

Chickin Lickin  
by  
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FADE IN:

EXT. CARIBBEAN - DAY

A mountainous chain of emerald ISLANDS in a turquoise sea.  
It's sun-drenched. Breezy. Tropical.

Between two islands --

A CAR FERRY

smashes into heavy seas.

ONBOARD

It's bumper to bumper. Passengers wait inside their cars.

Last in line is

EMILY'S JEEP

Dented. Rusty. Steal at your own risk.

INT. EMILY'S JEEP - DAY

The driver, EMILY SHAW (20) is a sunny, blue sky girl, with  
nary a hint of cloud.

Next to her --

JOSH (28). Looks like rain. Carry an umbrella.

Emily nudges Josh to look at something in front of them --

EXT. BACK OF PICK-UP - DAY

ERNESTO PEREZ (40) cradles an unsteady ROOSTER in his arms.  
Soulful eyes in a furrowed face, an enormous gold rooster  
pendant dangles from his neck on a thick gold chain.

He smooths the Rooster's scant feathers. Covers its beak  
with his mouth --

INT. EMILY'S JEEP - DAY

Josh recoils...

JOSH

God, this place grosses me out.

Emily stares, rapt...

EMILY

I gotta find out why that guy is  
making out with that chicken.

She starts out of the jeep. Josh grabs her arm.

Emily tugs her arm free, but stays in the jeep.

JOSH  
He could be dangerous.

EMILY  
He's kissing a chicken.

JOSH  
Exactly.

EXT. ST. THOMAS - FERRY TERMINAL - DAY

The ferry docks. Car ramp lowers. Engines crank up.

INT. EMILY'S JEEP - DAY

Emily keys the ignition. The jeep won't start. She tries again.

Nope.

Once more...it cranks in a cloud of black smoke.

Jeep status is a touchy subject...

JOSH  
Sweetie.

Emily won't look at him.

JOSH (CONT'D)  
Whatever happened at --  
(ah)  
You never applied. Em. Roger's a friend of mine. Do you know how hard it is to get hired in those places?

EMILY  
I'm not the corporate type. Those people are like sharks...I'm more jelly fish.

JOSH  
Which doesn't have a brain.

EMILY  
It's very relaxing.

Eager to placate...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
I'll find a better job, I promise.

Her sunny nature reasserts...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Want to stop for ice cream?

Josh checks his phone.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
We could get a movie? Ice cream,  
movie night at my place?

JOSH  
After you torch that love seat.

Josh looks up from his phone...

JOSH (CONT'D)  
Who buys a ratty old love seat from  
two gay guys, calls it the ball chair,  
then expects someone to sit on it?

EMILY  
I can put a towel down?

Not funny.

JOSH  
My place.  
(re: Emily's thighs)  
Ice cream?

Despite a near perfect body, Emily flushes, tugs her shorts  
down thigh.

She puts the jeep in gear, drives off the ramp, careful not  
to jostle Josh.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ST. THOMAS - DAY

Main street. Historic grubby charm in a tropical setting.

SIDEWALK

Emily weaves through a jungle of TOURISTS.

She sees a BABY CHICKEN on the

ROAD

it zig-zags, frantic, in the traffic. Emily darts out --

TIRES SQUEAL. HORNS BLARE.

scoops up the chick, bustles back to the

SIDEWALK

She searches the area for other chickens...

EMILY  
Where's your mama?

"PEEP"

EMILY (CONT'D)  
It's scary to lose your mama. You're  
coming home with me.

She cuddles the Chick as she presses through the crowd of  
sweaty, noisy TOURISTS which segues into --

EXT. COCK FIGHT ARENA - DAY

A crowd of sweaty, noisy MEN.

Ernesto presses through the crowd. He cuddles a different  
Rooster, this one is limp, battered and bloody.

He croons to it in Spanish...

ERNESTO  
(with subtitles)  
Hold on, brave one.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Spartan. Single room. Island art festoon walls which need  
paint. A bare concrete floor is softened by throw rugs.

The *Ball Chair*, relatively lush in purple velour, dominates  
the room.

Emily sets the Chick down inside a cardboard box.

"PEEP"

Em picks the Chick up. It goes quiet.

She kisses the Chick then puts it back in the box.

"PEEP"

Em picks it up...

EMILY  
You win.  
(kiss)  
I'm glad we had this talk.

EXT. ERNESTO'S HOUSE - DAY

A modest concrete block home.

Four PIT BULLS, chained to trees, BARK as Ernesto's truck pulls into the

DRIVEWAY

Ernesto exits the truck with the injured Rooster cradled in his arms.

He WHISTLES, a single piercing sound --

TWO YOUNG BOYS

exit the house, hurry towards him.

The tallest boy, MIGUEL (13) strokes the Rooster's head. His brother, JUAN(9) worried for the Rooster, won't look at it.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN ERNESTO AND MIGUEL IN SPANISH WITH SUBTITLES

MIGUEL  
Wilfredo is okay?

Ernesto shakes his head. Sadness.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)  
Such a fierce little chicken.

ERNESTO  
(nods)  
The hero of his own life.

The boys unload Wilfredo's cage and food from the truck bed, then disappear with it around the back of the house.

Ernesto takes Wilfredo inside the house.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily has the Chick in the ball chair for a cuddle.

EMILY  
We'll find your Momma tomorrow.

The Chick baptizes Emily's lap with a small load of poop.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ST. THOMAS - DAY

The Chick cradled in her hands, Emily searches the area where she found it. She stops at an

INFORMATION BOOTH

manned by an formidable-looking LOCAL WOMAN...

EMILY  
Good morning. All is well?

LOCAL WOMAN  
Tank God for life.

EMILY  
Yes. I was wondering if you could  
help me find this baby's Momma?

Emily opens her hands to reveal the Chick.

The Woman looks, then...

LOCAL WOMAN  
Come.

She leads Emily to a

GRASSY SPOT

Where a MOMMA CHICKEN, with three ADOLESCENT CHICKS hang  
out.

Emily, uncertain, hugs the Chick to her chest.

LOCAL WOMAN (CONT'D)  
Go. She take it.

Emily kisses the Chick on the head...

EMILY  
Stay out of traffic.

She sets it next to the Momma Chicken --

SQUAWK!

The Momma Chicken pecks the Chick on its head. The Adolescent  
Chickens join in --

PECK. PECK. They all attack the Baby.

The Chick takes off, the other Chickens follow, in hot  
pursuit.

Emily rushes to SHOO the other birds away, snatches up the  
Chick.

PEEP. PEEP. PEEP.

She smooths its fluffy little head...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 Sorry. Sorry. I should'a known  
 better.

The Local Woman watches, dispassionate, then...

LOCAL WOMAN  
 Come.

EMILY  
 No. That's okay.

LOCAL WOMAN  
 (nods)  
 One day, good for the pot.

Emily hurries away with the Chick.

EXT. HULL BAY BEACH - DAY

Local beach scene. Tiki hut bar. SURFERS in swell on the west side. A few LOCALS hang out. KIDS play in the sand.

Emily carries a paddleboard and paddle to the water's edge. The Chick is secure on her chest in a baby sling type wrap.

BRIANA (20), offbeat, with numerous piercings and tattoos, rushes up to Emily, shoves a clipboard into her hands...

BRIANA  
 Hey, Em. Sign the petition!

Emily skims the cover sheet.

INSERT:

*HULL BAY PUBLIC NOTICE:... Island Green, Inc. have initiated the application process to rezone their property... The beaches and coastal waters of the Virgin Islands are public property... community needs to get involved if they are to stay that way...A public hearing will be held on...*

BACK TO SCENE:

BRIANA (CONT'D)  
 Nimrods want to build a dock on Inner Brass so they can develop it.

Emily signs the petition...

EMILY  
 Can we stop them?

BRIANA

Hell, yeah. Come to the public hearing. Let your voice be heard, bay-bee.

EMILY

I'm not good with public speaking.

BRIANA

Who is? Gotta leave your comfort zone if you want to make a difference.

PEEP. PEEP.

BRIANA (CONT'D)

What you got there?

The Chick's head pops out of the sling.

BRIANA (CONT'D)

Wow. You paddling with a baby chicken?

Emily nod/shrugs.

BRIANA (CONT'D)

Man. That's so cool. I dig how you raise the bar on weird.

Briana's attention is diverted by --

TY ROLLE (21)

West Indian. Surf God. He emerges from the water carrying a board. A potent personality simmers under a casual exterior.

He walks up to Briana and Emily.

BRIANA (CONT'D)

Hey, Dude. Fifty signatures!

TY

Great.

(to: Emily)

You sign?

(off: nod)

Coming to the public hearing?

EMILY

I think so.

BRIANA

Ty's going to give a presentation. It's gonna be sick!

TY  
 (to Emily)  
 Please come. We need all the support  
 we can get.

PEEP.

BRIANA  
 Hey. Check out her chicken.

Emily shows the Chick to Ty.

TY  
 Cute.

BRIANA  
 She's paddling out to Brass with it.

EMILY  
 I was afraid to leave it alone in my  
 apartment.

TY  
 So. A pet chicken?

EMILY  
 Maybe. I don't know anything about  
 them.

TY  
 (smiles)  
 Except how they taste?

EMILY  
 (smiles)  
 Like chicken?

TY  
 I wouldn't know. I was raised Vegan.

Oh. Awkward.

BRIANA  
 I'm a Vegan, too! It's really helped  
 my complexion.

He catches Emily's eye. They share a smile. The look lingers.  
 Emily breaks it off first...

EMILY  
 Well. I'm gonna get going before  
 the wind picks up.

BRIANA  
 See you at the hearing, Em.

Briana turns her full attention to Ty who watches Emily shove off from the beach.

EXT. INNER BRASS ISLAND - DAY

A perfect little island. Pristine. Undeveloped.

Emily pulls her paddle board up on a beach.

She walks into the shade of a magnificent

BLACK MAMPOO TREE

Its sticky black seed pods litter the ground.

Sprinkled around the enormous roots are offerings of beach glass, coral and shell. A sign of local reverence.

Emily adds a shell. Kisses a knot-hole...

EMILY

From me and Nana.

This is an impromptu gathering place. Clean. Picked up. Respected. No one leaves garbage here.

She sets the Chick down in the grass...

EMILY (CONT'D)

Pretty nice, huh?

PEEP.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I was a baby the first time Nana brought me here.

PEEP.

EMILY (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Yep. Just like you.

She picks the chick up, nuzzles its fluffy little head. The chick dozes. Emily smiles. Her heart full.

Her eyes lay claim to the view --

*A MOUNTAIN CHAIN OF EMERALD ISLANDS RISING FROM THE TURQUOISE SEA.*

EXT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Emily climbs a flight of stairs, a seed pod in one hand.

She *trips* on the stairs, catches herself against the wooden railing. It wobbles from her weight.

With a worried frown, she pushes inside and heads

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

to the FRONT DESK, manned by a West Indian Nurse, NILSA (40).

EMILY  
That handrail outside is rotten.

NILSA  
I know.

EMILY  
Who takes care of stuff like that?

Nilsa shrugs, then...

NILSA  
Sorry, child.

EMILY  
Not your fault.

Emily heads down the hall.

INT. NANA'S ROOM - DAY

Emily pauses in the open doorway of a standard government Nursing Home single room.

An ELDERLY WOMAN (80's) gazes out through security bars on the window --

FLORENCE SHAW (NANA)

seems fine...on the outside.

EMILY  
Nana?

Nana turns, smiles. Emily rushes over. They hug.

She hands Nana the seed pod...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
The tree sends her love.

A flash of confusion on Nana's face. She returns to the window, fiddles with the security bars.

NANA  
I can't seem to get this window open.

Emily draws her away...

EMILY  
Come have a seat, Nana. We'll have  
a proper visit.

Nana sits in a chair, admires the seed pod...

NANA  
Goddess tree?

EMILY  
(beams)  
Magnificent as ever.

NANA  
(smiles)  
No caterpillars?

Nana hits on all synapses. Emily is ecstatic..

EMILY  
Oh! Nana! They ate every speck of  
green. We were so worried. But  
she's fine!

Nana smiles and nods...and nods. She's forgotten why she  
nods. Her smile fades into a look of utter confusion.

Emily takes Nana by the hand...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Nana?

Blank stare. Emily, desperate to bring her back...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
I have a baby chicken.

Panic as confusion deepens.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
He's really sweet. I rescued him  
from traffic.

Uncertain smile...

NANA  
Who?

EMILY  
(sad)  
I love you, Nana.

NANA  
I'm very tired.

She closes her eyes. Emily kisses her cheek. Covers her with a blanket. Tip-toes from the room.

INT. FRONT DESK - DAY

Nilsa looks up from a computer screen. Questioning look.  
Emily shakes her head.

NILSA  
They ran out she medicine.

EMILY  
What? Why?

NILSA  
Money.

EMILY  
This is a government facility.  
Where's the money gone?

Nilsa just looks at her. World-weary.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
That's not right.

NILSA  
Careful, child. Don't vex dem.  
They kick your Nana out. Where she go then?

EMILY  
Someplace safe?

NILSA  
Ain't no such ting as safe.

EXT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

Historic near ruins. Plants spring from crumbling bricks.  
Emily pushes through the front door --

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

Stands, hipshot, in front of

CARTER REED (60)

her deaf, alcoholic land lord.

Shabby, but charming, Carter puffs on a pipe, scrutinizes Emily from head to toe. He twirls his index finger.

Emily spins around.

CARTER

Wiggle.

Emily wiggles her butt.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Beyonce.

Emily does the Beyonce butt move.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Nice. Your rent is no longer in arrears.

EMILY ENUNCIATES EACH WORD IN DIALOG WITH CARTER.

EMILY

Can I use your credit card?

Carter tosses a credit card on the table. Emily takes it...

EMILY (CONT'D)

Thanks. I'll pay you back.

CARTER

What's up?

EMILY

The Nursing Home can't buy Nana's medicine.

CARTER

Bullshit.

He picks up his phone. Texts...

CARTER (CONT'D)

Let's see what the Attorney General thinks about it.

EMILY

Wait.

CARTER

No. Bunch of criminals.

EMILY

We don't know that.

CARTER

We don't?

EMILY

Let me talk to someone first. Find out what's going on?

CARTER

Really? You up for that? I've heard the administrator's a real meanie.

Emily flinches.

CARTER (CONT'D)

You want me to handle it?

Emily does, but...

EMILY

No. I'll take care of it.

Emily kisses him on the cheek...

EMILY (CONT'D)

You're sweet for offering.

Carter swigs from a hip flask...

CARTER

Bet you say that to all the drunks.  
(swig)  
You hear about Inner Brass?

EMILY

I signed the petition.

CARTER

Going to the public hearing?

Emily shrugs.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Sorry. I don't hear so good.

EMILY

I think so.

Hand cupped to his ear...

CARTER

Eh?

EMILY

Yes.

CARTER

I need a ride. They took my license again. Silly Bastards. Who expects us to drive on the left sober?

INT. ERNESTO'S KITCHEN - DAY

Ernesto scoops chicken feed into five gallon buckets.

ERNESTO

Miguel. Jose.

The boys shuffle into the kitchen, still in their jammies.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

Hurry. You don't want to be late for the first day of school.

Each boy grabs a bucket. Miguel helps Jose carry his out the door and into the

BACK YARD

They struggle to cross in the predawn light.

Rooster's CROW. Jose's stomach GROWLS.

Miguel halts their progress. He peels a banana and gives Jose half.

They gulp it down then pick up their buckets and continue across the yard.

INT. DISCOUNT DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Emily heads down an aisle in the

PET SECTION

where Ernesto loads bags of dog food into his cart.

They exchange a nod.

Emily sees the ROOSTER PENDANT. Remembers...

EMILY

I saw you on the St. John ferry last Saturday. You had a chicken.

Ernesto responds with a polite smile...

ERNESTO

A gamecock.

EMILY  
You kissed it?

Ernesto seems mystified.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Kiss. Uh, beso?

ERNESTO  
Not kiss. Blow. He was hurt.  
(pats chest)  
Here.

EMILY  
Oh. Sorry. Is he okay?

ERNESTO  
Yes.

EMILY  
Thank goodness.

Awkward pause, then...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
So, you fight roosters?

ERNESTO  
Yes.

EMILY  
As a hobby?

ERNESTO  
It's my life.

EMILY  
Your job?

ERNESTO  
It's the only thing I do.

EMILY  
Do the roosters always get hurt?

ERNESTO  
Sometimes. I've roosters who've  
fought many times, but some die in  
the first fight.

EMILY  
Oh. That's sad.

ERNESTO  
Yes.

Another lull.

EMILY

I have a baby chicken. How can you tell if it's a boy or a girl?

ERNESTO

Bring it to me. I will tell you.

Both smile. The start of a friendship...

EMILY

I'm Emily.

They clasp hands...

ERNESTO

Ernesto.

INT. JOSH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Impersonal, conventional furnishings. Easy to move on from. Josh is kicked back on the sofa, locked into his ipad.

KITCHEN

Emily stirs something on the stove...

EMILY

Hey, Josh?

Silence.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Josh?

JOSH (O.S.)

Sorry?

EMILY

Did you hear about the plans for Inner Brass?

She carries two plates of food into the --

LIVING ROOM

hands one to Josh. Sits down to eat.

JOSH

Yeah. St. Thomas needs more investors like that.

EMILY

They shouldn't be allowed to destroy everything.

JOSH

They own it. They have the right to do whatever they want with it.

EMILY

You can't really mean that --

Josh spills food on his blue shirt.

JOSH

Shit!

He smears it. Emily jumps up...

EMILY

Here. Give it to me.

He takes his shirt off, tosses it to her...

JOSH

Thanks, Sweetie. It's my favorite.

Emily sets her plate down. Heads to the --

LAUNDRY ROOM

shoves the shirt in the washer. Dumps in detergent. Pushes the start button.

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

You put some stain remover on that, right?

Emily yanks out the shirt, squirts on stain remover (with bleach) The fabric discolors instantly. Uh-oh.

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

Did you call Roger about the job?

Uh-oh.

EMILY

Not yet.

Silence from the living room.

Emily inspects the shirt. Takes a deep breath. Shoves it back into the washer.

INT. EMILY'S JEEP - DAY

Emily consults a paper, counts driveways.

The Chick rests in a box on the passenger seat.

EMILY  
(to: the Chick)  
Any thoughts on a name?

The Chick preens, does a full body shake.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
No comment?

EXT. ERNESTO'S HOUSE - DAY

Emily's jeep pulls into the  
DRIVEWAY.

The Pit Bulls go berserk.

Emily exits the jeep with the Chick. She pauses, uncertain about the BARKING dogs.

Ernesto stands at the front door. Miguel and Jose, hang behind their father.

ERNESTO  
(to: the dogs)  
Silencio.

The dogs go quiet.

Ernesto beckons to Emily.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Emily perches on a chair while Ernesto examines the Chick.

ERNESTO  
Cockerel. Young male.

He hands the Chick back to Emily.

EMILY  
Thank you.  
(baby talk to chick)  
That wasn't so bad.

ERNESTO  
No baby talk. He's a rooster. You must show him you are the boss.

EMILY

He's just a baby.

ERNESTO

He is a rooster. You are telling a young rooster that he is in charge. You will regret it when he grows. He will try to dominate you.

EMILY

I think he loves me.

ERNESTO

All he knows is that you've got him and don't hurt him. If you let him think he's boss one day he will peck your eyes out.

EMILY

He would never hurt me.

She kisses the Chick.

Ernesto watches her for a beat, then...

ERNESTO

Roosters do what comes naturally. You think he understands what is natural in your world? If you displease him and he is boss, one day he will show you what is natural in his world.

EMILY

You seem to love your birds.

ERNESTO

I love them, yes. They know I won't hurt them but they understand, without doubt, that I am their King.

EMILY

I'm more democratic than that.

Ernesto regards Emily, sadness in his eyes...

ERNESTO

Then you and your rooster will suffer for it.

He stands up...

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

Come see my birds.

EXT. ERNESTO'S BACK YARD - DAY

Rooster's CROW. Supply an intermittent background noise.

Under shade trees are rows of clean, well maintained rooster houses.

Twenty MULTI-COLORED ROOSTERS, tethered by a leash, peck the ground or roost within the confines of their own compound.

Ernesto leads Emily to an old Rooster. He motions for Miguel to pick him up...

ERNESTO

Meet Feliz. He was my best fighter.

Miguel cuddles FELIZ, a battered warrior. Blind eye, scarred comb, missing feathers, this Rooster has kicked some serious ass...at a price.

EMILY

He doesn't fight anymore?

ERNESTO

He has earned his rest.

Miguel feeds Feliz from his hand.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

What do you feed your rooster?

EMILY

(blush)

He eats off my plate.

ERNESTO

(grave)

I will give you the proper food for this young rooster.

EMILY

Thank you.

INT. JEEP - DAY

Emily scrutinizes the Chick, a troubled look on her face...

EMILY

You're different. You don't have an aggressive bone in your body.

The Chick dozes.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 Puff? No. You'd hate me when you're  
 older. Peeps? Nah. Peck?

A sleepy PEEP, like approval.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 Peck? Okay. Peck it is.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily types on her laptop.

INSERT ON COMPUTER SCREEN:

*Raising chickens indoors.*

BACK TO SCENE:

Intent. Emily reads what's on the screen.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ST. THOMAS - DAY

Cruise ships have disgorged thousands of TOURISTS. They crowd the narrow sidewalks in search of bargains.

BARKERS stand outside stores, wheedle passers-by to check out what's inside...

BARKER 1  
 Good morning! Looking for jewelry  
 today --

BARKER 2  
 Hello, Folks! Best liquor prices in  
 St. Thomas --

BARKER 3  
 Interested in souvenirs --

Tourists ignore or avoid them. With one exception --

SIDEWALK

A plume of bright green feathers bobs above a small group of Tourists.

The crowd parts to reveal --

Emily. Sparkling in a scanty acid green sequined carnival costume, complete with enormous feathered headdress.

Glittery eyelids, fake eyelashes, rouged and lipsticked. There is little sign of the fresh faced island girl in this get up.

A FAMILY OF CHUBBY TOURISTS pose with her for a photo --

"CLICK"

Emily disengages from FAT FATHER'S sweaty grip.

EMILY

Thanks, folks. Go inside for your free water bottle.

FAT FATHER

Well, little lady. There's four of us that need water. Wouldn't want us to get dehydrated now, would you?

EMILY

I'm sorry, sir. Only one per family.

FAT FATHER

What the hell good is that going to do us?

EMILY

You get free refills?

FAT FATHER

We get all hot and sweaty to come back for water? You ain't thinking right, pretty girl.

He pats her butt...

FAT FATHER (CONT'D)

Now, take that sweet little booty of yours inside and get us four water bottles.

Emily seethes but heads inside.

CARNIVAL STORE

Tourist stuff for sale. Cheap t-shirts. Dusty sea shells.

MUSTAFA, 20's, an East Indian whose nose and eyes are always swollen from allergies, blows into a tissue with a loud HONK.

EMILY

I need four water bottles. Please?

He hands her one water bottle...

MUSTAFA

One per family.

EMILY

I need four. They insist.

MUSTAFA

Americans too greedy. Tell them,  
eat less, not be so fat and thirsty.

Emily shakes her head.

MUSTAFA (CONT'D)

Do your job. We lose money. Father  
unhappy. Tell them only one bottle.

Emily heads out with the single water bottle.

SIDEWALK

She hands it to the Father...

EMILY

Sorry.

FAT FATHER

False advertising! I'm telling the  
ship! They're not gonna be happy!

EMILY

Okay. Okay. Hold on.

She heads back inside --

CARNIVAL STORE

Grabs three more bottles.

EMILY (CONT'D)

(to: Mustafa)

Take it out of my pay.

She hurries outside

SIDEWALK

Hands the water bottles to the Father.

FAT FATHER

You made us stand in the sun for ten  
minutes waiting on some stupid water.  
I'm telling the ship.

He herds his family down the sidewalk.

Emily heads back inside

## CARNIVAL STORE

loads more water into an ice tub.

MUSTAFA

Don't bother. You fired.

EMILY

What?

MUSTAFA

You suck. Tourists never come in store.

EMILY

It's not my fault they just want the free water.

MUSTAFA

Free water is carrot to get stubborn mules inside. Your mules always stay outside.

Emily pulls out her cell phone.

EMILY

You can't do this. I'm calling your father.

MUSTAFA

Go ahead. He think you slut in sequins, anyway.

EMILY

This costume was his idea!

Mustafa smirks.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I need this job.

MUSTAFA

(suggestive)

I know way you keep job.

Emily rips off her headdress. Rushes out in tears.

EXT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Emily swipes at her tears. Tries for composure. She wiggles the rotten handrail. A piece breaks off in her hand.

Mad now, she pushes inside --

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Rests the rotten wood on the FRONT DESK.

EMILY

Who?

NILSA

Wheatley. Down the hall.

Emily heads that way --

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

She rude, girl.

jerks to a halt.

EMILY

Rude?

NILSA

Try to catch her with honey.

Emily squares her shoulders. Heads down the hall.

Stops in front of a door with the nameplate --

MRS. WHEATLEY

a light TAP on the door.

No response.

Emily TAPS harder.

No response.

One more TAP.

Emily turns to leave. The door flies open --

MRS. WHEATLEY (40)

stands there. Her chubby attractiveness marred by the look of someone spoiling for a fight...

MRS. WHEATLEY

Who banging down my door?

Emily is cowed by her fierceness.

MRS. WHEATLEY (CONT'D)

It's lunchtime. Come back tomorrow.

She SLAMS the door.

Emily shuffles back down the hall to Nilsa...

EMILY  
It's her lunchtime.

NILSA  
Right.

EMILY  
I'll catch her tomorrow.

EXT. ERNESTO'S BACKYARD - DAY

Ernesto trots a Rooster around a dirt circle. He pushes the Rooster from side to side. Pats its butt. They maintain a brisk pace.

The Pitbulls BARK.

Ernesto picks up the Rooster.

EXT. ERNESTO'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Emily cuddles Peck, who, in one week, looks more like a young chicken than a baby chick. His regular feathers are in, baby fluff is gone.

Ernesto comes up. She holds Peck up for him to inspect.

Ernesto covers the eyes of his Rooster...

ERNESTO  
Handsome. He grows fast.

EMILY  
It's the food you gave me. Could I buy some?

Peck squirms, interested in Ernesto's Rooster.

Emily struggles to restrain him. He PECKS her...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Ouch!

ERNESTO  
Discipline him!

EMILY  
He didn't mean it.

ERNESTO  
He's a Rooster. You must show him you are his master!

Peck pecks her again.

EMILY  
Ouch! Naughty bird.

She taps him on his butt.

Ernesto puts his free hand over Emily's hand...uses it to push Peck into the ground.

Peck SQUAWKS and struggles.

Ernesto holds him firm with Emily's hand.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Stop! You're hurting him!

Ernesto releases them.

Peck runs off a short distance.

ERNESTO  
If he thinks he dominates you he'll be good for nothing but the pot.

He inspects the wounds on Emily's arm...

ERNESTO (CONT'D)  
Those needs to be attended to. Wait here.

Ernesto disappears to the back yard with his Rooster.

Emily picks Peck up...

EMILY  
I thought we were friends?

Peck looks at her with a young Rooster's eye.

EXT. ERNESTO'S BACKYARD - DAY

Emily, arm bandaged, watches Ernesto trot a Rooster around the dirt circle.

"PING"

A timer goes off.

Ernesto scoops up the Rooster. Strokes its feathers, CROONS as he gives it water, then tethers the Rooster to his house.

After an affectionate last pat he walks over to Emily.

EMILY

That's the first time he's ever pecked me.

Ernesto waits...

EMILY (CONT'D)

I guess it's up to me to make sure he doesn't do it again?

ERNESTO

He will do it again. That must be the last time he ever thinks he can. Assert yourself.

EMILY

That's hard for me.

ERNESTO

It's not for him. I must get back to work. Take good care of that bite.

Emily wavers, then...

EMILY

Need some help?

EXT. ERNESTO'S BACK YARD - LATER

Peck rests in a small cage in the shade.

Ernesto and Emily, hot and sweaty, clean a coop together.

When they finish...

ERNESTO

You're a good worker.

EMILY

Thanks.

ERNESTO

My sons are back in school. I need help with my birds. Are you interested?

EMILY

(uneasy)

I won't have to watch them fight?

ERNESTO

The fights are elsewhere. I only condition them here. They train like any other athlete.

Emily is silent.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

Emily. They are born fighters.  
It's in their blood. Here, they are  
well-loved and cared for, then allowed  
to do what comes naturally.

EMILY

But...they die.

ERNESTO

Compare them to chickens raised for  
food. Their death is guaranteed.  
My roosters have a 50% chance of  
survival. When they are injured or  
too old to fight they retire as  
heroes. Part of our family.

Emily deliberates, then...

EMILY

I'd like a job.

They shake on it.

ERNESTO

Bring your rooster to work. It will  
help keep him sane.

EXT. PUBLIC BUILDING - NIGHT

Emily's jeep parks in a PARKING LOT full of cars.

Emily and Carter exit the jeep.

HUNDREDS of ANGRY PEOPLE stream out of the building.

CARTER

Looks like we missed all the fun.

EMILY

That was quick.

CARTER

We're thirty minutes late.

EMILY

Sorry. Nothing ever starts on time  
here.

Briana rushes up...

BRIANA

Pretty crazy, huh?

EMILY

What happened?

BRIANA

CZM screwed up. Booked too small a room. Place went nuts. They called in the police to disperse the crowd. Those Island Green bastards know they're in for a fight now!

She rushes off.

EMILY

(to: Carter)

You get that?

Carter nods.

EMILY (CONT'D)

What's CZM?

CARTER

Coastal Zone Management. They can approve the dock permit.

Ty comes up, shakes hands with Carter...

TY

Mr. Reed. Em. Good to see you.

CARTER

When's the next hearing?

TY

Once they figure out where, they'll tell us when.

CARTER

I imagine Island Green's shitting their pants.

TY

They underestimated us.

(to: Emily)

Who's minding your chicken?

INT. EMILY'S JEEP (MOVING) - NIGHT

Carter takes out his flask...

CARTER

So. Who is minding your --

(swig)

Chicken?

EMILY

He's big enough to leave alone now.

CARTER

The deaf guy missed the part where you got a chicken.

EMILY

He's a rescue chicken. A baby rooster.

CARTER

Let the good times roll.

(swig)

You keeping him in my apartment?

EMILY

Is that okay?

CARTER

Sounds sanitary.

EMILY

He wears a diaper.

CARTER

Little girl. Your weird just turned pro.

(approving pat)

I wouldn't have it any other way.

INT. JOSH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily enters with her key...

EMILY

Josh? You should have come. So many people showed up they had to reschedule --

JOSH (O.S.)

Back here.

Emily heads to the

BEDROOM

Josh packs stuff into cardboard boxes. A sunnier man.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Hey, Sweetie.

EMILY

What's going on?

JOSH  
I'm being transferred. To Atlanta!

Stunned silence.

JOSH (CONT'D)  
We can leave as soon as we pack.  
We'll ship stuff in boxes. Travel  
light --

EMILY  
I can't move to Atlanta.

JOSH  
Sure you can.

Emily shakes her head.

JOSH (CONT'D)  
Sweetie, I know I haven't been much  
fun, lately. I was just so miserable.  
I frigging HATE this island. But  
now we can start over. We'll get a  
place together. It'll be so much  
better once we get out of here.

EMILY  
I can't leave Nana.

JOSH  
She hardly knows you anymore.

Silence.

JOSH (CONT'D)  
Sorry. We'll take Nana with us.  
Atlanta has way better facilities.  
You'll have access to all sorts of  
jobs --

EMILY  
Nana hates the states.

JOSH  
She doesn't even know where she is,  
most of the time.

EMILY  
I'd shrivel up and die in Atlanta.  
(wan smile)  
They despise jellyfish there.

JOSH  
So. You'll just let us go?

EMILY

Josh. I grew up here. I can't just take off. What about Peck?

JOSH

Who?

(beat)

Oh. The chicken. Give him to the Rooster Guy. You can get a dog in Atlanta. A normal pet.

(wheedles)

There's all sorts of work. You can make real money. Plus, I won't have to lie to my friends about what you really do.

EMILY

You lie about me?

JOSH

Come on, Em. You can't possibly think I'd ever tell anyone my girlfriend trains Roosters for cock fighting?

EMILY

They're born to fight.

JOSH

Uh-huh. Well, guess what? It's *illegal* in the states. *Illegal* because it's *barbaric*.

EMILY

I just take care of them.

JOSH

So the Rooster guy can make a fortune by fighting them to the death? Honey. This place is bad for you. It makes the unacceptable seem acceptable.

Confusion and pain...

EMILY

I'm not a bad person.

Josh hugs her.

JOSH

Of course you're not. You're just young. You'll figure things out. I'll help you.

Josh hands her some newspapers...

JOSH (CONT'D)  
You mind packing the kitchen?

Emily shuffles into the kitchen.

EXT. ERNESTO'S BACKYARD - DAY

Ernesto and Emily stand next to a round cage which has a tire mounted on a post.

Ernesto places a magnificent rooster, HECTOR, inside. He flips a switch. The tire starts spinning.

Hector hauls ass on the spinning tire.

ERNESTO  
Give Hector ten minutes. If he seems tired, turn it off. Afterwards, give him water and praise.

Emily nods. Settles in.

LATER

"PING"

Emily switches off the tire. She lifts Hector. Kisses his head...

EMILY  
You looked really good in there.

Hector CHITTERS. She gives him water.

EXT. ERNESTO'S PORCH - DAY

Ernesto and Emily eat lunch.

Peck scratches in the yard.

ERNESTO  
(re: Peck)  
Has he been a good boy?

EMILY  
He likes it here. He hates wearing his diaper at home.

Huh?

EMILY (CONT'D)  
It's for chickens who live inside.  
Fits over their butt.

Ernesto considers Peck...

ERNESTO  
 Poor little chicken. Women rule us  
 in ways we'd never guess.

EMILY  
 (smiles)  
 Is that why you're not married?

ERNESTO  
 My wife died five years ago.

EMILY  
 Oh. I'm sorry. Did she help you  
 with the Roosters?

A School Bus HONKS.

ON THE ROAD

Miguel and Jose erupt from inside. They wave at Ernesto and Emily...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 You're raising two nice boys.

ERNESTO  
 (smiles)  
 They're easier than Roosters.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Emily prepares Peck's food at the kitchen counter.

Peck CLUCKS at her feet. A bright pink diaper covers his butt.

EMILY  
 Hang on, little buddy.

She leans over to set his food bowl down.

Peck *pecks* her hand...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 Ouch!

She drops the food bowl.

Peck eats the spilled food.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 Naughty bird.

She shoos him away from the food.

He SQUAWKS then pecks at her.

Emily leaps out of his reach, just in time.

One mad little Rooster, Peck returns to the spilled food.

Emily pushes him.

He SQUAWKS. Lunges to peck. Just misses.

Apprehensive. Awkward. Emily grabs Peck by the back of the neck. Forces him flat onto the floor.

He squirms and SQUAWKS as he struggles.

Emily, not happy, but determined...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Mama's not gonna hurt you.

Peck eases in his struggles.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Momma loves you, even when you're  
naughty.

Peck stops squirming.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
It's okay, little Peck. Momma's got  
you. You're safe. It's okay...

Peck lays still.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Momma's gonna let you up so you can  
eat.

She releases Peck. Offers his food bowl.

Peck hesitates.

Emily taps the food with her finger.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
It's okay.

Peck eats, docile, content.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Wow.

EXT. ERNESTO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Full moon night.

Ernesto exits his truck with a limp, bloody Rooster in his arms.

The Pit Bulls WHIMPER a greeting as he heads behind the house.

EXT. ROOSTER GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Behind a thicket of Bougainvillea, invisible from the house, is a small cleared section of land.

Numerous smooth stones, which serve as grave markers, reflect the moon light.

Ernesto picks up a shovel, starts digging

LATER

He sets the shovel down. A fresh grave has been dug.

He wraps the dead Rooster in cloth, lays it in the grave.

Ernesto bows his head, WHISPERS a prayer in Spanish, swipes at his eyes.

He picks up the shovel, begins to cover the Rooster.

EXT. ERNESTO'S BACK YARD - DAY

"PING" A timer goes off.

Emily takes Hector out of the tire treadmill.

She kisses his head. Gives him water.

EMILY

(to: Hector)

Who's a strong, beautiful boy?

Hector CHITTERS.

EMILY (CONT'D)

That's right. Brave, too.

She tethers him. Sets him on the ground. He scratches in the dirt.

Ernesto walks up with a hefty Rooster...

ERNESTO

Alphonse.

He hands Alphonse to Emily...

EMILY  
(to: Alphonse)  
What a big, brawny guy.

Alphonse CHITTERS.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
(to: Alphonse)  
No, sweetie. You've got to go the  
full five minutes.

ERNESTO  
(laughs)  
Alphonse is a lazy chicken. You  
have to push him to work. He will  
be your second bird.

EMILY  
He's a little chubby. Maybe he can  
win fights by sitting on the other  
bird?

ERNESTO  
(laughs)  
Maybe.

Ernesto picks up Hector...

ERNESTO (CONT'D)  
Hector rests now. He has his first  
fight tomorrow night. We increase  
his supplements, watch his weight.  
You've done a good job with him.

Emily bites her lip.

EMILY  
Are you sure he's ready?

ERNESTO  
Don't worry. He's smart and quick.

Emily looks sad.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)  
Emily. He's not afraid to die. No  
animal ever is.  
(reassuring pat)  
Try to see beyond your own fears.

Emily clutches Alphonse.

Ernesto sets Hector down, gently takes Alphonse from her.

He places him on the tire treadmill. Sets it spinning.

Alphonse runs at a waddle.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)  
Give him an extra five minutes.

Alphonse SQUAWKS.

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Emily nods to Nilsa...

EMILY  
Good morning. Thought I'd catch her  
before lunchtime.

NILSA  
She no morning person, child.

EMILY  
(dithers)  
Should I wait? Maybe I'll go see.

She walks down the hall, pauses outside

MRS WHEATLEY'S OFFICE

taps on the door. No response.

She RAPS on the door...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Mrs. Wheatley?

No response.

Emily BANGS on the door...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Hello? I need to speak with you  
about my Grandmother --

The door is jerked open...

MRS. WHEATLEY  
What makes you think you can bang on  
my door, girl? Ain't you got no  
manners? It's my breakfast. Come  
back later.

EMILY  
It's ten o'clock in the morning!

MRS. WHEATLEY  
I supposed to check with you when I  
hungry? Who you tink you are?

Emily's opens her mouth to speak...

MRS. WHEATLEY (CONT'D)  
You momma raised a rude girl, that's  
for sure.

Mrs. Wheatley closes her door. Emily stops her...

EMILY  
My grandmother raised me and I'm not  
rude.

Mrs. Wheatley pushes to close the door. Emily pushes back...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
What time is convenient?

Mrs. Wheatley narrows her eyes...

MRS. WHEATLEY  
What you wanna talk about?

EMILY  
Why my Grandmother isn't getting her  
medicine and that rotten handrail  
outside.

MRS. WHEATLEY  
Come back tomorrow.

She slams her door.

Emily stares at the closed door. She HUFFS down the hall to --

NANA'S DOOR

Opens it. Peeps inside.

INT. NANA'S ROOM - DAY

Nana fiddles with the bars at her window. One side has been  
pried open.

EMILY  
Nana!

Nana jumps with a guilty start.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Nana. What are you doing?

NANA  
I need to smell the sea.

Emily seats her in a chair then inspects the bars at the window. A screw is missing.

Emily picks it up from the floor and screws it in with her fingers.

EXT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Emily and Nana walk arm in arm. It's a good day.

NANA

(sniff)

The sea smells like life to me. How could anyone live away from the ocean?

EMILY

They're not living, just existing.

Affectionate squeeze...

NANA

My little island girl.

EXT. ERNESTO'S BACK YARD - DAY

Emily cuddles Hector. Whispers in his ear...

EMILY

You be really careful tonight. I don't want anything to happen to you.

Ernesto comes up...

ERNESTO

You hold him while I remove some of his feathers.

Emily clutches Hector.

EMILY

Is that really necessary?

Ernesto studies her. Compassionate but firm.

ERNESTO

Emily. You must understand. Hector wants this fight. It is what he was born to do.

Emily struggles with emotion.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)  
Feathers offer protection but can slow him down and cause him to overheat. We remove the feathers to improve his speed and mobility. That way the smarter Rooster will win.

He puts a reassuring hand on her arm...

ERNESTO (CONT'D)  
Hector is smart. He will win.

Emily reluctantly hands Hector over.

Ernesto plucks some feathers.

EMILY  
I'm sorry, Ernesto. I can't watch this.

Ernesto nods. Continues to pluck Hector.

Emily walks off, tears stream down her cheeks.

EXT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

A sign at the front door -- *CZM HEARING 7:00 PM*

Emily and Carter wait to sign in...

CARTER  
We need to sit on the front row.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Everybody knows everybody. Deafening din.

ONSTAGE

FIVE CZM EMPLOYEES are seated with FIVE ISLAND GREEN SUITS.

The CHAIRMAN (50's) RAPS a gavel...

CHAIRMAN  
This meeting is called to order...

SERIES OF SHOTS (MOS) -- Presentations from each side.

-- An ISLAND GREEN SUIT does a Power Point presentation to an audience full of glowering faces.

-- Ty gives a Power Point presentation. He's nervous. Drops things. It doesn't seem to matter.

-- Briana stares terrified at the crowd. Opens her mouth to speak. Can't. She flashes a peace sign.

-- A YOUNG GIRL (8) clutches a toy sea turtle. Gives a speech. The audience gives her a standing ovation.

-- Locals exit the podium, clutch papers, photos. Folks are riled. Determined. Indignant.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Carter's turn. He heads to the

PODIUM

Surveys the crowd. He holds up a thick clutch of papers...

CARTER

I had a lot to say tonight.

He tosses the papers into a wastepaper basket.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Somebody recycle that, okay?

LAUGHTER.

CARTER (CONT'D)

If my hearing has served me --

LAUGHTER.

CARTER (CONT'D)

The people who have gone before me  
have said all there is to say. Island  
Green? Hope you've been listening.

A standing ovation. Feelings run high which segues into --

INT. COCK FIGHT ARENA - NIGHT

Atavistic SHOUTS from a CROWD OF MEN as a cockfight reaches a decisive moment.

*The fighting Roosters are never visible.*

ROARS of mixed jubilation and disappointment signals the end of the fight. Money changes hands.

Ernesto weaves through the crowd with Hector. Hector's chest is plucked nearly naked. They enter the --

COCK PIT

a dirt circle of hell. Ernesto squares off with another ROOSTER OWNER.

They begin the pre-combat ritual of thrusting the birds, back and forth, beak to beak.

A REFEREE barks...

REFEREE

Ready pit!

The two men release the Roosters.

The birds collide in mortal combat.

Eager men press in.

The fighting Roosters are obscured from view.

EXT. COCKFIGHT ARENA - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ernesto cradles a bloody Hector in his arms...

ERNESTO

My strong, brave Rooster.

He kisses his head.

EXT. ERNESTO'S BACK YARD - DAY

Emily cleans the Rooster houses with a worried glances at the empty tether in front of Hector's house.

Ernesto comes up. He hands her an envelope...

EMILY

Hector is all right?

ERNESTO

He won. He's a little banged up.  
I'll keep him inside for a few days.  
He will heal quickly.

Emily sags with relief...

EMILY

Thank goodness.

Ernesto indicates the envelope...

ERNESTO

Your part of the winnings.

Emily looks inside the envelope.

EMILY

There's three hundred dollars in here!

ERNESTO

It was a good fight.

EMILY

I shouldn't take this.

She watches Peck, who scratches nearby. He's tethered to keep him away from the other Roosters.

ERNESTO

Why? You work hard. You deserve it.

He puts a hand on Emily's shoulder...

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

We care for our Roosters. Then we let them do what comes naturally.

Peck CHITTERS at Emily's feet. She picks him up. Kisses his head. She sticks the envelope in her back pocket.

Roosters CROW.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

(smiles)

And naturally, our Roosters tell us it's time to eat.

He walks off. Emily looks at Peck...

EMILY

What do you really think, little buddy?

Peck looks at her with a rooster's eye.

INT. JOSH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Boxes are stacked. Ready to go.

Josh sits on the sofa. Eats take out.

FRONT DOOR

Emily sticks her head in...

EMILY

Hey.

Josh swallows the last of a beer. Holds the empty bottle out.

Emily takes it. Goes into the --

KITCHEN

takes a beer out of the refrigerator, heads back into the --

LIVING ROOM

Hands Josh the beer. He nods his thanks.

EMILY (CONT'D)

The public hearing went well. Lots of people spoke out against the development.

JOSH

I read the paper. The surfer gods were, like really worried, it will affect a like, totally epic surfing spot, dude.

EMILY

Which is why it's crazy someone wants to build a dock there.

JOSH

The folks on this island are determined to drive its economy into the ground.

EMILY

Or to preserve what makes it so special.

JOSH

That statement right there is why you need to go to Atlanta with me. You've led such a narrow little life here. You know nothing of how the real world works.

EMILY

I think I know what matters to me.

JOSH

You're so young, Em. Believe me, the things you think matter now, won't in five years.

Emily stays silent.

JOSH (CONT'D)  
I only want to help you figure out  
what's best. Okay?  
(placates)  
How about we google Nursing Homes in  
Atlanta?

Emily stalks out of the apartment.

JOSH (CONT'D)  
Jeez.

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Emily knocks on Mrs. Wheatley's door...

EMILY  
Mrs. Wheatley? It's Emily Shaw.

No response.

Emily bangs on the door.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Mrs. Wheatley? I'm sorry if it's  
inconvenient but I really need to  
talk to you.

No response.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Mrs. Wheatley?

EXT. HULL BAY - DAY

Emily carries her paddle board to the shoreline. Peck  
follows, on a leash.

OFFSHORE

Ty sits on his surf board, waits for a wave.

He sees Emily and Peck arrive.

BEACH

Emily puts Peck in the baby sling, mounts her board.

She paddles a short way out --

OFFSHORE

Ty catches up with them...

TY

Hey, Em!

She sits on her board. They drift together.

TY (CONT'D)

Did you hear about our plan to mark  
the endangered corals around the  
proposed dock site at Brass tomorrow?

Emily shakes her head.

TY (CONT'D)

Yeah. Island green claims there  
aren't any but there's hundreds of  
colonies. We're going to buoy them  
and take an aerial photo.

Peck sticks his head out of the sling.

TY (CONT'D)

(grin)

You and Peck should come.

EMILY

Okay.

(pause)

I thought you did a great job at the  
hearing.

TY

I was so nervous. I couldn't remember  
my name.

EMILY

Still. You did it. I'd never have  
the courage to do something like  
that.

TY

Never say never, Em. You might  
surprise yourself.

(pause)

Haven't seen you downtown. Whatcha  
doing these days?

EMILY

Oh...you know...different things?

TY

(teases)

I never thought carnival queen was  
your calling. So. You working boats?  
Retail?

EMILY  
 (hedges)  
 I'm working with animals.

TY  
 Oh. Great! Humane Society? They  
 need some good folks.

EMILY  
 (blush)  
 I'm working with chickens.

Peck CROWS.

TY  
 (laughs)  
 Well. Peck seems to approve.

Into Emily's awkward silence...

TY (CONT'D)  
 Hope it works out for you.

EMILY  
 Thanks.

TY  
 So, see you two out at Brass tomorrow?

Em nods.

TY (CONT'D)  
 Great! It'll be fun.

He paddles off. Em watches him go. A troubled frown on her  
 face.

EXT. ERNESTO'S HOUSE, FRONT PORCH - DAY

Emily and Ernesto eat lunch...

EMILY  
 Ernesto. When can I see Hector?

Ernesto doesn't answer.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 (urgent)  
 Is he okay?

ERNESTO  
 Emily. Your affection for the  
 roosters worries me. I think this  
 job could become unhealthy for you.  
 You're too attached.

EMILY

I'm okay.

ERNESTO

Imagine...Hector's death.

EMILY

Did something happen to him? Is he all right?

Ernesto looks at her with compassion.

ERNESTO

He's all right...for now.

Ernesto takes her hand.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

Emily. Believe me when I tell you I understand. But also know that I will always fight Roosters. No matter how many die.

EMILY

How, Ernesto? How can you watch them die and not be affected?

ERNESTO

I am affected. But I try to respect the Rooster for who he is. To me, the Rooster is a fighter. So he should be allowed to fight.

He squeezes her hand...

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

But that is my belief. It does not mean it must be yours.

EMILY

I don't know what I believe.

ERNESTO

Don't waste your life allowing other people to think for you. Listen to your heart and have the courage to follow what it tells you.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Emily carries Peck into the living room. She kisses him...

EMILY

Who's Momma's best boy?

Peck CHITTERS. Emily sets him on the floor.

She pulls her hair tie out of her ponytail. It flies from her fingers...lands across the room.

Peck CACKLES with excitement.

He takes off after it. A funny sight in his bright pink diaper. He picks up the hair tie in his beak.

Emily SNAPS her fingers...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Bring it back to Momma.

Peck heads towards her then veers off. He drops it.

Emily picks it up.

Expectant, Peck CHITTERS at her feet.

Emily tosses it.

Peck picks it up, carries it almost to Emily then drops it.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
(laughs)  
Who's a smart boy?

She picks it up. Tosses it.

Peck picks it up and wanders off.

Emily scoops him up. Smothers him in kisses...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
We'll work on it.

EXT. INNER BRASS ISLAND - DAY

LOCALS crowd the beach. A small GROUP surrounds Emily and Peck.

A YOUNG MOTHER with a BABY on her hip oozes disapproval...

YOUNG MOTHER  
Why in the world would you want a  
chicken for a pet?

EMILY  
He's a rescue chicken.

An OLD HIPPIE CHICK chimes in...

OLD HIPPIE CHICK  
Chickens are cool.

YOUNG MOTHER  
They're stupid. Their brains are tiny. You keep him in your house? Don't chickens poop all over the place?

EMILY  
He wears a diaper.

The old Hippie Chick HOOTS.

YOUNG MOTHER  
That's disgusting. I can't even imagine.

OLD HIPPIE CHICK  
Sure you can.  
(re: baby)  
Stays inside. Small brain. Wears a diaper.

She HOOTS as the Young Mother HUFFS off.

OLD HIPPIE CHICK (CONT'D)  
I crack myself up. Ignore the idiots. Do what you think is best.

EMILY  
I've been hearing something along those lines alot, lately.

OLD HIPPIE CHICK  
Life trying to tell you something?

EMILY  
Seems like it.

OLD HIPPIE CHICK  
Better listen up. Try not to learn things the hard way.

She grins a semi-toothless grin...

OLD HIPPIE CHICK (CONT'D)  
Don't want to end up toothless in St. Thomas.

She CACKLES as she walks away.

EXT. INNER BRASS - SHORELINE - DAY

Dozens of swimmers armed with buoys snorkel the area.

BEACH

Emily wears a mask, snorkel and fins. Ty hands her a cluster of buoys and a laminated card.

INSERT: *LAMINATED CARD WHICH FEATURES AN ENDANGERED CORAL*

EMILY

Elkhorn coral?

TY

Good girl. Just make sure you don't damage the coral itself.

The sound of a helicopter has everyone look up.

A helicopter with an ISLAND GREEN LOGO hovers. A SUIT leans out the side door...

SUIT

(microphone)

You are trespassing on private property. You must vacate the premises immediately. I repeat. You are trespassing on private property. You must vacate the premises immediately.

Ty beckons to folks hanging out under the tree...

TY

Come to the shoreline. It's still public property.

Everyone hurries to the water's edge. They jeer at the island green helicopter.

The side door closes. The helicopter roars away. Everyone cheers.

Ty smiles at Emily...

TY (CONT'D)

That was fun.

Emily looks a tad unsettled. She clutches her buoys.

TY (CONT'D)

You okay?

EMILY

(resolve)

Yes.

She wades out into the water.

LATER:

AERIAL VIEW - *HUNDREDS OF BUOYS dot the surface of the water.*

A yellow HELICOPTER hovers as a PHOTOGRAPHER snaps pictures.

BEACH

Ty stands next to Emily and Peck...

TY

Thanks for coming out, Em.

EMILY

It felt good to do something.

TY

Doesn't it? Hey, Let me know if you and Peck want company the next time you paddle?

EMILY

Okay.

She puts Peck on the board. Shoves off from the beach.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Bye.

She paddles towards Hull Bay. Peck stands in front of her. An arresting sight.

Ty grins as he watches them go.

EXT. ERNESTO'S BACKYARD - DAY

Ernesto sets Hector down on the dirt circle...

ERNESTO

We take it slow today, Hector.

He pats Hector's butt. The two slowly move around the circle.

The pit bulls BARK.

EXT. ERNESTO'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

The truck from the ferry scene sits in the driveway.

Ernesto walks up to the driver's side

JOSE RAMIREZ (50)

Could be Ernesto's older brother.

THEIR DIALOGUE IS IN SPANISH WITH SUBTITLES

JOSE  
Hello, my friend.

ERNESTO  
Hello. It goes well?

JOSE  
Very well. How about you?

ERNESTO  
Yes.

JOSE  
The boys?

ERNESTO  
Good.

JOSE  
Good. I have some excellent roosters  
from the Dominican Republic. Are  
you interested?

ERNESTO  
Yes.

JOSE  
Can you come to Puerto Rico with me  
tonight?

ERNESTO  
It's a school night. How about this  
weekend? The boys can come with me.

JOSE  
Tonight, my friend. More roosters  
are coming this weekend. I need to  
make room.

Ernesto considers it, then...

ERNESTO  
I'll let you know.

JOSE  
Good to see you.

The truck backs out of the driveway.

Ernesto dials a number on his cell...

ERNESTO  
(into phone)  
Hello, Emily? I was wondering if  
you could stay with my boys tonight?

INT. ERNESTO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Emily watches TV with the two boys.

Peck, diapered, shares the sofa with Emily.

EMILY  
You know what's missing?

The two boys shake their heads.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Popcorn!

Enthusiastic noises. Emily gets up...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Back in a jiffy.

She walks past an empty cage.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Hey, guys. Was this where you kept  
Hector?

The boys nod.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
So, he's back in his house?

MIGUEL  
Dad started conditioning him today.  
He's doing okay.

EMILY  
That's wonderful.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Emily searches through cupboards. Finds popcorn. Puts it  
in the microwave. She goes over to the --

WINDOW

Stares out into the darkened back yard.

The Roosters are in their little houses. All is quiet.

"PING"

The microwave goes. Emily puts the popcorn in a bowl.

LIVING ROOM

The boys dive in.

LATER

The movie ends.

JUAN

Can we watch another one?

EMILY

Sorry. School night. Your Dad  
wouldn't like it.

The boys GROAN but get up.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Brush your teeth. I'll be doing a  
bed check.

The boys wander down the hall.

Emily cuddles Peck.

LATER

Emily goes to Miguel's door. She pauses...

EMILY (CONT'D)

Knock. Knock.

MIGUEL'S BEDROOM

Miguel is in bed. A book in his lap.

EMILY (CONT'D)

You cool?

Miguel nods.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Good book?

Miguel nods.

EMILY (CONT'D)

You're oldest. You can stay up  
another thirty minutes.

MIGUEL

(smile)

Thanks.

Emily kisses him on the cheek. Miguel crushes...hard.

EMILY  
Night, sweetie.

MIGUEL  
Night.

JUAN'S ROOM

She opens the door. He's fast asleep.

She gives a light kiss on his forehead...

EMILY  
(whispers)  
Sweet dreams.

She quietly closes the door behind her.

LIVING ROOM

She sits on the sofa with Peck in her lap. A movie is on but her mind is elsewhere.

LATER

Hands on a wall clock show two a.m.

Emily wakes up. Peck makes quiet CHITTER noises as she moves him off her lap.

She goes into the

KITCHEN

For a glass of water. She stares out the

WINDOW

Bright moonlight illuminates the Rooster houses.

She opens the door. Goes out.

The door is left ajar.

EXT. ERNESTO'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

A quiet night except for the tree frogs. Emily makes her way over to the Rooster Houses.

INT. ERNESTO'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Peck wakes up. Leaves the sofa and waddles into the kitchen.

EXT. ERNESTO'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Emily closes in on the first of the Rooster houses.

INT. ERNESTO'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Peck waddles to the kitchen door. Pushes it open with his beak. He heads out into the night.

EXT. ERNESTO'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Peck crosses the yard. He softly CHITTERS.

He stops to peck in a patch of dirt.

At the Rooster houses. Emily pulls Hector from his coop...

EMILY

(croons)

I missed you. So glad you're okay.

Peck hears Emily. Heads in her direction.

Emily's shirt gets caught in Hector's tether. She fumbles to free herself.

Hector flaps his wings. Struggles to get free.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Hold still, sweetie.

Peck closes in. He's now twenty feet away.

Emily undoes the tether from Hector's leg.

Hector sees Peck, GURGLES with rage.

He fights to escape Emily...viciously *pecks* her.

She drops him. He races towards Peck --

COLLIDES

with him in mortal combat.

Emily rushes over to the fighting Roosters.

She kicks at Hector who turns on her. He attacks her, vicious and mindless.

Peck, bloody, battered, limps away.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Run, Peck, run.

Hector pecks her. Over and over.

Miguel rushes up. He wields a hatchet. Swings at Hector.  
Cuts his head off in one swipe.

Emily falls to her knees, sobbing.

MIGUEL

Emily. Come with me. We need to  
tend to those bites.

He supports her as she limps to the kitchen door.

EMILY

(sobs)  
Peck?

MIGUEL

We'll find him. First you.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

White faced with anxiety, Miguel cleans Emily's bites.

EMILY

I'm so sorry.

Miguel nods. Stays silent.

Juan enters with a limp, lifeless Peck.

Emily crumbles...

EMILY (CONT'D)

Oh, no.

Peck weakly CLUCKS.

MIGUEL

His feathers protected him.

Emily cuddles Peck. She CROONS to him...

EMILY

You're gonna be okay, sweetie. You're  
gonna be okay.

She looks to the boys for affirmation.

Neither boy can give it.

INT. ERNESTO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dawn's early light shines through the window blinds.

Emily sits on the sofa. Peck in her lap. She strokes him. Stares ahead, vacant.

Miguel comes in...

MIGUEL

You okay?

Emily isn't sure.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

(re: Peck)

Is he?

EMILY

I think so.

MIGUEL

We will feed the roosters.

Emily doesn't respond.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

You should go to the doctor.

Emily stays silent.

Miguel starts to speak. Decides against it. He leaves the room.

Emily strokes Peck who is still as death.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily is curled up in the ball chair with Peck.

Her cell phone RINGS.

She lets it go to voicemail.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Emily is asleep in the ball chair with Peck.

Her cell phone RINGS.

It goes to voicemail.

EXT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Our first glimpse of the outside of her building.

A run down villa. Peeling paint. Rotten door jams and window sills.

Carter's junky old Mercedes rolls up in the driveway, parks.

Carter and Josh get out.

Carter KNOCKS on Emily's door...

CARTER

Emily. It's Carter and Josh. Open up.

No response.

CARTER (CONT'D)

I know you're here. Your shitty jeep said so.

No response.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Open up or I'm knocking it down.

Emily opens the door a crack.

EMILY

I'm okay.

CARTER

Thank God! Why the hell aren't you answering my texts?

JOSH

Sweetie? I've been calling and calling. What's going on?

She opens the door wider. They see her bandages.

CARTER AND JOSH

(together)

Holy shit.

EMILY

Darn chicken got the drop on me.

She gauges the reactions of the two men: Concern on Carter's face. Revulsion on Josh's.

Carter grabs her by an undamaged part of her arm.

CARTER

Holy shit.

Emily snatches her arm back.

CARTER (CONT'D)

We're coming in.

Carter pushes in. Josh follows.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Josh gags. Carter grabs his nose...

CARTER

Smells like a chicken coop in here.  
Does your landlord know about this?

He sees Peck, roosting in the ball chair.

CARTER (CONT'D)

What's up with your chicken?

Emily carefully picks Peck up.

EMILY

He got hurt, too.

Carter looks around her apartment.

It's a mess with little piles of chicken poop here and there.

CARTER

Looks like a drunk with systems  
failure lives here. Pack some stuff.  
You two are going with us.

EMILY

We're okay.

CARTER

No. You're not. When the cavalry  
arrives you accept help. End of  
story.

Emily stares, stubborn.

CARTER (CONT'D)

You can't stress out an alcoholic,  
little girl. We don't like it. Get  
your shit. Literally. Bring the  
chicken and let's go.

Peck CLUCKS weakly. Emily picks him up, tears in her eyes...

EMILY

We're ready.

They head out the door.

INT. CARTER'S MERCEDES (MOVING) - DAY

Carter drives.

Emily sits with Peck, in the front seat.

Josh, from the back seat...

JOSH

Em? What the hell happened?

EMILY

I learned a lesson the hard way.

JOSH

So it would seem.

Emily grimaces. Shows all her teeth.

EMILY

Still got all my teeth.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Emily is cleaned up with fresh bandages.

DOCTOR

Those wounds are serious, young lady.  
You start taking better care of  
yourself. And stay away from  
chickens.

WAITING ROOM

Josh fidgets upright when Emily enters...

JOSH

Carter took your chicken to the vet.  
They're keeping him overnight. You're  
coming home with me.

EMILY

His name is Peck.

JOSH

Excuse me?

EMILY

My chicken's name is Peck.

JOSH

Of course it is. What else would it  
be?

INT. JOSH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Emily and Josh sit on the sofa. The TV is on.

EMILY

Josh?

Josh mutes the TV.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I'm not going to Atlanta with you.

Josh nods.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry things didn't work out  
between us. We're just not the best  
fit.

JOSH

I'm sorry, too. We want completely  
different things. Plus, I hate  
chickens.

EMILY

(gentle smile)

A deal breaker.

Silence for a beat.

JOSH

Spend the night? Tomorrow you can  
face the chicken shit.

Emily gets up...

EMILY

Thanks. I don't think so. I've got  
another mess to clean up.

EXT. ERNESTO'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Emily's jeep pulls in and parks. She gets out.

The pit bulls go berserk.

Ernesto rushes to her. Tormented...

ERNESTO

Are you okay?

Emily nods.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

I've been so worried. You never  
returned my calls. I went to your  
apartment --

EMILY

Ernesto. I'm okay.

He gently takes one of her bandaged arms in his hands.

ERNESTO

You've been to a doctor?

Emily breaks down...

EMILY

Ernesto. I'm so sorry about Hector.

Ernesto holds her while she cries. He strokes her hair...

EMILY (CONT'D)

You tried to tell me. I thought  
Hector loved me. I got it so wrong.  
I'm so stupid.

ERNESTO

Shush, Emilia. This is my fault,  
not yours.

EMILY

No. You told me over and over...

ERNESTO

Emily. When you showed up with your  
big heart and little chicken you  
reminded me so much of my wife. I  
should have never let you near the  
Roosters.

Emily looks at him.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

My wife helped me with the roosters.  
Like you, her heart was too big, and  
she felt they loved her back. She  
was feeding her favorite rooster  
when he pecked her. She thought it  
was no big deal

(sorrowful)

One night I woke up to her crying.  
She said her arm hurt. The wound had  
festered with red streaks. I rushed  
her to a hospital. It was too late.  
She went into a coma from sepsis  
that night and died two days later.

Ernesto takes Emily's bandaged arm in his hand.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

I can hardly bear seeing you like this.

EMILY

I'm full of antibiotics. I'll be fine.

ERNESTO

Please come over on Sunday? The boys need to see you are okay. We don't want to lose you from our life.

Emily nods. They hug. Both relieved beyond belief.

INT. NANA'S ROOM (NURSING HOME)- NIGHT

Nana fiddles at the bars of her window. Her movements are nervous and jerky.

At the door, she peers out at the nurse's station where a MALE NURSE sleeps at the desk.

She returns to the bars. A screw falls to the floor. Then another. Nana tugs.

The bars pull free.

She opens the window and climbs outside.

EXT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT

Nana SNIFFS the night air. She heads to the sea.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A cell phone RINGS.

Emily wakes, checks the time. It's two A.M. She answers the phone...

EMILY

Hello?

We can see from her face it's bad news.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I'll be right there.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Emily sits in a hospital room.

Nana lays in the bed. Unconscious.

The BEEPING of a heart rate monitor and Nana's RASPY breathing are the only sounds.

A KNOCK on the door.

It's Carter. He hugs Emily, hands her a coffee...

CARTER

What happened?

EMILY

She pried the security bars off and climbed out her window. A boater found her floating in the harbor.

CARTER

Damn.

Carter takes a hit from his flask.

EMILY

This is all my fault.

CARTER

You did not give your grandmother Alzheimer's, little girl.

Emily shakes her head. Pissed...

EMILY

That Nursing home bitch backed me down. She intimidated me. Bullied me. Humiliated me. Nana paid the price because I'm a gutless little puke.

She stands up...

EMILY (CONT'D)

I'm gonna go kick her ass.

Carter stares. Speechless with surprise.

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Emily BANGS through the --

FRONT DOOR

Nilsa jumps. Emily stomps down the hall...

NILSA

Girl. She's gone.

EMILY

Gone?

NILSA

This place mash up. Heat is on.

Emily slumps in defeat.

EMILY

I suck.

NILSA

Child. This is not your fault.

EMILY

No? How come? I knew Nana was tampering with the security bars. I never mentioned it to anybody.

NILSA

No one could know how bad you Granny wanted out of here.

Emily pounds her fists on her thighs.

EMILY

Dammit! I did! She couldn't smell the sea. I left her in a room with a window she couldn't open. Correction. Shouldn't open. God!

She rushes out the door.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ST THOMAS - MAINSTREET - DAY

Emily shoves past hordes of Tourists who are blurred through her tears.

She Hears the PEEP, PEEP of a CHICK in traffic.

Emily swipes at her tears. Her vision clears in time to see --

A BABY CHICK FLATTENED BY A CAR TIRE

EMILY

Oh. No.

Emily rushes into the street. Falls to her knees in front of the dead chick.

HORNS BLARE. TIRES SQUEAL.

Emily SOBS...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 Sorry. I'm so sorry.

INT. HOSPITAL ICU - DAY

Emily holds Nana's hand...

EMILY  
 I'm so sorry.

Nana's breathing changes.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 Nana?

Nana's breathing grows softer.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 I'm here. I love you, Nana. Thank  
 you for all you've done for me.

Tears stream. Nana's breathing slows.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 I love you, Nana. I love you --

Nana has one last soft intake of breath...dies.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 I love you.

EXT. INNER BRASS ISLAND - DAY

Carter tugs a skiff up on the beach. Tosses out an anchor.

Emily carries a urn of her Grandmother's ashes.

CARTER  
 Under the tree?

Emily and Peck make their way to the tree.

Emily jerks to a halt at the sight of a --

NO TRESPASSING SIGN

Nailed into the trunk of the Black Mampoo.

EMILY  
 Shit!

She sets the urn down. Rips at the sign. It's stuck.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 Disrespectful bastards!

Carter goes to the dinghy, retrieves a hammer. Hands it to Emily...

CARTER

Calm down. Ease those nails out.

Emily sobs as she gently extracts the nails...

EMILY

(to tree)

I'm so sorry.

The sign comes down. Emily kisses the nail holes.

CARTER

She's survived Hurricanes and caterpillars, Em. She can handle a few nail holes.

He gives her the urn.

Emily gazes up through the branches.

The sun sparkles. Clouds drift. It's Peaceful. Serene.

She reaches in the urn and sprinkles ashes under the tree.

Peck snags a small bone amidst the ashes.

He races off.

Horror! Emily looks at Carter.

Carter BARKS a laugh.

Emily, slightly hysterical, also LAUGHS.

She beckons to Peck...

EMILY

Come here, boy. Come to Momma.

Peck runs back to Emily, the bone in his mouth. He drops it. CHITTERS for her to throw it.

CARTER

I'll be damned. A chicken who plays fetch.

Emily picks up the bone. She breaks off a twig. Throws it instead. Peck races off.

CARTER (CONT'D)

That can solve your job problem.  
You and Peck can go on the road.

EMILY

Nope. Never going to exploit a loved one.

CARTER

Good for you, little girl.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

Same crowd has gathered.

ONSTAGE

The Chairman stands at the podium.

CHAIRMAN

This is to be the final opportunity to present any views or opinions regarding the permit request for a dock to be build in Inner Brass island.

He consults a sheet of paper.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)

Ty Taylor?

Ty gets up. He wears a curly gray wig, shapeless dress and tennis shoes.

AUDIENCE LAUGHTER.

Ty is nervous. He drops items as he sets up a screen for his presentation, but struggles on.

TY

Hello, everyone.

AUDIENCE

Hello, Ty.

TY

Got your attention?

(grin)

I'm wearing this outfit to pay tribute to one of my heroes...the little old lady in tennis shoes.

ON THE SCREEN --

*"A crazy looking little old lady in tennis shoes shakes a finger at a table full of suits"*

BACK TO SCENE:

TY (CONT'D)

In the past, Environmentalists were considered part of the lunatic fringe. They caught a lot of flack for being anti-development and were objects of ridicule...or worse. Consistently ignored and outgunned by developers and industry until the 1960's, when the United States government finally realized our nation was in the midst in an environmental crisis.

ON THE SCREEN: SERIES OF SHOTS -- Environmental Crisis.

-- Rivers burning.

-- Smokestacks belching fire and smoke.

-- Santa Barbara blowout in the pacific Ocean.

TY (CONT'D)

Well, you all know that story. In the early 1970's laws were passed to protect and preserve the environment. One of these laws was the Endangered Species Act. This law was designed to protect critically imperiled species from extinction as a consequence of economic growth and development.

ON THE SCREEN:

NEW SLIDE: Elkhorn Coral Colony

BACK TO SCENE:

TY (CONT'D)

Meet Acropora, endangered species of the marine fauna type.

ON THE SCREEN:

NEW SLIDE: Hundreds of fishing buoys in the bay at Inner Brass.

BACK TO SCENE:

TY (CONT'D)

Each of those buoys represent a colony of Acropora. Island green's claim that this coral is sparsely scattered is patently false. Their proposed dock construction and subsequent development would place this coral at risk. Approval of their permit would, in essence, allow them to break the law. I respectfully ask the CZM to deny their permit application.

Ty pulls his wig off.

THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE

Ty sits down.

The Chairmen goes to the podium.

CHAIRMAN

Thank you, Mr. Taylor...Misses Taylor?

LAUGHTER.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)

Next up is Emily Shaw and her...chicken, Peck.

All eyes on Emily. She heads to the --

PODIUM

Peck behind her, on his leash.

It's obvious she's scared witless. She surveys the crowd --

CARTER. Gives her a thumbs up.

BRIANA. Flashes a peace sign.

ERNESTO and the BOYS. Nod encouragement.

TY. Smiles. Puts his wig on.

She gathers herself. The paper RATTLES in her shaking hand...

EMILY

(quavers)

Hello, everyone. My name is Emily Shaw and --

Emily grows calm and steady...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
I am an island girl.

The audience ROARS approval.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Life has been trying to tell me something lately. I think I finally got it. The message is...you fight for what you believe in.  
(surveys crowd)  
Sometimes it's hard to figure out exactly what that is. When I first heard about this proposed development I stayed in the background and did what I could from there. Which, in truth, wasn't much. Then, a few things happened to me. Bad things.

Wobble. Recover...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Things I believe I could have prevented, if I hadn't taken that step back. I've decided I would not be the person who let other people speak on my behalf...they might not get it right. So here I am, today.

She turns to the Island Green Representatives...

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Making sure that everyone is clear on exactly where I stand on Island Green's plan to develop Inner Brass. No, thank you. I signed a petition stating that I wanted the beaches and shorelines to forever remain free to the people of St Thomas...and I meant it.

LOUD APPLAUSE

Emily holds up Peck.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
And he'll back me up

Peck CROWS.

The crowd give a standing ovation.

Emily, face flushed with triumph, leaves the podium, with Peck.

INT. CARTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Emily pushes through the door. She stands in front of Carter.

Carter sips from a flask. Twirls his index finger.

Emily shakes her head.

CARTER

I knew it couldn't last.

EMILY

We need to talk.

CARTER

I hate it when someone's lips say that.

He lifts his flask...sees Emily's look of disapproval.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Et tu, Emily?

EMILY

Afraid so.

CARTER

Spit it out.

EMILY

I can't be the friend who watches you drink yourself to death and not say something.

CARTER

Great. You've said it. Now, move on. Don't wreck us by putting me on your things to fix list.

EMILY

Can't you see what you're doing to yourself?

CARTER

Of course I can, little girl. However, it's none of your business.

EMILY

But, I care about you.

CARTER

And I care about you. We can either accept each other as we are or we un friend.

EMILY

I can't lose you. You're like family to me.

CARTER

(softens)

Sweetie. I'm always here for you, in all my glory. Why mess with perfection? Life has kicked your ass lately. It's natural for you to want some control. But don't expect control over anyone but yourself. It's all we ever have.

Emily thinks it over. She nods.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Now. Beyonce?

EMILY

(grins)

Why not?

She twirls around. Does the Beyonce butt move.

CARTER

Nice.

Emily sits down.

EMILY

There's something else I want to talk to you about.

SUPER: A FEW MONTHS LATER

EXT. EMILY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

The Villa is transformed. Fresh paint. Door frames and windows replaced.

Emily parks her jeep next to Carter's Mercedes.

She gets out, in paint splattered clothes, with bags of food.

Carter, in old clothes, helps LANDSCAPERS plant bougainvillea.

He sees Emily with the food...

CARTER

Lunch.

Everybody stops working.

Emily disperses food.

She and Carter sit under a mango tree. Mangoes litter the ground.

Peck scratches in the dirt nearby.

Carter hands Emily a letter.

CARTER (CONT'D)

We're approved for twenty beds.

EMILY

Yay.

CARTER

I'm interviewing for an assisted living administrator.

He cracks open a non-alcoholic beer. Looks at Emily...

CARTER (CONT'D)

Don't you say a word.

Emily grins. Mimes locking her lips.

They eat in silence.

CARTER (CONT'D)

This is for real Little girl.

Emily nods.

CARTER (CONT'D)

It feels good to be real.

They grasp hands.

EXT. HULL BAY - DAY

Emily sits with Peck. She holds a clicker in her hand.

EMILY

(to Peck)

Ready?

"CLICK"

Peck falls down. Plays dead.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Good boy.

"CLICK"

Peck gets up.

Waddles over to Emily for a treat.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Who's a smart chicken?

She smooches him on the head.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Ready?

"CLICK" "CLICK"

Peck lays down. Rolls over once.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Good boy.

"CLICK" "CLICK"

Peck gets up. Goes for a treat.

OFFSHORE

Ty, on his board, sees Emily and Peck.

He paddles into the --

BEACH

Peck waddles down to greet him.

Ty picks him up.

TY

(to Peck)

Hiya, buddy.

Peck CHITTERS, full of news.

Ty plops down beside Emily. He sets Peck loose.

TY (CONT'D)

Hey, you.

EMILY

Hey.

TY

You hear about Island Green  
withdrawing the permit request?

EMILY

Saw it in the paper. I couldn't  
believe it.

TY

People power, bay-bee. I'm so proud  
of St. Thomas. The community stepped  
up and did exactly what they were  
supposed to do.

EMILY

Some of us took a while.

TY

You were great.

EMILY

(serious)

Ty.

TY

(mock serious)

Emily?

EMILY

This is important.

(steels herself)

Remember when you asked what I did  
for work and I told you I worked  
with chickens? Well. I trained  
Roosters for cockfighting.

TY

Hah. Good one, Em.

EMILY

No, Ty. I did.

Emily clutches Peck...

EMILY (CONT'D)

I don't expect you to understand.  
But. I wanted you to know.

A long beat of silence. Ty chooses his words carefully...

TY

Em. We're young and still trying  
life on for size. Some things will  
fit. Some won't. It's all just  
part of our journey.

Emily's eyes fill with grateful tears...

EMILY

How'd you get to be so smart?

TY

I'm six months older than you. Makes all the difference.

Relieved laughter.

Laughter trails away, then...

TY (CONT'D)

Did you bring your board?

EMILY

Just came from work.

TY

How are things going?

EMILY

Carter hired an assisted living administrator today. She seems great. Has him on his toes.

TY

Awesome, Em. This island needs a place run by people who care.

EMILY

I'm to be the activities director. We're getting a van so I can bring everybody to the beach.

TY

Perfect.

Smiles.

TY (CONT'D)

Surf's not great but you can use my board, if you want.

Emily looks out. Someone catches a wave.

EMILY

You sure?

TY

I'll keep an eye on Peck.

EMILY

Thanks.

She retrieves his surf board, paddles --

OFFSHORE

Emily sits on the board, which rises and falls in the swell.

She watches a A FRIGATE bird swoop and soar.

UNDERWATER

A huge TARPON parts a sea of silver side MINNOWS.

She watches in delight.

SURFER (O.S.)

Get ready.

A big wave crests. It's almost upon her.

Emily lays down and paddles.

The board lifts in the swell.

She stands, rides the wave to shore. An ecstatic grin --

BEACH

Which matches the grin on Ty's face.

Ty's fingers the sand. He tosses a random pieces of beach debris.

Peck races after it.

He picks it up in his beak. Hurries back to Ty, drops it.

Ty is speechless, then...

TY

Damn, Peck. Good job.

He throws another small piece of wood.

Peck CHITTERS, races after it.

He picks it up and hurries back.

TY (CONT'D)

Does your Momma know about this?

Emily plops down next to him on the sand.

EMILY

Isn't he wonderful?

Peck CHITTERS.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
He wants his treat now.

She reaches across Ty for the treat bag.

Ty inhales at the close proximity of her body.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

TY  
No worries. Just thought I was getting  
a treat, too.

EMILY  
More like a jellyfish sting.

TY  
Jellyfish are cool.

EMILY  
No brain.

TY  
Sounds relaxing.

They smile at each other.

TY (CONT'D)  
Sometimes I feel like a jelly fish.

He stretches out to optimize her view of him. Completely comfortable in his own body.

Emily checks him out, then...

EMILY  
Me, too.

She stretches out full length to optimize his view of her. Not quite as comfortable as him, but getting there.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
What do you think?

He studies her from head to toe. Shakes his head, rueful.

Emily blushes.

They share an intense look.

Things are changing between them...

TY  
Hate to say it.

Emily struggles to not cover herself.

He looks the length of her body again...

TY (CONT'D)  
Not enough jelly.

EMILY  
Oh, yeah?

TY  
Yeah. Looks like you could use some  
ice cream.

EMILY  
Can vegans eat ice cream?

TY  
No.

EMILY  
Weirdo.

Ty nods.

TY  
I like that about me.

EMILY  
I like that about me, too.

Ty stands up, pulls Emily up into his arms.

They are chest to chest. Eye to eye.

TY  
We weirdos need to stick together.

EMILY  
Safety in numbers.

They kiss. It builds in intensity.

Ty breaks it off...

TY  
Get your chicken, island girl. Time  
to go.

Emily picks Peck up.

Ty gets his surfboard.

They walk hand in hand down the beach.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HULL BAY - DAY

Sunrise. Peaceful.

The water is calm and crystal clear.

A white Van pulls up and parks.

Emily exits the driver side.

She opens the passenger side door...

EMILY

Okay, everybody. Let's go.

EIGHT SENIORS exit the van, wear swim suits, clutch neon colored noodles.

Peck exits last, he wears a child's water wing.

LAUGHTER as everyone heads towards the water.

They bob on their noodles in the warm, salty water as they follow Emily's gentle exercise instructions.

The sun rises in the sky.

The emerald islands glow in the bright turquoise sea.

FADE OUT: