRESTON
That's me.

NURSE

Your wife's out of surgery.

PRESTON

Can I see her?

NURSE

Not for a bit. But the surgery went well. Both lungs are showing full blood flow, which is positive. But there's a problem with her heart.

PRESTON

She was born with a hole in her heart.

NURSE

That's right. Dr. Landry thought that he might be able to fix it at the same time.

PRESTON

I know all this.

Preston grows impatient. The boy BANGS on the machine.

BOY

It took my dollar!

He runs to his mother, who fishes for another dollar.

NURSE

Would you like to sit down?

Preston nods and they move to another corner of the room.

NURSE (CONT'D)

The ventricular septal defect couldn't be addressed like Dr. Landry had hoped. There was a vascular cluster that could have impaired her body's ability to accept the new lungs.

PRESTON

The hole in her heart? So what does that mean?

NURSE

Nothing's changed. It's a congenital defect. She's lived with it for thirty years, so we're gonna leave it alone for now.

(MORE)

NURSE (CONT'D)

If we need to address it later, we
can discuss that once she's
recovered.

Preston nods as the boy BANGS on the vending machine, which
has eaten the other dollar.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - PRESENT - LATER

IN COLOR:

ESTABLISHING. Deb's car alone on an expansive country road
outside Indianapolis, flanked by CORN FIELDS. The CITY can be
seen in the distance.

INT. DEB'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Driving, Deb flips through radio stations: country, WIBC,
then VIOLIN MUSIC. She hits the BRAKES, stares at the radio.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

FROM ABOVE, we see Deb's car abruptly make a U-turn, kicking
up dust as she drives in the opposite direction.

EXT. RESTAURANT - LATER

Deb sits in her car outside the restaurant where she and
Preston dined. The STREET VIOLINIST is there again.

Deb's PHONE BUZZES.

INSERT DEB POV

A reminder on the screen says:

"Physical therapy appointment at 10 AM"

BACK TO SCENE

Deb puts down her phone and drives away.

INT. HOSPITAL PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Kendra is supervising Deb's reps with a MEDICINE BALL.

KENDRA

Two more. Do 'em both.

Deb pushes through the final two reps. Kendra takes the medicine ball and replaces it as DR. JAMESON LANDRY (50s) approaches and takes a file from the table.

LANDRY
How we doin'?

DEB
She's a sadist.

LANDRY
That's why I hired her. It'll get easier.

DEB
(continuing her exercise)
I sure hope so.

LANDRY
(checking the chart)
You're already doing a lot better.
Your progress is right on target.
Next time you're in, I'd like to do
a new blood panel, and we should
talk about reducing your meds.

KENDRA
A quick rest, then five more.

LANDRY
Any problems with the new
immunosuppressants?

DEB
I'm feeling a lot better after
switching to the Prednisone.

LANDRY
Good.

Deb takes a shallow breath and picks the medicine ball up.

LANDRY (CONT'D)
How's the incision?

Deb begins her reps.

KENDRA
It's healing well, but she's having
trouble sleeping.

LANDRY
That's normal. It takes a while to
adjust.

Landry puts the chart up, looks at Kendra as Deb finishes.

LANDRY (CONT'D)
Maybe we can get you a sleep aid if
it's still a problem next week.

DEB
I don't want to be on too many
medications.

LANDRY
I can give you a mild sedative.
Almost no side effects. Just be
sure not to mix it with alcohol.

DEB
I don't drink.

LANDRY
A physician's favorite sentence.

Deb is clearly struggling to finish the set.

LANDRY (CONT'D)
Don't let up on her.

KENDRA
Wouldn't dream of it.

Exit Landry. Kendra looks at Deb's chart. Deb drops the
medicine ball and leans back against the wall.

DEB
Happy?

Kendra smiles.

KENDRA
Moderately.

Deb rolls her eyes and laughs, panting from exhaustion.

As Kendra turns to update the chart, Ransom walks into the PT
room. He looks up to see Deb. They lock eyes and smile.

As Kendra turns back, Deb quickly looks away from Ransom and
busies herself packing up.

KENDRA (CONT'D)
You wanna get lunch?

DEB
Yeah. Sure!

EXT. OVERVIEW MEDICAL COMPLEX - DAY

ESTABLISHING. The expansive teaching hospital campus is bustling with MEDICAL STUDENTS and STAFF moving between buildings and assisting PATIENTS.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

STUDENTS, PATIENTS, and MEDICAL STAFF flood the cafeteria. Deb and Kendra sit at a table eating lunch. Deb reaches for her napkin, knocks over her cup, and quickly sets it upright.

DEB
Napkins!

Kendra grabs NAPKINS and they throw them on the spill.

KENDRA
Did I work you too hard today?

DEB
No, I'm just naturally clumsy.

KENDRA
Glad to know I didn't break you.

DEB
No one can say you didn't try.

They pause, finish cleaning up the spill, and begin to eat.

KENDRA
You in a hurry?

DEB
No more classes today, but I'm seeing a patient in an hour.

KENDRA
You seeing a full patient load?

DEB
No, just on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Kendra picks at her food, then looks up at Deb.

KENDRA
Tell me a little bit more about the dreams you've been having.

Deb looks up.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING GARAGE - LATER

Deb and Kendra hug goodbye. Deb gets into her car and Kendra watches her drive off. Kendra walks back toward the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kendra crosses through the busy physical therapy office.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Kendra walks down a long corridor.

INT. DR. LANDRY'S OFFICE - LATER

Landry, eating lunch, looks up as Kendra appears at the door.

KENDRA
Do you have a minute?

LANDRY
Of course.

KENDRA
It's about a patient. Deb Worth.

Dr. Landry sets down his fork. She has his attention.

EXT. MEDICAL COMPLEX - PLUMFIELD EXECUTIVE WING - NIGHT

The "Plumfield Executive Wing" SIGN GLOWS on the side of the building. VALETS run as LUXURY VEHICLES arrive.

A large BANNER nearby says "Plumfield Angel Foundation Gala."

INT. PLUMFIELD BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

GUESTS in TUXEDOS AND EVENING GOWNS dine at lavish tables. At the podium is DR. NEWSOM (50s).

DR. NEWSOM
And so ten years ago, I kept coming
into work, knowing that something
was wrong. But I ignored it.
Because as we all know, doctors are
hard-wired to be terrible patients.

AUDIENCE LAUGHS.

DR. NEWSOM (CONT'D)
So when it finally got too bad to
ignore, and when my golf score got
nearly as high as my blood
pressure...

More LAUGHTER.

DR. NEWSOM (CONT'D)
...I contacted a trusted colleague
and friend who diagnosed me. To
this day, I am so grateful to that
friend and skilled surgeon who
performed my surgery two months
later. The man who's run this
teaching hospital with military
precision for the last decade. I
wouldn't be standing here now
without him, and I'm forever
indebted. Now let's get him up here
so I can eat my salmon. Ladies and
gentlemen, Dr. Jameson Landry.

The audience STANDS and APPLAUDS. Landry takes the podium.
After a moment, and at Landry's urging, they sit back down.

LANDRY
I am overwhelmed by that
introduction. So much so that I
almost feel bad that now I have to
hit you up for money.

The audience LAUGHS. Landry smiles and holds up one finger.

LANDRY (CONT'D)
Almost.

More LAUGHTER.

INT. DEB'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Deb packs papers into her satchel as Kendra enters.

KENDRA
Hey, my 5 o'clock canceled. I'm off
early. Dinner?

DEB
Oh, that's nice, but I can't. I'm
meeting Preston.

KENDRA
Date with the hubby. Next week?

DEB
Sounds great.

Kendra starts to leave.

KENDRA
You missed a good one last night.
Sorry you couldn't make it.

DEB
What were the final numbers?

KENDRA
I haven't heard yet, but they
raised a bundle. Landry squeezed
'em for everything they were worth.
You doing your exercises?

DEB
Yes, mother.

KENDRA
(laughs)
Oh, you're gonna pay for that.

Deb smiles. A PHONE in the outer office RINGS.

ELISE (O.S.)
Plumfield Psychotherapy, Elise.

DEB
I'll see ya' next week.

Exit Kendra toward the outer office.

INT. DEB'S OUTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Kendra, exiting, waves at ELISE (30s). Elise waves back.

ELISE
(on the phone)
Oh. Hi, Preston. Just a second.
I'll let her know.
(calling to Deb)
Deb, it's your husband.

DEB (O.S.)
Thanks.

ELISE
Line one. OK if I head out?

DEB (O.S.)
Of course! See you in the morning!

INT. DEB'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Deb shuts the door, crosses to the desk, picks up the phone.

DEB
Hi, hon.

INT. PRESTON'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Preston, in a WHITE PICKUP TRUCK, drives a country road. He talks on speakerphone, his cell phone mounted to the dash.

PRESTON
A monkey bit me today.

DEB (ON PHONE)
What?

PRESTON
A damn monkey bit me!

DEB (ON PHONE)
I don't know if you're talking
about a child or a real monkey.

PRESTON
(laughs)
The new Capuchin they just
integrated. He bit me when I was
working on the gate to the
enclosure.

DEB (ON PHONE)
Did you have to get the shots?

PRESTON
No, it didn't cut through the
glove. But now every time I go in
there, I'm gonna be watchin' my
back like that guy from *Outbreak*.

Deb laughs.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Anyway, I thought maybe I could
pick you up. You could leave the
car and I'll bring you in to work
in the morning.

DEB (ON PHONE)
Thanks, hon, but I can't. I'm
having dinner with Kendra.

PRESTON
You heard me say I was bit by a
monkey, right?

DEB (ON PHONE)
You're gonna have to get through
this one on your own. I'd better
run. I'm a little late, actually.

PRESTON (ON PHONE)
OK, well, see you later. Love you.

INT. DEB'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DEB
You too.

She hangs up, continues packing. After a moment, she looks
up. Ransom stands in the doorway. He smiles. She smiles.

DEB (CONT'D)
I told you I'd meet you there.

RANSOM
You want me to leave?

DEB
Not even a little bit.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

BELL RINGS and CHILDREN exit the school. Deb stands by the
front gate. Sarah, waving a PAPER, runs out at full speed.

SARAH
I got ten out of ten!

DEB
(taking the paper)
Oh, wow! Animal habitats!

SARAH
Ten out of ten!

Deb and Sarah begin to walk home.

DEB
Oh, Daddy's gonna be so proud.

SARAH
I got a sticker on it! See? It says
"Wow." AND it's a scratch 'n sniff.

DEB
(very seriously)
Whoa.

SARAH
(eyes wide)
Yeah.

Deb hands the paper back. They turn onto a quiet street lined with homes. They walk on the sidewalk, up a little hill.

DEB
That one goes on the fridge!

SARAH
I want Daddy to take it to the zoo
and show everybody.

DEB
Daddy would love that.

Sarah smiles, sniffs the sticker.

SARAH
Mmm. Strawberry. We better put it
in my backpack.

Sarah stops, Deb puts the page in the backpack. Through the window of a nearby home, they hear a CHILD's violin lesson.

SARAH (CONT'D)
You're never going to believe what
happened at school today.

Deb takes Sarah's hand. They walk. Deb looks back as the MUSIC continues. She is only vaguely aware of Sarah speaking.

DEB
Really? What?

SARAH
Mrs. Harris says that we are going
to have a pajama day next week...

Deb pants heavily as she walks. Sarah's voice FADES.

SARAH (CONT'D)
And we're gonna read books all day.

Deb's footsteps become labored as her world begins to spin.
The VIOLIN MUSIC and Sarah's VOICE FADE to the background.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Parents can come and everything,
and she's bringing muffins--

FLASHBACK (4 SECONDS)

Nora, from the cold open, plays violin in an empty apartment.

BACK TO SCENE

DEB
Mommy needs to sit down.

Deb half collapses on the sidewalk.

FLASHBACK (4 SECONDS)

Nora's bow flies as she plays a fiendishly difficult passage.

BACK TO SCENE

DEB (CONT'D)
I need to sit down.

SARAH
Mommy?

DEB
(closing her eyes)
Get my phone. It's in my purse. I
need you to call Daddy.

Sarah, scared, grabs the purse.

INT. DEB'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Deb and Preston are in the middle of a fight.

DEB
I told you, I'll be fine. I just
got a little winded.

PRESTON
A little winded? You couldn't even
make it up the hill!

DEB
It's normal after surgery.

PRESTON
(louder)
It's NOT normal!

DEB
Will you keep your voice down?
Sarah's going to hear you.

PRESTON
(quiet, but aggressive)
You're worried about me waking her
up, but you keel over on the
sidewalk right in front of her?

DEB
I didn't keel over.

PRESTON
You could've. I'm making you an
appointment for tomorrow morning.

DEB
I told you, I'm fine.

PRESTON
I'm calling Dr. Landry.

DEB
Pres...

PRESTON
Listen. Maybe you're fine, maybe
you're not, but we need to know.

Deb is hesitant.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Please?

DEB
You don't need to worry.

PRESTON
I am worried.

Deb looks away.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Our six year old daughter is
worried.

She looks back at him.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Also, I was bit by a monkey.

Deb laughs.

INT. DR. LANDRY'S OFFICE - DAY

Deb sits alone, staring at an anatomical MODEL of the human RESPIRATORY SYSTEM. There is a KNOCK. Deb looks up, smiles.

Kendra walks in and sits next to a pale, shaky Deb.

KENDRA
I heard you were here.

DEB
I'm fine.

KENDRA
What happened?

Dr. Landry enters reading a chart.

LANDRY
Alright.

Dr. Landry crosses to his desk and notices Kendra.

LANDRY (CONT'D)
Oh! I--

KENDRA
I'll step out.

DEB
No. Please stay.

Dr. Landry sits. Kendra squeezes Deb's hand.

LANDRY
We need to talk about another surgery.

DISSOLVE TO
BLACK.

INT. NYC LOFT APARTMENT - TWO YEARS AGO - DAY

OVER BLACK:

We hear a DRAWER SLAM SHUT.

"2 YEARS AGO."

IN SEPIA:

Nora argues with CHET (25).

CHET
Whoa, whoa, calm down! There's no
need for all that yelling. Chill.

NORA
You're such an ass.

She flings a PILLOW at him. He's clearly high.

CHET
What's your problem?

NORA
Did you even look for work?

CHET
I have feelers out. I'm looking for
the right fit.

NORA
What about this?

She picks up a BAGGIE with white powder. Chet snatches it.

CHET
I just needed to take the edge off.

NORA
You don't have a job. Exactly what
edge do you need to take off?

CHET
If you think jobs are so easy to
get, why aren't you raking in the
dough?

NORA
I *have* a job. Two. And school. What
about the restaurant?

CHET
I have two degrees. I'm not gonna
work a minimum-wage restaurant job.

Nora grabs her LEATHER JACKET.

CHET (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

NORA
I'm leaving.

CHET
You're not going anywhere.

NORA
Watch me.

Nora slips on her jacket, grabs her keys.

CHET
Because I won't bus tables?

NORA
If bussing tables is all there is,
then you bus the damn tables.

CHET
Oh, come on. It's degrading.

NORA
If I can serve, you can bus.

CHET
I'm not doin' that.

Nora grabs her VIOLIN CASE.

NORA
At some point, Chet, you just have
to put on your big girl panties and
deal with it like the rest of us.

Nora starts to leave. Chet grabs for the violin case, but
Nora holds firmly. They stare each other down.

INT. DEB'S OUTER OFFICE - PRESENT - DAY

IN COLOR:

Elise TYPES on a computer. In walks Deb, distracted.

ELISE
Your 1:30 is here. Mr. Cernkovich.
I told him you were running a
couple of minutes late.

DEB
Thank you. You got his file?

ELISE
On your desk. You alright?

Deb nods, walks into her office, shuts the door. Elise types.

INT. DEB'S OFFICE - LATER - DAY

NICK CERNKOVICH (35, large, burly) sits on a couch. Deb rubs her forehead and takes notes.

NICK

Sure, I live with my mother, but does that mean I'm a loser? Every time I turn on the TV, somebody's making jokes about guys who live with their mother, you know?

DEB

Mm-hm. So you're frustrated.

NICK

Damn right, I'm frustrated! I mean, come on! It's not like I'm not bringin' in any money! I've got my unemployment. I pay rent. And she needs me, but you can't tell anybody that. They just think you're ridin' the gravy train.

DEB

Yeah.

NICK

Sure. I'd like to have my own house, but they're expensive.

DEB

Especially if you're not working.

Nick looks at her.

NICK

Right! And I can't just make a job appear. Can I?

(long pause)

I dunno. Maybe I should just take that construction gig with my uncle after all. What do you think?

DEB

I think sometimes you just have to put on your big girl panties and grow the hell up.

Nick stares, dumbfounded. Deb realizes what she's said.

NICK
Wow.

DEB
Let me just--

NICK
You're right!

DEB
What?

NICK
You're absolutely right.

DEB
I-- actually-- I--

Deb's eyes widen as she processes what just happened.

INT. DEB'S OUTER OFFICE - LATER

Nick emerges.

ELISE
Same time next week?

NICK
Please. She's amazing! I'm so glad
I switched insurance.

Elise smiles.

NICK (CONT'D)
Thanks again, Dr. Worth.

Deb appears at the door connecting the two offices.

DEB
See you next week, Nick.

Exit Nick.

DEB (CONT'D)
Can you tell me what I have the
rest of the day?

ELISE
Physical therapy at three, and Mrs.
Sullivan is your last appointment
at five.

DEB
Alright.

She turns to her office, then stops and turns back to Elise.

DEB (CONT'D)
Actually, I'm sorry. Can you, can
you-- Can you cancel Mrs. Sullivan?

ELISE
Of course. Are you alright?

DEB
Yeah. Just a headache. After you
make that call, you can go, too.

Elise nods and picks up the phone. Deb shuts the door.

INT. DEB'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Deb goes to her desk. From the bottom drawer, she pulls out a GLASS and a BOTTLE of VODKA. She pours herself a drink and downs it. She sets the empty glass on the table next to the nearly full bottle. The CLOCK reads 2:33.

TIME LAPSE TO:

INT. DEB'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A third of the bottle is gone. Deb begins to pour. The CLOCK reads 5:59. There is a KNOCK at the door. Enter Kendra.

KENDRA
Hey, you missed PT.

DEB
Yeah. Sorry. I got caught up here.

KENDRA
What happened?

Deb looks up.

INT. NYC LOFT APARTMENT - TWO YEARS AGO - CONTINUOUS

IN SEPIA:

Nora and Chet both grasp the violin case, staring.

NORA

This violin is worth more to me
than my life. You better *believe*
it's worth more than yours.

She stares him down and he lets go. Nora turns to leave.

CHET

Fine! Go, then! You know you'll be
back! You got nowhere else to go!

The door SLAMS.

INT. JUILLIARD MUSIC DEPARTMENT OFFICE - DAY

ESTHER SORRELL (60s) sits behind a desk. Nora sits.

NORA

When I got there, Dr. McKeegan said
I wasn't on the class roster. I--

MS. SORRELL

You were dropped by the registrar.

NORA

Why?

MS. SORRELL

You have a financial hold on your
account.

NORA

So what am I supposed to do now?

MS. SORRELL

Well, there's nothing really to do
unless you can pay your account.

Nora looks down.

MS. SORRELL (CONT'D)

Take this semester off to work, pay
your balance, and be ready when
registration opens up next fall.

NORA

What about the orchestra?

MS. SORRELL

Your account has to be clear.

NORA

But I--

MS. SORRELL
I'm sorry. There's really nothing I
can do until you're paid up.

INT. DR. LANDRY'S OFFICE - PRESENT - NIGHT

IN COLOR:

Landry studies Deb's file. Kendra sits across from him.

LANDRY
You say she was upset?

KENDRA
Not just upset. Hopeless.

Landry sits back in his seat looking over Deb's file.

LANDRY
Depression's normal. Everything
else seems fine. I don't see any
reason to delay the next surgery.

KENDRA
I don't think you understand Deb.
She doesn't run hot and cold. She's
steady as it goes. For her to miss
an appointment, it-- it's a sign--
it's not at all like her.

LANDRY
This is the first downturn?

Kendra nods. Landry sets the folder down on his desk.

LANDRY (CONT'D)
But you think there may be a
complication.

KENDRA
I really do.

LANDRY
Then we'll look into it.

KENDRA
Thank you.

LANDRY
Of course. Total patient health.
You know that's what Plumfield
always puts first.

Kendra smiles and stands. Landry walks her to the door.

LANDRY (CONT'D)

You have a good night. I'll take it
from here.

Exit Kendra. Landry shuts the door and locks it. He goes to a bookcase, reveals a SECRET COMPARTMENT containing a LOCKBOX. He opens it, sifts through 5 or 6 folders. He picks one.

INSERT LANDRY POV

The folder's label says "Patient A - 347."

BACK TO SCENE

He sets it on his desk next to Deb's and opens it.

INSERT LANDRY POV

A picture of Nora along with her name and vital statistics.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Deb, Preston, and Sarah are in the middle of dinner.

PRESTON

Don't play with your food, baby
girl. Peas are for eating.

SARAH

I'm not a baby. I don't like 'em.

Preston looks at Deb, who doesn't have anything to say.

PRESTON

You're right. I'm sorry. Will you
eat them if I let you have dinner
in front of the TV?

SARAH

Uh-huh.

PRESTON

Don't make a mess, OK?

SARAH

I won't.

Sarah carefully slides her plate off the table, walks to the living room as Preston watches. Deb never looks up.

PRESTON
(to Deb)
We knew this might happen. We'll
get through it.

DEB
You don't know that.

PRESTON
We'll do it together.

DEB
I'm the one they're gonna cut open.

**INT. JUILLIARD MUSIC DEPARTMENT HALLWAY - TWO YEARS AGO -
LATER**

IN SEPIA:

Nora's DETERMINED FOOTSTEPS ECHO as she walks quickly down
the hall. She carries her violin case and sheet music. MUTED
MUSIC fills the air. She KNOCKS on a door.

DR. MCKEEGAN (O.S.)
Hold it, hold it, hold it. Alright,
everybody, take five.

MUSIC STOPS. DOOR OPENS. Reveal DR. MCKEEGAN (30s) conductor.

DR. MCKEEGAN (CONT'D)
Nora, I told you, you're not on the
class roster any more.

NORA
Not for credit. Just to play.

McKeegan shuts the door behind him and steps into the hall.

DR. MCKEEGAN
I can't. You're not technically a
student here.

Nora sets her violin and music on a nearby TABLE.

NORA
Can I still teach lessons?

DR. MCKEEGAN
Not if you're not enrolled.

NORA
Then how am I supposed to clear my
account if I can't teach?

DR. MCKEEGAN
You're still working at the
restaurant, right?

NORA
That's not enough.

DR. MCKEEGAN
Nora, you're a talented violinist,
but you're raw, and a bit volatile.
The best advice I can give you is
to get your life together, keep
studying, and get back on track.

NORA
How the hell can I do that?

DR. MCKEEGAN
I know it's not easy. It never is
for artists. Look, I have a friend
in Chicago who sometimes needs
session musicians.

NORA
I can't get to Chicago.

DR. MCKEEGAN
I don't know what to tell you.

NORA
But--

DR. MCKEEGAN
I've gotta get back to rehearsal.

NORA
I just--

DR. MCKEEGAN
I'm sorry. I've gotta go.

He shuts the door. Nora stares at the walls lined with PHOTOS
of MUSICIANS and FRAMED ARTICLES ABOUT ALUMNI.

DR. MCKEEGAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
OK, everybody, pickups to fifty-
two. Watch that chromatic run,
flutes. And--

MUTED MUSIC begins. Nora fumes. She grabs her violin and
angrily swipes her music from the tabletop, sending PAPERS,
BROCHURES, PLASTIC CASES CRASHING.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - PRESENT - CONTINUOUS

IN COLOR:

PRESTON
Whatever it takes, we'll--

DEB
Stop saying we.

PRESTON
I'm here, too. And this isn't
something you consider not doing.
We're talking about life and death.

DEB
I know that.

PRESTON
Do you?

DEB
It's *my* life we're talking about.

PRESTON
Then let's figure out the best way
we can get through this.

DEB
Stop saying that!!!

Deb angrily sweeps her arm across the table. PLATES CRASH.
She stands and storms out, SLAMMING the back door.

EXT. NYC STREET - TWO YEARS AGO - NIGHT

IN SEPIA:

Nora sits on the curb, holding onto her violin. NEON LIGHTS
flash behind her. PEOPLE rush by. Tears stream down her face.

EXT. RIVERBANK - PRESENT - NIGHT

IN COLOR:

Deb sits. She looks up, sees Ransom. He sits next to her.

RANSOM
You OK?

DEB

I feel utterly disconnected from everyone around me. I'm alone.

RANSOM

You're not, but I understand. After my transplant, I felt like I was seeing with someone else's eyes. Like the world had opened up a new dimension.

DEB

No one else understands that.

RANSOM

You can't if you haven't been through it.

DEB

When I'm with you, I feel like I'm somewhere else. Somewhere completely different.

RANSOM

Me too.

DEB

But I'm not. I'm here. I'm the same person I was before we met, and this is still my life.

RANSOM

It doesn't have to be.

He leans in to kiss her. Deb pulls away.

DEB

What are you doing?

Ransom retreats. We realize this relationship is not what we thought it was.

RANSOM

Deb, what's going on here? You've been stringing me along for weeks now. You call me in the middle of the night to come out here, and--

DEB

I know. I can't explain it. I just-- So what do you do when you wake up in a life that feels like someone else's?

Ransom doesn't answer.

DEB (CONT'D)
Can't we just sit here for a while?

Ransom relents, sits back. Deb puts her head on his shoulder.

DEB (CONT'D)
I told a whiny patient today he
needed to act like a man.

RANSOM
Really!

DEB
I said he needed to pull up his big
girl panties and deal with life.

RANSOM
How'd that feel?

DEB
So damn good.

Ransom laughs.

DEB (CONT'D)
I've been hearing things and seeing
things that I can't explain.

RANSOM
When you dream?

DEB
Dreaming, awake, all the time.
Something's not right.
(pause)
That's not all. Watch.

Deb gets out her phone, plays ITZHAK PERLMAN'S "HUMORESQUE."
The fingers on her left hand begins to move uncontrollably.
Ransom's eyes widen. They both stare.

RANSOM
What is that?

DEB
It feels like I'm playing it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DEB'S STREET - NIGHT

Deb walks the DARK street toward her house. She looks up. THROUGH THE WINDOW, she sees Preston put Sarah to sleep. He kisses her on the forehead, TURNS OUT THE LIGHT.

EXT. NYC STREET - 2 YEARS AGO - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

IN SEPIA:

As Nora sits on the curb, a MAN (scrawny, 40s) approaches.

MAN
Hey, spare some change?

NORA
I haven't got a dime.

MAN
Anything helps.

NORA
I'll tellin' ya, I'm flat. I got nothin'. Wish I could help you.

Man eyes her LEATHER JACKET.

NORA (CONT'D)
Don't you touch me.

MAN
Give me the jacket.

NORA
Back off and take a breath.

The man grabs at her jacket, trying to pull it off of her.

MAN
Give it up! I swear I'll cut you.

In the tussle, Nora catches the man with an elbow. He hits her across the face. She grabs him, knees him in the crotch, and then punches him in the face repeatedly.

The man staggers backwards, regaining his footing.

NORA
You want some more? Come on ahead.

At the end of the alley, a PASSERBY crosses and the man takes off the other direction.

Nora picks up her violin case. The HANDLE IS BROKEN.

INT. DEB'S KITCHEN - PRESENT - DAY

IN COLOR:

Deb packs lunches. Sarah runs in wearing her backpack.

SARAH
'Bye Mommy, I love you.

Sarah gives Deb a kiss, grabs her lunch, runs toward the garage. Preston stops in front of Deb.

PRESTON
We should talk about last night.

DEB
I can't. I have a patient.

PRESTON
It just feels like--

DEB
I've gotta go.

She sets his lunch down and leaves out the front door.

INT. NYC BAR - TWO YEARS AGO - DAY

IN SEPIA:

The next morning, Nora walks up to a stool in the empty bar where CASSIE (20s, tattoos, piercings) stocks liquor.

CASSIE
How'd you sleep?

NORA
Fine. Thanks for lettin' me crash.

CASSIE
Any time.

Cassie pours Nora a shot of vodka.

NORA
I don't have any money, Cass.

CASSIE
My boss won't be in until we open.
We have an hour to get mad drunk.

Cassie and Nora each take a shot.

CASSIE (CONT'D)
Lip's lookin' better.

NORA
Another shot might help.

CASSIE
The healing power of vodka.

NORA
Vodka's what usually starts the
fight.

Cassie laughs.

CASSIE
Not this stuff. It's \$40 a shot.

Nora laughs and downs it.

INT. DEB'S OFFICE - PRESENT - DAY

IN COLOR:

Deb sits with a notepad behind her desk as ANGIE (45) leans back on the couch.

ANGIE
It's always been this way. Even
when we were kids. I mean, your
sister's supposed to be your best
friend, right?

DEB
Mm-hmm.

Deb has discretely kicked off her shoes. With her right foot, she opens and shuts the desk drawer that hides her vodka bottle and glass.

ANGIE
She always has to be the golden
child. Did I tell you she convinced
my parents to make her the executor
for their will? She told them that
it wouldn't be fair to put that
much pressure on me. Suuure. Just
looking out for her big sister,
right? I'll bet.

DEB

Mmmm.

ANGIE

She says I'm a narcissist, but she's the one always trying to hog the attention. Is that fair?

Deb isn't listening. She doodles.

INSERT DEB POV

On the notepad is a loose sketch of a jacket and pants.

BACK TO SCENE

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Dr. Worth? Dr. Worth?

Deb tugs at her slacks. Angie is staring at her.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

You know what I mean?

DEB

(to herself)

I hate these pants.

ANGIE

What?

DEB

Oh, um, nothing. Well, it sounds like you have a pretty good grasp on that situation. Well done.

Deb slips on her shoes, grabs her purse from under her desk, and leaves Angie lying on the couch.

INT. DEB'S OUTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Deb walks out and breezes past Elise, who looks up.

ELISE

Is everything OK?

ANGIE (O.S.)

Is this some sort of isolation therapy?

ELISE

What's the matter?

DEB
Nothing. Everything's fine. I'm
taking the rest of the day off.

ELISE
What about Mrs. Klenk?

DEB
Who? Oh. Yeah. You should probably
check on her.

A bewildered Elise stares after Deb as she exits.

ANGIE (O.S.)
So, do I keep talking, or...

Elise stares at the empty doorway.

INT. WILSON'S LEATHER STORE - DAY

Deb flips through a rack of leather jackets, picks one. She
grabs a leather mini skirt and heads into the dressing room.

INT. WILSON'S LEATHER STORE - DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Deb, wearing the skirt and jacket, looks at herself in the
dressing room mirror.

DEB
(to herself)
What the hell am I doing?

Deb strips off the jacket and changes out of the skirt. She
quickly pulls on her own clothes.

In the room next to hers, Deb sees the FEET of a TEENAGE
SHOPPER turning around. HANGERS CLASH. Several HANGERS and a
PURSE fall to the floor under the partition.

As the purse lands, its contents spill out in Deb's dressing
room. Deb picks up a PACK of MARLBOROUGH LIGHTS and several
lipsticks. She drops the lipsticks back into the purse.

TEENAGE SHOPPER (O.S.)
Oh my gosh! I'm so sorry!

Before Deb can return the cigarettes, the SHOPPER grabs her
purse and hangs it up. Deb starts to say something, stops.

INSERT DEB POV

Deb looks down at the pack, opens it up. It's almost full.

BACK TO SCENE

She hesitates, then hears the DOOR OPEN next to her.

TEENAGE SHOPPER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Thank you! I'm such a klutz.

DEB
No problem.

The shopper exits the dressing room. Deb holds the pack.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD RESTAURANT - LATER - DAY

A distracted Deb sits on a barstool and a BARTENDER (handsome, 20s) comes over.

BARTENDER
Hi, there. What can I get ya'?

DEB
Uh, is it happy hour?

BARTENDER
(laughing)
Not for a couple hours. What's your poison?

DEB
Vodka.

He starts to reach for the bottle on the bar.

DEB (CONT'D)
No, not-- Do you have Beluga?

BARTENDER
Absolutely.

He reaches behind him, pours her drink into a CHILLED GLASS. She takes it, closes her eyes as she takes a drink.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
Want to start a tab?

DEB
I do, and I'm ready for another.

BARTENDER
Same thing?

Deb nods. Her PHONE BUZZES in her purse. She reaches in to get it and pulls out the cigarettes. She ignores the phone BUZZING and stares at the pack.

The bartender pours her second shot.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
I can trust you not to light up in here, can't I?

Deb looks up in confusion. He looks at the cigarettes.

DEB
Yeah. I don't even smoke.

The bartender smiles and turns away. Deb stares at the pack.

INT. NYC BAR - TWO YEARS AGO - CONTINUOUS

IN SEPIA:

Nora and Cassie are several drinks in.

CASSIE
Hey, my boss is gonna be here in five. Want one more for the road?

NORA
Long as it doesn't get you in trouble.

CASSIE
Nah, he'll never know. I fill it with the cheap stuff and stick it in the back.

Cassie pours them both one more shot. They both drink.

NORA
You got a cigarette?

Cassie slides her a PACK of MARLBOROUGH LIGHTS and a LIGHTER. Nora takes one and puts another behind her ear.

CASSIE
You need to crash again tonight?

NORA
No, I'm leaving town for a while.

EXT. JUILLIARD MUSIC BUILDING - DAY

Nora, with her violin case in hand, handle broken, stops Dr. McKeegan as he walks out of the music building.

DR. MCKEEGAN

Nora, you look like hell. Are you okay?

NORA

Don't worry about me, I can take care of myself.

DR. MCKEEGAN

I'm sorry. If you want to get back into class, I told you. There's no way that can happen.

NORA

No, I understand. But-- you believe in my playing, right?

DR. MCKEEGAN

(pause)

I've never met someone who has a better feel for the music than you.

NORA

So I'm not wasting my time, then?

DR. MCKEEGAN

Talent isn't enough. Even Beethoven almost washed out on violin because he didn't practice. And you're no Beethoven.

Nora looks up.

DR. MCKEEGAN (CONT'D)

But you're probably the closest thing to him I've ever had in my classroom. If you keep studying and you don't stop playing, if you can work through this rough patch, you could be one of the greatest there's ever been.

NORA

You said you had a friend in Chicago?

DR. MCKEEGAN

Yeah. If you can get there, he'll use you.

(MORE)

DR. MCKEEGAN (CONT'D)

I don't send him just anyone. You can get experience doing session work, get to know some people in the industry, pay off your bill, and be here in the fall.

(getting his wallet)

If you need some money for a bus ticket--

He starts to fish for cash.

NORA

Thanks, but I'm okay.

Dr. McKeegan nods and hands her a business card.

DR. MCKEEGAN

That's his phone number. Tell him I sent you.

McKeegan exits. Nora slips the card in her pocket, takes the cigarette from behind her ear, and fishes for matches.

INT. DEB'S CAR - PRESENT - DAY

IN COLOR:

Deb drives, one cigarette behind her ear. She finds herself in front of the restaurant where the musician played.

An EMPLOYEE is sweeping the entrance. Deb pulls up, put the car in park. She gets out, leaving the door open.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

DEB

(to employee)

Hey! Excuse me?

The employee looks up and stops sweeping. Deb approaches him with an urgency that makes him step back.

EMPLOYEE

Yeah?

DEB

A guy plays his violin here?

EMPLOYEE

What?

DEB
On the corner. He's a street
musician.

EMPLOYEE
I don't know.

He goes back to sweeping. Deb hears a loud HONK. She looks behind her car to see RAGE LADY (45, female, dumpy, wearing heavy makeup, yoga garb) behind the wheel of a Cadillac SUV.

RAGE LADY
What the hell?

DEB
Sorry.

Deb runs to close the door.

RAGE LADY
What's your problem?

DEB
You can't wait two seconds?

RAGE LADY
This isn't a freakin' parkin' lot.
Don't leave your door open like you
own the whole street.

DEB
I'm having a conversation! Why
don't you take a breath?

Rage Lady slams her SUV into park and gets out.

The employee looks up. So does a PATROL OFFICER (50s) from across the street.

RAGE LADY
Oh, you want me to take a breath?

Rage Lady grabs Deb by the elbow.

DEB
Don't touch me.

Rage Lady starts pointing aggressively in Deb's face.

RAGE LADY
You stupid piece of trash, you take
one more step and I'll--

Without hesitation, Deb PUNCHES her, dropping her to the ground. Deb stares in disbelief, immediately reacts to the pain in her hand.

The employee drops his broom, officer comes running. Deb, wide-eyed, stares at the woman.

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING CELL - DAY

Deb sits on a hard metal bench bolted to the wall, surrounded by DRUNKS, PROSTITUTES, and TEENAGE VANDALS. She stares down and tugs at her slacks.

POLICE SERGEANT (O.S.)
Worth? Deborah Worth?

Deb stands up and goes to the door of the cell.

DEB
That's me.

POLICE SERGEANT (45) unlocks the cell.

POLICE SERGEANT
You're gettin' bailed out. They're
at the front desk.

INT. POLICE STATION FRONT DESK - DAY

A series of DOORS BUZZ, then UNLOCK as Deb emerges from the holding area. She looks up. At the front desk stands Kendra.

KENDRA
So this is new.

TOM (40s, Desk Sergeant) sets a baggie down with Deb's belongings on the counter.

TOM
Deborah Worth? Sign here.

Deb nods, signs the clipboard, takes her belongings.

KENDRA
Thanks, Tom.

TOM
You two stay outta trouble.

Deb eyes the contents of the bag.

EXT. DOWNTOWN INDIANAPOLIS - MONUMENT CIRCLE - LATER

Kendra and Deb sit on a bench. Their lunches sit between them, uneaten. Deb seems beaten.

KENDRA
You said you were hungry.

Deb doesn't reply. Kendra changes tack.

KENDRA (CONT'D)
You wanna tell me what happened?

No response.

KENDRA (CONT'D)
Is it the second surgery?

DEB
I feel like I'm losin' it.

KENDRA
Depression is normal. I--

DEB
This *isn't* normal. When I found out I needed a double lung transplant, I felt this tremendous relief.

KENDRA
Relief?

DEB
My mom died when she was younger than me. So when I found out a lung transplant would save me, I was relieved. I felt like the world was paying me back for being good. For always being patient, for showing temperance, for not being like every other woman in my family.

KENDRA
Why relief?

DEB
Because I had you. A friend who could help me recoup. Because I was married to Preston, who I knew would never abandon me. And because I worked at one of the few hospitals in the country that had done the surgery successfully.

(MORE)

DEB (CONT'D)

I thought the world was paying me
what I'd earned.

KENDRA

That's not the way it works.

DEB

And an hour ago, I was sitting on a
metal bench in a jail cell, trying
to figure out how the hell I got
there.

Deb stares across Monument Circle.

DEB (CONT'D)

How'd you get them to reduce it to
a misdemeanor?

KENDRA

I helped Tom out of a jam a few
months ago.

DEB

The desk sergeant? How?

KENDRA

I stitched him up off the books
after he got shot in the leg.

DEB

But--

KENDRA

With his own gun. When he was drunk
and trying to make a TikTok of
himself doing the Thriller dance.

There is a pause. Kendra begins to eat her sandwich.

DEB

I'm angry ALL the time.

KENDRA

You've been through a lot.

DEB

I have memories that aren't my own.

KENDRA

(laughs)
Sounds like the start of a poem.

DEB

I'm not joking. What's my drink?

KENDRA

What?

DEB

When we go out, what do I order?

KENDRA

A Shirley Temple. Or a daiquiri on your birthday.

DEB

And once at Christmas. Today I sat down at a bar before noon and had 5 shots of Beluga Vodka.

KENDRA

Expensive taste. You must've been trashed.

DEB

I felt fine. Like I'd done it every day of my life. And that's not all. I'm ignoring patients, canceling sessions...

Mood shifts. Kendra focuses on Deb, who's baring her soul.

DEB (CONT'D)

I'm having memories of a life that I've never lived. I've always been completely tone deaf and now I can remember every note in Bartok's Second Violin Concerto. I see pictures of a woman in my head, and when I look in the mirror, I'm surprised to see that it's just me.

KENDRA

Deb, I--

DEB

I'm married to a man that I love and I find myself wanting to wrap my hands around his throat every time I see him. When I was a little girl, growing up in Terra Haute, all I wanted to do was get married and move to Indianapolis. And now, this town makes me sick. My husband is so damn nice. So sweet. My neighbors are so cordial. That psycho that I punched today?

KENDRA

Yeah?

DEB

She was the first person I've actually understood in months.

KENDRA

How long has--

DEB

Since the surgery.

Deb digs in her purse and finds the Marlborough Lights. She tosses them to Kendra.

DEB (CONT'D)

I had a lung transplant less than a year ago. I've never smoked a day in my life and I stole these out of a teenage girl's purse.

KENDRA

You stole them?

DEB

And I'm keeping secrets like a child. Everything that happens, my first instinct is to hide it from whoever might be looking.

KENDRA

What kind of secrets?

Deb leans back and looks at Kendra.

Deb's PHONE RINGS. Kendra starts to say something. Deb's expression stops her.

KENDRA (CONT'D)

What is it?

Deb holds up one finger as she answers her phone. She stands up and begins to pace.

DEB (ON PHONE)

Hello?

(listening)

Oh--no, no, sorry. I should've called you earlier. Of course I'll be there. I'm sorry. I just-- I hit--
- I got stuck in traffic.

Deb hangs up the phone, exasperated. She looks at Kendra.

DEB (CONT'D)
I need you to take me somewhere.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - LATER - DAY

At the front of the empty school sits Sarah with her lunchbox. A TEACHER stands with her arms crossed behind her.

Kendra's car pulls into the roundabout and Deb gets out and shuts the door. She waves frantically at Sarah, who hops up and begins to run toward her.

DEB
(to the teacher)
Hi! Thank you. Again, I'm so sorry.

The teacher waves as Sarah runs across the lawn. Deb turns back to Kendra in the car.

DEB (CONT'D)
Thank you.

KENDRA
I told you, it's not a problem. I can drive you home.

DEB
No, it's fine. We always walk.

Sarah grabs Deb around the leg.

SARAH
I was the last one!

DEB
I know! I'm sorry I was so late.

SARAH
Who's that?

DEB
That's Mommy's friend from work.

SARAH
(to Kendra)
Hi.

KENDRA
Hi!
(to Deb)
I'll see you tomorrow, right?

DEB
I promise.

KENDRA
(to Sarah)
'Bye! Nice to meet you!

Kendra drives away. Deb takes Sarah's hand as they start to walk toward home.

DEB
How was school?

SARAH
The teacher picked on me!

DEB
What?!

SARAH
The teacher asked a question and I raised my hand an' she picked on me! It was great!

Deb laughs.

DEB
Called on, sweetie. Not picked on.

SARAH
Yeah. Called on.

Deb and Sarah continue home.

EXT. BUS DEPOT TICKET BOOTH - NEW YORK - TWO YEARS AGO - DAY

IN SEPIA:

Nora in line at the ticket booth holding her violin case. PEOPLE swarm. We hear BUSES ARRIVING AND LEAVING.

TELLER
Next!

Nora walks up to the counter where the TELLER (60s) talks through the opening in the Plexiglas window.

NORA
How much to get to Chicago?

TELLER
By when?

NORA

Now.

The Teller pauses, types something into the computer.

TELLER

I have a bus leaving at 5:30, but there's a 6 hour layover in Indianapolis. 38 bucks.

NORA

That's fine.

Nora starts to walk away.

TELLER

You want a ticket?

NORA

I don't have any money, but I'll be back.

TELLER

(annoyed)
Next!

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM - PRESENT - NIGHT

IN COLOR:

Kendra, alone after hours in the office, cleans up the exercise equipment. Through the open door, she sees Dr. Landry walking toward her.

LANDRY

You're here late.

KENDRA

Just finishing up. I saw Deb Worth today. She's experiencing some abnormalities.

Landry perks up.

LANDRY

Anything of concern?

KENDRA

Things that will be difficult to explain given her situation.

INT. DEB'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Deb, Preston, and Sarah eat at the dinner table.

SARAH
And we got to change reading
partners, and I got Claire!

PRESTON
That's great, honey!

SARAH
And then Mommy forgot me!

Preston looks up, surprised.

PRESTON
What?

SARAH
At school!

DEB
I didn't forget you. I was a little
late picking her up. My car got
towed.

PRESTON
Towed?

DEB
It was my fault. I parked in the
wrong spot downtown, but it's at
the garage near work.

PRESTON
You're okay?

DEB
Yeah. Yeah, it was-- it was a
stupid mistake. If you can drive me
in, I'll walk over and pick it up
at lunch tomorrow.

SARAH
Stupid.

DEB
Honey, don't say stupid.

SARAH
You said it.

DEB
Well, I shouldn't have. I meant
unfortunate. It was an *unfortunate*
mistake.

PRESTON
I'll drive you in.

INT. HOSPITAL PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Deb finishes a set with the medicine ball.

KENDRA
You're lookin' strong today! Give
me one more set!

Deb lifts the ball over her head and begins the next set. As she looks in the mirror, she sees Ransom in the reflection.

Ransom works out with his THERAPIST, catches Deb's gaze in the mirror. Their eyes lock. Deb looks away and tries to refocus on the set.

EXT. MEDICAL COMPLEX - LATER

As Deb walks out of the PT office, Ransom stands by the door. He walks alongside her.

RANSOM
I want to show you something.

DEB
I have to pick up my car.

RANSOM
(pointing just ahead)
I'm parked right there. Just twenty
minutes.

DEB
I really have to--

RANSOM
I'll drive you over after.

DEB
But I--

RANSOM

You know, we spend all these nights
with you falling asleep on my chest
and then you go home to your
family. Don't I get twenty minutes?

Deb's PHONE RINGS and she looks down.

INSERT DEB POV

The screen reads "PRESTON CALLING"

BACK TO SCENE

DEB

Twenty minutes.

Ransom smiles and walks her to his car.

INT. PRESTON'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Preston's phone, mounted to the dashboard, is on speakerphone
as he drives. We hear a VOICEMAIL BEEP.

PRESTON (ON PHONE)

Hey! Listen, I took off work early.
I'm bringing you lunch and we can
go pick up your car together, OK?

Preston hangs up, parks on the street outside the medical
building. He reaches to get the food, looks up to see...

INSERT PRESTON POV

Through the truck window, Preston watches as Deb gets in
Ransom's car and they drive off.

BACK TO SCENE

Preston, shocked, follows in his truck.

EXT. STREET - A FEW MINUTES LATER

ESTABLISHING. Antique Mall. Ransom's car is parked near the
entrance. The parking lot is full.

INT. ANTIQUE MALL - CONTINUOUS

Ransom holds Deb's hand as they navigate the aisles filled
with VENDORS and CUSTOMERS.

RANSOM

How'd your car get towed?

DEB

I don't wanna talk about it. What are we doing here?

RANSOM

Come with me.

Ransom walks her to a booth toward the center. He stops her and stares directly into Deb's eyes.

RANSOM (CONT'D)

I know that you don't know what you want. And that's okay. But I truly want you to be happy.

DEB

I just--

RANSOM

I saw something and I thought of you. Remember the other night? When you played that recording? Well...

Ransom walks her to the counter where a vendor, CHARLIE (man, 70s), sits. Charlie looks up and smiles when he sees them.

RANSOM (CONT'D)

You still got it?

CHARLIE

Wasn't sure you were coming back. Yeah. It's still here.

He sets a violin case on the counter.

RANSOM

It's the perfect time to try something new. To listen to your heart. You want to play the violin? Learn to play the violin. Deb? Deb?

Transfixed, Deb runs her fingers along the case.

INT. BUS DEPOT - LATER - 2 YEARS AGO

IN SEPIA:

Nora, amid a throng of TRAVELERS, sets down her violin case and runs her fingers over it. She undoes the clasp, opens it.

INT. ANTIQUE MALL - PRESENT - CONTINUOUS

IN COLOR:

Deb opens the case and picks up the violin and bow.

INT. BUS DEPOT - 2 YEARS AGO - CONTINUOUS

IN SEPIA:

As PASSENGERS hurry by and buses come and go, Nora tunes the violin and tucks it under her chin.

INT. ANTIQUE MALL - PRESENT - CONTINUOUS

IN COLOR:

Deb, as if compelled by Nora, plucks a string, adjusts the tuning, and tucks the violin under her chin.

INT. BUS DEPOT - 2 YEARS AGO - CONTINUOUS

IN SEPIA:

Nora draws her bow across the strings and begins to play an original composition. Equal parts rock and classical, the notes fill the depot as her fingers move at a ferocious pace.

INT. ANTIQUE MALL - PRESENT - CONTINUOUS

IN COLOR:

Deb draws the bow across the strings as music fills the air.

DEB AND NORA PLAY THE SAME PIECE CONNECTED ACROSS TIME.

INT. BUS DEPOT - 2 YEARS AGO - CONTINUOUS

IN SEPIA:

A CROWD has gathered as Nora finishes the piece, triumphantly removing her bow from the strings as the last notes hang in the air.

Spontaneous APPLAUSE erupts. Nora looks down at her feet, where her violin case sits, NOW FULL OF CASH AND CHANGE.

INT. ANTIQUE MALL - PRESENT - CONTINUOUS

IN COLOR:

A CROWD has gathered as Deb finishes the piece, triumphantly removing her bow from the strings as the last notes hang in the air.

The crowd is applauding, but Deb can't hear a thing. Her world is silent as she tries to grasp what has just happened.

Deb gets her bearings. Ransom stands, confused. From the crowd emerges Preston. His eyes meet Deb's. The crowd disperses.

PRESTON

(to Deb)

Who are you?

Deb looks at Preston, at Ransom, then back down at the violin, equally in shock. She sets the violin down on the counter, backs up, then turns and bolts.

Preston tries to follow, but runs into a COUPLE. By the time he gets around them, she's lost in the crowd.

EXT. ANTIQUE MALL ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Deb bursts through an EXIT DOOR and into the alley. She turns and then runs into someone. When she steps back, she sees a surprised-looking Kendra.

KENDRA

Whoa! Deb? Hey!

(chuckling)

Well, fancy running into you here!

DEB

(still in shock)

I'm-- what are you doing here?

Kendra smiles and proudly flashes a new PURSE.

KENDRA

Just picked up an early birthday present to myself! You like it? I know a guy that works in that new boutique down the street and...

(concerned)

Hey, are you okay? You look a little wobbly.

DEB
(crying)
I don't know. I don't know
anything. I was--

Deb starts to panic, and Kendra pulls her into a hug.

KENDRA
Hey! Hey! It's alright. Everything
is going to be okay.

Deb puts her head on Kendra's shoulder and cries. Kendra looks around, pulls a SYRINGE from her new bag, and STABS Deb in the neck.

Deb's eyes open wide for a second before she collapses, unconscious, into Kendra's arms.

A VAN pulls into the alley. Kendra drags Deb inside, quickly scans the alley, slams the door, and they pull away.

END CREDITS ROLL.

BLOWFISH

"PILOT"

Written by
A.D. Hasselbring

COLD OPEN

EXT. PURE RESTAURANT - SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

BLACK AND WHITE.

ESTABLISHING. A busy restaurant with a line of well-heeled PATRONS spilling out the door. Modern architecture, overlooking the water. Busy VALETS park luxury cars. The sign above the door says: "pure."

INT. PURE RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM CONTINUOUS

The all-white, fine dining interior has bustling WAITERS serving elegant plates of food. Every table is filled. Over the RUMBLE of TALKING and LAUGHING DINERS, we hear the CLINKING OF SILVERWARE and the POP of a CHAMPAGNE BOTTLE. This is THE PLACE to see and be seen.

INT. PURE RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Flashes of FIRE pop up from skillets as the busy LINE cooks work. The sounds of PANS being set down, SIZZLING, CHOPPING, etc. fill the kitchen. A WAITER yells over the counter.

WAITER

Come on, man! I need those scallops!
Table five's order is dying on the
pass out here!

LINE COOK

Scallops heard! Firing scallops!

WAITER

(frustrated)
Fine - I'm taking it. I'm trailing the
scallops but they're already mad and
this is a huge table. Get it done!

The Waiter takes the order from the pass and exits to the dining room.

LINE COOK 2

(frantically cooking, to Line
Cook)
Where the hell is Fish, man?

LINE COOK

(cooking the scallops)
I don't know. He should be running the
pass.

LINE COOK 2
We're in the weeds. We need him out here!

LINE COOK
(turns the skillet handle)
Here. Finish searing these and don't screw it up. I'll find Fish.

INT. PURE RESTAURANT - SAN FRANCISCO - BATHROOM - DAY

Inside the bathroom sits FISH (30s, cocky). His chef's whites have platinum Chrome Hearts studs instead of buttons.

He stares down at a striped SEABASS, partially wrapped, with a gaping gash that reveals a "stuffing" of tiny baggies filled with cocaine.

A LINE COOK KNOCKS on the bathroom door.

LINE COOK
Chef! Chef! We're backing up out here... And the servers keep asking if you want the white china tonight for the VIP party.

Fish looks toward the door.

LINE COOK (CONT'D)
Chef?
(tone changing, with concern)
Fish! What's goin' on, man? Are you alright?

Fish looks back down at the drug-filled dead fish.

LINE COOK (CONT'D)
Fish...

The seabass looks up at Fish and speaks.

SEABASS
What? You think just because he said "Fish" he's talking to me? That's so species-ist. Besides, that's your nickname. Not mine.

Fish's eyes grow wide.

MATCH CUT TO:

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. LONG JOHN SILVER'S - SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDWEST - DAY

COLOR.

CLOSE UP. The same eyes, 3 years later.

Reveal Fish, now a fry cook at Long John Silver's. He wearily lowers a BASKET of french fries into the deep fryer.

Behind him, at the counter by the cash register, a MOM holding a BABY slams down a TRAY OF FULL-SIZED CARROTS.

A kids' BIRTHDAY PARTY RAGES nearby.

The mom LOUDLY COMPLAINS to an employee, MELODY (college age, sexiest girl in town, sickly sweet, and dumb as a post).

MOM

(shaking a carrot)

You can't be serious. There's no way a three year old can eat this.

MELODY

(nodding, but already lost)

Umm, those are carrots.

MOM

I know they're carrots. And I asked for *baby* carrots.

MELODY

I don't know how old the carrots are.

The mom bounces the FUSSY BABY and tries to stay calm.

MOM

You've got to be kidding me. I get them here all the time. They come in a sealed green baggie with five or six carrots inside. *Baby* carrots.

MELODY

(genuinely confused)

Yeah, this is my first kid's party.

MOM

(becoming irritated)

This is bigger than my kid's arm.

MELODY

OK, umm, I'm starting to think this might be partially our fault.

The BABY starts to CRY and the mom bounces it on her hip.

MOM

I'm sorry. I need to speak to a manager.

MELODY

Oh, Hank's not here right now, but he should be back soon.

Manager HANK (50, but thinks he's 20) pulls up in a CORVETTE, visible through the front window. He parks sideways in the handicapped spot and enters the restaurant.

MELODY (CONT'D)

Oh! Here he is now!
(waving excitedly)
Hi, Hank!

Hank flashes Melody a smile and walks over to her.

The mom puts a PACIFIER in the baby's mouth.

HANK

Well, hi, there, beautiful. What's up?

MELODY

(motioning to the mom)
Ummm, so this lady feels *really* strongly about carrots.

HANK

(to the mom)
What seems to be the problem?

MOM

Well, these carrots *seem* to be the size of a tree and apparently nobody knows how to make them any smaller.

The BABY CRIES again.

HANK

We're out of baby carrots, so we are substituting carrot sticks.

MOM

But these aren't carrot sticks!

HANK
Unfortunately, we are out of carrot sticks.

MOM
Then cut some more!

The baby's CRIES turn to SCREAMS.

Fish stares, appalled and irritated by the whole situation.

HANK
Yeah, those are cut using one of our slicers, and the prep crew that handles that is gone for the day.

MOM
Use a knife.

HANK
We use a machine.

MOM
But you have a knife sitting right there!

HANK
Ma'am--

Mom "Lion Kings" the SCREAMING baby in Hank's face.

In a flash of frustration, Fish yanks the BASKET out of the fryer and walks up to the counter.

He takes the TRAY OF CARROTS, spins the knife skillfully, and effortlessly juliennes the carrots in seconds.

He puts the tray of carrots back on the counter.

MOM
Wow.

MELODY
You're, like, a Long John Silver Samurai!

MOM
THANK you.

The mom takes the carrots and walks back to her table. Hank is seething but trying not to show it.

MELODY

(to Hank)

I need a break.

HANK

OK, sweetheart.

Melody slips out the back door for a smoke.

Hank waits until Melody leaves, glaring at Fish, who turns his back and goes back to the fryer. Hank pursues Fish.

Through the back window, we see Melody smoking.

Tightly gripping his KEYCHAIN, Hank gestures angrily at Fish.

HANK (CONT'D)

Don't you ever try that again or you'll be cleaning grease traps for the rest of your natural life! You're a fry cook. You don't touch a knife unless you're told to!

Hank angrily hangs his KEYS on a HOOK by the register, then storms off toward the back door.

The KEYS SWING back and forth. Fish looks at them, looks away, looks at the keys again.

Hank is distracted, sharing a smoke outside with Melody.

Fish again eyes the swaying keys. He can't resist.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

FROM ABOVE - Fish speeds along in Hank's Corvette.

INT. CORVETTE - CONTINUOUS

Fish presses the accelerator. The speedometer hits 90 mph.

AHA'S "TAKE ON ME" PLAYS. Fish listens with disgust.

FISH

No, no, no, no...

He scans the radio for something cooler and settles on THE EAGLES' "LIFE IN THE FAST LANE."

He smiles, floors it, and the speedometer tops 100 mph.

TITLE SEQUENCE ROLLS.

EXT. THE SAME COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT - LATER

Fish, wounded but alright, sits next to the upside-down Corvette.

With him are KEISHA, his FBI handler (20s, smart, tough) and her partner EDDIE (40s, tough cop, impatient).

KEISHA
(to Fish)
You can't keep doing this.

FISH
Actually, I think I'm getting pretty good at it!

KEISHA
Fish--

FISH
Maybe it's the constant fear of being murdered. Keeps me on my toes.

EDDIE
Now we're gonna have to move you again, and every time we do it gets harder.

FISH
(yelling)
Are you insane? Do you think I want to be here? I had ten cars nicer than this one, and you've got me driving a Subaru! A SUBARU!

Fish flips out and starts kicking the totaled Corvette.

EDDIE
(smirking)
See, this is why we can't give you nice things.

Fish charges Eddie and takes a swing at him. Before he can connect, Keisha has him on the ground in a headlock.

KEISHA
Hey! You're in witness protection. We call the shots now, seafood boy. You do as you're told.

EDDIE

We could kill him right here and nobody would know.

KEISHA

Not worth the paperwork, Eddie.

EDDIE

Always gotta do it the hard way.

Keisha hoists Fish up and puts him into her car's back seat.

A tow truck approaches.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

I'll call in a DOA and clean up here, Keisha.

KEISHA

Thanks. I'll get this idiot back to the safe house.

EDDIE

If this guy wasn't the key to a multi billion dollar drug takedown, I swear it wouldn't be worth keeping him alive.

KEISHA

Well, he's a pain in the ass for sure.

Keisha turns back to her car and gets into the driver's seat.

INT. KEISHA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Keisha adjusts the rearview mirror.

INSERT KEISHA POV

In the mirror, Fish looks at her, smiles, shrugs, and laughs.

FISH

Sorry, Kiki.

BACK TO SCENE

Keisha laughs, shakes her head, turns around to face Fish.

KEISHA

Fish, baby, you gotta pull it together.

FISH

I thought you liked me in the back seat of your car.

KEISHA

Every time we get you placed somewhere, you do this. It keeps getting harder to fix it, and it's just going to be worse for you.

FISH

(laughing)

Worse for me? Are you serious? I'm a fry cook at Long John Silver's in the middle of nowhere! How much worse can it get?

Keisha smiles. Fish's eyes widen.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ONE EYED WILLY'S - HELLTOWN, OHIO - 3 DAYS LATER - DAY

Keisha and Fish stand in front of One Eyed Willy's, a pirate-themed restaurant in the middle of nowhere.

They see a small, dilapidated building that used to be a Big Boy restaurant. The "BIG BOY" outside has been modified to wear an eye patch and pirate uniform.

A flashing neon "OPEN" sign dominates the front of the restaurant. A kiddie-sized COIN-OP PIRATE "RIDE" by the door turns on at random intervals, SQUEAKING and saying "AAARGH!"

High atop the restaurant is a crow's nest, overlooking miles of miles of cornfields and not much else.

KEISHA

Welcome to Helltown, Ohio.

FISH

Hellt-- you're joking, right?

KEISHA

Nope. This is your new home.

She hands him an Ohio state ID and a couple of papers.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

You're Brody Campbell.

FISH

Brody Campbell?

KEISHA

Uh-huh.

FISH

I'm Brody Campbell, and I'm a cook at a restaurant called One Eyed Willy's in Helltown, Ohio?!

KEISHA

(laughs)

Nope. You're a busboy at a restaurant called One Eyed Willy's in Helltown, Ohio.

The ride turns on and we hear "AAARGH!" Fish makes a face.

FISH

It smells like a tackle box.

KEISHA

I'm pretty sure that's you, big shot.

FISH

How does everyone not get food poisoning at these places?

KEISHA

You're about to find out.

Keisha hands Fish a CELL PHONE.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

Here's your new burner. There's a text from Eddie with the address of the motel we've got you at. It's south of here, about 2 miles down the road.

Keisha looks directly at Fish.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

If you screw this up, your next job in food preparation will be sorting through scraps at the city dump. You got it?

FISH

Got it.

She grabs Fish forcefully by the hair on the back of his head and kisses him hard, then turns and walks back to her car.

FISH (CONT'D)

Hey, how do I get to the motel?

KEISHA
(over her shoulder)
Well, you didn't like the Subaru,
right?

FISH
Right...

Keisha gets into her car and slams the door.

KEISHA
(through the open window)
Good. I got rid of it.
(starts the car)
You're walking!

Keisha peels out of the parking lot. Fish watches the CLOUD OF DUST on the empty road.

INSERT FISH POV

Fish looks down at his Ohio state ID with his picture and the name Brody Campbell on it.

In the background, we hear another SQUEAK and "AAARGH!"

CUT TO:

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S - DAY

Fish is caught in a hug from OTIS (50s, lovable, jolly), the owner of One Eyed Willy's.

OTIS
It's so nice to have you "on board!"
Just a little ship humor.
(laughs)
We're one big, happy family here at
One Eyed Willy's! I'm Otis, the
captain of this here ship. There are
no small jobs here, no siree! Without
our new bus-matey to swab the deck,
we'd be lost at sea! Nice to have you
aboard!

Otis releases Fish.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Anything you need, you just let me
know, alright?

Fish nods and looks around the main dining room. It is a garish mess of pirate-themed kitsch.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Hey! I got a joke for ya'! Where do
you find a pirate who's lost his
wooden leg?

Fish is dumbfounded.

OTIS (CONT'D)
Right where ya' left him!
(laughing at his own joke)
Right where ya' left him! I love that
one. Right where ya' left him.

Otis exits, revealing DANI (11, female, smart, sharp-tongued,
independent) seated at the hostess stand.

DANI
(to Fish)
Otis is a hugger.

FISH
Yeah, I noticed.

DANI
I never hug people. Especially white
males.

FISH
Alright.

DANI
There's a 6.3% chance that any adult
white male you meet over the age of
thirty is a pedophile.

FISH
Yeah, well, I'm not a pedophile.

DANI
That's exactly what a pedophile would
say.

FISH
(stunned, pauses)
Who ARE you?

DANI
I'm Dani. Otis's kid.

FISH
You call your dad Otis? What kid does
that?

DANI
(matter-of-factly)
I was basically raised by the internet. My dad owns a restaurant where he wears an eye patch and talks like a pirate, and I literally live in a town called Hell. You grow up quick.

FISH
You're a disturbing child.

DANI
And you're pretty judgemental for a busboy.

FISH
And you're pretty mouthy for a little kid.

DANI
I'm 11.

FISH
Yeah, well, that makes you a little kid.

DANI
How would you like it if I called you an old guy?

FISH
How would you like it if I grind you up, throw you in the blender, and make an aioli out of you?

DANI
It'd never work. Human flesh would be much better braised into a confit.

Fish pauses in admiration and disbelief, staring at Dani.

FISH
Is everyone around here like you?

DANI
Otis says I'm one of a kind.

Fish looks up from Dani and stares at a large swordfish mounted on the wall across from the dining room.

FISH
Is this place for real?

DANI

One Eyed Willy's is gonna be the largest pirate-themed seafood franchise in the Midwest.

FISH

How many locations do you have?

DANI

Just this one. But Otis says you gotta start somewhere.

The swinging doors to the kitchen fly open as RIDLEY, the head chef (30s, boy band reject) bursts into the dining room.

RIDLEY

That kitchen is a disaster area! Where the hell's the paprika? And where the hell's that new busboy?

FISH

Umm, I guess that's me.

RIDLEY

You're a little old for a busboy.

FISH

Yeah, I've already been through that with the kid.

RIDLEY

What's your name?

FISH

Brody. Brody Campbell.

RIDLEY

And what do you call that, Campbell? A soul patch?

FISH

What?

RIDLEY

That hair! Under your lip! Is that like, a planned facial hair configuration or are you just woefully negligent in your hygiene?

FISH

I haven't shaved for a couple of days.

RIDLEY

Yeah, well it makes you look like my grandmother! At the end of her life. When she just stopped caring. Shave it!

FISH

What?

RIDLEY

Shave it or find a new place to work!

FISH

(grumbling)

Alright.

RIDLEY

Hey! I wanna hear a "Yes, chef!" from you! Whenever I tell you something, you say "Yes, chef!"

FISH

Yeah.

RIDLEY

I'm sorry - what?!

FISH

(through clenched teeth)

Yes... chef.

RIDLEY

Good. Now get to work. We open in one hour and this place is a wreck! Nikki!!!!!!

NIKKI (late 20s, beautiful, all business) looks up from a table where she's been working on a LEDGER and hurries over.

NIKKI

Coming, babe.

RIDLEY

Look at this place!

NIKKI

I know. We'll get it done.

Ridley turns, shoves the DOORS, and stalks into the kitchen.

Nikki motions at the tables behind her, covered in DISHES.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

(to Fish)

We didn't get these tables cleared last night, so looks like that'll be your initiation. We need them turned over in the next fifteen minutes. Welcome aboard.

Nikki motions to ALICE (waitress, early 20s, scattered).

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Alice, this is Brody. Show him the ropes.

Alice nods as Nikki exits to the kitchen.

FISH

That guy is a piece of work.

ALICE

He's a little moody, but he's a good chef.

DANI

The Cuyahoga Valley Times called Chef Ridley the Bobby Flay of North Central Ohio.

Alice puts silverware on clean tables. Fish surveys the crusty dishes, stopping his gaze at the mounted swordfish.

SWORDFISH

Hey! What do you call a pirate with two arms and two legs?

Fish stares at the talking swordfish.

SWORDFISH (CONT'D)

A rookie!

The swordfish bursts into laughter.

CUT TO:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - DAY

A "Route 66 Motel" sign towers over the parking lot.

Next to the motel is a recreation of the "Largest Catsup Bottle in the World" water tower.

Eddie and Keisha sit in their cars, each car pointed a different direction, talking to each other.

KEISHA

You bugged the room?

EDDIE

Yeah, I put all six in. You headed back to Columbus?

KEISHA

Yeah, I'll make sure he's settled in before I take off.

EDDIE

He's gonna think you're sweet on him.

KEISHA

Please. I just don't want to have to come back and drag his ass outta here.

Eddie smiles and drives off. Keisha parks by room 132.

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S MAIN DINING ROOM - DAY

Lunch service is in full swing. Fish is CLEARING TABLES.

NIKKI

Campbell!

(pause)

Campbell! Hey! Swabby!

(pause)

Bus-matey!

Fish finally looks up.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

What the matter? You don't know your own name?

FISH

Sorry.

NIKKI

We got a spill on seven. Go grab some towels out of the kitchen.

FISH

Yeah, OK.

Fish turns to the kitchen and almost collides with Alice, carrying a FULL TRAY.

ALICE

Whoa!

NIKKI

Campbell, wake up!

FISH

(frustrated)

Sorry.

Fish exits to the kitchen.

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ridley is cooking up a storm.

FISH

Towels for cleanup?

RIDLEY

(barely looking up)

By the blast chiller.

Fish goes to a CLOSET and opens it to reveal a sleeping POSSUM hanging upside down from a bar. Fish SLAMS the door.

FISH

Son of a--

He grabs a BROOM and goes to wallop the possum. Ridley runs and jerks the broom away from him.

RIDLEY

What are you doing?!

FISH

That's the biggest damn rat I've ever seen! I'm going to kill it!

RIDLEY

That's not a rat, you idiot. That's my ESR.

FISH

Your what?

RIDLEY

My ESR. My emotional support rodent.
Take your towels and get out of my
kitchen. What kind of heartless
monster are you?

Ridley throws a handful of TOWELS at Fish's chest and then
comforts the possum.

Fish turns and bumps into NOSTRADAMUS (scraggly, dirty, cross
between Old McDonald and Gary Busey).

NOSTRADAMUS

Three things.

FISH

What?

NOSTRADAMUS

First, always keep your head on a
swivel. Second, put this in your
pocket. You'll need it later.

He hands Fish a ZIPLOC BAG full of bacon.

NOSTRADAMUS (CONT'D)

And last, count to five.

FISH

I'm sorry?

NOSTRADAMUS

At the post office, before you cross
the street, count to ten.

Nostradamus exits as Dani enters.

FISH

(to Dani)
Who was that?

DANI

He supplies our corn. Quite a
character, Nostradamus.

FISH

You're kidding.

Fish holds an armful of towels and baggie of bacon.

DANI

Nikki needs you to clean up 7. There's a two year old who thinks he's Jackson Pollock.

CUT TO:

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S MAIN DINING ROOM- DAY

At the end of his shift, Fish cleans off a table.

OTIS

Well, matey, you did it! First service under your belt! Tell you what. It's 2:30 now. Why don't you take a little break, and we'll see you back here for dinner service in three hours.

FISH

Yeah, OK.

EXT. ONE EYED WILLY'S - CONTINUOUS

Fish steps outside to find a STRAY, MANGY DOG staring at him.

FISH

Go on, get out of here.

The dog doesn't move and lets out a LOW GROWL. Fish growls back. The dog bites into the cuff of Fish's pants, shaking it back and forth until Fish falls to the ground.

FISH (CONT'D)

Here!

He pulls the bag of bacon from his pocket, tosses it, and the dog goes after it. Fish stands and dusts himself off.

Nearby, several LOCALS look up at the crow's nest, where a CANADIAN FLAG has appeared. JIMMY (50s, good ol' boy, shirtless, drunk) LOUDLY SINGS "OH, CANADA."

Alice runs by Fish toward the commotion.

FISH (CONT'D)

(to Alice)

Hey, who's that?

ALICE

Oh, that's just Jimmy.

FISH
Large Canadian faction here in
Helltown?

ALICE
Oh, he's not Canadian. Pamela Anderson
is.

FISH
Pamela Anderson?

ALICE
Happens every time he starts drinking
during a Baywatch marathon. We'll get
him down by dinner service.

We hear the SQUEAK and "AARGH" of the ride out front.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - A FEW MINUTES LATER

A rickety pickup truck carrying pumpkins zips by. Fish tries to hitchhike. The DRIVER doesn't even look at him.

The truck hits a bump in the road. A pumpkin bounces out and crash lands at Fish's feet, spilling seeds onto his shoes.

Fish stares down and tries to clean his shoe. He looks up to see the mangy dog sitting in front of him, panting happily.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATER - DAY

Followed by the dog, Fish reaches the intersection across from the motel. A large SIGN reads "HELLTOWN POST OFFICE AND BAIT SHOP."

He starts to step off the sidewalk and the dog BARKS LOUDLY.

He begins to step off the sidewalk again and the dog lets loose with 3 FEROCIOUS BARKS IN A ROW. Fish looks at the dog.

FISH
(screaming)
I don't have any more bacon, OK?
That's all that old guy gave me.

Fish looks at the sign, then at the dog. He lifts his foot to step off the curb and the dog lets loose on a BARKING JAG.

FISH (CONT'D)
Alright! Alright! Alright!
(counting angrily at the dog)
One, two, three, four, fi--

At the gas station next door, the PUMPKIN TRUCK DRIVER drops a CIGARETTE, igniting his FUEL TANK. He runs as the truck EXPLODES, covering the road in PUMPKIN DEBRIS. A METAL SHARD whisks by, embedding itself in the post office wall where Fish would have been.

Fish looks at the dog, then at the commotion across the street as PEOPLE douse the fire with EXTINGUISHERS.

The CAMERA PANS OUT as Fish carefully crosses the street. The happy pup follows.

CUT TO:

INT. ROUTE 66 MOTEL ROOM 132 - LATER

The interior of the DATED MOTEL ROOM is covered in Route 66 KITSCH. There is MEMORABILIA everywhere you look.

Fish is in bed. Keisha is getting dressed. Keisha leans over and kisses Fish tenderly.

FISH
So you're done punishing me?

KEISHA
Oh, baby, you'll know when I'm
punishing you.

FISH
This place looks like where the
fifties came to die.

KEISHA
It's quaint.

FISH
It's called the Route 66 Motel.

KEISHA
Yeah?

FISH
Route 66 doesn't run through Ohio!
You'd have to drive hundreds of miles
just to get to Route 66!

KEISHA

So?

Fish grandly gestures at the room's decor.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

There's an Eifel Tower in Vegas.

FISH

Not the same thing.

KEISHA

You thought you'd get the Four Seasons when you entered witness protection?

FISH

I'm just saying between this and a chef that owns a possum, I'm not sure what you expect me to do.

KEISHA

I *expect* you to keep your head down, bus tables, and stay alive.

FISH

(disgusted)
Chef Ridley. I honestly don't know how he manages to put out any food.

KEISHA

You're a snob about cooking.

FISH

He keeps a possum in the kitchen!

KEISHA

Head down, bus tables, and help me keep you alive. Understand?

He nods. They kiss. Keisha sets the FBI BUGS on the table.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

I pulled Eddie's bugs. Here you go. Be sure he hears something interesting.

Keisha opens the door. The dog sits panting just outside.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

When did you get a dog?

FISH

Not my dog.

Keisha drives away. Fish grabs a Route 66 ASHTRAY and smashes the bugs. The dog looks on. Fish SLAMS the door.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Alice bursts through the kitchen door.

ALICE
They're here!

FISH
(to Dani)
Who?

The entire staff begins to rush out to the dining room.

DANI
Bogies in the Boonies!

OTIS
They're early.

DANI
Helltown is the final stop on The
Haunted Towns of Ohio tour.

ALICE
First they try to find Old Sally's
ghost and then they come by here for
the all you can eat buffet.

OTIS
It's a big money maker. Batten down
the hatches!

Fish follows the staff into the dining room.

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S MAIN DINING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

The LARGE GROUP swarms around Alice and the buffet.

ALICE
Oh, no.

Nikki looks at Fish.

NIKKI
(to Fish)
Get in there and help.

Fish immediately pulls tables together for the large group.

He grabs a TUB OF DISHES, turns, bumps into a CUSTOMER, and sends the dishes onto the floor with a loud CRASH.

Nikki stares at Fish. Nostradamus sits in a booth nearby.

NOSTRADAMUS
(leaning down to Fish)
Didn't I tell you to keep your head on
a swivel?

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S KITCHEN - LATER

Fish walks in with the tub of dishes. Nikki glares at him.

RIDLEY
(to Nikki)
Are you questioning my expertise?

NIKKI
Of course not. But our customers are
pretty set in their ways.

RIDLEY
I know what works and what doesn't,
and this is tonight's special.

NIKKI
Fish satay?

Fish winces and groans a little at the smell.

RIDLEY
(to Fish)
Don't you have somewhere to be?

Fish dumps the dishes in the sink and exits.

RIDLEY (CONT'D)
It's Thai.

NIKKI
It's fish with peanut butter.

RIDLEY
It's fusion!

Alice enters.

ALICE
Table nine wants to meet the chef.

RIDLEY

See?

Ridley and Alice exit the kitchen. Nikki follows.

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S MAIN DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MRS. JOHNSTON (elderly, spunky) sits with her FAMILY.

RIDLEY

(flattered)

Enjoying your meal?

MRS. JOHNSTON

(sharply)

What is this supposed to be?

RIDLEY

Fish satay. Tonight's special.

MRS. JOHNSTON

Honey, it ain't special. It's fried fish with melted peanut butter. It's God awful.

ALICE

Uh-oh.

NIKKI

(to Alice)

Get the possum!

Alice quickly exits.

RIDLEY

Perhaps your palate...

MRS. JOHNSTON

My plate isn't the problem. It's what's on my plate.

RIDLEY

Not your plate, your palate. That's...

MRS. JOHNSTON

This thing is a soggy, sorry mess. There is nothin' that you can tell me about fryin' fish that I haven't known for the last sixty years. Now take this thing in there and bring me fried catfish.

Exit Ridley, on the verge of a breakdown.

NIKKI
(to the customer)
Of course, ma'am. I'll bring it out
right away.

MRS. JOHNSTON
Just a mess.

NIKKI
Yes, ma'am. Campbell!

When Fish doesn't respond, she walks over to him.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Look, I don't know how things worked
where you came from, but when I call
your name, you better come running.
You got that?

Fish follows her back to the kitchen with the PLATES.

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

As Fish and Nikki enter, Ridley is cuddling his possum,
having what looks like a manic episode.

RIDLEY
That's it! I can't work like this!

NIKKI
Ridley--

RIDLEY
No! I can't do it! I try to bring a
little bit of culture to this place
and they scrape my food into the
trash! Into the trash!!! They don't
deserve my food.

Ridley frantically strokes his ESR.

NIKKI
Ridley--

RIDLEY
No. That's it. If you all know so much
about food, why don't you just do it
yourself? We quit! We quit!

Ridley storms out with his possum. Nikki follows. Dani and
Otis enter. Everyone is stunned.

OTIS
What's the matter?

FISH
You just lost your chef. And his
possum.

NIKKI
Why don't you just focus on not
breaking any more dishes on your first
day, *bus-matey*? Now go take some
waters over to the Bogies in the
Boonies table.

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S MAIN DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Fish storms out. He stops by the CASH REGISTER. Slams his
DISH RAG DOWN. The register pops open with a DING.

Ready to self-destruct, he flips through the cash drawer.

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dani peeks through the SLIGHTLY AJAR kitchen door.

INSERT DANI POV

Fish with his hand inside the open cash register.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dani is looking out the SLIGHTLY AJAR door.

OTIS

Dani! Time to hoist the mizzen!
Everything ship-shape?

DANI

(still looking at Fish)
Ship shape, Otis.

Dani SHUTS the kitchen door.

DANI (CONT'D)

Be back in a sec. I'd better check to
see how many tickets we have going.

Dani exits the kitchen.

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S MAIN DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dani approaches the register and OPENS it.

INSERT DANI POV

The open drawer is still filled with CASH.

BACK TO SCENE

Dani flips through it. All there. She smiles.

She looks toward the Bogies in the Boonies table, where Fish
is diligently handing out GLASSES OF WATER.

He finishes and approaches the kitchen.

DANI

Thought maybe we'd scared you off.

FISH

I don't scare so easy. It's a pirate's
life for me. What's the plan?

DANI

Nikki's calling Harley from The Shrimp
Hut. He fills in when Ridley quits.

FISH
This happen a lot?

DANI
A couple times a month.

FISH
This just gets better and better.

DANI
What do you mean?

FISH
A chef like Ridley would never last
where I come from.

DANI
Ridley's family. Family means you
always have another chance.

FISH
Not if Otis wants One Eyed Willy's to
be a real franchise.

DANI
We need Ridley. He's a name in the
family friendly themed fast casual
seafood industry. If word got out he
wasn't running the kitchen any more,
One Eyed Willy's would lose its cache.

FISH
Still...

DANI
Besides, some things are more
important. People make mistakes, but
you don't just throw them away. You do
that, and you'll end up all alone.
Even I know that.

Fish is silent. Nikki enters from the office, passes by.

NIKKI
Kitchen. Now.

CUT TO:

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Otis, Dani, Nikki, Alice, and Fish all stare down at a
disgusting TRAY of fish satay.

NIKKI

So Harley's out of town and we can't serve this.

ALICE

Maybe we should close down early.

OTIS

Strike the colors? Never! I can handle the kitchen.

Dani, Nikki, and Alice share a knowing, horrified look.

NIKKI

Oh. Wow. That's so great of you to offer, but--

OTIS

Perfect. Dani will run the pass and I'll man the galley. I'll get changed.

Otis smiles and joyfully exits to the dining room.

ALICE

He can't--

NIKKI

I know.

DANI

We need to stall.

NIKKI

Everyone get back to serving.

No one moves.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Go!

CUT TO:

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S MAIN DINING ROOM- LATER

The room is PACKED. ROY LEE (A regular in his 80s) flags Alice over to his table.

ALICE

(running up with a tray)
You need some more waters, Roy Lee?

ROY LEE

No, honey, we need some food!

ALICE

I know. I'm sorry. Things are taking a little longer to come out today.

ROY LEE

Oh.

(quietly)

Is Ridley takin' some possum time?

ALICE

Well, Ridley's actually not--

ROY LEE

(alarmed)

Wait just a gosh darn second. Otis ain't back there again, is he?

ALICE

Well--

The WHOLE TABLE quickly stands along with half the CUSTOMERS in the restaurant. Nikki and Dani walk in as they pack up.

Roy Lee quickly plops down a few DOLLARS on the table.

ROY LEE

That's for you, honey. We'll be back when Ridley's back in.

Roy Lee and the others quickly exit en masse out the front door. We hear a MUFFLED "AAARGH" in the background.

Fish clears water cups from the now empty tables.

ALICE

(to Nikki)

Hey, Nikki...

NIKKI

Yeah, I know.

ALICE

We have to get him out of there.

NIKKI

It's OK. We have a plan.

ALICE

What about the food he's already cooked? We can't serve that--

Otis exits the kitchen, walks to the group. Fish clears the table next to them.

OTIS
Did you find it yet, Nikki?

NIKKI
No! I looked everywhere!

DANI
For what?

OTIS
The oil! We're almost out in the fryer
and we can't find the refill!

FISH
Isn't there--

Nikki gives Fish a look of absolute death.

ALICE
(catching on)
Oooooohhh. Yeah, that is a problem.

OTIS
Guess I'll have to run to the market.

DANI
Can't. Sold out. I checked.

OTIS
Wow! Well, I could run over to
Parkerville.

NIKKI, DANI, AND ALICE
Great!

OTIS
But that's an hour away, and we do
have a lot of food still ready to go.

DANI
It sure would be embarrassing if we
ran out, though.

NIKKI
She's right. Better not chance it.

OTIS
Of course. You're right. I'll shove
off and get back as soon as I can.

Otis exits.

NIKKI
Bon voyage!

DANI
Happy sailing!

ALICE
Thank God.

The three look at Fish.

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Alice, Dani, and Nikki know the routine. Fish stands by.

NIKKI
(to Fish)
Dump those fryers.

FISH
What?

NIKKI
Dump 'em. We've got two hours.

FISH
What are we doing?

DANI
Otis can't taste a thing.

ALICE
And his food is awful.

NIKKI
If we don't do something, we'll lose
this entire dinner service.

They dump the fish satay and start from scratch.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
We'll do the most basic menu and maybe
we can get through the night.

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S MAIN DINING ROOM- LATER

Fish and Alice work feverishly.

ALICE
(to Fish)
Are you ready to jump ship yet?

FISH
The way this day is going, it'd
probably be shark infested waters.

Alice laughs.

ALICE
You'd better go take those dishes
back. We'll run out before the end of
service if we don't get them washed.

Fish nods, takes the CART, heads back to the kitchen.

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Fish enters and sees Dani and Nikki working like seasoned
line cooks. Their commitment is obvious.

DANI
How is it out there?

Fish starts unloading DISHES into the sink.

FISH
It's OK. Wow. You've done this a few
times before, huh?

NIKKI
It's what you do for family.

FISH
Otis is lucky to have you guys.

DANI
Not just Otis. We're all family here.
Otis believes in Ridley. He believes
in you, too.

Alice enters.

ALICE
We have a party of twelve and we're
gonna lose them unless we can find
someplace to put them.

NIKKI
We'll open up the party room. Dani,
come help me set the tables.

Nikki motions to a pile of VEGETABLES.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
(to Fish)
Here. Cut these.

Nikki, Dani, and Alice exit the kitchen.

Alone, Fish spins the KNIFE and gets to work. He smiles and enjoys the chance to use his skills.

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S MAIN DINING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

A few seconds later, Dani comes back for a KEY hanging on the wall. The door is slightly AJAR. Unseen, she watches Fish.

INSERT DANI POV:

Fish flourishes the knife and chops with incredible precision.

BACK TO SCENE

Dani quietly takes the keys and exits to join Nikki.

CUT TO:

INT. ONE EYED WILLY'S MAIN DINING ROOM- NIGHT

Dinner service is over. The staff sits around with an open BOTTLE OF WINE.

OTIS

What a victory! What a victory! I'm just sorry I couldn't get back in time to be a part of it!

NIKKI

You're always a part of it, Dad.

DANI

None of this would be possible without you, Otis.

OTIS

(almost teary-eyed)
You all are the best shipmates an old pirate could ask for.

NIKKI

I'm gonna close out the register.

Nikki and Dani start the after hours wrap-up.

OTIS

(to Fish)
Well, bus-matey, you did it and you proved your sea legs worthy. What a battle!

Fish watches as Alice, Nikki, and Dani go through their normal routine.

OTIS (CONT'D)

We'll get Ridley back tomorrow and the whole crew will be together again!

FISH

Ridley still has a job?

OTIS

Of course!

FISH

What if the health inspector comes by and finds that rodent in the kitchen?

OTIS

Tom? He caught the possum for Ridley! Found him under the porch. Now Ridley can't live without him.

(laughs to himself)

I remember one time, it crawled under that booth over there when the senior Sunday school came in from Newville. They started screaming, pelting it with their hushpuppies... and at least one set of dentures. You should have seen them all in their little walkers, running in slow motion. We never did find Mrs. Thurman's teeth.

FISH

But he's a disaster in the kitchen.

OTIS

He's our head chef.

FISH

He can't cook.

OTIS

We all have things we need to work on.

He stands up and pats Fish on the shoulder.

OTIS (CONT'D)

See ya' tomorrow, matey. It's time for this old sea dog to get some rest. I don't know when I've ever been so tired!

NIKKI
I'll walk out with you, Dad.
(to Fish)
Those dishes are coming out of your
paycheck.

OTIS
(to Dani)
You coming?

DANI
Right behind you, Otis.

ALICE
See you tomorrow, Campbell. Goodnight,
all!

Exit Alice, Nikki, and Otis, with a CHORUS OF GOOD-BYES.

OTIS (O.S.)
Don't forget to batten down the
hatches.

Dani and Fish are alone. She holds up her key and smiles.

DANI
(to Fish)
He means lock the door.

FISH
You take good care of your dad.

DANI
He's always taken care of us. Well, I
guess I'd better get going.
Goodnight... Blowfish.

FISH
(shocked)
What?

DANI
Come on. There's not a middle aged
busboy alive in Ohio who can julienne
a cabbage like that without losing a
finger.

FISH
But how--

DANI
Otis says someday we'll take a
vacation to San Francisco so I can
visit some of my favorite restaurants.
(MORE)

DANI (CONT'D)

My favorite is a place called Pure,
but I hear they just lost their head
chef. The internet's a wonderful
thing.

FISH

Are you going to keep my secret?

DANI

Sure. That's what family does.

She walks toward the door and tosses Fish the key, which he catches.

DANI (CONT'D)

You can seal up the hull, matey.

Exit Dani.

EXT. ONE EYED WILLY'S - MOMENTS LATER

In front of the restaurant, an old station wagon pulls up with Nikki at the wheel and Otis in the passenger seat. Nikki HONKS the horn.

CLOSE UP ON the license plate, which reads: "AVAST-YE" and the license plate cover reads "I'D RATHER BE PILLAGING."

Dani gets into the car and they drive off as Fish comes out of the front door.

The dog sits on the sidewalk waiting for him.

FISH

(to the dog)

Well?

The dog looks at him. Fish locks the door and puts the keys in his pocket.

FISH (CONT'D)

C'mon. Let's get going.

As Fish turns to go, the dog starts barking.

FISH (CONT'D)

What's your problem?

The dog takes off into the night.

FISH (CONT'D)

Hey! Where you goin'?

(pause)

Dog!

A few seconds later, KEISHA'S CAR pulls up and she rolls the WINDOW DOWN.

KEISHA

You going my way?

Keisha smiles. Fish smiles. As Keisha leans over to open the passenger door for fish, 3 SHOTS RING OUT and the DRIVER'S SIDE WINDOW SHATTERS.

CUT TO BLACK.

END CREDITS ROLL.

BEHIND THE LAVENDER DOOR

Written by

A.D. Hasselbring

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT 4B - DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO - 1937 - DAY

The screen is filled with a lavender color. Calm. Serene.

SUPER: "DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO, 1937"

A VICIOUS KNOCKING breaks the silence. We PULL OUT and the lavender reveals itself to be a door. MORE KNOCKING.

MILES (O.S.)

Pearl!

Across the room, we see LOTTIE (10) and ANNIE (7) huddled together, clinging to one another in fear.

MILES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I know you're in there, Pearl. Open up!

The POUNDING INCREASES. The girls speak in FRANTIC WHISPERS.

ANNIE

He's going to break down the door!

LOTTIE

It's alright.

ANNIE

Lottie!

LOTTIE

He can't get in. You have to be brave. Don't be scared.

Lottie's VOICE FADES.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)

Don't be scared.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE APARTMENT 4B - 2013 - DAY

SENATOR WILLIAM CLEARING (60s) stands outside of the lavender door, surrounded by cameras and REPORTERS.

SUPER: "2013"

A YOUNG REPORTER (female, 20s) speaks above the rest.

REPORTER

Senator Clearing, this building was slated for demolition as part of your urban redevelopment program. Why have you halted that?

CLEARING

What was that?

REPORTER

Why would you hold up construction on a project that's the centerpiece of your re-election campaign?

CLEARING

Well, that's the right question.

REPORTER

Sir?

CLEARING

It's exactly what I asked when I first saw this place two weeks ago.

After 40 years in politics, he owns the room.

CLEARING (CONT'D)

(Prelap)

Stop it? Why would I stop it?

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE APARTMENT 4B - DAY

Senator Clearing and his daughter RENA (30s, not a hair out of place) climb the stairs to the 4th floor.

RENA

Dad--

CLEARING

They have to tear down the old building before they can start a new one, Ren. I really don't have time to revisit this right now. You know I'm meeting with the campaign staff today, right?

The building is filthy. VAGRANTS sleep under newspapers and TRASH is scattered.

RENA

I make your schedule, Dad. I know where you need to be.

(MORE)

RENA (CONT'D)

You can spare a half hour. The world won't grind to a halt before we get back.

CLEARING

Where'd you learn to talk to me like that? You used to be so sweet.

RENA

From Mom. And I haven't been sweet since 1992.

CLEARING

You got that from your mother, too.

They reach the 4th floor and start down the dark hall.

CLEARING (CONT'D)

This building is a mess. There's a reason they're tearing it--

Just outside the lavender door of apartment 4B stands JACKSON (20s). It's an awkward meeting.

JACKSON

Morning, Senator.

CLEARING

How are you, son?

JACKSON

I'm fine, Pop.

CLEARING

Been a while this time.

JACKSON

Sure has. Miss me?

FADE OUT:

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - 1938 - DAY

Lottie and Annie sleep next to one another in a single bed. Lottie stirs and her eyes pop open with anticipation.

SUPER: "1938"

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie hurries through the apartment toward the lavender door. Glimmers of daylight shine through the windows.

Annie, dressed in a nightgown, follows Lottie, brimming with excitement. Lottie presses her ear to the door. Then:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lottie opens the door. They peek cautiously into the hallway. Excitement turns to despair as they stare down.

An empty dairy crate sits where the biweekly milk delivery should be. An envelope labeled "Past Due" is attached.

Across the hall is a newspaper. CLOSE UP on: "Oct. 13, 1938" and headline: "Roosevelt urges peace from aggressor nations."

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The girls sit at the table, the empty crate between them.

ANNIE

I'm hungry.

LOTTIE

Talking about it only makes it worse.

ANNIE

We could go buy food. There's money in the box.

LOTTIE

I don't think that's a very good idea.

ANNIE

You don't ever like my ideas.

They're hungry, cranky, worried. Lottie grabs the envelope.

LOTTIE

Do you think if we put some money in here and leave it outside they'll bring more milk?

ANNIE

I don't know. What did you do before?

LOTTIE

It was just always there.

ANNIE

How much do they want?

LOTTIE
It doesn't say.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Annie watches as Lottie stands precariously on the kitchen counter reaching up for a worn red cigar box. She opens it.

ANNIE
How much?

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The open cigar box, a small amount of money, and two faded photographs lie beside the girls on the living room floor.

One photograph is of a woman (Lottie's mother). The other is of a father, mother, and infant child, circa 1928.

LOTTIE
Should I put it all in?

Annie shrugs. Lottie puts some money in the envelope. There is a KNOCK at the door. The girls look in fear.

MILES (O.S.)
Pearl!

ANNIE
(urgent whisper)
Lottie!

Lottie stays still, puts her fingers to her lips. "Quiet."

MILES (O.S.)
Pearl! Mr. Pearl!

Annie runs to the hall closet and hides, terrified.

MILES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You're two weeks late on the rent.
I know you can hear me, Pearl!

A paper slides under the door, landing by Lottie. CLOSE UP:
"RENT DUE."

MILES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
If I don't have it in the box by
the end of the week, then you can
start packing. You hear me, Mr.
Pearl? By the end of the week!

HEAVY FOOTSTEPS FADE and trod down the hall.

LOTTIE
It's alright. He's gone, I think.

Annie continues to hide but cracks the closet door.

ANNIE
Are you sure?

LOTTIE
Yes. It's alright now. You're okay.

Annie emerges cautiously. Lottie picks up the paper.

ANNIE
What's it say?

Worry grows.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dressed for bed, the girls sit in front of a mirror. An OIL LAMP lights the room. Lottie brushes Annie's hair.

LOTTIE
That's not true. We will so. We
just have to figure it out.

Annie continues to cry.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
Didn't we figure out how to keep
the milk cold when the electricity
stopped working?

Annie nods.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
And we will figure this out, too.
This is our home. And no one is
going to make us leave it. Alright?
(looking at Annie)
Alright?

Annie nods, comforted.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
Besides, I have an idea.

ANNIE
(unsure)
You do?

LOTTIE

I'm going to take in some washing,
and that will bring in a little
extra money.

ANNIE

Do you think you could?

LOTTIE

Sure! I already do ours, don't I?
Papa always said I did a great job.

ANNIE

But how will you do it? That's an
awful lot of work, Lottie.

LOTTIE

There's nothing we can't do
together. Everything will be just
fine. You don't have to be afraid.

ANNIE

But I am afraid!

LOTTIE

I know. But you don't have to be.
I'm going to take care of you.

ANNIE

And you're never going to go away?

LOTTIE

No. I won't ever go away. I
promise. I won't ever let you be
alone. I'll always take care you.

Annie, fragile and weak, needs a protector.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)

Do you want to see what I've been
working on?

Annie nods. Lottie unfolds a sheet of paper for Annie.

ANNIE

A boat!

LOTTIE

It's a fishing trawler.

Annie examines the drawing under the lamp light.

ANNIE
This is the best fishing trawler
I've ever seen.

LOTTIE
You don't even know what a fishing
trawler looks like.

ANNIE
I do so!

Annie points at the picture. Lottie laughs.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
I want to hear a story about it!

LOTTIE
It's your bedtime. You need your
rest so you can stay healthy.

ANNIE
Please!

LOTTIE
A short one. Then you sleep.

Annie leaps into bed. Lottie lies down next to her.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
Once upon a time, there was a
little girl named Annie.

ANNIE
Like me!

LOTTIE
And she lived on a big boat.

ANNIE
A fishing trawler.

LOTTIE
A giant fishing trawler. But Annie
wasn't alone...

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

Lottie studies, books everywhere. There are also bags of
dirty laundry and a full clothesline strung across the back
of the room. Annie practices headstands.

ANNIE
What are you doing?

LOTTIE
Practicing my handwriting. It's a
very important tool to have.

ANNIE
How come?

LOTTIE
It just is. These books have to go
back to the library today. You
should practice, too.

ANNIE
I don't want to. I'm. So. Hungry.

Lottie looks at her.

LOTTIE
Yes, I know.

ANNIE
Your "Q"s aren't very good.

Lottie ignores her.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
And your capitals are too big.

Lottie won't take the bait.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
And your "U"s look like "W"s, so
when you write--

LOTTIE
Annie!

Annie goes to the piano and plucks out a couple of notes.

ANNIE
We could sell the piano!

LOTTIE
No. You need to practice. Besides,
I can't get it down the stairs.

Annie is dead set on annoying Lottie. She plucks the keys.

ANNIE
I know something we can sell.

Nothing.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
It's something very pretty.

Nothing.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
And it's worth a lot of money.

LOTTIE
No! Not unless we have to. We have
other things we can sell first.

ANNIE
Like what?

Lottie is quiet.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Like what, Lottie?

Lottie looks to the radio that sits on a table.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
(eyes widening)
Oh no!

LOTTIE
We have to.

ANNIE
Not the radio.

LOTTIE
It doesn't even work without
electricity.

ANNIE
But maybe someday!

LOTTIE
We have to take care of today.

A KNOCK. Lottie freezes. ANOTHER. Annie hides.

JOE (O.S.)
Peninsula Creamery.

Annie peeks out from hiding.

LOTTIE
The dairy!

Lottie starts toward the door.

ANNIE

Lottie, no!

LOTTIE

Shhh! It's okay.

ANNIE

No!

JOE (O.S.)

Hello? Mr. Pearl? Anyone home?

Lottie hesitantly opens the door to find JOE (40s, affable and kind, in a bright, white dairy uniform).

JOE (CONT'D)

Well, hello! I thought I heard someone in there. Is Mr. Pearl at home?

LOTTIE

He's in the bathtub.

JOE

Well, he gave me too much money. That's not something that happens a lot these days! Can you give this to him?

He hands her a small amount of change.

LOTTIE

Yes, I can.

JOE

Alright, then. Say, you're not going to go and spend all that on candy or anything, now are you?

LOTTIE

No. I'm not allowed to have sweets. Except at Christmas.

JOE

Well, that's a nice holiday treat. You be sure to give that to your daddy.

LOTTIE

I will.

JOE

Don't you lose that money, now.

LOTTIE
No, sir.

 JOE
Remember, some day it might be
worth something.

 LOTTIE
Yes, sir.

Joe exits with a laugh.

Lottie brings in the dairy, shuts the door, and smiles. Annie sticks her head out from where she was hiding.

 LOTTIE (CONT'D)
We did it!

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

Many items, including the radio, are gone. Sold. Annie plucks out a melody on the piano.

Lottie enters hurriedly, carrying a stack of LIBRARY BOOKS. She shuts the door, looks at Annie. "Shhhh!"

Annie hides. FOOTSTEPS PASS.

 LOTTIE
You okay?

Annie emerges cautiously from hiding.

 ANNIE
Did we get any money?

 LOTTIE
Yes.

 ANNIE
Is it enough?

Lottie sets down the books and some money on the table next to the "Rent Due" notice and goes towards the:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lottie climbs the counter to get the cigar box. It would never occur to her to keep it anywhere else. Annie watches.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie finishes counting the money and sets it on the table.

LOTTIE
Just enough. And this much left
over!

ANNIE
That's good!

LOTTIE
I told you not to worry. There's
nothing we can't take care of if we
try.

ANNIE
When do we have to pay it again?

LOTTIE
Rent's due every month. On the
first.

ANNIE
What will happen if we don't?

LOTTIE
Then they won't let us live here
anymore. But you don't have to
worry about that. You believe me,
don't you?

Annie nods. Lottie smiles and folds the rent due notice
around the money. She writes "4B" on it in crayon.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
I told you. I'm always going to
take care of you.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Lottie struggles with a large bag as she leaves the
apartment.

MILES WALTZENBURG (40s, landlord, frightening) sees her.

MILES
Everything alright?

Lottie freezes.

MILES (CONT'D)
I asked if you was alright?

LOTTIE

Yes, sir.

Miles peers into the apartment through the slightly open door, but Lottie pulls it shut, closing off his view.

MILES

What's all this? You ain't planning on making some kind of a mess in my hallways are you?

LOTTIE

(lying)

I'm taking it--to the laundry. For my father.

MILES

Well, you sure are an industrious little thing. Bag's twice as big as you are. You gonna break your neck toting that thing down the stairs.

He towers over the little girl.

MILES (CONT'D)

You a pretty little thing, too, huh?

Miles breathes in Lottie's face. She stands her ground.

MILES (CONT'D)

You break your neck, I'm the one got to explain it to the cops. See you don't fall.

Miles' body blocks out the light as he moves down the hall. Lottie looks down at the bag filled with items she'll pawn.

ANNIE

(Prelap)

There are places we can go. Places far, far away.

INT. MAIN ROOM - MORNING

Weak, hungry, and thin, the girls sit together. Nearly everything that can be sold from the apartment has been. Time has obviously passed. There are piles of laundry and a half-full clothesline.

LOTTIE

Like where?

ANNIE

The east.

LOTTIE

This is where we live.

ANNIE

What if they make us leave?

LOTTIE

This is our home.

Lottie starts to draw.

ANNIE

What are you doing?

LOTTIE

I'm drawing to the music.

ANNIE

From where? You sold the radio.

LOTTIE

It's in my mind.

ANNIE

That's silly.

LOTTIE

It's not silly if you believe in it. You have to use your imagination.

ANNIE

I have an excellent imagination.

LOTTIE

Betcha it's not as good as mine.

ANNIE

That was a mean thing to say!

LOTTIE

It's true.

ANNIE

You're just cranky 'cause you're hungry!

LOTTIE

No, you--

There is a KNOCK. They freeze. ANOTHER KNOCK. Annie hides.

JOE (O.S.)
Peninsula Creamery.

Lottie runs to the door, desperate. Annie peers out of the closet. Lottie gathers courage and opens the door.

JOE (CONT'D)
Well, hello, there! I remember you.
What's your name again?

LOTTIE
Lottie Pearl.

JOE
Well, Happy New Year, Miss Pearl!
Is your mother or father home?

LOTTIE
They can't come to the door right
now.

JOE
Ah. Well, that's alright. I'm
taking down orders for the new
year, but I'll be back around next
week. Can you tell them that?

LOTTIE
Yes. I can tell them.

JOE
Good on ya, Lottie! Well, I had
better get going! Want to be home
in time to hear the president on
the radio tonight!

Lottie weakly wavers in the doorway.

JOE (CONT'D)
Say, you don't look so good. Are
you sick?

Lottie shakes her head. Joe catches a glimpse inside the barren apartment. Lottie is not well.

JOE (CONT'D)
Just so happens that we're having a
sale on eggnog now that the
holidays are over.

Joe hands Lottie a small bottle of eggnog.

JOE (CONT'D)

Why don't you take that and see if you like it, OK? But be sure to ask your mama first.

LOTTIE

I'm not supposed to...

JOE

It's OK, honey. We'll call this one a sample. You enjoy that now, alright? Eggnog is one of my favorites. 'Course, it's always better with a slice or two of cheese.

Joe hands Lottie a small package of cheese and winks at her.

LOTTIE

Thank you.

JOE

Mighty welcome! Have to start the new year right, you know! 1939! Sounds just like the future to me!

Joe laughs and walks away. Lottie shuts the door and locks it. Annie runs from her hiding spot.

ANNIE

Can we drink it?

LOTTIE

Not 'til tonight. We need to make it last.

ANNIE

How come you didn't pay him?

LOTTIE

We used it all for the rent.

ANNIE

All the money?

LOTTIE

Everything that was left in the box.

ANNIE

What about the washing money?

LOTTIE

It was all in there.

ANNIE

What are we gonna do, Lottie?

There is simply nothing of value left in sight.

LOTTIE

You know what we need to do.

Annie's eyes light up.

ANNIE

Really?

LOTTIE

It's the only thing we have left.

ANNIE

I'll get it!

Annie jumps down from her chair and runs toward the:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie and Annie are in what is clearly an adult's room. They peer inside a large wooden chest.

Lottie reaches in and removes a JEWELRY BOX. She opens the top. "DANNY BOY" BEGINS TO PLAY. Rings, pendants, etc, shine.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Lottie and Annie are dressed in clothes, an excessive amount of jewelry, and shoes - all far too big for them.

ANNIE

We look beautiful. Just like princesses! Do we really have to sell it?

LOTTIE

Yes. At least some of it. Or we won't have enough for the rent.

ANNIE

Or the dairy.

Lottie tries on a braided gold and emerald necklace.

LOTTIE

Maybe this one first.

ANNIE

So shiny! I'll bet we get a million dollars. You gonna sell the clothes, too?

LOTTIE

If I can.

ANNIE

I wish we didn't have to.

LOTTIE

We make the most of what we have. I'll take the necklace down today.

ANNIE

Then this one!

She holds up a wedding ring.

LOTTIE

No. Not this one. This one we keep.

Lottie puts the ring back in the jewelry box. She listens to the MUSIC PLAY for a moment, then shuts the top.

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

Lottie enters the apartment, shutting the door loudly. She drops a bundle of books on the table.

ANNIE

You scared me!

LOTTIE

There's no reason to be scared. Especially now.

Lottie smiles a devilish smile. Annie's eyes widen.

ANNIE

How much did they give us?

Lottie continues to grin. From her pocket, Lottie removes a handful of bills. Annie gasps. She runs to Lottie. Joy.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

We're rich!

LOTTIE

No, but we can definitely pay rent.

ANNIE

And buy some ice cream, too! Are these from the library?

LOTTIE

Yes! They were giving them away. The woman said I could take as many as my little heart desired.

Annie looks at the top book on the table.

ANNIE

Combato, Defendo?

LOTTIE

It's about how to fight, and how to protect yourself! That way, you don't have to be so scared all the time.

ANNIE

I'm not scared all the time.

LOTTIE

Well, if we can learn to protect ourselves, you don't have to be scared at all. And I got a piano book, and one on sewing! Now I can take in mending with the laundry!

ANNIE

Do you think that people would pay you for that?

LOTTIE

Sure! Mr. Anderson's socks always have holes in them. Plus, I could sew some things for us, too.

Annie looks critically at Lottie's outgrown, worn dress and then her own.

ANNIE

I guess they do look pretty old.

LOTTIE

And look. This one's on gardening.

ANNIE

We gonna grow flowers?

LOTTIE
 No, silly. Food. Out on the balcony, where the water drips, I think we could plant some seeds.

ANNIE
 And have our own food?

LOTTIE
 I think so. There's nothing you can't learn if you have the right book. Even how to grow your own food.

ANNIE
 And if anybody tries to steal it, BAM! Combato! Wham! Defendo!

Lottie laughs and Annie beams with hope and excitement.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER

The girls practice self defense. Lottie throws Annie. They both laugh, shocked, then get up and pick up *Combato Defendo*, studying each move. Lottie points at a move, Annie nods, and they practice again. Lottie throws Annie.

ANNIE
 It's not fair! I can't win.

LOTTIE
 Just do your best.

ANNIE
 You're too big!

LOTTIE
 You just have to keep trying, Annie.

Annie pauses, then runs and tackles Lottie with a roar.

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

The window leading to the balcony is open. Lottie plants seeds. Annie watches.

ANNIE
 How long's it gonna take?

LOTTIE
 I don't know.

ANNIE
I hope they grow fast.

LOTTIE
Probably a few weeks.

ANNIE
We're gonna need food sooner than
that.

MUSIC PLAYS.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Lottie takes a pendant from the jewelry box to sell.
- Lottie adds money to the cigar box.
- Annie folds laundry as Lottie darns socks.
- Joe delivers dairy to the apartment.
- Lottie brushes Annie's hair and shows her drawings.
- Miles watches Lottie coming home.
- Annie playfully attacks Lottie. Annie gets thrown.
- Lottie hands Annie a few small vegetables from the garden.
- Lottie takes a pair of earrings from the jewelry box.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - THREE YEARS LATER - DAY

Lottie (13) takes a bracelet from the jewelry box. "DANNY BOY" PLAYS as Annie (10) looks on. The girls are doing well.

SUPER: "THREE YEARS LATER - 1941"

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Lottie harvests tomatoes from the balcony. Annie claps.
- Lottie teaches Annie to sew buttons onto a shirt.
- The girls practice self defense. Lottie throws Annie.
- Joe hands Lottie the dairy delivery. Miles passes them.
- Lottie adds money to the cigar box.

- Lottie brushes Annie's hair. They laugh.
- Miles watches Lottie bring in the dairy.
- Annie watches Lottie as she draws.
- Lottie takes a necklace from the jewelry box.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - THREE YEARS LATER

Lottie (16) takes earrings from the jewelry box. Annie (13) looks on. There are only a few pieces left.

SUPER: "1944"

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Lottie draws.
- Lottie pays Joe and brings in the dairy.
- Lottie finishes making a dress and proudly shows Annie.
- The girls practice self defense. Annie is thrown.
- The girls cover the thriving garden during a storm.
- Lottie adds money to the cigar box.
- Miles stumbles, drunk, down the hall. Lottie avoids him.
- Lottie and Annie wrestle. Annie throws Lottie.

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

ANNIE

I did it! I won! I got you!

Lottie laughs and Annie helps her up.

LOTTIE

I don't even know what I could have done!

ANNIE

You just have to keep trying,
Lottie.

Lottie playfully goes after Annie. An envelope slides under the door, landing near the girls, who stare down at it.

INT. MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Lottie and Annie sit at the table reading a lease agreement. Next to them is the cigar box and a small amount of money.

ANNIE

So they want more money?

LOTTIE

Almost double.

ANNIE

Can they do that?

LOTTIE

I guess so. I guess they can do whatever they want.

ANNIE

That's not fair. What are we going to do?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Discouragement. Lottie and Annie look down. The jewelry box has 2 pieces of jewelry left. "DANNY BOY" whimpers out.

Lottie picks up the necklace, leaving the ring in the box.

ANNIE

You think it will be enough?

LOTTIE

Maybe for this month.

(pause)

Maybe I can take in some more sewing.

ANNIE

The ring might be worth--

Lottie shuts the lid.

LOTTIE

I don't want to talk about that.

Annie gets the message.

ANNIE

There's nothing else to sell.

LOTTIE

Then I guess one of us will have to
get a job.

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

Lottie and Annie stare down at a newspaper.

ANNIE

What's an arborist?

LOTTIE

It's a tree doctor.

ANNIE

You could do that. You're good with
the garden.

LOTTIE

Maybe. There's a lot of factory
jobs.

ANNIE

What's a court artist?

LOTTIE

Someone who draws in the court, I
guess. Like this.

Lottie flips through the newspaper and finds a court
rendering.

ANNIE

You can draw better than that.

The girls smile.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie and Annie swing open the doors of a large, wooden
wardrobe. Inside hangs a single dress.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie stands in front of the mirror wearing the outdated
dress.

ANNIE

It looks old.

LOTTIE

It is old. But I can remake it. It will be beautiful. We make the best of what we have.

ANNIE

What about your hair?

LOTTIE

What's wrong with my hair?

The girls look in the mirror. Nope. Not going to work.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A drawer slides open. A few hair pins and a broken brush.

Lottie props up a faded photograph of a woman (her mother, Lilly) on the counter and begins to work.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Lottie has duplicated a slightly updated version of her mother's look perfectly. It is a transformation.

ANNIE

Oh, you look so beautiful.

LOTTIE

We don't have any earrings left.

ANNIE

That's okay. They pinched your ears anyway!

The girls laugh. Lottie looks wistfully at the picture, seeing a strong resemblance. She shuts the drawer with a SLAM.

LOTTIE (O.S.)

(Prelap)

Annie!

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

Lottie SLAMS the lavender door and smiles at Annie, who has been waiting for her.

ANNIE
Did they like you?

Lottie's world had opened and possibilities abound.

LOTTIE
I have a job.

Euphoria.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lottie brushes Annie's hair. Lamp light illuminates the many new and strange courtroom images Lottie has been working on.

LOTTIE
And then Mrs. Thornton in the office told me that what I am supposed to draw mainly is the people. People! I can draw people.

ANNIE
You're not very good at hands.

LOTTIE
I'll get better if I practice.

ANNIE
Is that the judge?

LOTTIE
One of them. And this is what the courtroom looked like when everyone first came in.

ANNIE
Where are you?

LOTTIE
I don't draw myself.

ANNIE
But you were there?

LOTTIE
Of course I was. But I'm not part of the story.

ANNIE
Is it scary?

LOTTIE

A little. But fun, too. I just watch what happens and draw it and I'm only allowed to talk to Mrs. Thornton.

(then)

I had to lie about something.

ANNIE

What?

LOTTIE

You're supposed to be at least eighteen to work there, so I told them that I was.

Lottie looks to Annie for approval.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)

It was a white lie. So I don't think it was bad.

ANNIE

It's still a lie.

LOTTIE

Yes, I know. But we need the money. We want to stay together, don't we?

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lottie and Annie sleep, tucked into the same single bed.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Let go!

COMMOTION ECHOES from the hall. Lottie's eyes pop open. The SOUNDS grow louder. Lottie quietly gets out of bed.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie listens at the door. The SHOUTING GROWS LOUDER.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

LOTTIE POV:

Lottie cautiously opens the door. TWO POLICE OFFICERS pull a WOMAN and CHILD down the hall. The woman carries a bundle.

WOMAN

Please, no.

The child notices Lottie and stares back at her.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

We will pay next week if you
just...

The officers, woman, and child disappear down the stairs.

Miles steps in, blocking Lottie's view. He carries clothing that he dumps down the stairwell. He sees Lottie.

Eyes wide, Lottie shuts the door.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Lottie lies back down next to a still sleeping Annie. Lottie can't sleep now. Her eyes drift across to her drawings.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

In the crowded courtroom, Lottie sketches diligently from her seat as a man in a back brace sits in the stand, answering questions.

EXT. SIDEWALK OUTSIDE APARTMENT 4B - NIGHT

At the trolley stop on the corner, a professional-looking Lottie, in her mother's remade dress, gets out of the trolley, hugging her portfolio. She anxiously looks around her, quickly making her way to the building. She glances up toward the apartment, never breaking her stride, and hurries inside.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ANNIE

But wasn't it fun?

LOTTIE

I don't know. I was really nervous.

ANNIE

But you got to ride the bus, and
hear all about the trial, and then
you get paid to draw!

LOTTIE
They call it sketching, not
drawing.

ANNIE
Who does?

LOTTIE
The people at work.

ANNIE
Why is that important?

LOTTIE
Because I can't sound like a little
kid if I want to keep this job.

ANNIE
Oh.
(pause)
Do you want to keep it?

LOTTIE
I need to, if we want to stay here.
But every time I'm out in the
world, I just want to get back
home. This is the only place I feel
like I understand.

ANNIE
I know. But you can do it, Lottie.
(pause)
I believe in you.

LOTTIE
(gratefully)
Thanks, Annie. You're right. We're
not babies any more. We can do
anything we set our minds to.

The two girls smile and Annie squeezes Lottie's hand.

INT. COURTROOM - WEEKS LATER

In the courtroom, Lottie sketches more confidently as a man
in a suit takes the stand.

EXT. SIDEWALK OUTSIDE APARTMENT 4B - NIGHT

At the trolley stop, Lottie, in a new dress, gets out of the
trolley, still hugging her portfolio. She again checks around
her, walking quickly to the building.

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

Lottie sits at the kitchen table with a portfolio of her courtroom drawings set out before her.

LOTTIE

And this man was a soldier, but not a good one. When they wouldn't let him be in the army anymore, he stole some money from the place where he was working.

ANNIE

You should draw a soldier's hat on him.

LOTTIE

No, they want you to draw them exactly the way they look.

ANNIE

He'd look better with a soldier's hat.

LOTTIE

They don't want him to look better. They want everything to look exactly the way it really is. Mrs. Thornton said to take my time and just be sure I get it right.

ANNIE

But you can draw fast.

LOTTIE

Yes. But they don't care about fast. Just accurate.

Annie and Lottie look at the pictures on the table.

ANNIE

I still think he'd look better with a hat.

Lottie reveals a secret to Annie.

LOTTIE

So do I.

Smile.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)

But I have to do it their way if I want to keep working there.

ANNIE
Did you get paid?

LOTTIE
Look.

Lottie empties the money from the cigar box on the table.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
I make this much each week.

ANNIE
It looks like a lot.

LOTTIE
I thought so, too. It's not,
really. But if we're careful, it
will be enough for the rent,
groceries, and the dairy. I think.

ANNIE
You think?

LOTTIE
The months that have less than
thirty-one days might be close. But
we can't do anything about that.
And we've sold all the jewelry.

ANNIE
Not all of it.

Annie looks to Lottie.

(Prelap) "DANNY BOY" begins to play.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie and Annie lean over the open jewelry box that now has
only her mother's wedding ring in it. Lottie picks it up.

ANNIE
How come you don't want to sell it?

LOTTIE
You know why.

ANNIE
But if we sell it, we might be able
to--

LOTTIE

Some things are worth more than money.

There is a KNOCK AT THE FRONT DOOR. Lottie holds the ring and walks to the:

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie stops near the table where the money and drawings are laid out. ANOTHER KNOCK.

LOTTIE

Who is it?

JEANNIE (O.S.)

(through the door)

My name is Jeannie, and I'm selling magazine subscriptions to help put myself through nursing school. I was wondering if maybe you'd like to buy one. Every new subscription earns you an entry for a cash prize drawing in two weeks!

Lottie looks to Annie, who cautiously steps out of view. Conflicted but interested, Lottie opens the door to see:

JEANNIE (18, wearing a nurse's uniform, smiling). Behind Jeannie is CONROY (20s, fedora brim down, imposing).

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Hello! Like I said, my name is Jeannie. May I ask your name?

LOTTIE

Lottie Pearl.

JEANNIE

Thank you for speaking with me, Miss Pearl.

LOTTIE

Oh, I like to talk to people, but I'm not allowed to do it at work.

JEANNIE

Well, I like to talk to people, too, and I'm certainly glad you were home.

(MORE)

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

I'm with the Unified Subscription Scholarship Organization, and I wanted to talk to you about buying some magazine subscriptions, because the more I sell, the more entries I get to win full tuition through nursing school!

LOTTIE

Oh, that sounds wonderful!

Jeannie laughs.

JEANNIE

Yes, well, I certainly think so, too! Would you be interested in subscribing to a magazine to help me reach my goal? We have magazines about almost anything you can think of.

Lottie lets the door open a bit to hear more.

LOTTIE

We love to read.

Conroy shifts his weight and looks into the apartment.

JEANNIE

Is that someone calling for you?

LOTTIE

What?

JEANNIE

Oh, I'm sorry. I just thought I heard someone calling for you. Maybe your parents?

LOTTIE

No, they're not here right now. My father is in Turkey on a business trip.

JEANNIE

Oh, my, how exciting. And no one else is home? You're not married?

Lottie giggles.

LOTTIE

No, I'm not married.

JEANNIE

Well, good. Me, either. Not yet,
anyway.

Jeannie winks at Lottie. Lottie looks at Conroy.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Oh, this is Mr. Conroy. He's from
the magazine company and he'll be
verifying everything I sell for the
contest. You were saying how much
you love to read?

LOTTIE

Yes.

Lottie again looks at Conroy and begins to realize something
is amiss. The hall is deserted and Conroy seems uneasy.

JEANNIE

Miss Pearl?

LOTTIE

No, thank you.

Lottie starts to shut the door. Jeannie stops it.

JEANNIE

Are you sure? We have National
Geographic, the New Yorker, even
the Saturday Evening Post. And all
new subscribers will be entered for
a drawing to win a cash prize. Two
hundred dollars! Now wouldn't that
be nice to have?

LOTTIE

Two hundred dollars?

JEANNIE

Yes.

Lottie is caught between wanting to hear more and a strange
feeling of danger.

LOTTIE

I really don't--

Suddenly, Conroy pushes past Jeannie and bursts into the
room, KNOCKING LOTTIE VIOLENTLY TO THE GROUND.

Annie, unseen by the intruders, instinctively flees to the
hall closet.

Jeannie follows Conroy, scoops the money from the table into her purse, and quickly moves to the bedroom.

Conroy pounces on Lottie, slaps her across the face, and claps his hand over her mouth.

CONROY
 You say one word and I'm gonna put
 your lights out.
 (to Jeannie)
 You alright?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jeannie rifles through drawers, the trunk, the wardrobe.

JEANNIE
 Yeah, the place is empty.

CONROY (O.S.)
 Hurry up.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

JEANNIE (O.S.)
 There's a jewelry box, but nothing
 in it.

CONROY
 Well, keep looking.

Conroy remains on top of Lottie with his finger to his lips. Lottie grips the wedding ring tightly in her left hand.

Annie, hidden from the intruders, peeks out of the closet door. Lottie sees her.

The sound of DRAWERS BEING EMPTIED and THROWN comes from the bedrooms.

Lottie and Annie lock eyes. Annie motions to the self defense book lying on the floor.

LOTTIE POV:

Near her on the floor lies an empty milk bottle.

Conroy shouts over his shoulder.

CONROY (CONT'D)
 Nevermind. Let's get outta--

Lottie grabs the milk bottle and slams it into the side of Conroy's head. He falls backward off of Lottie, but gets up.

Conroy screams in pain. Annie cowers. Lottie throws two wild punches at the bloody, staggering Conroy. Annie leaps out.

ANNIE

Combato, Defendo! Combato, Defendo!

Conroy screams again. Jeannie runs from the back bedroom, sees what's happened, and flees out the front door.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Now you scream, too!

Lottie lets out with a blood-curdling scream. Conroy, wounded, but mobile, follows quickly after Jeannie.

Lottie slams the door, locks it, and slides to the floor.

The apartment is a mess. Items toppled, clothes and drawings scattered. The girls sit, terrified.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

They took all our money, Lottie!
They took all our money!

LOTTIE

Why didn't you help me?

ANNIE

Our money, Lottie! They took it
all!

Lottie, stunned, angry, and injured, opens her bloody hand to reveal the RING she held tight to throughout the struggle.

INT. BATHROOM - THAT NIGHT

Lottie, in pain and confused, touches her bruised and swollen eye. She coughs into a towel, leaving it stained with blood.

Annie watches. Lottie looks at her, then back to the mirror.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Lottie wakes, pale and not looking well. Annie is not there.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER

Lottie, dressed for work, painfully tries to eat. Annie watches her, worried.

ANNIE
Are you sick?

Lottie violently coughs. Food spills. Annie is utterly ashamed.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
You're sick.

LOTTIE
I'm okay. I have to go to work.

ANNIE
Don't go.

LOTTIE
I have to. We don't have any money.
I'm alright.

ANNIE
You don't look alright.

Lottie looks at Annie with a glare.

LOTTIE
That's because I didn't hide like a
scared little child.

ANNIE
I'm sorry, Lottie. I'm sorry I
couldn't help you. I'm sorry.

Lottie picks up her portfolio and storms out.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

EUGENE MCSHAY (60s) is there.

EUGENE
Hello, Miss Pearl.

LOTTIE
(weakly)
Hello, Mr. McShay.

EUGENE
Everything alright?

Lottie doesn't say anything, but winces as she shuts the door.

EUGENE (CONT'D)
You look like death warmed over.

LOTTIE
I'll be alright.

EUGENE
What happened to your eye?

LOTTIE
Nothing. I-- I fell down.

EUGENE
On that broken step down there?
Almost did that myself the other day. It's a hazard.

LOTTIE
No, it wasn't there.

EUGENE
Well, it's a hazard. Whole place is falling apart. And the neighborhood's goin' straight to pot. All these service boys comin' back. Too many people. It's a mess. Take care of yourself.

LOTTIE
I will.

EUGENE
Whole neighborhood. Goin' straight to pot.

SIRENS WAIL in the distance. Lottie locks the door and pauses in regret before painfully going down stairs.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Lottie agonizingly makes her way up the stairs. UNRULY TEENAGERS SHOUT and run past. She opens the door and enters.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Annie hasn't moved. Lottie stares at her for a moment.

LOTTIE
Have you been there all day?

ANNIE
I was worried about you. You're
back early.

LOTTIE
They sent me home. They said I was
too sick to be in the courtroom,
and I should come back after the
Thanksgiving holiday.

ANNIE
But that's a whole week.

Lottie, pale, weak, and getting worse, disappears into the
bedroom. Annie is alone.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Lottie?

COUGHING.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Lottie tries to clean up the mess made by the intruders. She
can barely stand. Annie watches her.

LOTTIE
Annie, I'm sorry for what I said. I
didn't mean it. This isn't your
fault. None of this is your fault.
I'm sorry. I have to lie down.

Lottie staggers toward the bed.

ANNIE
Where does it hurt?

LOTTIE
On my side, every time I move or
cough.

ANNIE
Just like Papa.

The words echo in Lottie's ears.

LOTTIE
What?

ANNIE
You're sick.

LOTTIE
Annie, I'm afraid.

ANNIE
No, Lottie. You're not. You're
never afraid.

LOTTIE
That was just pretend.

Lottie closes her eyes to sleep.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Lottie sleeps restlessly alone in her bed.

(Prelap) A MAN COUGHS.

QUICK POP:

INT. MAIN ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

LOTTIE (9) sits bundled by the window. A STORM RAGES.

FATHER (30s, frail), face unseen, fights the kind of coughing
fit that one does not recover from.

LOTTIE
You OK, Papa?

FATHER
It's just a cold. I'll be fine.

BACK TO SCENE:

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie coughs and wakes, haunted by something she can't
explain. She winces in pain as she struggles out of bed.

LOTTIE
Annie?

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Feverish Lottie stares at Annie, who's alone in the main
room.

ANNIE
Why are you looking at me like
that? Lottie?

LOTTIE
I--

ANNIE
What's the matter?

LOTTIE
I couldn't see him.

ANNIE
Who?

LOTTIE
Papa, I couldn't see his face. I
can't remember what he looks like.

ANNIE
You can't remember?

LOTTIE
I don't remember anything.

Lottie is in and out of lucidity.

ANNIE
Please don't leave, Lottie. You
promised you'd never leave.

Lottie begins to cough.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
You have a fever. You need to go to
bed.

LOTTIE
I can't. I need to remember. I have
to remember what happened here.

ANNIE
But Lottie--

LOTTIE
I didn't mean to forget them. I
didn't mean to--

Lottie starts to cough.

ANNIE
Lottie!

Lottie collapses to the floor. Black.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM - 2 DAYS LATER - DAY

Lottie awakes where she fell.

SUPER: "TWO DAYS LATER"

Light streams through the window and falls across her. Annie leans over her and smiles.

ANNIE
I thought you died.

LOTTIE
Nope. How long has it been?

ANNIE
A pretty long time. I'm hungry.

Lottie smiles.

LOTTIE
Me, too.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER

Annie reads from a medical book on the table. Lottie tears a sheet into strips.

ANNIE
I think you have broken ribs.

LOTTIE
Maybe.

ANNIE
Are you angry at me?

LOTTIE
No. Not even a little bit.

Lottie wraps her bruised ribs. Annie reads, then looks up.

ANNIE
Too tight and you'll give yourself
pneumonia and die.

Lottie finds this amusing.

LOTTIE
 I saw that. I'll be careful.
 (then)
 I have a surprise for you tomorrow.

ANNIE
 Tomorrow's Thanksgiving.

LOTTIE
 Yes. And I want to tell you a
 story.

Annie smiles.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
 But I need to buy some things if
 I'm going to tell it correctly.

ANNIE
 We don't have any money.

Lottie opens the cigar box. Inside is her mother's ring.

LOTTIE
 I know.

INT. MAIN ROOM - THAT EVENING

Lottie enters carrying a shopping bag. Annie is skillfully practicing piano.

LOTTIE
 That's very pretty.

ANNIE
 Yeah. I'm getting pretty good.

Lottie smiles, gets the cigar box. The ring is gone. Sold. She removes money from her pocket and sets the pile of bills inside.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lottie brushes Annie's hair in front of the mirror. Candlelight glows.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Annie sleeps. Lottie does not. She lights the lamp and looks at the drawings piled up after the robbery.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Lottie has made a makeshift artist's studio in the main room. Paints, brushes, drop cloths.

She starts to paint an image on the wall.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Lottie paints by candlelight. She draws the figures of a man and woman holding a child. She paints with talent and speed.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER - EARLY MORNING

Painting all night, Lottie has now filled an entire section of the wall with images. Annie enters and stares, wide eyed.

LOTTIE
Happy Thanksgiving.

ANNIE
What did you do?

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie and Annie stand in front of the paintings.

LOTTIE
This one is Mama and Papa. And that's me she's holding.

ANNIE
You were so little.

LOTTIE
This is the story I want to tell you. The story about my life before you.

ANNIE
You don't talk about that.

LOTTIE
I couldn't before, but I want to now if you'll help me.

ANNIE

How?

LOTTIE

Close your eyes.

ANNIE

I'm afraid.

LOTTIE

That's why I need your help. Close your eyes, Annie.

Annie does so hesitantly.

ANNIE POV:

As her eyes close, a swirling haze of monstrous visions appear. Annie breathes heavy with fear. We are in her world.

INT. MAIN ROOM - AS ANNIE SEES IT

Annie does not see things like the rest of us. Her world is one of surrealism and tangible thought. Fear is more palpable, emotions can be seen. Like an oil painting come to life, everything is exaggerated for the painter's purpose. Her only comfort is her friend and protector, Lottie.

ANNIE

Lottie?

LOTTIE (O.S.)

I'm here.

ANNIE

I can't see you.

LOTTIE (O.S.)

Can you see Mama and Papa?

Annie peers past the visions of her fear, and through the mist, she sees two hyperrealistic figures on the wall.

ANNIE

Yes.

LOTTIE (O.S.)

That's where I am.

Passing through the painting now as if into the wall, Lottie begins to come into focus. The girls can see, hear, and feel things in a way they never could before.

The empty apartment fills with possessions. (FLASHBACK)

INT. MAIN ROOM - 1928 - MORNING

We see the same two-bedroom apartment, clean, elegantly furnished, new, circa 1928. Everything seems heightened.

SUPER: "1928"

LILLY PEARL (20s, angelic), Lottie's mother (from the picture), holds infant Lottie in her lap.

A lace-lined blanket billows above Lottie's cherubic face.

LILLY
Where's that smile? Where is it?
I'm sure it's there somewhere.
Where is it?

The blanket gently falls, brushing the infant's face.

LILLY (CONT'D)
Where is your smile?

The baby smiles and giggles.

LILLY (CONT'D)
There it is! I knew we could find
it! Yes, I did! It was hiding, but
we found it!

Mother and child laugh as they cuddle close together. Father (30s, strong, steadfast) looks on and smiles.

LILLY (CONT'D)
That's my little girl! That's my
happy, darling girl!

The young family is happy. Full of life, potential, and hope.

Lottie's mother sings to her. The baby's eyes shine.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM - THREE YEARS LATER - DAY

SUPER: "1931"

There is SINGING from the previous scene. Lottie (3), bright and shining eyes, dressed in funeral attire, stares ahead.

Father, dressed in black, is on the phone.

FATHER

No. I told you. I don't want any of them there. They didn't want to be there when we got married. I don't want them there now that she's gone. Yeah. Well, Lilly isn't here, so we'll never know.

Father hangs up the phone, walks to his daughter, and extends his hand.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Come on, Lottie.

INT. MAIN ROOM - WINTER - TWO YEARS LATER - DAY

Lottie (5) sits bundled in a coat and scarf. Next to her sits paper and a Rubens Crayola No. 500 crayon box.

SUPER: "1933"

Father, also bundled, talks on the phone while she colors.

FATHER

So what does it mean for the shareholders in the east?

(listens)

No, I understand that, but--
Alright. Alright.

Father hangs up. Composed, but worried, he reaches above a kitchen cabinet and brings down a cigar box filled with cash.

Lottie watches as he counts out some bills. She hands him a paper which he folds around the money.

Father uses her crayon to write "4B" on the outside of the paper.

INT. MAIN ROOM - TWO YEARS LATER - NIGHT

The clock reads 8:45 pm.

SUPER: "1935"

Lottie (7) draws at the table. Her father enters.

FATHER

How's my little girl?

LOTTIE
She's fine. Did you see my
drawings?

FATHER
Oh, my. These are wonderful!

LOTTIE
That one's a horse.

FATHER
I can tell. I could use a horse!
Maybe I can ride him to work.

LOTTIE
No, you can't. He's not real.

FATHER
Well, he's a very good horse, and
you're a very good girl.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Father retrieves the cigar box from above the cabinet.

FATHER
You could perhaps be an artist when
you grow up. Did you get something
to eat?

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

From under the door slips a paper. Lottie picks it up and
reads "Rent due."

LOTTIE
Mm-hm.

FATHER (O.S.)
You finished the milk - good girl!

Father brings the cigar box and two empty milk bottles to the
table. Lottie hands her father the note, climbs into his lap.

LOTTIE
Rent's due.

FATHER
Yes, ma'am. Time to count!

Father counts out the bills while Lottie watches.

LOTTIE
Did you work today?

FATHER
I did. I scrubbed down a fishing
trawler.

LOTTIE
What's a fishing trawler?

FATHER
It's a big boat that smells like
fish.

LOTTIE
Eeewww!

FATHER
I agree.

Father has finished counting.

LOTTIE
Just enough?

FATHER
Just barely. But hopefully soon
there'll be more.

LOTTIE
Are you going to scrub down the
fishing trawler again tomorrow?

FATHER
No, tomorrow I'm going to a
factory.

LOTTIE
(Impressed)
A factory?

FATHER
Yes. The foreman says there might
be a job for me where they build
the boats.

LOTTIE
And then we'd have more money?

FATHER
I hope so.

LOTTIE
And we could buy ice cream!

Father laughs.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
When can I go back to school?

FATHER
As soon as it re-opens.

LOTTIE
I wish it was open now.

FATHER
Me, too. But we make the best of what we have. And aren't we lucky to have such a nice library close by where we can keep up with our lessons?

LOTTIE
Yes, and now I know how to read really good.

FATHER
Really well.

LOTTIE
Yes. Really, really well.

FATHER
But do you know how to tell time?

LOTTIE
Of course I do! It's almost nine.

FATHER
And that's past your bedtime.

He tickles Lottie, who laughs.

LOTTIE
But I don't want to go to bed.

FATHER
I know, but it's important so you can stay healthy.

He folds the note around the money, writes "4B" in crayola.

LOTTIE
Can I take it down?

FATHER
You remember where the rent box is?

LOTTIE

Yup!

FATHER

Alright. Straight down and straight
back up to bed. I'll time you!

He hands Lottie the money, who exits the apartment running.

LOTTIE

Go!

Father, weak and exhausted, gets up, sets 2 empty milk
bottles outside the apartment, and waits for Lottie.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - 2 YEARS LATER - DAY

Lottie (9) is asleep in bed. Father leans over and kisses her
on her forehead. He kneels beside her. Lottie stirs.

SUPER: "1937"

FATHER

Lottie? Lottie, wake up.

Lottie turns and opens her eyes.

LOTTIE

What is it, Papa?

FATHER

Hey, happy birthday! How's it feel
to be nine?

LOTTIE

I'm nine!

Her eyes fly open and she looks at Father.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)

Do you have to go to work?

FATHER

I do. Lots of people there are sick
and I want them to see that they
can count on me.

LOTTIE

'Cause you're tough.

FATHER

We're both tough. Now you be sure to go to the library for a couple of hours and work on your math and spelling, alright?

LOTTIE

Alright, Papa.

FATHER

We don't take days off in this family, even on our birthday. Got it?

LOTTIE

Got it.

FATHER

Good girl.

Father starts to leave, then stops.

FATHER (CONT'D)

About your birthday present, Lottie.

LOTTIE

It's OK, Papa. Birthdays aren't the same as Christmas.

FATHER

Well, that's true, but I suppose they should still be celebrated, especially for the finest daughter in all the land.

Father motions to a paint box, paints, and brushes tied with a red ribbon, on the floor. Lottie leaps out of bed.

LOTTIE

Thank you! I love them!

FATHER

They were your mama's. She was quite an artist, your mother. Just like someone else I know. I picked you up a library book on how to draw.

LOTTIE

There's nothing we can't learn if we have the right book.

FATHER

(With a laugh)

That's right. And there's a butcher on my way to work who says if I do his deliveries after my factory shift, I can bring you home a roll of butcher paper to paint on.

Lottie is already examining the paints.

FATHER (CONT'D)

I love you very much, and I'll see you tonight, birthday girl.

Father starts to leave. He's thin, tired, and sick. He quietly shuts Lottie's bedroom door to cover his coughing.

(PRELAP) "DANNY BOY" PLAYS.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lottie (9) is asleep. She wakes, gets out of bed, and starts toward the bathroom. MUSIC comes from Father's room.

LOTTIE POV:

Behind the partially open door, Father sits, the jewelry box open on his lap.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Next to Father sits a newspaper with an ad that reads: "Sell your precious stones for a fair price."

Father clutches his wife's ring tightly, then returns it to its place, closes the lid. Lottie ducks away from the door.

QUICK POP (FLASHBACK):

INT. MAIN ROOM - TEN YEARS BEFORE - DAY

The happy couple (Lottie's father, looking much younger, and mother) dance in the main room of the apartment.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-- Her hand in his hand: Wedding ring

-- His cheek against her cheek: Earrings

-- She tilts her head back and laughs: Necklace

-- He kisses her neck and shoulder: Broach

BACK TO SCENE:

Father closes the jewelry box. He sees another ad:
"Purchasing gold fillings. Let your mouth make you money."

Father goes to the mirror and examines his gold filled back teeth by candlelight. He is growing weaker and more frail.

INT. MAIN ROOM - THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

Lottie, bundled in her coat, colors on butcher paper. Father enters, nearly broken by the Depression. Lottie runs to him.

Cold and fragile, he places money on the table, then gauze. Lottie hugs him, then runs to the kitchen.

Father reaches in his mouth and replaces old cotton with new, packing tightly the gaps from the teeth he has just sold.

He dabs the blood from his mouth and hides the evidence as Lottie returns with the cigar box. She climbs into his lap.

Father and daughter huddle for warmth.

INT. MAIN ROOM - MORNING

Lottie (9) sits bundled by the window. A STORM RAGES.

Father fights a coughing fit. Lottie runs to him.

 LOTTIE
You OK, Papa?

 FATHER
It's just a cold. I'll be fine.

 LOTTIE
I painted this for you.

She hands her father a delicately painted handkerchief with birds around the border.

 FATHER
It's beautiful, Lottie. Where did you get the material?

 LOTTIE
The inside of my baby coat I grew out of. Just like the girl in the story we read.

FATHER

Now I can have a little bit of you
with me all the time, no matter
where I am. Thank you.

He pockets the handkerchief, tugging the corners up to be visible. He kisses Lottie on the head.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Careful crossing the street in
front of the library this afternoon
and I'll see you tonight.

LOTTIE

Alright, Papa. I love you.

FATHER

I love you too, little one.

Father coughs, exits. Lottie's alone, unaware that it's the last time she'll see her father or any member of her family.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER - DAY

Lottie enters with an armload of library books. She sets them down and thumbs through them. She pulls out a sheet of butcher paper and starts to draw. RAIN begins to PELT THE WINDOW outside.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER - NIGHT

Lottie sits at the kitchen table. She looks up at the clock, which reads 9 pm. She goes to bed as RAIN CONTINUES TO FALL.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Lottie wakes. She's aware something is not right.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She looks at Father's room, empty. The bed is undisturbed.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

In the bathroom, too, everything is untouched.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie opens the front door and spies the dairy delivery.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She drinks some milk and puts her glass in the sink.

INT. MAIN ROOM - AFTERNOON

Lottie draws. The clock moves forward. The light is fading.

INT. MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The apartment is dark. Lottie draws by candlelight. The clock reads 8:15.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lottie climbs in bed next to her bear and falls asleep.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - WINTER 1938 - NIGHT

The room is dark. We hear VOICES, but see only Lottie (10) holding a candle.

SUPER: "WINTER, 1938"

ANNIE (O.S.)
Are you afraid of the dark?

LOTTIE
No.

ANNIE (O.S.)
I am.

LOTTIE
That's OK. You're much younger than me. I'll have to take care of you. So you won't be afraid.

ANNIE (O.S.)
I don't want to be afraid.

LOTTIE
Only babies are afraid.

ANNIE (O.S.)
And you're not a baby.

LOTTIE
No. I'm not. I'm very grown-up.
It's your bedtime now. You need to
go to sleep. It's important to stay
healthy.

She blows out the candle and closes her eyes. A CHILD SINGS.

INT. MAIN ROOM - 1945

The apartment returns to view with Lottie and Annie in front of the paintings.

SUPER: "1945"

ANNIE
Who was that?

LOTTIE
You'll see.

ANNIE
When?

LOTTIE
In just a little while.

INT. MAIN ROOM - WINTER 1938 - DAY

Lottie (10), paintbrush in hand, stares down at the butcher paper.

SUPER: "WINTER, 1938"

Tears dampen the paper.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Lottie, alone, forges ahead with her normal routine. She eats a piece of bread at the table, then brings her plate to the sink.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

She brushes her teeth and watches a bug crawl across the counter.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER

She draws on butcher paper in the living room. There is a KNOCK. She jumps up and starts toward the door.

 LOTTIE
 (quietly)
 Papa?

A SECOND KNOCK, LOUDER. Lottie stops, frightened, too afraid to move. Under the door slides a piece of paper. "Rent Due."

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lottie sets the paper on the table and stares at it. She draws flowers in the note's margins.

She stares up at the cigar box, then climbs on the counter, gets the box, and looks inside. She counts out the rent money, writes "4B" on the note, and wraps it around the bills.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Lottie can't sleep. She is alone and frightened.

 ANNIE (O.S.)
 I'm so scared.

 LOTTIE
 It's okay. You have to be brave.
 Everything is going to be alright.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Lottie sleeps where we saw her last.

 ANNIE (O.S.)
 Lottie.

Lottie's eyes fly open. The room is still and she is alone.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie stands alone in her father's bedroom. Still.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie stands alone in the main room. Still.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - LATER - DAY

Lottie spreads out a piece of butcher paper and begins to draw. The image is of a little girl, Annie.

She draws Annie's hat, hair, clothes, and shoes, then large eyes and a smile. Lottie adds shading to Annie's face and then adds Mary Jane oxfords on her feet.

Lottie's eyes brighten and a smile sweeps across her face.

ANNIE (O.S.)
Do you want to play?

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie bursts out of her room, followed by Annie (7). They run through the apartment and fall to the floor with laughter.

INT. MAIN ROOM - 1945 - DAY

SUPER: "1945"

Annie is and always has been fiction. She is a painting created by Lottie and brought to life by her imagination.

ANNIE
Lottie?

LOTTIE
I was alone and scared, and I painted you. And then I wasn't alone any more.

ANNIE
I'm not real?

LOTTIE
You are to me. You were there when I needed you. There's nothing more real than that.

ANNIE
And now you don't need me anymore?

LOTTIE

That's not true. But I'm not a child now.

ANNIE

Are you gonna make me go away?

LOTTIE

I couldn't if I wanted to. You're a part of me, Annie. And you're a part of this place, just like the walls or the ceiling. I could never make you go away.

ANNIE

And you're always going to take care of me?

LOTTIE

You're the one who's taken care of me. You've been with me the whole time, and you always will be.

The mural of Lottie's past glows with life. The girls embrace and Annie is gone. On the wall, Annie's image smiles down at Lottie.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Lottie wakes alone in the single bed that she and Annie once shared.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER

Lottie sits dwarfed by the empty room and her painted life story. She stares up, unsure of how to move on without Annie.

There is a KNOCK. Lottie tenses.

JOE (O.S.)

Peninsula Creamery.

Lottie relaxes and goes to the door. Opens it.

JOE (CONT'D)

Happy Monday, Miss Pearl. Say! You look better.

LOTTIE

How are you, Joe?

JOE
 Can't complain! Starting the after
 Thanksgiving pick up. Looks like
 you're missing something here.

Lottie's confused.

JOE (CONT'D)
 Your empties. They're not here.
 Don't want to get charged for them,
 do you?

LOTTIE
 Oh, no. Of course not. No. Thank
 you. Let me get them.

Lottie hesitates.

JOE
 You go ahead. I'm fine here. It's
 no hurry.

Lottie smiles and shuts the door. She finds a bottle on the
 table, another under a chair. Conroy's blood is still on it.

ANNIE (V.O.)
 Combato, defendo! Combato, Defendo!

She returns to the door with the bottles.

LOTTIE
 Here, Joe.

JOE
 Now. There we are! A place for
 everything and everything in its
 place. Secret of life. You have a
 good day now, Miss Pearl.

Lottie shuts the door.

LOTTIE
 A place for everything.

Lottie closes her eyes and when she opens them, the mural is
 full of life and movement.

INT. HALLWAY - 2013 - DAY

We are back with the REPORTERS and SENATOR CLEARING.

SUPER: "2013"

CLEARING

What happened here holds meaning far beyond the time and place in which it happened. It's the story of a life untouched by the outside world. It's the story of who we are, absent the things most of us feel like we could never live without.

THEN:

INT. MAIN ROOM - 1945 - DAY

Lottie, eyes open, staring at the living mural of her life.

SUPER: "1945"

CLEARING

(from previous scene)
And it's a story that, like so many, was almost never told.

Lottie knows what she wants to do.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Lottie pulls a chair to the wall and sets out her paints.
- Lottie begins to add to the mural.
- The living images envelop Lottie. She continues to paint.
- COMMOTION in the hall. Lottie paints, undisturbed.
- Night falls. Lottie continues to paint by candlelight.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM - MORNING

Lottie, dressed for work, stands in front of her creation. The main wall is entirely painted.

The images move and swirl. She picks up her portfolio and exits, locking the door.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER - EVENING

Lottie paints. The images on the wall swirl with life. A DOOR SLAMS in the hall and LOUD VOICES draw her attention.

LOTTIE POV:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lottie opens the door and sees POLICE OFFICERS rushing past. Another DOOR SLAMS. Lottie shuts the door and locks it.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Lottie, still struggling with being alone, looks where Annie used to sleep. Empty.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lottie opens the door to retrieve the dairy. Miles is there.

MILES

Hello, there.

Lottie is startled but tries not to show it.

LOTTIE

Good Morning, Mr. Waltzenburg.

MILES

Your daddy home?

LOTTIE

He's in Australia.

Miles eyes Lottie. He's drunk.

MILES

Hope the ruckus last night didn't cause you any trouble. Four prowl cars busted up a party, then all tarnation broke loose.

LOTTIE

No. It didn't bother me. Thank you.

Miles stops Lottie from closing the door.

MILES

Need to talk to your daddy when he's back. See, there's a lot of undesirables moving in here now with the war done.

Miles' foot still blocks the door.

MILES (CONT'D)

Problem is that they are making so much money now that I can't afford not to rent to 'em. Know what I mean?

Lottie's terrified.

MILES (CONT'D)

Make the rents sky high an' they still just cough it up like they Rockefeller.

He tries to look inside.

MILES (CONT'D)

You hear what I'm sayin'?

Lottie nods.

MILES (CONT'D)

Not gonna say it's the safest place, though. Your daddy ought to know that. Daddies supposed to keep their little ones safe.

Miles moves his foot away from the door, but Lottie is frozen with fear. Miles is distracted.

MILES (CONT'D)

You know I had me a little one. Not much older than you.

He stumbles, ghostlike, away from Lottie and down the hall.

MILES (CONT'D)

A good daddy ought to know how to keep his little girl safe.

Lottie quickly shuts the door and locks it.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie drops to the floor, setting the dairy down with a thud. The mural churns with emotion in response to her.

INT. HALLWAY - THAT NIGHT

Lottie, bundled in a coat, comes home from work. HEATED VOICES can be heard down the hall.

EUGENE (O.S.)
But it's a forty percent increase.

Lottie creeps down the hall.

MILES (O.S.)
Got to cover the building
improvements.

LOTTIE POV:

Down the hall, Miles argues with Eugene, who is waving a lease agreement wildly.

EUGENE
Improvements? We've had nothing
fixed since we moved in!

MILES
You can always move.

EUGENE
We've been here ten years!

MILES
Well, then, sounds like you've had
a good run. Maybe time to move on.

Lottie presses against the wall out of view and listens.

EUGENE
(Deflated)
My boys lived here.

MILES
I understand that.

EUGENE
We can not pay forty percent more.

MILES
Then you can not live here.

EUGENE
This is criminal.

MILES
Well. You welcome to get a lawyer.
Course, they gonna cost a lot more
than that forty percent increase.

The two men stand in the dim light of Eugene's doorway.

MILES (CONT'D)
Need to know by month's end.

Eugene slams his apartment door. Lottie's lost in worry, drops her portfolio, scattering the drawings.

Lottie stoops to gather her things and sees the muddy boots of Miles standing in front of her.

MILES (CONT'D)
You quiet as a little mouse, ain't ya'? Messy, though. What's all this?

Miles looks at a court rendering of a witness on the stand.

LOTTIE
They're from work. I bring them home to finish.

MILES
You work for the courts? Doing these drawings?

LOTTIE
My father is an attorney for the military. He got me a job there. He's very good friends with the judges.

Lottie tries to take the one drawing Miles holds tightly to.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
And all of the lawyers.

Miles lets go of the drawing.

MILES
How old are you?

LOTTIE
I need to get inside. I have to finish these.

Lottie quickly moves past Miles, who watches her go.

INT. MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The mural has grown. It is a history of Lottie's life with Annie as the protagonist. Lottie paints an image of Annie.

LOTTIE
 ...but because it was done *ex parte*, I had to draw the same man every day.

The mural has become Lottie's second life.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
 He was missing a button on his jacket and I had to try not to laugh every time I drew it.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Miles passes the door and stops. He listens.

LOTTIE (O.S.)
 I know it's not important, but I did want to stand up and shout, "Hey, fella! I'm tired of drawing your coat with one button! Get someone to sew it on for ya', will you?"

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie laughs as the mural responds to her joy. She continues to paint.

LOTTIE
 But of course I didn't. Can you imagine what would have happened if I did?

Lottie, amused with herself continues to paint. In the hall, Miles' shadow moves away from the door.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER

Lottie now paints an image of Joe, dapper and real. His image and responds to Lottie.

LOTTIE
 There was a child on the stand today. Thirteen years old.

Joe's image speaks to Lottie.

JOE
 Why was she there?

LOTTIE
I'd rather not talk about it.

JOE
Well, that's pretty much up to you,
now isn't it?

She smiles as she continues to paint.

JOE (CONT'D)
You look very nice today.

This is a better topic.

JOE (CONT'D)
Would you say I look handsome here
in my dairy uniform?

LOTTIE
That's not appropriate.

JOE
I apologize.

Lottie smiles. Then her mind drifts elsewhere.

JOE (CONT'D)
What's the matter?

LOTTIE
Why do...

JOE
What is it?

LOTTIE
Why is it that people, no matter
where they come from, or what they
look like, or how much money they
have, sometimes do things that
hurt?

JOE
Hurt who?

LOTTIE
Other people. Sometimes themselves.
Sometimes both.

JOE
Hmmm.

LOTTIE
Do you know people who do that?

JOE
Well, I do meet a lot of people.

LOTTIE
That's not an answer.
(then)
There's a lot of sadness now.

JOE
At work?

LOTTIE
Yes. It's easy to forget how lucky
we are.

JOE
Are you alright?

LOTTIE
Yes. I'm alright, thank you.

JOE
Glad to hear it. Now! What do you
say, do I look fine as frog's hair
in my spiffy whites or not?

Lottie fights a smile.

LOTTIE
Fine as frog's hair.

JOE
See, now, was that so hard?

Lottie grins. The paintings swirl. Lottie is embraced by her
fantasy world.

INT. MAIN ROOM - MORNING

Lottie, dressed for work. Finishes a hasty breakfast.

ANNIE (O.S.)
Then why didn't he have to go to
jail?

LOTTIE
He made restitution and agreed to
serve community service.

Reveal. The mural encompasses half the room.

The vast painted images are part fiction, part reality. Epic
in scale, they swirl and move with life.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
I don't know when I'll be home
tonight. I have to go to the store.

ANNIE
Don't forget the library.

LOTTIE
Of course I won't forget, but I may
not be able to get there before it
closes.

Lottie picks up a paint brush and touches up the detail on an
image of Annie.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
I'll be back as soon as I can,
though.

Lottie picks up her portfolio and exits to the:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Miles sits on a crate, watching her door.

MILES
What do you do in there all night?

Lottie, startled, tries to stay composed.

MILES (CONT'D)
Candlelight licking at the
threshold all hours of the
darkness. What the blazes you doing
in there?

A WOMAN (60s) carrying groceries climbs the stairs and starts
down the hall.

MILES (CONT'D)
Morning, Mrs. Zambelli. Beautiful
day for the market, isn't it?

She moves down the hall without a word. Lottie locks the door
and makes her escape down the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Joe sets the dairy delivery down just as Lottie opens the
door. She sees him and jumps back, startled.

JOE
Whoa, now! I'm sorry! Didn't mean
to scare you.

Lottie eases, seeing it's Joe.

LOTTIE
I wasn't scared. Just surprised.

JOE
Your daddy still in-- where was it?

LOTTIE
Brazil. Yes. But he'll be home
soon.

JOE
That man sure must lead an exciting
life. Bet he'll be glad to get home
and see you, though. You have a
nice day, now.

Joe starts to leave and Lottie stops him.

LOTTIE
Joe?

Joe turns to look at her.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
If someone is trying to...

JOE
Trying to?

LOTTIE
Nevermind. I'm sorry. Could you
please just add an extra bottle of
cream to next week's order?

JOE
I surely can. Happy to do it! 'Bye,
now.

Lottie watches as Joe walks away.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lottie passes Miles arguing with a tenant. She moves quickly
by him.

INT. MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Lottie paints. NOISES ECHO OUTSIDE. She's engrossed in her world. Candles burn, illuminating her living work of art.

ANNIE
Tell me a story.

RAIN FALLS HEAVILY outside.

LOTTIE
I just did.

ANNIE
About me.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Miles stalks the hall. He is a man with no place to be. The light under the door flickers. He takes a drink.

LOTTIE (O.S.)
Annie had always wanted to fly
around the world, just like Amelia
Earhart.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Miles' shadow can be seen under the lavender door.

LOTTIE
Now, everyone knows that flying
around the world is a very
dangerous thing to do. But Annie
was determined!

The handle of the apartment door moves. Lottie freezes. There is a THUNDER CLAP. The mural teems with activity.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Lottie exits the apartment with her portfolio. As she begins to close the door, she sees Miles coming up the stairs. The hall is empty. She pauses with the door ajar.

MILES
Well, now, look who it is. You
know, I was just thinking about you
last night.

LOTTIE
I'm sorry. I'm late for work.

MILES
I could give you a ride.

LOTTIE
No, thank you.

MILES
Come on, now. Let me get you where
you headed. Little thing like you
shouldn't be out all alone.

LOTTIE
No. Thank you, though. I'll be--

MILES
What's the matter with you? Nobody
never teach you how to be polite?

Lottie stands frozen as Miles reaches out for her wrist.

MILES (CONT'D)
Now, come on. Someone offers you a
kindness, the least you--

Lottie clutches her portfolio as Miles grabs her wrist.
Lottie's heard of this kind of attack before. She knows she
has to fight back.

LOTTIE
I said no.

MILES
You ungrateful little...

He pulls her closer. Lottie shoves her portfolio at his
chest. Surprised, he steps back, but tightens his grip. He
slaps the portfolio away as court drawings go everywhere. In
fight or flight, Lottie uses Miles' momentum to spin in, then
throws an elbow to his nose, connecting with a loud CRACK. In
shock, he lets go. He reaches up to find blood dripping and
angrily rushes toward her. Quick and agile, she makes it into
the apartment and SLAMS the door. We hear the TURNING of the
lock and a BOLT sliding into place.

Miles slams his hand into the door, leaving a BLOODY
HANDPRINT.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie, pressed against the door, breathes heavily. Miles KICKS on the door from outside. Annie, wide-eyed, appears in the room.

ANNIE
(timidly)
Lottie?

MILES (O.S.)
(shouting)
Oh, you want to play, huh?

Miles' THUNDEROUS KICKS at the door echo through the room.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

MILES
You better open this door, or I'll
take it down!

Miles beats the door violently and turns at the door handle.

The approaching CLATTER OF MILK BOTTLES echoes from the stairwell. Joe emerges on the scene and takes in what's happening.

JOE
Morning.

Silence.

JOE (CONT'D)
Everything alright here?

MILES
Something I can help you with,
dairy boy?

Joe knows where this is headed. He sets the milk bottles down.

JOE
Well, for starters, you could step
away from that door that's not
yours.

MILES
(turning to face Joe)
Well, lookee here. We got ourselves
a hero come to save a poor little
girl.

Joe looks Miles up and down.

JOE
Looks like to me she did just fine
on her own.

Miles turns his fury on Joe, throwing a roundhouse punch at the side of his head.

Joe instinctively ducks out of the way, then counters with several well-aimed punches that hit their marks on a stunned Miles' head and body.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie hears the SOUNDS of PUNCHES outside the door.

LOTTIE
(whispering)
Joe!

The paintings churn into a storm of emotion. Lottie sees Annie, the break in, and Joe. She looks back at the door, determined.

ANNIE
Lottie, no!

LOTTIE
We don't have to hide any more,
Annie. We're not babies. We're
stronger now.

Lottie opens the door, but the two men crash into it, sending Lottie flying backwards. Half in the hall and half in the apartment, the two men exchange haymakers.

ANNIE
(screaming)
The door!

Lottie jumps up and slams it shut again.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Miles, out of breath and sweaty, fights like an animal, but Joe's boxing stance quickly gives him the upper hand. Miles tries to get Joe in a headlock, but Joe hits him with a jab to his broken nose, and then three swift punches to his left kidney, dropping the large man to his knees. Joe takes hold of a battered Miles and lifts him to his feet.

JOE
How often am I here?

Miles knows he's beat.

MILES
What?

JOE
How often do you see me in this building?

MILES
Every day.

JOE
That's right. Every day. And this is my new favorite floor. Every pick up, every delivery, I'm going to be sure I stop by here.

Miles understands.

JOE (CONT'D)
And she just became the tenant you forgot. Get it? She's invisible. You don't go anywhere near her. This building only has three flights up now. You understand?

Miles has no option.

MILES
Yeah.

JOE
For you, this fourth floor doesn't even exist.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie has a bump on her head from where the door hit her. Annie gently touches it. There is a KNOCK.

JOE (O.S.)
Miss Pearl? Are you alright?

No answer. There is a SOUND at her feet. Lottie looks down as her COURT DRAWINGS slide into the apartment. She smiles, opens the door.

LOTTIE
Are you hurt?

JOE
Hurt? No, I'm fine.

LOTTIE
I'm glad.

Joe starts to leave.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
Joe.

He turns.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
Are you sure you're not injured? I
have a medical book.

He re-approaches Lottie.

JOE
Miss Pearl, where I grew up, a
scuffle like that was called a
difference of opinion. I'm fine.
No need to worry. Every day's got
something new in store for us. My
wife will give me a bit of grief
for ripping my uniform, though.
(beat)
But I guess I've seen a whole lot
worse.

The two have a new bond.

JOE (CONT'D)
Maybe you've seen a little bit of
that, too?

No need to answer.

LOTTIE
My father isn't working in Brazil.

JOE
Mmmhmm. Or Turkey, or Australia,
or the Island of Grenada?

Lottie understands.

JOE (CONT'D)
There is a sanctuary in growing up
hard.
(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

It means you don't have to worry
about what comes next. 'Cause you
know it's bound to be easier.

The mural behind Lottie jumps to life.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lottie brushes her hair alone. She looks at herself in the
mirror. She sets down the brush and climbs into bed.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - 2012 - MORNING

Lottie (84) wakes in her single bed. The eyes are instantly
identifiable as Lottie's.

SUPER: "2012"

The room, however, looks very different. The bed and few
items that remain have all been pushed to the center of the
room.

Every inch of the wall is covered in paintings.

INT. MAIN ROOM - 2012 - CONTINUOUS

SIRENS WAIL and there is SHOUTING ON THE STREET BELOW. Lottie
eats her breakfast.

Reveal: Paintings cover everything reachable. Walls,
baseboards, and much of the floor.

What little furniture there is has been pushed to the middle
of the room.

There is a THUNDEROUS CRASH OUTSIDE HER DOOR. Then MORE
COMMOTION.

She goes to the door, listens, then carefully and quietly
cracks open the lavender door to see:

LOTTIE POV:

Two YOUNG MEN run past. Lottie quickly closes the door and
locks it. She waits, then carefully cracks open the door
again. Hallway empty.

Lottie begins to shut the door, but stops. She sees a shoe
barely in view.

Cautiously, she opens the door more and sticks her head into the:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

On the floor beside her door, unconscious, is Jackson Clearing (the senator's son). She approaches.

Bloodied and awkwardly lying across a skateboard that was used to bash his head during a mugging, Jackson is a mess.

Lottie reaches down and tentatively touches his shoulder. He wakes with a jolt, flailing around.

Lottie retreats inside her apartment.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie again cautiously opens the door. No shoe. She peeks further into the:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lottie stands in the hall, looking down.

Jackson, one shoe missing, is again flopped awkwardly, this time on his face. The skateboard has rolled down the hall.

Lottie assesses the situation. SHOUTING echoes from the stairwell. It's not safe.

Lottie tries to pull Jackson by the foot. No luck. MORE SHOUTS and a BOTTLE BREAKS.

Lottie sees the skateboard. "Ah-ha!"

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Lottie rolls Jackson onto the skateboard, points him toward her apartment, and starts to push. His head bangs against the doorway.

LOTTIE

Oh, dear. Sorry about that.

She readjusts and this time pulls him into:

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie, hunched and exhausted, wheels Jackson across the threshold of her doorway and into apartment 4B.

She shuts the door and locks it. Then stares down at him.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER - DAY

Lottie sits in a chair. Next to her sits an empty milk bottle and a number of books.

At her feet sleeps Jackson. Cleaner, a wet cloth on his forehead, sleeping on Lottie's little girl pillow and bedding brought from her room.

He stirs and snuggles in before reluctantly starting to wake.

JACKSON POV:

His eyes open to find himself surrounded by Annie's life story. He truly has no idea what to make of this.

JACKSON

What the... Where...

LOTTIE

Good morning.

He leaps to his feet, flees from the voice, then turns to see Lottie standing, holding a milk bottle by the neck.

JACKSON

Holy--

LOTTIE

If you try to hurt me in any way, I'll smash this milk bottle up against your head and send you running. We've done it before and we'll do it again if you get out of line. Understand?

JACKSON

Yes, ma'am.

LOTTIE

No funny business now. I'm not a young woman, but you step out of line and BAM! Combato! Wham! Defendo! Do you believe me?

JACKSON
I do believe you.

LOTTIE
Good. How's your head?

JACKSON
My-- It hurts, now that you mention it. Front and back.

LOTTIE
One of those might be my fault. I'm sorry.

JACKSON
What is this place? Do you-- You live here?

LOTTIE
Yes, I do. My name is Lottie Pearl, and you crashed into my door this morning. Now what's your name?

JACKSON
Clearing. Jackson Clearing. You can call me Jax. I'm a journalist. I write for NewZDoggs.

LOTTIE
That's a funny name for a newspaper.

JACKSON
It's a blog.

LOTTIE
Well, you stay with it and I'm sure it will get better.

JACKSON
No. It's... nevermind.

LOTTIE
Would you like something to eat?

Jackson stands bewildered. Injured and utterly speechless as he looks at what's around him... but he is hungry.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER

Jackson and Lottie finish eating at the table.

JACKSON
And you've lived here this whole
time?

LOTTIE
Yes. Since I was born.

Jackson, in awe, looks around.

JACKSON
Alright.

LOTTIE
Do you live in the building?

JACKSON
Me? No. I was doing a story on
cloned phones being sold online. I
was supposed to meet a girl outside
apartment 4F down the hall.

Lottie accepts this as she does all things.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
I think, I-- I guess it was a
setup.

The mural seems endless.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Did you do all of this?

Lottie nods as she methodically eats her meal.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
What's it about?

LOTTIE
Annie.

JACKSON
Annie?

Lottie looks at him a bit like he's an idiot. She gets up and
walks to the wall where she first started her mural.

LOTTIE
Her name is Annie.

Jackson again is left speechless.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Lottie has told Jackson her entire life story.

 LOTTIE
And now I need something from you,
please.

Jackson is dumbfounded.

 JACKSON
From me?

 LOTTIE
Yes.

 JACKSON
Ummm, okay. What's up?

 LOTTIE
Good question!

Lottie looks straight up. Jackson follows. The ceiling.

 JACKSON
Oh.

INT. MAIN ROOM - THE NEXT DAY - MORNING

Lottie is painting. There is a KNOCK. She goes to the door.

INTERCUT - MAIN ROOM AND HALLWAY

 LOTTIE
Who is it?

 JACKSON
It's Jax. I got the stuff you
wanted.

 LOTTIE
What's the password?

 JACKSON
The... It's Jackson. From
yesterday.

 LOTTIE
No one gets in without the
password.

 JACKSON
Ummm... Annie?

Lottie opens the door. She's having fun.

LOTTIE
There's no password.

JACKSON
Oh.

LOTTIE
But that was a good guess!

JACKSON
Thanks.

LOTTIE
That was fun.

JACKSON
Right.

Outside the door is a pile of timber and a metal framework.

LOTTIE
Oh! You did get it! Do you think it
will be enough?

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER

Jackson has set up the scaffolding. Lottie climbs carefully upward.

JACKSON
You alright?

LOTTIE
Oh, yes! This is fun!

JACKSON
Right. More fun. Hey. Who else have
you shown this to?

LOTTIE
Shown what?

JACKSON
This place.

LOTTIE
Oh. No one. My, this is high up. I
like it.

JACKSON
So no one else knows about Annie?
About the paintings?

LOTTIE
Just you.

JACKSON
How come?

LOTTIE
No one else ever crashed into my
door on a skateboard.

JACKSON
I wasn't on the-- forget it. You
sure you're alright up there?

LOTTIE
Yup. Thank you. You can go now.

JACKSON
Go? Oh. Okay. Ummm. Really?

LOTTIE
Yes. Thank you. Goodbye.

JACKSON
I-- You're welcome.

Jackson starts to go.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Could I come see you again,
tomorrow, maybe?

LOTTIE
I have to go to the library.

JACKSON
Oh. Alright.

He opens the door to leave.

LOTTIE
I'll be here on Thursday, though.

INT. HALLWAY - THURSDAY - DAY

Jackson climbs the stairs and starts down the hallway toward
the lavender door.

A HOMELESS MAN sleeps in the corner. Trash is everywhere.
LOUD MUSIC PLAYS nearby. Jackson knocks at the door.

JACKSON
Miss Pearl? Hello?

He knocks one more time, then starts back down the hall.

Lottie reaches the top of the stairs, sets a bottle of water
and foil packet of food where the homeless man sleeps.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Miss Pearl?

LOTTIE
Hello, there!

JACKSON
Jackson.

LOTTIE
I know!

JACKSON
Oh. Okay. How are you?

LOTTIE
Fine as frog's hair! Come on. I'll
make us some tea.

JACKSON
Alright.

Lottie opens the door and they enter.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie sets her bag and a book down on the table.

LOTTIE
Do you like tea?

JACKSON
Sure. Thank you.

Lottie disappears into the kitchen.

In the middle of the room, the scaffolding stands. The
ceiling is already filling up. The artwork is everywhere.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER - DAY

Lottie and Jackson drink tea at the table.

JACKSON
And you were born in 1928?

LOTTIE
Yes, that's right. I think that's right.

JACKSON
And that would make you eighty-four?

LOTTIE
That's right, but the government thinks I'm eighty-six. I just let them think I look good for my age.

Jackson laughs.

JACKSON
Would you be willing to let me interview you? You know - for an article?

LOTTIE
I thought that's what you were doing.

JACKSON
No, I-- I guess I just thought I should make it official.

LOTTIE
Well, alright then.

Lottie sticks out her hand. Jackson, amused, shakes it.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
Now Annie wants you to see the important part.

Jackson has given up control to Lottie.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lottie leads Jackson into her room. His amazement deepens.

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - LATER - DAY

Lottie and Jackson sit amid all the paintings.

LOTTIE

And so I asked him. Why do people do things that just cause pain? I must have sounded like a little girl.

JACKSON

And what did he say?

LOTTIE

Oh, he wouldn't tell me anything. Made me figure it all out on my own. I think that maybe that's what caring for someone is about.

JACKSON

Caring for someone?

LOTTIE

Staying with them until they figure things out.

JACKSON

And did you? Figure out why people cause so much pain?

LOTTIE

I think everything bad that people choose comes from being hurt or afraid. And if we don't heal the hurt or stop the fear, then we pass it on to others so that we don't feel alone.

Jackson is in awe.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)

Annie would want me to tell you most of that was hers.

(beat)

I also need to you show you the other room.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door to the master opens and Jackson stands, shocked by what he sees. The darkest and most painful images are here.

JACKSON

These are...

Jackson's speechless.

LOTTIE

I don't go in here very much.

JACKSON

Why are they all so...

LOTTIE

They used to talk to me.

JACKSON

Talk to you?

LOTTIE

Even more than that, really. They were real to me. So when something happened, something really awful, the darkest times, I put them in here. So I could shut the door.

JACKSON

And this is where they stayed.

LOTTIE

This was their place. A place for everything and everything in its place.

Jackson is moved.

JACKSON

When I came here. When you found me.

LOTTIE

Yes?

JACKSON

I wasn't researching a story. I was... following a more recreational path.

LOTTIE

Okay.

The images seem to move, but Jackson doesn't notice.

JACKSON

I'm sorry I lied to you.

LOTTIE
 Oh, that's alright. I lie a lot.
 It's a very useful tool to have.
 Would you help me with something?

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER

The scaffolding moves, inch by inch, as Jackson tugs it across the floor. Lottie watches.

JACKSON
 There?

LOTTIE
 A little more.

The framework creaks and groans as it moves.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
 There!

JACKSON
 Alright. You'll be careful getting up?

Lottie is distracted, gathering her paints.

LOTTIE
 Oh, yes. I like to climb. And I'm always very careful.

JACKSON
 Alright, then. I can give you a--

She is on a mission. She ignores Jackson and starts to climb. Jackson watches for a moment, then shuts the door.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER - DAY

Lottie lies on the scaffolding, high above Jackson, who reads at the table.

SUPER: "ONE YEAR LATER - 2013"

JACKSON
 I can't believe this is a real book. *Combato, Defendo*. Unbelievable. Where'd you say you got it?

No answer.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Lottie, where did *Combato, Defendo*
come from?

No answer.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Lottie?

Jackson leaps up and starts toward the scaffolding. Lottie looks down.

LOTTIE
Scared you, didn't I?

JACKSON
Son of... Yeah. Good one.

LOTTIE
I got it at the library. They were
gonna throw it away. Annie and I
used to read it all the time.

JACKSON
What made them stop talking to you?

LOTTIE
What's that?

JACKSON
The paintings. Why did they stop
talking to you?

LOTTIE
They didn't.

Jackson, concerned, looks up.

Lottie peeks down over the edge of the scaffolding at him, laughing.

JACKSON
You're having fun again, aren't
you?

LOTTIE
Oh, very much. They stopped talking
to me when I stopped talking to
them. Maybe I just didn't need them
any more.

Silence.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
But I do miss them sometimes.

Silence.

 LOTTIE (CONT'D)
You coming back next Thursday?

 JACKSON
Yeah, I'll be here.

 LOTTIE
Good.

Jackson smiles.

 LOTTIE (CONT'D)
I need blue paint. I'll tell you
where to get it.

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

Time has passed. The scaffolding has moved, and much of the ceiling has been painted. Jackson and Lottie share a meal.

MUSIC PLAYS as we see glimpses of their life over the next few years.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Jackson knocks, holding painting supplies.
- Jackson holds the scaffolding. Lottie paints the ceiling.
- Paints drips on Jackson as he reads. Lottie laughs.
- Jackson stands alone in the master bedroom.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Lottie enters, carrying food, and sets it on a wooden trunk.

 LOTTIE
There you go.

 JACKSON
I'm not writing an article.

 LOTTIE
Oh, you lied!

Jackson laughs.

JACKSON

No. I tried. I can't fit it all in. There's no way I could put it all into words. Everything that happened to you.

LOTTIE

Oh, nothing happened to me.

Jackson scoffs.

JACKSON

Nothing?

LOTTIE

Anyone who's never left the city can't have lived much of a life. I wanted to go to Australia. And I almost did once. I didn't tell you about that, did I?

Jackson shakes his head.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)

I didn't get to live a big life. Just the courthouse and here. That's all it was.

JACKSON

My father used to say it's not how much we do that makes people care. It's how much we care about the things we do.

LOTTIE

Oh, I like that.

JACKSON

I never really knew what it meant.

Silence.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

Okay if I keep coming by? Even if I can't write about you?

LOTTIE

Oh, my, yes! We have fun.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

The building is disgusting. The halls are deserted and many apartments have been abandoned.

Jackson walks away, down the stairs.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Jackson walks up the stairs, bundled for warmth. He knocks on the lavender door.

 LOTTIE (O.S.)
Who is it?

 JACKSON
Jax.

Lottie opens the door.

 LOTTIE
I'm glad you're here. I want to
show you something.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jackson and Lottie stand, looking at the ceiling. It's completely covered. Many new images include Jackson, the night they met, and their time together.

 LOTTIE
What do you think?

 JACKSON
I love it. Can I take a picture?

 LOTTIE
I don't own a camera.

 JACKSON
I've got one on my phone.

 LOTTIE
Oh, my. It's like the future!

Jackson laughs.

Jackson begins to frame the ceiling at then stops.

 JACKSON
Do you want to be in it?

 LOTTIE
Me? Oh! Yes!

JACKSON
Let's do one together.

LOTTIE
Yes! That's a good idea. I had my
picture taken at work when I
retired and once when I was a baby,
too. Do you wanna see?

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lottie, shoes off, has climbed up on the kitchen counter to retrieve the cigar box.

JACKSON
Lottie, I can get that for you.

LOTTIE
Don't be silly. It's my box.

There's nothing Jackson can do.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
You can hold the chair, though.

Jackson does.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

At the table, Lottie opens the weathered and worn cigar box. Inside are a few knickknacks, a watch, and three pictures.

LOTTIE
This one is of my mother. Wasn't
she beautiful?

JACKSON
Yes. Very.

LOTTIE
Annie thinks I look like her.

JACKSON
She's right.

Lottie smiles.

LOTTIE
This was her with my father and me.

JACKSON
Wow.

LOTTIE
I'm the baby.

Lottie removes a 3x5 photo. 65-year-old Lottie is immediately identifiable by her eyes. People in typical 1990s work attire, silk shirts, and rolled up suit coat sleeves, mill in the background. She hands it to Jackson.

JACKSON
This is you?

LOTTIE
When I retired. They gave me a watch.

Lottie picks up a watch from among the knickknacks.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)
It's engraved.

JACKSON
(reading out loud)
"To Lotty for her service." They misspelled your name.

LOTTIE
That's OK. I don't mind. It looks pretty with the Y.

JACKSON
Are these the only two pictures that you've ever had taken?

Lottie nods as she stares at the photos.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Why?

LOTTIE
Where would I put them? Besides, I know what I look like.

Good point.

JACKSON
Well, then let's take one now.

LOTTIE
Alright.

Jackson positions himself for a selfie with Lottie and extends his arm to capture her, him, and much of the room and ceiling.

LOTTIE (CONT'D)

Oh, my.

JACKSON

It's called a selfie.

LOTTIE

That's a funny name.

They smile. Jackson takes the picture.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Jackson arrives at the top of the stairs where a VAGRANT has set up camp. He sets a water bottle and nutrition bar down beside him and goes to the lavender door.

He knocks. No answer. He knocks again, checks the time on his phone, then knocks louder.

JACKSON

Lottie?

No answer. He tests the doorknob. Unlocked. He cautiously enters:

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The ceiling is completely painted in images and everything looks as it should.

JACKSON

Lottie? You havin' fun with me?

No answer. Jackson starts down the hall. Lottie's door is open. He enters, then comes back out.

Jackson's face is filled with sadness, hurt, and shock. He wanders to the middle of the main room, stunned. Lottie's gone.

A storm of emotion sweeps over Jackson and through the apartment. He is transported into Lottie's former world.

The scenes of the mural come to life and sweep across his mind like a hurricane.

The image of his first meeting with Lottie takes focus. He stares up to where Lottie has painted a replica of their selfie. Lottie's image is rich, animated, and full of life. She smiles at him.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jackson steps into the hall, pulling the lavender door closed. He takes out his phone and dials.

JACKSON
 (on the phone)
 Ren? ...No, I'm fine. Can you find
 time to meet me downtown?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Picking up where we saw them in the beginning. The awkward meeting.

JACKSON
 Morning, Senator.

CLEARING
 How are you, son?

JACKSON
 I'm fine, Pop.

CLEARING
 Been a while this time.

JACKSON
 Sure has. Miss me?

Rena is impressed it hasn't come to blows yet. There is a long, awkward pause.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
 See, Ren? Just like old times.

Rena loves her brother. He could always make her laugh.

CLEARING
 How much do you need?

RENA
 Dad.

CLEARING
 Please, Ren. You did your part.
 You got me here. Let's just get
 down to it.

Clearing stares down his only daughter.

CLEARING (CONT'D)

So what's the number, Jackson? How much do you need?

RENA

Dad. Please just--

JACKSON

Ren. It's fine. It's okay.

(then)

Actually, Dad, you're right. This is absolutely about money.

CLEARING

How much this time?

JACKSON

Around a million and a half, if you think you can spare it.

Jackson opens wide the lavender door to reveal a room filled with painted memories, covered in the story of a life unseen.

INT. MAIN ROOM - LATER

Clearing, Rena, and Jackson stand, dwarfed by the life's work that surrounds them.

RENA

So when Jax called me, I saw what was here. I knew that you'd want to know about it. And I knew that nothing about it would be easy.

CLEARING

This development was a centerpiece of our re-election campaign.

JACKSON

Say you lied. It's expected behavior for an elected official.

Rena can't hide her amusement. Her father looks at her.

CLEARING

While I have never been above a creative retraction of a campaign promise, bids have been accepted. Permits have been granted. People are depending on this project.

He looks to Rena.

CLEARING (CONT'D)

You know how much has gone into this.

RENA

Yeah. I do. And so does Jackson, Dad. But the woman who lived and died here left her soul on these walls. She left a story that can touch the lives of people who never knew she existed. She left the key to understanding what makes us who we are, and it's been trapped in here for decades. You can give that to your constituency. You can give them the gift of understanding that a life, any life, lived with purpose, holds meaning.

Clearing looks at his daughter.

CLEARING

In the morning, remind me to transfer you to my speech writing staff.

Rena smiles.

CLEARING (CONT'D)

It won't be easy. There are people who will hate this. They will hate it with a special ferocity reserved for meddling government officials who tamper with their bottom line.

Clearing lets the gravity of this settle with his children.

RENA

If only there was someone with the position and skills to deepen their understand of a true bottom line.

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

Senator Clearing stands in front of the lavender door.

He is surrounded by cameras, REPORTERS holding microphones, and recorders pointed in his direction.

REPORTER

But what do you say to critics who say that this will undercut your own multi-million dollar revitalization plan?

CLEARING

A society is ultimately judged by two diametrically opposed ideologies. How much have we built that will last forever and how have we treated the weakest among us? What happened here speaks to both of those, and...

INT. HALLWAY - LATER - MORNING

The senator, the reporters, and the cameras are gone. The lavender door is shut.

CLEARING

(from previous scene)
...to what can happen when we choose to imagine what life can be.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-- People begin to line up.

-- The door is open and people pass in and out.

-- Inside the main room, crowds are stunned by Lottie's work.

CLOSE UP on a folded program in a LITTLE GIRL's hand. The title reads "Imagine Life: Behind the Lavender Door."

We PULL OUT to see the main room of an apartment that has been transformed into a museum.

FAMILIES, ART STUDENTS, and ONLOOKERS mill about the apartment, looking at the paintings that cover every space.

The little girl holding the program looks up at her MOTHER as they stand in front of a painting.

MOTHER

I met your daddy when I was studying art. I loved to paint.

LITTLE GIRL

Just like me!

INT. LOTTIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rena is being interviewed.

REPORTER

And what made you think that her life would be of interest to so many people?

RENA

Well, it was to us and we just hoped it would be to others.

REPORTER

And what specifically touched you?

RENA

How she chose to see the world. She lived alone, had only three pictures ever taken of her. She experienced joy and pain, for so long, and she left us something beautiful...

The interview continues. Jackson leaves the room and goes to:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

People stare at the ceiling, walls, and floor, where dark images seem to be hiding everywhere.

SARA (pregnant, alone, and not yet 20) stands among the crowd. Jackson looks at her and smiles.

SARA

She lived here her whole life.

JACKSON

Since before the Great Depression.

SARA

Did you know her?

Jackson nods.

SARA (CONT'D)

That must have been amazing.

JACKSON

It saved my life.

SARA

She felt all this pain and was all alone. But she never let it consume her. She never let it win.

JACKSON

Sounds like you need to meet Annie.

From the doorway, Senator Clearing looks on. He watches his son.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- An ART STUDENT sketches one of Lottie's works.
- Senator Clearing finds Jackson alone and shakes his hand.
- Rena stands near Jackson. He puts his arm around her.
- The rooms become more crowded as people move in and out.
- CLOSE UPS of the paintings of Lottie's life. Of Annie.

CAMERA MAKES ONE FULL REVOLUTION as the room becomes even more crowded with people entering to view the works.

CAMERA LEAVES THE APARTMENT THROUGH THE LAVENDER DOOR.

CAMERA FOCUSES ON PEOPLE WAITING JUST OUTSIDE THE DOOR.

CAMERA GOES DOWN 4 FLIGHTS OF STAIRS as people walk up.

It ZIPS OUT THE FRONT DOOR of the apartment complex and UP INTO THE SKY.

We catch a glimpse of the line of people waiting to view the life in pictures no longer hidden behind the lavender door.

FADE TO BLACK.

END CREDITS ROLL.