

BLINK

Written by

Tracy Barone
November 7, 2018

Based on the novel "Happy Family" by Tracy Barone

Matthew Carnahan Circus Products

"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived
forwards."
- Kierkegaard

"Us physicists believe the separation between past, present and
future is only an illusion, although a convincing one."
- Einstein

CLOSE ON A YOUNG WOMAN'S FACE

Framed by punk, short, black hair. Multiple piercings in her ears. Her unblinking eyes are open. They're mismatched colors, the pupils moving slightly, dilating....

THE CAMERA PULLS UP AND OUT so we see--

EXT. THOMPKINS SQUARE PARK, ALPHABET CITY, NYC - NIGHT

The woman's body, lying on a walkway. We HOVER above her; blood seeps from the back of her head, pooling on pavement littered with used needles, trash.

Out of frame, Sketchy Motherfuckers are doing sketchy shit. We hear their VOICES AS MURMURS, as if underwater, disbursing in the WAIL OF SIRENS, coming closer and closer...

We stay on the woman, looking right at us as she's bathed in blue emergency lights. We hear the amplified SOUND OF A CAR DOOR OPENING, CLOSING; FOOTSTEPS; SQUAWKING OF POLICE RADIO.

A COP'S LEGS

Move into frame. We see more of him as he bends to quickly check the woman's vital signs, walkie-talkie in hand.

COP
(under his breath)
Fuck me.
(into walkie talkie)
I got a white female, looks to be
mid 20's...GSW to the head...Have
fire rescue and backup units
respond, Code 3.

The Cop is joined by another COP, they are replaced by...

EMS WORKERS

Hustling, attempting to stabilize the woman, lifting her onto a stretcher. CAMERA is shaky; the images get grainy as we PULL UP, faster and faster....

THE TRAUMA SCENE

Ambulance, cop cars, cops, bystanders...getting smaller and smaller.

It's as if we're tethered to the reality below by a long string that's getting longer and finer as we're WHOOSHED UPWARD in a dark tunnel.

Claustrophobic. Twitchy. Skydiving without a parachute only we're moving up not down. The VOICES AND SOUNDS from the scene below whispering, vibrating, coming from everywhere at once. The only way to orient is to look dizzily down at...

THE TRAUMA SCENE

In a pinspot; a mini world that wavers at the edges like the skin could peel off. And it does as we hurtle deeper up the rabbit hole, the vibration of sound crescendoing then FULL STOP as we...

HARD IN ON:

CHERI MATZNER (27)

Our woman, looking a lot more lively. She's edgy, striking, in a jolie laide way. She's standing in the middle of a....

INT. WHITE ROOM

As in all white, can't tell what's the ceiling or floor. Think Kubrick. Mirrors surround her like in a fun house. Music is piped in, jaunty, retro, maybe early Serge Gainsborough.

Cheri looks around; *where the fuck am I? Is this a dream?* She feels her head. Checks her body. She's intact.

ANGLE ON THE MIRRORS

The reflected images ape her movements, seemingly in unison...a few way down the line may just be a tad off.

CHERI (V.O.)

They say right before you die your
life flashes before your eyes. That
doesn't even begin to describe it.

Cheri notices something is hand written on the mirror in front of her. Suddenly, like Alice in Wonderland, she's standing too close to read them. She reaches out to rub the writing with her hand and is thrown back a few paces.

Now she can see the words but they're backwards. Cheri turns to look in the...

MIRROR BEHIND HER

The words read: THERE ARE. The third word is still a series pointillist dots, blurry.

CHERI

Fuck this.

Boom. She's thrown back again as the whole room rotates.

THE MIRROR IN FRONT OF HER

The writing is now forwards and clear: THERE ARE MULTITUDES.

CHERI (V.O.)

It's not your life that flashes...

Cheri turns to see the fun house chain of....

REFLECTED IMAGES OF HERSELF

Which now refuse to fall in line. One IRREVERENT CHERI pulls her hair. Another scratches crazily. Another dances; the one behind her pounds on the mirror, screaming. Still another Cheri turns her back to us, walking into the portal of the mirror, into whatever alternate reality, like a movie, is playing out within.

CHERI (V.O.)

It's your lives.

We PUSH IN on Cheri in the center of the rebellion of alternates, her mind desperately trying to order, and we--

FADE TO BLACK.

IN BLACK:

The underground version of "Teenagers from Mars" by the Misfits snarls its punk anthem.

SUPER: TEN DAYS EARLIER

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE, NYC - VARIOUS - DAY

We TRACK, jarringly, over burned out buildings, garbage-strewn lots, crumbling tenements, shuttered storefronts exploding with graffiti, one reads: "Mug a Yuppie."

SUPER: "LOWER EAST SIDE, NYC - 1987"

We PLUNGE into the war zone, where the twin plagues of AIDS and crack have hit hard, weaving through the human trade: marauding SKINHEADS; mohawked PUNKS; SQUATTERS infesting a derelict building; CRACKHEADS *whooshing* up; TEEN GANGSTA's displaying 80's bling, sitting outside a housing project with Uzi's on their laps; JUNKIES lining up to score from DEALERS who deal behind cinderblocks.

EXT. AVENUE C - AFTERNOON

We come up on the BACK OF CHERI, in grungy punk garb, wearing a walkman. Blaring The Misfits. Her posture says 'don't fuck with me'; she's on edge.

Here's the thing about Cheri, her toughness is an amulet against the dragon forces of her desire for belonging. Because she's never fit in. Anywhere.

We follow as she turns into a shitty apartment building.

INT. SHITTY STUDIO APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Cheri walks in and freezes. She pulls off her walkman.

The place has been tossed to within an inch of its life. Empty bottles of booze and cigarette butts dot the wreckage like flotsam.

From the look on Cheri's face, this wasn't random.

She checks out the grimy window. Her POV: A cop car screeches up to her building.

CHERI (V.O.)

It doesn't have to be like this.
How often have you thought that?
Choices. I know, we are nothing if
not a sum of our choices...one pill
makes you larger, the other makes
you small. But what about other
people's choices?

She hastily rescues a few things from the floor and shoves them in a bag. Her phone RINGS in the background.

CHERI (V.O.)

People you love. Strangers who
randomly cross your path. People
you've never even fucking met.
Their choices can affect who you
are, can change your life forever.

She glances at PHOTOS: a graduation pic of her in uniform from the police academy, lingers on pictures of her and another COP, clearly her boyfriend, taken in good times. A flicker of emotion crosses her face, we flash to:

INT. MUSTER ROOM, 9TH PRECINCT POLICE STATION - MORNING

Cheri, in uniform, walks in to roll call, as she's jostled and harassed by the room of ALL MALE COPS.

COP #1
(as if coughing)
Dyke.

She stares straight ahead, her mantra: outlast. Another COP waves her over to an open chair next to him. As she cautiously approaches the open seat, she sees there's...

A BIG DILDO

Standing straight up on the seat. GUFFAWS. Now Cheri looks that cop dead in the eye:

CHERI
What? You outgrew this one already?
Balls deep? Impressive.

That gets everyone going.

SARGEANT
Okay, okay. Simmer down people,
simmer the fuck down! We're short
staffed today, so Matzner, you're
in rotation.

Cheri's surprised. Now there's real GRUMBLING.

COP #1
No way I'm taking a broad.

Cheri's like the last kid on the ball field, waiting to be picked.

SARGEANT
We ain't got all day, she's gonna'
ride with someone.

From the back of the room:

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
She's with me.

EDDIE NORRIS (Irish, late 20s), the boyfriend from the photos, walks in, late, exuding the kind of confidence that makes men want to be him. The cops are shocked - if Eddie Norris taps you, you're in the game.

Eddie motions to Cheri: let's go. She hustles up, makes a little nod of thanks.

EDDIE
If you fuck up with me, you won't
fuck up again.

INT. SHITTY STUDIO APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Cheri SNAPS OUT of her memory. Moves past the photographs of her and Eddie. Not taking those.

The phone keeps RINGING. She steps over the debris of her life and goes to her closet. What's left of it.

CHERI (V.O.)
Any choice precludes all other
choices. It can all hinge on a
split second decision. If one
moment, or a series of moments,
were different...

Feeling along the top shelf, she finds her lock box. Pulls it down and opens it with a key from her keychain. Inside are handguns. She grabs them, shoves a Glock down her waistband, puts the others in her bag.

Her hands shake. She fishes in her pocket, pops a hit of speed.

Someone knocks on her door. BANGS.

CHERI (V.O.)
Everything wouldn't have gone to
total shit. I, for example,
wouldn't be about to do something I
can't undo, bound by a secret
nobody believes I can keep.

She opens the window, crawls onto the fire escape.

CHERI (V.O.)
Then again I was born in a
labyrinth of secrets. Nature?
Nurture? Chance? Order? Whatever
your poison, it's way more complex,
way more...unknowable..than you can
possibly imagine.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - AFTERNOON

Cheri's two, scary high floors up. She looks down at the street.

CHERI (V.O.)
But let's not get ahead of
ourselves. Let's start linear,
let's ease in at the entrance of
the labyrinth. My ground zero.

Off her mid-jump, we --

SMASH TO

EXT. MIDDLE CLASS, SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

MIRIAM (16, ambiguously exotic) same mid-jump. Her exit is from her bedroom window.

She gets to her feet and runs hard and fast away from her parent's home, a wild fire of innocence and trouble.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Miriam smokes a joint as she walks along the highway, thumb out.

Her coat blows open in the winter chill. She doesn't feel it, she's too stoked on the adrenaline of escape.

SUPER UP: 1961, New Jersey Turnpike

An old Dodge Dart pulls over. She peers in the window. GERRY, (late 20s, square-jaw masculine) flashes a smile that's equal parts dangerous and safe.

INT. GERRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Miriam and Gerry fuck on Gerry's creaky bed. Dusty street light seeps in from the blinds to illuminate her lithe body engulfed in his. He's passionate, tender. She's thinking of other things.

REALTOR (PRELAP)

As you can see, it's a lot of house
and there's plenty of room to grow
into.

EXT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE - DAY

A REALTOR in a pastel coat with an nose as upturned as her hairdo shows newlyweds SOL (31) and CICI (20) MATZNER the BACKYARD. Cici, a blond Italian who wears clothes like nakedness itself, clings to Sol in the winter air. Sol is as awkward in his body as she is spectacular in hers.

REALTOR

It doesn't look like much now, but
this is spectacular in the Spring.
Full of roses, irises, lilacs.

Cici's mouth lights in a smile.

CICI
 (to Sol)
*Lillà, il mio preferito! Sarà un
 veramente bel giardino, amore mio.*

REALTOR
 (playing to Cici)
 Perfect for *bambinos* to run
 aroundin. And parties. As the wife
 of a Manhattan doctor, I'm sure
 you'll be in demand in our little
 city here.

*

CICI
 (heavy accent)
 Is perfect for a *famiglia*.

Cici beams up at her man. It's at times like these when Sol
 still can't believe this stunning woman is his wife.

SOL
 It is a lot of house.
 (to realtor who is
 hovering)
 We'll join you inside in a minute.

The realtor retreats.

CICI
 A lot? This mean good or no good?

SOL
 Neither. Just... Like Goldilocks,
 you know that fairy tale? We want
 it to be not too big or too little.

Cici nods, looks out at the barren garden, the trees in the
 back wild, like a forest.

SOL (CONT'D)
 But if you feel it's just right...

Cici turns to Sol with childlike joy.

The realtor sticks her head out of the door to the house.

REALTOR
 Did I mention that Montclair is
 known as The Florence of New
 Jersey?

EXT. ST. VINCENT'S HOSPITAL, NYC - EVENING

Venerable institution. Busy Manhattan street.

INT. RADIOLOGY ASSOCIATES, ST. VINCENT'S - EVENING

Sol, still wearing his lab coat, is working late at his desk, tapping at a big electronic calculator. He's got a sheet of numbers in front of him and loan documents.

JONATHAN (O.C.)
No matter how you crunch the
numbers on that thing they're not
going to lie.

Sol's focused. He gives a 'yeah' wave with his hand.

JONATHAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
You know why I diddle and dawdle
here?

Sol's partner, DR. JONATHAN BENNETT, (50s, heavy set, avuncular), suit and tie, plops down across from him, smoking a cigarette.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
To avoid my wife. Not much to say
with the kids gone; am I supposed
to give a rats ass about her
shopping and mahjong? Not sure what
she gives a rat's ass about with me
except that, like death and taxes,
I'm certain. At least to pay bills.
I'd like to keep being certain.

Sol looks up.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
We haven't gotten up to speed on
building the practice, son. It's
starting to show.

SOL
I'm not looking at the business--

JONATHAN
My point.

Now he has Sol's full attention.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
Don't get me wrong, I know the road
to domestication is full of
distraction. Even for the usually
non-distractible. Not that I blame
you, with a looker like your wife.
But...now you're in the shackles
like the rest of us.
(MORE)

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

And while I don't pretend to have your aptitude for invention, or the training in special procedures, I do know our bread and butter.

SOL

You didn't bring me for bread and butter. X-rays are fine, we can do more, but that's small thinking. Interventional procedures--

JONATHAN

Aren't standardized--

SOL

Yet. Soon they will be and then the game is changed. My referrals from those alone will pay for us to move out of here. Provide better care to patients at a lower cost.

JONATHAN

The future, I have no doubt, holds great things.

He stands, puts his hand on Sol's shoulder.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

But in the meantime, how about we focus on servicing our hospital contract and getting more patients?

Sol's not comfortable with being told what to do. He nods.
After a beat:

SOL

By the way, did you think more about investing in my polymer patent?

JONATHAN

Johnson and Johnson is band aids; can't see how that dog will hunt. But your pill coating, now that's something I'd be interested in buying a piece of.

SOL

Thanks but I'm not looking to partner with anyone on that.

JONATHAN

Fair enough. I'd keep that for myself if I was you too.

(MORE)

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

(a beat)

Though never say never. Especially
with wives and houses.

Off Sol's look:

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Take it from me, son, they're both
expensive. And not gonna' get less
so with age.

INT. SOL'S GRAMERCY PARK APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's a small, bachelor's one bedroom. The remnants of risotto
along with an empty wine bottle and mismatched glasses are on
the folding kitchen table, Sol's one skillet drying in the
rack on the counter.

CICI (O.S.)

Love which pardons no-one lov-ed
from loving in return, sei-zed me--

Sounds of SPLASHING, SLIPPING.

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

Porca Miseria!

LAUGHTER. We follow the laughter into...

THE BATHROOM

Cici and Sol are in a small, claw foot tub, re-arranging
themselves. Cici giggles as Sol holds up Dante's Inferno like
a captured flag.

SOL

Saved, despite your best efforts,
Mrs. Matzner.

CICI

Is not fair. You were destructing
me, stirring me with you generals.

She stands up, Venus rising. Pulls her hair into a knot.

SOL

What you do to my generals is not
fair. Now don't think this gets you
out of your turn.

He pats his chest so she can sit and lean back on him.

CICI
Daaaaiiiiii, do no say 'but you are
doing so good.'

SOL
I will. Because you are.

CICI
I am sheet at it.

She sighs dramatically and sits in front of him. He hands her
the book.

SOL
(kissing the top of her
head)
Anything worth learning takes time.

A beat. She leans her head back, looking up at him.

CICI
No worry about Jo-nathan.

SOL
I'm not worried. What makes you say
that?

CICI
Marco D'Ameri...

Sol's face clouds, this isn't a name they mention.

CICI (CONT'D)
He say the more things you do in
life, the more they can go to
sheet.

SOL
Your step-father has
some...limiting views. As we know.

Cici turns, as best she can, to face him.

CICI
Like Jo-nathan. You will make
things to change *medicina*. What
will he make?

SOL
The only thing that seems to
interest him: more money.

A beat.

CICI
You wish that he can see you as I
see you.

Sol looks at her tenderly, tucks a strand of her wet hair
behind her ear.

SOL
You think you're ready for a bigger
bathtub?

CICI
(snuggling into him)
Ma..this is so co-zzey.

SOL
It comes with a bigger house. The
one you liked.

CICI
Che cosa? Solomon?

SOL
I'm buying it.

She looks at him, *really?* He looks at her, *really.*

CICI
Ma cherie amour, grazie, grazie.

She kisses him once, twice.

SOL
OK now, before we get too excited,
you're on Canto Five, mid page,
"Seized me."

Cici leans back down on him, with a naughty smile. Puts his
hand on her belly, moves it down between her legs as she
reads.

CICI
"That, as you see, it still does
not aban-don me."

Off her breathless moan:

INT. GERRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

They've been having quite the weekend party. Miriam sits on
the side of the bed, wearing Gerry's shirt and her panties.
She pinches a ball of hash, sticks it on the edge of a name
tag pin and shimmies over to the bedside table.

Gerry, dressed in a rowdy leisure suit, puts a bag down on the bed.

GERRY

Take a look. I'm not up on ladies habidashery. Made my best guess.

MIRIAM

That's just for men.

(off his look)

Habidashery. It doesn't cross genders.

GERRY

Oh, you don't say. Well, I was thinking. About what you said the other night, how you felt there's something more out there for you, waiting.

She lights the ball of hash, flips a water glass over it. The smoke snakes up and around, trying to find a way out.

MIRIAM

Uh-huh.

She slides the glass to the edge of the table, puts her lips to the rim and inhales. The white smoke speeds to her.

GERRY

Two words: Speed. Reading.

He goes to his briefcase, pulls out an Evelyn Wood Speed Reading Course manual. She exhales.

GERRY (CONT'D)

What's a better racket than selling Bibles? Teaching people how to read Bibles. You have your high school diploma right? I said you did on account of your being eighteen but maybe I shouldn't have taken the liberty.

Miriam eyes the book. He takes this as a sign of interest.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Ok, liberty granted. Evelyn Woods can read 2,700 words a minute. You heard that right, a minute! And she's a fucking she, pardon my French.

MIRIAM
Vous etes pardonne.

Miriam picks up a pool cue that's up against the wall.
Fiddles with it.

GERRY
Not that I'd kick you out of bed
for eating crackers. But you. You
are full of surprises. I figured
you were foreign. Your people,
where they from?

MIRIAM
People are overrated.

He raises an eyebrow. Takes the pool cue from her.

GERRY
Don't fuck with the Szamboti. It's
inherited, so to speak.

He leans the cue back against the wall.

GERRY (CONT'D)
But I digress.

He sits next to her on the bed, opens the book.

GERRY (CONT'D)
Watch and learn, sweet thing, watch
and learn.

He runs his finger down the page.

GERRY (CONT'D)
No mouthing the words or sounding
them in your head.

MIRIAM
You read that whole page?

GERRY
Yep.

She ponders. He ponders.

MIRIAM
You get more Necco's?

He pushes the bag towards her. She riffles through it, finds
a roll. Pops a few in her mouth.

GERRY

You sure go through the candy.
You're not doing smack are you?

She stares at him. Is she saying of course not? Hard to tell.

GERRY (CONT'D)

One thing in life you learn is that
you gotta' draw a line. You're the
only one who needs to know where it
is but know it. And don't go over
it for nobody.

He leans over takes a hit of the hash, checks his watch.
Shoves the book in his briefcase.

GERRY (CONT'D)

Gotta' fly. I'll be home same time.
Nobody's gonna' mess with you
because they know me, but be
careful if you go out. See if
there's something there you can
wear; I can take you with me
tomorrow.

He goes to kiss her. Miriam sucks on her candy, starts
rolling another ball of hash.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE GERRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gerry walks past a snow drift carrying a grocery bag.

INT. GERRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

He puts the bag down in the dingy kitchenette. Takes a beer
out of it, cracks it open.

GERRY

Hungry? I could eat a fucking bear.
And a cub or two.

He takes a pull on his beer while unpacking: canned tuna,
cream of mushroom soup, potato chips, noodles.

GERRY (CONT'D)

I warn you I make one thing and one
thing only. All I promise is it
will be warm. Hey Miriam! Don't
tell me you're sleeping?

A beat. He stops what he's doing, goes around the corner.

The messy bed is empty.

EXT. GERRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gerry sits on the stoop, waiting. The snow drift glows in the street light.

EXT. GERRY'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT NIGHT

Gerry sits on the stoop, exhaling cold clouds of air, waiting.

EXT. GERRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The stoop is empty. He's not waiting.

The snow melts away. Water runs across asphalt.

The sound of RUNNING WATER turns into a systematic SHHH-TIK-TIK-TIK...

EXT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE - DAY

A traveling lawn sprinkler goes back and forth over what's now a verdant lawn. The garden is a riot of flowers. It's a hot day; a very pregnant Cici in a mod maternity dress and heels picks the last of the lilacs and puts them in a basket.

CHERI (V.O.)

In case you're wondering, one of these women is my mother.

INT. KORVETTE DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Muzak plays. Miriam sashays down a jewelry aisle, eating a candy bar she's just stolen. She casually swipes a necklace and some earrings.

As she turns the corner and nonchalantly heads for the exit, we see her pregnant belly pushing against the fabric of her summer dress.

CHERI (V.O.)

Actually, both of them are.

SPLIT SCREEN -- CICI AND MIRIAM**INT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE - DAY**

Cici's in the kitchen, putting lilacs in a vase and checking on her pasta sauce. COOKIE (20s, African American), in a maids uniform two sizes too big for her whippet-like frame, buzzes around. Cici, not used to anything about her new life, tries to stay out of her way.

EXT. KORVETTE DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Miriam exits the store and spies a mother and her little girl. The girl is holding a PUPPY. Miriam watches them for a beat.

The little girl wiggles her fingers at Miriam. We hear a WHISTLE.

Angle on a DEALER DUDE WITH AN AFRO (20s) and a HIPPY GIRL (late teens) waiting in the alley.

Miriam trots over to her friends. Afro-dude gestures with his hand - what you get? She pulls out her haul.

CHERI (V.O.)
It's complicated. And random. Like
any sperm meets egg story, just
more so.

IN BLACK

A white, globular sphere.

CHERI (V.O.)
My cells divided to conquer.

The cell pulls, then splits into two. We're in a slide like you see in sex education class.

CHERI (V.O.)
Again and again. Creating the great
genetic swirl and swill, the base
code, for who I would become.

Slide: two split into four. Four into eight. We SPEED through slides; cells continue multiply at a stellar rate. It all looks like a geometric pattern, it becomes colorized and we're

CLOSE ON MOD FABRIC

With those geometric shapes. PULL BACK to reveal--

CICI

Lounging on the sofa covered in said fabric in...

INT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

A big, partially furnished room. Cici fans herself while skimming out of date Italian magazines.

CHERI (V.O.)
 My mothers lived a few miles from
 each other but worlds apart.

Cici's gaze wanders out the window. Her POV: On the street
 outside TWO WOMEN push prams, chatting in easy camaraderie.

Cookie enters from the kitchen, wiping her hands on her
 apron.

COOKIE
 You need somethin' Mz. M? If not,
 and it's all right with you, I'll
 run down the street and get me some
 Brillo.

Cici looks at her: what's a Brillo? Hit with a wave of
 insecurity and heartburn, Cici runs upstairs.

CHERI (V.O.)
 One an immigrant for love, still
 clinging to what she left behind.

INT. BABY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Warm yellow walls, bassinet, rocker - everything at the
 ready. Cici shuts the door, goes to a portable record player
 on the dresser. Drops the needle. It's Maria Callas, Il
 Pirata, the voice commanding, passionate.

Cici picks up an old handmade stuffed elephant that's missing
 an eye from the rocker. Sinks into the chair.

We MOVE IN on her awash in longing for something she never
 quite had but in memory is terribly dear. Her cheeks are
 flushed, her skin glows with perspiration.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Summer of love jam fest. MUSICIANS play to a HIPPIY crowd in
 various stages of various highs.

We find Miriam, twirling, sparkling in the center. She turns
 her face to receive a hit of acid from the Afro Dude from
 Korvette's.

CHERI (V.O.)
 The other a child of immigrants
 praying at the altar of the land of
 the free.

The hippie girl strokes Miriam's pregnant belly. Kisses her
 on the lips. It's all laughing and falling down fun until...

COPS appear to break it up.

Chaos as everyone splits. It's now only falling down for Miriam. Her friends run off ahead of her. Her knee is bleeding, she scrambles to get up.

CHERI (V.O.)
How would one world have made me
different than the other?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Dodgy area. Miriam, her trip fading, walks quickly, scared. No money. No drugs.

CHERI (V.O.)
The possibilities are mind fucking.

A car slows, coming up from her from behind. The window rolls down; a CREEPY MAN is inside. She walks faster, turns into an alley.

MATCH CUT:

EXT. ALLEY - PRESENT DAY

Cheri turns into the alley. Housing projects rise up like hate in the background.

CHERI (V.O.)
Even more mind fucking if you
consider equifinality; that certain
outcomes will happen eventually
despite what happened before them.
Hard to believe that any path I
took would have led me, like a long
con, to this....

She starts to run...

INT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE, HALLWAY

Cookie is knocking on the door to the baby's room. The Callas record SKIPS loudly.

COOKIE
Mz. M?

She slowly opens the door. Cici is collapsed on the carpet, a trail of blood between her legs.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOOR

Cici, on a gurney with an oxygen mask over her face, is wheeled into a operating room. The heavy doors close, shutting us out.

INT. HOSPITAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

Doors are pushed open. Sol rushes to a nurse's station.

INT. WAITING ROOM

Sol sits with his head in his hands. A DOCTOR (40s, glasses), dressed in scrubs, walks in. Sol stands, scanning the doctor's expression the way he reads X-rays. The doctor extends his hand.

DOCTOR

Dr. Chuck Dubin. I'm the surgeon on call.

SOL

Is she OK? Is my wife OK?

DR. DUBIN

She will be. It was a complicated surgery. Mr. Matzner, your wife had a condition called placenta previa. That's where the placenta is implanted over the opening of the cervix. There is total previa and partial, the differences are significant--

SOL

(interrupting)

Dr. Matzner. I take it this was significant.

DR. DUBIN

(clears his throat)

As a result, she was hemorrhaging, in jeopardy. I had to perform an emergency Cesarian hysterectomy.

SOL

Hysterectomy? Jesus. She's only twenty years old....

DR. DUBIN

It was the only way to stop the bleeding. And ensure her survival.

Sol takes this in as best he can.

SOL
And the baby?

INT. NURSERY

Sol stares at an incubator which holds his tiny, intubated SON. We hear the SOUND OF THE DEVICE, oxygen in and out. He awkwardly puts his hand on the clear plastic.

He waits a beat, holding his son the only way he can; the thin shield the only thing and everything between them.

After a beat, a NURSE comes and give Sol a comforting look. She disconnects the machine, moving around him. Until Sol is left, a slight RINGING in his ears...the tinnitus increases and we're--

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, ICU

Silent. All sound held in abeyance as Sol strokes Cici's hand over her IV catheter. She wakes up, in pain, confused. Pulls the oxygen mask off her face, struggles to sit.

We don't hear the question she keeps asking, over and over, with more desperation. Or the answer Sol is giving her. But we know.

A NURSE walks in, responding to the distress. Tries to calm Cici, starts putting medication in her IV, which Cici swats away, as she's getting more agitated.

And now all SOUND comes rushing back:

CICI
Il mio bambino. I must see my baby.
I must see! Solomon, tell her,
Solomon!

NURSE
It's all right Mrs. Matzner, we're
just giving you something to help
with pain.
(to Sol)
Could you hold her still?

CICI
Dove il mio bambino? She has lost
him. Solomon, it is she who loose
him.

The Nurse tries again to get the medication into the IV.
Cici's not having it.

SOL

It's Ok, nurse. I can handle this.
Darling, just lie back. For a
second. Can you do this for me?

CICI

No! She take him. He is here. Find
him, Solomon. *Per favore.*

NURSE

I'll have to get the doctor.

SOL

I have this under control, thank
you. Shhhhhh, *cara*, Shhhhhh.

The nurse makes a note on Cici's chart and exits. Cici
clutches Sol's arm.

CICI

Find *mio bambino*. Solomon, *per
favore.*

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sol is in debate with Dr. Dubin.

SOL

If this was your wife, would you
care about protocol?

DR. DUBIN

I'm not sure what I would do. But
you're asking something that is
unusual.

SOL

Look, I understand you're not the
primary. If we could wait for Dr.
Roberts we would. But we can't, so
I'm asking for a professional
courtesy. And to let me handle
telling her...the rest.

DR. DUBIN

She's going to have some very
difficult questions.

SOL

I know. But one blow at a time.
She's too fragile for anything else
right now.

I/E. HOSPITAL ROOM, ICU

The Nurse holds a swaddled infant and is about to walk into Cici's room with it. Sol stops her: it is his burden to bear, this small, heavy thing.

CICI
(stretching out her arms)
Mio bambino...

Sol gives the bundle to her. Cici pulls back the blanket and clasps the baby to her chest. Off her WAIL, the sound of all hope and joy being extinguished...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, ICU - THE NEXT DAY

Cici is lying in bed, looking up at Sol who is unshaven, in the same clothes.

CICI
(weak)
Solomon, when do they say we can
start again, when we can make
another baby?

Sol's thrown, this is too soon. He takes deep breath, like a swimmer who knows he's going to be under water for a long time.

SOL
Sweetheart. I am so sorry.

INT. DIFFERENT HOSPITAL ROOM, VARIOUS SHOTS

- The nurse tries to give Cici a shot; she refuses.
- Cici, in a fit of weeping, claws at her stitches.
- Sol walks into the room with a PRIEST. The Priest, FATHER JULIAN (30s) goes to Cici's bedside to talk to her.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOOR

Father Julian is talking to Sol.

FATHER JULIAN
The Lord's hands are much bigger
than our own. As much as we want to
take away our loved one's pain,
it's not up to us.

Sol's not buying all the Lord business.

FATHER JULIAN (CONT'D)

I know that's not the kind of advice you want, despite it being the truth. I can tell you to invite normalcy - once she's home, reach out to friends, family for support. If she has a family member who can come visit--

SOL

No. That's...not possible.

FATHER JULIAN

I see. Well it will take time. Come to church; we haven't seen much of you since your marriage. You had the courage to embrace the faith. Now let it help heal you.

SOL

(extending his hand)

Thank you for coming, Father.

FATHER JULIAN

Don't under estimate what rest can do either.

SOL

I'll make sure she gets that when she's home.

FATHER JULIAN

I meant you.

EXT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Old newspapers are on the front doorstep. Sol opens the door, mail litters the hallway.

INT. SOL AND CICI'S BEDROOM

Sol is looking through his closet for a clean shirt. Finds one that passes the sniff test. His foot kicks against a bag. He pulls it out. It's Cici's go to the hospital bag, with a baby rattle and blanket.

Sol sits on the corner of the bed, holding his shirt.

He picks up the phone on the bed stand. Rotary dials.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Halloo?

SOL
(into the phone)
Mom?

A beat of silence.

SOL (CONT'D)
Mother, don't hang up Mom? I just
wanted to tell you...the thing
is...we...lost the baby. There were
complications. Cici's going to be
Ok, but....Are you there? For
Christ's sake, just say something
so I know you're listening.

He switches the phone to his other hand.

SOL (CONT'D)
You knew she was pregnant...you
sent back my letter with tape on
it. You didn't seal it very well;
the paper was folded differently.

A beat.

SOL (CONT'D)
Mom?

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
I'm sorry. You must have the wrong
number.

The phone clicks then the line goes dead. Sol slowly puts the
phone back in the cradle.

EXT. MIRIAM'S PARENT'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Miriam stands at the front door to the tidy box of a house.
Shoes are lined up outside on the mat. She glances over her
shoulder. Fishes inside a flower pot, finds a key. On
instinct, she slips off her shoes.

INT. KITCHEN

Ravenous, Miriam eats from the refrigerator like the teenager
she is. On the wall we notice a frame with Arabic letters.
Prayer mat on the floor.

The back door bangs open. Miriam freezes. Then quickly jams
herself in the small, open pantry.

A skinny teenage boy, SIAMAK (13), walks in to the kitchen
and goes to the fridge. Reaches in for a tupperware; the lid
is askance. He shrugs, takes the bowl.

Inside the pantry, Miriam listens to her brother's retreating footsteps. Accidentally KNOCKS against a broom.

Siamak puts the bowl on the counter, turns to look in the pantry.

SIAMAK

Mimi?

He's relieved to see her, she's relieved it's him. He wraps his arms around her; and now he takes in all of her.

SIAMAK (CONT'D)

Ya lahwy! Shit, mother of God,
fuck! Fuuuuuck!

MIRIAM

(a bit amused)

You curse! Since when you do curse?

SIAMAK

Since when? I always...well, I
curse when...when...look at you!
This is bad. Very, very bad.

MIRIAM

Don't say anything, Mak, I swear,
keep your mouth closed or I'll--

SIAMAK

(a stream)

What do you mean don't say
anything? Do you know how worried
we've all been, do you have any
idea? What happened?

MIRIAM

What does it look like happened?

SIAMAK

(earnest)

Who did this to you, Mimi? Tell me
his name. I'll kill him.

MIRIAM

Oh please. They got you too,
believing in their bullshit.

There's the HONK of a car horn outside. Miriam's eyes go wide.

SIAMAK
Mom forgot the chelow.
(off Miriam's look)
It's just her.

MIRIAM
Go! Just get out of here!

She picks up the tupperware from the counter, shoves it at him. Gives him a push.

SIAMAK
What were you thinking coming here?
You committed Zina. You know what
Dad will do.

She knows. A beat.

MIRIAM
I'm tired, Mak. I'm just...tired.

He looks at her, torn. Car horn sounds again. Miriam pushes him towards the door.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
If you think you saw me, you saw a
ghost.

She heads towards the back of the house. Siamak turns at the door:

SIAMAK
But what will you do?

INT. MIRIAM'S PARENT'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Miriam opens a slat in the window blinds. The car is gone.

She runs her hand over items on her mother's dresser; sprays some of her perfume on her arm. Inhales. Picks up a hamsa necklace next to the perfume. Stirred by memory, she puts it on.

Then, she riffles through drawers until she finds a roll of bills. Pockets it.

INT. SOL AND CICI'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Cici, her hair unwashed, is sitting in the armchair by the window in a nightgown. On the bed a dress is laid out, tags still on it. She is staring out the window.

We follow her gaze into the bright blue sky...the sun burns brightly, too brightly.

EXT. SOL AND CICI'S DRIVEWAY - SIMULTANEOUS

A shiny Cadillac pulls up. Jonathan, Sol's partner, and his wife PATTY (50s, brunette, plump) get out. She's dolled up, holds a foil covered casserole dish.

INT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE, FOYER

Sol opens the front door. Shakes Jonathan's hand. Not quite sure of protocol with Patty. She goes in for a hug, but it's a miss and a back pat from him.

JONATHAN

This is quite the house, Sol.

He flashes his wife an "I told you so" glance she knows and doesn't love so well. She proffers the casserole.

PATTY

I wasn't sure if Carlotta was up to cooking just yet, so I made a little something.

JONATHAN

(mock whispering)

It's her famous chicken a la King.

SOL

(taking the casserole)

Where are my manners? Please, come in.

Sol leads them into the living room, pausing to stop and call upstairs.

SOL (CONT'D)

Cici! Our guests are here.

No response.

SOL (CONT'D)

She'll be right down.

INT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE, LIVING ROOM

Jonathan and Patty sit on the sofa. They both smoke. Sol sits on a chair he's brought in from the kitchen. They all have glasses of lemonade in front of them on the coffee table. Small talk has run dry.

PATTY

My isn't it lovely out here! And so close to the city. I had no idea.

JONATHAN
They're called bedroom communities
for a reason, dear.

Patty gives a weak smile.

SOL
(glancing towards the
staircase)
I don't know what's keeping Cici.

After a beat:

PATTY
How about I go up and check on her?

Sol looks relieved. Stands.

SOL
Second door on the right. Thank
you, Patty.

Patty heads upstairs.

JONATHAN
She's good with this sort of thing.
Women need each other.

Sol watches Patty go.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
And I need you back. It's not like
I brought someone in so I can work
harder.

Jonathan stubs out his cigarette in the ashtray.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
Margossian is rumbling he won't
extend our contract, says he wants
to open the field to other groups.

SOL
That's what Chiefs of Staff do. I'm
not afraid of competition.

JONATHAN
With all due deference, how many
chiefs of staff have you dealt
with?

SOL

The point is, other groups don't have someone with my expertise and Margossian knows that. That's the whole reason he pushed you to partner with me.

(off Jonathan's look)

What, you think I didn't know that?

JONATHAN

I reminded him of that.

SOL

Everything is under control. I'll pick up extra shifts in the next couple of weeks.

JONATHAN

Good because I told Margossian you'll work all the shifts he needs, starting tonight.

Jonathan stands. Claps Sol on the back.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Now where do you keep the booze around here? I could use a real drink and it looks like you can as well.

INT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE, HALLWAY

Patty's been knocking on the door to no answer.

PATTY

Carlotta, you don't have to come out. I understand how you feel. I understand more than you'd know.

She waits.

PATTY (CONT'D)

This isn't something I talk about. Or have talked about. But. Well, dear...

(takes a deep breath)

I miscarried. Three times. I only told Jonathan about the first one. I thought I was being punished. That it was my fault. I didn't have anyone to tell me it wasn't.

INT. SOL AND CICI'S BEDROOM

Cici sits on the floor, in her nightgown, by the door. We hear Patty's voice through the door:

PATTY (O.S.)

I don't know if it's God's plan or
just drawing the short straw
because someone has to. And it's
shitty, dear. No getting around it.
But these things, they happen to so
many women, even if we don't talk
about it. It may feel this way
right now, but you are not alone.
And you're not less. Of anything.

Cici hugs her knees into her chest, rocks back and forth. We hear the sound of RAGGED BREATHING.

INT. DOWNTOWN TRENTON MEDICAL CLINIC, WAITING ROOM - DAY

Miriam stands, shifting her weight from foot to foot, near the check in window. Her dress is wet with amniotic fluid and sweat. The lone fan in this shit-hole is long broken.

MIRIAM

Hey...

A contraction rips through her. She grips the ledge of the window.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Hey, somebody!

The somebodies are CAR ACCIDENT VICTIMS, in pain and shock. An elderly janitor strains to hoist a bleeding man off a chair and onto a gurney. The man vomits.

The vomit streaks close to Miriam's bare feet. She squeezes closer to the window as a teenage orderly, BILLY BEAL, slops over with a bucket and mop. Billy looks at Miriam. Her breasts show through the thin fabric of her dress. She MOANS. He quickly looks down, swipes at the vomit.

A NURSE with a name tag "Syl" sticks her head into the room.

SYL

Orderly!

Billy looks up - his left hand involuntarily curls as if around a ball.

SYL (CONT'D)

Back here, now!

She disappears. Miriam looks at Billy.

MIRIAM

Please...

His hand curls faster.

INT. MEDICAL CLINIC AREA

Billy leads Miriam into one big room sectioned into cubicles by curtains. All of the cubicles are full of VICTIMS.

BILLY

(nervously talking)

Big accident on the Turnpike. A
real blood bath. Generator's out at
St. Mercy's so they brought them
all here.

Miriam grips her belly. With no bed for her, Billy helps Miriam to the nurses' station. Sans nurse.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Um. Just wait here.

He pulls out a chair for her, but she keeps standing, rocking on her heels.

MIRIAM

Shit, shit, shit.

BILLY

Ok? Um, you just...hold on. I'll
get a nurse.

He trots off. Miriam paces. Outside the cubicles are wheeled tables with trays filled with meds. Her druggie eye focuses on a table parked beside the bed of an UNCONSCIOUS PERSON wearing a surgical mask.

ANGLE ON THE TABLE

There's a syringe and a bottle labeled morphine.

Miriam swipes the bottle and syringe just as Syl appears with Billy in tow.

CHERI (V.O.)

Some people believe we choose our
parents as part of a soul contract.

INT. BACK OF MEDICAL CLINIC

Miriam is lying on a cot, covered with a paper sheet in a corner that's now a birthing station. Syl closes a "privacy" screen on Billy.

Syl feels around inside of Miriam to see how dilated she is.

SYL

No time to put you out. I'll get
the Doctor.

Miriam is left alone. Again. She unclenches her hand with the vial and syringe. Her hands shake as she stabs the needle in the bottle. Taps the side of the syringe.

CHERI (V.O.)

Would anybody really choose this?

She plunges the needle into her arm. Her eyes roll back and she floats up, then slowly down to the cot.

Now we're in morphine-time, colors jacked, sound like underwater. It's as if Miriam is lying in the sun, on a beach, squirming a little from the heat, squinting from the bright sun/overhead light.

Syl is at Miriam's side, her mouth moving like in a Peanut's cartoon. Miriam hoists herself up on her elbows, laughing, because the baby is coming out. We see blood and placenta, but it's surreal, dissociated, like Miriam's state. A DOCTOR IN BLOODIED SCRUBS enters, his back fills the frame.

CHERI (V.O.)

The events surrounding your birth
aren't in your DNA but there they
are, like an additional helix,
affecting who you are, right down
to this very moment.

INT. MEDICAL CLINIC HALLWAY

A baby WAILS, the cries insistent. Billy, carrying towels, follows the sound.

INT. BIRTHING AREA

Billy pushes back the screen. A baby lays on the cot. He grabs one of the towels, wraps up the crying baby, runs out.

INT. MEDICAL CLINIC WAITING AREA

Billy looks around; Miriam's gone. He's just a confused kid holding a kid.

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE HOUSING PROJECTS - EARLY EVENING

Cheri is on the run, looking over her shoulder as a cop car siren BLARES past.

CHERI (V.O.)
But who, exactly, are you?

She darts into a derelict lot. Menacing MOTHERFUCKERS and DEALERS lurk.

CHERI (V.O.)
You know who you were.

Her eyes flick to find escape routes.

CHERI (V.O.)
You cling to the story you tell
yourself about the past.

As one Big Motherfucker comes toward her, hard stare, we
SWISH PAN TO REVEAL:

CHERI IN HER COP UNIFORM, gun drawn.

EXT. HOUSING PROJECTS LOWER EAST SIDE - NIGHT

Makes Beirut looks like a playground. Garbage fires create noxious smoke. Cheri chases a PERP through a tent city towards the projects.

CHERI (V.O.)
The way you want to remember
yourself, and the way you actually
were, may or may not be very
different.

INT. HOUSING PROJECTS

Deep in the bowels, we follow Cheri as she runs past JUNKIES and CRACKHEADS, gun drawn. It's badly lit, graffiti crawls the walls like spiders; we hear the CRUNCH OF NEEDLES UNDERFOOT, ZAP of loose electrical wires.

Now we're in Cheri's POV, feeling her heightened positional awareness. Everything on alert. She aims left, then right. Where the fuck is he? Her breathing is jagged.

Out of nowhere, the PERP appears, a sawed off shotgun coming out from under his long coat. He's aiming for Cheri's back as we hear a GUN SHOT. The perp takes one in the chest, goes down.

We PULL BACK to reveal the shooter is her partner, Eddie Norris.

EXT. BURNED OUT BUILDING - NIGHT

Cheri and Eddie fuck against a wall. Raw, urgent. Eddie stops, cups her face in his hands.

EDDIE

You ok?

She nods, moving to get back into it.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

'Cause you can tell me if you're not. You know that, right?

A tender beat.

CHERI

Right.

And then they're back into it, open eyed, their passion fueled by intimacy.

SWISH PAN TO --

EXT. DERELICT LOT - EARLY EVENING

CHERI STANDS WHERE WE LEFT HER, wearing her street clothes, that Big Motherfucker still staring her down: wrong place, wrong time.

CHERI (V.O.)

You cling to the story you were
told about your past...which may or
may not be true.

She intuitively reaches for her badge, doesn't have that anymore. She reaches for her holster. Not there. Then the back of her waistband.

CHERI (V.O.)

Right down to the beginning. Your
birth has a butterfly effect on
other lives, of people you never
knew existed.

In a second, Cheri and Big Mofo have their guns out, pointed at each other. A SECOND MOTHERFUCKER sucks on his teeth, figuring something out about Cheri.

SECOND MOTHERFUCKER

I know where I see you. Yo, Bitch
is 5-0, G.

FIRST MOFO

(to Cheri)

Sure can be lonely out here all by
yo self.

CHERI

Who the fuck says I'm alone?

Neither backs down. Tense beat. Then he shakes his head, not worth it, slowly backs away. And goes back to his drug deal. She regroups, in dire need of refuge.

EXT. BEAL HOUSE, TRENTON - DAY

One in a row of small, working class houses. The leaves on the trees are a symphony of change. We hear the sound of a BASEBALL GAME, follow it into---

INT. BEAL HOUSE, FAMILY ROOM

The World Series plays on the black and white Zenith. Yanks versus Giants. It's a tied game 2/2, in the 7th.

Billy Beal, paces, holding the baby, wearing a Yankee's cap. His POPS (Irish, 40s, balding) and brothers, RALPHIE and TERRY (18, 24) watch expectantly as Clete Boyer gets up to bat for the Yanks. They all drink beer.

POPS

C'mon Boyer, don't be a farking
bum! C'mon!

ON TV: Boyer hits a home run!

TERRY

And...it's out of there! Fucking
Boyer, man!

The Beals are all on their feet, yelling. Pops tackles his older sons so they bang into the coffee table, knocking over empty bottles of beer. Billy steps out of the way.

MOMS (Irish, 40s), watches from the kitchen, cradling the phone so she can caterwaul like a cheerleader.

Billy takes off his Yankees hat and waves it at the baby. Her eyelids flutter.

BILLY

You see that, Moms? She's a Yanks fan. I've been schooling her.

Moms looks at Billy smiling at the baby, her no nonsense face creased with something like sadness. She closes the door to the kitchen.

INT. NJ CHILD WELFARE SERVICES - DAY

Busy office. The phone is ringing. Two social workers, JUNE and DOLORES, look up. They both go for the phone, but June's sweater catches on her chair as Dolores passes her.

DOLORES

Child Services. Dolores Grenville speaking...

June goes back to her files.

INT. BILLY BEAL'S ROOM

It's a Pinstripe hero's shrine. Baseball trophies are crammed everywhere. The baby's sleeping in an old crib next to the window. Billy and Moms are sitting on his bed.

MOMS

I tried. Look at me, son, it's important that you hear this right.

Billy stares at the ceiling.

MOMS (CONT'D)

I talked to your Pops. We can't keep her any longer, no ifs, ands, or buts about it.

BILLY

(turning to her)

But you've got a license, you take in kids all the time...

MOMS

It doesn't pay enough to take my time away from the deli and don't tell me you'll help more - you need to keep your mind on baseball and school and getting yourself out of the trouble you got yourself into.

Frustrated, Billy goes back to staring at the ceiling.

MOMS (CONT'D)

I can hear you spinning those circles in your head. Got to stop that.

BILLY

I told you that girl looked real nice. She'll be back for her soon.

MOMS

You're a romantic, Billy Beal. Life ain't that.

Billy looks like he might cry or rage.

MOMS (CONT'D)

Don't. Now just get ahold of yourself. This was only for the time being and you knew that. I've made arrangements, Child Services are coming next week.

Moms goes to hug Billy. He shrugs her off, goes to pull the blanket over the sleeping baby.

INT. SOL AND CICI'S BATHROOM - DAY

Cici sits on the tub, nightgown pulled up, her finger tracing her raised scars. She has a razor blade in her other hand. She poises the blade over the inside of her thighs; we see a hoist of red lines there, some scabbed.

She makes a fresh cut. Her eyes show pain then relief. Drops of blood stain her pale skin.

SOL'S VOICE

Cherie?

Cici rips off a bit of toilet paper, presses it to her cut.

SOL'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I forgot my briefcase.

She pulls her nightgown down. Opens the bathroom door. Sol is bent over, getting his briefcase from beside the unmade bed. Cici gets in bed, turns on her side away from him.

SOL

Maybe you'll try to get out a little bit today.

Sol strokes her cheek, her hair. She doesn't respond. He hovers for a moment.

SOL (CONT'D)
Cookie's here. She'll stay late
again. I'll get home as soon as I
can.

He picks up his briefcase.

SOL (CONT'D)
Get some rest.

INT. SOL AND CICI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sol opens the door. Strips of moonlight seep in from the curtains so we can make out that Cici's in the same position on the bed. Sol checks on her; she's sound asleep.

Something is sticking out from underneath her pillow....

Sol shifts her gently. She SIGHS. He waits. She doesn't wake. He pulls out the OBJECT.

INT. SOL AND CICI'S BATHROOM

Sol examines what looks like a bicycle horn - a cone taped to a handle that splits into a bulb on one end and a tube on the other. He turns it over in his hands, puzzled.

INT. ST. VINCENT'S RADIOLOGY UNIT - NEXT DAY

It's swamped with PATIENTS. SOL comes out from behind a door, wearing his lab coat.

SOL
Mrs. Millay? Laura Millay?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ST. VINCENT'S RADIOLOGY UNIT - EVENING

Sol walks into the room, which is finally empty. It's dark outside. He's got his briefcase.

INT. ST. VINCENT'S HALLWAY - EVENING

Sol is walking, preoccupied. An INTERN runs past him, looking over his shoulder:

INTERN
You coming? We missed the start.

It dawns on Sol what he's talking about. He quickens his pace.

INT. ST. VINCENT'S NURSES' STATION - EVENING

The HOSPITAL STAFF on the floor is gathered around a small TV. Watching somberly, with disbelief. Sol stands in the back.

ON TV:

PRESIDENT KENNEDY

This government, as promised, has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet military buildup on the island of Cuba. Within the past week, unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on the imprisoned island. The purpose of these bases can be none other than to provide a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere.

People stand frozen around the tv, as if waiting for further instructions. Muttering, in shock.

TREMONT

This is America. Nobody can bomb us!

Sol nods noncommittally. The doctor, DON TREMONT, stares at Sol, then snaps his finger.

TREMONT (CONT'D)

Wait a minute -- Sol Matzner? Don Tremont. Mo Lubitch's partner. I remember when Mo was recommending OB's for your wife. You must be a father by now. Congratulations.

Tremont extends his hand. Sol looks at it. After a beat:

SOL

We lost the baby.

INT. DR. TREMONT'S OFFICE

Sol stands across from Tremont. A plastic model of female reproductive organs between them. And framed photos of Tremont's Golden Retrievers.

SOL

What do you think it is?

Tremont considers.

TREMONT

When your wife was in the hospital,
did they give her the shot to
suppress her breast milk?

SOL

She didn't want that.

TREMONT

With no baby to stimulate
production, her milk should have
dried up within two weeks. The only
thing that I can think of is... it
might be a crude form of breast
pump.

SOL

A pump? For breast-feeding?

TREMONT

Well, of course you know we don't
recommend that women breast feed,
but in some ethnic communities it's
still done. There are devices that
can be used to express milk if a
woman has to be away from her baby.
Or is a wet nurse.

SOL

But the baby died. Why would she
be...?

There's an uncomfortable silence. Tremont gathers his coat
and briefcase.

TREMONT

I wish there was more I could
offer. Your best bet might be to
consult someone in psychiatry.

INT. N.J. COMMUTER TRAIN - NIGHT

Sol's alone in the compartment, staring into the mid-
distance. Sucker punched by news on all fronts.

INT. SOL AND CICI'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Sol sits at the kitchen table, the breast pump is in front of
him. So are his car keys. His coat is folded over the chair
next to him. He listens to the radio.

BROADCASTER

By the end of the day, the
Organization of American States is
likely to approve of the quarantine
against Cuba.

Cookie walks in wearing a coat two sizes too big.

COOKIE

Morning, Mr. M. How's she doin'
today?

SOL

Why don't you tell me?

Sol pushes the breast pump towards her.

SOL (CONT'D)

This is yours, right? You gave it
to her.

Cookie takes a nervous breath.

COOKIE

Yes, sir.

A beat.

SOL

And...?

Cookie looks down.

SOL (CONT'D)

It's a pump. So she can milk -- but
you already know that! Are you
making her believe she can have
another baby?

(raising his voice)

I hired you to clean the house, not
to put delusional ideas in her
head! What on earth were you
thinking? Are you crazy?

COOKIE

I may be a lot of things, Mr. M.,
But I ain't crazy.

SOL

Well, then, explain it to me,
because I don't understand.

COOKIE

No, sir. I don't suppose you would.

Sol takes a breath. Gets up, holds out a chair for her.

SOL
Why don't you sit. Please.

COOKIE
(remaining standing)
Thank you.

Sol runs his fingers through his hair.

SOL
As you can imagine, I'm very
concerned about my wife. And...I'm
just trying to understand what a
woman who doesn't have a baby is
doing with this.

Cookie considers her answer.

COOKIE
Sometimes people, they want to feel
something they don't got. Maybe
they had it once and they lost it.
Like a man who lost he leg, had it
cut off, he still feel he leg.

SOL
What does she want to feel?

COOKIE
Like she a mother.

A beat. Sol softens.

SOL
Thank you, Cookie.

He puts on his coat.

SOL (CONT'D)
You can't have been planning on
doing this forever. This whole
thing needs to stop.

He takes the pump, walks towards the garbage.

COOKIE
Oh, no Sir. You don't want to be
doing that.

SOL
Excuse me?

COOKIE

If you take that away from her you
be taking away her hope. And if you
do that, you're in for a heap more
trouble than you already got.

Sol takes a moment, considering, frustrated. He lays the pump
back down on the table.

INT. TREMONT'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

Sol peers his head in. Tremont is reading the newspaper.
Waves Sol in.

TREMONT

They can say it's just a high
stakes game of chicken, but with a
lunatic like Castro who knows who
will blink first.

Sol nods in agreement.

SOL

I appreciate your seeing me. I
thought of something that might
help my wife.

Tremont motions to a chair.

SOL (CONT'D)

I won't take up much of your time.
As illogical as it is, it occurred
to me that she's been using that
device we spoke about to give her
hope. She needs something real,
something she can hold on to.

A beat while Tremont figures out where he's going.

TREMONT

You're talking about adoption?

SOL

Yes.

TREMONT

I can recommend some good agencies.
The process takes six to eight
months--

SOL
Six months? Given her
circumstances, that's...We need
soon. Soon is essential.

Tremont opens his desk drawer, takes a business card. Gives
it to Sol.

TREMONT
He's discreet. And costly.

INT. WALTER PEMBROKE, ESQUIRE OFFICE - DAY

The office looks like Mr. Pembroke's "Esquire" could have
been bought through a mail-order course not from the
University of Akron, which his framed Law School Diploma
attests to. From the books on his shelf, he's a fan of Dale
Carnegie.

Sol sits across the desk from PEMBROKE (30s, African
American, well built). In contrast to his office, Pembroke is
pressed -- pants, shirt, for time.

PEMBROKE
No waiting. No questions. No
checks.

Pembroke tidies the stack of color coded files in front of
him.

PEMBROKE (CONT'D)
If you're interested, once you have
the funds on hand, we will arrange
for you to meet the child.

This is all a bit distasteful for Sol.

PEMBROKE (CONT'D)
Fortunately for everyone involved,
I'm neither good at nor in need of
salesmanship. I mean no disrespect
to you and your wife, Sir, but if
you are not interested, there are
three other highly qualified
couples I represent who are.

Sol swallows.

SOL
I'm interested.

INT. RADIOLOGY ASSOCIATES - DAY

Sol is in his office, on the phone. On his desk: applications for lines of credit, paperwork on his bank loans.

SOL

As I keep saying, the four thousand dollars is for extended home care for my wife. Why can't you put up my share of the practice for collateral?

We hear a man's voice over the phone:

BANK OFFICER (V.O.)

Dr. Matzner, we did that already on your home loan.

SOL

How about the home?

BANK OFFICER (V.O.)

As the branch manager told you this morning, your accounts are extended already. We can't offer you anything else.

SOL

I understand.

Sol hangs up the phone. Dials another number.

INT. SOL'S OFFICE

Sol's on the phone. Has a large cup of coffee by him. A bunch of applications are now in the trash.

SOL

Nothing you can do. Right. Thank you.

He hangs up. Sighs.

INT. RADIOLOGY ASSOCIATES

Sol knocks on his partner's office door.

JONATHAN

Come in.

Jonathan is taking practice swings with his putter.

SOL
Are you still interested in a piece
of my enteric coating patent?

JONATHAN
I appreciate a man who can dispense
with the niceties and just say
what's on his mind.

A beat.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
So you need the money?

Sol's look says he does. And that he hates being in this
position.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
Houses and wives.

SOL
This will change medicine. Whatever
you decide remember: I came to you
first.

Sol is about to walk out the door, without looking up from
his swing:

JONATHAN
Ok, son, I'll talk to Roger. Have
him draw it up.

EXT. AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS, NYC - DAY

Sol walks past a newsstand on his way into an office
building. Headlines are all about the missile crisis blowing
up. He goes into the building.

INT. LAW OFFICES - DAY

ROSALEE, the secretary, ushers SOL into the office of ROGER
DRECHSEL (40s) who has mounds of paperwork on his desk.
Looking through it.

ROGER
Rosa! Where the hell is the Matzner
contract?

She hands him file.

ROSALEE
It's Rosalee.

ROGER
Jesus Christ. Why didn't you tell
me you took it out?

Rosalee leaves.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Long line of new girls, don't ask.
I'm not sure what's so hell on fire
about this it couldn't wait until
Monday, but here you go. Look it
over, it's straight forward.

Sol opens the file, takes out the paperwork. Stops when he
sees that it's for patent number ND282. Shuffles through the
file, sees a list of patent applications under his name,
scans to: ND282 - POLYMER; ND281 ENTERIC. Sol hesitates,
realizing the mistake. Should he say something?

Roger slides a check for \$5,000 in front of Sol.

ROGER (CONT'D)
I'm purely transactional, can't
speak to what this might be worth.
You are giving up a large
percentage, but these were the
terms Jonathan was willing to do.

He looks at Sol. Sol looks back at the check.

ROGER (CONT'D)
You want to reconsider?

Need turns to justification, justification emboldens. Sol
clicks his pen.

SOL
No, this is fine.

INT. BILLY BEAL'S HOME, KITCHEN/FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Dolores from Child Services stands with Moms, who signs
paperwork. The door to the kitchen is open, we see Billy,
holding the baby, talking softly to her.

MOMS
Oh, she's real healthy. Not even
had the colic.

Dolores makes a note on her clipboard.

DOLORES
And no known information about the
mother?

MOMS

This was all she left at the clinic. My son Billy there found it. He's the star pitcher for the Trenton Tigers, watch for him, soon you'll see him in the majors.

She hands Dolores a piece of paper with handwriting on it. It's a mess, looks like something spilled on it.

MOMS (CONT'D)

Her parents or maybe the father...not the most legible of scripts.

Dolores puts it the file.

DOLORES

Okay then. Let's have you sign the blue document and we are d-o-n-e, Done.

Moms looks over at Billy and the baby. Hesitates.

DOLORES (CONT'D)

Not often you see the boys take an interest. Mrs. Beal?

Dolores looks at the last document. Moms signs.

DOLORES (CONT'D)

Very good and thank you. The State will issue you a check.

Moms walks Dolores over to Billy. It's time. Dolores holds out her arms. Billy hands her the baby. Dolores starts walking to the door with Moms. Billy's hand starts curling.

BILLY

She likes baseball.

Dolores turns.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Yankees of course. Tell whoever...she's with...to let her listen to a game, she'll light right up.

DOLORES

Okay then.

Moms walks her out to her car. Billy stands at the door. He fishes in his jean pocket, pulls out Miriam's mother's hamsa necklace. Holds it as he watches the baby go.

EXT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE - MORNING

Sol, carrying his briefcase, walks to his Oldsmobile. Looks up to his bedroom window. Gets into the car and drives off.

INT. OLDSMOBILE - MORNING

Sol's palms sweat as he turns the leatherette steering wheel to make an illegal U-turn. Missile Crisis news is on the radio. Sol nervously checks his watch. Twizzles the knob on the radio, all more doomsday. Settles on "Duke of Earl."

He checks his rear view mirror: *is that a cherry top?*

Sol slows down. "Duke, Duke, Duke..." he switches that shit off. Looks nervously at his briefcase. Puts his hands at 9 and 3 o'clock.

A car pulls up to him in the next lane, "cherry" top is a red E-Z Driving School placard.

EXT. HOWARD JOHNSON'S - DAY

We see the orange and turquoise signage and restaurant off the highway.

Sol pulls up in his Olds at the farthest end of the parking lot. No other cars here save for a Chevy Nova which flashes its headlights. Sol pulls up next to the Chevy.

Pembroke steps out of the car, looking dapper. Sol emerges from his vehicle, does the obligatory handshake. Goes around to the back door and opens it.

TWO BABIES are bundled up in the back seat in bassinets.

SOL

There are two, you didn't say
anything about two babies.

PEMBROKE

(motioning to our girl)
This child just came up for
adoption. I find that some parents
appreciate having a choice.
Speaking of which, will Mrs.
Matzner be joining us?

SOL

She's under the weather.

Sol is feeling, and looking squirrely. Pembroke jumps in--

PEMBROKE

Ok. Full disclosure, Doctor Matzner: you happen to be my first stop today. So you can choose or not choose, that's up to you. But rest assured that both children are in great health, all immunizations up to date, I have the records here for both of them.

Pembroke continues to talk, lifting the blankets off the babies. They've got all their chubby fingers and toes, respond appropriately to Pembroke's tickles. It's all drowned out by the slight RINGING in Sol's ears.

Sol looks from our baby to the next GIRL BABY. Back and forth; he knows this is significant but doesn't have a clue. He points to our girl:

SOL

This one.

Pembroke goes to pick her up, for Sol to hold. She looks drowsy. Sol waves, no. Pembroke lifts the bassinet and hands it to Sol who doesn't quite know how to hold it.

INT. OLDSMOBILE

Sol's in the driver's seat. Pembroke in the passenger's. Baby in back with a bag of baby items next to her.

SOL

My wife and I have the baby free and clear?

PEMBROKE

Absolutely. That's the service I provide.

Pembroke clears his throat. Sol discreetly gives him an envelope. Pembroke not as discreetly thumbs through the cash.

They sit. Pembroke runs his hand over the dashboard.

PEMBROKE (CONT'D)

Is this a 58'?

Sol nods.

PEMBROKE (CONT'D)

Had any issues with the transmission?

Sol doesn't answer.

PEMBROKE (CONT'D)
I'm a bit of a car buff.

Sol reaches over and opens Pembroke's door for him.

PEMBROKE (CONT'D)
Congratulations to you and Mrs.
Matzner.

Sol's left in the car. He watches Pembroke drive away. The baby makes a YAWNING sound. Then it's quiet. Sol takes a deep breath.

INT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE, FOYER

Sol closes the door carefully, holding the bassinet. He puts it down on the floor. Goes to walk up the stairs.

SOL
Cherie? Are you up?

The baby starts to WAIL. Sol turns around.

He goes to pick the baby up. She kicks off her blankets. He tries to calm her. She BAWLS. He bounces her. Shit, what does he do? He heads upstairs with her.

INT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE, HALLWAY

Sol looks up from the crying baby to see:

CICI

Standing outside their bedroom in her dressing gown. Her face, for the first time in a long time, is soft. She extends her arms.

CICI
Per favore...

Sol puts the baby in her arms.

INT. SOL AND CICI'S BEDROOM

Cici sits on her chair, the baby still crying, and pulls her nightgown to the side. She murmurs soothingly, puts the baby on her breast. The baby chokes and kicks, refusing. Cici patiently keeps trying.

Sol stands there awkwardly. Clears his throat.

SOL
Um, I'll just leave the two of you
alone... give you time to get to
know each other.

INT. SOL AND CICI'S BEDROOM - LATER

Sol knocks. Brings in a sandwich on a plate and a bag of bottles and formula and diapers.

SOL
I thought you both might be hungry.
And they gave me these things...

The baby's in bed next to Cici, curled like a lima bean.

He lays down the package, puts the sandwich on the table next to Cici's side of the bed. Cici presses her finger to her lips.

CICI
Shhhhhhhhhhh.

INT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE, DEN - NIGHT

Sol makes a bed for himself on the couch.

EXT. UPPER EAST SIDE STREET, NYC - NIGHT

Cheri emerges from the subway. She's far from the war zone; it's drizzling. She merges into the chic after-work crowd, ducks into a swanky building.

INT. LOBBY, SWANKY BUILDING

The DOORMAN looks up. Cheri looks at him with purpose, feral. After a moment, he begrudgingly motions her to the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR

Cheri steadies herself. Fuck it. She reaches into her pocket, pulls out a bindle. Taps powder out on the back of her hand. Then up her nose. She squeezes her eyes shut.

INT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE, KITCHEN - MORNING

Sol looks worse for wear. He stands at the table, massaging his back with his hand. He's perusing newspapers. We see headlines: US and Soviets reach accord on Cuba. World returns to normal!

Cookie comes in, a spring in her step. She's carrying a diaper pail, some dirty dishes.

SOL
How is she?

COOKIE
Oh, her appetite be good now.

SOL
I meant Cici. Never mind, I
shouldn't be having to ask.

He heads upstairs.

SOL (CONT'D)
I'd like some coffee please,
Cookie.

INT. MONTCLAIR HOUSE, HALLWAY - MORNING

Sol knocks insistently on the door to his bedroom.

SOL
*Cherie? Cici. It's been days. My
back is in knots. You have to come
out now. Or more precisely you have
to let me in.*

CICI (O.S.)
Come, come.

INT. SOL AND CICI'S BEDROOM

The bottles and formula are right there by the bed where Sol left them. Untouched.

Cici is sitting up, the baby nestled in her arms. Her hair is clean, pinned up. Sol looks at her - she glows. Without taking her eyes off the baby, Cici pats the bed for Sol.

CICI
Come, amore mio.

He sits. She turns the baby towards him. The baby's focused, staring at him with those two different colored eyes. What is he supposed to do, hold her?

Cici's goes to burp the baby, patting her.

CICI (CONT'D)
Shhhh, cara mia, tesoro mio.

Sol scooches up on the bed, slides an arm around Cici's shoulders. The baby has spit bubbles on her mouth. Cici blows on her face, laughing. Kisses the top of her head.

CICI (CONT'D)
Breathe, right here...so beautiful.

Sol leans in, but the baby starts fussing.

CICI (CONT'D)
Oh, *cara cherie*, no cry. Shhhhhh.
Cheri.

SOL
Is that her name?

Cici looks up at him.

CICI
Si. Ma cherie amour. Is perfect,
no?

Sol manages a curdled smile. The baby's fussing kicks up, Cici goes to nurse. He moves away in the bed.

We move into the BABY'S POV: breast coming at her, smothering. She chokes.

CICI (CONT'D)
I am you mama, Cheri and you are
mio bambino. I never leave you.
Never.

We slowly pull away as Cici bends over the baby, swallowing her in her love.

CHERI (V.O.)
Other people's choices collide and
collude in the dance of your
destiny. Or is it predetermined at
conception? At birth?

We FLOAT higher and higher over the bed, now isolated in a vacuous space as Cici's only world exists around, with and for this one baby.

CHERI (V.O.)
If you could see it all, the 360
degree view of choices and events
and random acts, you'd understand
how easily it could have gone in
another direction. Change one small
piece of the puzzle and I would
have been raised by someone else.

INT. SEMI - DAY

A TRUCKER drives on the New Jersey turnpike.

CHERI (V.O.)
Think about the trucker the day I
was born, hauling ass across the
country. His favorite song comes on
the radio...

"Duke of Earl" plays. The Trucker looks down, fiddles with
the knob to play it louder.

He looks up and swerves suddenly. We hear the SOUND OF BRAKES
AND METAL SCRAPING as the cab tips, the windshield shatters.

INT. DOWNTOWN TRENTON MEDICAL CLINIC, WAITING ROOM - DAY

Miriam stands, shifting her weight, near the check in window.

MIRIAM
Hey...

She grips the ledge of the window.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Hey, somebody!

Somebodies are all CAR ACCIDENT VICTIMS in various stages of
pain and shock.

CHERI (V.O.)
If he hadn't looked down at that
very moment, there wouldn't have
been a twelve-car pile up on the
New Jersey Turnpike.

The accident victims disappear. Syl sits behind the check in
window. Gives Miriam a dirty look.

CHERI (V.O.)
The morphine would have been locked
away.

INT. MEDICAL CLINIC AREA

Miriam looks at the tray with the syringe and morphine. They
disappear.

CHERI (V.O.)
How might it have played out then?
Would she have kept me?

INT. MEDICAL CLINIC AREA

Syl walks with a newborn swaddled in her arms. Most cubicles
are empty.

She pulls back the curtain on one to reveal Miriam. She's lost, doesn't know what to do. She takes the baby, gingerly.

CHERI (V.O.)
Or what if someone else had
answered the call?

INT. CHILD WELFARE SERVICES - DAY

It's busy. The phone rings and June and Dolores look up. They both go for the phone, June's sweater does not catch and she gets there first.

JUNE
Child welfare. June Monroe
speaking...

Dolores goes back to her paperwork.

INT. CHILD WELFARE SERVICES - NIGHT

June studies the piece of paper from Moms Beal. The writing is barely legible. It might say Jerry Dempson or Jerry Demperson or?

CHERI (V.O.)
The social worker who's like a pit
bull, give her something to bite on
and she'll never let go.

On a pad of paper, June has a list of possible names and spellings written down. Gerald. Jerry. Surnames that begin with Demp. A pile of phone books sits nearby, names checked off in pen. She sighs, dials the next Demp combination.

INT. GERRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gerry picks up the phone.

GERRY
Hello?

He listens, taken aback. He stays on the phone.

CHERI (V.O.)
Or what if someone had a change of
heart?

INT. BEAL HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Dolores has the blue form for Moms to sign. Moms hesitates, looking at Billy with the baby.

CHERI (V.O.)
Or if a heart, though hardened, had
the chance to soften.

EXT. MIRIAM'S PARENT'S HOUSE - DAY

MIRIAM'S MOTHER (late 30s) wearing a head scarf, sits in the car, about to honk the horn. Decides to get out of the car.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Miriam and Siamack are arguing.

MIRIAM
Oh please. They got you too.
Believing in their bullshit.

They look up to see their mother. Her face a riot of emotions at seeing her daughter. She hugs Miriam, maternal instincts winning out....

MIRIAM'S MOTHER
You can't be here...but we will
figure something out.

CHERI (V.O.)
Or it could have been as simple as
this -

EXT. HOJO'S PARKING LOT - DAY

Sol stands over the two babies in bassinets as Pembroke gives his spiel. Looking at one. At the other.

Sol points: at the other baby.

CHERI (V.O.)
I could have been anyone's child.

We TRACK Cheri in her bassinet in the backseat of Pembroke's Chevy as he drives away with her.

CHERI (V.O.)
And I wouldn't be in this
particular loop, running for my
life, running from my life, while
someone readies to kill me. I'd be
someone else, still me, call it a
me-not-me...as many as there are
configurations you can conceive of,
and some you can't.

INT. SWANKY APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - EVENING

The elevator doors open. Cheri walks out flanked by FIVE OF HER ALTERNATE SELVES, all sporting different hair, clothes, posture, attitudes.

We go to SLOW MOTION as they all walk, Tarantino style, down the long hallway.

CHERI (V.O.)

A multiverse of lifelines, existing simultaneously. But that's too much for our minds to hold on to, we cling to the construct, the illusion of time, we freeze on one present. Agree that we can only live one path, one life, at a time.

We PUSH in on Cheri, her mouth forming into an ironic smile...CLOSER to her eye, the iris, and we see dancing in there the reflected images of the lineup of selves...

We ZOOM OUT and we're--

INT. WHITE ROOM

Coming around Cheri's head as she watches the Tarantino lineup stride down the hallway on the mirror/screens that surround her. Each Alternate Self is split on a separate screen, they come together at slightly odd angles.

CHERI (V.O.)

So this is all how it went down.

ANGLE ON CHERI IN THE CENTER SCREEN

She looks directly at us.

CHERI

This time.

Her face glitches, freezes. All of the alternate selves freeze. A door opens from this tableaux.

A woman (indeterminate age, foreign, elegant) walks out, closing the door behind her. Let's call her MOHINI. She's impeccably dressed with a small notebook in her hand. Her voice is whiskey laced, makes you want to lean in--

MOHINI

Hello, Cheri Matzner. Khosh amadid.

INT. SWANKY APARTMENT BUILDING - SAME TIME

Cheri is alone in the hallway. She pauses, then rings the doorbell. OLDER SOL (balding, heavier) opens the door. His face doesn't hide his distaste at seeing her.

SOL

Nothing for months, and now? Now
you deign to show up?

Cheri blows past him into marble, ornate decor. OLDER CICI, still a beauty but now more made up, bejeweled, rushes to her. Hugging her daughter tight, too tight.

QUICK POP OF--

INT. SOL AND CICI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Cheri as a baby, swaddled in her mother's imposing embrace. GASPING and then -

INT. SOL AND CICI'S APARTMENT

Cheri is disentangling herself from her mother, who gives a mock 'whisper':

CICI

Why have you kept your fiancé a
secret from your mama?

Fiance? Cheri instinctively touches her waistband, feels the top of her Glock. She moves past Cici, turning the corner into the living room, to see...

Eddie Norris calmly standing up from the tufted couch.

Cheri is shocked to see him. Their eyes lock. Eddie walks over to Cheri, smiling that dangerous smile she's been running from.

EDDIE

We don't have any secrets, do we
babes?

He moves to put a muscled arm around her.

There's nowhere left for Cheri to run. Or is there?

HARD TO BLACK:

END OF PILOT