

# Chicks

"Pilot"

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*"The world is full of hopeful analogies and handsome,  
dubious eggs, called possibilities."*

- George Eliot

EXT. VARIOUS PITTSBURGH NEIGHBORHOODS - MORNING

Springtime in Pittsburgh, PA, where tech and medicine are flooding the once blue collar city. We flash on:

A plague of craft breweries.

MED STUDENTS stuffing their faces with Primanti Bros.

A line of Teslas charging in the Strip District.

GIRL SCOUTS pushing cookies on BUSINESSPEOPLE arriving at work. One young scout runs a credit card with her Square/iPhone combo.

Just a typical weekday in the 'burgh...

EXT. THREE ADJOINING YARDS - MORNING

Three similarly sized yards divided by low hedges. The plot to the right boasts a swingset and children's toys. The neglected plot to the left, a ramshackle dog house and overturned water bowl. CLOSE IN ON...

EXT. TATE BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

The center yard hosts a small vegetable patch and a WOODEN CHICKEN COOP. JONI TATE (early 20s, black with light skin, a self-described "urban agriculturalist") tends to her flock, refreshing their water and spreading feed around the excitable CHICKENS.

JONI

Hey, babies. Hey you fat little  
assholes. Chill out. There's plenty  
for everyone.

Joni wears thrifted coveralls, her natural hair pulled into a bandana-wrapped updo like a black Rosie-the-Riveter. On the porch next door, an obese female neighbor, "PJ," smokes Marlboros in fleece Steelers pajamas and watches her work.

PJ

(calling down)  
They make an awful lot of noise.

JONI

They're just excited to eat.

The birds CHIRP sweetly at her feet.

PJ  
Woke me up crowing yesterday.

JONI  
That must've been something else.  
My birds don't crow.

PJ  
Sure they crow. I heard it.

JONI  
I don't think so. There's no cock.

PJ  
Excuse me?

JONI  
They're all hens. No rooster.

Joni disappears into the coop from her waist up. The pestering neighbor stubs out her cigarette.

PJ  
No need to be vulgar about things.

From half in the chicken coop, Joni suddenly shouts-

JONI  
Mom! Holy shit!

INT. TATE HOME / KITCHEN - MORNING

The adjoining brick home.

GAIL TATE (late 50s, white, with the innate dignity of a bare-faced, barefoot Annette Bening) preps a plate of toast and THREE MUGS of coffee. She pulls a battered tissue from her pocket and blows. It's been a devastating week (we'll learn why) and Gail is bone tired.

Joni bangs in from the yard, cradling her FRESH EGGS. She lines them proudly along the windowsill.

JONI  
Seven! That's the most they've ever laid.

GAIL  
That's great, honey.

Joni clocks the mugs-

JONI  
You still think she's coming, huh?

GAIL  
She said she would.

JONI  
Yeah. Okay.

INT. ALICIA'S HOUSE / BEDROOM - MORNING

Alone in bed, ALICIA TATE (30, biracial, with darker skin than Joni) clutches a pillow, crying. Her otherwise lovely face is bloated from the combination of tears and too much wine. Hair wrapped in an expensive silk scarf, Alicia is Joni's older, more polished, more devastated sister.

On the bedside table, her phone DINGS. Alicia scrambles to check the text:

Joni: "You coming over or what?"

Alicia tosses the phone back down and turns over in bed.

INT. TATE HOME / KITCHEN - MORNING

Gail finishes her cup of coffee. Joni picks at the one remaining slice of toast.

GAIL  
(deciding)  
Screw it. Let's just get it done.

INT. TATE HOME / HOME OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Gail and Joni stand in a home office that has been lovingly converted for hospice care. The shelves boast law books and some sentimental items, including family photos with handsome patriarch MALCOLM (black, distinguished, loving). The desk and chair have been subbed out for a HOSPITAL BED.

As Joni starts stripping sheets from the bed, Gail stands immobilized.

JONI  
Okay. Might as well wash and donate these, right? You don't want to keep them.

GAIL  
No. I don't know.

JONI

You have a sentimental attachment to these sheets? Dad pooped in them, like, not a week ago.

GAIL

Okay. You're right. Donate?

JONI

Trash.

Joni hands her mom a banker's box.

JONI (CONT'D)

How about you start with the books and the files? I don't know what half that shit is. Sort out what you want to donate, or sell, or shred.

As they get back to work-

GAIL

When'd you get so practical?

JONI

Guess I inherited *something* from Dad.

PRE-LAP: A REPETITIVE THUMP.

INT. ALICIA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Alicia strides toward the front door through her Dwell-worthy home, knotting a robe around her pajamas and wiping her eyes. She peers out the peephole - nobody's there. Huh. THE THUMPING CONTINUES, but now it's behind her.

CLOSE ON: A top-of-the-line Roomba is trapped beneath the mid-century console in the entryway.

Alicia nudges it free, deflated.

INT. ALICIA'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A food blogger would get off on this impeccably renovated kitchen. On the countertop, a used WINE GLASS and mostly finished bottle of WINE are the only evidence that this kitchen has ever been used.

Alicia empties the bottle into the glass and lifts it to drink. Before she can, her eye catches on a CHIP IN THE GLASS: ruined.

Alicia pours the wine down the farm sink (of course it's a farm sink). She pauses, then DROPS THE GLASS after it. It SHATTERS. Huh. That felt kind of good.

Alice swipes the empty wine bottle in, too. THE GLASS SHARDS multiply, slipping into the built-in disposal.

Suddenly, Alicia snaps out of it.

ALICIA

Shit.

As she begins gingerly picking the shards from the sink, trying to right her momentary madness....

TITLE CARD: CHICKS

EXT. TATE HOME - MORNING

Joni hauls two stuffed GARBAGE BINS toward the curb. At a parked Subaru, NOAH (late 30s, handsome) is unbuckling daughter RUBY (6, a tomboy, possibly on the spectrum) from her booster seat.

As Joni reaches the street, one bin TIPS OVER, vomiting masses of SHREDDED PAPER onto the pavement.

NOAH

Go wait on the porch for me, Rubes.

RUBY

I have to go to the bathroom. Bad.

NOAH

Two minutes. I'll be right there.

As Ruby trots off to the neighboring house, Noah bends down to help Joni with the paper.

JONI

Thanks. My mom went a little nuts with the shredder.

NOAH

Is she covering up a crime?

JONI

Probably just a bunch of nasty divorce settlements.

NOAH

I thought Malcolm was a civil rights attorney.

JONI

Sure, technically, but the ACLU didn't pay the mortgage. Child custody disputes, that's where the money's at.

NOAH

Tell me about it.

Noah straightens up. Secures the garbage can lid.

NOAH (CONT'D)

(tentatively)

Hey, I wanted to say, I was really sorry when I heard.

JONI

Thanks. You know, we knew it would happen. Eventually.

(then)

Do you want to come to the memorial tomorrow?

Noah seems hesitant.

JONI (CONT'D)

It's gonna be super informal. Nothing religious. Dad didn't believe in that stuff. When you're dead, you're dead. We had him cremated. We're just inviting everybody over to the house so they can get drunk and feel better about pretending he didn't exist for the last four years.

NOAH

Jesus. People are the worst.

JONI

You can bring Ruby, too, if you want. Unless that's too weird for a kid.

On the porch, Ruby has pulled down her pants and is peeing - standing up - into a potted plant.

NOAH

Fuck. I gotta go.

As Noah debates offering a hug, Joni goes for it. She takes unexpected comfort in his arms, holding him a beat too long.

JONI  
Thanks, Noah.

INT. STEIN, STEIN, KLEIN & TATE - AFTERNOON

Alicia blows into work, briefcase in hand, dressed like she means it. Her arrival catches the RECEPTIONIST off guard.

RECEPTIONIST  
Alicia! I didn't know you were coming in-

ALICIA  
Half day!

She proceeds down the hall to...

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Alicia wasn't expecting the SYMPATHY BOUQUETS and BEREAVEMENT CARDS that litter her desk. She sets them aside and unpacks her briefcase. It seems she's actually planning to work.

HOLLY (O.C.)  
Alicia?

Senior partner HOLLY (mid-40s, Diane Keaton's wardrobe meets Susan Sontag's intellect) stands in the doorframe.

ALICIA  
Holly. Hi.

HOLLY  
We didn't expect you for a few days, at least. I redistributed your casework.

ALICIA  
I should have called. It's just been... a complicated couple of days.

HOLLY  
Your father was so deeply admired by everyone here. We'd all understand-

ALICIA  
Ben left me.

Holly shuts the door, lest they be overheard. Drops the professional pretense.

HOLLY

What are you talking about?

ALICIA

My dad died and then Ben left. I mean, there's more to it.

(beat)

I told him.

HOLLY

(surprisingly caustic)

Why would you do that?

ALICIA

I don't know! He was trying so hard to be nice to me and I didn't want him to. I told him I'd had an affair.

HOLLY

Christ, Alicia.

(then)

I hope you didn't drag me into it.

ALICIA

I didn't have to. He guessed.

HOLLY

If any of this gets back to my family-

ALICIA

(hurt)

How would it?

Silence.

HOLLY

You really shouldn't have come in.

(finally, disconsonantly)

Give my best to your mother.

Holly leaves.

EXT. GOOD GRIEF COUNSELING CENTER - LATE AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON: A logo of two anthropomorphic flowers leaning on one another. Pull back to reveal a poorly funded but cheerfully decorated office.

INT. THERAPY OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Gail sits at the edge of a small couch across from SHELBY (30s, Korean, masculine-of-center with an undercut and button-down). Shelby's one of those therapists who stays silent until you've exhausted the thought.

GAIL

So that's it, really. Yes, Malcolm died, but it was a long time coming. It was helpful to have the group, but I honestly don't know what the point is... now.

She shifts uncomfortably.

GAIL (CONT'D)

That's why I won't be at the meeting this afternoon. And I really appreciate you making time to see me... but I'm done. I think I'll start volunteering instead. Or helping my daughter. Joni wants to rent a booth at the farmer's market. She's raising chickens. Did I tell you that?

SHELBY

You did.

(beat)

Gail, I'm wondering why the sudden change of plans? We talked about transitioning you into a different group, or doing more one-on-ones...

Her question triggers an unexpected surge of upset.

GAIL

(almost accusatory)

I just want to be done with it. I want to put it behind me. It's been four years of talking about Malcolm, of taking care of him. Isn't that enough?

Shelby offers Gail a box of tissues.

SHELBY

If you don't want to discuss Malcolm, we don't have to. But where is this emotion coming from?

GAIL  
(again, accusatory)  
I think I'm allowed to be upset.

SHELBY  
Of course you are. Are you mad at  
Malcolm?

GAIL  
(you dummy)  
How can I be mad at Malcom? He  
didn't choose that! Who would  
choose to have their body just fail  
like that?

SHELBY  
You can still be mad at him. It's  
not what you thought your future  
would look like, is it? You have  
children and a house to care for,  
alone. You have his medical  
expenses. You quit working, which  
you told me was very important to  
you before he got sick. Anybody  
would understand if you were angry  
about the sacrifices you've made.

GAIL  
Don't forget how old and unfuckable  
I got. Not that you'd understand  
that, seeing as you're barely older  
than the underwear I'm wearing.

At Gail's hostility, Shelby shifts in her chair. Gail  
immediately regrets her tone.

GAIL (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

SHELBY  
That's okay.

Gail doesn't know what else to say. She starts collecting the  
discarded tissues in her hand. It's reminiscent of Alicia  
picking the glass from her sink.

INT. EON'S VINTAGE CLOTHING - LATE AFTERNOON

A treasure trove of vintage clothing, impeccably curated by  
owner MAXIMO (ageless, gay). Maximo perches next to the  
register. He vapes with one hand and scrolls Instagram with  
the other as Joni browses a rack. This store is clearly the  
source of her unique style.

MAXIMO

Your sister's a freak.

He's browsing Alicia's feed, which chronicles the modern but soulless renovation of her house.

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

Who can live in a place like this?  
Every room's a different neutral.  
What's this one? Spring beige?

JONI

That house is her baby. I mean,  
when she actually *has* a baby, the  
baby is going to have to fight the  
house for her attention.

Joni hangs the colorful dress she's considering over her neck and studies herself in an ornate mirror.

MAXIMO

That suits you.

JONI

I think it's a little too youthful.

MAXIMO

You're a youth.

JONI

You know what I mean. Not for this crowd.

MAXIMO

Then why don't you wear it on your date tonight?

JONI

(quick to dismiss)  
I'm canceling that.

Joni replaces the dress and keeps browsing. Maximo slides from his perch, incensed.

MAXIMO

You can't. After weeks of anticipation? You said this guy was everything you've been looking for. If you cancel at the last minute, he'll disappear. The male ego is fragile.

JONI

The timing is crap. I can't just leave my mom.

MAXIMO

Where is she right now?

JONI

Group therapy.

MAXIMO

Oh.

Joni pulls a second hanger over her head.

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

Joni, I think your father would be upset if he knew you were calling things off on his behalf.

JONI

I don't think my Dad wanted me to get laid. I think you want me to get laid.

MAXIMO

You put him and your mom first for years. Maybe the timing is perfect. Maybe this guy is your karmic reward.

JONI

I get a boyfriend in exchange for feeding my dad baby food?  
(re: the dress)  
Would you take fifty for this?

MAXIMO

Just take it. It's yours.

JONI

No. How much?

MAXIMO

Blow me.

JONI

How about forty?  
(then)

Max. I'm not family. I'm your part time employee, and you're bleeding profits.

MAXIMO

Consider it a bereavement gift. In return, you tell your sister it's her turn to babysit Mom. Go on the date. And call me if you need saving.

EXT. ALICIA'S HOUSE - EVENING

The house from Instagram. Alicia parks her Mini behind an expensive SUV, happy with this development: Ben's home.

She tries the front door, but her key doesn't work. She fiddles the deadbolt. No luck. BRITISH ROCK music sounds faintly from inside.

Getting pissed, Alicia pounds her cell phone.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ALICIA'S HOUSE / KITCHEN - AT THE SAME TIME

BEN CHAKRABARTI (early 30s, British Indian) cooks a gourmet meal for one. Splattered sauces defile the countertop. Arctic Monkeys BLARE through a bluetooth speaker. Suddenly, the music cuts out and an incoming call RINGS through.

Hands full, Ben leans over his nearby phone and checks the caller. He briefly debates, then accepts the call.

ALICIA

(on her phone, pacing the front door)

Ben?

BEN

(on speakerphone)

Hello darling, I've had the locks replaced.

ALICIA

What the fuck, Ben! Can't we even have a conversation?

BEN

Okay, let's have a conversation. You start.

Alicia grapples for an in.

ALICIA

You're being irrational.

BEN  
No. Try again.

ALICIA  
I made a mistake. I told you I'm  
sorry. It was one really bad  
decision. Weeks ago!

BEN  
You know what I don't get? Why not  
tell me then? Why wait?

ALICIA  
I told you. Doesn't that count for  
anything?

BEN  
No, I don't think. You didn't tell  
me so *I* would feel better.

ALICIA  
Ben, I want to work this out. If we  
need to go to therapy, let's go to  
therapy. Whatever you want.

BEN  
How about you admit you're a lying  
cunt?

Silence.

ALICIA  
(finally, relenting)  
I'm a lying cunt. Okay?

Ben's tearing up, silently, at the sink. In the way all  
married people can tell, Alicia listens.

ALICIA (CONT'D)  
Ben. Please. You don't have to do  
this. I love you.

BEN  
Do you?

ALICIA  
Of course I do. I just... admired  
Holly. You knew that. She knew  
that. She took me to drinks. She  
kissed me.

BEN  
Are you saying she took advantage  
of you?

ALICIA  
Yes. In a way.

Dead air. Alicia is lying, and they both know it.

BEN  
I'm keeping the house.

ALICIA  
(breaking, crying)  
I can't believe you're doing this  
right now. My dad-

BEN  
I know. Your father just died. It's  
not very nice. But neither is what  
you've done.

ALICIA  
Ben-

BEN  
Just so you know, Al, I do take  
some responsibility. I always knew  
you were profoundly selfish. I  
married you anyway. My mistake.

Ben hangs up. The MUSIC kicks back in.

EXT. ALICIA'S HOUSE / INT. ALICIA'S MINI - MOMENTS LATER

Alicia retreats into her Mini. She searches the glove  
compartment for a tissue and settles on an old napkin.

The pity party is interrupted by her DINGING CELL PHONE. She  
has a series of missed (ignored) texts and calls from Joni.

The latest: "Mom says she's cutting you out of the will."

And another: "Just kidding. You still suck."

Alicia debates replying, but places a call instead.

ALICIA  
(on her phone)  
Joni? Yeah. I know. I'm sorry. I-  
(then)  
Not at the moment.

Alicia turns the ignition.

INT. TATE HOME - LATER

Just inside the front door, Joni and Alicia trade off mom duty. Joni, hair pulled into two knots atop her head, shrugs on a jacket over a short dress and twee, thigh-high tights.

JONI

If she's hungry, there are like a dozen casseroles. But she hasn't had much of an appetite.

ALICIA

I'm sure we can figure it out. What's with the look?

JONI

What?

ALICIA

Are you going to a naughty schoolgirl convention, or...?

JONI

I know you don't really care about trends, but this is fashion.

ALICIA

Where? Japan?

JONI

(re: Alicia's rumpled suit)

What's with you? Did you go into work?

ALICIA

I had to put in a couple hours to clear my schedule. I want to be really present tomorrow. Actually, I was thinking of staying over.

JONI

Huh. Okay. Where?

ALICIA

My room.

JONI

You mean Mom's yoga room?

ALICIA

Shit.

JONI

I'm just swinging by a friend's.  
I'll be back in an hour or two.

And Joni's out the door.

INT. TATE HOME / SECOND FLOOR - MINUTES LATER

Alicia snoops around upstairs, ducking her head into the various rooms: the home office, Joni's room, the yoga room. Gail's bedroom door is open a crack. She sits in bed, absorbed in a phone conversation.

GAIL

... And you're coming tomorrow?  
You're sure it's not a problem?...  
No, I don't think so... No...

Alicia slips back downstairs unnoticed.

INT. THE SQUIRREL CAGE - NIGHT

An eclectic bar. Joni carries her CIDER from the bar to a two-top and takes a seat. She now wears a long necklace, with a hard-to-identify pendant at the bottom.

INT. TATE HOME / KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alicia tidies and rearranges her mom's kitchen, which is not to her taste. Joni's line of fresh eggs give her pause. She begins transferring them to the fridge.

Gail enters, intending to refresh her tea. They catch one another by surprise.

ALICIA

Hey Mom.

GAIL

Hey baby.

There are no other words necessary. We register each woman's deep sadness. Gail sets aside her mug and wraps Alicia in a tight hug. A moment that reminds us of their very real, very recent loss.

INT. THE SQUIRREL CAGE - NIGHT

Joni's eyes dart between her phone and the door, where she spots her date arriving: it's DADDY DAN (40s, white, well dressed for Pittsburgh, with an authoritarian, faintly militaristic streak just below the surface).

JONI  
Daddy Dan?

Confusion flits across Dan's face as walks over.

DADDY DAN  
LittleChick?

JONI  
Hi.

She almost gets up for a hug, but then Dan slides into his seat.

DADDY DAN  
I'm surprised they let you in here,  
looking like that.

JONI  
They carded me. Then again, I  
always get carded, so...

Dan reaches out and tugs teasingly at her necklace.

CLOSE ON THE PENDANT: Which is AN ADULT-SIZED PACIFIER,  
covered in black rhinestones.

DADDY DAN  
This is cute.

JONI  
Thanks. I stoned it myself.

DADDY DAN  
Really?

JONI  
(inane babbling)  
Everything they sell online is such  
crap. You've probably noticed.

DADDY DAN  
I hadn't.  
(then)  
You seem nervous. I don't want to  
make you uncomfortable.

JONI

I'm not. Not really. Maybe a little. It's just weird.

DADDY DAN

Is this your first time meeting up with someone from the site?

(off her silent confirmation)

Wow. All right. I hope I'm making a good impression.

JONI

So far, so good.

She nudges her hand so it just brushes Dan's. Notices his smooth nails. This is a heterosexual man who gets manicures.

JONI (CONT'D)

Did you want to order something?

Daddy Dan weighs the situation. Joni's clearly warming up to him. He shifts in his seat.

DADDY DAN

I'm going to be straight with you.

Joni's confused. They weren't already being straight with one another?

JONI

Okay...

DADDY DAN

I don't see this working out.

JONI

We just met. I know I seem a little nervous, but really-

DADDY DAN

You're African-American.

Hold up. What the fuck?

JONI

Is that a question?

DADDY DAN

From your photos, I knew you must be mixed, but I thought Asian.

Dan takes out his phone and pulls up a photo Joni has posted to HER FETLIFE PROFILE.

A selfie in the grass, with her flock of baby chicks (a few months ago). Her face is mostly obscured.

DADDY DAN (CONT'D)

You have light skin. You see how I could make the mistake.

JONI

Not really, no.

DADDY DAN

Hey. No offense. I'm not racist.

(He is.)

I just prefer Asian littles. And we *could* try this out. We could go on dates and I could call you for bedtime and teach you how to be a good little girl, but ultimately, I know that relationship would never be completely fulfilling. For me. It doesn't get me off.

Joni is speechless. And angry. She struggles for a response.

DADDY DAN (CONT'D)

I can tell I've hurt your feelings. Listen. You're a smart, beautiful girl. I'm sure there's a daddy out there for you. Keep looking.

Dan makes a hasty exit. Tears of mortification and fury prick at Joni's eyes. She gathers her things and flags the BARKEEP.

JONI

I need to close my tab.

INT. TATE HOME / HOME OFFICE - MORNING

Alicia stirs awake to a phone ALARM. She slept soundly for the first time in days.

PULL OUT to reveal she's waking in her father's hospital bed, swaddled in a spare blanket and a borrowed shirt.

INT. TATE HOME - MORNING

Joni and Gail drink coffee and eat toast in a repeat of their morning routine. More eggs have been added to the windowsill. Once again, a mug sits waiting for an absent Alicia.

JONI

Want me to go knock?

As if on cue, Alicia sails downstairs in her makeshift nightclothes.

GAIL

There she is. Morning, honey.

ALICIA

Morning.

Alicia swigs her coffee, butters a toast. She isn't sitting down.

JONI

Are you going somewhere?

ALICIA

I have to run a few errands. Pick up some clothes for tonight.

GAIL

Did you have a chance to go through the box in the closet? I thought you might like some of your father's old law books. You could use them at work, or maybe you'd just like to have them...

ALICIA

All that stuff's online now, Mom.  
(softer)  
But thanks. I'll look through it.

JONI

Everyone should start showing up around four.

ALICIA

And I'll be there.

She clamps the toast in her teeth and heads back upstairs.

JONI

(to Gail)  
She's being weird.

INT. TATE HOME / JONI'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Sprawled on the floor, Joni smokes a joint as she draws in a COLORING BOOK FOR ADULTS.

INT. TATE HOME / GAIL'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Gail stands at her bureau in a half slip and bra, face fully made up. She has a great figure, which you'd never know from her daily wardrobe.

Gail finishes threading her WEDDING BAND onto a simple gold chain. As she fastens the necklace, she catches sight of herself in the dresser mirror. There's something there. A spark of inspiration. Gail runs her hands slowly down her chest, over her hips. She turns to take in her profile, and likes what she sees.

EXT. TATE HOME - LATER

Cars are parked bumper-to-bumper along the residential street. MEMORIAL GUESTS migrate into the house carrying potluck or wine, each dressed more brightly than the next, including Maximo, in a vintage tuxedo that's both garish and the height of fashion.

INT. TATE HOME - LATER

The guests mingle and drink. They chat in small groups, sign an ornate GUEST BOOK, and browse FAMILY PHOTOS that Gail has arranged throughout the house. Gail and Joni float easily through the crowd. They both don figure-flattering, brightly colored dresses.

Neighbor Noah makes small talk with attorney Holly and HOLLY'S WIFE (holy shit).

WE LOCATE Alicia, dressed chicly in all black, deeply uncomfortable and sticking out like a sore thumb.

Maximo brings her a glass of wine.

MAXIMO

Hey gorgeous.

ALICIA

(pissed)

Nobody told me about the dress code.

MAXIMO

You look incredible. Very Bette Davis in the red dress, but the opposite.

ALICIA

I look like an idiot.

MAXIMO

Alicia. Trust me. *Nobody cares.*  
 You're the kid of the dead guy. You  
 can do whatever you want. You can  
 get wasted and act like a moron.  
 You can strip naked and run down  
 the street. Everybody will just act  
 like it's normal.

Alicia studies Maximo, often the source of unexpected wisdom.

WE FIND Gail, who excuses herself to greet the latest  
 arrival.

It's Shelby, her therapist, with a TASTEFUL BOUQUET in hand.

SHELBY

I hope you don't mind. Joni must've  
 invited your whole contact list.

GAIL

(accepting the flowers)  
 These are beautiful.

SHELBY

That's what the florist assured me.

GAIL

You don't go to too many of these  
 things?

SHELBY

Weirdly, I don't get invited. I've  
 been told I'm a downer.  
 (re: the party)  
 Your husband was clearly a popular  
 person.

GAIL

Lots of colleagues, and clients,  
 and old friends.  
 (then)  
 Can I get you a drink? Wine?

SHELBY

Beer?

GAIL

Of course.

EXT. TATE BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

In the grass, Ruby from next door plays with the chickens, utterly delighted.

Gail fishes a cold BEER from a cooler full of ice on the back porch.

GAIL

Ben?

He's tucked out of the way, finishing a cigarette. Ben rises. Kisses Gail on the cheek.

GAIL (CONT'D)

I didn't know you were here.

BEN

Only just. And I can't stay.

GAIL

Work?

BEN

Work is tough, yeah.

She can see it on his face. It isn't work. It's Alicia.

GAIL

Maybe if you talked to her?

BEN

I don't know, Gail. It's pretty fucked up.

GAIL

That's something people don't tell you, beforehand. Marriage. What a motherfucker.

Ben's surprised by Gail's candor.

BEN

I should go. I just wanted to tell you how sorry I am about Malcolm. I will always be glad I knew him.

(tearing up)

Shit.

Gail gives him a quick, reassuring hug. Looks like she's about to say something comforting. Instead:

GAIL  
(re: the cigarette)  
Do you have another one of those?

INT. TATE HOME - LATER

Joni - now several pours deep - spots Alicia tidying the used cocktail plates and glasses, keeping busy instead of engaging with the guests.

JONI  
The Pushinskys were looking for you. Jean wants you to give a speech.

ALICIA  
That woman drives me crazy. She acts like she's single-handedly finding the cure for ALS.

JONI  
You could at least be polite. They were Dad's friends.

ALICIA  
Then she can give her own speech.

JONI  
Jesus. You're such a bitch.

Alicia motions for Joni to watch her tone. Company's over.

JONI (CONT'D)  
Just be a fucking person for one day, okay? You can disappear back to your perfect life tomorrow.

ALICIA  
You're drunk.

JONI  
So what?

Alicia decides to be the bigger woman. She collects her trash and heads out. Joni trails her, unsatisfied with Alicia's brush-off.

INT. TATE HOME / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Alicia tosses the garbage. Joni follows.

JONI  
I'm gonna go back to school.

ALICIA  
Nobody's stopping you. That was  
your decision.

JONI  
Mom needed help.

ALICIA  
She could have managed. You never  
gave her the chance.

There's some truth to the statement, which goads Joni on.

JONI  
What do you even know about it? You  
weren't there, Al. You jumped ship.  
It fucking sucked. So  
congratulations to you for missing  
out on that!

Joni storms out.

Alicia reaches for an open bottle of wine. As she pours  
herself a glass, Shelby wanders in from outside, fresh beer  
in hand. Who knows how long she was out there, but she  
definitely wasn't going to walk through the middle of that  
sister shit.

ALICIA  
(embarrassed)  
Sorry about that.

SHELBY  
I heard nothing. I saw nothing.

They trade smiles.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
I'm Shelby. I know your mom.

ALICIA  
Alicia.

SHELBY  
Oh, you're *that* daughter.

Alicia looks momentarily stricken.

SHELBY (CONT'D)  
Kidding! I'm kidding. Sorry. I've  
heard only good things.

There's a spark of something there.

INT. TATE HOME - LATER

Joni and Maximo chat as she flips through the GUEST BOOK, full of kind notes and memories of Malcolm Tate.

MAXIMO

(re: Dan)

He sounds like a total garbage person. Do you want me to fuck him up? I know some people.

JONI

No. You can't get arrested again.

Maximo acquiesces - she's probably right.

Joni's eyes catch on one short entry in particular, signed "*Benjamin Chakrabarti*." Ben's here?

JONI (CONT'D)

Did you see Ben around?

Maximo shakes his head.

INT. TATE HOME / KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Joni wanders in again, where she interrupts Alicia and Shelby's easy conversation.

JONI

Where's Ben?

ALICIA

I don't know, Joni. He said he might not make it.

We register Shelby's slight disappointment at mention of Alicia's husband.

JONI

Well he signed the guest book, so.

Now it's Alicia's turn to be surprised.

ALICIA

Oh! He's probably looking for me, then. I should... It was nice to meet you, Shelby.

As Alicia heads off in search of her husband...

INT. TATE HOME / VARIOUS LOCATIONS - CONTINUOUS

Alicia looks everywhere for Ben and comes up short...

INT. TATE HOME / SECOND FLOOR - MINUTES LATER

The bedroom doors on the second floor are closed against the prying eyes of visitors. Alicia ducks her head into the empty bedrooms, and lastly...

PRE-LAP:

ALICIA

Ben?

INT. TATE HOME / YOGA ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gail is backed against the wall, her mouth on neighbor Noah's and his hand up her skirt. It's more romantic than frenzied, but that's hardly discernible to a traumatized daughter.

Alicia stops short.

ALICIA

Mom.

As quickly as Noah and Gail separate, Alicia closes the door and retreats downstairs.

INT. TATE HOME - MINUTES LATER

Alicia silently processes what she just interrupted.

JEAN PUSHINSKY (60ish, head-to-toe Eileen Fisher) finally spots the elusive Tate daughter and approaches.

MRS. PUSHINSKY

Alicia! I was hoping to catch you before we had to take off.

ALICIA

Hi Mrs. Pushinsky.

MRS. PUSHINSKY

It's been the most wonderful gathering... so good to be among friends... It's what Malcolm would have wanted. How are you?

As they exchange pleasantries, Alicia clocks Noah cutting a fast path toward the back door, presumably to collect Ruby and go home.

Gail descends moments later, avoiding Alicia's gaze.

INT. TATE HOME - EVENING

The party has cleared out. Empties and abandoned plates.

INT. TATE HOME / KITCHEN - EVENING

A depleted Gail finds Alicia putting away food. There's so much unsaid between them, but that conversation will wait.

GAIL

Have you seen your sister?

EXT. TATE BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Alicia finds Joni sprawled in the yard near her chicken coop, drunk and sleepy.

ALICIA

Are you crashing out here tonight?

JONI

Considering it.

(then)

I forgot to ask. How was dad's hospital bed?

ALICIA

Honestly? Pretty great.

JONI

Would you say you slept like the dead?

ALICIA

That's not funny. You're not funny.

JONI

I'm funny. You're not funny. You're like... Spring Beige.

ALICIA

(bewildered)

What? C'mon.

Alicia pulls her sister to her feet.

INT. TATE HOME / JONI'S ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Alicia flips on the lights. Joni follows her in and begins stripping, unashamedly. Alicia turns to give her sister privacy. She spots the abandoned coloring book from earlier.

ALICIA

Do you want to wash your face?  
Brush your teeth?

JONI

Tomorrow. Goodnight.

Joni crawls into bed naked, turns over, and is out.

Alicia collects Joni's discarded clothes, folds them, and sets them on her dresser, where she spots THE PACIFIER NECKLACE. She picks it up, curious. What the hell is this?

She sets it back down, flipping off the lights.

INT. TATE HOME / KITCHEN - MORNING

Gail, Joni, and Alicia sit around the table in their pajamas, finally united for the Tate family breakfast ritual.

Gail has a STACK OF CONDOLENCE CARDS beside her, which she has been working through one at a time. Joni pushes her toast away in hungover disgust.

GAIL

(re: a card)

This is a nice one. The firm made a  
big donation in your father's name.

She passes the card to Alicia and they lock eyes: a tacit understanding that they'll keep Gail's *whatever it is* with Noah under wraps from Joni.

ALICIA

(reading)

Nice.

Alicia passes the card to Joni, who sets it aside and pounds her coffee.

GAIL

This one's addressed to you, Al.

Alicia curiously accepts the envelope. As she extracts the card, BEN'S WEDDING BAND FALLS ONTO THE TABLE.

It sits there, an incrimination. Nobody speaks, until-

GAIL (CONT'D)  
Alicia, honey.

JONI  
What the fuck?

Joni's legitimately confused. She takes the card from her paralyzed sister. Reads it. Throws it down.

JONI (CONT'D)  
Oh, fuck him.

Trying to hold it together, Alicia collects the band, trying to wrap her head around this atomic bomb.

ALICIA  
Ben and I been having some  
problems.  
(then)  
He threw me out.

JONI  
What?!

ALICIA  
It's mostly his house. He made the  
downpayment.

JONI  
(increasingly incensed)  
No. That is not okay. And dumping  
you at Dad's memorial? Are you  
fucking kidding me? Alicia!

Alicia's too deep in her self-loathing.

JONI (CONT'D)  
Mom!

Gail grasps Alicia's hand, reassuringly.

GAIL  
You know you can stay here as long  
as you need to.

But that's not enough for Joni. She's furious. First Daddy Dan, now Ben of all people? She jumps up from the table and heads...

EXT. TATE BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

...straight to the chicken coop, where Joni shoos aside her hens to collect their eggs.

Next door, neighbor PJ smokes and looks on, disapprovingly.

INT. TATE HOME / KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Alicia and Gail haven't budged.

Joni strides in, the cache of eggs sagging in her outstretched pajama top. She adds the eggs from the windowsill, not so delicately as before.

JONI  
(ordering them all)  
Get up.

EXT. ALICIA'S HOUSE - MORNING

They pull up in Alicia's car. In the backseat, Joni cradles her precious eggs. Gail has TWO MORE CARTONS of store-bought on her lap.

ALICIA  
Someone could call the cops.

JONI  
It's *your* house.

ALICIA  
(reticent)  
I don't know... We just finished the siding. Do you think it'll damage it?

JONI  
Jesus.

Joni climbs out of the car and plants herself squarely in firing range. She selects an egg and HURLS IT.

It falls short, landing in the bushes.

JONI (CONT'D)  
Shit.

An egg whizzes past Joni, exploding on the siding in a magnificent splatter. Joni turns to find Gail reloading.

JONI (CONT'D)  
Nice, Mom!

Encouraged, Gail launches another egg. And another. Gail's a goddamn machine. It's not even Ben she's mad at. It's everything, and nothing. It's Malcolm, for dying.

Alicia finally steps from the car. She watches her family's unrelenting volley of eggs arc through the air and explode against her house.

Joni turns to her sister. As she extends an offering, the perfect egg cradled in her palm, and Alicia reaches to accept it...

THE END.