

THE BLACK BOX

by
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PILOT EPISODE

"Kiss The Sky"

"Purple haze was in my brain,
Lately things don't seem the same,
Actin' funny, but I don't know why,
' Scuse me while I kiss the sky."
Jimi Hendrix

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TEASER

INT. DR. HARTRAMPH'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. HARTRAMPH faces her patient, DR. ELIZABETH BLACK. Elizabeth wears dark jeans, a de-constructed T-shirt, looks more like a rock star at the end of a bender than what she is: a famous neurologist. The office is bare bones. Two chairs, a desk, a computer. Boxed medications are stacked from floor to ceiling. Hartrampf is a medicating psychiatrist, not a talk shrink. She's unsentimental, all business.

HARTRAMPH

How would you define normal, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

I don't know what normal means.

HARTRAMPH

You're a neuroscientist. I think you can handle this.

ELIZABETH

Statistically, normal means average.

HARTRAMPH

So all extraordinary people are abnormal?

ELIZABETH

Yes. Picasso wasn't normal. Einstein wasn't normal.

HARTRAMPH

And a normal person is mediocre?

ELIZABETH

I didn't say that.

HARTRAMPH

Let's talk about what happened Thursday night. This is the message you left on my machine.

(reads from her note pad)

"I freakin' nailed it. Every man in the room wanted to sleep with me. Every woman wanted to be me. I have the cure for autism and schizophrenia. Buy MERCK. We're in talks."

ELIZABETH

(unrepentant)

It was a classic manic episode.

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Sudden onset. Pressured speech,
delusions of grandeur, disordered
thought, hallucinations...

HARTRAMPH
And?

ELIZABETH
A freakin' rocket ride, if you want to
know the truth. I've never had a better
time in my life.

Hartrampf is silent. Waits for the kicker.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(reluctantly)
Until, drum roll, I nearly killed myself.

HARTRAMPH
You nearly killed yourself.
(lets that sink in)
When I saw you last Wednesday, you were
happy. Thinking about changing your
whole life.

INT. WILL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Elizabeth just finished making love with WILL VAN
RENSELLER. He's a handsome, strong, imposing young black
man. His hair is gathered in long braids that hang down
his muscled back. He is kissing Elizabeth's neck.

ELIZABETH
I love you.

WILL
And I love you.

He reaches under a pillow, pulls out a diamond ring. She
stares a moment in disbelief. She pulls away, sits up.

ELIZABETH
No, no, no.

WILL
Yes. It's time. I have to know we have
a future. I swear I don't want to
domesticate or tame you. What I want is
to wake up and find you in bed next to me
every day for the rest of my life.

Elizabeth is moved. She touches his face.

ELIZABETH

Oh, baby. I can't. You think you know me, but you only see one side of me. I can be a real bitch.

WILL

And I can be a dick. I don't expect, or even want, perfection.

INT. HARTRAMPH'S OFFICE - DAY

Hartrampf and Elizabeth, where we left them.

HARTRAMPH

You didn't refuse him.

ELIZABETH

No. I said I had to think about it.

HARTRAMPH

Then you left for San Francisco to give the keynote speech at American Society of Neuroscientists.

ELIZABETH

Yeah. A very big deal. I'd been working on that speech for weeks.

We hear the approaching roar of a jet engine.

EXT. LAX - DAY

The plane SCREAMS towards camera, takes off, the wheels passing just overhead.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)

I started to panic when I reread it on the plane.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Elizabeth sits in first class reading some pages. Not a happy camper.

HARTRAMPH (V.O.)

It wasn't up to your standards.

A beeper goes off on Elizabeth's watch. Mechanically, she opens her purse, pulls out two bottles of prescription medicine.

HARTRAMPH (V.O.)

You needed a shot of "inspiration".

She looks at the pills, pauses, and puts them away.

HARTRAMPH (V.O.)

So you skipped your meds.

Elizabeth signals the STEWARDESS she wants a drink.

EXT. HYATT HOTEL SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Moving past the skyline to the hotel. Helicopter shot swoops up, up, in a dizzying flight to the balcony suite on the 30th floor.

INT. HYATT SAN FRANCISCO - BALCONY SUITE - NIGHT

Elizabeth writes a moment, then balls up the paper and throws it on the floor. Still blocked.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)

That night, I barely slept.

INT. HYATT BALCONY SUITE - MORNING

Elizabeth lies in bed, still wide awake, fully clothed.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)

By the morning the medication was out of my system. Finally, the fog lifted and my mind grew wings.

She vaults out of bed.

INT. HYATT SAN FRANCISCO - BALCONY SUITE - DAY

Elizabeth sits at the desk writing so feverishly that her pen literally flies across the paper. Her concentration is astonishing. Her output epic. As she finishes each page, she pushes it off to drop to the ground. There's a pile at her feet. When the last page lands and she's out of paper, she starts writing up her arm.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO HYATT - NIGHT

Elizabeth comes out, dressed to kill in an outfit way too trendy/sexual for a gathering of neuroscientists.

As she gets in the limo, the driver, KASSIM, a muscular young Middle Eastern man in a tight shirt, holds the door. Her skirt hikes as she slides into the back seat. He watches, then his look then moves up and meets her smile as we hear:

MALE (V.O.)

I am honored tonight to introduce the director of the highly acclaimed Neuroscience Research and Treatment Centre at USFD.

INT. CONFERENCE HALL - NIGHT

The DOCTOR doing the introduction stands beneath a banner that says "American Society for Neuroscience". The audience is packed with egghead doctors who look humorless and impossible to impress.

DOCTOR

....recently named by Newsweek one of the hundred most prominent people in medicine.

Elizabeth is backstage waiting in the wings. She adjusts a bra strap, swallows a small mini bar bottle of gin.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Her articles and books documenting an array of bizarre cases have earned her the nickname, the Marco Polo of the brain. Please welcome Dr. Elizabeth Black.

Elizabeth strides on stage. She looks stunning. Like a movie star. She is completely confident, wildly charismatic and now arrogant, too.

ELIZABETH

Thank you. It's an honor to be here. I don't think I've ever seen so much raw brainpower in one room. I'd like to begin by saying you don't know shit. Any of you.

The audience stirs, exchanges annoyed looks.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

About the brain, that is. We study an organ so complex it's beyond human comprehension. How do you make sense of a hundred billion neurons with a hundred trillion connections between them? The

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 galaxy is simple in comparison. I tackle
 the problem by taking the advice of a
 "crazy" man.

A huge image appears on the screen behind Elizabeth: Van
 Gogh's Starry Night.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 Vincent Van Gogh once said that to
 understand blue you must first
 understand yellow and orange. In other
 words, to see anything, you have to
 understand it's opposite. I study
 abnormal brains to learn about "normal"
 ones. And every day I grapple with the
 very definition of the word "normal".

(turning to the painting)

"Starry Night" was completed by Van Gogh
 while he while he was a patient in a
 mental hospital. Temporal lobe epilepsy
 allowed Saint Paul, Moses and Joan of Arc
 to hear the voice of God. Hemmingway,
 Sylvia Plath, Art Buchwald, Billie
 Holiday, Winston Churchill, Teddy
 Roosevelt, Charles Dickens, Herman
 Melville: these are only a few of the
 great minds who suffered from "a fine
 madness". Should they have been
 medicated into mediocrity? My work is
 about respecting each individual brain
 while I learn from my patients. And as I
 study the disorders themselves, I make no
 attempt to distinguish them from an
 imaginary and ideal state of "normalcy".

INT. HARTRAMPH'S OFFICE - DAY

Hartramph looks unimpressed.

HARTRAMPH
 How was the speech received?

INT. CONFERENCE HALL - NIGHT

The doctors leap to a standing ovation. Voices call out:
 "Bravo!" "She's incredible!" "So brilliant!" "And so
 beautiful!"

INT. HARTRAMPH'S OFFICE - DAY

HARTRAMPH
You were hallucinating.

ELIZABETH
Yes.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

Elizabeth has her window down, leans out, her hair blowing. She loosens the top of her dress, revealing more cleavage.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)
On the ride home, I became hypersexual.

Now she sees her handsome driver, Kassim, watching her intently in the rear view mirror. She smiles. He smiles back.

INT. ELEVATOR - HYATT - NIGHT

Elizabeth and Kassim are going up to the 30th floor together, necking as the floors click by. It's hot, passionate, hungry kissing. His hands slide down to her ass. She laughs. And laughs.

INT. LIVING ROOM SUITE - NIGHT

Clothes scattered everywhere. A lamp tipped over. An empty bottle of champagne lies on the sofa. Sounds of sex and water running.

INT. BATHROOM BALCONY SUITE - NIGHT

Kassim and Elizabeth can be seen in the steamy shower. They are forms glimpsed partially in the steam, thrusting madly.

INT. BEDROOM SUITE - NIGHT

It's later. Much later. A digital clock reads 4 a.m. Elizabeth, now wearing a black satin teddy, her hair in disarray, jumps on the king sized mattress, singing to music blaring in her head.

ELIZABETH

"Blackbird singing in the dead of night. Take these broken wings and learn to fly. You were only waiting for this moment to arrive."

Kassim can be seen in the next room, looking for something. He's fully dressed. Elizabeth doesn't appear to know he exists. He finds her purse on the floor, takes all the money from her wallet, exits.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth sings louder, jumps higher and higher. Until she is flying. Then, like a dark Peter Pan, she flies right out the balcony door.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Elizabeth is superwoman, soaring far above the lights along the harbor, doing barrel rolls like an F-16 fighter pilot. Stars streak by. The Milky Way spins overhead.

CU ELIZABETH, crying tears of joy. Then lightning flashes. Something wet hits her cheek. Rain. The world goes dark and cold. The stars disappear.

And now she's falling like a stone. The harbor lights blur as she drops towards the earth, hurtling towards the pavement. She opens her mouth to scream and-

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY - NIGHT

Elizabeth is back in the real world, balancing on the railing of the hotel balcony 30 floors up in her silk underwear in the rain. Inches from death. She wobbles, nearly falls, barely catches herself, drops back to the safety of the balcony where she edges back, curls into a fetal position. For the first time, scared.

INT. HARTRAMPH'S OFFICE - DAY

Elizabeth is sobered now. But there's no self-pity. It's not in her nature.

ELIZABETH

I took four Ativan and crawled into bed. The next day, it was over. I flew home. Will met my plane.

INT. AIRPORT BAGGAGE AREA - DAY

A pale Elizabeth finds Will waiting for her. She moves immediately into his arms, holds on.

INT. HARTRAMPH'S OFFICE - DAY

Hartramph takes a moment to let it all sink in. Then...

HARTRAMPH

Let's talk about some of the exceptional people you named in your speech. Hemmingway used a shotgun to blow his brains out. Sylvia Plath was thirty when she stuck her head in an oven. Billie Holiday died of acute alcoholism after a lifetime of drug abuse. Van Gogh shot himself in a wheat field right after finishing a painting. Normalizing does not doom you to mediocrity. It allows you to live long enough to do your best work. It gives you peace.

ELIZABETH

(soft, looking at her hands)
I get it. This time, I get it.

HARTRAMPH

Do you, Elizabeth? Really? Because it's important. Your life is at stake. Here's the question I want you to ask yourself.

(beat)

Do you want to be "exceptional" and dead?

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. ELIZABETH'S BATHROOM - MORNING

High end, spare, clean. Elizabeth is dressed, alternative as always, but she's back to being carefully put together. This is the good Elizabeth, the sane Elizabeth. Her appearance and the neatness of her surroundings will always be a tell of her state of mind. She takes her medication.

EXT. THE CUBE - DAY

The Center for Neurological Research and Treatment, aka "The Cube" is a square structure made of smoky black glass, attached by walkway to an older University hospital. The hospital is staid, ordinary, plain. The cube is modern. Elegant. Impenetrable.

INT. THE CUBE - DAY

State-of-the art hallways are hung with prints by Goya, Van Gogh, Pollack, Bosche: all artists with issues. One glance tells us this is a facility like no other. Patients roam freely; most wear street clothes. There are no straight jackets, no restraints. Nor is it the least bit grim. The "normal" staff mingle easily with the patients.

One WOMAN wearing a Chanel suit is facing a wall and inching along, spanning it with her arms as if measuring it and embracing it. A MIDDLE-AGED man stares at a mirror, speaks gently but firmly to his own reflection.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Look, you seem like a nice guy.
But if you don't quit following me
I'm calling the police.

A dwarf runs by wearing an outfit straight out of Santa's workshop. Green tights. Red cap. Wide patent leather belt. Bells on his toes. This is YOJO. He tears ass, does a controlled skid and ducks down a side hall just as LUCY DACY, 60, appears.

Lucy looks like she could be a school librarian, which is what she was until she retired a few weeks ago. She's harried and unfit, seems exhausted from her exertions.

LUCY

Yojo? This isn't a game, dear.

Lucy glances into several side rooms. A male nurse, JORGE, looks up from reception.

JORGE

May I help you?

LUCY

I'm here with my friend, YoJo. He has an appointment with Dr. Black. He thinks he's one of Santa's elves.

Lucy hears giggling from down the hall. Yojo peeks out. She takes off after him as we pick up Elizabeth going into an examination room.

INT. EXAM ROOM - DAY

Elizabeth enters and stops in her tracks. ANTHONY GUINNESS, 18, uses colored markers to draw on the wall. He's already got it covered with a stunningly intricate mural. ARTHUR and YVONNE GUINNESS, Anthony's upper middle class parents, rise to meet Elizabeth.

ARTHUR

I'm sorry. We can't stop him. We'll pay to have it repainted.

ELIZABETH

I wouldn't dream of it. It's beautiful.

She moves straight to Anthony, quickly notes his hair in disarray, his shirt buttoned off kilter. He wears glasses covered with grime, as if he can't think clearly enough to clean them. Her face flashes with sympathy as she gently touches his arm.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

You must be Anthony. I'm Dr. Black.

Anthony sloughs her off.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

If you don't feel like talking, that's okay. I'm going to chat with your parents.

Elizabeth speaks quietly, compassionately to Arthur and Yvonne.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Tell me what's been going on.

ARTHUR

Anthony has always been a wonderful son and an exceptional student. He was headed to MIT this fall.

YVONNE

To study physics, like his father.

ARTHUR

He was never interested in art.

YVONNE

He started drawing about three months ago. First he drew all over the walls of his room. Then his school suspended him for defacing the hallways.

ARTHUR

We tried taking him to the doctor and he ran away. He's over eighteen. We couldn't make him come home.

YVONNE

(voice breaking)

He lived on the streets.

ARTHUR

The police finally picked him up tagging the rear wall of the Museum of Fine Arts. When he drew all over the glass in the squad car, they took him to the hospital.

ELIZABETH

(reading the file)

The ER diagnosed schizophrenia.

YVONNE

That's wrong. Our son is a scientist, not an artist. Something happened to him. Something changed in his brain.

ELIZABETH

Schizophrenia can be like that. A perfectly normal childhood. No warning, then a sudden onset of psychosis, often at about Anthony's age. Did the ER put him on medication?

ARTHUR

They tried. He won't take the pills. I've done all the research. This place....the Center for Neurological....

ELIZABETH

Neurological Research and Treatment. Just call it The Cube. We all do.

ARTHUR

It's the best. And you...chief of staff. If anyone can help....

ELIZABETH

(gently)

Schizophrenia should be managed by a medicating psychiatrist. I'm a neurologist.

YVONNE

It's not schizophrenia. We've been on the internet. There are a hundred other things that could cause this. Heavy metal poisoning. A tumor. A B-12 deficiency-

Elizabeth is about to interrupt when she notices that Anthony has stopped drawing and is standing as still as a statue, as if he is frozen in time.

ELIZABETH

(to Yvonne)

Has he done that before?

YVONNE

Yes.

Elizabeth crosses to Anthony, touches his arm. No reaction at all. He doesn't even pull back. Elizabeth waves a hand in front of his face. His eyes are sightless, like dark marbles.

It only lasts a few seconds and then Anthony focuses again. He finds Elizabeth close beside him and darts to the corner, crouching in terror. He covers his ears, rocking and chanting as if to block out all other noise. And Elizabeth, because she's who she is, realizes what's going on. She remains completely calm, turns to Anthony's parents.

ELIZABETH

Could you leave us alone for a moment?

Arthur nods, leads his reluctant wife out. Elizabeth sits beside Anthony on the floor. She looks at him intently and we hear what he hears.

VOICES IN HIS HEAD (V.O.)
 She's evil. She's one of them. She'll
 put a transmitter in your brain.
 Lobotomize you. Run! Get out of here!

Elizabeth takes his hands from his ears and holds them.

ELIZABETH
 Anthony, don't listen to the voices.
 They can't hurt you if you don't let
 them. Listen to me.

Anthony pauses. He sees something. Writing on
 Elizabeth's arm. She follows the look and pulls her
 sleeve up farther. More writing.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 Sometimes, I can't stop.

Anthony looks into her eyes and finds there the
 understanding that only comes from shared experience.
 The voices lower until they are nearly imperceptible.

ANTHONY
 "Some are born to sweet Delight,
 Some are born to Endless Night.
 We are led to Believe a Lie..."

He pauses. It's a test.

ELIZABETH
 "When we see not Thro' the Eye." William
 Blake was a great poet and also an
 artist, like you. He saw visions and
 heard voices. Once he saw an angel in a
 tree.

Now Anthony knows she's on his side.

ANTHONY
 No pills. They make me stupid.

ELIZABETH
 I understand. We won't medicate you
 until we know what's going on. Do you
 ever have headaches? Feel dizzy? Or
 like you can't control your movements?

The voices rise on the track again.

VOICES (V.O.)
 Don't tell her! It's our secret! She's
 the enemy. You can't trust her!

This time Anthony doesn't listen. He focuses on Elizabeth with tears in his eyes.

ANTHONY

Headaches. Yes. And the other things, too.

INT. HALLWAYS - THE CUBE - DAY

Elizabeth walks with DR. OWEN MORELY, Medical Director of the hospital. Owen is 55, a Harvard Don right down to his tortoise shell glasses, pinstripes and bow tie.

OWEN

Isn't this a waste of your time? Schizophrenia is incurable. Drugs are the only answer. A medicating psychiatrist-

ELIZABETH

That's what I thought, too. But Anthony had an absence seizure right in my office. His parents may be right. I'll start blood work to rule out any metabolic disturbances, check his renal function and LFTs. We'll need an MRI and a CT to look for lesions, masses or abnormalities-

They enter Owen's office which says MEDICAL DIRECTOR.

INT. OWEN'S OFFICE - DAY

The space is not what you'd expect. The walls are covered with posters for ultra violent slasher films. Cabinets hold displays of bizarre 19th century brain memorabilia including terrifyingly primitive surgical tools. On the desk is a skull impaled through the eye by a sharp metal spike. Owen waves off her description of her process.

OWEN

I won't second guess you. You surpassed your teacher long ago. Do whatever you think best.

Elizabeth checks up. They aren't alone. DR. MARC BICKMAN rises from the sofa. He's tall, handsome, ripped. Highly intelligent and intense. Elizabeth is taken aback by Bickman's physical presence.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Elizabeth, this is Dr. Marc Bickman, our new Chief of Neurosurgery.

BICKMAN

Dr. Black. I've wanted to meet you ever since I read your first book, "Identity Theft."

Bickman leans in and takes Elizabeth's hand in both of his as she stares into his cool, blue, unblinking eyes.

ELIZABETH

(smooth)

Nice to meet you, too. You also have quite a reputation.

OWEN

Everyone knows "Bick" has magic hands.

Elizabeth glances down. Those "magic hands" are still holding onto hers. She pulls back firmly as Owen turns to Bickman.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Dr. Lark has some pre-op films ready for you.

BICKMAN

I never keep a lady waiting.

He exits. Owen waits till they are alone, then...

OWEN

So? What do you think of our new can opener?

ELIZABETH

He's a sexual predator.

OWEN

So I hear. But only with willing partners. The nurses at Mass General couldn't say enough good things about him. They called him Dr. Big Man.

Owen's door slams opens and Lucy, breathless and stressed, appears. She sees them, flushes.

LUCY

So sorry. Wrong door. I'm looking for my friend. He has an appointment with Dr. Black.

ELIZABETH

That's me.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

They walk several doors down to Elizabeth's office.

ELIZABETH

What's your friend's name?

LUCY

Yojo. Yojo Grim. He's a little person.
Potty as a house plant. Insisted on
playing hide and seek when we got here
and now he's disappeared.

ELIZABETH

He can't have gone far. Wait in my
office. I'll get the nurses on it. They
will find him.

She opens her office door.

INT. ELIZABETH'S OFFICE - DAY

They enter and Lucy's face splits with a lovely grin.

LUCY

You little rascal!
(points)
There he is.

From Lucy's POV we see Yojo behind Elizabeth's desk,
spinning in her chair and laughing with delight.

CU ELIZABETH, puzzled.

From HER POV, the room is empty.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. CHARTER SCHOOL - ROXBURY - AFTERNOON

Elizabeth enters the inner city brick building as we hear:

KIDS CHANTING (V.O.)
 Radius is half across the circle.
 Diameter is all.

INT. WILL'S MATH CLASS - DAY

Will stands in the middle of a group of chanting 8th grade minority students. He wears a suit and tie, his braids falling neatly down his back. Each line of the math chant is punctuated by clapping. The kids all wear black T-shirts that say "MATH IS LIFE".

WILL
 Circumference is all around the circle.

KIDS
 The distance 'round a ball.

WILL
 Finding circumference is no big deal.
 Give it a try!

KIDS
 Multiply diameter times 3.14. Easy as
 Pi!

A BELL RINGS. The kids clap, alive and energized.

WILL
 Remember! Quiz on Monday. You have my e-mail if you need any help.

The kids file out revealing Elizabeth waiting out in the hallway. She smiles.

ELIZABETH
 Want to carry my books home, Mr. Van
 Renseller?

He pulls her inside the classroom, closes the door and kisses her.

WILL

Absolutely, Dr. Van Renseller. Or will you keep your maiden name?

ELIZABETH

Will....don't pressure me.

WILL

Why? You know your own mind. Always have. Always will. I want an answer.

ELIZABETH

(kissing him, whispers)

Okay. After the game. Promise.

EXT. NOBLE MIDDLE SCHOOL - DUSK

A fancy private school outside Boston. The scene is as different from the previous one as it could be. The varsity girl's soccer team is fighting a close game. Well-to-do parents from opposing teams line both sides. The field is lit with kleig lights. An ironic group of white guys pretend to be cheerleaders, chant:

CHEERLEADERS

Mirror, mirror on my locker
Pretty girls don't play soccer
Lets get ugly!!! Go Team!

One young Apollo, DARIUS NEGROPONTE, calls to ESME BLACK, 15, a raven haired beauty with a strong resemblance to Elizabeth, as she moves the ball down field.

DARIUS

B-u-s-t, bust em. That's your custom! Go Esme!

Esme flips Darius a bird and a smile without missing a stride. He laughs.

A tight lipped, 43-year-old mother putting out half-time refreshment sees it all and frowns. This is REGAN BLACK, Esme's mother.

Elizabeth and Will stand near the goal with her brother, JOSHUA BLACK, 40. Joshua is a thin, bearded, slightly scruffy guy who looks out of place in a sea of yuppies. He's sneaking a cigarette.

ELIZABETH

Don't let Regan catch you.

JOSHUA

She's too busy being the food Nazi Mom.
Wait till the team gets a load of her
gluten-free arugula sandwiches.

Elizabeth grimaces, then puts her fingers in her mouth
and whistles encouragement as Esme passes. Will shouts.

WILL

Take it home, Esme!

Esme, hearing Will, shoots him a grin and goes into hyper
drive. She takes off, dark hair flying, long legs eating
up the field, drills the ball around several defenders
and slams home a goal. Will, Elizabeth and Joshua go
nuts.

The team leaps into high fives, then jog towards
refreshments. Esme and one of her friends, a muscled,
Viking girl, JOHANNA, arrive first.

JOHANNA

I'm starving. Haven't eaten since I
barfed up my lunch.

Esme grabs Fuji water. Johanna takes a bite of sandwich
and spits it out.

JOHANNA (CONT'D)

What the hell? Tastes like cow dung on
cardboard!

CASH, a feisty redhead, calls out.

CASH

Heads up. Esme's mom made snacks!

The team groans, turns away from the trays of food. They
wander off to greet their parents. Esme spins on Regan.

ESME

I told you they want soda and chips! Are
you trying to embarrass me?

REGAN

Me embarrass you? I saw you use an
obscene gesture right in front of
the dean of students!

ESME

"Congratulations Esme! I'm so proud of
you. You scored the winning goal!"

Esme tosses down the water bottle, huffs off as Joshua approaches. Regan turns on him.

REGAN

How can you let her talk to me that way?
(without missing a beat)
You've been smoking.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth finds Esme, circles her waist, lifts her off the ground.

ELIZABETH

You were awesome! You totally brought it.

ESME

Help me, Auntie Liz. Mom is psycho.

ELIZABETH

No. She's a great mom who is just doing her job.

Will has the soccer ball and starts goofing with it.

WILL

Esme! Over here.

Esme joins him and they pass it back and forth. Joshua crosses to Elizabeth.

JOSHUA

Marry that guy. He's the best.

ELIZABETH

Funny you should bring up the m word.
Will proposed.

JOSHUA

What? This is huge. Congratulations!

He hugs her. She pushes away gently.

ELIZABETH

Chill. I'm going to say no.

JOSHUA

What?! Why?

ELIZABETH

Because, Joshua, he's clueless about me.
He thinks I'm normal.

JOSHUA
 (incredulous)
 Why haven't you told him? Liz! It's
 been a year!

ELIZABETH
 I don't want to lose him.

JOSHUA
 He can handle it.
 (after a moment)
 All men aren't like Esme's dad.

Elizabeth reacts, glances around to make sure no one
 heard, says firmly.

ELIZABETH
 You're Esme's dad.

JOSHUA
 (cocks an eyebrow)
 Not going to tell him that, either?

Esme comes running back and they fall silent.

ESME
 Come home with us for dinner, Auntie Liz?
 Pretty please?

REGAN
 (approaching)
 Not on a school night.

The tension between Regan and Elizabeth is apparent and
 Elizabeth is not the one generating it. As always, she
 avoids throwing kerosene on the fire.

ELIZABETH
 Your mom's right. Great game, kiddo.

Elizabeth hugs Esme briefly, then smiles a full, generous
 smile at Regan as Will approaches.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 Couldn't come anyway, I've got a hot
 date.

INT. WILL'S CAR - NIGHT

Will and Elizabeth drive off and she snuggles against
 him.

ELIZABETH

Where are we going?

WILL

You tell me.

ELIZABETH

Somehow I don't think you want to hear
"Sushi sounds good."

WILL

(quieter)

Why the drama? The suspense? Is there
some problem? I love you. You love me.

She looks out at the passing neon lights. It's time.
And so, characteristically, without drama, she speaks
simply.

ELIZABETH

There's something you don't know about
me. If you knew, we wouldn't be having
this conversation.

He looks over.

WILL

Serious.

ELIZABETH

Very.

WILL

Drop the dime.

ELIZABETH

I'm bipolar.

There's a moment of silence.

WILL

I thought you said-

ELIZABETH

I am. Bipolar. It's a form of mental
illness. Sometimes called manic
depression.

He pulls the car over. Turns to her.

WILL

I know what it is. You couldn't have
hidden something like that.

ELIZABETH
I could and I did.

Cold silence. Will is pissed.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

WILL
You're sorry?!

ELIZABETH
I should have told you. Obviously.

WILL
By the third date! Why didn't you? What do you think I am? A monster? My sister has diabetes. Do I love her less?

ELIZABETH
A physical illness.

WILL
Mental illness is a physical illness. Just because the organ involved is the brain-

ELIZABETH
Very PC of you. I've used the line myself. But diabetes isn't who your sister is. I am bipolar. With mental illness, it's not something you can cut out or cure. It's hard wired in the brain. Part of my identity, my personality.

WILL
But it's treatable, just like diabetes.

ELIZABETH
Yes. Bipolar is the most treatable form of mental illness. When I take the medication, I'm fine.

WILL
Then we can deal with it. You have been dealing with it, obviously, so-

ELIZABETH
No. Actually I have a history of non-compliance. A tendency to go off the reservation. Way off the reservation.

WILL

Not since we've been together.

ELIZABETH

Yes. In fact, it happened last week.

WILL

(shocked)

In San Francisco? And you didn't tell me?

ELIZABETH

(mild)

Of course not. I wasn't ever going to tell you. Because I wanted to keep you.

WILL

Keep me? I'm not a pet.

Elizabeth's phone beeps, interrupting. She looks down, has a text.

ELIZABETH

I have to go to the hospital. It's an emergency.

He starts the car again, makes a U-turn, his jaw set.

WILL

Why in God's name would you ever "go off the reservation?"

ELIZABETH

Because it's an incredible high. When I'm ramping up, I do my best work. Life is never more beautiful. The sex is great. I feel as if I could conquer the world and then after a while, sometimes, I do very bad things.

Elizabeth isn't prone to be apologetic or to feel guilty. So now she's defensive.

WILL

Like what?

ELIZABETH

I am not going to tell you. But I will say this. If you knew, you'd never want to see me again.

That's the hard truth. It shocks him into silence. He wants to push for more information, and yet some part of him is afraid to do ask.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

The hospital.

He lost focus, was about to pass the entrance. He turns hard, pulls in.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Elizabeth gets out of Will's car. He gets out, too, but keeps a distance between them. She turns to him, her eyes clear. Her voice quiet.

ELIZABETH

This is the end. I understand that. And it should be. Find someone nice, darling. Someone normal. I love you too much to do this to you.

She walks off. He watches. And he doesn't follow. He gets back in the car, drives off.

CLOSE ON ELIZABETH.....She turns and watches him drive away.

Then the entire street MORPHS into a different place. A different hospital. And Elizabeth is suddenly 18 and pregnant, standing outside the ER door. She screams at another car as it pulls away.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

No, Johnny! Come back. Don't leave me!

The car disappears into the night. She's left sobbing, alone. She doubles over with labor pains.

BACK TO....

Elizabeth present day. Composed. No longer capable of that kind of meltdown. She squares her shoulders and walks inside, taking refuge where she always takes refuge. With her patients. Her medical life.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAYS - NIGHT

Elizabeth moves down the quiet halls, her heels echoing in the silence. There's no one at the nurse's station. That's not good.

Something crashes behind a door up ahead. She breaks into a jog and then....there's a noise between a scream and a growl. Elizabeth starts to run.

INT. ANTHONY'S ROOM - NIGHT

A very pretty nurse, CARLOTTA, gives Anthony an injection as a SECURITY GUARD tries to put him in restraints. His mouth is bleeding. Two walls of his room are covered with blood. The slender kid is lashing out with astonishing force making animal noises as Elizabeth bursts in.

ELIZABETH

What happened?

CARLOTTA

He wouldn't stop drawing. I had to take away his pens. So he bit his lip and started using his own blood to paint the walls. I just gave him 50 milligrams Haldol IM.

ELIZABETH

Let him go.

Carlotta and the guard release Anthony who backs into a corner, panting. He is whispering constantly, a stream of nonsense words.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Leave me alone with him. Go!

Carlotta and the guard exit and Elizabeth moves closer to Anthony. There's something about the connection she makes with her patients when they get in her tractor beam. We MOVE RAPIDLY in on Anthony's terrified face as we...

FLIP THE WORLD and now see the scene from his POV. Looking through his fractured mind, we see the wall behind Elizabeth, the only one Anthony hasn't marked, is on fire.

The voices rise on the track. "We told you not to trust her! You will burn in hell consumed by the purifying fire. The minions of the damned will swallow you."

ANTHONY

You promised no meds!

ELIZABETH

You hurt yourself, Anthony. That's a game changer.

She sees he's not looking at her, but behind her, fear in his eyes.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

What's wrong? What do you see?

ANTHONY

Fire.

Elizabeth follows his look, rises and walks to the wall, touches it with her bare hand. From Anthony's POV, she is engulfed in the flames and yet not consumed.

ELIZABETH

There is no fire. Come see for yourself.

Anthony rises and approaches slowly, breathing fast, shaking with fear. As he gets closer, the flames get lower and lower. By the time he reaches Elizabeth, her demeanor and the Haldol are having an effect. He's standing by a cool white wall. We see him visibly relax. Elizabeth leads him back to bed.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

The shot they gave you will make you sleep. But I'm going to have to order some other pills to clear your mind, okay? You can still draw as much as you like, I promise. Right now, I want you to rest.

He lies back and the drug overcomes him. His eyes close.

INT. DR. INA LARK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A tiny, bird-like woman with hair that sticks up in strange dark tufts is playing Guitar Hero alone. DR. INA LARK is an androgynous teenager trapped in the body of a 28 year-old radiologic prodigy. Her IQ is north of 200. Her EQ, not so much. Elizabeth enters.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Can't believe my luck. You're here.

INA

I'm always here.

INT. RADIOLOGY LAB - NIGHT

Elizabeth stands with Ina as she switches on a light box to display rows of images.

INA

I'm afraid I have bad news. Anthony has a brain tumor.

Elizabeth stares at the CT, lets out a whoop of joy.

INA (CONT'D)

And I thought I was weird. Since when is a mass in the head good?

ELIZABETH

It's in the temporo-limbic area! It could explain all of his symptoms. The compulsions. Paranoia. Hallucinations. We thought he was schizo. This is fixable!

INA

You want to show these to our shiny new cutter, Dr. Bickman?

ELIZABETH

He's here?

INA

He just got out of the OR. Some kind of marathon, super cool ten hour neurosurgery, never performed here before.

INT. SCRUB ROOM BY OR - NIGHT

Anthony's films go up on the light box. Bickman is still in bloody scrubs. He glances for a nanosecond at the films and turns to Elizabeth.

BICKMAN

I'll get it out. No problem.

ELIZABETH

Could you please take a closer look? I'm worried the mass is in a delicate spot. Removing it could cause serious complications-

BICKMAN

Not with me on deck. I have incredible stats. If I say no problem, there will be no problem.

ELIZABETH

(irritated)

But you barely checked the films. This is a lovely, dear kid with his life on the line. I don't want him to end up blind or paralyzed or God forbid, mentally impaired.

Bickman glances over at her, mildly amused. He takes her by the arms, leans in as if he's going to kiss her and whispers softly in her ear.

BICKMAN

Do you always get so worked up in defense of your patients? It's cute. But take my advice. Detach. Emotions get in the way. Of everything. I told you, I'll fix it. And I will.

He smiles at her, releases her as she flushes. He goes off whistling, leaving her pissed.

INT. HALLWAY THE CUBE - NIGHT

Elizabeth walks alone down the hall. She reaches the door. Looks out and sees the taxi she called is waiting.

WILL (o.s.)

Liz.

She turns. Will rises from a waiting area. He came back. Elizabeth is moved beyond anything she can express. In moments they are in each other's arms.

WILL (CONT'D)

I love you. I don't want to lose you.

ELIZABETH

I don't want to lose you either.

WILL

There's a simple solution. Stay on the meds.

She nods, drops her head on his chest.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. CHINA PEARL RESTAURANT - DAY

Close on the engagement ring on Elizabeth's finger. Another hand enters frame wearing one of those huge pink rock candy rings favored by little girls.

Wider we see Esme and Elizabeth at lunch. Esme lifts her candy ring and licks it.

ESME

Mine is bigger, and it's delicious.

Elizabeth laughs.

ESME (CONT'D)

Seriously. This is cool. Will is totally a ten. Officially Esme endorsed.

ELIZABETH

Your Dad's happy about it, too.

ESME

You know what Mom said when she heard? "They aren't going to have children, are they?"

That stung, but Elizabeth recovers and hides it with a smile.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, well as usual, your mom is correct. Kids would be problematic. Bipolar is heritable. The most hereditary form of mental illness.

ESME

But it's not a hundred percent. Dad's fine. And anyway, you're great.

ELIZABETH

I'm lucky. The meds work for me. Your grandmother never found anything that gave her relief. She suffered terribly.

ESME

Dad never talks about her. I know she committed suicide.

(beat, carefully)

Hold old were you when....

ELIZABETH

Fifteen. Your Dad was seventeen.

ESME

Must have been awful.

(more silence, then)

What was she like?

ELIZABETH

She could be wonderful. Magnetic, charming, hilarious. And brilliant. She was always the smartest person in the room. Part of me was in awe of her. But part of me hated her. She could be so cruel, too. Irritable. Prone to violent, drunken rages. For months at a time, she'd be so depressed she couldn't get out of bed.

Esme is moved, takes her hand.

ESME

She drowned, right?

ELIZABETH

(nods)

It was Mother's Day. Did you know that more women commit suicide on Mother's Day than any other day?

Esme shakes her head.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

She was in a rage. She told us that having children ruined her life. We were ungrateful bastards who'd driven our father away. She warned us she didn't want to live any more. But we didn't believe her. We'd heard it all a million times. Then she took the car and drove away. We learned later that she headed straight to the beach. She lined the pockets of her mink coat with rocks and walked into the ocean.

Esme sits in shocked silence.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

She was forty-three. All my life I've fought to be nothing like her. She was a housewife. So I work full time. She married. So I never have.

ESME

You can get married and not be like her.

ELIZABETH

(as if convincing herself)

Let's hope.

Elizabeth sits quietly, recovering from going over territory she tries to never visit.

ESME

Let's talk about something else. The wedding. Hey, let's go look at wedding dresses. It will be a great bonding op and a major hoot.

ELIZABETH

Can't today. I have to get back to work. But I do want to find a dress for you. You want to be my maid of honor?

ESME

Hella yes.

INT. RADIOLOGY LAB - DAY

Elizabeth is in with Dr. Ina Lark again. They have new films.

INA

Lucy Dacy. Your LOL. Went into the PET accompanied by Santa's helper, who curiously didn't show up on film.

ELIZABETH

(checking the films)

Her confusion and postural instability would fit with Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. But it looks like the amyloid burden is higher than you see in either of them.

INA

And, hello, she's hallucinating dwarfs.

ELIZABETH

(pained)

Lewey Body Dementia.

INA

Yeah. One year, maybe two, she'll be an eggplant in diapers. Incurable. Case closed. Nothing you can do.

INT. OUTSIDE LUCY'S ROOM/HALLWAY - DAY

Lucy is sitting with Yojo. They are watching "Elf" on TV. Elizabeth looks in with the male nurse, JORGE.

From their POV, Lucy is talking to an empty room, perfectly content and well taken care of. It's the opposite of a grim scene. But Elizabeth can only see Lucy's death sentence.

ELIZABETH

Start her on Rivistigmine for the hallucinations. At least we can get rid of Santa's elf. Is there a relative listed on her intake forms? She's going to need family. Someone to look after her.

JORGE

There's a sister in Chicago.

ELIZABETH

Let's track her down. How's Anthony doing on Aripiprazole and Thorazine?

JORGE

Much clearer. Calmer. He's with his parents. They're waiting for you.

INT. ANTHONY'S ROOM - DAY

Elizabeth sits with Anthony, Art and Yvonne. Anthony is now medicated and his affect is flat and subdued. All his fire and compulsions have been suppressed. His art supplies lie untouched on the table beside him.

ELIZABETH

Ironically, the brain tumor is great news. Our neurosurgeon, Dr. Bickman, is sure it's operable. Once it's out, we could have a total cure.

YVONNE

Anthony, did you hear that, darling?

Anthony looks up. He speaks with some difficulty, his words slurred, his limbs stiff from the meds.

ANTHONY

Will I still be able to draw?

Elizabeth pauses. She hears something like agony in his voice, and it's an agony she knows and shares. He fears what he may lose.

ELIZABETH

Of course you will be able to draw. But you may not want to. The compulsion may disappear.

Anthony looks torn.

ANTHONY

And if I don't have the surgery?

ELIZABETH

The tumor will grow and the headaches, the pain you feel right now, will become so intense that no pain killer can touch it. You will die in agony.

(soft)

There is no choice here.

Hold on Elizabeth, fully aware she just made similar arguments to the ones Hartrampf used on her.

INT. HALLWAY - HOSPITAL - DAY

Elizabeth comes out of Anthony's room, sees Jorge.

ELIZABETH

Anthony and his family are ready to meet with Dr. Bickman.

Jorge goes to find Bickman. Elizabeth heads to the nurse's station to write an order. A light comes on indicating someone in room 307 needs help. Elizabeth looks around. No nurse in sight. She walks down to 307.

INT. ROOM 307 - DAY

Elizabeth enters and stops cold. Sounds of sex come from behind a room divider. Elizabeth leans in, catches a glimpse of Dr. Bickman banging Carlotta up against the wall. Her butt must be pressing against the switch requesting help.

Carlotta is moaning, eyes closed, oblivious and in ecstasy. Shocked, Elizabeth backs out.

INT. HALLWAY - THE CUBE - DAY

Elizabeth stands still, reacting, stunned, and despite herself, massively turned on.

EXT. SUBURBS - DAY

Elizabeth gets out of her car, crosses to Will who waits with a realtor, JODY FINE. They are standing in front of a lovely family home with a two car garage and a white picket fence. Elizabeth slows as she approaches. We see something like fear in her face. Will turns and she forces a smile.

WILL

What do you think?

ELIZABETH

It has a white picket fence.

WILL

Keep breathing. And keep an open mind.

JODY

Hi, I'm Jody Fine. I just started working with Will and this place popped up on the market. I really think you're going to love it. Wait till you see the inside. And, here's the best part, there's a playground in walking distance and the school district is first rate.

(bright smile)

You couldn't find a better neighborhood for starting a family.

Elizabeth shoots Will a panicked look, whispers.

ELIZABETH

I told you I don't want kids.

WILL

Someday you may change your mind.

EXT. BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

Elizabeth is parked looking out at the ocean. It's cold and foggy. Quiet. Peaceful. This is a place she often comes to think. She looks down at the engagement ring on her hand, seems troubled. Tries to slip it off. Can't. It's too tight on her finger.

She looks up. There's a woman walking on the beach. She is wearing some kind of fur coat. What the hell? Elizabeth blinks and the vision is gone. Is there really someone there or were her eyes deceiving her?

She tries to open the car door. It's locked. She can't get out. She struggles, slams her fist against the window, getting increasingly panicked.

Then she stops. She tries to breathe evenly, control her anger. It works. She hits the right switch. Gets out with no problem.

No sign of a woman in a fur coat. Elizabeth slips off her shoes, walks towards the water.

But then she SINKS up to her knees as if in quicksand! She fights back and finally pulls her leg out. Confused, she backs away, then hears:

O.S. WOMAN

Help!

Elizabeth turns. There is a dark head just visible above the waves! Someone is in the water! As Elizabeth watches, the person goes under. Elizabeth looks around. There's no one else on the beach.

A hand comes up, thrashes, and disappears again. Elizabeth doesn't hesitate. She runs to the water and dives in, swims out, then down.

Underwater. Elizabeth goes deeper, deeper. Finally she sees streaming dark hair. It's the woman in the coat, sinking fast. Elizabeth reaches out. Gets closer. Reaches out more. Grabs the edge of the coat. The weight begins to pull her down, too!

She kicks frantically, unwilling to drown to save this person. She lets go of the coat and the drowning woman reaches up and grabs her! They'll die together. The woman is pulling her down. She can't get away.

Elizabeth opens her mouth to scream but nothing comes out underwater. At the same time she sees the woman who has her in a death grip. It's her own face looking back at her.

INT. ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elizabeth sits bolt upright, pouring sweat. Will stirs beside her, sits up too, concerned. It's 2 a.m.

WILL
Baby? You okay?

ELIZABETH
Nightmare.

He takes her in his arms. After a moment they start to kiss. He's tender, gentle. Most women would think it's great. But Elizabeth pushes him away.

WILL
What's wrong?

ELIZABETH
Nothing. Just....nothing. Go back to bed. I'll be all right.

She gets out of bed, slips on a robe and goes into the bathroom.

INT. ELIZABETH'S BATHROOM - DAY

Elizabeth closes the door. Leans against it.

FLASH CUT...of Bickman and the nurse, up against the wall having rough, nasty sex.

Elizabeth's eyes open. She looks at her own face in the mirror. Steady. A decision is made. She opens the medicine cabinet, gets out her pills and opens the bottles. Dumps the contents in the toilet and flushes.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. EXAM ROOM - DAY

The door opens and Elizabeth enters followed by five medical students. Instantly we realize we're in an Alice In Wonderland World. Everything is completely askew. The corners of the room go off at bizarre angles. The doorway is tiny and the students Lilliputian in size. Elizabeth is gigantic. She looks up into camera.

ELIZABETH

(to the students, voice
echoing)

This is Orson Peters.

(to Orson)

How are you feeling today?

ORSON (O.S.)

Very Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds.

The whole frame shakes as Orson chuckles. We are seeing through his eyes. He holds out a hand, into frame, and it's GIGANTIC. Twice as big as Elizabeth who has suddenly shrunk along with everyone else in response to the fact the ceiling is descending. We now FLIP the scene and see it as it appears in reality.

ORSON PETERS, 35, is doubled over trying to keep below the ceiling and maintain his balance in a room that keeps moving. He is a long-haired guy, tattooed, very fit, a surfer.

ELIZABETH

Mr. Peters has Alice in Wonderland Syndrome, or AIWS, a neurological condition which affects human perception. It's often associated with migraines. Sufferers may experience micropsia, macropsia and size distortion of other sensory modalities.

STUDENT ONE

What's the prognosis?

ELIZABETH

There is no treatment as yet for AIWS. The anti-migraine medication works for his pain but has only a minor effect on Mr. Peters' sensory symptoms. Luckily, they only last for an hour or two. Then he's back to normal. Questions?

STUDENT TWO

(to Orson)

What does it feel like?

ORSON

Like LSD, without the brain damage. If I roll with it, it's totally cool.

ELIZABETH

Orson's case is a good illustration of how altered states of perception can be arbitrarily labeled "bad" when in fact, the patient isn't suffering.

(looks at her watch)

You're all due in the fourth floor OR to observe surgery on Anthony Guinness. It's about to start.

Jorge enters.

JORGE

Dr. Black? Do you have a minute? We're having a problem with Lucy Dacy.

INT. THE CUBE - HALLWAYS - DAY

Elizabeth comes out of the stairwell, returning to her floor. She seems energized and very up as she finds Lucy wandering in a hospital gown.

ELIZABETH

Hey, Lucy. What are you doing here? You should be in your hospital room.

LUCY

Just walking around.....exercise.

Her voice trails off. Her eyes search the halls.

ELIZABETH

Are you looking for someone?

LUCY

My sister. I want to see my sister, Louise. She'll take me home. Why am I here? I want to go home.

ELIZABETH

I understand. I'm trying to make that happen, okay?

Elizabeth crosses to Jorge.

JORGE

The Rivistigmine is working perfectly. She hasn't mentioned her little imaginary buddy once today. She's not hallucinating any more.

ELIZABETH

We have to find a place for her to go. What about the sister?

JORGE

No help there. We found her, she's in a nursing home. Also has dementia, but more advanced. Lucy is all alone in the world.

ELIZABETH

(heartbroken)

Okay. Call social services.

They look back and Lucy is now crying as she continues wandering around. Elizabeth goes to her, puts her arm around her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Talk to me, honey. I can help. You're shaking. What are you afraid of?

LUCY

I don't know.

She starts to sob and Elizabeth sits her down, rocks her and comforts her. Gradually Lucy quiets, looks into Elizabeth's eyes. Chokes back another sob. And Elizabeth gets it in a flash.

ELIZABETH

You're lonely, aren't you? You miss your friend.

LUCY

(relieved)

Yes. Where is Yojo? Please, can't I see him? I don't want to live without him.

Elizabeth reacts, goes back to Jorge.

ELIZABETH

Stop the Rivistigmine immediately.

JORGE

Why?

ELIZABETH

How did taking away her hallucinations
change her outcome?

JORGE

It didn't, but she normalized.

ELIZABETH

(increasingly passionate)

Why does everyone assume that's a good
thing? When Lucy was "mad" she was
happy. Now she's miserable. Her brain
created exactly what she needed: a little
person with his own harmless delusions.
And like an idiot, I "fixed" her by
taking away her only friend.

Elizabeth walks off leaving Jorge unsettled by the
outburst.

INT. OR. - DAY

Owen and the students sit in stadium seating watching as
Anthony is brought in. There are giant monitors and
amazing high tech equipment. Everyone whispers excitedly.

INT. HALLWAYS HOSPITAL - DAY

Elizabeth reaches the elevator, hits a button. She's too
impatient and edgy to wait. She opens the stairwell
door, enters. A sign indicates the OR is a floor up.
She ascends, and as she does, begins DANCING ON THE
STAIRS like someone in a Fred Astaire film.

She stops, laughs and pauses. Hears someone below her
enter the stairwell. The person below is moving
furtively. Elizabeth looks down. It's Dr. Bickman.

INT. HOSPITAL BASEMENT - DAY

Elizabeth comes out of the stairwell, sees Bickman at the
end of the hall. She pulls back and watches as he looks
either way, gets out a key and opens a locked door marked
PHARMACEUTICAL SUPPLIES.

INT. PHARMACEUTICAL SUPPLIES - DAY

The room is lined with pill boxes, syringes etc. Bickman

searches until he finds something. He grabs a medication and turns to go just as the door opens and Elizabeth appears.

ELIZABETH

What are you doing in here?

BICKMAN

None of your business.

ELIZABETH

You're supposed to be scrubbing in.

He tries to push past and she blocks him, reaches for his hand which holds the pills. He pushes her off hard. She looks into his eyes which now seem frighteningly cruel.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

If you're high, you're not operating on my patient.

BICKMAN

Don't ever presume to tell me what to do.

He starts to push past again. They struggle briefly. She feels something, looks down at his crotch. Can't believe it.

ELIZABETH

You're turned on! You're disgusting. You pathological creep!

BICKMAN

You dominating bitch.

Unexpectedly, he takes her hand and kisses it sensually. She starts breathing hard. He smiles. He has her. One more beat and they start tearing their clothes off.

INT. OR - DAY

Anthony is on the table, his head in a metal brace, one area now being shaved and prepped. The atmosphere is sober and professional.

INT. PHARMACEUTICAL SUPPLIES - DAY

Bickman puts Elizabeth on a counter, is about to enter her. Now they're both on fire. But then suddenly Elizabeth has one of her flash visions and it's Will, not Bickman, in front of her, ready for sex. She realizes what she's doing and pulls up.

ELIZABETH

Wait! I'm engaged.

She pushes Bickman away. He starts to laugh.

BICKMAN

What has that got to do with anything?

ELIZABETH

What are the pills?

Bickman

Provigil.

ELIZABETH

Oh. Cool. All the surgeons take those.
No big deal.

BICKMAN

Fighter pilots too. They're great. You
ever try them?

ELIZABETH

Shut up.

They tear at each other again.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Art and Yvonne Guinness hold hands and wait.

INT. SCRUB ROOM - DAY

The nurses are waiting. Everyone looks at the clock.
Finally Bickman enters, starts to get ready. Totally
professional.

INT. HALLWAYS - DAY

Elizabeth heads out. Starts to run. Jorge sees her.

JORGE

Dr. Black?

ELIZABETH

(calls)

I'm leaving. Cancel my appointments.

She's gone.

EXT. THE CUBE - DAY

Elizabeth pulls out in her Audi. Going fast.

INT. ELIZABETH'S CONDO - NIGHT

Music is blaring. Elizabeth comes out of the bathroom, bottle of Scotch in hand. Five inch heels. Skin tight skirt. Low cut blouse. Hair wild. Her mouth is a red slash of lipstick. She takes a long pull on the Scotch. Ready to roll.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Elizabeth's car passes everything in sight.

INT. ELIZABETH'S CAR - NIGHT

Elizabeth's foot presses the accelerator to the floor. The wind whips at her hair. She may be sky high, but she knows exactly what she's doing.

EXT. WILL'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Historic brick buildings overlooking a river. Tasteful. Elizabeth's car roars up, jumps the curb and parks with one tire off the street.

INT. WILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Will opens the door in his chinos and button down shirt to see Elizabeth holding the bottle of Scotch, now nearly empty, her clothes askew, her hair wild.

ELIZABETH

Hey baby. Party time!

She pushes him inside and slams the door behind her.

INT. WILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

With one rapid move, Elizabeth tears the shirt off Will's back.

WILL

Elizabeth! What are you-

ELIZABETH

God, you're gorgeous.

WILL

Stop. You're not yourself.

ELIZABETH

Oh yes I am.

She starts mauling him, pulling his skin. The kissing turns to biting.

WILL

Stop it. That hurts!

She keeps going and they struggle. In moments they're on the floor. Not clear whether it's foreplay or fighting. A little of both. He wants to stop it, but on some level, he's getting turned on. She gets on top and suddenly she SLAPS him hard. Will grabs her hand, appalled. She dives down on him, kissing and biting.

WILL (CONT'D)

No, Elizabeth, no!

He flips her and gets on top, pinning her arms.

WILL (CONT'D)

I don't want to hurt you. You have to stop.

ELIZABETH

Hurt me, yes hurt me.

He releases her, pulls back, actually looks scared,. She crawls towards him on hands and knees.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Meow.

She backs him into a chair.

WILL

My God. What are you doing?!

She grabs him. We see her nails dig into his skin.

INT. WILL'S BEDROOM - LATER

Will is on the four poster bed, his wrists tied with his own silk ties, a sheet discretely covering his lower half. He looks spent and in shock. The room is a complete mess.

Elizabeth comes out of the bathroom wearing a pair of Will's sweats. She pulls off the engagement ring, puts it on the table by the bed.

WILL

Where are you going? Hey.

She's gone.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Under a full moon. Elizabeth runs. And runs. And runs.

EXT. CITY SQUARE - NIGHT

Still going, covered with sweat, she enters a subway station.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Elizabeth gets in the car, swings around the pole several times, starts laughing. There are only a few other passengers. They stare. Suddenly she becomes aware of music. It's "Blackbird". She stops.

ELIZABETH

I hear music. None of you hear it. Only I can. Because I am incredibly special to God and you poor jerks are nobodies.

A teenager looks up.

TEENAGER

It's your cell, douche bag.

He's right. Elizabeth pulls out her phone, flips it open.

ELIZABETH

Starship Enterprise.

INT. ESME'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The typical room of a clean-cut teen girl. Soccer posters. The most current music. Esme is on her cell phone.

ESME

Auntie Liz? It's me.

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

Elizabeth grins.

ELIZABETH

Awesome, baby. I want to see you. I have this incredible idea. I want to buy you a parrot. Would you like a parrot? Or maybe a puppy? Or does your uptight mom say no pets, like she says no to everything else?

(singing)

How much is that puppy in the window?

INT. ESME'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Esme puts her hand over the phone. Curiously, she is not surprised. She goes to her door and calls.

ESME

Dad!

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Joshua struggles with Elizabeth, trying to get her into his car.

JOSHUA

Elizabeth, you have to come with me.

ELIZABETH

I don't have to do jack! I am the mother suckin' shore patrol, mother sucker. Watch. I have magical powers. I can stop cars!

She runs into traffic. Tires screech. Joshua dials 911.

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

Joshua rides with Elizabeth, now strapped to a gurney and struggling. He talks calmly to the PARAMEDICS. He's done this many times before.

JOSHUA

She's bipolar. She needs IV Haldol or Ativan.

ELIZABETH

Wahoo! Make it a double!

EXT. INNERCITY HOSPITAL - DAWN

A very different place than the one where she works. Not nice.

INT. ER - MORNING

Elizabeth wakes up strapped to a gurney in a hall filled with gurneys. She's the only person there who isn't dirt poor or homeless, except for Joshua who is asleep on a metal chair nearby.

Elizabeth closes her eyes. Christ.

INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Elizabeth sits in a robe, curled on her sofa, recuperating. Joshua brings her coffee. He's exhausted. Rumpled. Unshaven. She looks beautiful, and curiously ethereal, as if she just died and came back.

JOSHUA

I called work, told them you had food poisoning.

ELIZABETH

Thanks. Esme?

JOSHUA

She's okay. She understands. Regan is on the warpath, as you can imagine.

ELIZABETH

Please tell her it will never happen again.

JOSHUA

Lizzy, dear, that's a promise you can't make.

She winces. He's right. He crosses. They hug.

ELIZABETH

I'm so sorry.

JOSHUE

It could have been me, you know. You were unlucky.

ELIZABETH

Thanks.

INT. HARTRAMPH'S OFFICE - DAY

Elizabeth sits across from Hartramph, who is totally impassive. Clinical. Interested in how it all unfolded.

HARTRAMPH

So going off the meds was a willful act.

ELIZABETH

Yes.

HARTRAMPH

Why do you think you did it?

ELIZABETH

(shrugs)

I wanted it to end?

HARTRAMPH

That's not how I read it. I think you wanted Will to love you for who you are, and so you showed him the worst you have to offer.

ELIZABETH

Well, if that was the plan, it definitely didn't work.

HARTRAMPH

You don't know that. Talk to him. Call him.

Elizabeth shakes her head.

HARTRAMPH (CONT'D)

Elizabeth, I'm worried about you cycling into depression.

ELIZABETH

I'll be okay. I will. You see, I still have the thing that matters most to me in the world.

EXT. JOSHUA'S HOUSE - DAY

Elizabeth knocks at the front door. Regan opens.

ELIZABETH

I came to apologize, to you and to Esme.

Regan steps outside with Elizabeth, closes the door behind her. Not good.

REGAN

Esme's fine. She's used to this. How does that make you feel?

ELIZABETH

Worse than you can ever imagine. Can I see her?

REGAN

No. You and Esme are going to take a break.

ELIZABETH

Please, Regan. I'll do anything. Don't take Esme away from me.

REGAN

It's all about you all the time. God, you're exhausting. And the worst of it is, she still loves you. More than me. You can't have missed the way she's been treating me.

ELIZABETH

She's a teenager. It's normal.

REGAN

No, it's not. She's transferring the affection she always had for me to you. I'm the boring housewife who waits on her hand and foot. You're her exotic, successful, crazy aunt who does exactly what she pleases, no matter who she hurts, and always gets away with it. Not this time.

ELIZABETH

(suddenly desperate)

Please, Regan. I have to see her. She's all I've got.

REGAN

Not until she realizes who her real family is.

ELIZABETH

I am her real family.

REGAN

Say that one more time and you'll never see her again. You made a deal. You know perfectly well I hold the cards. This is my decision. So learn to live with it.

Instantly, Elizabeth regrets her words. But it's too late. Regan goes inside and locks the door. Elizabeth leans on the doorbell. Nothing. Starts to hyperventilate. She returns to her car and looks up at the house.

Esme stands her upstairs window like a princess in a tower. She waves once to Elizabeth and disappears.

EXT. BEACH - DUSK

Elizabeth sits in her car, looking out at the water. It's the same place we saw in her dream. A real place. It may, in fact, be where her mother died. Elizabeth pulls out her cell phone and dials.

INT. HARTRAMPH'S OFFICE - DAY

Hartramph sits with a pockmarked teenage boy and his mother. Her cell rings. She looks down.

HARTRAMPH

I'm sorry. I have to take this. I only get calls on this line if it's an emergency.

She steps into the next room, a small private office.

HARTRAMPH (CONT'D)

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH ELIZABETH AT WILL.

ELIZABETH

Give me a reason to go on living.

Hartramph knows instantly how important this is. She remains magnificently calm.

HARTRAMPH

Your work. What I do for you is nothing compared to what you do for your patients. If you're gone, there's a void that can't be filled. Dr. Elizabeth Black is needed, valued, and loved.

ELIZABETH

Not for who I really am.

HARTRAMPH

The best part of you is who you really are. The rest is a disease.

ELIZABETH

I alienated Will forever. I can't see my daughter. I came within an inch of exposing myself at work. If Owen had seen me. If Bickman finds out-

HARTRAMPH

Don't catastrophize. No one found out anything. Esme will come back. Regan can't keep her from you forever. And your work is waiting for you. Nothing matters more than that.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Anthony is packing to leave. His drawings still cover the walls. Elizabeth enters, still feeling down, but she smiles when she sees Anthony. His head is bandaged and he's pale, but he is cheerful and upbeat.

ANTHONY

(big grin)

Hi, Dr. Black.

She sits on the edge of the bed.

ELIZABETH

How are you feeling?

ANTHONY

Great. My old self again. Checking out today. I'm almost ready to go.

He starts to put a book from his bedside table into his suitcase.

ELIZABETH

What's that?

He hands it to her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

"The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat."

ANTHONY

It's incredible stuff. All about the brain.

ELIZABETH

I know it well.

ANTHONY

I can identify with all the stories, you know?

(he gestures to the wall)

I can't believe I did that. It's like I was someone else. This whole experience, it's been pretty major. I don't want to be a physicist anymore.

ELIZABETH

You don't?

ANTHONY

No. Neuroscience is so amazing. The brain is the ultimate mystery. No one really understands it at all. I think now I want to be a neuroscientist, like you. You saved my life, Dr. Black.

He looks at Elizabeth with huge admiration and she smiles like the whole world just came back into its orbit.

EXT. THE CUBE - DAY

Establishing. A board and care van is by the front door.

INT. THE CUBE - DAY

Elizabeth walks down the hall pushing Lucy in a wheelchair with Yojo in her lap.

LUCY

So Yojo can go with me?

ELIZABETH

He'll never leave you.

LUCY

And this place is nice?

ELIZABETH

Very nice. They will take good care of both of you.

A NURSE is waiting.

BOARD AND CARE NURSE

Hello, Lucy. I'm Amelia. I'm going to take you to your new home. Can you introduce me to Yojo?

LUCY
 (soft)
 He's a little shy.

The nurse takes the wheelchair from Elizabeth.

HOSPICE NURSE
 I'll win him over. Wait till he tries my
 chocolate chip cookies.

And they're out the door. Hold on Elizabeth, feeling
 better and better.

INT. EXAM ROOM - THE CUBE - LATER

Elizabeth walks back towards her office, passes the first
 exam room where she saw Anthony and his parents.
 Painters are going in, preparing to repaint the wall.

ELIZABETH
 Wait, what are you doing?

PAINTER ONE
 (hands her a work order)
 Cleaning this place up. We'll have it
 back to normal in a few hours.

She enters, looks at the beautiful, nonsensical drawing
 Anthony did the first day. She takes the work order and
 tears it up.

ELIZABETH
 Take a long lunch instead.

They go and Elizabeth remains in the presence of the
 strange art work. She looks at it, now at peace.

EXT. RIVER PARK - DAY

Elizabeth sits on a bench having take out lunch. Will
 slips into frame and sits beside her. She looks over,
 surprised to see him. Doesn't know what to say.

WILL
 I should have called.

ELIZABETH
 (casual)
 It's okay. I understand.

WILL

You were a stranger. A creature. Not
the woman I thought I knew.

ELIZABETH

You don't have to explain. You're a
kind, intelligent, normal guy. Why should
put up with this?

She gets up to go and he reaches out and grabs her hand.

WILL

Maybe I'm not as "normal" as you think.
What you did to me. That night?

(beat)

I liked it. And I want to do it again.

Elizabeth doesn't know what to say. Hold on the two of
them as we....

FADE OUT.