

A SIMPLE FAVOR

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A YouTube page awaiting a live streaming vlog to start, the screen blank. On the right side of the screen is a COMMENTS SECTION. COMMENTS are being written in quick succession:

TigerMom217: Any word about Emily?
Yogalover999: Have you heard anything?
Lives2Zumba: Is Emily okay?
MomPower14: My kids loved your bundt cake recipe!
NinjaMom911: PLEASE TELL US EMILY'S NOT DEAD!!!!

The screen pops on, revealing STEPHANIE SMOTHERS, a cute, conservative, earnest young mother and mommy blogger. She's in a modest country kitchen with a cozy feel. There's a child's art work on the refrigerator behind her.

On the counter in front of Stephanie are her cookie ingredients: flour, brown sugar, chocolate chips, zucchini, measuring cups, mixing bowls, spatula, pan.

STEPHANIE

Hi, Moms. Stephanie here. As promised, today I'll be sharing my secret recipe for zucchini chocolate chip cookies. Your kids will never know they're eating a full serving of veggies. But first --

(her voice shifts, grave)

-- many of you have asked for an update on the Emily situation. For those of you new to my vlog ...

(checking computer screen)

That's you, Babette9 and VioletsRblue, thanks for joining ... You should know that my best friend Emily is missing. She asked me for a simple favor: to pick up her son Nicky from school. That was nine days ago. She hasn't come back yet ...

(voice breaks; regroup)

I hope you'll forgive me. I'm just so worried about her. And I want to help the police track her down. But I'm realizing I didn't know her as well as I thought. Like my mother used to say, God rest her soul, "Secrets are like margarine. Easy to spread, but bad for the heart." But as different as we were, I truly considered Emily my best friend. Our sons brought us together. She's such a wonderful, elegant person ...

She clears a tear, then composes herself.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, for all our new friends, let me catch you up. I met Emily a few weeks ago at school ...

Hammering rain falls on a quaint Connecticut ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. It pings onto the abandoned jungle gym and swing sets, an ominous crack of lightning through the bars. A VOLVO STATION WAGON drives alone through the torrent.

STEPHANIE (POST-LAP)
It was International Cuisine day in my son Miles' 2nd Grade class and, *once again*, I drew Sweden.

3 **EXT. WARFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY** 3

Trying to juggle an UMBRELLA, PHOTO EQUIPMENT, and the HATCHBACK, Stephanie fights to extract the TRAY OF SWEDISH MEATBALLS (each adorned with a miniature flag). She can't quite pull it off and spills a few onto the pavement.

STEPHANIE
Oh, nuts.

She turns and races toward the school, splashing through puddles in her TALBOTS SKY BLUE MOCCASINS.

4 **INT. WARFIELD ELEMENTARY - KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM - LATER** 4

The tray of meatballs has now been eaten, paper flags dead in puddles of cold gravy. They sit on a table with other remnants of a consumed international pot luck.

On the ground, blocks, dinosaurs - two boys have made an alternate universe, which they now demolish with toy trucks. MILES SMOTHERS (5) is a shy kid with the alert eyes of his mother. NICKY (5) is a rambunctious towhead, ready for trouble. Miles both admires and fears his aggression.

NICKY
You're all dead! I killed *everyone*.

Miles retrieves his LEGO MAN from the wreckage, upbeat.

MILES
Not me. I came back to life.

Below a banner that reads "Ethnic Food Day" sit the spent parents: STACY (30s, cardigan and culottes), SONA (30s, East Indian), DARREN (40, put together) dandling his toddler LULU.

MRS. KERRY
I want to thank everyone who participated in today's feast. Yay! Class, didn't we learn so much about food from around the world? Give your parents a big hand.

The distracted kids CLAP as the parents nod. FREEZE FRAME:
The parents look with dread at the lens. REVERSE ON -

Stephanie, decked out like a WAR CORRESPONDENT with photo gear. She checks her video display, not loving the shot.

STEPHANIE
Oh, shoot. The lighting was pretty bad.

STACY
Just set it to Auto.

STEPHANIE
What's the fun in that? All right, everybody look like you're having fun!

They stare ahead like MUG SHOTS and she snaps another. As she heads off to get more action shots, the parents talk:

SONA
How can she still have energy?

DARREN
There must be crystal meth in those meatballs.

MRS. KERRY, the teacher, calls over to the group of parents:

MRS. KERRY
And parents, don't forget, there's a sign-up sheet on the board for our Easter egg hunt next week. *Please*, Stephanie, don't sign up for more than one job.

Stephanie looks caught as she starts to ERASE the first two of her FOUR SIGNATURES she's just written on the sign-up sheets.

MRS. KERRY (CONT'D)
I'm not sure everyone has gotten a chance to volunteer yet.

Stephanie glances over at Nicky, angrily smashing his block creation with a truck.

STEPHANIE
Miles, honey? Maybe keep your fingers away from Nicky's truck.

MRS. KERRY
Has *Nicky's Mom* volunteered?

SONA'S DAUGHTER has come over and lay across Sona's knees, limp as a sack of apples.

DARREN
(incredulous)
Emily? Please. I don't think she knows it's Easter. She's in the city 24/7.

STACY
God, it'd be my *dream* to run PR for Dennis Nylon. Can you imagine all the free shit she must get? The *parties*? I'd kill for *one night* of her life.

Sona struggles to keep her daughter from falling on her head.

SONA
I would miss my kids too much. Honey, sit up. This game is hurting Mommy's knees.

DARREN
(baby voice, to his Lulu)
Sona's right, Lulu! You'd miss Daddy if he worked in the Big City, wouldn't you?

He fart-kisses her cheek, then her stomach. She laughs.

Stephanie's in a quandary. She wonders whether to erase her name from DECORATIONS or SNACKS. Always the problem-solver, Stephanie tries to come up with an equitable solution:

STEPHANIE
 What if I just erase myself from decorations and leave it for Emily? Then if she can't make it, I'll still bring my balloons and helium tank.

STACY
 Please tell me you don't actually own a helium tank.

It just slipped out of Stacy - and she regrets it. Stephanie is a bit hurt by the comment but tries to hide it.

STEPHANIE
 I think lots of people own helium tanks, Stacy. If they don't, they should. Kids love balloons, especially floaty ones.

MRS. KERRY
 (trying to save Stephanie)
 It's a perfect plan, Stephanie. We'll leave decorations open for Emily.

Stephanie looks proud, then notices the other parents staring at her like she's an alien. She deflates a bit.

5

EXT. WARFIELD ELEMENTARY - MOMENTS LATER

5

Under the awning outside the school, parents are claiming their children and trying to get them to put on raincoats. Umbrellas snap open as water cascades off the awning.

Stephanie returns from loading her car, greeting her son Miles again as he emerges beside a jacketless Nicky.

STEPHANIE
 Hey, Smooch. Great work today.

NICKY
 (laughs)
 Smooch?

MILES
 (a withering look)
 Thanks a lot, mom.

NICKY
 Can me and Miles have a playdate today?

STEPHANIE
 "Miles and I," sweetie. And I'm not sure. We'd have to ask your mommy - and she's probably still in city.

NICKY
 She's right there.

Nicky points as Stephanie spins to see:

Walking across the soaked playground in a perfect straight line, a raised BLACK UMBRELLA over the sleek outline of a BURBERRY TRENCHCOAT - comes EMILY NELSON. She walks as if on a fashion runway, never veering in the downpour even as a lost Hello Kitty umbrella blows like a tumbleweed across her path. She's a classic beauty. Lights a cigarette. Nicky high fives her and then hugs her. She hugs him back tightly.

EMILY
(to Nicky)
Hello, little man.

NICKY
Hello, big woman.

EMILY
Don't tell me you lost another jacket?

MILES
Ask her!

EMILY
Ask me what?

NICKY
Can me and ... Can I and ...
(correcting himself)
I just want a play date.

EMILY
Good for you. And I want an unlimited
expense account. Neither event is
happening. Let's go.

MILES
Play-date! Play-date!

NICKY
Play-date! Play-date!

Emily gives a world-weary sigh.

EMILY
Nicky, stop. I've got a ton of work.

NICKY
Then keep your door closed and we won't
even bother you. You don't have to do
anything! God!

Emily glances at Stephanie, as if she might find solidarity in this other mom. Stephanie gives her a bright smile.

EMILY
Please just get in the car, sweetie.

NICKY
You don't let me do anything! You don't
let me have any friends!

Emily feels the other parents watching. She flicks her cigarette into a flower bed and turns to Stephanie.

EMILY
Do you drink? I need a martini.

STEPHANIE

A martini. Wow. I haven't had a martini in forever. Apple's my favorite.

Emily stares a beat, then pivots back to Nicky.

EMILY

Get in the car. No play date.

NICKY

Then I'm staying here.

STEPHANIE

Of course, it doesn't *need* to be apple.

Emily turns back to Stephanie, who smiles at her again. Emily just shakes her head and sighs, defeated. Gets a small smile.

EMILY

Christ, he's as stubborn as I am. I'm never gonna win this.

(to Stephanie)

Why don't you come over for a *non-apple* drink and they can play? I need back-up.

Miles and Nicky erupt into cheers, while Stephanie looks both excited and nervous to be invited. She unconsciously fixes her hair and straightens her blouse.

STEPHANIE

That would be lovely. No apples allowed. Boo, apples. Ha ha.

Emily gives her a look of "What am I getting myself into?"

6

EXT. WARFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PARKING LOT/AWNING - DAY 6

DARREN, SONA, and STACY watch as STEPHANIE and EMILY run under the same umbrella as the boys race ahead, stomping puddles.

STEPHANIE

Don't swamp your galoshes!

STACY

What on earth are *those* two going to talk about?

SONA

Maybe they won't talk. Maybe Stephanie will color-code her Tupperware.

DARREN

You really think Emily has Tupperware?

STACY

Ha, she keeps her leftovers in Prada bags.

SONA

Emily's going to eat her alive.

DARREN

At least she'd be eating something.

7 EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAY

7

Stephanie's VOLVO pulls in behind Emily's vintage BMW. Stephanie gets out into the lingering drizzle and marvels at the house: a MODERN DREAM of glass, steel and poured concrete plunked in the midst of suburban Connecticut.

8 INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAY

8

Miles and Nicky tear upstairs. Stephanie slips off her wet moccasins, revealing KITTY-CAT SOCKS.

EMILY

Cute socks.

STEPHANIE

Oh, yeah. *Target*. A pack is only ten dollars. They must lose money on them. They have other animals, too. Chipmunks, squirrels ...

Stephanie sees a PAINTING OF NUDE EMILY. Her eyes go wide.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

... beavers.

The painting hanging in the foyer depicts Emily at age 18, with red hair, staring at her own reflection with a hard expression. Stephanie tries to play it cool.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Wow, that is so ... *lifelike*.

EMILY

Used to dye my hair. I get bored easily.

STEPHANIE

It's terrific. Who painted it?

EMILY

An almost-famous painter from the East Village. My life is littered with Almost-Somebodies. I did some art modeling to pay my way through school. But the weirdo got obsessed with me. Like restraining order obsessed. Anyway, I stole the painting, hoping it'd be worth something someday. No such luck.

Stephanie is still reeling from the story as Emily slips off her heels and heads into a dream LIVING ROOM, decorated with a bold, eclectic mix of modern and vintage. Emily switches on Sonos, which plays the 1960s French pop song "COMMENT TE DIRE ADIEU" by Françoise Hardy. Stephanie is in awe.

STEPHANIE

What an incredible house.

EMILY

It's a fucking money pit.

STEPHANIE

Oopsy.

EMILY

The fuck?

STEPHANIE

Oh, I'm sorry. It's what we say when someone swears. Force of habit.

(off Emily's look)

We have an "oopsy" jar in the pantry. A quarter for every bad word.

EMILY

You should smash the oopsy jar. It might change your whole life.

STEPHANIE

I'm sorry.

EMILY

And stop saying you're sorry. It's a fucked-up female habit. Don't be sorry for anything. Ever.

STEPHANIE

You're right. Thank you. That's great advice. I love your music, by the way.

EMILY

It's old French pop from the 60s. Makes me forget I'm stuck in this shithole town. I'll make the drinks.

Emily heads toward the kitchen. Stephanie looks to make sure Emily is out of sight, then starts doing a little dance around the living room to the music as she looks at everything. She's never been anywhere so "classy."

EMILY (CONT'D)

(coming back in)

You like olives or -- what are you doing?

STEPHANIE

Oh! Um. Just got caught up in the moment.

EMILY

(shakes her head, amused)

Jesus Christ. Come with me, Audrey Hepburn, before you hurt yourself.

An embarrassed Stephanie follows Emily into the kitchen.

9

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

9

Sea green glass tiles, slate counter tops and hand blown glass fixtures. A kitchen out of Architect's Digest.

STEPHANIE

Wow, you must really love to cook.

EMILY

No. Sometimes Sean does, but I think it's just an excuse to avoid writing.

STEPHANIE

Your husband? He's a writer?

Emily begins to mix a MARTINI at the built-in WET BAR.

EMILY

Was. Now he's a bitter English professor at Connecticut College. He wrote a book ten years ago that made him the toast of New York. It opened every door in the city. It was non-stop, the dinners, the parties. All of Manhattan was like one long line of cocaine.

Stephanie forces a demure smile.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I had to stalk him and force him to fall in love with me. Then ... nothing. One big *anti-climax*. He never finished another book. The old bait-and-switch.

STEPHANIE

But he loves you. What was the book?

EMILY

It was called Darkness at Dawn.

STEPHANIE

Oh my Gosh! I read that in my book club. That's when I first became a single mom, I was so tired at the end of the day I was just plopping onto Miles's bean bag chair in front of the Kardashians. And then I thought - this is ridiculous. So I joined a book club and that was the first one we read. So impressive.

EMILY

You're divorced then?

STEPHANIE

Widowed.

EMILY

You mind if I ask how he died?

10 **EXT. CONNECTICUT HIGHWAY - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

10

A classic Noir flashback: A CAR picks up speed down an empty highway past changing foliage. It swerves across TWO LANES TO THE LEFT, THEN VEERS HARD INTO A LAMP POST IN THE STEEL MEDIAN with a violent SMASH. It's a horrific wreck.

11 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - BACK TO PRESENT**

11

Stephanie tries to put on a cheerful face for Emily.

STEPHANIE

Car accident.

EMILY

How awful. I'm so sorry.

STEPHANIE

My brother Chris was in the passenger seat.

EMILY
You're kidding.

STEPHANIE
In one fell swoop, I lost the two most important men in my life. Well, aside from Miles, obviously. Two out of three.

Emily studies Stephanie for a long time now. Slowly, her eyes begin to well up. A single tear courses a line through her make-up, until she wipes it away.

EMILY
I can usually stomach sad stories. For some reason that one got to me.

STEPHANIE
I don't talk about it much. Especially with people I just met. I'm sorry.

EMILY
Lady, I'm going to slap the "sorry" right out of you if you apologize again.

STEPHANIE
I'm s---oopsy. Dang it. Hard habit to break. I'm *not* sorry. Ha ha.

Emily generously pours the first martini and hands it to Stephanie. Not a drinker, Stephanie sips it politely.

EMILY
So, are you dating anyone?

STEPHANIE
Me? No. It's slim pickin's in Warfield.

EMILY
You're an hour and a half from the city.

STEPHANIE
Oh, I couldn't date anyone from the city. That's a little too fast for me. I tried eHarmony, but then that mother of three wound up with her head in a trash can - and I said, "No, thank you."

EMILY
You're too young and cute to give up.

STEPHANIE
Really? Thank you. I never thought I'd end up a single mom, trying to make ends meet. My husband had life insurance, thank goodness, but not a lot. And I put half of it away for Miles' college. So, even with a fixed income, that money will run out in 2020. Tokyo Olympics. Go, USA.

EMILY
Sean barely makes a dime. I have to pay for everything. And he spends like he's still the man of the hour. We're upside down on this house, too.

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)
Bought it during the bubble and we can't sell. People hate modern around here.

STEPHANIE
Well, I love it. Don't even think of selling it. If I lived here, I'd just *bask in this kitchen all day.*

EMILY
Well, cheers, then. Here's to being "House Poor."

Clink! Stephanie eyes Emily's BARBED WIRE TATTOO BRACELET.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Yeah, there's another one of my bad decisions. I got that when I was too young and stupid to know better.

STEPHANIE
It's a nice contrast with your ring.

Emily flashes her VINTAGE WEDDING RING. Platinum filigree with sapphires and diamonds, c. 1920.

EMILY
This? It's a family heirloom. Belonged to Sean's "great grandmum," then his "mum." She insisted I have it.

In the next room, the front door is unlocked and opened.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Speak of the devil ...

A MALE VOICE with a British accent calls out:

SEAN (O.S.)
Whose Volvo is blocking the garage?

SEAN (30s) enters the kitchen, a handsome academic carrying a bag of groceries. He acts light but has a burdened and uneasy quality, an addict always in the early stages of withdrawal. Emily is his heroin: both his greatest pleasure and curse.

STEPHANIE
Oh, that's me. I'm sorry.
(winces at her "sorry")
Your wife is trying to get me to stop saying *I'm sorry.*

SEAN
(with a pointed laugh)
Maybe you can get her to start.
(to Emily)
You left work early, you couldn't stop at the grocer's before martini time?

EMILY
I'm so sorry. Did I cut into your *writing* time?

SEAN
(forcing a smile)
Going right for the sword today, are we?

EMILY

(a playful smile back)
What's the point? I've heard the pen is mightier. Maybe try it some time.

Sean looks stung but covers with a laugh as Emily moves in and loops her arms around his neck, kissing him deeply. Stephanie lingers watching them a moment too long, her lips parted. Emily ends the kiss and gestures to Stephanie.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Babe, this is Stephanie. Her son goes to Warfield with Nicky.

STEPHANIE

I'm a big fan of your book. I thought it was brilliant writing. It reminded me of William Thackeray.

SEAN

Well, that's certainly high praise. Not many people trot out Thackeray as a reference these days --

STEPHANIE

I was an English major at Barnard. But that was a lifetime ago, before "Mommybrain" set in. I did my senior thesis on Canterbury Tales.
(in Olde English)
*"And with that word Arcite gan espye,
Wher-as this lady romed to and fro --"*

SEAN

(looking at Emily)
*"And with that sighte hir beautee hurte
hym so ..."* One of my favorite verses. So much truth in so few words.

EMILY

(shakes head; laughs)
Jesus, you should have married Sean.
(to Sean)
Want me to mix you a drink?

SEAN

Not yet. I'm going to go upstairs and take a shower. Nice to meet you, Sharon.

As he heads away across the living room ...

EMILY

He's terrible with names.

STEPHANIE

Well, Stephanie's a hard one. Boy, you two are ... what a cute couple.

EMILY

Lotta good that does us. I never thought anything would go this way. The job in the city, the house in the suburbs -

STEPHANIE

You've figured out how to "have it all."
How do you juggle it?

EMILY

This isn't juggling. This is a nightmare.
We're on the verge of bankruptcy. I never
sleep, I eat seven-hundred calories a day
- and I can't find a decent nanny in all
of Connecticut.

STEPHANIE

If you ever need me to pick up Nicky
after school, I'd be happy to bring him
to my house.

EMILY

You'd do that for me? I'm practically a
stranger. I'm never at the school.

STEPHANIE

Well, you will be. I just signed you up
for the Easter decoration crew.

Emily gapes back. Suddenly, Miles races into the kitchen on
socks, sliding like a speed skater on the slick floor.

MILES

Nicky wants me to stay for dinner!

STEPHANIE

Oh, not tonight, Smooch. I have to do my
vlog before dinner.

(to Emily)

I have a Mommy Vlog. For fun and a little
extra income.

EMILY

That's very resourceful.

STEPHANIE

Six hundred and ten page views a day. I
really need a hundred thousand to start
monetizing the site with ad revenue. So,
it's more a way to connect with other
moms. It's a *community*.

MILES

Mom! Can I stay for dinner or not?

STEPHANIE

I don't like this new *tone*, Mister.

EMILY

Let him stay. I'll have Sean drive him
home later. That way you can go do your
vlog in a nice quiet house.

MILES

(running out)

Yeeees!!! Nicky!! I can stay!

STEPHANIE

Thank you. I know how busy you are.

EMILY

No sweat. I'm sure I'll be calling you for a favor any day. You owe me now.

Emily flashes her megawatt smile and pours another drink. Stephanie beams, dazzled by her.

12

A COMPUTER WINDOW POPS UP (STEPHANIE'S VLOG) - KITCHEN

12

In her lit set of a kitchen, Stephanie now has full makeup, hair flat-ironed. She's warm and chipper.

STEPHANIE

Hi, Moms. Stephanie here. If this is your first visit to my vlog - a hearty welcome. And fill out the survey at the bottom so I can thank whoever referred you with this lovely lavender sachet.

(holds up sachet, then)

Today's theme is friendship. You know, I don't understand these silly, hurtful divisions between working moms and stay-at-home moms. The truth is, I've found it hard to make friends with either.

Parenthood can be isolating. Honestly, you moms have been better friends to me even though we've never met in person. I treasure each and every one of you. Truly. And so I thought today ...

She clicks the ZOOM OUT button on her remote to reveal the island is covered with packets of colored string.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

... was a perfect day for FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS! To celebrate the most important bonds of our lives. Other than family, of course.

13

EXT. WARFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY

13

There's a new spring in Stephanie's step as she gets out of her VOLVO with a box of CANNED GOODS marked MATH: Mothers Assisting The Homeless. As she trundles the heavy load, her CELL PHONE rings. She glimpses the call screen - EMILY - and she drops the box, sending cans rolling around the lot.

STEPHANIE (ON THE PHONE)

Hello? Emily? Hi there! What's up, lady?

EMILY (O.S.)

I was wondering if I could take you up on your offer to pick up Nicky. I'm in a meeting with no end in sight.

STEPHANIE

Of course! I'm happy to help. I just bought a jumbo set of Perler beads --

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

You're the best, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

And I have extra snacks. I just need to know if he has any dietary restrictions.

EMILY
I have no idea. Thanks!

14

EXT. WARFIELD LOCAL PARK - DAY

14

In her "Yearbook Mom" photo vest and camera, Stephanie chases Miles and Nicky around the jungle gym with a roar and finger claws -- a game of "Darth Mommy" that Miles loves. She's good with them, making them squeal and dart away from her.

Emily pulls up in her car and walks toward the park, still on a work call and exuding irritation.

STEPHANIE (ON THE PHONE)
Calm down, Dennis. Alexi is all talk. No one is "coming after you." Take a fucking Xanax and let me do my job. Jesus.

Emily ends the call and watches Stephanie chase the boys, a natural mother in her element. Emily feels a pinch of guilt, even jealousy. Stephanie sees Emily and jogs over, winded.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
"Darth Mommy," we call it. It's silly. But it's one of Miles' favorite games. One of the things he remembers from his Dad. He was much better at roughhousing.

After flashing side eye, Emily pulls out a compact mirror and begins tracing around her mouth with a pencil.

EMILY
Don't do that.

STEPHANIE
Do what?

EMILY
Don't denigrate your good parenting to comfort me for my shitty parenting.

STEPHANIE
Oh, gosh, Emily. That's not what I was doing *at all*. I think you're a super mom--

EMILY
No, you don't. You pack nori rolls for lunch. If I even remember the lunch box, it's a miracle. The nicest thing I could do for Nicky is blow my brains out.
(off Stephanie's horror)
I have a dark sense of humor.

STEPHANIE
Yeah, yikes. You *do* work in the city.

Emily stares emotionally at Nicky, who's playing happily and unaware of her. We see how much she loves him. Then - *SNAP*. Emily spins to see that Stephanie has snapped a picture.

EMILY
(sharply)
What did you just do?

STEPHANIE
I'm ... the yearbook mom.

EMILY
Erase it.

STEPHANIE
But you look so ... *chic*.

EMILY
If that shows up on your vlog --

STEPHANIE
No, gosh, *no*. It's just for the "Faces
and Places" section. Only other parents
would see it -

EMILY
Erase it now or I'll slap an injunction
on the whole fucking yearbook.

Shaking, Stephanie erases the photo from her digital display,
showing Emily the last pictures of a cooking project.

STEPHANIE
Gone. See. Just homemade granola.

EMILY
Good. Don't do that shit again.

STEPHANIE
Gosh, I'm sor-- I mean, I didn't mean to
offend you. I can understand in your line
of work how sensitive this is.
(struggling)
I guess I'm not someone you'd normally be
friends with.

EMILY
You don't want to be friends with me.
Trust me. You're a real human being.

Stephanie can't tell if Emily means to forgive her with that
comment - but she takes it with a bashful smile.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Let's grab the kids and get the hell out
of here. I need a drink.

15

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

15

STEPHANIE (O.S.)
I made it especially for you.

CLOSE SHOT - Stephanie ties a new FRIENDSHIP BRACELET over
Emily's wrist, right onto the barbed wire tattoo.

EMILY
It's very sweet.

Emily regards the CHEVRON PATTERN. Then she pours gin into a
shaker to finish the martinis. Stephanie watches in awe.

STEPHANIE

I used to watch old Bewitched episodes on TV Land and always thought it was so classy when Darren would come home and Samantha would mix him a martini. And now here I am. *Again*. It's so high tone.

Emily chuckles as she shakes the ice-filled martini shaker.

EMILY

God, you're such a nerd, I hope it's not contagious. They'd make me quit my job.

Stephanie laughs but we see she wishes she was cooler. Emily pours one martini from the shaker. It's cloudy with ice chips floating in it. Emily stares at it a beat, then:

EMILY (CONT'D)

Fuck this. I need a real martini.

STEPHANIE

This one's not *real*?

Emily goes to the fridge, opens the freezer and pulls out a frozen bottle of gin and one frozen martini glass. She brings it back over to the island.

EMILY

Too watered-down. When Sean and I were in London, we had the real thing at Dukes Hotel. Sometimes you just need something with a kick to reset your brain.

(making the martini)

Frozen gin, frozen glass. Pour in a small bit of vermouth, swirl it and dump it. Then add the gin and squeeze a twist over the top. Pure booze, no ice, strong as hell. Gotta work your way up to it, though. No amateurs allowed.

Emily hands Stephanie the watered-down martini, then picks up her strong martini and clinks with Stephanie.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Alessandro the bartender has a saying at Dukes. "One's not enough, three's too many, two's just right. Just like tits."

STEPHANIE

Oopsy.

EMILY (CONT'D)

L'chaim.

Emily takes a sip and visibly relaxes. Stephanie studies her.

STEPHANIE

Can you make me one of those? I think I need to reset my brain too.

Off Emily's impressed smile ...

Stephanie and Emily sit on the couch as a fire blazes in the fireplace. A FRENCH 60'S POP SONG PLAYS. Stephanie is clearly wasted. She takes another drink, smacking her lips.

STEPHANIE

I really am not happy with myself about the *picture* I took ... of you. That was so rude ... like a paparazzo ...

EMILY

Oh, *please* - will you get over it already, Stephanie? You're so nice, I don't know how you've managed to survive on this planet for so long.

STEPHANIE

(stares for a long beat)
I'm not as nice as you think.

EMILY

Oh, really ...? Are you baiting me?

STEPHANIE

I'm juss' saying - we all have a dark side. Even "nerds." It's juss' -- some of us are better at hiding it. My mother once said, "Secrets are like margarine--"

Stephanie stops as her drink goes down the wrong pipe and she chokes, coughing. Emily laughs.

EMILY

She had a way with words. Okay, Dark Side. Let's trade confessions. Tell me the wildest thing you've ever done.

STEPHANIE

What? No. I mean ... well ... okay. Maybe. But you go first.

EMILY

(thinks a moment)
Well, I can think of a pretty recent one. Sean and I had his TA over about six months ago. We drank too much and had a threesome.

Stephanie's jaw slackens. She covers her open mouth.

STEPHANIE

(whispering)
Wasn't Sean jealous of him?

EMILY

Who says it was a *him*?

Stephanie digests this info. Nods, trying to stay cool. She does a bad job. Emily grins, amused by the effort.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to freak you out.

STEPHANIE

(freaked out, hiding it)
I am - what do you mean? I'm not freaked out. I'm completely ... *laissez faire*.

EMILY
I just know you're not exactly a sexual
maverick. Nothing wrong with that. Prudes
are people, too.

Emily winks. Stephanie absorbs the insult, smarting.

EMILY (CONT'D)
But now I really want to hear your dirty
little secret. Spill it.

Stephanie downs the rest of her drink, nearly swallowing the
lemon twist. She takes a breath, then ...

STEPHANIE
My father died when I was a senior in
High School ...

17 **INT. PITTSBURGH ROW HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 17

Pouring rain outside. A funeral reception. PEOPLE are dressed
in black, crowded into a modest house, having sandwiches.
STEPHANIE (here 18) moves through the house cleaning up. No
make-up, hair in a ponytail, simple black dress. She heads...

18 **INTO THE KITCHEN (FLASHBACK)** 18

She looks out the window and sees CHRIS (20). He wears an ill-
fitting suit, dark hair in his eyes, skinny like a rock star.
He approaches the door. Stephanie freezes, unable to breathe.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
... A boy showed up at the funeral.

19 **IN THE LIVING ROOM (FLASHBACK)** 19

Her mother GRACE (50) opens the front door and nearly faints.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
His name was Chris.

It's like seeing the young, handsome ghost of her dead
husband. The crowd has now gathered to watch this unfold.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
He was the *spitting image* of my father -
only thirty years younger.

Grace starts to cry and throws her arms around Chris' neck,
holding him as if he's her dead husband. Chris hugs her back,
lifts his eyes and looks RIGHT AT Stephanie.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
Turns out ... he was my half-brother.

20 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - BACK TO PRESENT** 20

EMILY
Hold on. This is your deep dark secret?
That your dad had an affair?

STEPHANIE
(drunk, steadying herself)
No, this is necess'ssary prologue.

EMILY
Necessary prologue. Got it. Keep going,
Dark Side.

21 **INT. PITTSBURGH ROW HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 21

Now in jeans and a tank top, Stephanie unfolds the rusty, stained pullout couch for Chris. A bare bulb hangs overhead illuminating the moldy basement.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
We talked for a long time, looking at old photos of my dad. It was too late for Chris to drive home. So he stayed over.

Chris watches Stephanie make the bed. She can feel his eyes on her ass as she crawls across to stretch the fitted sheet. They lock eyes. Their chests rising with desire.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
Maybe it was the loss of my dad, who was the only person who ever truly understood me, maybe it was the way Chris looked and acted like him, or the fact I suddenly wasn't an only child, which I never wanted to be. I don't know, we just stood there for the longest time.

She moves in and loops her arms around his neck to say good night, pulling him close. She tips her chin, looks up at him.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
We didn't know how to say goodbye.

Lips so close. They start to kiss. Tug at each other's clothes, desperate to merge as quickly as possible.

Chris throws her on the bed and fumbles with his fly. She yanks off her jeans. Chris climbs on top of her and thrusts into her, eyes wide in amazement. She gasps. She's never had sex like this, great sex. She presses her lips together and shakes with an orgasm building. She buries her face in his shoulder and groans as it swallows her up. He comes at the same moment and collapses. They lie together stunned, sweaty.

22 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - BACK TO SCENE** 22

Stephanie stares into space. Emily snaps her fingers in front of Stephanie's eyes.

EMILY
Hello? Keep going! You're not allowed to be too drunk in my house not to finish a juicy story.

STEPHANIE
Me? No, I'm fine. What was I saying?

EMILY
You stood there for the longest time, you didn't know how to say goodbye. I'm waiting for the big ending here.

Stephanie can't tell the truth. But she's cornered. Then ...

STEPHANIE

Oh, I don't know. Maybe it's not so racy where you're from. I went in to hug him and then we ... kissed.
(buries face in hands)
It's so gross.

EMILY

So that's your whole story? You kissed your brother? Once?

STEPHANIE

It's like *Chinatown*! We immediately said this will never happen again, and we'd never breathe a word. And no, he wasn't my brother, he was my *half*-brother.

Emily sizes Stephanie up. She sips her drink, then leans in.

EMILY

There's more.

STEPHANIE

No, there's no more.

EMILY

You started that story, then hit the eject button. I saw it happen.

STEPHANIE

I did not eject -

EMILY

You fucked him.

STEPHANIE

What!? No! I didn't say that.

EMILY

Swear.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I swear.

EMILY

Swear on your father's grave.

Stephanie pauses.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Ha! You're a brother fucker!

STEPHANIE

Oh my Gosh, you're *terrible*. I never should have said anything. Stupid martinis ... from *Dukes*.

Stephanie is flustered and guilt-ridden. Emily softens.

EMILY

You crack me up. Do you and Miles want to join us for dinner?

STEPHANIE

Really? That would be lovely.

EMILY

Great. You're cooking, Dark Side.

Stephanie gives her a look, then they share a genuine laugh. Stephanie absorbs it: they really are becoming friends.

23

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

23

CLOSE UP of Alka Seltzer being dropped into a glass. REVEAL a very hungover Stephanie setting up her kitchen for her vlog. She opens up her FIRST AID kit and lays out the items.

STEPHANIE

(practicing)

Hi Moms, Stephanie here. Today we'll be talking about the perfect First Aid Kit, so that you're never left in need during a crisis --

She doesn't like how that sounds, and starts to revise her SCRIPT. Just then, her CELLPHONE rings. As she answers:

EMILY (O.S.)

Stephanie, thank God you picked up. I have a little emergency --

STEPHANIE

Well, that's really a coincidence, because I was -

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

I need your help.

STEPHANIE

Are you okay?

EMILY (O.S.)

I'm fine, but I need a simple favor. Can you grab Nicky from school? Sean's in London, his mother broke her fucking hip, and I got a big fire to put out at work.

STEPHANIE

Oh, Gosh, poor Sean. Poor you. Of course, I'm always happy to help.

EMILY

You're the best. I gotta run but I'll get you back for this.

STEPHANIE

Of course! Nicky's in good hands.

EMILY

You're a great friend, Stephanie. A true friend. I really mean that.

OFF STEPHANIE, beaming --

24

EXT. WARFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - SECOND GRADE - DAY

24

At the end of another day, moms are picking up kids. Miles and Nicky emerge with their backpacks.

STEPHANIE

Hey, guys! You're getting a play date today!

The boys both cheer as Darren approaches, Lulu in his arms.

DARREN
Stephanie, that's so great you took the
nanny job.

STEPHANIE
Nanny job?

DARREN
For Emily. I know she was looking.

STEPHANIE
(mortified)
I am -- No. I am not - this is not a job.
I'm helping her out. As a friend.

DARREN
Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize you guys
were so close.

STEPHANIE
Well, we are. We drink martinis together.
Strong martinis. From London.
(to the boys, the "fun
mom" again)
All right, fellas - if you don't wrestle
in the car, we'll make *fruit pops*.

They cheer again, running across the yard - as Stephanie
storms away, throwing a dirty look back at Darren.

25 **INT. STEPHANIE'S VOLVO - DAY** 25

Stephanie, Miles and Nicky drive along, SINGING ALONG TO A
FUN SONG ON THE RADIO. Everyone's really happy.

26 **INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY** 26

The revelry seems to come to a sudden halt. Miles and Nicky
sulk at the kitchen table. Tempeh burger, carrots and steamed
spinach on their plates. Used to it, Miles eats; but Nicky
pushes the food around with his fork as Miles sets down his
glass of milk on the wood table next to its coaster.

STEPHANIE
Miles, sweetie, you know the rule. Mr.
Glass always stands on Mr. Coaster.

MILES
(putting glass on coaster)
Because of his wet feet. Sorry, mom.

STEPHANIE
Nicky, you can't just live on starch.
People need 11 different amino acids.

NICKY
Do amino acids come from *horse shit*?

Miles gasps in horror. Stephanie smiles, beatific.

STEPHANIE
We don't use that language in this house,
sweetie.

(MORE)

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
That's an "oopsy." It would normally cost you a quarter, but I'll cut you a little slack this time because you're a guest.

NICKY
Well, that's what it tastes like. Are you telling me to lie?

STEPHANIE
No, lying is wrong, too. But there's a difference between lying and being polite. So we can at least take a "no thank you" bite and see if we like it.

He takes a bite of Tempeh burger, horrified, making a face like it's torture. Then he pushes his plate away.

NICKY
No thank you.

27 **INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY** 27

The two boys watch SpongeBob Squarepants on TV, eating popcorn. Stephanie texts Emily: "*Should i give nicky a bath?*" She hits SEND. Waits. She fixates on her phone. No response.

28 **INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT** 28

Stephanie gives the two boys a bubble bath. They splash around, hurling rubber sea creatures at each other.

STEPHANIE
Don't splash. This isn't Sea World.

They ignore her and splash harder.

29 **INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT** 29

Stephanie dials Emily. She gets her VOICEMAIL.

EMILY (O.S.)
"Hi, this is Emily Nelson, Director of Public Relations for Dennis Nylon Holdings. Leave a message here or at the New York office at 212-555-6361."

BEEP. Stephanie opens her mouth to speak, but hesitates. As she dives in, she's now even more sugar-coated than before.

STEPHANIE
Hi, Em, Stephanie. Hey. I know you're probably knee-deep in that crisis. But, um, Nicky asked when you were coming and I didn't know what to tell him. They're having a hoot here, don't worry. And I'm happy to watch him as long as you need, just let me know. Okay? Hope you're hanging in there.

She hangs up, her smile dropping.

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Stephanie climbs up to say good night to Miles on the TOP BUNK, her head gets trapped in a HANGING SOLAR SYSTEM MOBILE affixed to the ceiling. She tries to *blow* away a Styrofoam Saturn, finally clearing planets like a cloud of gnats.

STEPHANIE
G'night, Smooch.

MILES
Good night, Mama.
(looking up)
And good night, Daddy. Good night, Uncle
Chris.

NICKY
Who's Uncle *Chris*?

STEPHANIE
Chris was my brother. He's in heaven now.

NICKY
There's no such thing as heaven.

STEPHANIE
Is that what your mommy and daddy tell
you?

NICKY
My Dad says life's just a brief moment of
pain before an eternity of darkness.

STEPHANIE
Well, he's an English professor.

NICKY
And he says when we die we turn into a
feast for bacteria.

STEPHANIE
Well, at least *someone* is eating dinner
then.

She checks Miles, hoping this didn't sink in.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Do you want a kiss good night, Nicky?

NICKY
I want to go home. My Mom didn't say I
was sleeping over.

STEPHANIE
She should be here any minute and then
she'll come wake you up.

Stephanie pecks Nicky on the cheek anyway. He rubs his face with disgust as she walks out and closes the door.

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Stephanie makes two kids' lunches for the next day in silence.

She mashes avocados and nori on whole grain bread, then cuts the sandwiches in half. She texts Emily: "Made lunch for Nicky. Text me to say you're ok. Worried about u."

She hits SEND. Waits a beat. No response. She finds a bottle of WHITE ZINFANDEL in the back of the fridge, half empty. She unscrews the screw cap and sniffs it. Still good? Maybe. She pours herself a glass.

She steals a cookie from under Saran Wrap. She nibbles a tiny bit of it, washing it down with wine. She slips the cookie back, looking guilty. Looks at her phone. Nothing from Emily.

CUT TO:

3 a.m. Stephanie dumps the empty wine bottle into the recycling bin. The cookies have been devoured. She washes the dish in the sink, disgusted with herself.

32

EXT. WARFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

32

PUSH IN ON the PARKED VOLVO as Stephanie tries to get a hold of Emily at work. She speaks slowly and with a forced calm.

STEPHANIE (ON PHONE)

Stephanie. Smothers. I'm a close friend.
I've been watching her son. Do you know
where she went or when she'll be back?

33

INT. DENNIS NYLON INC - INTERCUTTING

33

In a sleek Manhattan office in a Midtown skyscraper, Emily's assistant VALERIE (25) -- a Goth, emo girl -- is on her headset, multi-tasking as she types.

VALERIE

She - is - hold on ...
(typing)
Yeah, she's in Miami for a few days, did
you want to leave a message?

STEPHANIE

A few days? She didn't tell me -

The other line rings.

VALERIE

Can you please hold for a second?

STEPHANIE

The thing is, I haven't heard a peep and
Nicky wants to know -

Valerie puts her on hold, activating 80s SYNTH MUSIC.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Oh, for the love of Job.

As she endures the hold music, we hear:

STEPHANIE (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)

Hi, Moms. Stephanie here, and the truth
is, I'm not quite myself today.

34

ON VIDEO VLOG - STEPHANIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

34

Stephanie addresses the camera, her voice shaky.

STEPHANIE

My friend, the one that inspired the double-weave chevron friendship bracelet ... well, she's been gone a few days and I haven't been able to reach her. I sent her plenty of cute iPhotos of our boys. She usually sends me back a winky-face emoji, but now ... not even that.

(a deep breath)

Oh, she travels a lot for work and I know some big hoo-ha came up, it's always something. So I've been watching her son, who is a ... very spirited young man. Her husband's in London visiting his injured mother and ... anyway, there's probably a good explanation. It's not like I mind -- but her son is starting to ask questions. Moms, what would you do if a mother put you in this situation?

She glances at the comment feed:

HUGSnKISSES19: A true friend wouldn't do that.

SUNDAYGIRLXOXO: Rude.

TIGERMOM9: REPORT HER TO THE POLICE!!!

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Tigermom, be constructive. And you know the all-caps rule. No yelling.

Yogalover999: The husband has to know something.

Lives2Zumba: Call her husband.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Right. Thank you, Yogalover, thank you, Zumba. You're both right.

35

INT. UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON HOSPITAL - RM. 612 - NIGHT 35

In a cramped, shared hospital room, two beds separated by a drawn curtain, Sean sits alongside his mother MARGARET (70), asleep. Sean looks like hell. His cell phone rings. Sean doesn't recognize the number. He answers suspiciously.

SEAN

Yes?

36

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - INTERCUTTING

36

STEPHANIE

Hi, Sean. It's Stephanie. I'm so sorry to bother you, I got your cell number from the school directory. I know you're going through so much, and gosh, my prayers are with you and your mom. But we really need to talk about a situation with Emily.

SEAN

Who is this?

STEPHANIE

Oh, Stephanie Smothers. I'm Emily's friend. I drive a Volvo.

SEAN

I'm sorry, I'm a little out of sorts.

STEPHANIE

Our sons go to Warfield together. Miles is my son. Nicky is yours.

SEAN

Has something happened to Nicky?

STEPHANIE

No, Nicky's fine. It's Emily. She asked me to watch Nicky. That was three days ago and I haven't been able to reach her. Have you heard from her?

Sean sighs as if he's a punctured balloon. His mother wakes up, having heard some of the conversation.

SEAN'S MOTHER

What is it? What's wrong?

SEAN

Three days, Christ.

SEAN'S MOTHER

What did Emily *do* now?

He presses a CALL BUTTON.

SEAN

Shhh, mother, go back to sleep. Let's call a nurse and get you some morphine.
(into phone)
What did she say?

STEPHANIE

Are you talking to me or your mother now?

SEAN

You. What did Emily say?

STEPHANIE

She told me that she had to put out a fire. Her office said she's in Miami -

SEAN

Oh, right, good. That sounds ... yes. I've been through these emergencies with her. As long as she knows Nicky's taken care of, she can disappear for some time.

STEPHANIE

Oh, good. I just ... I assumed we'd be communicating.

SEAN

She's not really much of a communicator.

STEPHANIE

I mean, to check in on Nicky.

SEAN
How is he?

STEPHANIE
He's okay.

SEAN
Amazing. You're a life-saver. Look, I'm flying back in the morning and then I can pick Nicky up as soon as I'm on the ground. All righty?

STEPHANIE
All righty.

37 **EXT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

37

A TAXI pulls up in front of the house. The first time we've seen the exterior. It's a quaint colonial, the country mouse opposite of Emily and Sean's house.

Sean gets out of the cab and pays the driver, dragging his bag toward the front door. He knocks and Stephanie opens.

SEAN
Oh, you. You're Miss Canterbury Tales. So sorry I didn't remember.

STEPHANIE
You've got a lot on your mind. We all do. The boys are asleep. Nicky tried to stay up to see you, but he was just too tuckered-out. Come in.

38 **INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

38

Stephanie and Sean speak in low voices in the kitchen.

SEAN
So nothing? Still no word?

STEPHANIE
Nothing. Not to you either?

SEAN
No, but that's not unusual. We had a bit of a row the other day.

STEPHANIE
I'm sorry.

SEAN
Don't be. It's our pattern. All dramatic breakups and reunions, with almost nothing in between.

STEPHANIE
It sounds tiring.

SEAN
Yes, but ... it keeps life interesting.

STEPHANIE

Her assistant Valerie hasn't been able to reach her either. Which doesn't make any sense if she's dealing with a work crisis. Some of the moms think we should go to the police.

SEAN

The moms?

STEPHANIE

I posted something about Emily on my website. For other moms. Just ... cooking tips, odds-and-ends. It's mostly How-To.

He looks at her with jet-lagged eyes. It's all sinking in.

SEAN

The police. Has it really come to this?

STEPHANIE

Would you like anything to drink? Herb tea maybe?

SEAN

Yes, let's do it. Not the tea, the police. Let's call them.

39

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - MILES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

39

Miles is fast asleep on the top bunk. Nicky sleeps on the bottom bunk. Sean stands in the cracked doorway, watching his son sleep. A look of deep concern on his face.

STEPHANIE (O.S.)

Sean? The police are here.

40

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

40

Stephanie sits at the dining room table while TWO POLICE question Sean: SERGEANT MOLLOY and OFFICER BLANCO.

OFFICER BLANCO

And when was the last time either of you heard from her?

Sean swims, shaking his head. He looks over at Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

Four days ago.

SEAN

I'm sorry. I was in London. My mum broke her hip.

SERGEANT MOLLOY

Sorry to hear that.

OFFICER BLANCO

And she said it was a work crisis?

SEAN

She has a very high profile job - with a full staff she oversees.

OFFICER BLANCO
And what do you do, sir?

SEAN
I'm an Associate Professor.

OFFICER BLANCO
And what do you teach?

SEAN
English.

SERGEANT MOLLOY
Sounds like you're pretty good at it.

SEAN
That's wonderful. Well-played.

SEARGEANT MOLLOY
Ever slept with a student?

Stephanie is shocked.

SEAN
Excuse me? Do you think I had something to do with my wife's disappearance?

OFFICER BLANCO
No need to get defensive, Mr. Townsend. We're just exploring all avenues.

SEAN
Well, that's a dead end. No. Christ.

SERGEANT MOLLOY
Most times when a woman vanishes, she has a reason. A really good reason.

SEAN
That's an astute piece of detective work. What are you implying?

OFFICER BLANCO
You two didn't have a fight? Something to make you run off to London?

SEAN
Are you implying I broke my mother's hip?

OFFICER BLANCO
We're just looking at this objectively. You leave town, your wife takes off. Perhaps there was some abuse--

STEPHANIE
(can't take any more)
How dare you. This man flew back from his *mother's* bedside. This is a dedicated father and husband. I've seen him with his wife, and let me tell you something: they are *in love*. They have more chemistry than the Science Fair.

OFFICER BLANCO
Just exploring all avenues, Ma'am.

STEPHANIE

Like Sean said, that avenue's a dead end.
Or at least a cul-de-sac. So, drop it.

Sean is astonished. No one has ever defended him with such veracity - and he now can't take his eyes off Stephanie, who even surprised herself. The officers are unfazed, however.

OFFICER BLANCO

And where's Emily's family?

SEAN

She doesn't have any. She was an only child. Her parents died when she was a teenager.

STEPHANIE

She never told me that.

SERGEANT MOLLOY

We'll file a Missing Person report and contact you in a day or two. If she doesn't turn up we'll contact local authorities in Miami. You're not planning any more trips, Mr. Townsend?

SEAN

No. I'll be right here. I mean, at my house. Taking care of my son. Until this matter is resolved.

OFFICER BLANCO

We can show ourselves out.

As Blanco and Molloy leave, Sean and Stephanie stare at each other a moment in silence across the room.

STEPHANIE

Well, they were extremely rude.

SEAN

I need a serious drink.

STEPHANIE

I have some white zinfandel in the fridge.

SEAN

Oh god no. I'm sorry. I'm sure it's lovely. I just need something a bit stiffer.

STEPHANIE

I still have my late husband's whisky collection ... if that doesn't make you uncomfortable. I know you don't believe in heaven, so it's not like *he'll mind*.

SEAN

How would you know what I believe?

STEPHANIE

Oh. Gosh. Nicky. He doesn't like our prayers at night.

SEAN
 (with a chuckle)
 Well, we're not sacrificing goats or
 anything at our house.

STEPHANIE
 I welcome all denominations.

SEAN
 As do I. Let's drink your husband's
 scotch.

41

INT. STEPHANIE'S KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

41

Stephanie and Sean sit at the kitchen table with two whiskey glasses and a bottle of single malt between them. Stephanie refills their glasses. Sean sips his.

SEAN
 God knows, we've had our troubles - but
 ... I don't think she would just up and
 leave her child. Do you?

STEPHANIE
 She adores Nicky. She could never do that.

SEAN
 She's an enigma, my wife. It drew me to
 her. But it can also make her impossible.
 She can be so fiercely private.

STEPHANIE
 She sure doesn't like having her picture
 taken, I'll tell ya that.

Sean sparks at this, studying her more closely.

SEAN
 That's right. She works in the fashion
 industry, but you'd think you were
 stealing her soul. I remember once she
 made me shut down my Facebook account
 after I posted a family picture.

STEPHANIE
 Social media can be pretty tricky.

SEAN
 You can get close to her, but you can
 never really *reach* her. That's the truly
 hypnotic thing about Emily. She's like a
 beautiful ghost. She's never entirely
 there.

STEPHANIE
 That's really poetic. I can see why
 you're such a good writer.

He looks up at her with inconsolable pain in his eyes.

SEAN
 I'm not a writer, Stephanie. I gave it up to
 chase this woman for the rest of my life.

She puts her hand onto his, comforting him.

SEAN (CONT'D)

I got addicted to her. God, and she devours me. The things she does, you wouldn't believe it. She's like a succubus. So beautiful, so *primal*. Her orgasms are like *seismic* events.

He looks down at her hand, on his. She withdraws hers.

STEPHANIE

Well, I'm a good judge of character, Mr. Sean T. Townsend. And I know Emily loves you. One thousand percent.

SEAN

I should call a taxi home.

STEPHANIE

(glancing at the clock)
Oh my Gosh, it's 1:25. They stop driving at 1 a.m. here.

SEAN

What about an Uber?

STEPHANIE

Well, there's only two Uber drivers in Warfield, and I know Davit has his son's recital in the morning.

(a beat)

I have a guest room. Why don't you stay over? Nicky will want to see you when he wakes up.

OFF SEAN, contemplating it --

42

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

42

Stephanie pulls open the HIDE-A-BED onto a few DINOSAURS stranded on their sides and starts to prepare the bed.

SEAN

I can do that. Really. You've already done so much.

Stephanie stops and heads for the hallway.

SEAN (CONT'D)

And Stephanie? Thank you. For everything.

Sean sits down on the creaking swayback bed, setting off a RECORDED SONG: "*Me mind of fire... me soul on fire... feeling hot hot hot.*" He reaches under his butt ...

STEPHANIE

Oh, that's where Dr. Crackers is.

Sean pulls out a SINGING PARROT, activated by a button, singing: "*Party people, all around me feeling hot hot hot.*"

43

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

43

Sunlight pours in the window. The sound of CHILDREN'S VOICES rouses Stephanie out of an intoxicated sleep. She shakes cobwebs from her head. She hears the GRINDING of a BLENDER.

44

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

44

Stephanie enters in her robe. Miles and Nicky are at the table drinking GREEN SMOOTHIES, Sean helming the blender with a mix of CHIA SEEDS, YOGURT, KALE, SPINACH, BANANAS, HONEY.

SEAN
Who wants more B vitamins?

MILES
I do!

SEAN
And I'm sure *mum* does.

STEPHANIE
What on earth are you making?

SEAN
A hangover smoothie. It'll knock it right out of you. The kids love it.

Stephanie turns to the kids, amazed they're drinking it.

SEAN (CONT'D)
(whispering; with a wink)
It's a full serving of vegetables and they don't even know it.

She's shocked to hear him say something she always does.

SEAN (CONT'D)
Hope this is okay. Don't mean to mess up your routine.

Her eyes are fixed on him now - with real desire.

SEAN (CONT'D)
Do you want some?

STEPHANIE
Yes, please.

Stephanie takes the smoothie from his hand, slowly. She drinks it with her eyes locked on Sean. They have a long moment in the kitchen. The toaster dings, breaking the spell. Then they remember why they're here.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
All right, kids. Party's over. Let's get ready for school.

45

ON VIDEO VLOG - STEPHANIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

45

Stephanie addresses the camera, looking a little worse for wear. She looks at the PAGE STATISTICS and sees HER LIVE TRAFFIC STATS. A graph shows viewership rising ...

STEPHANIE
Hi, Moms. Stephanie here. Before we get to today's topic - VEGETABLE SMOOTHIES - I want to welcome all of the new viewers: thank you for joining us.
(MORE)

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

And I especially want to thank so many of you who have written to ask about Emily. Now, she is very sensitive about her privacy but these are extenuating circumstances. So, I'm using her real name and posting a few rare pictures in case any of you have seen her. It's been six days. The good news is her husband Sean is back from London and working closely with the police.

(a sigh)

Now, a lot of you Moms are stuck on this idea that the husband is always the primary suspect. But I'm here to tell you: Sean was out of the country when Emily disappeared. Some of you have suggested he just wanted an alibi, but I can assure you, Sean is an amazing husband and father. He's been a wreck ever since he got home. And the police are no help. I don't know what our tax dollars are paying for!

46 **INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY** 46

Stephanie is on her hands and knees digging in her closet.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)

Well, as every mom knows, if you want something done right, you better do it yourself.

She finally finds a VINTAGE CHANEL SCARF in a gift box.

47 **INT. STEPHANIE'S VOLVO (MOVING) - DAY** 47

Stephanie wears the Chanel scarf, nattily knotted on the side. Trying to look chic, in dark lipstick, eyeliner and her hair pulled back in a low ponytail. She drives.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)

I will leave no stone unturned.

48 **I/E. STEPHANIE'S VOLVO (MOVING) - G.W. BRIDGE - DAY** 48

Stephanie drives into Manhattan playing Adele's "HELLO."

STEPHANIE (V.O.)

I think that's what Emily would want.

She joins in singing the chorus of "HELLO" at top volume.

STEPHANIE

"Hello from the outside / I must have
called a thousand times / To tell you I'm
sorry for breaking your heart ..."

49 **INT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN OFFICE BUILDING - ELEVATOR - DAY** 49

It's that awkward polite silence in a crowded elevator. As Stephanie rides, she eyes the faces around her. Skinny PROFESSIONAL WOMEN in sleek suits and stiletto heels. PROFESSIONAL MEN in suits with slick-backed hair.

Stephanie adjusts the knot on her scarf, pulling it tighter. She accidentally pulls it too tight, choking herself. She GASPS OUT A SMALL CHOKE SOUND, then plays it off as if it's a COUGH and THROAT CLEAR. Everyone stares at her.

STEPHANIE

Allergies. It's that wet spring we had.

Nobody buys it. Dying of embarrassment, she pulls the knot looser as the doors open and Stephanie exits.

50

INT. DENNIS NYLON HQ - RECEPTION - DAY

50

White marble and chromium steel. White leather banquettes and black lacquer side tables. The name DENNIS NYLON in giant silver letters. Stephanie works up her nerve as she approaches the chic RECEPTIONIST answering phones on headset.

RECEPTIONIST

Dennis Nylon, please hold. Thanks for holding, how may I direct your call?

STEPHANIE

Hi. My name is --

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

(holding up a finger)
Dennis Nylon, please hold.

STEPHANIE

My friend works here. She's been missing for over a we--

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Thanks for holding, how may I direct your call?

STEPHANIE

Her name is Emily Nelson. She's the head of public relations.

EMILY

Emily's not in today.

STEPHANIE

I know she's not in. That's why I'm --

RECEPTIONIST

Dennis Nylon, please hold.

Stephanie lurches across the counter and presses the hang up button, hissing at the young woman:

STEPHANIE

I'm sorry, but - no, you know what? I'm not sorry. This is an emergency. A woman is missing. I need to talk with Mr. Nylon. Now.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Nylon's not here right now.

STEPHANIE

Then I'll wait.

RECEPTIONIST

Knock yourself out.

STEPHANIE

I will. Thank you very much.

The receptionist gestures to the lobby seating area. Stephanie gives her a defiant look and takes a seat. She tries to lean back, but the back of the fashionable chair is too far. She sits up straight, avoiding eye contact with the receptionist, who just stares at her.

The elevator doors open and DENNIS NYLON (40s, Tom Ford type) walks out with his assistants, KIKO and DIEGO. Diego is very intense looking and a bit scary. As Dennis breezes past -

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Mr. Nylon!?

He turns as Diego steps forward and puts himself between Dennis and Stephanie. Dennis looks at Stephanie with disdain.

DENNIS NYLON
We don't accept unsolicited resumes.

STEPHANIE
That's not -- We have a problem, sir.

DENNIS NYLON
(looking her over)
We most certainly do.

STEPHANIE
A friend of mine works in your publicity department--

DENNIS NYLON
Is that a vintage Chanel scarf?

STEPHANIE
My Aunt Frieda gave it to me.

DENNIS NYLON
Were you trying to hang yourself with it?
Look at this knot. Jesus.

He comes forward to loosen the knot around her neck.

STEPHANIE
I'm here because of Emily Nelson.

Dennis pauses, staring at Stephanie with concern now.

DENNIS NYLON
What about Emily? What happened?

STEPHANIE
She's missing. She asked me to pick up her son *nine days ago* because apparently she was going to Miami and she never came back. Not a call, not a text - and no one in your office seems to give a crap. Excuse my language.

DENNIS NYLON
(to Kiko)
Why did Emily go to Miami?

KIKO
I didn't know she did.

Dennis looks quite thrown, then recovers and returns his gaze to Stephanie, regaining his power.

DENNIS NYLON
I'm sorry but if Emily hasn't told us about something then we know *not to ask*.

STEPHANIE
She works for you, right?

DENNIS NYLON
Yes, but do you see this skin? I'm 48 years-old and that's not botox, sweetie. That's sleep. I get plenty of it, thanks to Emily. Now, if there's something she's not telling me, it could be Chernobyl for all I know, and bless her, she'll put on her radiation suit and deal with it.

KIKO
And find a way to look fabulous doing it.

STEPHANIE
Then what do you suggest I do?

DENNIS NYLON
You want advice? Never wear a Chanel scarf with a Gap T-shirt. If you were truly Emily's friend, you'd know that. Have a nice day.

STEPHANIE
(as they walk away)
It's *Target*, thank you very much. And we are friends. *Best friends*.

Diego throws a scary look back at her as the receptionist tries to escort her out. Stephanie starts to stride off.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
I'll show *myself* out.

She walks toward the elevators as the receptionist goes back to her desk. Stephanie looks over at the doorway to the cubicles area. Her eyes follow Dennis. He now looks upset. She then sees an office door that reads: EMILY NELSON.

DENNIS NYLON (O.S.)
Valerie, my office. Now.

Dennis grabs Emily's assistant VALERIE and pulls her urgently toward his office, Diego in tow. Stephanie sees a sign over the doorway to the cubicles area that reads "EMPLOYEES ONLY."

Stephanie looks torn. She's never disobeyed a rule before. She glances around nervously, considers, then takes a deep breath and darts secretly into the cubicles area.

51

INT. DENNIS NYLON HQ - CUBICLES AREA - CONTINUOUS

51

Stephanie pauses in the doorway. She sees an INTERN pulling a RACK OF GARMENT BAGS along the aisle that leads to Emily's office. She darts behind the rack, moving stealthily.

She nods hello to the intern, trying to fit in while watching through the tops of the hangers as Dennis, Diego and Valerie enter Dennis' glass walled office and close the door.

Stephanie sees them talking intensely through the glass but can't hear what they're saying as she approaches Emily's office. But Dennis looks quite agitated. Diego listens, cold.

Suddenly, THE RACK TAKES A SHARP TURN, EXPOSING STEPHANIE just as Diego turns and is about to see her. She quickly darts through a door next to her, closing it behind her.

52 **INT. DENNIS NYLON HQ - CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS** 52

Stephanie leans against the door, nervous. To herself ...

 STEPHANIE
 Deep breaths, deep breaths ...

 VOICE (O.S.)
 Finally!

Stephanie turns to see the room is filled with people in the middle of a design review. They all stare at her. A DESIGNER is leading the review. He looks at her impatiently.

 DESIGNER
 We're dying in here. I need a skinny
 latte with a double shot of vanill-- What
 are you wearing?

 STEPHANIE
 Oh, um, it's Chanel.

 DESIGNER
 (stares a beat, then)
 It's fab. Dennis would love that. All
 right, what's everyone else want?
 (looking at her again)
 Don't tell me you didn't bring a pad?

Stephanie shakes her head "no." He sighs and tosses a pad and pen to her. People start calling out their coffee orders to Stephanie, who dutifully but distractedly writes them down.

53 **INT. DENNIS NYLON HQ - WORK AREA - MOMENTS LATER** 53

Stephanie peeks out the conference room, holding a long list of coffee orders. She sees Diego and Dennis still conferring in Dennis' office. She ducks down so that she's hidden by the low cubicles and darts into ...

54 **INT. DENNIS NYLON HQ - EMILY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS** 54

Emily's office is immaculate, modern with no clutter. Her desk is a glass top on chrome legs. A small drawer unit sits under it next to her minimalist desk chair.

The wall in Emily's office is glass and so Stephanie is completely exposed. She hunches down and duck-walks to the desk, staying below view of the workers in the cubicles.

Stephanie tries to open the top drawer but it's locked. They all are. She thinks, then pulls a hair pin out of her hair and tries to jimmy the lock in the top drawer with it.

She clearly has no idea how to pick a lock. After a beat, the pin bends and springs out of her hand and lands out of reach.

STEPHANIE
Motherfudger ...

Just then, Valerie walks past Emily's office, talking on her headset, preoccupied and upset. Stephanie scrambles behind the drawer unit, hunching down low.

VALERIE
 Of course he's freaking out! He needs someone to manage this *now* ...

As Stephanie hunches lower to hide, she glances up at the bottom of Emily's desk. Her expression changes.

EMILY'S POV: Through the glass desktop, Stephanie sees a letter under Emily's desk pad. It looks like it was hastily shoved under there along with the envelope it came in.

Stephanie stares up at it, thinking.

STEPHANIE'S FLASHBACK VISION: Emily is at her desk, reading the letter, worried, then hears Dennis heading for her office. Scared, she quickly lifts the desk pad and hides the letter under it, dropping it just as Dennis enters.

BACK TO SCENE: Stephanie reaches up and lifts the desk pad, quickly pulling out the letter and envelope. She stuffs them into her purse, then looks at Dennis' office. It's now empty. Seeing Dennis and Diego nowhere, she rushes out of Emily's office.

55

INT. DENNIS NYLON HQ - WORK AREA - CONTINUOUS

55

Stephanie darts past the cubicles, speeding toward the exit. She looks back at Dennis' office. VALERIE IS NOW WATCHING HER, STARING SCARILY. As Stephanie then turns to run ...

DIEGO STEPS OUT IN FRONT OF HER, grabbing her arms. She GASPS. He stares at her threateningly as Dennis steps up.

DENNIS NYLON
 Forget something, Aunt Frieda? You're not supposed to be back here, you know.

Stephanie looks terrified, then suddenly changes tact. Snaps.

STEPHANIE
 (to Dennis, in his face)
 You listen to me, you bargain basement Tom Ford. If you don't have your goon take his hands off me right now, I'm gonna tell the moms who watch my vlog - the *thousands* of moms - that Dennis Nylon is an abusive creep who victimizes women and that they should spread the word all over the internet to stop buying your overpriced, poorly-made garbage. Because if you lose moms, *you lose business*.

Dennis looks at her like she's nuts but clearly responds to the threat of potential bad press. He pulls Diego's arm off of Stephanie.

DENNIS NYLON

I was just going to have him escort you out. Jesus Christ. You're the one who trespassed, you know.

STEPHANIE

Well, tough nuts. It's a free country. And I'll escort my-self out, thank you.
(to Diego, re: her arm)
And you'd better pray I don't have a bruise.

Stephanie pushes past them and heads for the exit. As she walks away, she begins to smile to herself, suddenly feeling very cool and empowered. She takes out the coffee order list, looks at it, then crumples it up and tosses it coolly into a trash can. She exits around the corner.

After a beat, she comes back around the corner and takes the crumpled list out of the garbage. She uncrumples it, smooths it on her knee and hands it to an ASSISTANT.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

They're waiting for these in the conference room. Please apologize to them for the delay.

She gives the assistant an apologetic look and heads out.

56 **INT. DENNIS NYLON HQ - ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS** 56

Stephanie slips into the elevator, then pulls out the letter. It's an UNFLATTERING CANDID PICTURE OF EMILY, dressed in a big army coat, her face drawn, hair unwashed. Underneath it written in bold pen: "GOTTA HAVE FAITH."

STEPHANIE

"Gotta have faith?"
(studying it)
No wonder you don't like to have your picture taken.

57 **EXT. DOWNTOWN WARFIELD, CT - MAIN STREET - DAY** 57

THE UNFLATTERING PHOTO OF EMILY, copied to the point of blurriness, is STAPLED to a community bulletin board.

Stephanie goes store to store in the small downtown area putting up fliers with the caption "HAVE YOU SEEN ME?" and a hotline number. Sean walks up and hands her a new stack. They exchange a sad smile. He's grateful to her for all this.

REVEAL Darren, Stacy and Sona watching from a Starbucks.

DARREN

Look at our little Stephanie, comforting the worried husband.

STACY

Oh, please. It's an Arts-and-Crafts project. I've never seen her pass up a chance to use a stapler.

DARREN

Think of the optimism that goes into making those fliers. It's like they're looking for a lost parrot.

SONA

Emily's going to hate those fliers when she comes back.

DARREN

She's not coming back. Don't you ever watch *Dateline*? If a case isn't solved in the first 72 hours, they're always dead.

Sona looks sadly back at Stephanie, Sean standing nearby.

58

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

58

A beautifully set table for four with steaming platters of food, good silver, linen napkins and lit candles. Stephanie uncorks a bottle of white wine and pours it in two wine glasses at either end. Sean comes in the front door in sweats, damp from a jog.

STEPHANIE

Oh, perfect timing. Dinner's ready.

Sean stares at the table, then shakes his head.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Did I do something wrong?

SEAN

No, I just ... I've never had this experience. Coming home to a set dinner table. I feel like I'm in some "Twilight Zone." Or "Leave it to Beaver."

STEPHANIE

Is it too much?

SEAN

It's wonderful. Anything stable is like a gift from heaven these days.

STEPHANIE

You don't believe in heaven.

SEAN

(giving her a smile)
Maybe I'm starting to. I'm going to take a shower. I'll be right back.

The DOORBELL rings. Sean goes to the door and opens it, revealing a man in a suit, DETECTIVE MEANY, 40s, Cuban. Stephanie watches anxiously as he flashes a badge.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Stephanie? Maybe you should help the boys with their homework.

Stephanie hovers in the doorway a moment, eyes wide.

STEPHANIE

Of course.

Stephanie grabs the bread basket of rolls and heads up.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Just a snack before dinner.

Meany nods to her, then watches her go, curious.

DETECTIVE MEANY
Cute nanny.

SEAN
No. She's a friend of my wife's. She's
been helping me out.

Meany nods. He clocks the open BOTTLE OF WHITE WINE on table,
the lit candles and fresh flowers. Meany smiles.

DETECTIVE MEANY
Maybe she can help out around *my* house,
too.

59

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

59

Miles and Nicky sit on the edge of the bed munching rolls and
watching SpongeBob.

STEPHANIE
(anxious)
Eat over the napkin. Try not to crumb.

The boys ignore her and keep eating sloppily. Stephanie's
curiosity gets the best of her. She creeps out onto ...

60

THE SECOND FLOOR LANDING

60

She hovers in the shadows, trying to make out their VOICES.

DETECTIVE MEANY
The manifests from American Airlines say
she wasn't on any flight to Miami.

SEAN
Bloody hell.

DETECTIVE MEANY
But she did rent a White Kia from Budget.
She paid in cash for a two-day rental.
People usually pay cash for one reason.

SEAN
You're saying she's having an affair?

Stephanie leans so far forward she knocks into the railing.

DETECTIVE MEANY
I can't say that with any confidence.

SEAN
Then don't say it. I'm sure you'll be
able to track that Kia.

DETECTIVE MEANY

We're working on it. I have toll reports coming in from across the country, assuming she didn't swap out the plates. I'd like to send a description of your wife to every precinct in the Tri-State area. Any distinguishing features?

SEAN

Yes. She's drop dead gorgeous.

Stephanie feels a pinch of envy.

DETECTIVE MEANY

Any birth marks? Tattoos?

SEAN

No. Wait. Actually, yes. She has a tattoo on her wrist. A bracelet of barbed wire.
(off of Meany's look)
More judgement? Look, Emily did things like that. Crazy, impulsive things. It's part of what made her the most exciting woman I've ever known.

His voice trails off, forlorn. Stephanie can study him from this angle and she feels his loss. But she also feels a pang of jealousy. She shakes it off.

DETECTIVE MEANY

Well, you're on a roller coaster now.
(with another smile)
Tell your wife's friend I said goodbye.

61

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

61

Stephanie washes the dishes post-dinner in silence. Sean comes in and pours himself the last of the wine.

SEAN

You don't have to do this. You're a saint.

STEPHANIE

I'm *not* a saint. I just like to keep my hands busy.

SEAN

Where was she going in that damn Kia? She'd never be caught dead in a car like that. Ugh, bad choice of words.

STEPHANIE

She's not dead. I know she's not.

SEAN

Then she's having one hell of an affair. Or maybe she just had to get away from me.

STEPHANIE

Sean, you are a wonderful, caring, intelligent man. And Emily loves you dearly. Don't you ever undersell yourself like that again. I won't stand for it.

Sean stares at her, then smiles sadly. Nods. She smiles.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Good. I'm going to go home. It's "Flags of the World" day tomorrow at school and I haven't even started on Asia.

Stephanie moves to leave. As she passes Sean at the table, he reaches out and takes her wrist. She gasps and stops short, looking him in the eye. There's genuine longing in his gaze. He quickly lets go of her wrist apologetically.

SEAN

Sorry. It's just ... no. I don't mean sorry. I mean thank you. For being such a good friend, Stephanie. Not just to Emily, but to me as well.

STEPHANIE

Of course. I'm a problem-solver. I just wish I could do more.

SEAN

You're doing plenty. And you are a saint.

62 **I/E. STEPHANIE'S VOLVO (MOVING) - DAY** 62

Stephanie drives home, chewing her bottom lip, completely conflicted. Miles is asleep in his car seat in the back seat.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)

That's where we are today, moms ...

63 **INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY** 63

We catch up to the VLOG from the very beginning.

STEPHANIE

So, we're keeping our heads high and not jumping to conclusions. We're soldiering on with zucchini cookies. But if you want to help, Emily was driving a WHITE KIA rented at the Budget at La Guardia on April 24th. I did some digging and found that the license plate was New York F as in Frieda, N as in Nicky, Z as in Zucchini, 1447. If any of you moms happen to see it, I've got a basketful of rosemary shampoo bars with your name on them.

64 **INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY** 64

Stephanie wears a robe and a towel turban over her wet hair, Nefertiti-style. She opens her laptop, checking her e-mail. We HEAR the voice of one of her MOMS as Stephanie reads.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

"Dear Stephanie, I'm writing from Standish, Michigan, with a possible Emily sighting. I was in a gas station off the 75 when I saw a White Kia rental you described. The woman was wearing a baseball cap and glasses, so I didn't get a good look, but I managed to match the license plate number. I hope this helps.

(MORE)

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And do you have a sugar-free Christmas
 cake recipe? I wou--"

Stephanie closes her laptop and makes a call.

STEPHANIE
 I'd like to speak to Detective Meany.

65

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

65

The boys play in the next room. Sean pours a drink: there's
 an even deeper level of anxiety on him. Stephanie sips tea.

STEPHANIE
 Meany sent all the info to local
 authorities in Michigan. Did Emily ever
 mention Michigan? Maybe a friend from
 college?

SEAN
 As far as I knew, Emily never had any
 real friends. Not before you.

STEPHANIE
 Well, that's ... I'm flattered. But how
 is that possible?

SEAN
 She's a workaholic.

Sean's cell phone RINGS. Sees the number and answers quickly.

SEAN (CONT'D)
 Hello? Tell me you found her ...
 (to Stephanie)
 Did Emily have a Celine handbag?

STEPHANIE
 (with dread)
 The Nano Tote.

SEAN (ON PHONE)
 Yes, that's hers. A lake? I have no idea.
 I'll head there now.
 (hangs up)
 They found the rental car in Michigan.

Stephanie grabs Sean's hand, squeezing it.

SEAN (CONT'D)
 I have to go or I'm going to go crazy.
 Can you do me a favor and -

STEPHANIE
 Done. I'll take care of Nicky. Go.

66

ON VIDEO VLOG - KITCHEN - DAY

66

STEPHANIE
 Hi, Moms. Stephanie here. I can see we
 have a *flood* of new viewers today, so
 welcome. But I'm sorry, this is probably
 not the best entry to start with.

67 **EXT. WITCH LAKE (MICHIGAN) - DAY** 67

A TOW TRUCK tows a mud-splashed WHITE KIA down the dirt road.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
Those of you who've been following the
last few weeks, you know that my best
friend went missing.

68 **EXT. LAKESIDE - MICHIGAN WOODS - DAY** 68

A CSI PHOTOGRAPHER takes a shot of FOOTPRINTS on a dirt path.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
So many of you wrote to me with your tips
or hunches.

69 **INT. WITCH LAKE - CRAMPED SPACE - DAY** 69

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATORS tag and bag various personal items
strewn about a cabin lined with rusty bunk beds.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
Special thanks to Leanne Lippens, whose
helpful tip led to a major break in the
case.

A GLOVED CSI HAND empties Emily's handbag of its contents:
CELL PHONE. LIP GLOSS. SUNGLASSES. LEGO MAN HOLDING A SWORD.

70 **EXT. MICHIGAN LAKE FRONT - DAY** 70

LOCAL POLICE OFFICERS loll around at the bank, casually
chatting or on cell phones as an exhausted Sean stands at the
water's edge, arms folded, his face as pale as he watches the
lake.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
I have somber news ...

DIVERS in tanks and goggles drag the bottom. Faint bubbles
pepper the surface in spots. One of the divers surfaces and
waves his hand, pointing below. He found something.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
Emily was found.

Sean's face falls as the truth hits him hard.

The Diver resurfaces with a BODY under his arm. The pale
corpse of a woman, her loose hair hiding her face like
seaweed. He swims toward the shore, tugging her along.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
Not alive, I'm afraid.

The police move in to meet him and take the body onto the
land. Emily's face is bloated, her eyes wide open, her lips
parted as if taking her last breath.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
My friend, my best friend ... is dead.

Sean reaches for her lifeless hand with the barbed wire tattoo. And his mother's sapphire and diamond WEDDING RING. Sean breaks down sobbing.

71

INT. MORTUARY - DAY

71

Sean is a wreck as he speaks to the MORTICIAN. Stephanie hangs back a few feet, supportive.

MORTICIAN

An open casket helps give the loved ones a sense of closure.

SEAN

I ... God - I have to think for a second.

Sean heads out of the mortuary, leaving Stephanie alone with the MORTICIAN. They stand together in silence.

MORTICIAN

Let him know we have the best embalmer. Usually with drowning victims, the skin is too fragile for an open casket. But not us. We can give her a glow.

STEPHANIE

(uncomfortable)

She was very private. And very particular about how she looked.

MORTICIAN

Oh, we only use the best brands of make-up. And fillers. You'll never even know about her missing tooth.

STEPHANIE

Missing tooth?

MORTICIAN

Yes, the right front one.

STEPHANIE

(baffled)

Did she lose it when she died?

MORTICIAN

Had to be an old injury. The bone was growing over it. But we'll cover it. Think of us as life's final fashion runway.

72

EXT. WARFIELD CEMETERY - DAY

72

EMILY'S CASKET is lowered into a grave as a PRIEST delivers a sermon. Darren, Sona, Stacy, other parents, Dennis Nylon, Emily's co-workers, they're all there.

Sean and Stephanie stand a safe distance apart. Nicky wears a navy blue suit and a numb countenance as the pulley ropes are removed and the casket settles in. Stephanie glances at Sean, whose eyes are red. Puts her hand on his arm.

We see Dennis Nylon staring at Stephanie intently, thinking. Stephanie looks over at him and he looks back at the priest before Stephanie sees he was watching.

73

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAY

73

Emily's funeral reception. People mill around. Stephanie sets food out on the buffet table. Darren sets his homemade brownies out on a crystal platter next to her. He and Stephanie trade a look and a sad smile.

STEPHANIE
Are those ...?

DARREN
They are. From your "Last Minute Brownies" entry.

STEPHANIE
I can't believe you watch my vlog.

DARREN
Well, to be honest, I was making fun of you at first. But then there were some helpful tips in there - especially when Lulu had that rash. *Apple Cider Vinegar*. Who knew?

Stephanie gives him a sad smile as Sona walks up.

DARREN (CONT'D)
You're a saint to help out her family.

STEPHANIE
I'm not a saint. Emily was my friend. She'd do the same thing for me.

SONA
If you or Sean ever need me to watch Miles or Nicky any time, it's nothing.

STEPHANIE
Thanks, Sona.

74

EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

74

Nicky rips branches off a tree one by one. Angry and frustrated, he needs a release. Miles approaches Nicky from behind, also in his suit.

MILES
Nicky. You don't need to worry. Your Mom's in heaven. With my Dad and Uncle Chris.

NICKY
No, she's not. She's in the ground. She's never coming back.

MILES
She's in heaven now -

NICKY (CONT'D)
Shut up!

Nicky flies at Miles and shoves him to the ground.

MILES
OWWWW! Stop!!!

Nicky straddles Miles and smacks him across the face, open-palmed, left then right then left then right until Miles' nose starts gushing blood.

75

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

75

Stephanie notices the scuffle out the window and races --

OUT TO THE BACKYARD

SEAN
(racing over)
What the hell are you doing!?

Sean yanks Nicky off Miles and holds him back.

SEAN (CONT'D)
Calm down.

Stephanie moves to Miles and helps him up off the ground, kneeling to look at his nose. Nicky points at Stephanie.

NICKY
She made this happen. She made my mom die!

Stephanie feels dizzy. She glances around and notices Darren watching all this from the kitchen window.

SEAN
Oh, Jesus, Nicky - that's crazy.

NICKY
She's trying to be my *new* mom.

STEPHANIE
I'm not trying to be your new mom, sweetie.

NICKY
You're trying to be *everybody's* Mom. But you're not mine!

SEAN
Nicky, *stop*. I know you're upset, but -

NICKY (CONT'D)
I want my mom!

SEAN
I know you do, but you need to calm down.

Sean struggles to hold onto Nicky who kicks wildly.

NICKY
Mom was right. You're a loser!

Sean hurls Nicky on the ground, snapping. Stephanie gasps.

SEAN
Is that what your mother said? Is that when she was drunk at two in the afternoon? I'm doing the best I can!

STEPHANIE
Sean, shhh. He's a little boy.

All at once, Sean realizes what he's done.

SEAN
Oh my God, what am I doing? What have I
done? Nicky ... Jesus.

Nicky hurls himself on the ground and hides his face with his hands. Sean touches his arm. Nicky swats him away.

NICKY
Get away from me!

Sean looks up at Stephanie, completely lost. Some of the guests watch from a distance.

SEAN
What do I do?

STEPHANIE
Let's everybody take a deep centering
breath. We're going to do one thing at a
time. Let me talk to Nicky; and Sean, you
get some ice for Miles' nose. He's got a
good little shiner coming.

Sean puts his hand on Miles' shoulder, walking him inside. Stephanie sits down on the grass next to Nicky.

NICKY
I don't want to talk to you.

STEPHANIE
Well, you're not my favorite dinner date
either, Mister. But I think you should
know everything you're feeling right now
is normal. You can act up all you want -
but it won't change what I know.

NICKY
(suspicious)
What do you know?

STEPHANIE
That you're a good kid.

From a distance, SEAN turns to see Stephanie calmly sitting across from Nicky, like a snake-charmer. He stares sadly.

STEPHANIE (FROM A DISTANCE) (CONT'D)
So let's sit here and not talk. Let's
just sit here and feel lousy and watch
the grass grow. Sometimes you just need
to feel what you're feeling. Until it
gets better. Time is the only medicine.

Stephanie carries a sleeping, spent Nicky upstairs INTO HIS ROOM. She lays him on his bunk. Miles is asleep in the upper bunk. Stephanie kisses Nicky's forehead and slips out ...

INTO THE HALLWAY

Sean is standing silhouetted against the light from the master bedroom. His eyes bloodshot, tear-filled. She moves to him and hugs him.

STEPHANIE

You got to break some eggs sometimes.
Don't be hard on yourself. These are the
sorts of things nobody ever gets right.

SEAN

You do. You always do.

He sinks into her. This feels all too familiar and dangerous. Her heart pounds against his. Sean can feel it too. His need for her is turning physical. His hands slide down, resting on the small of her back.

STEPHANIE

Sean, I don't know ...

SEAN

I'll stop. I'll stop if you're sure you
want me to.

His hands move lower ... to her ass. She inhales sharply but doesn't stop him. His hand slides between her legs. It's been a long time. His fingers move rhythmically. Her breathing picks up. He hikes up her black dress, easing down her underpants. She grabs his wrist to stop him.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Right, you're right. We shouldn't.

She stares in his eyes. Her heart pounding loud in her ears, she then kisses him hungrily. They attack each other ...

77

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM

77

Sean hurls her on the bed and climbs on top of her. As she reaches down to unbuckle his belt, he grabs her wrists and pins them to the bed. She VISUALIZES --

SEAN PINNING EMILY'S WRISTS TO THE BED THE EXACT SAME WAY.

Stephanie tries to shake off the image as he kisses down her body to between her legs. She writhes in brutal ecstasy as he goes down on her, pinning her hands down.

STEPHANIE

Oh my god ... oh my god ... no ...

She fights it but it's too late. Her body arches and twitches with a groan of intense pleasure. Yells in ecstasy.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Ohhh, SUGAR-FREE CHRISTMAS CAKE!

78

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

78

Stephanie and Sean lie in bed next to each other. Staring at the ceiling in stunned disbelief. After several beats ...

STEPHANIE
Well, I think it was a lovely service.
Very tasteful.

SEAN
Yes, it was.

They keep staring up at the ceiling ...

STEPHANIE (PRE-LAP)
Hi Moms. Stephanie here. In a time of so
much grief, it's important to find that
silver lining.

79 **INT. WARFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY** 79

The SECOND-GRADERS are dressed in yellow T-shirts with hand
painted suns. They sing "It's a Sunshine Day" while
performing it in sign language. Ms. Kerry leads in front.

SECOND GRADERS
"Everybody's laughing/It's a sunshine
day/Everybody's singing/It's a sunshine
day ..."

The parents crowd the auditorium shooting videos on iPhones.
Stephanie is in her photo vest, equipped with a telephoto
lens; but she's lost some of her overbearing quality.

She steals glances at Sean. He glances back, then feels
Darren's eyes on him. Stephanie smiles until her eyes fall on
Nicky. He's singing with all his heart. Her smile falls,
thinking of Emily.

80 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY** 80

Miles and Nicky watch Sponge Bob and laugh hysterically.

Stephanie enters with a tray of TEMPEH. With his eyes on her,
Nicky takes one off the tray, eating it, swallowing with
difficulty ... then giving her a small smile.

It's a small gesture, but it means the world to both.

81 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY** 81

Sean's jogging shorts hang around his ankles. Stephanie's
perched on the rumbling washing machine while Sean has sex
with her. She folds her ankles behind him, pulling him in.

SEAN
Don't do that. You're gonna make me come.

STEPHANIE
Fair is fair.

SEAN
(suddenly climaxing)
Ohhh, sugar-free Christmas cake!

He slumps against her, then gives her a playful smile.

STEPHANIE
 (with a laugh)
 Oh god. You're terrible.

She playfully swats the back of his head. He winks and kisses her shoulder. She smiles to herself, feeling powerful. Happy.

82

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

82

Pandora plays on Stephanie's iPhone. Beyonce's "GIRLS (RUN THE WORLD)." Stephanie dances as she washes some dishes.

STEPHANIE
 Girls! We run this mother / Girls! We run
 this mother / Girls! We run this mother -

Her back is turned when Sean opens the kitchen door, home from work. He watches her jiving. Cracks a smile. She feels him there and turns, mortified.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
 Oh my God. It was --
 (grabs phone; stops it)
 I like to listen to hip hop when I cook.
 How embarrassing.

SEAN
 No, keep it on. I like when you "twerk."

STEPHANIE
 Oh lord. Hey, can I make you a drink?
 Emily taught me how to make a Duke's
 martini.

A flash of pain crosses Sean's face at the mention of Emily.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
 Gosh, that was really insensitive of me.

SEAN
 No, it's fine. And I'd love one.

Stephanie opens the freezer and takes out Emily's gin and glass. Stares at it, then starts to make the martini.

STEPHANIE
 Sean ... how did she lose her tooth?

SEAN
 What?

STEPHANIE
 Emily. The mortician said that she was
 missing her front tooth. She sure had a
 good falsie. I had no idea.

SEAN
 I wasn't aware she had a fake tooth.

STEPHANIE
 Is that something she'd hide from you?

SEAN

She hid everything from me. Sometimes I'm amazed I know as much about her as I do.

Stephanie sees his pain as he looks off distantly. Softens.

STEPHANIE

I made you guys cashew chicken with stir-fry veggies. It's almost ready. Miles and I will get out of your hair.

SEAN

I'd rather the two of you stay for dinner. My hair can take it.

Stephanie turns and smiles. Sean smiles back hopefully.

STEPHANIE

I was really hoping you'd say that.

83 **EXT. WARFIELD, CT - STREETS - DAY** 83

A beautiful morning in Warfield. The FLIERS OF EMILY, torn and weathered, flapping sadly in the wake of passing cars.

84 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY** 84

Stephanie stands in the center of Emily's living room, taking it all in. It's impressive. She sees the Sonos remote. She runs her finger along it, remembering Emily. Then she pushes the "on" button. A 60s FRENCH POP SONG begins to play.

Emily listens sadly, then starts to enjoy the song. She does a little turn and ends up face to face with THE NUDE PAINTING OF EMILY, which stares back at her. Looking caught, Stephanie thinks for a second, then takes down the painting.

85 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY** 85

Sunlight pours into the ultra hip modern bedroom as the FRENCH POP SONG continues playing from the ceiling speakers. Stephanie slips off her worn moccasins and tiptoes, carrying the painting to -

EMILY'S CLOSET

Stephanie looks with some trepidation at the array of slick designer clothes. Then, with a look of determination, she steps in for the first time as if into a tomb. She rests the PAINTING against the wall. She's so cautious it's as if she's certain it's haunted. She pivots and she's face to face with -

- a Dolce & Gabbana fitted silk dress.

She holds it up to herself in the mirror. She can't believe she's doing this. She pauses, reverent, respectful. But suddenly, excitement gets the better of her and she strips down to her bra and panties, unzips the dress, and steps into it. She tries to tug up the zipper but she can't get it up. Frustrated, she yanks the zipper up by force.

She studies her reflection in the mirror, liking what she sees. She stands on tiptoe, simulating high heels.

Stephanie moves to the closet where the designer shoes are kept in their boxes: Prada, Jimmy Choo, YSL. She makes an Emily face and strikes poses in the mirror in time with the French song.

STEPHANIE
(channeling Emily)
"One's not enough, three's too many,
two's just right. Just like tits."

She smiles. The DOORBELL RINGS. Stephanie panics. She desperately tries to unzip the dress. Not happening.

Stephanie races to the window and looks down. Sees a SEDAN parked out front and Detective Meany at the front door. She GASPS as HE LOOKS UP AND SEES HER.

DETECTIVE MEANY
Ms. Smothers? Can I talk to you?

STEPHANIE
(forced casual)
Sure thing! Coming right down.
(to herself)
Shit, shit, shit. Oopsy.

86

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAY

86

Trapped in the dress, Stephanie races downstairs, barefoot, still tugging at the zipper. She dives at the Sonos remote, turns it off and yanks open the door.

STEPHANIE
Hi! Sorry! I was just - I left something here and Sean gave me the key. For when I bring Nicky home. We have an *arrangement*. A deal! I meant a very domestic deal.

DETECTIVE MEANY
You're not under arrest, Ms. Smothers.

STEPHANIE
Ha! Ha ha. Well, I should *hope* not.
(suddenly serious)
Sean's not home.

DETECTIVE MEANY
I was hoping to speak to you, actually. I went by your house and the school. Some of the moms said you might be here.

STEPHANIE
Oh, really. Who? It was Stacy, wasn't it?

DETECTIVE MEANY
Can I come in?

STEPHANIE
Of course. *Entre vous*. Ha ha.

Stephanie clears the door, sweating, as Meany enters.

DETECTIVE MEANY
I had a few follow-up questions.

STEPHANIE

Well, I have more than a few myself.

Stephanie has a hard time sitting in the *extremely tight* dress, but she manages an awkward pose on the divan.

DETECTIVE MEANY

You said Emily was your best friend.

STEPHANIE

She is. Was. It's hard to get used to -

DETECTIVE MEANY

Was she depressed?

STEPHANIE

No. She had it all: the job, the house -

DETECTIVE MEANY

The husband.

STEPHANIE

I was getting there.

DETECTIVE MEANY

The neighbors say they fought a lot.

STEPHANIE

Oh, they had their issues. But they loved each other. Intensely.

DETECTIVE MEANY

Too intensely?

STEPHANIE

I think the exact right amount of "intensely."

DETECTIVE MEANY

What "issues" did they have?

STEPHANIE

Normal issues. They were stressed out about money. Emily wanted to slow down.

Detective Meany produces a DOCUMENT.

DETECTIVE MEANY

She slowed down all right. Here's the autopsy report.

(reading)

"Severe liver damage suggesting heavy use of alcohol. Track marks along her arms and between her toes." Were you aware of her heroin use?

Stephanie's eyes are as wide as a deer in the headlights.

STEPHANIE

Uh, I ... *no*. I really don't believe that. She liked very strong martinis, b--

DETECTIVE MEANY

They found the needle.

STEPHANIE
 (reeling)
 But -- how could she keep that a secret?
 Not just from me. From Sean ...

DETECTIVE MEANY
 You seem to know Sean pretty well.

STEPHANIE
 (composing herself)
 I've gotten to know him over the last few
 weeks -- as friends helping each other
 through a crisis.

DETECTIVE MEANY
 Uh huh. I'm guessing you've never dealt
 with law enforcement before.

87 **INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 87

A YOUNGER STEPHANIE opens the door to TWO POLICEMAN with grave expressions. Without sound, they begin telling her about the accident with her husband and brother.

88 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT** 88

Stephanie regains her composure.

STEPHANIE
 Not really, no.

DETECTIVE MEANY
 Then I'll simplify this. Did Emily know
 you were banging her husband?

Stephanie struggles to keep her wits.

STEPHANIE
 That's a very rude way to put it.
 (a deep breath)
 The answer is *no*. Because it started
 after she died. People grieve in very
 different ways. We've been discreet;
 we've been respectful of her memory.
 No one knows. Not a single person in
 Warfield, not even the children.

He stares at her a moment with a half-smile, toying with her. Meany finally leans in, going for the knockout.

DETECTIVE MEANY
 Were you aware that Sean took out an
 extra four million dollar life insurance
 policy on Emily before she disappeared?

Stephanie goes ash white.

STEPHANIE
 No, I ... I didn't know that.
 (mocking)
 So, what are you saying? Sean hired a
 "hitman"? That he *rubbed her out*?

DETECTIVE MEANY
 I never said that. But you just did.

STEPHANIE

Look, I don't appreciate your attitude, quite frankly, Mr. Meany. If you want to grill anybody, you should talk to Emily's boss, Dennis Nylon. He couldn't be more suspicious.

DETECTIVE MEANY

That's interesting because he contacted us and said that he thought you may know more about all this than you're letting on.

(off her shocked look)

As long as you're being honest with me, Ms. Smothers, you've got nothing to worry about. I'm just following bread crumbs, wherever they lead.

Meany stands up, leaving Stephanie in her confounded state.

DETECTIVE MEANY (CONT'D)

I'm done for now. Thank you for your time. Nice dress, by the way. Her clothes look good on you.

As he heads for the door, Stephanie erupts:

STEPHANIE

Your theory doesn't hold water. How does it explain the fake plane ticket? The rental car? Why drive to a Summer Camp in Michigan to do heroin? There's plenty of good heroin right here in Connecticut! ... I'm told.

DETECTIVE MEANY

I'll be in touch. Enjoy the new house.

As he heads out the door, she calls after him.

STEPHANIE

Those are the worst bread crumbs ever. You couldn't fill a *Caesar salad* with them.

As he vanishes, Stephanie is deep in thought, confused, disgusted and finally ... determined. FRENCH POP KICKS IN.

89 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY**

89

With kitchen shears, Stephanie cuts the Dolce dress up the front and rips it off herself like Hulk. RRRRIIIIP!!!

90 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - HOME OFFICE - DAY**

90

Stephanie goes through drawers, searching through Emily's files and receipts, finding nothing much of interest. Pulls out a large manila envelop that's already been opened from a pile. Written on the envelope is "EM - CAN YOU SIGN THESE? - INSURANCE GUY NEEDS THEM ASAP - THANKS! S." She looks inside the envelope but it's empty. She looks a bit freaked.

FROM OUTSIDE, WE SEE STEPHANIE THROUGH THE OFFICE WINDOW. IS THIS SOMEONE'S POV OR NOT? WE ARE UNSURE.

Stephanie stares at the writing on the envelope, thinking. Suddenly, BANG! Stephanie GASPS as something hits the window. Heart pounding, she stands and looks out the window.

STEPHANIE'S POV: A BIRD is on the ground, dazed from hitting the window. It flops around a bit, recovers and flies off.

Stephanie catches her breath, recovering from the shock. Then she looks at the writing on the envelope again, puts it back in the pile and heads for the door.

91 **EXT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE - DAY** 91

Happy, busy looking COEDS cross the paths en route to classes. Stephanie moves across the campus, deep in thought.

92 **EXT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE - ENGLISH DEPT. - DAY** 92

As Stephanie rounds the corner, she sees Sean with a very attractive FEMALE T.A -- cool clothes, highlighted blonde hair. A younger version of Emily. Sean and the girl walk out, deep in flirty conversation. The girl laughs at a joke he makes and then touches his arm gently. They hug.

Stephanie watches with a pit in her stomach.

93 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY** 93

All seated around the table, Stephanie, Sean, Miles and Nicky eat in silence. Stephanie looks tense, pre-occupied.

MILES

Mom, Nicky's glass isn't on the coaster.

STEPHANIE

What? Oh, Nicky, put Mr. Glass on Mr. Coaster please.

Nicky rolls his eyes and moves his glass onto the coaster as he crunches on his salad, confused.

NICKY

Are these amino acids in this salad?

STEPHANIE

Those are just bread crumbs.

Determined, he keeps crunching. Stephanie hesitates, then ...

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

(to Sean)

So how was work today?

SEAN

Grim. I had to explain the difference between "your" possessive and "you're" apostrophe R-E to a college junior. Remarkable. That's where my writing time has gone. To proofreading illiterates.

STEPHANIE

I can see how that might ... drive a man over the edge.

She's doing everything she can to contain her roiling soul.

SEAN
And what did you guys learn in school today? Other than unmerited self-esteem.

NICKY
(mouth full)
I saw my Mom.

The dinner table goes silent. Sean and Stephanie meet eyes, then look back at the boy, crunching on croutons.

SEAN
I understand, buddy. We sometimes think we see people we miss ... even if they're gone.

NICKY
(crunching loudly)
No, I saw her.

Stephanie is holding her breath. The crunching is maddening, inescapable, like a tell-tale heart.

NICKY (CONT'D)
She was right outside the fence by the kickball yard. At recess.

SEAN
Lots of people *look* like other people ...

NICKY
Nobody looks like Mom.

He finally looks up at a stunned Sean and Stephanie as the crunching stops and he slurps his drink.

NICKY (CONT'D)
She told me say hi to Stephanie.

Stephanie drops her knife onto her plate with a clank.

SEAN
Nicky, this isn't healthy.

NICKY
Miles saw her too. Right, Miles?

Miles looks scared to be drawn into this.

MILES
I think I did, but ... I don't know. I was playing tetherball.

STEPHANIE
Did you two hatch this up? Is this some game you're playing? Like when you smash everything with trucks. You know what we say about lying?

NICKY
I'm not lying! Fuck you, I saw her!

SEAN

Hey!

Nicky leaves the table and races upstairs. The other three sit at the table in pained silence.

94 **EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - TRASH AREA - DUSK** 94

A preoccupied Stephanie is taking out the trash after dinner. Suddenly, THERE'S MOVEMENT in the bushes.

STEPHANIE

Hello? Is somebody there?

She moves forward cautiously when suddenly, WHOOSH! A BIRD bursts out of the bushes and flaps past her. Stephanie GASPS, then hustles back inside the house, freaked.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

AGH! STUPID BIRDS!

95 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - NICKY'S BEDROOM - DUSK** 95

Both in their pajamas, Nicky and Miles clamber into their bunk beds. Stephanie kisses Miles good night.

MILES

'Night, Mom.

STEPHANIE

'Night, Smooch.

Stephanie gets up and heads for the door.

NICKY

Don't I get a kiss good night?

Stephanie heads over to his bed.

STEPHANIE

Of course, you do. But you owe the oopsy jar a quarter for earlier.

Stephanie leans over Nicky and pecks him on the cheek. As she does, she smells something. Emily's perfume?

96 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LAUNDRY ROOM - DUSK** 96

Preoccupied, Stephanie checks the pockets of the boys' clothes before she throws them into the washer. She pauses at Nicky's school clothes. Smells them. Emily's perfume again.

Then she turns inside-out the pockets from NICKY'S CORDUOYS to find: THE CHEVRON FRIENDSHIP BRACELET.

97 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK** 97

As Stephanie heads through the EXPOSED GLASS ROOMS, she grows nervous in the fishbowl.

98 **EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK**

98

For just a brief moment, we WATCH STEPHANIE from *outside* the glass house, from a distant, anonymous POV. Stephanie seems to sense someone behind the glass. She turns off the lights.

99 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DUSK**

99

Stephanie heads into the room. She pauses at the window for a moment. Sean comes up behind her and pulls her close.

SEAN

Let's get naked.

STEPHANIE

Sean, wait. We need to have a talk about Nicky's laundry.

SEAN

About his *laundry*? Can we please hit pause on the "Captain Mom" thing?

STEPHANIE

The *Captain Mom* thing?

SEAN

(sighs; knows he fucked up)
That's just what Emily used to call you. She was masking her own guilt. Because you're such a saint.

STEPHANIE

I'm NOT a saint. And *she* knew that. If anybody knew it, it was *her*!

Sean is confused by her demeanor.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I smell her, Sean. I smell her on Nicky. Her perfume ... it's like a ghost all over him, all over his corduroys.

SEAN

He probably got into the bottle in the medicine cabinet. He misses her. You're getting paranoid.

STEPHANIE

Am I? Because I also found *this*.

She holds out the CHEVRON FRIENDSHIP BRACELET.

SEAN

What is that?

STEPHANIE

A friendship bracelet I made for Emily.

SEAN

I hate to say it but she wouldn't have kept that. She hated that stuff. I'm sure she gave it to him right after you gave it to her.

STEPHANIE

(deflating)

Nicky and I were getting so close, but ... now the way he's talking, Sean, doesn't it worry you? Wouldn't you think we should get him a psychologist? They can do a lot with play therapy: they have these plastic figures in a sandbox. I mean, he'll smash all of them, but -

SEAN

Let's let it rest for tonight.

STEPHANIE

Or maybe he's telling the truth.

SEAN

Stephanie, you saw her with your own eyes. In her *coffin*.

STEPHANIE

There was something ... off.

SEAN

She was dead. They found her at the bottom of a lake. You saw her crazy tattoo - and the ring she stole from my mother.

STEPHANIE

She said your mother wanted her to have that ring. She said she *insisted*.

Sean sits on the bed. He laughs darkly and shakes his head.

SEAN

God. Is that what she told you? That was the ring my father gave my mother. It's the only piece of jewelry she ever owned. My whole life, I never saw her take it off. I took Emily to England to meet my mum after we eloped. That weekend, the ring went missing. My mother was frantic. We looked everywhere. I went down to the basement to tear apart the plumbing. We never found it. My mother was devastated. So, we flew back to New York ...

100

INT. TRANSATLANTIC FLIGHT (MOVING) - DAY (FLASHBACK)

100

Emily and Sean sit side by side on the plane ride home from England. They're six years younger, radiant in love.

EMILY

Guess what I found?

Emily reaches in her purse and pulls out the SAPPHIRE AND DIAMOND RING, showing it to him.

SEAN

Oh, thank god. Well done, my little Sherlock! Mum will be so relieved.

EMILY

Oh, Mum's not getting this. She'll take it to the grave. What a waste.

SEAN

Excuse me. Not amusing, my darling.

EMILY

Not joking, my darling. I took it and I have no intention of giving it back.

SEAN

Of course you'll give it back. I'll tell Mum it dropped in your purse by accident, that you didn't find it until now.

EMILY

If you tell your mother that I found it, I'll tell her I stole it. What do you think will be worse for her? Thinking she lost her ring or knowing that her son married a thief?

Sean is stunned by her cold cruelty. Emily slips off her modest ENGAGEMENT RING and dons Sean's mother's antique.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Meet me in the bathroom in twenty seconds. Knock twice.

Emily gets up and disappears up the aisle into the BATHROOM STALL, shutting the door. Sean stares after her, his world spinning on its axis. He married a monster.

He makes a decision, gets up and heads to the bathroom door. Knocks twice. The door opens. He disappears inside.

101 **INT. AIRPLANE BATHROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 101

We watch Emily and Sean's faces as they make love in the tight quarters. Sean stares at her as she stares back at him intensely, passionately. The theft was her aphrodisiac.

SEAN (V.O.)

Nicky was born nine months later.

102 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - RESUMING** 102

Sean and Stephanie hold each other's gaze.

STEPHANIE

How could you stay with her?

SEAN

She fascinated me. She was the one woman I could never figure out. And as an arrogant young writer, that's all that mattered to me at the time. She was my mystery, but I was her *dream*. I could never live up to what she wanted from me. I could never be *myself*.

Stephanie just stares back at him, listening.

SEAN (CONT'D)

And I was always looking over my shoulder. I never slept well. With you, it's different. I sleep like a log.

STEPHANIE

That's what every woman wants to hear.

SEAN

(smiles sweetly)

You know what I'm saying. You see me. You understand me. You've *rebuilt* me, Stephanie. I even started writing again, part of a first chapter.

STEPHANIE

You did? *That's* ... wonderful.

SEAN

You took a broken man and you put him back together. I'm a better person, a better *father*. I've never known a woman with your compassion and your strength.

Stephanie swallows hard, touched by his words. She nods.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Move in with me.

STEPHANIE

What? Sean. It's too soon. What will people think?

SEAN

They already think it. Why do we have to lie? I'm tired of pretending, I want to be this man, the man I am with you.

He strokes her cheek. She pulls back. Stiffens. Then ...

STEPHANIE

I don't do threesomes. We should get that out in the open right now.

SEAN

What are you talking about?

STEPHANIE

Your *T.A.*? You and Emily had your little ... thing with her.

SEAN

Did Emily tell you that?
(off Stephanie's look)
Stephanie, listen to me. Emily was a pathological liar.

STEPHANIE

(steels herself)

Why did you take out a 4 million dollar insurance policy on her?

SEAN

(a beat; shakes his head)
 Good Lord, the cops have really done a number on you. It's *because* of you, Stephanie. When you told Emily you were living off your husband's insurance money, she realized that she and I both needed policies. For Nicky's sake. It was the most responsible thing we ever did. Thanks to you. Now is the interrogation over, Detective Smothers?
 (taking her hands)
 Move in with me. We can start a new wonderful life together. You and me and the boys. Please say yes.

Stephanie stares into his eyes. She so wants this all to be true that she can't resist. She nods and hugs him.

SEAN (CONT'D)

I love you, Stephanie Smothers.

STEPHANIE

(eyes wide, then)
 I love you, too.

MUSIC UP: MALA RODRIGUEZ'S "FUERZA" starts to play ...

103

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

103

AS THE SONG PLAYS, Stephanie takes Emily's clothes out of the closet and hangs them in garment bags. She replaces them with her own clothes, less chic, more flowy. Eileen Fisher. She raps along in Spanish, feeling empowered.

STEPHANIE

Me da igual que estes ciego, no soy tu
 parienta / Fácil la cabeza te rebientan /
 Se aplican sentencias en mi, andares
 influencias...

She enters STEPHANIE'S CLOSET -

- coming face-to-face with the NUDE PORTRAIT. Avoiding eyes with it, Stephanie pulls down the designer shoe boxes and lifts the lids to ogle the amazing shoes. Stephanie GASPS to find one of the Manólo Blahník's contains a LADY PISTOL.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

In shock, Stephanie picks up the gun awkwardly, pinching the barrel. She glances around the room, trying to figure out where to put it.

She eyes the night stand drawer alongside Emily's bed. She opens it to find a GIANT HOT PINK GLASS DILDO. Stephanie GASPS and returns the lady pistol to its original shoe box and shoves it back on a high shelf, completely weirded out.

104

EXT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - DAY

104

AS THE SONG CONTINUES, A "FOR SALE" sign goes up outside Stephanie's house with the name and info of a local realtor.

105 **INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - DAY** 105

AS THE SONG CONTINUES, Stephanie takes down all personal affects: Miles' art work and their family pictures as she continues to rap in Spanish:

STEPHANIE
Niñas con deporte lo hacen con elegancia
/ Yo, tengo presencia ...

106 **EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAY** 106

AS THE SONG CONTINUES, Stephanie carries boxes of stuff from a U-Haul truck to the front door. She's moving in with Sean.

107 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY** 107

AS THE SONG CONTINUES, Stephanie continues to rap as she unzips her dress down to her bra and underwear. She goes to the closet to hang it back up, so happy.

STEPHANIE
Disfruta quitale importancia / No te
quejes tanto, tos tuvimos infancia --

When she slides open the door, her rap stops WITH A GASP:

ALL OF EMILY'S CLOTHES ARE BACK IN THE CLOSET, HANGING EXACTLY AS THEY WERE BEFORE STEPHANIE REMOVED THEM.

STEPHANIE (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
Hi, Moms. Stephanie here. I want to start
with something a bit different today.

108 **ON VIDEO VLOG - KITCHEN** 108

Stephanie addresses the camera at night.

STEPHANIE
I try to avoid any talk of religion on this vlog, because I don't want to offend our non-denominational moms. But I do believe we live on after we die. In some fashion. So Emily ... if you're out there ... and you can hear me, I wanted to tell you a few things. We all miss you more than I can say. Nicky knows that you'll always be his mom. No one will ever replace you. But he no longer cries at night, like he used to. I know you wouldn't want that. And I want you to know that I am preparing the most nutritious food for him. I can never take your place. All I can do is love the people you used to love and try to make their lives better. Which is what I know you would want. Rest in peace, my dear best friend. Wherever you are.

109 **INT. STEPHANIE'S VOLVO (MOVING) - DAY** 109

Stephanie drives Miles and Nicky home from school. They each have a superhero figurine and crash them against each other. Stephanie glances in the rear view getting stressed out.

STEPHANIE
It's getting a little too rough back
there, guys.

NICKY
Ha! I just killed you!

MILES
I came back to life! Like your Mom!

STEPHANIE
Okay! The dolls go in your backpacks or
they're going in the trash! Now!

MILES
Mom! They're not dolls!

Nicky makes a face at Miles. He shoves his figure in his
backpack and remembers something, retrieving A SMALL SQUARE
BROWN ENVELOPE WITH THE NAME STEPHANIE WRITTEN NEATLY ON IT.

NICKY
Oh. My mom told me to give you this.

Stephanie looks in the rearview mirror at him, chilled, as he
holds out the envelop to her. She nearly drives through a RED
LIGHT and slams on the brake, the car spinning 180 as other
cars screech to a stop to avoid her. Both kids fly hard
against their car seat restraints. They sit in silence, then -

NICKY (CONT'D)
That was awesome.

OFF STEPHANIE, heaving for breath --

110 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAY** 110

The boys race upstairs. Stephanie listens to make sure
they're in their room, then she rushes into the kitchen.

111 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY** 111

Stephanie tears open the envelope. She pulls out a photo:

A SMILING STEPHANIE HOLDS MILES, AGE 2, IN HER ARMS. NEXT TO
HER IS HER HUSBAND DAVIS AND NEXT TO HIM IS HER BROTHER
CHRIS. A grease pencil has been used to circle Miles and
Chris with an ARROW connecting them. Under Stephanie, is an
ARROW and the words "BROTHER FUCKER."

Stephanie's heart pounds. The phone RINGS. Stephanie jumps
out of her skin. She stiffens and reaches for the phone. The
CALLER ID says UNKNOWN. As she answers ...

EMILY (O.S.)
You like the photo? You should be more
careful what you leave behind when you
try to sell a little gingerbread house.

STEPHANIE
Who is this?

EMILY (O.S.)
 I'm just calling to say *Thank you* for all that "nutritious food for Nicky," you Martha Steward wannabe. Oh, you're just squeaky clean, aren't you? You're not fooling me. You fucked your brother, Stephanie. I bet Miles isn't even your husband's kid. I thought I was warped, but you have me beat by a landslide. And what is this fetish with you? Fucking guys after funerals? Sick stuff, Dark Side.

STEPHANIE
 Tell me where you are.

EMILY (O.S.)
 Put up your hand. Don't tell me how many fingers you're holding up.

Stephanie makes the peace sign in the air.

EMILY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Two. Peace out.

Stephanie flinches. She moves to the window and squints out at the woods.

EMILY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Uh, uh, uh ... no cheating.

STEPHANIE
 Why are you doing this?

EMILY (O.S.)
 How do you know it's just me doing it?

Stephanie freezes when she hears this.

STEPHANIE
 What do you mean?

EMILY (O.S.)
 Kiss Sean for me. Four million times.

CLICK. The line goes dead. Stephanie can barely breathe.

112 **INT. STEPHANIE'S VOLVO (MOVING) - DAY** 112

Stephanie drives, gripping the steering wheel.

113 **EXT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE - ENGLISH DEPT. - DAY** 113

Stephanie heads into the red brick building.

114 **INT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE - SEAN'S OFFICE - DAY** 114

Sean corrects essays at his desk. Stephanie rushes in.

SEAN
 Hey. I didn't know you were coming in. I'd take you to lunch but I'm drowning.

STEPHANIE

Are you trying to "Diabolique" me?

SEAN

What are you talking about?

STEPHANIE

There's a French movie about this guy whose wife and mistress team up to kill him. But then it turns out that he's in cahoots with the mistress to give the wife a heart attack so they can collect her inheritance. But I don't have a four million dollar life insurance policy, so I can't figure out why you're trying to GIVE ME A HEART ATTACK!

Sean takes her by the shoulders and talks to her like a child having a tantrum, controlled and patronizing.

SEAN

Stephanie. You need to breathe. Nicky's getting to you. Emily is dead.

STEPHANIE

What about the missing tooth? And the heroin? How could she just happen to be on heroin? We have to tell the police.

SEAN

Tell them what? That the woman we buried came back to life? They're going to think you're insane. Do you really want to do that to Miles and Nicky?

(holding her)

We may never have all the answers. Emily was reckless. You know that as well as I do. She overdid it for some reason. It was just a stupid, tragic accident. You understand that, right?

STEPHANIE

She called me today.

He breaks from the embrace.

SEAN

What?

STEPHANIE

She called me, Sean. She knew things about me that I've never told anyone else. She's been watching us --

SEAN

This is madness. I have a friend in the Psychology department --

There's a fast KNOCK on the door as someone enters.

BETH (O.S.)

Hey, handsome. Got time for a visitor?

It's the pretty T.A. BETH (20). She stops, surprised to see Stephanie. Stephanie studies the two of them suspiciously.

BETH (CONT'D)
I didn't know you were in a meeting.

SEAN
Beth, this is Stephanie.

Beth shakes Stephanie's hand, both women chilly.

BETH
Nice to meet you.
(to Sean)
I was just gonna ask if you needed the smart board today. 'Cuz it's broken.

SEAN
I can live without it.

Beth nods, gives him a flirty smile and disappears.

SEAN (CONT'D)
Stephanie. Go home. Emily had a prescription of Xanax in the medicine cabinet. Take one. Take two.

STEPHANIE
Maybe she has some extra *heroin* lying around.

SEAN
This is all grief. Stages of grief.

Stephanie studies him, then takes a deep breath. Deflates.

STEPHANIE
You're right. I'm sorry, I - I think I'm just overwhelmed. Sorry to bother you at work and sorry about your... smart board.

She leaves quickly. Sean stares after her, then furrows his brow, sinking deep into thought.

115 **INT. EMILY'S CLOSET - DAY** 115

Stephanie stands in front of the NUDE PAINTING OF EMILY, studying the pretty, enigmatic face ...

EMILY (PRE-LAP)
Poor Stephanie. You just need someone to love you ...

116 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 116

The fireplace is blazing. Emily and Stephanie nurse martinis. Half-drunk, watching the fire.

STEPHANIE
I have you. All I need is a good friend.

EMILY
But don't you miss sex? Having a man throw you down and ravage you?

STEPHANIE
I barely remember what it's like.

EMILY
Why are you such a masochist? You could
have a man in your bed any time you want.

STEPHANIE
I had a man. And I ruined it.

EMILY
How? What the hell does that mean?

Stephanie instantly regrets letting that slip. Emily sees
this is something deeper. She softens.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Tell me --

STEPHANIE
No.

EMILY
I'm your best friend. If you can't tell
me, you can't tell anyone.

117 **EXT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 117

A BBQ is in full swing. Stephanie is talking to her brother
Chris, more like flirting. She wears a sundress and a
ponytail, looking beautiful. She laughs as they talk.

MILES (age 2) tugs her skirt. Chris grabs his "nephew" and
tosses him in the air, too high for safety. Miles laughs
wildly, but Stephanie's panicked.

There's a loud KNOCK on the window pane of the kitchen. Her
husband DAVIS (40) watches, enraged. Stephanie scoops up
Miles in her arms and heads ...

118 **INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 118

... into the kitchen. She can see Davis is furious. Stephanie
nuzzles Miles and sets him down in his high chair. Davis
watches as she brings Miles a plastic bowl of Cheerios.

DAVIS
I need the *truth*.

STEPHANIE
What are you talking about?

DAVIS
About Chris. And Miles.

STEPHANIE
He's my *brother*, Davis.

DAVIS
You don't act like it. Sometimes you look
more like lovers. Please, I need to know.
Is Miles mine or not?

STEPHANIE
Of course he is! My GOD, Davis, that's
ridiculous. Listen to yourself.

Davis moves to the sink and tosses the dish into it with a loud CRASH. He walks out the back screen door INTO THE YARD. Stephanie watches, her stomach in her throat. Then:

CRASH! Miles throws his bowl of Cheerios down on the floor and applauds with laughter! Stephanie looks out the window. She can't see Davis or Chris. Panicked, she races TO THE FRONT DOOR and throws it open. She sees Davis and Chris heading toward the driveway together.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

CHRIS
Steph, it's alright. Don't worry. We're going for a drive. We're going to have a little talk. Man-to-man. No problem.

Davis doesn't acknowledge her as he climbs in the car. She watches them pull away and waves, a pit in her stomach. The last time she'll see them again ...

119

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

119

Tears roll down Stephanie's cheeks to remember.

STEPHANIE
It's all my fault. They're both dead because of me ...

EMILY
Sometimes people do terrible things. For their own crazy reasons. That's on them.

STEPHANIE
I miss him ...

EMILY
Which one?

STEPHANIE
Both of them. I'm so lonely ... I think loneliness probably kills more people than cancer.

Emily strokes her hair. They hold each other's gaze. Faces close. Both a bit drunk. Emily leans in and plants a kiss on Stephanie's mouth. Stephanie melts into it. Parting her lips. Tongues intertwined. Stephanie wants this. Emily pulls back. Stephanie is mortified by her gaping desire, so obvious now. Emily is totally casual. It was just a moment for her.

EMILY
Wanna order a pizza?

STEPHANIE
Oh my god. I'm so embarrassed.

EMILY
Oh, Jesus, don't be. Not like I haven't kissed a girl before.

Stephanie rises, disoriented and hunts for her shoes.

STEPHANIE
I have to go.

EMILY
Take a taxi. You're too drunk to drive,
lightweight.

120 **INT. EMILY'S CLOSET - BACK TO PRESENT** 120

Stephanie picks up the painting, then notices the top of some writing hidden by the frame. She pops off the frame, revealing THE SIGNATURE OF THE ARTIST hidden under the matting: DIANA HYLAND. Stephanie gets a determined look.

121 **INT. STEPHANIE'S VOLVO (MOVING) - G.W. BRIDGE - DAY** 121

Stephanie drives to the city. The PAINTING rides shotgun.

122 **EXT. TRIBECA BUILDING - DAY** 122

The painting in hand, Stephanie rings the buzzer.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Who is it?

Stephanie holds up the PAINTING in front of a SECURITY CAMERA. She's all business now, a new Stephanie.

STEPHANIE
Diana Hyland? Did you paint this?

The door just buzzes - and Stephanie pushes her way in, trying to protect the painting from the weighted door.

123 **INT. ART STUDIO LOFT - DAY** 123

DIANA (50s) is a punky, severe artist with plaster in her hair and a Sex Pistols T-Shirt. She studies the old portrait as Stephanie's eyes look around nervously. REVEAL there are paintings of knives everywhere. ALSO, REAL KNIVES OF ALL SHAPES AND SIZES FILL THE STUDIO. There's bad energy in here.

DIANA
Where on earth did you find it?

STEPHANIE
I should start by giving you some
unfortunate news. Emily is dead.

DIANA
My condolences. Who the fuck is Emily?

STEPHANIE
The girl. In the painting.

Diana absorbs this a beat. Then ...

DIANA
Good.
(off Stephanie's look)
Her name wasn't Emily. It was Claudia.
Little cunt ruined my life.

STEPHANIE
 (thrown; regrouping)
 Wow, I ... What happened?

Diana gazes at the painting, nostalgic. She picks up a dangerous looking knife. Plays with it absentmindedly as she talks. Stephanie looks nervous, her eyes on the knife.

DIANA
 She was just this beautiful *sphinx*, a puzzle I could never figure out. And that just made her more fucking compelling.

STEPHANIE
 Yeah, I keep hearing that.

DIANA
 She lured me in at a gallery show. I'd started to sell some paintings. First time in my career there was a buzz. And there she was ... like a muse. Shit, I fell so hard. I had to have her.

As Diana talks, INTERCUT FLASHBACKS OF DIANA PAINTING A SEMI-NUDE EMILY IN HER STUDIO. Diana looks completely obsessed with Emily as Emily flirts back with her demurely.

DIANA (CONT'D)
 Suddenly, all I could paint was her. Every part of her. She just burrowed down into me, under my skin.

See a montage of DIANA'S PAINTINGS OF EMILY'S BODY PARTS: eroticized FEET, HANDS, THE ARCH OF A LOWER BACK. As Diana paints, Emily smiles coyly and turns her face away.

DIANA (CONT'D)
 Except she never wanted me to show her face. Refused. My new paintings started getting bad reviews. Critics were writing me off as some shitty erotic artist. They said I'd lost my soul.

An increasingly agitated Diana walks toward Stephanie, gesticulating with the knife at Stephanie as she speaks. Stephanie tries to play cool but backs up slowly.

DIANA (CONT'D)
 She stole it from me. She fucking stole my soul because she wouldn't let me show hers. But I didn't care. I gave her everything just to keep her happy, just to keep her here. But I could never reach her. She was like ...

STEPHANIE
 A ghost?

DIANA
 Right. A fucking expensive one. I paid off her debts. I paid for her college.

STEPHANIE
 Did you cover any dental work?

Diana stops. Seems to come back to reality.

DIANA

That's a weird fucking question. No, she had *perfect* teeth. Every part of her was perfect. Every fucking inch.

STEPHANIE

Any heroin use you ever saw?

DIANA

Smack? Ha. No way. Too vain. She was just a pretty little grifter. And she had plans. The day after she graduated, she disappeared ...

(points to the painting)

... along with that painting, the only one I ever did of her face. I was convinced it was the one that was going to put me back on the map but then it was gone and I couldn't recreate it. Not without her. I bottomed out. I wanted to kill her, to track her down and actually kill her. But the guilt of feeling that, well ... I almost offed *myself*. Funny - that painting would be worth a lot *more* if I had. Maybe that was her plan. She was always looking for a big score. All she wanted was to be rich.

Stephanie takes this in, her mind racing. Diana stares at the knife sadly.

DIANA (CONT'D)

Now all I do is paint fucking knives. I don't even know why. Nobody wants this shit except for biker bars and Satanists. Goddamned Claudia. She destroyed me. But I guess it's my fault for always falling for the fucked up ones. I never learn.

Diana looks at Stephanie and walks toward her, pointing the knife at her. She gets an obsessive look in her eyes.

DIANA (CONT'D)

I could paint *you*. You look sweet. Fresh. Normal. Not fucked up. Like you're some little saint.

STEPHANIE

(standing her ground)

Yeah, I get that a lot. I really hate when people say that.

DIANA

Embrace it. People love saints.

STEPHANIE

Only after they're dead.

Diana stops right in front of Stephanie, inches away, the knife between them, the blade close to Stephanie's face. Stephanie stares her down. Diana smirks.

DIANA

How did Claudia die?

STEPHANIE
She drown in a lake at some summer camp
in Michigan. High on heroin.

DIANA
Bullshit. You don't believe that, do you?

STEPHANIE
Not for a second. I'm sure she's alive.

Diana studies Stephanie, then smiles and heads to a CHEST at the edge of the room, opening it to reveal S&M EQUIPMENT.

DIANA
She left this behind. I saved it. She said she had it since she was a kid.

She pulls out a faded old T-SHIRT: "SQUAW LAKE BIBLE CAMP. MICHIGAN, USA." She tosses it to Stephanie.

DIANA (CONT'D)
She's a survivor. But if she wants to vanish, *poof*. She hits reset. Only way you'll ever find her: FOLLOW THE MONEY.

Off Stephanie's look ...

124

EXT. TRIBECA BUILDING - DAY

124

As Stephanie exits, she leaves a message for Sean.

STEPHANIE (ON HER PHONE)
Sean, Stephanie. I thought about what you said and you're right. These are stages of grief. This whole experience has been stressful for both of us. I need to hit the reset button, as Emily would say. I need a day or two to be by myself. I'm going to have Sona pick up the boys and let them sleep at her place tonight so they can play with Hector and Ashley. You should take some time too. There's mango and quinoa stew in the freezer. Five minutes in the micro. Don't forget to stir. Lots of love.

125

INT. STEPHANIE'S VOLVO (MOVING) - HIGHWAY - DUSK

125

Stephanie drives, on a mission. The radio plays a HIP-HOP STATION. Rihanna's "BITCH BETTER HAVE MY MONEY."

STEPHANIE
"Bitch better have my money! / Y'all should know me well enough / Bitch better have my money! Please don't call me on my bluff / Pay me what you owe me / Turn up to Rihanna while the whole club fuckin' wasted ... "

So much for the oopsy jar.

126

EXT. MICHIGAN MOTEL - LOT - DUSK

126

Stephanie pulls into a Michigan roadside motel, seedy and almost empty. She gets out and heads to the MAIN OFFICE.

127

INT. MICHIGAN MOTEL - STEPHANIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

127

Stephanie sits on the bed in a dingy room, making a call from the land line. A commercial for LITTLE DEBBIE CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES plays on the TV. Stephanie stares at it, then ...

STEPHANIE

Oh, hi there, my name is - Deborah.
Little Deborah.

Panicking, she glances quick at a cheesy painting of rolling hills. Lying like this is new to her and she's lousy at it.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I mean, Hills. Deborah Hills.
My friends call me Little. Off-topic,
sorry. So ... I'm looking for a summer
camp for my son who is refusing his Bible
study like Lima beans. I hate to be pushy
but I travel a lot and I won't be back in
town for a while. Could I tour your
facility tomorrow morning?

128

EXT. SQUAW LAKE BIBLE CAMP - ESTABLISHING - DAY

128

Stephanie's car drives through the front gates of a rundown campground. A sign reads "SQUAW LAKE BIBLE CAMP" with a big crucifix on it. The place is the definition of creepy.

129

EXT. SQUAW LAKE BIBLE CAMP - DAY

129

The owners of the camp, MARYANNE and BOBBY CHELKOWSKY, both 40s, upbeat and out of shape in their Squaw Lake Bible Camp attire, stroll alongside Stephanie through the campground toward the lake where Emily's body was found.

MARYANNE

We've been saving young souls going on
fifty years now. Not Bobby and me
personally, the camp. But we've still
been here a while and we'd be happy to
help your son see the light too.

STEPHANIE

Well, it just seems perfect.
(looking at the lake)
My son is practically a *porpoise*. He's
going to love swimming in this pond.

MARYANNE

That's Abel Lake. It's where we have our
canoeing competition and our baptisms.
The kids all joke that it's holy water.

BOBBY

(his favorite joke)
Any fish you pull out of there is
guaranteed to feed a multitude.

STEPHANIE

Ha ha, that's a good one. So funny.
(then)
Is it safe, though? Didn't I read
somewhere that someone just drown in it?

Bobby and Maryanne exchange a worried look. Try to recover.

MARYANNE

Oh, that had nothing to do with the camp. We were closed at the time. Just some poor soul who wandered in here and found her salvation in the lake. But don't worry. We watch our kids like a hawk.

BOBBY

Yeah, we're so on top of them, they can barely have any fun.

Maryanne gives him a "shut up, you idiot" look.

STEPHANIE

Well, that's great news. Hey, do you have any old photo albums or yearbooks I can look at? I think there's no better review of a camp than the faces of the campers.

BOBBY

Oh, heck yeah. Got a ton of them down in the basement. You'll see nothing but smiles in all of 'em. I guarantee it.

130

INT. MAIN OFFICE - BASEMENT - DAY

130

An overhead bare bulb illuminates the musty basement. Cobwebs and dust coat everything. Stephanie sifts through a box of old books. She pulls out a stack of "SQUAW LAKE BIBLE CAMP YEARBOOKS," scanning to SUMMER 2000.

Stephanie flips through book after book. Not quite sure what she's looking for, studying the young faces.

Finally a SINGLE IMAGE grabs her: TWO IDENTICAL TWIN GIRLS (AGE 9), their arms around each other. They're lean, fair, blue-eyed. There's a vague resemblance to Emily. Could it be?

Suddenly the names grab Stephanie: HOPE AND FAITH MCLENNAN.

STEPHANIE

Hope and ... Faith?

Stephanie pulls out the UNFLATTERING FAXED PICTURE: "GOTTA HAVE FAITH." STEPHANIE TAKES OUT HER PHONE AND SNAPS A PICTURE OF THE TWINS. She starts rifling through the pages, seeing and SNAPPING PHONE PICS of a SERIES OF AWARDS PAGES:

The MCLENNAN SISTERS won nearly every ribbon: FASTEST CANOEING DUO, BEST SWIMMERS, HOT DOG EATING CHAMPIONS, THREE-LEGGED RACE WINNERS ... the list is an endless procession of grim summer accolades. Stephanie SNAPS A PIC. Must be Emily.

BOBBY (O.S.)

Take a picture, it'll last longer. Oh, you already are.

She startles and looks up the creepy staircase at Bobby. He smiles at his joke but suddenly seems more menacing as he blocks the only way out of the basement. He walks down.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You must be mother-of-the-gosh-darn-year.
Most parents drop their kids off here ...
they barely slow down the car.

STEPHANIE

Well, my son gets homesick. I like to
prepare him. I hope you don't mind me
taking some snaps. I thought I'd show him
a bunch of these fun photos.

(showing the yearbook)

Boy, these McLennan sisters sure got on a
winning streak. They must have been popular.

Bobby looks ashen - as if he's seen a ghost. His eyes narrow.

BOBBY

Nowadays we put a' emphasis on playing
fair.

STEPHANIE

Are you suggesting they cheated in the
hot dog eating competition?

BOBBY

I don't recall.

STEPHANIE

The contest? Or the twins?

He stares at her coldly now, fun no more. A tense smile.

BOBBY

I truly hope your boy will join us here.
We've gotta get back to work now. Thank
you for your visit.

Bobby gestures for Stephanie to leave. Stephanie forces a
grateful smile and turns to put back the yearbook. As she's
closing the book, she sees a banner at the top of a page:
"Squaw Lake Bible Camp would like to thank the MCLENNAN
FAMILY for their generous donation." She clocks this.

131

INT. MICHIGAN MOTEL - STEPHANIE'S ROOM - DAY

131

Stephanie sits in front of Google and a long list of CROSSED-
OUT NAMES, beginning at Adam McLennan and spanning down to
"McLennan Foundation." She dials another number. Someone
answers but drops the phone.

STEPHANIE

Is this the McLennan Foundation?

There's a fumbling pause, and then:

MRS. MCLENNAN (O.S.)

Who is this?

Stephanie glances at the application from the camp.

STEPHANIE

Hi there! My name is Maryanne Chelkowsky,
I'm the director of Squaw Lake Bible camp-

MRS. MCLENNAN (O.S.)
What do you want?

STEPHANIE
Well, we are planning the fiftieth anniversary reunion edition of our Camp Gazette ... and I'm trying to track down some of our star alumni! Do you happen to be of any relation to Hope and Faith McLennan?

A second phone picks up and another voice comes on, BRUCE (60s), THE CARETAKER:

BRUCE (O.S.)
Hello?

MRS. MCLENNAN (O.S.)
Bruce? It's that camp. The girls must have done something again. God have mercy on me if those girls need to come home early again.

BRUCE (O.S.)
The girls are long gone, Mrs. M. You just go on back to your chair.

MRS. MCLENNAN (O.S.)
It's filthy in there, Bruce. I've asked you a thousand times --

BRUCE (O.S.)
(short)
I'll be right in, Mrs. M.

There's the sound of the phone dropping again. Stephanie hears Bruce breathing into the phone. She ventures ahead ...

STEPHANIE
Yes, Bruce, I was just speaking to Mrs. McLennan about our 50th reunion--

Click. The line goes dead. Stephanie knows she hit paydirt.

132 **EXT. MCLENNAN MANOR - DAY**

132

Stephanie has pulled onto the shoulder of the road, staking out a SPRAWLING MANSION, a near-ruin of dingy columns and colonnades. Vines have grown over a monogrammed gate. The lineage of some great industrialist family has ended with a whimper here.

As she moves along a gate, she sees - the WEST WING OF THE MANSION has been completely BURNED DOWN. It's charred rubble has been partitioned off with plywood and tarps, blowing like ghost sails in the wind.

Stephanie stops at the MAILBOX where she pulls out the day's mail. She races back to her car as the rain turns to hail.

133 **INT. STEPHANIE'S VOLVO - MOMENTS LATER**

133

She sorts through the mail: Bills for BRUCE HARGRAVE. A massive CATALOG for Margaret McLennan: "OLD MONEY STYLE: VANDERBILT ON A VAN-DE-KAMP'S BUDGET."

Stephanie perks up as she sees BRUCE (60s), walking out of the house in coveralls with a hunting shotgun over his shoulder. He's an old caretaker with a ghoulis quality. He hops into his old truck and takes off down the driveway.

STEPHANIE
Take your time, Bruce.

Here's Stephanie's chance. Deftly, she ties a handkerchief over her head like a 50s HOUSEKEEPER, grabs freshly purchased cleaning equipment (mop, bucket, feather duster) out of a Target bag, and rushes out into the storm.

134

EXT. MCLENNAN MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

134

Stephanie rings the bell. We can tell she's been at the door for a while. She rings the doorbell again, which echoes in a vast chasm inside. She bangs a last time.

Then, like the lid of a coffin, the door creeps open and a FRAIL HAND appears in the crease. An old woman's eyes peer out at Stephanie in the slanting rain.

STEPHANIE
Mrs. McLennan? Hello! I'm Gloria. I'm from the cleaning service.

Mrs. McLennan stares back with bewildered eyes.

MRS. MCLENNAN
Who?

STEPHANIE
Oh, goodness. Did Bruce not tell you? He said I was supposed to clean the entire house until you could eat a four-course meal off the floors. Did I get the date wrong?

The old woman makes a hard, irritable face. She closes the door. *Dammit*. But then it opens again, unlatched and pulled wide for her.

MRS. MCLENNAN
Start in the downstairs bathroom.

135

INT. MCLENNAN MANOR - BATHROOM - DAY

135

Her plan has backfired as Stephanie, in rubber gloves, cleans an extremely dirty toilet. Exasperated, she looks up at a giant JESUS portrait over the toilet. She eyes him, guilty.

STEPHANIE
(to the portrait)
Well, it's not lying if I'm *really* cleaning the place.

136

INT. MCLENNAN MANOR - CORRIDOR - AFTERNOON

136

As Stephanie wanders with her bucket, lightning flashes in the gauzy curtains. She looks at old pictures of SCOWLING INDUSTRIALISTS on the wall. She finally stops at one picture -
- HOPE AND FAITH. They stare ahead with hard faces, arm-in-arm, as if unified against the photographer.

MRS. MCLENNAN (O.S.)
Bruce! The fire's dying. Bruce!

Stephanie takes off her head wrap and hustles ahead.

137

INT. MCLENNAN MANOR - SITTING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

137

As Stephanie feeds wood onto the fire, Mrs. McLennan is now seated on her red velvet chair, thumbing through an "OLD MONEY STYLE CATALOG." Stephanie sees a massive FORMAL PORTRAIT of a younger Mrs. McLennan in an evening gown above the grand piano.

STEPHANIE
I couldn't help but notice that lovely picture of your daughters.

MRS. MCLENNAN
What have they done now?

STEPHANIE
Nothing, no. I was just commenting on how beautiful they are. You must be a very proud mother.

Mrs. McLennan clears her throat and leans forward. She seems to have lost track of who Stephanie is without the head wrap.

MRS. MCLENNAN
I don't know what sort of *donation* you're looking for, but the well has gone dry.

STEPHANIE
Oh, I'm not looking for any money.

MRS. MCLENNAN
Well, you must be the only one. My husband lost a fortune in the recall of '98. I warned him, you know. It was a defect with the airbags. Do you know anything about airbags, Miss?

STEPHANIE
I'm afraid not.

MRS. MCLENNAN
What good are you then? Where is *Bruce*?

STEPHANIE
Bruce has gone out for a while. So your daughter Faith ...? She had some troubles, I take it.

MRS. MCLENNAN
She restored *my faith*, all right. In the devil.

STEPHANIE
That's a very strong statement coming from a mother.

MRS. MCLENNAN
Are *you* a mother?

STEPHANIE

I am. I love every minute of it.

MRS. MCLENNAN

Well, you must have brain damage. It's a thankless business. And some children are born rotten. They don't need a parent, they need an exorcist. My husband understood that.

The old woman rises ... and heads to a HUGE BOOKSHELF. She pulls out a dictionary to reveal a HIDDEN BOTTLE.

MRS. MCLENNAN (CONT'D)

Don't tell Bruce about this. It's unseemly the way that man polices me. Would you like some sherry?

STEPHANIE

No, thank you. Sweet of you to offer.

MRS. MCLENNAN

(opens bottle; smells it)
Oh, that's not the sherry. It's the gin. The sherry must be behind another book.

She looks up at the massive bookcase, hundreds of tomes. It'd take her a month to look behind all of them. Then she shrugs and returns to the chair with her straight gin.

STEPHANIE

So what ever happened to Faith?

MRS. MCLENNAN

The family shame. We paid so much money for that girl and her rehabilitation. Is there any service where one pays so dearly to get so little?

STEPHANIE

She was using drugs?

MRS. MCLENNAN

(drinking)
Oh please *do* pay attention. Hope tried to take care of her, to get her off that stuff, I know - but of course Hope is a born liar. With *terrible posture*.

An idea comes over Stephanie. She unfolds the FAX from her pocket, with "GOTTA HAVE FAITH" written across the bottom. The military coat, the sunken cheeks.

STEPHANIE

Mrs. McLennan. Do you recognize anyone in this picture?

Stephanie thrusts the picture in front of the old woman's eyes. Suddenly, some recognition seems to come into her oblivious features. She looks back at Stephanie with a new expression of fear.

MRS. MCLENNAN

Faith. What does she want now? Who are you? Did *she* send you?

STEPHANIE MRS. MCLENNAN (CONT'D)
 No, ma'am. I'm not even sure-- Are you the police?

STEPHANIE
 No, no, I'm just asking -

MRS. MCLENNAN
 I've told you all a thousand times, my memory isn't very good anymore. It won't stand up in court. The night of the fire, my husband and I were estranged. We were in separate wings of the house. I was in the east wing.

STEPHANIE
 A fire burned down the west wing?

MRS. MCLENNAN
 Lord, you're so dense. May, 2001. I'm exceptional with dates. Unless it's today's. Is it Wednesday? Are you an insurance agent?

Stephanie swallows with guilt. It hurts to lie to this old woman in her state, but -

STEPHANIE
 Yes.

MRS. MCLENNAN
 (softening again)
 Oh good. Bruce and I have been waiting for the insurance money. My husband's stamp collection *alone* was worth a fortune. But you've got that ridiculous *clause* about arson. Vultures.

She toasts her bottle of gin.

MRS. MCLENNAN (CONT'D)
 Here's to being "house poor."

The phrase strikes Stephanie as familiar - but just then, with a loud squeak, the FRONT DOOR swings open down the hall. Stephanie stiffens at the sound - and Mrs. McLennan panics, too, handing her the bottle of gin.

MRS. MCLENNAN (CONT'D)
 It's Bruce. *Hide* this.

With booming heavy footsteps, Bruce comes down the hall. Stephanie pulls aside books to hide the bottle, but finds a different bottle behind each.

Finally she drops it into her bucket beside the toilet brush. She can think of nothing else but to grab the huge "OLD MONEY STYLE" CATALOG from the end table beside Mrs. McLennan as BRUCE APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY, HOLDING HIS SHOTGUN IN ONE HAND AND A DEAD GOOSE BY THE NECK IN THE OTHER.

Stephanie tries not to freak. She waves the magazine in the air as she squeezes past a glaring Bruce in the doorway.

STEPHANIE

Thank you very much for your time, Mrs. McLennan. We'll process your order for the faux Chanel suit in ivory and the taupe scarf ... we'll put a rush on it.

She bolts to the front door, hurriedly unlatching lock until -

138 **EXT. MCLENNAN MANOR - AFTERNOON** 138

- she's outside, dashing back to her car.

139 **INT. STEPHANIE'S VOLVO - AFTERNOON** 139

Hands shaking, Stephanie starts the car and drives quickly down the driveway, looking back in her rearview mirror for Bruce. She looks forward and GASPS, slamming on the brakes.

BRUCE STANDS IN FRONT OF HER CAR, SHOTGUN ON HIP, THE DRIVEWAY GATES CLOSED BEHIND HIM. Looking like an ax murderer, BRUCE stands in her headlights. He slowly starts to walk forward.

Stephanie is hyperventilating as he comes to her window. Her eyes are wide. Should she try to ram the gate? It's too heavy. Bruce taps on the window with the barrel of his shotgun. Sweating, she rolls it down, her face pale.

BRUCE

Where do you think you're going?

(a beat)

I wanted to order the Navy blazer. Extra large.

Exhale. She nods yes as he goes and opens the driveway gates.

140 **INT. LOCAL LIBRARY - DAY** 140

Stephanie approaches the LIBRARIAN'S DESK.

STEPHANIE

Hi. I'm looking for all arson-related news items from Wayne County in 2001.

AT A MICROFICHE CARREL

Stephanie scans an article in a local newspaper dated May 3, 2001. The headline reads: *"Teen Twins Vanish After Deadly House Fire"*

STEPHANIE

Holy smokes.

Stephanie scrolls the article, collecting phrases like "trapped in the house"... "suspicion of arson"... "possible abduction"...

141 **ON VIDEO VLOG - INT. MICHIGAN MOTEL - DAY** 141

Stephanie addresses the camera from her motel room.

STEPHANIE

Hi, Moms. Stephanie here. I'm coming to you today from Michigan for a special *on-the-road* edition. As you all know, I've been struggling to find closure around the tragic death of my best friend. So I drove to the lake where she drowned, just seeing if I could *dredge up* a little something.

142

INT. WARFIELD INN - EMILY'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY

142

Emily watches the VIDEO vlog of Stephanie, slack-jawed.

EMILY

You crazy bitch.

STEPHANIE (ON COMPUTER)

At first, I just couldn't figure why anyone would drive to Michigan just to shoot heroin and jump in a lake.

(a smile)

I could only figure that this particular watering hole had *sentimental value*.

EMILY

No, no, no, no, *no* ...

STEPHANIE (ON COMPUTER)

Turns out, it was the site of many a canoe race for Camp Squaw Lake, a Bible Camp that only a saint could love. I had to dig through plenty of camp journals: they had no filing system. But I finally found a picture of Emily. Or Claudia.

She holds up the SQUAW LAKE BIBLE CAMP GAZETTE PICTURE.

EMILY

Motherfucker.

STEPHANIE (ON COMPUTER)

It's like looking at an angel, isn't it, moms? And it gave me the closure I needed. It made me feel closer to her than I've ever felt. Almost like a sister. So, wherever you are, Emily ... I really HOPE you're listening ... you've gotta have *Faith*.

EMILY

Mother. Fucker.

143

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAY

143

Stephanie unlocks the door and enters.

STEPHANIE

Mom's home!

Miles flies at her and hugs her as Nicky rounds the corner.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Oh, Smooch. I missed you.

Miles glances over at the table, suddenly looking caught and guilty. There's a glass of milk without a coaster under it.

MILES
Sorry, mom. I forgot.

STEPHANIE
You know what? Forget Mr. Coaster. Mr. Glass can stand wherever he wants.

MILES
(looks at her oddly)
Are you okay, mom?

STEPHANIE
I've never been better, sweetie.

NICKY
Where were you? Why did we have to sleep at Hector's? He pees the bed.

Sean emerges from the kitchen with a whiskey in hand.

SEAN
They could've stayed with me, you know.

The sight of him unnerves her. She quickly regroups.

STEPHANIE
I thought we all needed a breather. I know I feel like a million bucks.

Stephanie heads up the stairs.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
(under her breath)
Maybe even *four* million.

Sean studies her, suspicious now.

144

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM/BATHROOM - NIGHT

144

Stephanie emerges from the bathroom in a nightgown carrying her clothes. Sean watches her from the bed.

SEAN
Since when do you undress in the bathroom?

Stephanie shrugs and shoves her clothes in the hamper.

SEAN (CONT'D)
I didn't like the way we left things.

Sean moves up behind her at the mirror as she brushes her hair. His hands slide up her body, cupping her breasts. She moves away. He tries to joke, but he's frustrated.

SEAN (CONT'D)
Cold hands? Bad breath? What's wrong?

STEPHANIE
I'm just tired. It was a long drive and the Stuckey's isn't sitting well.

Stephanie climbs into bed and turns on her side, her back to Sean. He eyes her, writhing inside. She's wrapping him around her finger now.

SEAN
I'm tired of women lying to me.

STEPHANIE
I know just what you mean. Good night.

She reaches over and turns off the lamp beside her bed.

145

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

145

Stephanie sits at Sean's desktop computer and clicks on the hard drive. Everything is neatly organized.

STEPHANIE
Follow the money ...

She finds the folder labeled FAMILY FINANCE and opens it. Sees INSURANCE EMILY-2 and clicks on the PDF. It opens up a standard confirmation letter from Allied Insurance. She scrolls to the bottom for the customer service number. Dials.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Hi, my name is Beth. I'm calling on behalf of my boss Sean Townsend regarding his wife Emily Nelson's policy.
(reading account number)
CT7602258. Do you know the name of the agent who handles that account?

146

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

146

Stephanie opens a fake e-mail account under the name bhargrave@gmail.com, then drafts an e-mail to **iprager@alliedinsurance.com.**

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
"Dear Mr. Prager ... My name is Bruce Hargrave. I'm writing to you about a case you're handling for Emily Nelson, recently deceased. I have been the caretaker of her family estate for many years. What I have to say will sound crazy, but years ago, my employer died in a house fire. His teen daughters, Hope and Faith, disappeared without a trace. I'm attaching an old photo as well as some articles about the fire. I have reason to believe one of the girls died recently under the name Emily Nelson. Before you shell out that money, you should know that she had a TWIN SISTER. And while it may sound extreme to think a girl could kill her twin to stage her own death, I'm sure you run into a myriad of strange situations in your line of work.
(thinks)
While I want to see justice served, I prefer to be left out of this. Please consider this an anonymous tip. Best wishes, Bruce Hargrave.

Stephanie's cursor hovers over the SEND button. And ...
CLICK. Stephanie lets out a long slow exhale.

147

INT. DOLCE VITA RESTAURANT - GREENWICH VILLAGE - DAY

147

A trendy Italian restaurant. Sean sits alone in a corner booth, annoyed. He huffs and dials his cell phone.

SEAN (ON PHONE)
Hi, this is Sean Townsend. I was supposed to meet Billy Kent for lunch?
(his face drops)
What do you mean? You called two days ago to set it up.

A shadow falls over Sean. He looks up and sees -- Emily standing over him in a baseball cap and shades.

SEAN (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Nevermind. No, don't call him.

He hangs up. Emily slides into the booth.

EMILY
We spent every anniversary here, you dumbshit. How could you not put it together? You've got "Mommy brain" now?

SEAN
(in shock, then)
Why, Emily? Why?

She takes a breadstick from beside him and crunches on it.

EMILY
I have four million reasons.

SEAN
How could you do this to Nicky?

EMILY
I did this for Nicky. I hated that job: I never got to see him. And you clearly only had one book in you. We couldn't exactly live off the faculty buffet the rest of our lives. I was going to buy us our freedom and it would have worked perfectly ... if you just hadn't shacked up with Miss Zucchini fucking Cookie.

Sean has to look down into his plate. He's dizzy.

SEAN
Whom did I bury?

EMILY
Let's not split hairs over the details.

SEAN
I was grieving your death.

EMILY
That's how you grieve? Balls deep in my "best friend?" That's some renegade therapy.

SEAN
She's been good to Nicky. At a time when
he really needed it.

Emily seethes at this comment. It disrupts her usual aplomb.

EMILY
Oh, she's been good to *Nicky*? That's what
drew you to her, her extraordinary
mothering. You're all just little horny
boys, aren't you?

SEAN
You could have told me something. Anything.

EMILY
Except you can't keep a secret. Even in
the dark, you almost ruined everything.
I was just gonna lay low until the
insurance money came through.

SEAN
So why didn't you? Instead you've been
terrorizing your son, making me think he
and Stephanie had gone mad. Why didn't
you stick to your plan?

Emily's face wilts, showing sincere longing.

EMILY
I missed Nicky. He's my little man.
(reclaiming her iciness)
Anyway, the clock is ticking. Nancy Drew
knows too much and if she fucks up that
insurance money, then I'm taking you down
with me. Don't forget, Sean, this was all
your plan.

SEAN
My plan? I--

Sean hears a CLICK. Emily raises her hand enough to show she
has a GUN, pointed at his groin under the table.

EMILY
Do you love her?

He sees the madness in her eyes. He says the only thing he
can to maintain the peace:

SEAN
No. It was just sex.

EMILY
Did you think of me while you were
fucking her?

SEAN
Yes.

EMILY
Do you love me or not, Sean?

SEAN
 (in pain; straining)
 Of course I love you. Stephanie means
 nothing to me.

Emily sees the WAITRESS heading over to them. CLICK! Emily
 fires the gun at his groin, causing him to jolt and go rigid.
 She smiles devilishly: the chamber was empty.

EMILY
 That's just an appetizer, baby.

She rises, coolly slipping the gun back in her purse, then
 bends down and kisses him.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 Meet me in the bathroom in twenty seconds
 for the main course. Knock twice.

She heads off. Sean can't believe what just happened. He
 stares down the long dark hallway to the LADIES ROOM door,
 his chest rising in panic.

148

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

148

A preoccupied Sean enters the house, looking shell-shocked.

STEPHANIE (O.S.)
 Here he is now.

Sean looks up to see Stephanie sitting on the couch with
 ISAAC PRAGER (40s), a doughy, pedantic CLAIMS ADJUSTER. He
 stands and holds out his hand.

PRAGER
 Mr. Townsend. Isaac Prager, Allied
 Insurance. I'm investigating the death
 benefit claim for your late wife.

STEPHANIE
 Sean, did you know that Emily had a *twin*
 sister?

Sean stops, eyes wide, putting it all together. Then ...

SEAN
 No. But then ...

STEPHANIE
 The woman in the lake was her *sister*.

PRAGER
 It would explain the DNA match.

STEPHANIE
 So, where's Emily?

SEAN
 (composing himself)
 If my wife were alive, she'd come home.
 She'd want to see her son.

PRAGER

I'm not a cop. And I'm definitely no therapist. I'm just an insurance guy. But this is definitely an interesting case.

STEPHANIE

Will you need to *exhume the body*?

Sean shoots her a look, shocked by her macabre question.

PRAGER

No, ma'am. Allied Insurance considers digging up graves to be bad PR. We have a thorough autopsy. But everyone tends to read it in different ways.

STEPHANIE

I see. Like the missing front tooth.

Sean is boiling inside as he looks at Stephanie.

PRAGER

I'm not sure I caught that. A missing front tooth?

Stephanie watches Sean like a hawk as he squirms.

PRAGER (CONT'D)

I will say, it's unusual to live with someone as husband-and-wife and not know they have a twin.

STEPHANIE

Or a missing tooth.

SEAN

She was a very private person.

PRAGER

Well, hey, we all have secrets. But as I'm sure you can understand with a payment of this size, we're going to have to continue this claims investigation.

SEAN

Of course.

PRAGER

And, by law, we'll have to notify the authorities of our findings.

SEAN

I just hope she's alive. I want her back.

Stephanie tightens, pained by his words. Prager shakes his hand, rises, and they all head to the front door ...

PRAGER

Obviously, if you do hear from her -

SEAN (CONT'D)

You'll be the first to know.

Sean closes the door behind him. He turns to Stephanie.

SEAN (CONT'D)
(cold)
You knew she had a twin.

STEPHANIE
Did I? Why didn't you?

SEAN
You knew and you didn't tell me.

STEPHANIE
Sean, baby. You sound crazy. Maybe you should take a Xanax. Take two.

She heads back to the kitchen. He watches her go, reeling.

149 **ON VIDEO VLOG - KITCHEN - DAY**

149

STEPHANIE (PRE-LAP)
Hi, Moms. Stephanie here. Today we're talking about *Tombstone Tributes*. I want to thank Helen from Missoula, Montana, for thinking out of the box.

150 **EXT. WARFIELD CEMETERY - DAY**

150

Blue skies, green grass and headstones as far as the eye can see. Stephanie stands at Emily's grave site. Opens a small cooler and takes out a silver shaker and two frozen glasses.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
It doesn't have to be flowers anymore. A favorite household item can do the trick. And Emily's favorite treat was a dry gin martini in the early afternoon.

She puts the martini glasses on Emily's headstone. Stephanie pours each glass to the rim. Peels two large twists from a lemon, squeezes one over each glass and rubs them around each rim, then drops one in each glass.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
I'm gonna make them exactly like Emily did. Frozen gin into frozen glasses and a generous twist. Her beloved Dukes. And I'm going to have a toast on her grave.

A FIGURE approaches behind Stephanie. It's Emily in her wig and glasses. Stephanie can hear her approach but doesn't turn. Emily stands alongside her, studying the headstone.

EMILY
Sean must have picked the font on the headstone. He loves Helvetica.

STEPHANIE
Men are so simple.

Emily reaches for the martini glass.

EMILY
Nice big twist. I taught you well.

STEPHANIE
The student becomes the master.

Emily winces at the cliché, but clinks with Stephanie.

EMILY
Whatever you need to tell yourself.

Emily goes to take a drink, then pauses. She *switches* glasses - and indicates that Stephanie should drink first.

EMILY (CONT'D)
I never know what surprises you have up these new empowered sleeves of yours, Dark Side. Let's hope you haven't build up a tolerance to something.

STEPHANIE
You think I poisoned both drinks? That's not my style.
(downing her martini)
I don't even eat gluten.

Emily throws back her martini, facing Stephanie for a duel.

EMILY
You want another?

STEPHANIE
Bring it on. But first tell me why you killed your father and sister.

EMILY
Oh, are we airing dirty laundry? Like your *son's* real father?

STEPHANIE
Try me. I hold the cards, Emily. I want to know about "Faith."

Emily looks at Stephanie, who stares her down defiantly.

EMILY
We were triplets. Faith, Hope, and Charity. But Charity was stillborn. My mother used to say that Faith and I offed her in the womb. And dad believed her.

STEPHANIE
Quite a mother. I had a nice afternoon with *Mags*. She likes her martinis even stronger than yours.

EMILY
You met my *mother*?

STEPHANIE
We had a little walk down memory lane. Actually it was more of a blind alley. But I got the picture. She was a cold woman, Em. I doubt you could ever do anything *right* in her eyes.

Thrown for a loop, Emily looks childlike and exposed.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Was it Faith's idea to set that fire?

Emily just stares at her, trying to hide her surprise.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
You've got nothing to hide from me, Hope.
If you can't tell your best friend, who
can you tell?

151 **EXT. MCLENNAN MANOR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 151

Dead of night. Hope and Faith (16) carefully open the second floor window and climb down on expensive tapestries cinched together. Hand in hand, they run past ...

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
Don't you think I understand?

... a vigilant BRUCE sitting by the caretaker's shack.

152 **EXT. WARFIELD CEMETERY - RESUME SCENE** 152

Emily is staring back.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
You were sixteen years old. It's that age
when you feel trapped.

153 **EXT. LAKE'S EDGE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)** 153

A bonfire burns in the middle of a field. Teens hang out and drink, dance, make out. Faith makes out with a CUTE BOY. Hope watches them kiss with a mix of envy and concern ... until she sees her FATHER'S CAR rolling downhill toward them.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
And if your mother always had the biting
comment ...

154 **INT. MCLENNAN MANOR - NIGHT** 154

Hope is locked inside a dark closet as she HEARS the sound of Faith being punished by her father on the other side of the door. Faith SCREAMS and fights back as Hope holds her ears.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
... I bet your father was more direct.

155 **EXT. MCLENNAN MANOR - NIGHT** 155

Hope and Faith each have a gas can in hand as they watch the bedroom wing of the mansion burn from the front lawn.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
I know that's when you learned to hit the
reset button. Burn, baby, burn.

156 **EXT. WARFIELD CEMETERY - RESUME SCENE** 156

This time Emily is *seduced* by Stephanie. There's warmth and forgiveness in Stephanie's voice, which prompts Emily to lean against her own headstone, pouring herself a second martini.

STEPHANIE
When did you and Faith part ways?

EMILY

We couldn't stay together after the fire.

157 **INT. GREYHOUND BUS (MOVING) - DAY** 157

Hope and Faith ride the bus. Hope looks out the window, her mind spinning, planning for them. A WELL-MEANING TOURIST taps them, holding up a camera, wanting a picture of the pretty twins. Faith violently slaps the camera out of the woman's hands, hissing at her to fuck off.

EMILY (V.O.)

We were a freakshow wherever we went.

158 **INT. HOUSTON TATTOO PARLOR - DAY** 158

Hope and Faith sit across from each other, gripping each other's LEFT HAND. Hope already has her barbed wire tattoo on her wrist. The TATTOO ARTIST is in the process of completing Faith's matching barbed wire tattoo.

EMILY (V.O.)

We said goodbye with tattoos ...

159 **EXT. CORPUS CHRISTI STREET - DAY** 159

Hope and Faith hug tightly under a pier as the ocean washes to their toes. Both girls have tears in their eyes. They slowly back away from each other.

EMILY (V.O.)

... and parted ways in Corpus Christi. She was going to head to Mexico. I was going to drift north. We had a time and place to meet in six months, when the smoke cleared.

160 **EXT. WARFIELD CEMETERY - RESUME SCENE - DAY** 160

STEPHANIE

But you never showed up.

Emily shakes her head. She sips the martini.

EMILY

I bought a one-way ticket to New York City and I never looked back.

STEPHANIE

Did you miss her?

EMILY

For a while. But you get used to pain. You use it. Besides, Faith would only get me in trouble again. She always did. Sometimes I think my mother was right about her. But then my life in New York fell into place perfectly. People took me in. I got a job, worked my way up, met the perfect man. That part you know.

She shoots Stephanie a deadly look.

STEPHANIE

Until your sister showed up.

EMILY

Damn *Facebook*. I could kill that Mark *Zuckerberg*. Sure, it's all baby pictures and protest marches until I got fingered.

STEPHANIE

You wouldn't meet her in New York: you had too much to lose. So you fabricated a trip to Miami, and went back to meet her at your old camp.

EMILY

Bunk Six. Our happy place.

161 **EXT. SQUAW LAKE BIBLE CAMP - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 161

Emily heads down the dirt path to GIRLS BUNK SIX. She braces herself then opens the door to ...

STEPHANIE (V.O.)

It must have been a shock. Seeing her again after all those years.

162 **INT. SQUAW LAKE BIBLE CAMP - BUNK SIX - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 162

Faith is already inside, wearing the ARMY JACKET from the fax. She rises to face her sister. Identical twins, the contrast between them is shocking. Faith is a full-blown junkie. Dirty and haggard, dark rings around her eyes. Her front tooth is broken.

EMILY (V.O.)

It was like looking in the mirror ... and seeing the life I could have had. The life I fought not to have.

Faith moves toward Emily and hugs her. Behind her shoulder, Emily gags at the smell of her sister and chokes back tears.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)

And did she forgive you?

Behind Emily's shoulder, we PUSH IN ON FAITH'S FACE as her smile dissipates and hardens into a deep-seated rage.

EMILY (V.O.)

No.

163 **EXT. WARFIELD CEMETERY - RESUME SCENE - DAY** 163

Emily stands in silence. Stephanie has got her now, like a perfect den motherly prosecutor, slowly reeling her in.

STEPHANIE

And how did you get your sister out into the lake?

EMILY

Fuck you. That was her idea. I didn't kill my sister.

Emily watches with dread and fascination as Faith drops a syringe. Her arm goes limp and her eyes become glassy. Faith's head tips back as the warm rush climbs her body. She smiles at Emily, revealing her broken front tooth.

FAITH

You gotta have Faith. And now here I am.

Faith laughs darkly, her smile hardening to malice.

EMILY

What are you up to, Faith?

FAITH

You abandoned me. And now I'm going to the cops. To tell them everything we did. And when I go under, you go with me.

EMILY

I have a family now.

FAITH

Awww, that kid is so cute. So's the husband. Can I be you for a day? Like in High School when we'd switch places?

EMILY

What do you want from me?

FAITH

I want a million dollars in cash.

EMILY

Where the hell would I get that?

FAITH

You're rich and famous. You'll figure it out.

Emily glowers at her. Then she appears to make a decision.

EMILY

Maybe I owe you this much for abandoning you. Okay. I'll sell the house.

Emily softens, fighting tears. This may well be an act, but if so, it's a damn good one ...

FAITH

Uch, it's fucking hot in here. Let's go swimming. Like old times.

Faith tugs her wool dress over her head, no underwear. Emily watches, disturbed.

FAITH (CONT'D)

You coming?

Emily considers it. Her mind working quickly.

EMILY

I'm right behind you.

165 **EXT. WITCH LAKE - WOODS - LATE AFTERNOON** 165

Emily makes her way through the woods to follow Faith, whose bare flesh flashes through the trees.

166 **EXT. WITCH LAKE - LAKE FRONT - LATE AFTERNOON** 166

Faith wades into the water then submerges under its icy surface. Emily peels off her dress down to her bra and underwear. She wades into the water with a gasp, her jaw clenched against the cold. Faith surfaces and treads water.

FAITH
C'mon, wimp! I thought you were the Alpha!

EMILY
(muttering)
I *am* the Alpha, goddammit.

Emily dives into the water, then swims out to where Faith is. They tread water, face to face in the moonlight. Faith's expression shifts. She's childlike, vulnerable.

FAITH
How could you leave me like that? We were supposed to be a team. You and me. Forever.

EMILY
I know. I'm sorry. We were.

Emily takes her sister's shoulders to hug her ...

EMILY (CONT'D)
It's just ... things have changed.

She shoves Faith under the water. Faith struggles and splashes to the surface, but Emily shoves her down again. The struggle persists. Emily is athletic and strong. Her will to murder is stronger than Faith's will to live.

Finally the struggle stops. Faith goes limp and floats. Emily holds her sister in her arms. A tender moment. Emily glances at her own hand, the sapphire and diamond engagement RING.

She pulls the ring off her finger and wrestles it onto Faith's lifeless finger, forcing it on.

167 **EXT. WARFIELD CEMETERY - DAY** 167

A few real tears roll down Emily's cheeks.

EMILY
I woke up the next morning and she wasn't there. I couldn't find her anywhere. Finally I remembered how much she loved swimming in the lake. So I went there. I was too late ...

Now Stephanie *reads* Emily the same way Emily once read her.

STEPHANIE
You're lying. You drowned her. You're a
sister killer.

EMILY
Well, you're a brother fucker.

STEPHANIE
What does Sean know?

EMILY
Everything.

Stephanie is stung by this. Emily sees her chance.

EMILY (CONT'D)
He told me to disappear until the money
came through. Said we could finally get
out of debt, sell the house, leave the
country. Start over, that I could quit my
job and spend more time with Nicky.

STEPHANIE
I don't believe you. Sean grieved for
you.

EMILY
All an act.

STEPHANIE
You're a pathological liar.

EMILY
Did Sean say that?

Emily takes out her cell phone, plays an AUDIO CLIP.

EMILY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Do you love her?

SEAN (O.S.)
No. It was just sex.

EMILY (O.S.)
Did you think of me while you were
fucking her?

SEAN (O.S.)
Yes.

EMILY (O.S.)
Do you love me or not, Sean?

SEAN (O.S.)
Of course, I love you. Stephanie means
nothing to me.

The CLIP stops. Stephanie looks sick to her stomach.

EMILY
Sorry, Steph. I know you thought it was
real. But let's look on the bright side.
Your web site went viral thanks to me.
Now you can sell those ad banners.

STEPHANIE

All of this was for a little money.

EMILY

Yeah, a little four million. Sean convinced me we could pull it off. My sister didn't exist anymore. DNA would take care of the rest. All I had to do was lay low for six months so he could collect the money, sell the house, tie up loose ends.

STEPHANIE

Was I a loose end?

EMILY

Sean needed some help looking after Nicky. And you're so good with them. Darth Mommy.

The entire tone has changed. It's like a chess match and Emily seems to have regained an advantage.

STEPHANIE

You were supposed to lay low. Why did you come back at all?

Emily glares back at her, offended now.

EMILY

Look, I may be a working mother ... but that doesn't make me any less a *mom*.
(grimacing)

Every time you vlogged about how much Nicky cried or how he hated quinoa, I couldn't take it. It was like a hostage standoff. I had to see him again. To let him know that I was coming back. He's my heart and soul, Stephanie, my everything. It doesn't matter how good your brownies are, he's *my* son.

This has an effect on Stephanie and she blinks away tears.

STEPHANIE

So what happens now?

EMILY

I want my son. Period. You fucked up the insurance money, and the authorities won't stop looking. I don't even give a shit anymore: take Sean.

STEPHANIE

I don't want Sean. Not after this.

A flicker of satisfaction on Emily's face. They wait quietly. Then Emily breaks the silence.

EMILY

Then there's one other option, one mom to another.

Emily reaches out her glass to toast. Stephanie clinks her glass into her friend's. OFF STEPHANIE, curious --

168 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT** 168

Stephanie lies in bed, back to Sean, snoring in a deep sleep.

 STEPHANIE
 Sleeping like a *log*.

She slowly, gingerly slides her leg off the bed, toe finding the floor, her body slinking out behind it.

169 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT** 169

She logs onto the Connecticut College website. She types Sean's email into user slot: stownsend@conncollege.com, then enters the password. Waits. She's in.

170 **EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - NIGHT** 170

Stephanie plants a DOCUMENT in the glove compartment of Sean's car and closes it. She's wearing Emily's leather gloves. Stephanie quietly closes the door and clicks the lock on the key fob. She tiptoes into the house, closing the door.

171 **INT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE - ENGLISH DEPT. - DAY** 171

Sean arrives at his office to find Beth, spooked. Two DETECTIVES are in his office unhooking computer cables.

 BETH
 They had a warrant. I tried to call you.

Shocked, Sean enters his office toward the detectives.

 SEAN
 I'm Sean Townsend. I'm happy to comply with whatever you need, but it would be nice to have a heads up.

 DETECTIVE #1
 This is an open investigation. You don't get to pencil us in when it's convenient.

 SEAN
 I'm calling a lawyer.

 DETECTIVE #2
 I'm calling that a good idea.

172 **EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAY** 172

Sean pulls up in his car to find his front door blocked with police tape and THREE SQUAD CARS. Detective Meany is there.

 SEAN
 What the fuck?

Meany clocks Sean's arrival and approaches as he gets out.

 SEAN (CONT'D)
 Am I under arrest?

 DETECTIVE MEANY
 We're still working on it. The D.A. wants a slam dunk.

SEAN
Well, that may be hard, since I didn't do anything.

DETECTIVE MEANY
Did you know your wife was alive?

SEAN
(after a beat)
Not until recently.

DETECTIVE MEANY
When?

Meany scrutinizes him carefully.

SEAN
She contacted me.

DETECTIVE MEANY
And you immediately notified the authorities, right?

SEAN
I can't discuss this without my attorney.

DETECTIVE MEANY
I'd say that's wise. We'll talk soon.
(turning back)
Oh. If we need you ... will you be with your wife or the best friend?

OFF SEAN, in a bad place --

173

EXT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - DAY

173

Sean pulls up to Stephanie's house. Hearing his car, she opens the door. He grabs his briefcase and approaches her.

SEAN
I need a stiff drink. Maybe more of your dead husband's scotch.

She blocks the doorway with her body.

STEPHANIE
I can't let you in. I'm sorry.

SEAN
Why not? Where's Nicky?

STEPHANIE
Upstairs sleeping. You have to go.

SEAN
What are you talking about?

STEPHANIE
This is an ongoing investigation, Sean. I can't let you into this house until this whole big hoo-ha is solved.

SEAN
 (studies her; then)
 My god, she got to you, didn't she? She
 got into your head.

STEPHANIE
 This has nothing to do with Emily.

SEAN
 It has EVERYTHING to do with her!

STEPHANIE
 Shhhh, the boys are sleeping --

SEAN
 She's gaslighting you. You don't
 understand how powerful she is.

STEPHANIE
 I don't understand anything right now. I
 just need to be alone and take care of
 the boys. Stay in a hotel tonight.
 Please. Don't make me call the police.

Sean looks at her, stunned. He backs away, shaking his head. Stephanie watches as Sean gets in his car and peels out of her driveway. She heaves a long slow sigh of relief.

174

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

174

Stephanie bakes cookies. But there's no joy in pinching the little dough clumps onto the greased pan. This is an act of survival. She sees her cell phone vibrating on the counter. We hear Sean on VOICEMAIL, forcibly calm and sincere.

SEAN (V.O.)
 Stephanie? I don't know what's going on
 or how this all will turn out. But you're
 a great mum and you've taught me how to
 be a better dad. For that I'll always be
 grateful. The truth is ...

175

EXT. WARFIELD INN - DAY

175

Emily comes out of her room and walks breezily past the various doors of a seedy motel. A HANDYMAN is installing an air conditioning unit into a room's window, his open toolbox on the ground next to him.

SEAN (V.O.)
 I don't think I ever knew my wife ...

The handyman goes inside the room to adjust something. Without breaking stride, Emily casually grabs a wrench out of the toolbox and keeps walking breezily, flipping the wrench.

176

EXT. WARFIELD INN - AROUND BACK - DAY

176

Emily walks around the back of the motel, casually flipping the wrench in her hand. She stops, takes a breath and flips the wrench high in the air. She puts her hands behind her back and calmly lines herself up under the falling wrench.

SEAN (V.O.)
 Or what she's capable of.

As the wrench speeds down toward Emily's eye ...

177 **INT. WARFIELD POLICE STATION - RECEPTION - DAY** 177

Emily walks into the Warfield Police Station, her eye and cheek bruised and bloodied. Tears rolling down her cheeks. She approaches the POLICE OFFICER manning the desk.

EMILY
My name is Emily Nelson. I need to speak
to someone.

178 **INT. WARFIELD POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY** 178

Emily talks to Detective Meany. She's convincing, emotional, wiping away tears as she tells her story. Meany takes notes.

179 **EXT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE - DAY** 179

STUDENTS pause to watch as Detective Meany walks Sean across campus in handcuffs, POLICE OFFICERS in tow.

180 **EXT. CONNECTICUT COURTHOUSE - DAY** 180

Both in suits and sunglasses, Sean and his LAWYER push past local news reporters on their way into the courthouse.

REPORTER (PRE-LAP)
In the Emily Nelson case, which first
went viral on a popular *Internet vlog* ...

181 **INT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - DAY** 181

Stephanie's listens to a local REPORTER on her TV.

REPORTER (PRE-LAP)
The PR executive was believed dead in
Michigan. But today, she has resurfaced.

THE NEWS PROGRAM CUTS TO:

FOOTAGE OF EMILY, still bruised and bandaged, addressing a slew of reporters outside the police station.

REPORTER (O.S.)
It appears the body found in the lake was
that of Nelson's estranged twin sister.
As for Nelson, why didn't she come
forward when her sister died?

See SHOTS OF SEAN AND HIS LAWYER entering the courthouse.

REPORTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Nelson's husband, an abusive failed
novelist and English professor, forced
her to stage her own death to collect an
enormous insurance claim to the tune of
four million dollars. We spoke briefly to
Sean's *niece*, who's studying in America.

Stephanie perks up as BETH comes on camera.

STEPHANIE
His *niece*?

BETH (ON SCREEN)
 Everyone is in shock. No one believes my
 uncle could do anything like this. He's
 always been the most generous person I
 know, and I don't believe a word of this.

BACK TO THE REPORTER ON CAMERA.

REPORTER
 Nevertheless, bail for Sean Townsend will
 be set today. A British national,
 Townsend faces deportation if found
 guilty. Although an accomplice to fraud,
 Ms. Nelson is complying with the
 authorities in exchange for clemency.

182

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAY

182

Sean unlocks the front door and walks inside. He looks like
 hell, a broken man, tired and unshaven. The lights are on,
 FRENCH POP MUSIC playing on the stereo, someone home.

SEAN
 Stephanie?

Emily emerges from the kitchen, carrying two martinis.

EMILY
 Guess again.

Sean takes her in, spooked.

SEAN
 Where's Nicky?

EMILY
 At a friend's watching a movie. I thought
 we needed some *mommy and daddy time*.

She hands him his martini and leans in to kiss his lips. The
 kiss chills him to the bone. She's hurt: he's no longer
 entirely under her spell.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 Have you forgotten me that quickly?

SEAN
 You're impossible to forget.

She forces a smile and heads for the kitchen. Sean eyes the
 martini, wondering if it's poisoned. He pours it into a
 potted plant and heads ...

INTO THE KITCHEN

Emily refills her glass and heads over to refill his.

EMILY
 I don't need to poison you, Sean. If I
 wanted to get rid of you, you'd already
 be dead.

SEAN
 You planted those files on my computer.

EMILY
Not just me. I had help. From a woman who volunteers for *everything*.

SEAN
Stephanie.

EMILY
Not as sweet as her cookies, is she?

SEAN
Were you ever going to tell me you had a twin sister?

EMILY
She was mine to kill. Wasn't your business.

SEAN
I'm your husband.

EMILY
Mmmm. Labels. Yawn.

183 **EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - SIDE YARD - DAY**

183

Stephanie stands in the dark yard, watching Emily and Sean confer in the kitchen. Their exchange is quiet, tense, contained. She can't make it out. Her eyes well up with angry tears. She has Emily's lady pistol in her hand.

STEPHANIE (PRE-LAP)
Hi, Moms. Stephanie here. I'm so grateful for all the love and support you've been sending my way.

184 **ON VIDEO VLOG - KITCHEN - DAY**

184

Stephanie addresses the camera, falling apart.

STEPHANIE
And as shocked as you are by the latest turn of events, no one is more stunned than me. Emily had her secrets and so did her husband. Clearly, I was the naive romantic who got caught in the middle. I hope you'll forgive me in advance for what I'm about to do ...

185 **EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - SIDE YARD - DAY**

185

Mustering her anger and courage, Stephanie stalks ...

INTO THE KITCHEN

Sean and Emily are both shocked to see her.

EMILY
Stephanie?

SEAN
You shouldn't be here right now.

STEPHANIE
I used to live here, remember?

SEAN

Please. Don't make this harder.

When Sean moves in toward her, Stephanie raises her gun.

STEPHANIE

Hold on. Not another step.

SEAN

Stephanie, please. You won't even let the boys play with *squirt guns*.

STEPHANIE

(cocking the gun)

Well, there's a time and a place for everything.

EMILY

Whoa, Stephanie ... take it down a notch.

STEPHANIE

You used me, Sean. And for what? Free babysitting? Home-cooked meals? I had to wash those bicycle shorts.

EMILY

Oh, I hate those.

SEAN

I swear, I had no idea she was alive --

STEPHANIE

No more lying!

EMILY

I agree. Let's just sit down and talk this out.

SEAN

You sit, Em. You hated Stephanie. You called her Captain Mom. You used to watch her vlog and tear her apart.

STEPHANIE

(hurt, to Emily)

All I ever wanted was to be your friend, Emily.

Emily stares back with sincere eyes.

EMILY

You were. I didn't expect it ... but I loved you. Then you fucked my husband and all of my best plans.

SEAN

Don't blame her -

EMILY

We could have been rich, Sean.

SEAN

Maybe if you'd had the good sense to call - I could have helped your little plot!

EMILY
Oh, you haven't come up with a decent
plot in ten years.

STEPHANIE
I'm going to say something. Objectively.
Nicky deserves better than both of you.

SEAN
Stephanie, put the gun down. You don't
want to do this.

Stephanie fingers the trigger as tears roll down her cheeks.

EMILY
Stephanie.

STEPHANIE
I loved you, Sean. And I loved *you*,
Emily. This is the only way.

SEAN
But, Stephanie, I love y---

BANG! Stephanie shoots Sean in the chest, blowing a bloody
hole in his shirt. Sean clutches his chest and staggers
backwards, knees buckling.

STEPHANIE
Oh God! Oh no!

Stephanie wails and rushes to Sean, draping over him.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Don't die! Sean. Please, don't die. I
didn't mean to do that. I'm so sorry -

SEAN
(sputtering)
No, I'm sorry.

STEPHANIE
No, God, *please*. I got so caught up. But
I love you, Sean. Don't die.

Emily sips her martini, suddenly completely calm.

EMILY
Oh yes, God, Sean. Please don't die.
(a long beat)
Okay, cut the waterworks.

Stephanie looks up at her, confused. Emily draws a gun.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Get up.

Stephanie slowly rises to her feet.

EMILY (CONT'D)
You too, DiCaprio.

Sean lies limp, eyes closed. Dead. Emily kicks him in the
gut. Sean clenches and groans.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Get up! Show's over.

Sean gets up and stands with Stephanie. They both know they're screwed. Emily grins.

EMILY (CONT'D)
That was *almost* brilliant, Stephanie. Almost. So, the cops planted a mic somewhere in here. You shoot him with a blank. Fake blood. Nice cinematic touch. I confess everything. You really almost had me. I knew there was so much *more* to you, Stephanie. You've got real panache.

Spattered with fake blood all over her blouse, Stephanie looks genuinely touched. Another misplaced moment of bonding.

STEPHANIE
Thank you. You know that really means a lot to me.

Emily nods back.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
But you already did confess, Em. And the police are on their way.

EMILY
No, no, no, don't try that. You had me just a little buzzed from this ... but you're still a *standard* martini, Stephanie. You're not the standard-bearer from *Dukes*.

Stephanie stares back, confused. Suddenly, Emily does a *perfect imitation* of Stephanie's voice.

EMILY (CONT'D)
(as Stephanie)
"Hi Cops, Stephanie here! Change of plans. I'm meeting Emily and Sean at Darren's house now. Hurry!"

STEPHANIE
You sent the cops to *Darren's house*?

186

INT. DARREN'S HOUSE - AT THAT SAME MOMENT

186

Darren, Sona and Stacy are having a "Moms Night" at Darren's house. They're playing Pictionary and smoking pot as Stephanie's OLD VLOGS play in the background. Sona is taking a long drag as she draws something indecipherable.

DARREN
It's a virus ... it's a ... it's String Theory. Is it String theory?

BLAM!!! The front door is splintered by a battering ram as a SWAT TEAM storm in, guns drawn. The moms SCREAM.

SWAT LEADER
Hands up, weapons down! NOW!!!

DARREN
 (hands up, wailing)
 I have a prescription! It's for my sleep
 apnea!

187

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - BACK TO SCENE

187

Emily holds up a gun in one hand and, in the other -- THE BUG
 the cops planted. The small mic cord has been severed.

EMILY
 I've lived on the run for over a decade:
 you don't think I know how to manipulate
 the authorities?

SEAN
 So you're going to kill us?

EMILY
 A murder-suicide seems like the only
 fitting end for you two. And I believe
 our insurance will still pay for that.
 One door closes, another door opens.

SEAN
 You have always been fucking *crazy*.

BANG! Emily shoots Sean in the shoulder. He falls to his
 knees.

SEAN (CONT'D)
 Agh!! You really shot me!

EMILY
 I'm crazy. You said so yourself.

Emily aims the gun at Stephanie, who stares her down.

STEPHANIE
 You won't kill me, Emily.

EMILY
 (cocking the gun)
 The hell I won't. I'll have to add this
 to my list. A father, a sister ... and
 now my dear best friend.

Stephanie can't help but get sentimental, even in danger.

STEPHANIE
 Am I *really* your best friend? You're not
 just saying that?

EMILY
 I'm not just saying that.

STEPHANIE
 Because I felt that way, too - but I
 worried it was just me. I mean, it's so
 hard to connect with other Moms ...

EMILY
 Tell me about it. Imagine when you have a
 full-time job?

STEPHANIE
Oh, don't pull that crap! What I do is
work too, Emily. It's a full time job!

Emily chambers a bullet and steps ahead.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
I may not get paid for it, but believe
me, being a mother is HARD WORK. And then
I have my vlog on top of that. In fact,
maybe you'd like to be on my vlog some
time? Have you ever thought about that?
(off Emily's confused
look)
Like ... right now? Killing us might just
get me to a *million* subscribers.

Stephanie points to the HIDDEN LIPSTICK CAMERA camouflaged in
a FLOWER ARRANGEMENT by the stove.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
We're live streaming. And you just
confessed. Wave hello to the moms!

Emily locks eyes with Stephanie as it dawns on her -
Stephanie has outsmarted her. Stephanie manages a light
smile. Emily simply shakes her head.

EMILY
Oh, goddammit ...

SIRENS rise up in the background. Then Emily bolts from the
kitchen, gun in hand.

188 **INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS** 188

Emily bolts through the living room, then out the front door.

189 **EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS** 189

Emily sprints across the lawn toward her car across the
street. SIRENS approach.

STEPHANIE
Stop! Emily!

Emily stops and turns. Stephanie runs onto the front lawn.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
It's over, Emily. You can't outrun this.
Think of Nicky. Don't do it to him.
You're still his mom.

EMILY
He may be better off without *any* mom.

Emily aims the gun at Stephanie, who GASPS. Emily starts to
pull the trigger when ... BLAM!!! SHE FLIPS IN THE AIR, HIT
FULL ON BY A SPEEDING PRIUS. Her gun goes flying.

Darren gets out of the car heroically.

DARREN
Toyota Prius. Silent but deadly.

Darren walks over to Emily, who is prone on the ground.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Saw you on the vlog. You fuck with one of the moms, you fuck with all of us.

Emily kicks him in the groin. As he doubles over, she tries to get up but can't. She crawls on the asphalt as TWO POLICE CARS close in from the other direction, cherry and blue lights flashing, reflected in her eyes. Emily accepts defeat.

CAPTION: SIX MONTHS LATER

190

ON VIDEO VLOG - KITCHEN - DAY

190

Stephanie addresses the camera from Emily's kitchen.

STEPHANIE

Hi, Moms. Stephanie here. Well, it's a big day because this morning we signed up our one millionth subscriber, Mrs. Carol Findley of Ames, Iowa! Thanks for joining us, Carol. As our newest friend, you should know that in addition to my usual helpful tips and recipes, I am now also taking on any unsolved mysteries. Turns out I have a nose not only for sniffing out the freshest basil but also criminals who thought they got away with it. So, if you have a cold case or a mystery to unravel, drop me a line. But for now... let's focus on my favorite *cold soup*: gazpacho!

191

EXT. PRISON YARD - YORK CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

191

Boss' "I DON'T GIVE A FUCK" blasts on a boombox. We're in the yard of a women's prison in Niantic, CT. Various cliques of women engaged in different activities and conversations. On the basketball court, there's a seriously competitive and cut-throat pick-up game going down. Right in the mix is --

EMILY. Racing up and down the court like a pro. Stealing the ball. Sweaty, athletic, take no prisoners. She looks fabulous in her orange jumpsuit with a more natural beauty. No make-up, hair in a messy ponytail, more herself than ever before. She swishes the ball in the hoop and high fives her TEAMMATES with a grin. A GUARD comes out.

GUARD

Hey, Runway. You got a visitor.

Emily peels off from the game. Her teammates groan.

192

INT. VISITORS ROOM - YORK CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

192

Emily walks in to see Stephanie and Nicky at a table. Nicky races toward her. She scoops him up in her arms and hugs him so tightly he groans.

NICKY

Can't ... breathe ...

Emily laughs and lets him go.

EMILY
You're growing so fast.

Nicky pulls his lower lip down to show off his missing teeth.

EMILY (CONT'D)
And you lost another one!

NICKY
The tooth fairy got me a gumball machine.

EMILY
Well, that was nice of her.

NICKY
(with a hard look)
I know it's Dad.

EMILY
You're getting too smart for me.

She joins Stephanie at the table, Nicky on her lap. Stephanie pushes a plate of cookies wrapped in saran across to her.

STEPHANIE
With agave instead of sugar.

EMILY
Good. They go a long way in here.

NICKY
Now can I have one?!

STEPHANIE
Of course, Nicky.

Nicky grabs a cookie, shoving the whole thing in his mouth.

NICKY
(mouth full)
I'm thirsty. Can I get a Coke?

STEPHANIE
I'd rather you had milk inst--
(then, with a smile)
Ask your mom.

Emily laughs and hands him a buck from a wad of cash tucked inside her bra. He darts off to the vending machine.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Okay. Whattaya got for me?

Emily glances over her shoulder to make sure the GUARD isn't listening.

EMILY
Inez Montoya. She used to be the guy's housekeeper before she got nabbed for wire fraud. She says he hides cash, lots of it, in a toolbox in the garage.

STEPHANIE

That's where they were putting it. Of course! I knew he was guilty. Thank you.

EMILY

You keep bringing the supplies, I'll keep doling out the info.

They share a smile. Emily takes a bite of a cookie. Frowns.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Do me a favor, Dark Side. Next time, use real sugar.

STEPHANIE

Copy that, Runway.

As the two women share a smile of mutual respect, BEGIN END CREDITS ...

193

EXT. WARFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

193

UNDER THE END CREDITS, the BELL rings and all the kids pour out of the school with their parents. Stephanie walks out with her boys -- Miles and Nicky -- who have bonded like brothers. Darren races up to Stephanie.

Stephanie begins to sign her name onto EVERY SLOT of a SIGN-UP SHEET when -

DARREN

Stephanie! We need your help! There's been a terrible crime.

STEPHANIE

What?

Darren grabs her hand and hauls her off. She resists.

DARREN

Come with me. I have to show you. There's a dead body in the schoolyard!
(to Miles and Nicky)
Boys, I'm borrowing your Mom!

Stephanie's jaw drops as she follows Darren ...

194

EXT. WARFIELD SCHOOL - SCHOOLYARD - DAY

194

A MAN'S BODY is splayed face down on the ground. A KID (5) is drawing a chalk outline around it. Confused, Stephanie turns over the body and discovers -- SEAN. Grinning ear to ear.

STEPHANIE

Sean. That's a pretty dark joke.

Sean nods to ANOTHER KID who stands next to a boom box. The kid hits the button. MUSIC kicks in and a FLASH MOB begins.

Everyone we've met is there: Sona, Stacey, Darren, the teacher Mrs. Kerry, even Detective Meany -- are there to participate in the choreographed performance, along with all the ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KIDS -- Miles and Nicky at the forefront.

Two COOL KIDS, 9 and 11, watch the flash mob with disdain.

COOL KID #1
Uch. This is so 2010.

COOL KID #2
Totally embarrassing.

Stephanie stands at the center, beaming, her eyes filled with tears as she takes in all this effort for her. At the end of the song, Sean kneels on one knee and pops open a velvet jewelry box. INSIDE IS THE VINTAGE DIAMOND AND SAPPHIRE RING THAT BELONGED TO HIS MOTHER.

SEAN
Stephanie Smothers. Internet sensation
and P.I. Mom. Please say you'll marry me.
Or I'll have a lot of explaining to do to
all these people.

STEPHANIE
Well ... I'll have to ask the moms first.
(off his look)
Yes. Of course I'll marry you.

Stephanie throws herself into his arms. The crowd explodes. It's a happy ending! Why the hell not? They've all been through a lot.

FADE OUT.