

I SMILE BACK

Written by

Paige Dylan and Amy Koppelman

Based on the novel

I Smile Back by Amy Koppelman

LANEY BROOKS (mid-30's) is having a drink at the bar while she fiddles with a pair of chopsticks. She's pretty, but not in the way that inspires envy; she's pretty in a way that makes you want to be her friend. Two large bags of takeout are on the counter.

Laney leans over the bar looking for something but comes up short. She pulls the elastic hair tie out of her pony tail and ties up the chopsticks with a folded piece of paper in the middle. She stands, drains her drink and glances over to a MOM and DAD arguing. Their young SON has a chopstick in each hand. He's trying to eat his noodles but they keep sliding off the chopsticks. The Mom and Dad don't seem to notice.

Laney grabs the takeout bags and starts heading for the door but stops short at the boy's table. She puts down her bags and we see what she's been making: a set of trainer chopsticks.

LANEY

Here you go Buddy.

She quickly shows the little boy how to work them. The Mom and Dad stop arguing and look at her. Laney's friendly.

LANEY (CONT'D)

I still use these.

Laney heads to the door. But she doesn't leave. Instead she waits until the little boy captures a mess of noodles and brings it to his mouth. Success! He looks up, locks eyes with Laney and smiles at her. Laney smiles back, then exits.

A perfect winter day, not a cloud in the sky. DONNY (mid-30s), tan and good looking is leaning against his Maserati and smoking a joint. Laney approaches, take-out bags in hand.

LANEY

Sorry that took so long. They were swamped.

DONNY

No sweat.

Laney attempts to put the bags in the back seat but Donny wraps his arm around her waist from behind, spins her around and pins her against the side of the car, kisses her neck.

LANEY

Quick: three reasons you love me.

Donny takes another hit off the joint and passes it to her.

DONNY

One--

Laney makes a game show buzzer sound.

LANEY

--Too slow.

DONNY

--Because you're beautiful.

He exhales. She takes a hit off the joint.

DONNY (CONT'D)

Two- fun.

LANEY

Really fun.

DONNY

Three- smart.

Laney laughs. Donny reclaims the joint and takes another hit. He leans in for another kiss but she dodges him.

LANEY

We've got hungry kids. Come on.

Donny takes one last hit before putting the joint out with his shoe.

3 EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - DAY - SAME

3

Tall trees line the road. Stables. Painted fences. Donny turns by the clock tower and then comes to a stop sign on the corner. Laney is sucking on a Red Charms Lollipop. This is something she does throughout the movie.

4 EXT. LANEY BROOKS' DRIVEWAY - DAY - SAME

4

Donny pulls slightly erratically into the driveway, swerving to avoid hitting a bicycle carelessly left laying on its side. The home is a modest center hall colonial, black shutters, red door.

LANEY

I've told Eli a hundred times not to leave his bike in the middle of the driveway.

Donny pushes the gears into neutral, pulls on the emergency break. Laney gets out of the car and grabs a bag of take-out from the back seat. She's still working on her lollipop.

LANEY (CONT'D)

The kids must be starving.

She walks toward the front door, turns around and tosses her hair over her shoulder, tucks a piece behind her ear. She's undeniably sexy. She motions for Donny to get moving but he doesn't. Instead he sinks back into his seat, cocks his head to the side lustily and grins at her. Laney walks back to the car, grabs the second bag of take-out.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Come on Donny. Everyone's waiting for us.

He turns off the engine.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Do I look high?

Laney fumbles around in her purse. She finds the Visine and puts a couple of drops in each eye. She's a pro.

DONNY

You look beautiful.

Donny tries to pin Laney against the wall next to the front door to kiss her but she wiggles out of it. Flashes a smile. Tosses what's left of the lollipop into the bushes.

5 OMITTED 5

6 INT. KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS 6

LANEY

We're back! Who's hungry?

Through the french doors we see BRUCE and SUSAN (both mid-30's). Three kids, ELI (8), JANEY (6) and HENRY (8) are playing happily on the trampoline. Donny starts removing food from the bags. Laney heads outside.

7 EXT. BACKYARD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

7

Bruce and Susan are bundled up and watching the KIDS play. Hearing the door open, Bruce turns around to see Laney. He has a vaguely suspicious look on his face - is that always there?

BRUCE

What took you so long?

Laney wraps her arms around Bruce's neck and gives him a kiss.

LANEY

They forgot the Moo-Shu Pork and I know it's your favorite.

She is well versed in identifying a suspicious look. Even more so in knowing how to dismiss it with a kiss.

BRUCE

Food's here! Everybody inside!  
Susan, you hungry?

8 INT. KITCHEN TABLE - DAY - SAME

8

Bruce, Laney, Donny and Susan are sitting around the kitchen table eating. There are open boxes of Chinese food and a few open beer bottles on the table. The KIDS are milling around the kitchen. Eli, in head-to-toe Nike sweats looks like a mini version of his father. He's dribbling a basketball. Susan passes Donny a manuscript.

SUSAN

Bruce's book.

Donny rests his chopsticks on his plate and takes a look at the book.

DONNY

"Life Insurance: Hedging Your Bet  
Against God", by Bruce Brooks!  
That's a great fucking title.

SUSAN

And he just won a big insurance  
award. Right Bruce?

BRUCE (TO ELI)

Not in the house E.

ELI

I know.

Eli dribbles it one last time then hugs it with one arm, grabs a plate.

BRUCE

Man Of The Year. Highest producer  
in the company.

Bruce's tone is playful.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

They're honoring me at the annual  
convention. An all expenses paid  
weekend in... Lake George. (a beat)  
In March.

Everyone laughs.

DONNY (FOOD IN MOUTH)

So what's the book about?

BRUCE

The way I see it, there's a bible  
for the afterlife. I wrote the  
bible for the here and now.

More laughs.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

I'm not kidding. People can say  
what they want about insurance and  
guys like me but you know what? At  
the end of the day, having good  
insurance is the most important  
thing you can do while you're  
alive. And every time you up it  
you're just hedging your bet  
against God. Am I right?

Laney, bored, brings her plate into the kitchen, dumps it,  
grabs a lollipop.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

(mouthful of food)

What are you doing?

LANEY

Just cleaning up, kids have school  
tomorrow. I have to do laundry,  
make their lunches.

BRUCE

Sit back down Laney. Everyone here  
is enjoying the food.

LANEY

The ribs are sour.

BRUCE

You don't eat.

DONNY

Come on Lane. Sit back down.

Bruce's vaguely suspicious looks returns when Donny calls her "Lane". Janey enters the kitchen holding BINGO, the cutest little dog in the entire world. Janey is Laney's clone. Brown hair, chocolate eyes, big smile.

JANEY

Daddy, Bingo was crying.

LANEY

Janey where did you get that dog?

JANEY

We rescued him from the pound!

BRUCE

Janey, Bingo was supposed to be a surprise for Mommy.

JANEY

But he was crying. I think he needs you Mommy.

Janey passes Bingo into Laney's arms.

LANEY

Bruce, I thought we talked about this.

BRUCE

Janey, go tell everyone to come see Bingo.

Janey hesitates, then runs out of the room. Bruce turns to Laney.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

No YOU talked about this. WE didn't talk about anything. Come on Lane- this dog is gonna make you happy. Let's just give it a try. Can you just trust me on this?

LANEY

Fuck you Bruce.

She shoves the dog into Bruce's arms and exits leaving Bruce, Donny and Susan in an awkward silence.

9 INT. LANEY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT - SAME 9

A naked Laney is examining herself in the bathroom mirror. She traces her left breast with her finger. Up and around, down. She stops, glances at herself and then lifts her right breast. Up and around, down.

She moves closer, and begins inspecting her face. The wrinkles by her eyes. The smile lines around her mouth.

Next to her a jar of rubbing alcohol rests on a lavender hand towel. She opens the jar, dips the tweezers into the liquid and then removes it.

She locates a hair hiding in the crease of her upper thigh and pushes her thumbs together to loosen it. She takes the tweezers, turns the sharp point in the direction of her skin and digs. She wipes the hair onto the hand towel and continues. Her movements are slow and deliberate. The outcome seems to satisfy her.

Laney walks over to the sink. She rummages through the cabinet beneath it, takes out a box of Tampax. Laney grabs a small white envelope from inside. This is obviously where she keeps her stash. She empties the contents onto the back of her iPhone but not before glancing at a picture of her kids. She sniffs a line, throws her head back and breathes deep.

Laney snorts the remaining line. She turns on the bath water, tests it with her toes. Then she walks over to the window.

10 EXT. BASKETBALL HOOP - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS 10

Bruce is playing basketball in the driveway. Sweat drips down his cheek, beads up on his forehead. He's got some nice moves - no stranger to a good pickup game in the park. Eli and Janey are also on the court. Bruce teaches Eli how to shoot free throws. Janey is riding a pink bicycle with training wheels.

9A INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS 9A

Laney steps into the tub. She sinks into the water and disappears.

11 INT. ELI'S ROOM - NIGHT - SAME

11

Eli gets into bed. His movements are slow. Deliberate. Once in bed he focuses on the Styrofoam solar system that hangs on the ceiling above him. Laney knocks. She cracks the door open. She's in her robe and holding Bingo.

LANEY

Hey-

ELI

Hey-

She puts Bingo on his bed.

ELI (CONT'D)

Hey, Bingo.

LANEY

Sleepy?

ELI

Not really.

Eli is focused on his ceiling. Laney lays down next to him. Bingo is between them. Laney's sniffing, fidgety.

LANEY

Whatchya thinkin' about?

ELI

Why do you hate Bingo?

LANEY

(irritated)

I don't hate Bingo.

ELI

Can we keep him then?

LANEY

I don't know E. It's just, you know. It's one more thing to worry about.

ELI

(pause)

Do you worry about me?

Laney is too amped up to finish the conversation and misses Eli's ultimate question.

LANEY

Okay, time to close your eyes.

She gives Eli a kiss on his forehead, grabs Bingo and heads to the door.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
Tell me when to stop...

She slowly closes the door.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
Now?

ELI  
A little more..

LANEY  
Now?

ELI  
Are we going to keep Bingo, Mom?

LANEY  
Maybe.

She closes the door a little bit more.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
Now?

ELI  
Maybe yes or maybe no?

LANEY  
Maybe as in it's time to go to sleep.

Laney closes the door a tiny bit more. Bingo is licking her cheek.

ELI  
So that means yes right? We are going to keep Bingo?

The smile on Eli's face is hard to resist.

LANEY  
It's a definite maybe.

12 INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

12

Laney opens her eyes, lifts her head lazily and glances at Bruce's empty side of the bed and the clock on his night stand. 6:55am.

Head back on the pillow, she stretches and enjoys her last moments in the warm womb of her blankets. The bathroom door opens.

BRUCE

Thought I was gonna have to wake you up.

He adjusts his tie and collar, grabs his jacket.

LANEY

I don't want to get up. Get back in bed with me.

Laney pats the pillow and smiles. Bruce gives her a kiss on the forehead.

BRUCE

I wish.

Bruce leaves, Laney rolls over and glances at the framed family picture on her night stand. Bruce with a younger Eli on his shoulders, his arm around Laney who's holding an infant Janey in her arms.

13 INT. MASTER BATHROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS 13

Laney is brushing her teeth. She looks up at her reflection, then opens the medicine cabinet and takes out a prescription bottle. As she spits out the toothpaste, she hears Bruce's car pull out of the driveway. She looks at the prescription and then returns it to the shelf.

14 EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY 14

Laney pulls into the school parking lot and is immediately met by a school GUARD who is directing traffic.

GUARD

Only school buses allowed in here lady.

LANEY

Since when?

GUARD

You must not read your emails.

ELI

(nervous)

Ma...

LANEY

Don't worry E.

(To guard, flirting)

Is Frank here? He always lets me  
double park.

The guard has already heard this 10 times this morning, but Laney's charm seems to be working.

GUARD

If I could do it for anyone I'd do  
it for you but the Board of Ed has  
new security procedures. Recent  
tragedies and all.

He hands her a sheet of paper titled "Ridgemont Elementary School's New Security Policy". In smaller font it says, "In light of recent events..."

ELI

What's it say Mom?

LANEY

Says we have to park.

Laney pulls her SUV back out into the sea of anonymous SUVs. She's just another broad in suburbia.

14A INT: BACKSEAT OF SUV-CONTINUOUS

14A

Eli and Janey are buckled in. They have their personalized paper lunch bags on their laps. Eli's has basketballs all over it, Janey's hearts and stars.

15 EXT. SCHOOL - DAY - SAME

15

Laney, Eli and Janey run toward the school building. They don't want to be late. Eli's backpack is twice his size. Janey's is pink with a princess on it.

16 INT. SCHOOL OFFICE -DAY - CONTINUOUS

16

Laney, Eli and Janey are waiting in a shallow line in the office. Laney spots Susan and her son HENRY. Susan is proudly wearing an official looking laminate around her neck.

LANEY

Hey Susan. What's this?

SUSAN

It's the parent ID.

Laney doesn't register what Susan is talking about, Susan sees this.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

They sent them in the mail? Part of this whole new security thing.

LANEY

I, uh...

SUSAN

Don't worry, I'll vouch for you.

Laney fidgets, looks around, everyone is wearing a badge around their neck. Everyone but Laney. This appears to bother her much more than it should. She steps to the front of the line where she is met by MRS. KOSINSKI (late 50's) the school principal.

MRS. KOSINSKI

ID?

LANEY

I forgot it today, busy morning. I'll bring it tomorrow.

MRS. KOSINSKI

Parent IDs are mandatory now. We mailed them out last week. And sent an email.

SUSAN

I'll vouch for her.

ELI

Ma?

LANEY

It's okay E, just a sec.  
(to Mrs. Kosinski)  
I've been walking them to class every morning for two years. Can't you make an exception?

MRS. KOSINSKI

If I make an exception for you Mrs. Brooks, then I have to make one for everyone. Is that how you want to teach our children?

Laney looks at her, stunned.

MRS. KOSINSKI (CONT'D)  
 I wouldn't think so. At this point  
 in the year Eli's quite familiar  
 with how to get to his class.  
 He'll be fine. And I'll personally  
 escort Miss Janey to her classroom.

ELI  
 I'm okay Mom.

Laney feels nothing but shame. She is inferior.

JANEY  
 Me too, Mommy.

LANEY  
 You sure?

Janey nods her head yes - she is eager to get going.

JANEY  
 I'm sure.

Mrs. Kosinski reaches out her hand, Janey takes it.

LANEY  
 Wait, honey.

Laney kneels down.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
 Give me a kiss.

Janey gives Laney a kiss and goes.

It's not as easy for Eli. He takes a deep breath, hoists his  
 backpack a little higher and begins the harrowing journey  
 down the crowded hall. Just outside the classroom he stops,  
 turns to look at Laney. Laney is fighting back tears. She  
 blows Eli a kiss. He catches it, puts it into his pocket and  
 disappears into the classroom.

17 OMITTED 17

18 EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY - SAME 18

An angry Laney heads to her car parked on the outskirts of  
 the school lot. Laney walks quickly while rifling through her  
 purse. She pulls out a cigarette just as she reaches her car.  
 She gets in and slams the door.

Laney fumbles through her purse for a lighter, assesses the parking lot, looks in her rearview mirror.

LANEY  
Fucking bitch.

She lights it in spite of her shaking hands.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
(mocking)  
"Is that how you want to teach our children?..."

She reaches for the secret vial in her purse, unscrews the lid, takes a deep breath, helps herself to a quick bump. She looks around again, another bump. Laney takes a drag off her cigarette as if it were her last and leans her head back on the seat. A deep breath. And then, Bing! She picks up her phone to read the text.

TEXT: DONNY  
Room 302

She turns on the engine and goes.

19 EXT. LANEY'S CAR - DAY 19

Laney's car headed towards a toll booth, pull back to reveal New York City not too far in the distance.

20 INT. REGENCY HOTEL ROOM - DAY 20

Laney is on her knees on the bed, ass in the air, holding onto the top of the headboard. Laney and Donny are, how do you say... fucking each other's brains out. But in Laney's eyes is a look of detachment. She is somewhere else.

Laney and Donny lay in bed. She's sucking on a lollipop.

LANEY  
I gotta take a shower.

DONNY  
It's still early. Stay with me.

LANEY  
Can't, gotta pick up the kids.

DONNY  
I love you.

LANEY

No you don't.

DONNY

Why do you say that?

LANEY

Because you're married. And because no man can love a girl whose ass he just fucked.

DONNY

Christ Laney. You're crazy, you know that? I told you I'll leave Susan. I love you.

Laney laughs.

LANEY

That's the funny thing... It doesn't matter.

Laney gets out of bed and is pulling on her panties.

LANEY (CONT'D)

I could love you and you could love me, and nothing. It still means nothing. Nine years of marriage, two kids, three thousand marinated chicken breasts - and nothing. And then you die.

Donny pulls a pillow over his head, rolls over.

DONNY

Go take your shower.

20 MINUTES LATER: Laney, freshly showered, walks out of the bathroom. She glances at Donny... out like a light. She takes the cash out of his wallet and the last of the cocaine sitting next to it. She grabs her things and leaves, the self-closing door slams behind her.

The door wakes Donny. He looks up, looks around, no trace of Laney. He stretches, sits up, puts on his underwear, walks into the bathroom.

Donny is standing in the doorway looking at the bathroom mirror. In red lipstick he reads: "DON'T LEAVE SUSAN".

21 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY - SAME 21

Laney is speeding down the turnpike. She's amped up and emotional, seemingly reckless. She mistakenly passes her exit.

LANEY

Fuck.

She is angrier than she should be, she's in a spiral. She turns off at the next exit. The Fed-Ex truck she's been stuck behind turns left. The traffic light at the intersection up ahead is changing from green to yellow to -

Laney closes her eyes, presses her foot deeper into the gas, hands up, letting go. She drives straight through the red. Cars screech to a halt, one swerves into another lane to avoid her. Horns are honking. She miraculously arrives across the street unharmed. A couple of cars pass. Honk. One person curses her. More honks.

Laney pulls to the side of the street and puts her car in park, takes a deep breath, exhales. She is visibly rattled. She pulls the last smoke out of her pack and lights it with shaky hands. Tears trickle down the sides of her face as turns up the radio, puts her car in drive and goes.

21A INT./EXT. LANEY IN CAR - SAME 21A

Laney drives slowly. She is clearly shaken.

22 EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - SAME 22

Laney's black SUV pulls into the driveway of the school, same guard is standing there with a clipboard. He stops her.

LANEY

I'm just picking up my son, I'll only be a minute.

GUARD

You can't park here ma'am, we've already been through this haven't we?

LANEY

I was hoping you wouldn't remember.

The Guard looks her over.

GUARD

No, I remember.

Susan walks by Laney's car holding Henry's hand, she's noticeably upset.

SUSAN

Hey Laney.

LANEY

Hey Susan, you okay? Did Henry have a bad day?

SUSAN

No, I can't find Donny. His cell's been off all day - hasn't been to the office.

LANEY

He's probably in a meeting or something --

GUARD

Lady, you gotta move it.

LANEY

(stalling)  
I'm going --

Laney's cell phone rings. It's Donny. She tosses her phone into her purse.

LANEY (CONT'D)

I'm sure Donny is fine. I'll call you later.

(to guard)  
There's my son--

Laney sees the kids filing out of the school into the front entrance. Eli, holding Janey's hand, sees her and waves. Laney motions for him to walk to the car.

Eli gets into the car, quiet. Janey is eager to talk. Laney is momentarily distracted by her conversation with Susan.

LANEY (CONT'D)

How was school, guys?

JANEY

Fun!

LANEY

E?

Eli looks out the window, no response. Laney makes her way through the sea of SUV's and out of the driveway.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
How'd it go E?

ELI  
Fine.

The cell phone rings. It's Donny again. Laney doesn't answer.

JANEY  
Your phone is ringing, Mommy.

LANEY  
I know, honey.

23 EXT. BROOKS HOUSE- DRIVEWAY - DAY

23

Laney turns into her driveway she gets out of the car and opens the door. Eli unbuckles and hurries past. Laney scoops Janey up into her arms. She carries her to the front door.

LANEY  
Did you miss me today?

JANEY  
Yes.

LANEY  
Did you cry?

Janey nods her head and is rewarded with a boost in the air.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
How much do you love me?

Janey opens her arms as wide as she can to demonstrate her love.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
Tell me you'll never leave me.

This scene looks all in good fun but it's thinly veiled twisted behavior by Laney.

JANEY  
(giggling)  
Mommy! Stop!

LANEY  
I'm just teasing Muffin. Kiss me.

24

INT. BROOKS DINING ROOM - NIGHT

24

The whole family sits around the dinner table. They have typical fare on their plates; spaghetti, peas, breaded chicken - nothing Laney went out of her way to cook, but homemade nevertheless. Laney's plate is empty. She sucks on a lollipop and sips a glass of wine.

Bruce observes her behavior for a moment.

BRUCE

Why aren't you eating?

LANEY

Not hungry.

BRUCE

You need to eat more food. Real food. Not lollipops.

Laney gets up from the table and walks toward the kitchen.

LANEY

Jesus, what are you the food police?

INT: KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Laney opens the refrigerator- blocking her view of the table. She downs her glass of wine behind the door.

BRUCE (O.S.)

All that sugar isn't good for you.

Laney sets her empty glass on the top shelf, uncorks a bottle of wine and refills her glass.

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

Empty calories. Right guys? Not energy food.

Laney returns to the table with butter and sits. She grabs a piece of corn on the cob, wipes it with butter and puts it in her mouth. They all watch her and smile- like this is the first time they've ever seen her eat. She smiles back.

ELI

Did you know the Pilgrims stole America from the Native Americans? They had the Native Americans teach them how to grow corn and stuff and then they stole their land.

BRUCE  
Is that right?

ELI  
Yeah, so we gave them casinos.

BRUCE  
Mrs. Zeldis told you that?

ELI  
No, John Frye did. His mom told  
him. She also said Thanksgiving is  
a lie.

LANEY  
(under her breath)  
John Frye's mom is a pig.

BRUCE  
Lane...

The table goes quiet again, kids look back down at their  
plates.

BRUCE (CONT'D)  
You want to shoot hoops?

Eli looks out the window.

ELI  
Really!?

BRUCE  
We still have a little light.

JANEY  
Me too.

Everyone gets a kick out of Janey's zeal.

BRUCE  
Okay.

Bruce and the kids leave the table. Laney begins clearing  
the plates.

24A LANEY'S POV: Through the window she can see them in the 24A  
driveway. Bruce loosens his tie. Eli dribbles the ball, aims  
for the basket, nearly makes it. Bruce kneels, positions Eli:  
plants Eli's feet, adjusts his arms. Eli shoots and MAKES IT!  
Janey runs after the ball and brings it to Bruce. He lifts  
her up so she's able to dunk the ball. Through the kitchen  
window we see Laney taking it all in. She puts her face in  
her hands, it's all too much.

25 INT. ELI'S BATHROOM - NIGHT - SAME

25

Laney passes Eli the soap.

LANEY

Did you practice piano today?

The bathroom door is open to Eli's room. He cranes his neck to try to see the game that's on the TV. He tunes Laney out completely.

LANEY (CONT'D)

E? Your recital is coming up. Did you practice?

ELI

Yeah.

LANEY

How long?

Eli hurries with the soap. He signals that he's done and Laney holds a towel open. When Eli gets out of the tub she wraps her arms tightly around him.

ELI

Mom? I can't breathe.

Laney is still holding tight, too tight. Eli manages to break away.

26 INT. ELI'S ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

26

Eli has positioned himself in front of the television. Laney stands at the edge of his doorway, takes in his broadening frame. His shoulders, his back. There is a portable keyboard against the window, a basketball hoop on the door and a Jeter fathead on the wall. Laney nods, acknowledging Jeter.

LANEY

Hey--

Eli glances at his mother.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Put on your T-shirt.

Laney tosses him the T-shirt. Eli throws it over his head.

LANEY (CONT'D)

And dry your balls.

He turns and looks at her like she's crazy.

ELI

Mom!

LANEY

You'll get a rash.

Eli rolls his eyes.

27

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT - SAME

27

Bruce, just out of the shower, has a towel wrapped around his waste. He's clipping his toenails into a trash can. Laney watches him from the bedroom door.

BRUCE

What's up?

LANEY

I was just thinking...

BRUCE

About?

LANEY

About your balls.

BRUCE

(laughs)

What?

LANEY

About your balls. Do you worry about drying your balls?

BRUCE

Do I worry?

LANEY

Yeah, like when you were a little boy, did your mother teach you to dry your balls or did you like... just know how to do it instinctively? Should I teach Eli or -

Bruce examines his Q-tip, puts it in the other ear, continues with his toenails.

BRUCE

You dry them like any other part of your body.

LANEY

Oh.

(pause)

But what happens if you don't dry them? Do you get a rash?

Bruce stops what he's doing and looks at her- this conversation is starting to get his attention.

BRUCE

I guess you could-- but whatever you don't get will just dry in your underwear. What's going on Laney?

LANEY

Your underwear! Why didn't I think of that?

Bruce leaves his grooming duties, picks Laney up and deposits her on the bed.

INT: MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

BRUCE

All this talk about balls...

Bruce starts kissing Laney's neck, unbuttoning her blouse. She unfastens his belt buckle, giggles, but it's clear she's going through the motions. Laney disassociates when she's having sex.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Uhh..

He's kissing her, getting close...

BRUCE (CONT'D)

You're so beautiful Lane... Uhh...

Bruce finishes and collapses on top of her. A pause.

LANEY

I think my dad dried and powdered.

BRUCE

Christ Laney, can we change the subject?

A beat.

LANEY

We gotta get rid of Bingo.

Bruce doesn't respond.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Bruce, I'm serious we can't keep him.

BRUCE

It's just a puppy Laney. All kids get a puppy. Why can't our kids have a God damn puppy? Why does it have to be such a big deal? Why does everything have to be such a big deal.

LANEY

Because puppies turn into dogs and dogs get old and die. What's a dog live, ten years?

BRUCE

Yes. Ten enjoyable fucking years that the kids can grow up with a dog. Only you could manage to turn getting a puppy into a negative.

LANEY

I'm trying to spare them a negative, don't you understand? The dog will die and they will be heartbroken!

BRUCE

That's life Laney. That's how it works. Puppies die and Bingo will die too. The kids will handle it.

LANEY

But I can't handle it.

BRUCE

Then why bother loving anything? Why bother loving me?

Laney doesn't respond. Bruce softens. He sits down on the bed, puts his arm around her.

LANEY

I just don't understand why anyone bothers to love anything at all. I mean by the time you're three you've pretty much figured out that everything you love is going to be taken away. Every three year old should run into traffic.

BRUCE

Come on, Lane. You don't mean that.

LANEY

I do mean it. Might as well cut their losses.

Bruce hugs her for a moment trying his best to comfort her, then tries to lighten the mood.

BRUCE

That could be a new market for me.... Insurance for three year olds.

Laney pulls away.

LANEY

Bruce I'm serious!

BRUCE

So what do you suggest?

LANEY

To not fall in love. To not get married and have kids. To not pretend that it's all going to be okay when nothing is going to be okay.

BRUCE

Well, thankfully most of us like to fool ourselves.

Bruce quietly observes her for a moment, narrows his eyes slightly while something occurs to him. He treads lightly, masking the real question with concern.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

You okay?

LANEY

Yeah. Of course I'm okay. Why wouldn't I be okay.

Bruce brushes his fingers through her hair.

BRUCE

I just worry about you that's all.

LANEY

I'm fine. I'm going to check on the kids.

28 EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 28

Laney picks a few action figures up off the floor. She gently opens the door to Eli's room. He's tossing and turning.

29 INT. ELI'S ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS 29

Laney jostles Eli.

LANEY

E, wake up. You're having a nightmare.

Eli opens his eyes, tears streaming down his cheeks.

LANEY (CONT'D)

What's the matter E? Another bad dream?

Laney instinctively puts her hand on his forehead to check for a fever.

ELI

We were walking down the street to go see dad and you were wearing headphones -

Eli is still crying, little boy fresh out of a nightmare.

LANEY

Take a deep breath, it's okay... tell me...

ELI

I was trying to warn you but you wouldn't listen to me- you couldn't hear me because you were listening to your headphones.

Laney brings a tissue to his nose.

LANEY

Blow -

ELI

I tried so hard -

Eli blows his nose.

ELI (CONT'D)

I was yelling and you didn't hear me and there were all these cars.

(MORE)

ELI (CONT'D)

And then I got trapped and I  
couldn't grab you and then the car  
just hit you - and you were dead.

Laney holds him tight.

LANEY

That will never happen Eli.

ELI

How do you know?

LANEY

Because I don't have an iPod.

ELI

It's not funny mom!

LANEY

It can't happen because I won't let  
it happen.

Laney tucks Eli back in bed. She begins rubbing his head.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Go to sleep. Mommy's here.

30

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - SAME

30

Laney lets Bingo out of the crate. She opens a cabinet and takes out two brown lunch bags and a box of crayons. She takes a loaf of bread and two small bags of organic chips from a drawer. She's about to make the kids' their school lunches but changes her mind. She opens another cabinet, takes out a secret bottle of vodka and pours herself a nice tall glass. She goes over to the phone, flips through the school directory, searches for a name, picks up the phone and dials. She looks down the hall to make sure nobody can hear her.

LANEY

Is this Diane?

(pause)

LANEY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry I know it's late. This  
is Laney Brooks, I'm Eli's mom.  
(pause) I'm fine. Actually no, I'm  
not fine. I'm calling because Eli  
came home today with a bunch of  
stories about how the Pilgrims were  
thieves and Thanksgiving is a lie.

(MORE)

LANEY (CONT'D)

He said that John told him. It's none of my business what you teach your kids but I was really hoping that you could - (pause) Sure I understand that but um, well I'm trying to teach my son to be grateful for what he has which is hard and Thanksgiving is - (pause) but that's a really important - (pause) but that's your opinion - (pause) Look - I'm not calling to have some kind of debate with you I just want to - (pause)

Laney is fuming mad.

LANEY (CONT'D)

I have a great idea- why don't you leave the teaching to the teachers- (pause)

LANEY (CONT'D)

That's fine, and you can go fuck yourself. And tell your little brat to stay the fuck away from my kid.

Laney slams down the phone, searches through her bag and locates her coke stash. She taps some coke onto the table, rolls up a 20 dollar bill, snorts a line. She sits down at the kitchen table and begins to flip through a magazine. She gulps some vodka. She flips through the magazine again, another gulp of vodka. Laney is clearly trying to drown out the demons - fast. She gets up, leaves the kitchen.

31 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS 31

Laney makes her way down the hallway. She's not in great shape. She grabs onto a wall and steadies herself. Continues. She opens Eli's door, enters.

32 INT. ELI'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS 32

Laney sits at the foot of his bed and watches him sleep for a moment. She gets up, walks to...

33 INT. JANEY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS 33

Laney peeks her head in, the little girl is fast asleep. Laney eyes her childhood teddy bear sitting on the shelf near Janey's bed - battered, one eye missing. She takes it from the shelf, lies down on the floor.

Face to face with the bear, Laney kisses it. She looks at it again before she places it between her legs, eases onto it, her crotch against the bear's nose. She focuses on the family picture next to Janey's bed. She starts rocking back and forth, eyes closed. This is a disturbing scene although Laney masturbating is actually less troubling than her desperation for connection.

The quivering stops, Laney pulls the bear from under her, rolls onto her back. Glow-in-the-dark plastic stars glitter on the ceiling. A combination of emotion and drugs overtakes her.

34 INT. HALLWAY LEADING TO MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 34

Laney moves slowly down the hall into her bedroom.

35 INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 35

Bruce is fast asleep. Laney's trying to make her way to his side of the bed. She feels for him in the dark but she's too disoriented.

LANEY

Bruce.

She stumbles into the night stand and sits on the floor at the edge of the bed. She pulls on the bedspread.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Help.

Bruce doesn't hear her. She pulls on the bedspread and says it again. A bit louder this time.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Help.

Bruce sits up, flips on the light, adjusts his eyes, looks for Laney. The camera freezes on Laney's face. Her hair is a mess. Mascara runs down her cheeks. She looks like a junkie. She is a junkie.

BRUCE (O.S.)

Jesus Laney!

36 EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY 36

A newer model sedan makes it's way down a rural road.

37 INT./EXT. GAS STATION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

37

Laney sucks on a lollipop and stares out the window as Bruce finishes pumping gas. Silence, until...Bruce enters the car.

BRUCE

When did you start hating me Lane?

LANEY

I don't hate you Bruce.

BRUCE

Then why did you stop taking the meds?

LANEY

They make me fat.

BRUCE

Fat?

LANEY

Yeah. I was gaining weight.

Bruce's anger rises.

BRUCE

That's bullshit.

LANEY

I was.

BRUCE

So you'd rather be insane?

LANEY

That's a little melodramatic don't you think?

BRUCE

I think it's pretty accurate.

LANEY

Whatever.

BRUCE

Not whatever. We've been through this. You have an illness. It's your responsibility to take your meds and keep your head on straight. If not for me then for the kids.

A beat.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Do you not understand that everything I do is for you and the kids. All I want is for you to be happy like you used to be. Don't you want to be happy?

LANEY

Happy like when? Happy like I was in college?

BRUCE

Yes!

LANEY

I was stoned every second of every day.

BRUCE

What kind of bullshit answer is that? I used to get stoned too but then I grew up.

Laney looks out the window.

LANEY

I know. Man of the Year. Highest producer in company.

BRUCE

I'll tell you what's wrong with you Laney, you're a spoiled fucking cunt. That's what's wrong with you.

Laney smiles - if only to the glass on the window. He finally gets it.

LANEY

That's true Bruce. That's what I'm gonna work on while I'm gone. If I de-cunt myself will you let me come back?

BRUCE

I see what you're trying to do. You're trying to make me look like the asshole. Like I'm kicking you out of the house instead of trying to get you help.

Bruce calms himself down.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

And you know that's not true. But for some reason, for some fucked-up reason, no matter how many times you disappoint me I still love you.

After a few moments of silence...

LANEY

And I'm the crazy one?!

Bruce looks at her, incredulous, but they can't help but laugh. It's a nice moment.

38

EXT. BLUE HILL HOSPITAL - DAY - SAME

38

Bruce's car pulls into the circular drive of BLUE HILL HOSPITAL. Front and center is a sign that says "BLUE HILL HOSPITAL Managing Mental Health Since 1954". A no nonsense NURSE PAULINE (early 50's) is waiting for Laney by the hospital entrance. It suddenly dawns on Laney that she's entering rehab. Bruce pulls up to the sign that says "new patients". Laney looks at the hospital, at Pauline and finally at Bruce.

LANEY

I don't think I can do this.

Bruce has tears in his eyes. This is very hard for him.

BRUCE

Just a month Lane. You'll be home before you know it.

Pauline opens the car door.

PAULINE

You must be Laney.

Laney hesitates. She looks one last time at Bruce. He is resolute.

Pauline helps Laney out of the car and escorts her into the building. Bruce, head in hands, gathers himself, turns on the engine and drives away.

39

INT. DETOX - DAY - SAME

39

The detox room has nothing in it but a bed. The nurse gestures towards Laney's bag.

NURSE PAULINE

Empty your bag please.

Nurse Pauline isn't mean, in fact she's pleasant. Laney dumps her belongings onto the mattress. Clothes and personal items, red lollipops scattered among it all. Nurse Pauline takes her make-up bag, her phone, her blow dryer, two belts, she inspects a winter scarf before she takes it, takes her shoelaces out of her sneakers. She opens a pocket inside Laney's bag and pulls out two bottles of prescriptions and a pack of cigarettes. She tosses the cigarettes back down on the bed.

NURSE PAULINE (CONT'D)

You can keep these, you'll get the rest back when you leave.

LANEY

But I need my medication.

Nurse Pauline checks Laney's prescription.

NURSE PAULINE

The Ambien has to go. And the Xanax. Sorry, Honey. For now you just get to sit back and enjoy the ride.

Nurse Pauline turns Laney's bag inside and out to make sure she doesn't miss any secret hiding spots.

NURSE PAULINE (CONT'D)

I'll need your bra too Honey.

LANEY

Jesus

The nurse puts Laney's bag on her shoulder.

NURSE PAULINE

Another nurse will be in soon to take your blood and your vitals. You can spend as much time as you like in here or you can go to the lounge, there's coffee, tea and TV. I suggest you try to sleep and drink as much water as you can. We'll check on you through the night just to make sure everything's okay. Any questions?

LANEY

When can I call my husband?

NURSE PAULINE

We'll give him regular updates.

The nurse gives her a sympathetic look. She's done this a million times but it's never easy, she knows the pain that's about to follow.

NURSE PAULINE (CONT'D)

You'll do great. I'll check on you later.

40 INT. BLUE HILL - LANEY'S ROOM - DAY 40

A series of shots of Laney in her room, laying on her bed, rolling over, sweating, itching. She ventures into the lounge.

41 INT. BLUE HILL LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS 41

Laney tries to watch TV, takes in her surroundings. A HEAVY SET MAN on a nearby vinyl couch is watching TV with no emotion. A YOUNG WOMAN flips through a magazine though she doesn't seem to really pay attention to its contents. Laney eyes both of them, back and forth, paying close attention to their disconnection and lifelessness. Laney doesn't belong here, or does she? She paces, looks out the window, vacillates between frantic and resigned. She makes a run for the bathroom.

42 INT. BLUE HILL - HALLWAY BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 42

She leans over the toilet, dry heaves, splashes water on her face.

43 INT. BLUE HILL LOUNGE - DAY - SAME 43

Back in the lounge she spots Nurse Pauline. Laney rushes over to her in a panic.

LANEY

I really need to call my husband.  
This is a mistake, this isn't the  
kind of place I should be in.

NURSE PAULINE

Your doctor will help you with that  
when you see him hon.

LANEY

(angry)

Then I want to see him now! I need to see the doctor!

NURSE PAULINE

The first 48 hours are the worst.

LANEY

This is a fucking hospital, is it not? Why can't I see the fucking doctor?

NURSE PAULINE

Take it easy. Why don't you go back to your room and get some rest. This is the hard part hon. You'll feel better soon.

Laney is shaking, fidgeting, pissed off, sweating. She takes a deep breath, the nurse puts her arm around Laney's shoulder to escort her back to her room. Laney throws her arm off.

LANEY

Don't fucking touch me.

Nurse Pauline isn't phased.

NURSE PAULINE

Okay, hon.

44 INT. BATHROOM - DAY - SAME

44

Laney walks into the bathroom, turns on the shower and washes her hair. She takes a deep breath. Instead of giving in to the tears, Laney takes the bar of soap in her hand and begins angrily stabbing at the wall with it. This is her release. She gets out of the shower, wraps herself in a towel and walks over to the sink. She stares at herself in the mirror, a pause, she looks away.

45 INT. DR. PAGE'S OFFICE - DAY - SAME

45

A psychiatrist's office. DR. PAGE (mid-50s) is sitting behind a formidable wooden desk. Laney is facing him. Legs crossed. Hands folded.

DR. PAGE

Since you aren't talking I'll assume this is accurate unless I hear otherwise.

He glances at a piece of paper on his desk.

DR. PAGE (CONT'D)

Your blood work shows that you had cocaine, amphetamine, Ambien and marijuana in your system. But no trace of Lithium. I assume you stopped taking it. Do you want to tell me why you stopped taking it?

Laney doesn't respond. Dr. Page has reached the height of his patience with Laney's silence though he remains calm.

DR. PAGE (CONT'D)

Nurse Pauline told me that you're desperate to go home. That you don't think you belong here.

LANEY

I don't.

DR. PAGE

Then why are you staying?

Laney looks at him with total surprise.

DR. PAGE (CONT'D)

You're an adult. You don't have to be here. Go home.

He picks up the phone and hands her the receiver.

DR. PAGE (CONT'D)

Go ahead.

LANEY

I have a family.

DR. PAGE

So?

LANEY

So-- so I can't just go home and do this all over again.

He hangs up the phone. Somehow he's made this her idea.

DR. PAGE

Where would you like to start?

LANEY

Are we really gonna do this?

DR. PAGE

We are.

LANEY

What's more interesting to you, the drugs or the daddy issues?

DR. PAGE

(with humor)

I like to start with the daddy issues because it makes for a very organic segue into the drugs.

LANEY

Mine will bore you. He left when I was nine. He kissed me good night one night and I never saw him again. Shall we move on to the drugs now?

DR. PAGE

We'll get there. Why is it that you never spoke to your father again?

LANEY

Because he never called me.

DR. PAGE

Did you ever call him?

LANEY

I didn't know where he was.

DR. PAGE

And now?

LANEY

He's upstate. My brother told me that.

DR. PAGE

So your brother talks to him?

LANEY

He does. Or he did. I don't know. We don't talk about my Dad anymore. It always ends in a fight. My mother was devastated when my dad left. I guess I've held on to that. My brother didn't.

DR. PAGE

Did she remarry?

LANEY

A few years later.

DR. PAGE

Why didn't you call him then?

LANEY

He was the adult. Why didn't he call me?

DR. PAGE

Why do you think he didn't call you?

She takes a moment.

LANEY

Maybe having a family isn't for everyone. Maybe you think that's the answer, that that's what you're supposed to do because that's what you've been programmed to do since you were a kid. But maybe that's not right. I mean, you shouldn't be allowed to just make babies and fuck up other people's lives because you think you're supposed to adhere to this idea that everyone tells you is right. Maybe he thought he was doing me a favor by leaving.

A beat. Dr. Page is silent while Laney contemplates what she's just said.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Can we talk about the drugs now?

46 OMITTED

46

47 EXT. MEETING SPACE - DAY

47

An emotionally exhausted Laney exits the building, cigarette in hand. She searches her pockets for a light. Nothing. She breaks her cigarette and throws it on the ground, too upset to notice ZACK (mid-30s) sitting on a nearby bench smoking a cigarette.

ZACK

It gets easier.

Zack walks over to Laney, hands her a cigarette and lights it for her. He is boyishly good looking, charismatic, and has a strong penchant for sarcasm. Laney takes a deep drag, eyes Zack skeptically, exhales.

LANEY

When?

ZACK

Heh, I don't know yet. That's just what they tell me. You just check in?

LANEY

Couple days ago. But I really shouldn't be here. No offense, this just isn't the kind of place I should be in.

ZACK

Oh yeah? What kind of place should you be in?

Laney takes a drag off her cigarette, searches her surroundings for an answer but comes up short.

LANEY

I don't know. Not this place. It's depressing.

ZACK

Yeah. I feel you. Last week was good though. Whole staff was all freakin out. They fired one of the nurses. Exciting.

LANEY

For what? Smiling?

Zack laughs, he likes her.

ZACK

No. She got caught having sex with a patient in a broom closet.

LANEY

No way. What happened to the patient?

ZACK

Just a slap on the wrist.

Zack holds up his wrist to show her.

ZACK (CONT'D)  
Bruise is almost gone.

Laney looks at Zack surprised.

ZACK (CONT'D)  
I'm Zack by the way.

LANEY  
Laney.

ZACK  
Nice to meet you Laney.

LANEY  
Likewise.

They smile at each other, an immediate chemistry.

Zack drops his cigarette on the ground and puts it out with his shoe.

ZACK  
When you figure out what kind of place you should be in let me know. Maybe that's where I should be too.

Zack leaves but looks back at Laney over his shoulder with a beguiling smile.

48 INT. LODGE - DAY

48

Laney picks up the pay phone, inserts some quarters and calls Bruce. One ring. Two rings. She begins to fidget, wraps the phone cord around her finger. Three rings. Then...

BRUCE (V.O.)  
Hello?

LANEY  
Hey.

BRUCE (V.O.)  
Hey. How's it going?

In the background Laney can hear cartoons, kids, minor chaos.

LANEY  
Uh, it's good. It's going good.  
How are you guys doing?

BRUCE (V.O.)

Good. Kids are wiped out. Getting ready for bed. Big day ice-skating.

LANEY

You went ice-skating? Without me?

BRUCE (V.O.)

Laney--

LANEY

We always go ice-skating together.

Laney is getting agitated.

LANEY (CONT'D)

It's kind of our thing.

BRUCE (V.O.)

Yeah, I know Lane but you're not here. Would you rather I didn't take them?

LANEY

No, it's just I should have been there.

Laney fights back tears. A NURSE approaches her with a small tray in his hand, a handful of small paper cups with names on them, and equal amount of cups of water. He hands her the "Laney" cup, she turns her back to him. He taps her shoulder and she turns around and takes the meds without argument.

BRUCE (V.O.)

It's only been a week Lane. Just focus on getting better. The kids need you, I need you.

Janey can be heard calling, "Daddy!" in the background.

BRUCE (V.O.)

I'm sorry, Lane. I gotta go.

LANEY

Wait, can I say good night?

A beat.

BRUCE (V.O.)

I don't want to upset them before bed. We'll see you at family visit.

Janey calls for "Daddy!" again.

BRUCE

I'm sorry, Laney. I have to go. I love you. We all love you and miss you here.

LANEY

I love you too.

Laney hangs up the phone and breaks down.

49

EXT. LODGE - EVENING

49

It's cold out but Laney doesn't seem to mind it. She sits alone on the porch and contemplates the starlit sky. Zack joins her.

ZACK

I understand if you have a death wish but it sucks when you only get pneumonia and can't take the good meds.

Zack takes his jacket off and wraps it around Laney's shoulders. He sits down next to her, hands her a cigarette, lights it. Lights his own.

LANEY

Thanks.

They sit for a moment staring at the sky until Laney, fighting tears, breaks the silence. Laney bites a cuticle. Zack sees her wedding band.

ZACK

How long have you been married?

LANEY

Forever.

ZACK

Lucky guy.

Laney is flattered but restrains herself.

LANEY

Not sure he'd agree with that. But thanks. (pause) How fucking great would a shot of tequila be right now?

ZACK  
With a little lime.

LANEY  
And salt.

Zack holds out his cigarette to hers, they bump them together.

ZACK  
Cheers.

LANEY  
Cheers.

50 INT. BLUE HILL CAFETERIA - DAY

50

It's visiting day. The room is filled with VISITORS. Zack sits close to a beautiful, wholesome, blond. He tucks a lock of hair behind her ear. Laney watches the exchange.

Janey and Eli are in line for dessert. Bruce and Laney are sitting at a table. Some time has passed. Laney looks much better, clear eyed. Bruce pushes his food around with his fork.

BRUCE  
You look great. You feeling better?

LANEY  
I am.

BRUCE  
Do you feel like you're making progress?

LANEY  
Why don't you just say what you're thinking?

BRUCE  
Why are you so angry?

LANEY  
I'm not angry.

Laney glances at Eli and Janey at the dessert table.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
I'm not. I'm not angry. I'm scared Bruce. I'm scared of everything.

BRUCE

Like what? What are you scared of?

LANEY

Everything. I know you think that if I just take my medication that everything will go back to the way it was but it's bigger than that.

Laney glances back at Eli.

LANEY (CONT'D)

What's Eli doing with his eyes?

We see Eli twitch.

LANEY (CONT'D)

When did he start doing that?

Bruce doesn't say anything.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Is he doing that in school?

BRUCE

I don't know. No one's called me about it.

LANEY

You can't wait for someone to call you. What if kids are making fun of him? You have to call his teacher and find out what's happening.

The both watch Eli for a moment, still twitching.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Promise me you'll call his teacher.

Bruce puts his hand on top of hers.

BRUCE

I promise Lane. I'll make sure he's okay.

Laney takes a breath and pulls her hands away.

LANEY

I need to tell you something Bruce. I need to tell you some things, some really fucking terrible things I did when I wasn't thinking clearly but I need you to know so I... so we can start fresh.

BRUCE

Don't do this now Laney. You've got a lot on your mind.

LANEY

No this is important. I need to do this--

Bruce looks over at the kids piling their plates high with brownies.

BRUCE

Come on guys, that's enough. Come sit down.

The kids return, all smiles.

JANEY

They have chocolate cake and brownies daddy! I like it here!

Bruce pulls Janey onto his lap, a human shield. Laney fights the tears and musters a fake smile for Janey. Bruce meets Laney's eyes, but he has to look away.

EXT. BLUE HILL PARKING LOT - DAY - SAME

Laney is holding Eli's hand as they walk down a path toward the parking lot. (Eli has his huge knapsack on his back.) Bruce and Janey are walking ahead of them.

ELI

I brought you something.

As he looks at her he rolls his eyes back in his head, twitches them, squeezes them open and shut, rolls them again. He doesn't seem to notice that a ferocious tick has taken over his eyeballs. Bruce and Laney look at each other, there are no words. Bruce shakes his head and shrugs, unlocks the door.

Eli drops his knapsack to the ground, opens it and begins digging.

ELI (CONT'D)

I made this for you.

He hands her a hard object wrapped in newspaper. It says "MOM" in purple crayon. Laney unwraps the gift. It is perhaps the most beautiful thing she has ever seen.

LANEY

You made me a dream catcher?

Eli, still eye twitching.

ELI  
Yep. No more bad dreams.

LANEY  
It's beautiful E. Thank you.

The kids get in the car. She helps buckle them in. Gives them each a kiss goodbye. Bruce comes around to her side of the car to say goodbye. Laney has tears in her eyes.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
Promise me you'll call the school psychologist or Eli's teacher first thing in the morning.

Bruce puts his hands on her shoulders.

BRUCE  
Focus on getting better Lane. So you can come home. We need you.

He kisses her.

BRUCE (CONT'D)  
I need you.

They get in the car. Laney stands in the parking lot and waves as she watches them drive away. In the background we see a WOMAN (60's) hugging two YOUNG MEN goodbye.

As both cars are pulling out of the parking lot we see Laney and the woman both standing alone, 20 feet away from each other, Laney with the dream catcher in her hand. They are the same. No words are exchanged. Yet there is an implicit understanding between them: if only they could be in those cars. If only it was as simple as driving away.

52 EXT. HOSPITAL PATH - DAY

52

Laney is jogging along the path. Zack runs up beside her.

ZACK  
Hey!

LANEY  
Hey.

ZACK  
You've been avoiding me for a while now and I'm starting to take it personally.

(MORE)

ZACK (CONT'D)

Though it's hard to imagine I could ever do anything wrong.

LANEY

I'm not avoiding you.

Laney doesn't look at Zack.

LANEY (CONT'D)

I took up reading.

ZACK

Reading is good.

(Pause)

Are you pissed at me or something?

LANEY

Why would I be pissed at you?

Laney keeps running, Zack stops, out of breath.

ZACK

Can you just stop for a minute?

Laney stops, turns around. They're both breathing heavily.

ZACK (CONT'D)

I don't know you just seem pissed. Everything okay? Kids okay?

LANEY

Everything's fine. Good actually. I've been working really hard in therapy. Finally getting somewhere. What about you? How's your girlfriend?

ZACK

My girlfriend?

LANEY

The girl who comes on visiting day. The blond.

ZACK

Sienna? Sienna is good.

LANEY

That's great. Happy to hear that.

Zack looks at her with grave curiosity. A charming smile spreads across his face.

ZACK

You're jealous? That's what this is about?

Laney is embarrassed. For the first time we see her vulnerable.

ZACK (CONT'D)

I don't mean to be the messenger of irony or anything but you're married. So unless you're not telling me something...

LANEY

I know, you're right. Maybe I am jealous.

Zack kisses her, she gives in for a moment before she pushes him away.

ZACK

Whoa. I'm kinda getting mixed signals here.

LANEY

I'm sorry. God. I'm really sorry.

Zack looks away, uncomfortable. Laney places a hand on his cheek and forces him to look at her.

This is Laney. Vulnerable. Sweet. Spoiled. Lovely.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Zack- listen to me. I've made some really stupid decisions in my life. And as much as I'd love to be with you it would just be one more bad choice. I need to remember how to be a friend. You know? I want to be a friend to you. A good friend. And I need to remember how to be a good wife and mother. How to just- be a real person. I've spent so much time running away from my problems because I didn't want to feel any pain and I've fucked up everything in my life. Good things.

ZACK

I hear that. And you are a real person Laney. A great person.

LANEY

Thank you. I'm working on it. I've gotta try. I deserve to try. My kids deserve that.

Zack takes in his feelings for a moment before he masks them with his trademark humor.

ZACK

So I guess I won't be getting you in the broom closet then?

They laugh and Laney looks at Zack with pure endearment and gratitude. They hug each other, long and honest.

LANEY

I have to go. See you at movie night?

ZACK

Yeah. Popcorn's on me.

As she walks towards the camera, Zack calls from behind her in the distance.

ZACK (CONT'D)

By the way- Sienna is my sister!

Laney stops for a moment of surprise. She smiles to herself, and keeps walking.

53

INT. DR. PAGE'S OFFICE - DAY - SAME

53

Laney sits on her familiar chair, Dr. Page sits in his chair behind the desk. They are observing each other in silence.

LANEY

You know the night before I came here, even with everything I did that night, I went into Eli's room to check on him. I sat down on the edge of his bed. I just wanted to watch him breathe. And I thought to myself, he'll never know. Neither of them will ever know how hard I tried not to hurt them.

A beat.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Am I gonna fuck this up? I really don't want to fuck this up.

DR. PAGE

Have some faith in yourself Laney.  
You've made unbelievable progress  
since you got here. Don't you see  
that?

LANEY

I do. Thank you for making me stay.

DR. PAGE

I didn't make you stay. That was  
your choice. And it was a good one.

Laney smiles at Dr. Page. He has empowered her.

54

INT. BLUE HILL LOBBY - DAY

54

Laney says goodbye to Nurse Pauline and gives her a heartfelt  
hug. Zack walks over.

ZACK

Tell me you weren't going to leave  
without saying goodbye.

Laney smiles.

LANEY

I suck at good-byes.

ZACK

I'm going to miss you.

Laney glances through the window and sees Bruce drive up.

LANEY

I'm gonna miss you too Zack. Will  
you call me when you're out?

ZACK

Yep. I think I'm gonna hang here  
for a couple more weeks though.  
Nothing for me to rush home to.

LANEY

I think that's a great idea.

Laney gives Zack a big hug.

LANEY (CONT'D)

My ride is here.

Zack looks out the doors and sees Bruce waiting against the  
car.

ZACK

That's the guy you blew me off for?  
I could totally take that guy.

They laugh like two old friends with an inside joke.

ZACK (CONT'D)

Go on. Get outta here and don't  
come back.

He smiles. Laney grabs her bag and walks out the door.

55 EXT. BLUE HILL HOSPITAL - DAY- CONTINUOUS 55

Bruce is leaning against the side of the running car. Laney walks out the door, looks at her husband. He smiles at her and to her surprise, without trying, she smiles back.

56 EXT. BROOK'S HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME 56

A handmade "Welcome Home Mommy" sign is hanging (half on/half off) the front door. Laney's SUV is parked in the driveway. Lights are glowing from inside the home

57 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS 57

Laney and Janey are icing a cake. There is a fire in the fireplace. It's a lovely and traditional scene. Janey is wearing a nightgown. Eli is wearing a Knicks Jersey. Bingo is trying to jump up, looking for attention.

LANEY

Eli, want to ice the cake with us?

ELI

No thanks.

Janey starts whining that she can't get it perfect.

JANEY

It's not the way I pictured it.  
It's not perfect.

Janey is getting really upset. Laney bends down, wraps her arms around her.

LANEY

It is perfect. It's beautiful.

JANEY

No it's not.

Janey begins sobbing. Laney tries to calm her down. Eli walks over, puts his arm around his sister's shoulder. Laney looks at him unsure, desperate almost.

LANEY

I don't understand why you're crying. It's a beautiful cake. Isn't it Eli?

ELI

I like it.

Bruce comes up the stairs.

BRUCE

Basement's dry.

Bruce sees Janey crying.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

What's going on?

LANEY

She doesn't like her cake.

BRUCE

But that's a great cake Janey. It's the best cake I've ever seen.

JANEY

Really?

BRUCE

Really. Can I smell it? Does it smell as good as it looks?

JANEY

Okay.

Bruce leans over the cake and purposely puts his nose in the frosting. Janey starts giggling.

BRUCE

Yep, it smells as good as it looks!

JANEY

Daddy!

BRUCE

What?

JANEY

Your nose!

BRUCE

What's wrong with my nose?

Bruce pretends like he doesn't know there is frosting on his nose. He feels all around his face, everywhere but the frosting on his nose. Janey is now laughing.

JANEY

I want to smell it!

Janey sticks her nose in the frosting. Bruce motions to her nose.

BRUCE

Oh, you've got a little something.

Pretending she doesn't know.

JANEY

What?

BRUCE

Just a little....

JANEY

What?

Laney comes over, aware of the fun.

LANEY

Can I smell?

JANEY

Yes! Smell it mommy! It smells great!

Laney leans over to smell the cake, Bruce pushes her head into it a little further, teasingly. Laney has frosting covering her nose and a bit of her face.

LANEY

That is the best smelling cake. It really is.

Eli watches the happy moment, for now he's an outsider as Bruce, Laney and Janey play with the cake and laugh.

BRUCE

Hey E, come smell the cake!

Eli shrugs his shoulders. He's not buying into the happy family yet. Laney understands. In the midst of the fun, the power goes out. It's pitch black.

JANEY

Mommy!

LANEY

It's okay Muffin, the power just went out. It'll be back soon. Bruce can you find some candles?

Bruce retrieves a handful of candles from a kitchen drawer. He lights one, we can see a little. Laney helps him to light more. Janey is quietly crying. In a matter of seconds the kitchen is lit up, candles all around. Candlelight and noses full of frosting.

BRUCE

(to Janey)

See? Look at that!

LANEY

(to Janey)

Better?

JANEY

Sort of.

BRUCE

Here, here's one just for you.

Bruce puts a candle in the cake right next to Janey who is still lightly sobbing.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

You ready?

JANEY

Yes.

Bruce lights the candle, which lights up Janey's face. Her crying fades.

BRUCE

(begins to sing softly)

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. This little light of mine I'm gonna let it shine.

Laney cautiously joins in.

LANEY AND BRUCE

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine let it shine let it shine.

Bruce takes Laney's hand, this is a very happy and romantic scene. He begins to dance with her, both with frosted noses and somewhat cautious. Eli can't help but watch, hints of a smile on his face. Janey is smiling ear to ear. She joins in singing.

BRUCE, LANEY AND JANEY  
Down in my heart, I'm gonna let it  
shine. Down in my heart, I'm gonna  
let it shine.

Bruce takes Janey's hand and pulls her off the bar stool. He starts to dance with her. She smiles.

Laney turns to Eli, waves him over. He resists, hands in pockets. She waves him over again. This time he comes.

BRUCE, LANEY AND JANEY (CONT'D)  
Down in my heart, I'm gonna let it  
shine, let it shine, let it shine  
let it shine.

Now they are all dancing in the kitchen by candlelight. Laney takes a swipe of icing off her nose and puts it on Eli's. They are all laughing. Bruce puts his arm around Laney, licks her nose playfully, they continue to dance.

PULL BACK: The camera begins to pull back revealing the glowing kitchen, the family is dancing, their voices fade.

58

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

58

Laney is standing in the hallway just outside the elementary school guidance councilor's office. She is wearing her parent badge around her neck, Janey next to her is wearing her tiara. Eli and Bruce are playing with his iPhone. A mom is passing through the hallway.

LANEY  
Hey Jessica!

Jessica gives Laney a dismissive smile and wave, carries on down the hall. Laney is slightly dejected, Bruce sees the exchange.

BRUCE  
Ignore it.

MR. ODESKY, the guidance councilor, open's his office door.

MR. ODESKY  
Come on in.  
(to Eli and Janey)  
(MORE)

MR. ODESKY (CONT'D)  
I'm going to speak to your mom and  
dad for a few minutes. Can you wait  
right here?

ELI AND JANEY  
Okay.

59 INT. MR. ODESKY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

59

Mr. Odesky motions for Laney and Bruce to sit.

MR. ODESKY  
Nice to meet you both.

Mr. Odesky takes his chair behind his desk and motions to the  
empty chairs across from him.

MR. ODESKY (CONT'D)  
Please, take a seat.

Mr. Odesky has a file on his desk which he seems to be  
familiar with.

MR. ODESKY (CONT'D)  
How's the re-entry going?

BRUCE  
A little choppy.

LANEY  
He hates me.

BRUCE  
He doesn't hate you.

LANEY  
He hasn't forgiven me yet.

MR. ODESKY  
You need to give him time. Build  
back his trust. He's scared you're  
going to leave again. That's a  
rational fear.

A beat.

MR. ODESKY (CONT'D)  
I'm glad you called me Mr. Brooks.  
I think we need to be proactive in  
this situation. Mrs. Zeldis is  
concerned about Eli's recent  
behavior in class.

(MORE)

MR. ODESKY (CONT'D)

One of the issue's is that he's being disruptive.

BRUCE

How so?

MR. ODESKY

He interrupts Mrs. Zeldis in the middle of her lessons- asks questions he knows the answers to. It's a way to get attention. She's working on that. But what concerns me more are his rituals. The eye blinking, the constant pencil sharpening. Recently he's started a pattern with tapping his feet.

Bruce and Laney look at each other.

MR. ODESKY (CONT'D)

These behaviors suggest anxiety; the rituals are a way for Eli to stay in control.

Laney looks uncomfortable.

MR. ODESKY (CONT'D)

It's not unusual but it becomes a problem when the rituals get in the way of functioning. When they become all consuming.

BRUCE

So what do we do?

MR. ODESKY

In my opinion Eli needs to see a specialist. Perhaps start with Cognitive Behavior Therapy. Or perhaps he can even benefit from medication.

BRUCE

Medication?

LANEY

(to Bruce)

This is my fault. He has my genes.

BRUCE

Stop it.

LANEY  
(under her breath)  
He never had a chance.

60 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY - SAME

60

Eli is reading "The Three Little Pigs" to Janey.

ELI  
And this little piggy went weeeeeee  
weeeeeee weeeeeee all the way home.

He tickles her. Laney and Bruce exit office and are met with their laughter. A relief.

BRUCE  
Anyone here in the mood for some  
ice cream!?

ELI AND JANEY  
Me!

Laney smiles. She takes Eli's hand, Bruce and Janey follow.

61 EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

61

Bruce, Laney, Eli and Janey are walking to the car. Laney and Eli still holding hands.

ELI  
Did you go to rehab because you're  
a drug addict?

Laney looks to Bruce. Bruce shakes his head. He's irritated.

LANEY  
No. Of course not. Where did you  
get that idea?

ELI  
John Frye said you're a drug addict  
and that's why you went to rehab.

JANEY  
Drugs are bad mommy.

BRUCE  
That's not why she was there Eli.  
John Frye is just trying to get  
your goat.

JANEY

Eli doesn't have a goat.

ELI

Then why were you there?

Laney stops walking and turns to Eli. She bends down on her knee and puts her hand on his back, bringing him closer to her. His eyes start twitching.

LANEY

I was having some troubles in my mind. And because of those troubles I started doing some things that I shouldn't have been doing.

ELI

Then why did you do them?

LANEY

Well, it's complicated.

Laney cups her hands gently around his eyes as if to calm them and stop the twitching.

LANEY (CONT'D)

But I saw a doctor who was very smart and he helped me make sense of my troubles. And now I feel a lot better.

ELI

Did Mr. Odesky tell you to send me to rehab too?

Laney hugs him tight. Bruce looks away.

62

INT. ICE CREAM PARLOUR - DAY - SAME

62

All four are looking in the window at the flavors of ice cream.

ELI

What are you getting mom?

LANEY

I don't know yet.

There is a pimply teenager behind the counter.

TEENAGER

What's it gonna be?

JANEY

I want the pink one please.

LANEY

And I'll have a small scoop of chocolate. Kid size.

TEENAGER

We don't do kid size for adults.

Laney's instinct is to get irritated. She calms herself.

LANEY

I'll pay for a regular scoop - just make it in a kid cup.

TEENAGER

I can't do that either. I'd have to charge you for the cup size I give you.

LANEY

(deep breath)

Fine. I'll have a small.

BRUCE

I'll have a scoop of vanilla on a sugar cone.

The teenager gives them their orders.

TEENAGER

And the little man?

Laney waits for Eli to make his choice but Eli doesn't say anything. His eyes start contorting furiously.

BRUCE

What do you want Eli? Rocky Road?

No answer.

LANEY

Which one Eli? E? What are you doing?

ELI

The lines. Look at the ice cream mom. See how the edges of the containers don't connect to each other? And the floor is crooked? If I do this with my eyes -

Eli rolls his eyes up into his head, holds them there, blinks hard.

ELI (CONT'D)

It makes them all straight and I  
can figure everything out.

Laney takes a deep breath. She looks to Bruce for help. Bruce gets down on his knees.

BRUCE

You know Buddy, straightening out  
all the uneven lines in the world  
is a big job. Let's just pick a  
good flavor for now.

62A INT. LANEY'S BATHROOM - MORNING

62A

Laney finishes brushing her teeth, spits, rinses her toothbrush. She opens the medicine cabinet, puts her toothbrush away and takes out a bottle of medication. She unscrews the cap and taps a pill into the palm of her hand, puts it in her mouth and draws some water out of the faucet to wash it down. Laney closes the medicine cabinet, glances at herself in the mirror. She fixes her hair, tilts her head. She is content with what she sees.

63 INT. TOY STORE - DAY

63

Laney and Eli are perusing the super-hero aisle of a toy store. Eli holds a plastic baggy filled with crumpled bills and coins.

ELI

Mom! Look at this one! It's so  
cool.

LANEY

Really cool.

Just then Donny and Henry come around the corner. Donny has that split second where one decides if they pretend not to see you, or face the music. In that same second, Henry spots Eli. Decision made.

Laney and Donny are both taken off guard.

HENRY

Eli!

ELI

Hey Henry!

DONNY  
Look who's here!

LANEY  
Hey Donny. Hey Henry.

Donny and Laney give each other a weak hug.

DONNY  
Good to see you back.

LANEY  
Thanks. Good to be back.

Henry and Eli try to solve the superhero dilemma.

HENRY  
Which one are you getting?

ELI  
I have to see what I can afford. I  
have fourteen dollars and eighty-  
two cents.

HENRY  
Wow. That's a lot.

ELI  
I guess so.

DONNY  
I'd pick a superhero if I were you  
Eli. Personally, I always wanted to  
be the kind of superhero that  
swoops down, rescues the woman from  
the burning building and flies her  
to safety.

This is clearly for Laney's benefit.

HENRY  
So you can't be Batman cuz he  
doesn't fly.

ELI  
And Spiderman doesn't really fly,  
he swings.

DONNY  
What do you guys think? What kind  
of superhero should I be? Maybe  
Superman? I'd be a good Superman,  
heh?

Behind Donny, Susan comes walking down the aisle carrying an infant seat. She's very noticeably pregnant. Laney can't believe her eyes.

LANEY

Looks like you're already a superhero Donny.

Susan approaches Laney with a warm smile and a hug.

SUSAN

Laney! So good to see you! I've missed you!

LANEY

I had no idea you were pregnant! You're glowing!

SUSAN

Oh bullshit. I look like shit and I feel like shit. But I'm almost halfway through, thankfully.

Donny is uncomfortable, Laney does some math in her head.

LANEY

That's great. Really great you two. Congratulations.

SUSAN

Hey- did you get my message? About my birthday party?

LANEY

Yes! I'm so sorry. I did, I've just been so busy trying to catch up on things--

SUSAN

It's fine! I just wanted to make sure you know it's no pressure. Really. I totally understand if you'd rather skip it.

LANEY

No, we're looking forward to it.

Eli interrupts, thrilled with his choice.

ELI

Can I get this one mom?

LANEY

Sure.

DONNY  
Good choice my man.

Laney puts her arm around Eli's shoulder.

LANEY  
We have to get going E.  
(to Donny and Susan)  
See you next weekend?

DONNY  
See you soon.

SHERYL  
Can't wait!

64 INT. JANEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

64

It's bedtime. Janey's wearing an adorable nightgown. Janey snuggles beneath the covers.

JANEY  
I have a wish.

LANEY  
What's your wish?

JANEY  
I can't tell it to you.

LANEY  
Why?

JANEY  
Because it won't come true.

LANEY  
Who told you that?

JANEY  
I don't remember.

LANEY  
Well, whoever told you that must not know about the 'Mommy Clause.'

JANEY  
The 'Mommy Clause?'

LANEY  
You can always tell your mommy a wish.

JANEY  
Good.

Janey throws her arms around Laney's shoulders.

JANEY (CONT'D)

I wish you would love me forever.

LANEY

You never have to worry about that, baby. I'll always love you.

JANEY

Forever?

LANEY

Forever. Now close you're eyes, it's bedtime.

JANEY

Are you going somewhere?

LANEY

I told you Honey- Mommy and Daddy are going to a birthday party.

JANEY

No! Don't go! I don't want you to leave!

Janey goes from 0 to 60 in a second. A full blown tantrum ensues.

LANEY

Janey we're just going for a few hours! I'll be here when you wake up in the morning!

JANEY

No! No! Don't leave me! Mommy! Stay here!

Bruce has obviously heard the screaming and he appears in the doorway wearing a suit. Janey throws her arms around Laney as if she can stop her- all the while screaming and crying. Laney looks to Bruce for help, Bruce let's out a deep sigh of frustration.

JANEY (CONT'D)

You can't leave me mommy!

Bruce and Laney are mid slow-dance on the dance floor but Laney is a million miles away.

BRUCE  
Hey. You okay?

Laney just shakes her head, she's seems overwhelmed with sadness. A tear streams down her cheek.

BRUCE (CONT'D)  
It's just separation anxiety Lane.  
All kids do that.

LANEY  
I know-

They dance for a moment longer.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
I'm going to go call them okay?

Bruce nods.

BRUCE  
Of course. I'll be at the table.

66 OMITTED 66

67 EXT. OUTSIDE RESTAURANT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS 67

Laney reaches into her bag and pulls out a cigarette. When she looks up Donny is facing her. He's obviously followed her out of the restaurant.

DONNY  
The way you move out there on the  
dance floor -if I were Bruce I'd  
get you your own pole.

Laney puts the cigarette in her mouth.

DONNY (CONT'D)  
Light?

Donny pulls a lighter out of his jacket pocket and lights her cigarette.

DONNY (CONT'D)  
You look great.

LANEY  
Do I?

DONNY  
Like a million bucks.

LANEY  
Thanks.

Laney glances at her reflection in the club's window. She pushes her hair behind her ear.

DONNY  
You know, I was going to call you but then I thought I'd done enough, you know. Caused enough damage.

LANEY  
It wasn't your fault, Donny. You could have been any man.

DONNY  
(insulted)  
Really?

LANEY  
I didn't mean it like that. I just meant that I was looking for something - guess I'm still looking. Of course, it makes it harder that I don't know what I'm looking for.

Laney's amused.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
You were there and willing, and I thought- well it doesn't matter. Don't worry. You didn't drive me to rehab.

Donny is perversely disappointed.

DONNY  
I took your advice. Susan and I - we've been working it out.

LANEY  
I saw.

DONNY  
I didn't know. When we had our thing-- I didn't know she was pregnant.

LANEY  
Our thing?

DONNY

I want to make sure you know I had no idea.

LANEY

I don't know what you're talking about.

Donny waits a beat. He is, in spite of his wounded ego, appreciative.

DONNY

Thanks. I'm here for you, you know. If you ever need anything. Call me.

LANEY

Yeah. Thanks.

Donny opens the door to return to the party, stops a beat and then...

DONNY

I mean. Not my house. Call my office. You need anything you talk to Janine. Okay? Anything.

Laney smirks, acutely aware of his audacity. Donny digs his cigarette into the concrete with his shoe and makes his way back into the restaurant. Laney dials a number on her cell phone and holds it against her ear.

ELI (O.S.)

Hello?

LANEY

It's mommy. How are you?

ELI (O.S.)

Okay.

LANEY

You sure?

ELI (O.S.)

I'm sure.

LANEY

That's good. Your sister sleeping?

ELI (O.S.)

She's sleeping.

LANEY

Eli?

ELI (O.S.)

Yeah?

LANEY

You know I love you right?

ELI (O.S.)

Yeah.

LANEY

Nah. Not really. Not how much.

Laney can hear him breathing.

LANEY (CONT'D)

I want you to promise me E. Promise me that you'll always remember that I love you. That I really really love you.

ELI (O.S.)

Okay, I promise.

Laney takes her forefinger and wipes under each of her eyes.

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

Mom, can I go now? I'm gonna miss the rest of the game.

LANEY

Of course. Go. Good night Sweetheart.

68

INT. PRIVATE PARTY - NIGHT - SAME

68

Bruce and Laney are sitting at a table near the dance floor with DAVID BLACKMAN (mid-fifties) and his trophy wife KATRINA (mid-twenties). David is a slick looking garmonto, Katrina has quite the jewelry wardrobe. The table is rife with alcohol.

BRUCE

I cover all of that in the book but to answer your question, there really is no such thing as having too much life insurance. Especially if you're planning on having more kids.

(MORE)

BRUCE (CONT'D)

And no offense David because you look like you're in great shape, but I'm guessing Katrina is going to outlive you.

Bruce is playfully ribbing him while expertly navigating the waters of business and personal. David laughs, he obviously finds Bruce charming.

DAVID

That's my plan. Plucked this one straight out of high school.

Katrina elbows him and smiles.

KATRINA

I was almost out of college.

BRUCE

Well, the book covers lots of unique scenarios. I see it like this David. There's a bible for the afterlife. I wrote the bible for the here and now.

DAVID

Well it sounds brilliant. The whole notion of hedging your bet against God.

A WAITER arrives with a tray of cocktails. Laney pulls a lollipop out of her purse and starts sucking on it.

KATRINA

You know, I've always dreamed of writing a book. How did you do it, Bruce? Did you just sit down and type what you were thinking into a computer or did you pay someone to help you?

BRUCE

It's sentence by sentence. Anyone can do it. Call me anytime. I'd be happy to help you.

Bruce takes his business card out of his wallet, passes it across the table. He is a professional.

LANEY

What do you want to write a book about?

KATRINA

Like, maybe a children's book or something. I'm not sure yet.

Laney feigns interest in her.

LANEY

You know Katrina, I'm thinking of writing a book too.

KATRINA

Really, on what?

LANEY

On prostitution.

BRUCE

(embarrassed)

Prostitution? Honey what do you know about prostitution?

LANEY

Well I've been thinking about it. Prostitution is the perfect example of hypocrisy. It's illegal to sell your body. But when you're rich it's perfectly acceptable. We just call it being a wife.

Bruce looks at her with hardened eyes. Laney smiles, returns the stare.

LANEY (CONT'D)

What do you think Katrina?

Katrina doesn't know how to respond. Across the room Donny taps a spoon against a champagne glass. The guests quiet.

DONNY

I'd like to make a toast to my beautiful wife.

Susan's right up next to him, beaming.

DONNY (CONT'D)

I know you guys are here to dance and have fun so I'm going to make this short. Suze, I just want you to know, when I drive away to work each morning and see you there waving to me, Henry by your side, all I'm thinking is how fast can I get back to you. Thank you for putting up with me.

(MORE)

DONNY (CONT'D)

I know I can be a real pain-in-the-ass sometimes. Happy Birthday Honey.

The room quiets for a collective awwwww. Donny puts his hand on Susan's pregnant belly.

DONNY (CONT'D)

And thank you for this.

He turns to the audience.

DONNY (CONT'D)

Can you believe it? Another baby this woman's having with me. She's a saint.

Donny draws Susan close and begins kissing her. Laney smiles and claps in synchronicity with the guests.

69

INT. LANEY AND BRUCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - SAME

69

Laney is stretched out on the bed. She watches Bruce as he undoes his tie, unbuttons his shirt.

LANEY

When are you gonna to talk to me?

BRUCE

Why would you do that? Say you're going to check on the kids and then you come back babbling about prostitution? I was this close to getting David Blackman as a client.

LANEY

I know.

BRUCE

Do you? Do you have any idea how hard I work to keep it all going? Because you act like it's all some big joke. Like what I do for a living is beneath you somehow.

LANEY

I said I'm sorry. I really am. And I do know how hard you work. I don't know what I was thinking. Come here.

Laney pats the side of the bed with her hand. Bruce relaxes and sits down next to her. Laney takes his hand and looks at him sweetly. He smiles at her, understanding.

LANEY (CONT'D)

I really am sorry. It was out of line. She was just such a--

BRUCE

Prostitute?

They laugh, real and true. Finally a joke not at their own expense. A silent moment passes while Bruce changes his tune.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Come with me to the conference this weekend.

LANEY

I don't know Bruce. You know how those things are. Everybody's shit-faced for three straight days.

BRUCE

Not us. Nothing stronger than water for me either. We can lay in bed. Get a massage.

LANEY

What about the kids?

BRUCE

They can stay with my sister.

LANEY

They're having a hard enough time as it is.

BRUCE

They'll be fine. Happy parents make happy kids. We need this. Come on. A road trip.

Laney glances up at the ceiling. She rolls over to face him. His eyes are earnest. Warm.

LANEY

What if I run into my dad?

Bruce is saddened by this.

BRUCE

We don't have to leave the hotel.

Bruce takes Laney into his arms, kisses her forehead.

BRUCE (CONT'D)  
Just think about it. You look  
tired.

He turns off the lamp, fluffs his pillow and rolls onto his side. Laney stares at the ceiling. A moment passes.

LANEY  
I'll go with you.

ON: Bruce. A softness coming to his face.

He reaches around her waist and pulls her close into spooning position, kisses the back of her head and closes his eyes.

BRUCE  
Thank you.

A moment passes.

LANEY  
God I hate upstate.

BRUCE  
You don't hate upstate. You hate  
your dad.

LANEY  
I think I hate both. Can't I hate  
both?

Bruce chuckles, holds her tight.

BRUCE  
Yes. You can hate both.

70 EXT. EXTERIOR SHOTS OF LAKE GEORGE HOTEL - DAY 70

71 INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY 71

Bruce is watching Laney sleep. He pushes a lock of hair from her forehead, waking her.

BRUCE  
Rise and shine Beautiful.

Laney reluctantly wakes. She sees the room service cart.

BRUCE (CONT'D)  
Pancakes and coffee.

Laney smiles.

LANEY

Bacon?

BRUCE

Of course!

Laney sits up. A tuxedo and a gown are hanging on a door.

LANEY

I have to call housekeeping to get those steamed.

She picks up the phone to dial and Bruce stops her.

BRUCE

Wait a sec-

He hands her a cup of coffee and a small jewelry box.

LANEY

Oh no. What did you do?

Bruce smiles. Inside the box is a beautiful diamond wedding band. Laney is deeply touched.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Who would have thought you'd be able to give me a ring like this?

Bruce kisses her forehead.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Tell me The Newsstand Story.

BRUCE

The Newsstand Story? You don't want to hear the Newsstand Story.

LANEY

I do. I want to hear The Newsstand Story. Please? And I want a massage.

BRUCE

High maintenance. Okay, roll over.

Laney rolls over, a gentle smile on her face.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Once upon a time there was this incredibly good looking kid.

LANEY

Awkward.

BRUCE

Oh yeah, different story. Once upon a time there was this incredibly awkward kid from Teaneck. He used to make a couple bucks racking magazines at a store around the corner from his house. He was usually bored out of his skull but one day this knockout comes in. Long black hair. Long thin legs. And she even had nice...

Bruce holds his hands out in front of his chest, mimicking giant boobs.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

And there was something about her. Her eyes, they seemed...sweet.

LANEY

Seemed sweet or were sweet?

BRUCE

Just let me tell the story. So he started dressing up a little for work--

LANEY

Bullshit. He wore T-shirts

BRUCE

If you knew how carefully he selected them for fit and color--

Laney laughs.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Point is, everyday, all he could think about was the next time she'd come back.

LANEY

Awww.

BRUCE

Then one day she comes in and asks the old man behind the counter to get her a pack of smokes.

(MORE)

BRUCE (CONT'D)

When he turned around, she boosted a candy bar and stuck it down her pants, paid for her cigarettes and walked out. But before she left she turned around and gave the kid this big huge smile. Blew his mind. He thought-- "this chick is hot and crazy." So he followed her out of the store thinking he was gonna get the nerve to talk to her. But then... then she did the thing that just owned him. She went around the corner and gave the candy bar to the homeless guy who lived in the alley. Kid was done. From that moment she owned him. He wanted to marry that girl.

LANEY

And did he?

BRUCE

Yes he did.

LANEY

Even though she told him not to?

BRUCE

Yep. Even though you told me not to.

LANEY

You know there's something really wrong with you, right?

Bruce runs his fingers through her hair and gives her a soft kiss.

BRUCE

I'd marry you a hundred times.

They share a loving moment in silence. Bruce glances at his watch and starts to get off the bed.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna hop in the shower, don't want to be late.

Laney pulls him back into bed.

LANEY

Let's fuck first.

72

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY - SAME

72

Bruce, in a casual suit, grins the grin of the satiated man.

BRUCE

You sure you don't want to go with me?

LANEY

As much as I love a good insurance seminar...

BRUCE

Very funny. I'll be back by five to shower. Cocktails at six. Awards at seven.

LANEY

I'll be ready.

BRUCE

I called the concierge. He said there's an AA meeting not far. Just a cab ride. Think about it?

LANEY

Of course.

She opens a prescription container, pops a pill and smiles for Bruce's benefit. Bruce gives Laney a kiss on the cheek and she follows him to the door.

LANEY (CONT'D)

Have a good time.

Across the hall an elderly man struggles slightly to slide the dirty room service tray out of his room and into the hallway. Laney watches him intently. He smiles at her and closes the door.

73

INT. TAXI - DAY - CONTINUOUS

73

Laney is in the backseat of a moving taxi. She takes a cigarette out of her bag.

LANEY

Mind if I smoke?

The driver responds by rolling down the windows. Laney lights her cigarette.

They pass through a series of neighborhoods before they pull up to a modest but charming ranch house. Laney gets out of the cab and walks up the driveway.

74

EXT. LANEY'S FATHER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

74

Laney rings the doorbell. DAISY (10) answers the door. Laney glances at the number on the door to make sure she has the right house.

LANEY

Oh-hello, is -ah-

ROGER (O.S.)

Sweetheart you have to ask who it is before you open the door.

Laney stares at Daisy for a moment before she turns her gaze to Roger who is walking toward the door. Awkward silence. It takes him second but then he realizes - takes a breath and instinctively puts a protective arm around Daisy's shoulder- the way one would do when confronted by a stranger.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Elaine?

Roger is silent, staring in amazement. Daisy looks up to him in confusion.

LANEY

Hi.

ROGER

Uh-come in. What a surprise. Uh Daisy-this is Elaine. She's-

Laney reaches her hand out to shake Daisy's.

LANEY

I knew your dad a long time ago. You can call me Laney.

DAISY

Do you like doll houses?

LANEY

Yes. Very much.

DAISY

Me and my daddy are playing with mine. Want to see it?

The door closes.

75 INT. DAISY'S BEDROOM - DAY - SAME

75

A dream bedroom for a little girl: Barbie dolls and stuffed animals. A canopy bed. There are several framed family photos on a book shelf. Laney takes them in.

DAISY

Did you have a dollhouse when you were little?

LANEY

I sure did.

DAISY

What color?

ROGER

Yellow with blue shutters.

Laney looks at her father. A moment is had between them. Laney collects the wooden family members. One by one she brings them into the living room, seats them on the couch. The mother in her checkered apron, the father, daughter between them, baby in bassinet.

LANEY

I like it better when everyone's in the same room.

DAISY

Me too. Can I show her my bike daddy?

76 EXT. ROGER'S HOUSE - SAME

76

Roger helps Daisy put her bike helmet on.

LANEY

Wow, a helmet. Huh.

ROGER

All these laws- all this PC garbage to keep your kid safe. The helmets, the car seats, the this and that. They didn't have that when you were a kid and look at you! You got through it just fine.

LANEY

Yeah. Just fine Dad.

A long, awkward silence as they watch Daisy ride around on her bike.

ROGER

She loves that bike. Got it for her eighth birthday. (pause) I was right about her age when I hit my first home run. I was so excited I ran all the way home from school. Completely out of my mind. P-O-P. Brought in three runs.

Roger never takes his eyes off Daisy.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Daisy! Slow down around the corners honey. You're gonna fall.

Daisy slows down.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I took the stairs two at a time, 'Ma!' I shouted, 'Ma!' I couldn't wait to tell her. I didn't even knock; I just busted right into her bedroom. And there she was, unconscious. Face down on the floor in a pool of her own vomit.

LANEY

You never told me that.

ROGER

You were too young. Drank herself to death. I don't even think your mother knows that. Took me until I was fifty to stop being angry.

Something about the way Roger communicates this, his tone, the way he looks at Laney and the concern in his eyes, gives it away.

LANEY

Who told you?

ROGER

Your brother.

Laney takes a minute to process.

LANEY

I'm not angry, Dad.

ROGER

Of course you are.

They watch Daisy pedal along the driveway.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
I was thinking, maybe I'll bring  
Daisy to the city this summer.

Laney's far away.

LANEY  
Why didn't you call me?

ROGER  
You were in the hospital. I didn't  
think it was the right time.

LANEY  
Why didn't you call me for the  
thirty years before that?

Roger doesn't have an answer.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
I need to get going dad. Can I use  
your bathroom?

ROGER  
Of course. First door on your  
right.

77 INT. DAISY'S BEDROOM - DAY - SAME 77

Laney walks into Daisy's room. She takes it in: the canopy bed, the collection of teddy bears, the doll house. Laney kneels, runs her finger across each of their heads. Then she takes the father and drops him in her bag.

78 EXT. ROGER'S HOUSE 78

Laney comes out of the house. A taxi is waiting.

ROGER  
I would have been happy to drive  
you back to your hotel.

Laney walks over to Daisy. Gives her a hug.

LANEY  
It was nice to meet you Daisy.  
Take good care of your Daddy.

Daisy doesn't really understand this but she smiles.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
And you take care of her, okay?

Roger understand the implication of Laney's words. He'll get it right this time. He opens his arms, hesitates.

ROGER

Can I?

Laney nods, but barely. Roger wraps his arms around her shoulders.

ROGER (CONT'D)

You know, I never stopped loving you Elaine.

LANEY

I know Dad.

Laney steps into the taxi and Roger carefully closes the door.

LANEY (TO THE DRIVER) (CONT'D)

We can go now.

Through the window Laney sees Daisy waving and her father wiping tears from his eyes.

78A INT. TAXI CAB - DAY - CONTINUOUS

78A

Laney sinks. She takes a deep breath, follows it with another no matter how much air she takes in it isn't enough. She can't seem to catch her breath. She puts her head between her legs and continues to breathe deeply, pulls her head up again, stretches out her back. The taxi driver adjusts his rearview mirror.

78B INT. HOTEL LOBBY- DAY- CONTINUOUS

78B

Laney reaches into her bag, takes out her phone and dials. The phone rings. We hear Bruce's voice mail.

BRUCE (V.O.)

Hey, you reached Bruce-

Laney tosses the phone back into her bag. Deflated. She eyes the lobby bar.

79 INT. LOBBY BAR - DAY - SAME

79

Laney sits down at an empty bar. There is a handsome BARTENDER (early 30's) cleaning glasses, his hair pulled back in a ponytail.

BARTENDER  
What'll it be?

LANEY  
A couple of Xanax would be great.

Bartender smiles.

BARTENDER  
You and me both.

LANEY  
A shot of tequila with a lime.

The Bartender prepares her drink, doing away with the requisite shot glass. He sets her drink in front of her. Laney looks at it for a moment, then shoots it.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
Keep em coming okay?

BARTENDER  
Not a problem, I like the company.  
Are you staying with us at the hotel?

LANEY  
Yes.

Laney contemplates him for a moment.

LANEY (CONT'D)  
Minnesota. That's the accent, right?

BARTENDER  
Sure is.

LANEY  
Dylan, Prince or Replacements?

BARTENDER  
Went to the same high school Dylan went to.

LANEY  
You're gonna think I'm crazy.

BARTENDER  
I like crazy.

LANEY  
Never mind.

BARTENDER

Tell me.

LANEY

People must tell you all the time  
that you look like Jesus.

Laney smiles wide - she knows she has him.

80

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

80

Laney's gown still hangs from the door, perfectly pressed. Bruce pulls his suit out of the closet, places it in the garment bag and zips it up. He is packing with some urgency. Or is it anger? There is a suitcase on the bed, a small mess of clothes waiting to be folded and packed. The hotel room door opens quietly as Laney tries to slip in without being heard. Her plan is foiled right away when she sees Bruce. He hears her but doesn't bother to turn around. Laney gathers her courage.

LANEY

I'm so sorry Bruce. I fell asleep  
by the lake.

Bruce is silent.

LANEY (CONT'D)

By the time I woke up I already  
missed the ceremony. And then I was  
too nervous to come back. I didn't  
want to disappoint you.

More silence.

LANEY (CONT'D)

How did it go? Were you a huge hit?

BRUCE

I looked for you by the lake Laney.  
You weren't there.

LANEY

Are you saying you don't believe  
me?

BRUCE

Yes. I'm saying I don't believe  
you.

LANEY

Jesus Bruce--

BRUCE

No. Do NOT try to turn this around  
and make me look like the bad guy  
Lane. Saying your lie louder  
doesn't make it true.

Laney sits on the bed where he's packing. She softens, he  
doesn't.

LANEY

Bruce, just listen. I found a  
couple Xanax in the bottom of my  
purse. I know I shouldn't have  
taken any but-

Bruce grabs Laney's face in his hand like he's going to snap  
her neck off.

BRUCE

What the fuck is wrong with you?

He squeezes tighter, then lets go.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Why is it so easy for you to look  
me in the eyes and lie to me?

He stares at her. Small pools of tears have settled in the  
corners of Bruce's eyes.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Do you even love me Laney?

LANEY

Of course I do.

BRUCE

Just not enough I guess.

He looks at Laney with a mixture of love and regret.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

I'm going to Atlanta. I have some  
business there and I need to clear  
my head. Figure out where we go  
from here.

LANEY

When are you coming back? What  
about Eli's piano recital?

This is almost comical. He shakes his head. Laney, mother of  
the year.

BRUCE

I'll be back in time. They'll stay with my sister until I get home.

LANEY

What? You don't trust me?

BRUCE

No. I don't.

He walks toward the door, bag in hand, turns back to Laney.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

This is my fault. I shouldn't have brought you. It was too soon.

LANEY

So you're just leaving? You're just leaving me here alone?

BRUCE

Yeah. You always seem to find your way home eventually.

He opens the door.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

I just don't know if I want to be there next time you do.

- 80A INT. BROOK'S HOUSE - DAY 80A  
Laney unlocks her front door and pulls her suitcase in behind her.
- 80B INT. BROOKS HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 80B  
Laney parks her bag next to her, looks around and feels the emptiness. Janey's ballet outfit is on the bench, Eli's backpack. Laney walks into the family room. Slow but deliberate.
- 80C INT./EXT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 80C  
Laney turns on a table lamp and gazes at a few photographs of her family on the table next to it. She walks over to the window, looks at the basketball court. It's empty but for a ball and Janey's pink bike.

81 INT. PIANO RECITAL - DAY

81

Modest suburban living-room, upright piano, folding chairs. Eli is wearing a navy sports coat over a Knicks jersey. Janey plays with her Barbie doll. Laney glances out the window and then back to Eli who is doing his eye ritual, blinking hard. He seems to have added a new step - he twists his mouth, holds his lips in a tight squeeze, waits a beat, releases and then again. A young girl SABRINA (age 10) finishes her recital piece. The AUDIENCE claps. MRS. MATTINGLY (30's), Eli's piano teacher, steps to the front of the room. She gives Sabrina a hug.

MRS. MATTINGLY

Let's give Sabrina another round of  
applause.

Laney hears a car door slam. She looks out the window and sees Bruce, still with rolling bag, just in time. He walks in, scans the room. There is an empty seat next to Laney but he chooses to take a seat in the back. Janey sees him and leaps down the aisle.

JANEY

Daddy!

She grabs his hand in an effort to lead him to their seats but he doesn't follow. Instead he scoops her up onto his lap. Ostensibly he doesn't want to interrupt Mrs. Mattingly but in truth he doesn't want to be near his wife. Mrs. Mattingly sees him politely sitting in the back.

MRS. MATTINGLY

It's okay Bruce. This isn't  
Carnegie Hall. Go sit with your  
family.

As Bruce makes his way down the aisle we see Laney and Eli slide over to make room for him. Bruce sits down next to Eli, Janey on his lap. He puts his arm around his son's shoulder. Eli is twitching away. Laney and Bruce barely make eye contact.

MRS. MATTINGLY (CONT'D)

So much has been written about  
Beethoven's deafness but my  
favorite story is this one. After  
the first performance of The Ninth,  
Beethoven stared blankly at his  
orchestra. A thoughtful musician,  
realizing he couldn't hear the  
clapping, turned Beethoven around  
to face the audience.

(MORE)

MRS. MATTINGLY (CONT'D)

It was Beethoven's eyes, not his ears that conveyed the symphony's triumph. Now let's use our eyes and ears while we welcome Eli Brooks to the stage. Eli will be performing the final movement of the Ninth. The Ode to Joy.

Eli, all three-foot nine walks up on stage as the audience politely claps. He takes a seat at the piano. He composes his hands properly but doesn't begin. This is gut wrenching. His eyes start twitching, his mouth is turning. Laney holds her breath, eyes wide in anticipation.

BRUCE

(under his breath)  
Come on Buddy....

Eli goes through another short series of eye twitches and mouth contortions. This moment is taking forever, the room is silent in anticipation. A PARENT subtly turns around to look at Laney for her reaction. Laney sits up straighter, stoic, masking her nerves. And then amazingly, without any twitching of the neck, contorting of the mouth, blinking of the eyes, Eli begins to play - fingers on keys, wrists raised.

This, the sound of her son, is, perhaps, the most beautiful Laney's ever heard. She secretly exhales and then because she's overcome with emotion, her eyes fill with tears. She can feel Bruce watching her, she turns her head slowly. When their eyes meet there is no malice. Instead a flicker of hope, the mutual acknowledgement of their little boy's triumph. At that moment, as Eli takes his bow and the room cheers, all is forgiven.

82 OMITTED 82

83 INT. BROOKS' HOME - FOYER - DAY - SAME 83

Bruce unlocks the front door and lets everyone into the house. Bingo, wagging his tail, is there to greet them.

BRUCE

Don't forget to take off your shoes.

The kids smile. Leave their shoes on the mat. Put their coats on the bench. All the while Laney is trying to compose herself.

JANEY

Why are you crying Mommy?

LANEY

These are happy tears.

Laney walks over to Eli. Kneels.

LANEY (CONT'D)

E-you were extraordinary today.  
Breathtaking. I don't think I've  
ever heard anything more beautiful.

Laney puts her hands on Eli's shoulders. She takes him in.  
Her beautiful boy.

LANEY (CONT'D)

I don't deserve to be your mother.

Bruce is getting anxious about where this conversation may  
lead.

BRUCE

Who wants a snack?

JANEY

Hot chocolate?

BRUCE

Sure.

JANEY

With marshmallows.

Bruce glances at Laney. Her smile belies her anxiety.

LANEY

I have to run to the bathroom.  
I'll meet you there in a minute.

84

INT. BATHROOM - DAY - SAME

84

Laney closes the bathroom door, removes the tampon box from the top shelf and pulls out the familiar white envelope. She empties the contents of the envelope onto the floor. She cuts lines, sniffs coke, glances at herself in the mirror. Bingo scratches at the bathroom door, he wants to come in. Laney ignores him.

There is a crash of some sort in the next room. The kids are calling her name. Laney does one more line and starts cleaning up in a hurry. She realizes she doesn't have much time.

JANEY AND ELI

Mom. Moooooooooom!

BRUCE

Laney!

LANEY

One second!

JANEY AND ELI

Mom!

Eli enters the bathroom first, followed by Janey and Bingo. Laney pretends to be looking for something.

LANEY

I lost my contact. Damn this floor makes -it's impossible to find-

Laney looks up. The three of them are staring at her. She wipes her nose with her sleeve. There is blood on it. The kids are visibly frightened as Bruce leads them out of the bathroom by their shoulders.

JANEY

Mommy! What's wrong with mommy?

85 EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS 85

Laney runs out the front door and speeds off.

86 OMITTED 86

87 INT. DONNY'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS 87

Walls covered with advertisements. Directly behind Donny is a mock up of the spring ad campaign. A life-sized poster, a caricature of Donny's father sitting on top of a cow. Arms in the air, cowboy hat, two lassoed yogurt pops. "The Dairy King Rides Again." Donny is taken aback by the site of Laney: mascara running down her face, crusted blood on her nose. She's shaking.

LANEY

I need something to calm down.

Donny hands her a tissue, then guides her into a chair.

DONNY

What happened?

LANEY

I don't want to talk about it.

Laney wipes her nose, glances at the tissue. There's blood on it. She crumples the tissue into her hand.

DONNY

I can't give you anything, Lane.  
What kind of person would that make me?

LANEY

Please Donny. Now isn't the time for moralizing.

DONNY

But you were just in rehab -

LANEY

Well now I'm not. Please!

Donny's office phone rings but he ignores it. Instead he wets his thumb, wipes the dry blood from Laney's nose, tucks a piece of Laney's hair behind her ear. A tear runs down her cheek.

DONNY

It's all going to be okay.

LANEY

Not for me. But it is for you -  
you're about to have a baby!

DONNY

We'll figure it out.

Donny kisses the back of Laney's neck. Then her mouth. He slips his hand into her blouse. His cell phone rings. He pulls it out of his pocket and looks at the Caller ID.

DONNY (CONT'D)

Hey Suze, what's up?

Donny looks concerned.

DONNY (CONT'D)

Jesus! Are you at the emergency room? Okay, take a deep breath. What did the doctor say? Is he in pain? I'm on my way. Everything's gonna be okay.

Donny hangs up the phone.

LANEY

How many people you going to make  
everything okay for?

Donny shoots Laney a look of disgust.

DONNY

This is my son.

He grabs his jacket and leaves. Laney opens Donny's locked desk drawer with a letter opener and rifles through the prescription containers inside. She swallows some pills, stuffs the prescriptions into her purse and leaves.

88 EXT. STREET - DAY - SAME 88

Laney is walking to her car. Across the street a neon sign flashes: EVERY NIGHT EIGHTIES NIGHT, THURSDAY IS LADIES NIGHT 1\$ BEERS.

89 INT. O'SULLIVAN'S BAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS 89

Laney takes a seat, eyes the BARTENDER for a drink.

LANEY

Beer.

A guy in a QUAKER STATE walks over to the bar.

QUAKER STATE

No Springsteen on the jute box?  
This is Jersey.

He glances at Laney.

LANEY

Springsteen fan?

QUAKER STATE

How could you tell?

Laney smirks, unimpressed.

QUAKER STATE (CONT'D)

Best musician on the planet. Put  
Jersey on the map.

Laney lifts the bottle to her mouth. She recognizes the pathetic pick-up attempt but she's willing to play ball.

LANEY

I'm sure Sinatra would argue. And  
Bon Jovi, and--

QUAKER STATE

Bon Jovi? All he ever wanted was to  
be Bruce.

LANEY

We all want to be something bigger  
than we are I guess.

QUAKER STATE

Yeah.

Quaker State moves closer.

QUAKER STATE (CONT'D)

What did you want to be?

LANEY

Me?

Laney tries to make out the tattoo on his arm.

QUAKER STATE

You see me talking to anyone else?

LANEY

All I wanted was to get married,  
have kids and live happily ever  
after.

QUAKER STATE

So?

LANEY

So what?

QUAKER STATE

So what's a nice girl like you  
doing in a place like this?

The pills have kicked in, Laney has that all too familiar  
glaze.

LANEY

Who said I'm a nice girl?

Laney's cheek is pressed up against a brick wall. There's  
trash all around: garbage cans overflowing with debris.

LANEY

Lick it.

QUAKER STATE

Lick what baby?

LANEY

My ass.

QUAKER STATE

Your ass?

As he bends down to lick her ass, Laney shoves him in an effort to provoke him. She's looking for trouble.

LANEY

No more fucker.

QUAKER STATE

I'll tell you when it's no more.

Laney has succeeded in instigating Quaker State. He draws back her head and smashes her face against the brick. As she reaches for the wound he pulls her arm back. Laney chuckles, inviting more pain.

LANEY

Fuck.

He likes this.

QUAKER STATE

That hurt?

LANEY

Barely felt it. Is that all you got?

Quaker State smashes her face into the wall one more time which turns him on even more. He finishes and buttons up his pants. She sinks to the pavement and watches as he dumps the contents of her purse on the ground. He picks up the cash and the two bottles of pills. He stashes the cash and one of the bottles in his pocket, takes the lid off the other bottle and pours the pills on Laney.

QUAKER STATE

Want?

Laney can't move her lips. The gash on her cheek is throbbing but she looks remarkably at peace. She got what she wanted, what she's certain she deserved.

Laney gives a feeble smirk before she falls into a fog, in and out of consciousness. She tries to get up, falls down again. Did someone try to help her up? Did she hear voices? She loses consciousness again.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

91 EXT. ALLEY - DAWN 91

As the sun begins to rise, Laney opens her eyes and takes a second to place herself. She touches her cheek, feels around for her bag. You can practically smell the alley- the piss on the ground, the trash starting to defrost from the nighttime cold. She sits up, reaches for her purse and all of her belongings strewn around her.

92 EXT. PARKING LOT - DAWN - CONTINUOUS 92

Laney stumbles to her car. She looks for her keys but can't find them. She reaches for her iPhone. Her screen saver is an adorable photo of Eli and Janey. We see Laney's reflection on the screen. Tears rolling down her cheeks. She presses the button in her contacts that says, "Valley Cab".

93 EXT. LANEY'S STREET - DAWN 93

Laney's in the back seat of a taxi cab, her face black and blue, dried blood. She's a mess. We pass the same tall trees, painted fences that we passed in the opening scene. The taxi slows to a stop in front of her house. It's early morning. All the lights are off. Laney opens the taxi door.

LANEY

Can you wait?

The taxi driver nods his head.

94 INT./EXT. BROOK'S HOUSE - DAY - SAME 94

Laney takes the key from under the potted plant, opens the front door and quickly turns the alarm off.

95 INT. KITCHEN - DAY - SAME 95

Laney opens a cabinet and grabs two brown lunch bags. She reaches into a drawer and grabs two bags of organic chips and a loaf of bread.

She opens the fridge, takes out two slices of American cheese, two apples, two juice boxes... Her gestures are steady and precise. Laney is on a mission: she is going to make her children lunch.

She makes the sandwiches, cuts off the crusts, slices them into fours, wraps them in tinfoil. Tears roll down her cheeks. She peels the apples, cuts them into bites, rubs them with lemon so they won't brown and places them in a Ziplock. She takes out a box of crayons and writes "JANEY" in bubbly letters on one lunch bag and "ELI" on the other. She decorates Janey's bag with hearts and flowers and Eli's bag with basketballs and stars. The scene is tense and heartbreaking.

Laney looks around the kitchen. There it is -- her life in full. Toys, photographs, school pictures pasted to the refrigerator, schedules and children's artwork tacked to the cork board.

It's time to go. Laney walks towards the front door, Bingo follows. But before she leaves she gets down on her knees and kisses him. When she stands up she sees Bruce leaning against the banister. He looks at Laney with sadness and resignation.

JANEY (O.S.)

Daddy?

Bruce hangs his head down, as if Laney's battered face is a slap to his own.

JANEY (CONT'D)

Daddy?

Laney looks up the stairs, then to Bruce.

LANEY

(Whispers)

I'm sorry.

Bruce watches as Laney makes the long short walk to the taxi.

96

EXT. BROOKS HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

96

The driver turns on the engine. As Laney steps in she notices the light in Eli's room come on. She closes the door, presses her hand against the taxi window. Bingo, wagging his tail, is standing with Bruce by the front door.

LANEY

(to taxi driver)

We can go.

The taxi makes it's way down the tree lined street until it disappears.

CUT TO BLACK.