

GRACE
by
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FADE IN:

INT. SMALL ROOM - DAY

A moist gnawing...

A shaft of desert sunlight pierces a tinfoil covering, partially baked from a small window.

Overfed flies explore the foil, dancing lazily in and out of the light.

At the center of the otherwise empty room, a WOMAN with close cropped, red hair sits on a foldout cot, her face lost in the glare of the sun.

A fly crawls along the pale skin of her naked back, disappearing across her ribs toward her hidden chest.

She is cradling something in her arms...

At her feet, dark liquid drizzles the stained carpet.

CUT TO BLACK.

A woman's quiet moan...

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

A large tomcat lies in a windowsill cat bed, bathed in the soft glow of early morning, watching...

On a bed in the center of the room, MADELINE (30) and Michael MATHESON (35) make shy love. She encourages him with gentle groans as he approaches climax.

She strokes his back with maternal tenderness, but her eyes never close.

The cat's tail flickers as he watches the act's culmination. He jumps down from the windowsill and exits.

Michael offers Madeline a hopeful smile. She returns it. He kisses her on the cheek and rises.

Madeline raises her hips in the air and wraps her arms around her legs. Closes her eyes.

As the glow of the morning sun slowly climbs the bedsheets toward her, she remains in the exact same position.

EXT. MATHESON HOUSE - DAY

The fading summer sun shines down on a lush, green lawn. Overlooking the grass, is a typical, two-story suburban home. A black Mercedes SUV pulls up behind a Prius.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Madeline, seven and a half months pregnant and downright radiant, sets a plate of tofu-like soy cake on a kitchen table between a colorful selection of vegetarian dishes.

At the table are Michael and his parents, HENRY and VIVIAN MATHESON, late-50's, straight laced and conservative.

VIVIAN

It's an amazing thing. You can nurse long after menopause. If your nipples get enough attention you reactivate the hormones.

MADELINE

Neuroendocrine reflex.

VIVIAN

That's something else.

Madeline sits. Michael quickly rises, moves behind Madeline and helps push in her chair. Vivian watches as they exchange a smile.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

(to Michael)

Do you have my Equal?

MICHAEL

Sure, Ma.

Michael turns and crosses to a row of cabinets. Vivian eyes the meal. Looks up at Madeline.

VIVIAN

Is there very much protein in tofu?

Michael returns, hands a box of Equal to Vivian.

MADELINE

It's tempeh, it's full of it. It produces natural antibiotics.

Henry loads his plate.

HENRY

Viv's been thinking about trying
Atkins.

Vivian gives him a venomous look. Returns her attention to
Madeline.

VIVIAN

So, you weren't crazy about this
last doctor, either.

MICHAEL

Ma...

MADELINE

We waited two hours to see him,
then he gave us five minutes. He
didn't even look me in the eye.

Vivian loads Equal into a mug emblazoned with a cartoon of a
mother cat and her kittens and the words "World's Greatest
Mother".

VIVIAN

Too bad you didn't like Richard
Sohn, he's been treating me for
years.

Vivian turns to Michael.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

His niece tried a manslaughter case
in my court last week, she looks
wonderful. You remember her.

She picks up her fork and pokes at the tempeh.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Terrible case. Woman starved her
baby to death by feeding him
wheatgrass.

Madeline watches as Vivian slowly extrudes the tempeh through
her fork.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

She's lucky it was a jury trial, I
would've locked her up.

Madeline's had enough.

MADELINE

I'm going to see a midwife.

Vivian lowers the fork and looks up. Michael watches anxiously.

VIVIAN
At which hospital?

MADELINE
It's an independent clinic, they're self contained.

VIVIAN
There's a reason people have babies at hospitals.

Madeline slices a piece of tempeh. Vivian turns to Michael.

MICHAEL
We're just checking it out.

She glares at him.

MADELINE
She's the best midwife working.

MICHAEL
Madeline was her assistant professor at Aimsly.

VIVIAN
The best is in a hospital. I know a little bit about this, you know.

MADELINE
So do I.

Vivian turns back to Michael. He looks away.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The SUV turns up a gravel drive.

INT. MICHAEL'S SUV - CONTINUOUS

Madeline watches anxiously out the windshield as they approach a modest, two-story cottage, idyllic in the afternoon glow.

Michael pulls up behind a green Saab.

MICHAEL
I'm trying to keep an open mind.

MADELINE

I know.

She gives his hand a little squeeze.

MICHAEL

If anyone breaks out a power
crystal, we're leaving.

MADELINE

Deal.

INT. NATUREBIRTH - MIDWIFE'S EXAM ROOM - DAY

A single ray of sunlight penetrates closed blinds.

DR. PATRICIA LANG (36), attractive without effort, sits
silently in the shadows at a simple wooden desk, looking down
at a photograph. On the back are written the letters: "M, P,
and J".

Her other hand rests on a bottom drawer, its handle grooved
from years of wear where her thumb slowly strokes the wood.

The sound of the Mathesons' car doors opening and closing
outside pulls her back to the present. She slips the photo
into her top drawer. Withdraws her other hand.

She closes her eyes and takes a practiced meditative breath.

E/I. NATUREBIRTH - FLOWER HALL - DAY

Madeline and Michael move into a beautiful, flower lined
glass roofed porch. A front door is open. They continue
inside.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

They move into a modified den, complete with sofa set and
coffee table, everything in soft earth tones.

MADELINE

Hello?

A tapestry hangs on the wall, embroidered with the words:
"SERENITY to accept the things I cannot change, COURAGE to
change the things I can, WISDOM to know the difference."

MICHAEL

We're in the wrong place.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Could be.

SHELLY (29), attractive and butch, emerges from another room carrying a tray of chocolate chip cookies and herbal tea.

SHELLY

I'm Shelly, the labor doula and chief assistant midwife, I work with Patty on all the births.

She sets the tray on the coffee table.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Sit down, let me grab her. Have some cookies, they're vegan.

MICHAEL

Great.

Shelly moves up a staircase, out of sight.

As Michael flips through the tea selection, Madeline follows Shelly's footsteps across the ceiling overhead. A wave of anxiety rinses over her features.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Herbal.

Michael gives up on the tea. Notices Madeline watching the ceiling.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You sure you're okay?

She pulls her eyes from above and turns to Michael.

MADELINE

Yeah. I'm fine.

Two sets of footsteps are heard descending.

Patricia Lang comes down the stairs, Shelly close behind her.

PATRICIA

Hi Maddy.

They share an awkward smile. Embrace.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

You look great.

MADELINE

This is my husband, Michael.

Patricia's smile wavers, despite herself. She shakes Michael's hand.

PATRICIA
You get some cookies?

MICHAEL
Not yet.

PATRICIA
She told you they were vegan,
didn't she. I swear, they're
amazing.

Patricia grabs one and takes a bite.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Oh, Shelly...

Shelly smiles proudly. Patricia holds the plate out to Madeline and Michael.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Can we get a minute, Shell?

Shelly watches Madeline take a cookie. Retreats from the room. A brief silence descends.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
I always prefer a little face time
to the phone. If you decided
Naturebirth was the right choice,
we'd start weekly pre-natals right
away.

Madeline looks hopeful.

MADELINE
Every week?

Patricia nods.

PATRICIA
The whole idea is to have time to
get to know each other. Or catch
up if we already do.

Madeline crosses her legs. Patricia rises, deliberately returning equal focus to Michael.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Come on up, let me show you the
birthing suite.

INT. NATUREBIRTH - BIRTHING SUITE - MOMENTS LATER

Patricia let's Madeline and Michael into a large bedroom, painted in greens and purples. A wooden bed sits in the center of the room.

MADELINE

It's beautiful.

Madeline crosses to a large Jacuzzi, encircled with orchids. Patricia watches as she run her fingers over the smooth surface.

PATRICIA

We keep the focus on you and your baby. Not just the birth, those crucial first moments, too. At a hospital, they clamp the umbilical while the placenta's still pumping--

MADELINE

And put your baby in a radiant warmer instead of letting you hold her.

Patricia nods.

PATRICIA

Some of the lost nutrients can be replaced, but losing that bonding right after birth is irreparable. Those first interactions between you and your baby are so powerful, they create biochemical responses we don't even understand.

MADELINE

The "Sensitive Period". That's Birth Psychology. Kennell and Klaus.

Patricia allows a smile. She holds open another door.

INT. NATUREBIRTH - MIDWIFE'S EXAM ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Patricia follows Madeline and Michael inside. With the blinds open, the room looks as cozy as the birthing suite.

Patricia gestures to a couch and takes a seat at her desk. Madeline and Michael follow suit.

PATRICIA

I'm sure you've got some questions.

MICHAEL

Are you a licensed doctor?

PATRICIA

I have a Ph.D. in Holistic
Obstetrics. I also trained for
five years in a dozen different
Eastern Healing modalities in
Nepal, Thailand--

MICHAEL

Medical doctor, I mean.

PATRICIA

I've got an M.D. from Columbia.

Michael gestures at the walls.

MICHAEL

I didn't see any degrees.

Madeline watches Patricia carefully. She is calm,
undefensive.

PATRICIA

The less this place reminds you of
a hospital, the better.

MICHAEL

How come?

PATRICIA

There's just no reason to
medicalize a perfect process. If I
break my leg, I'm not letting a
chiropractor set it, but with
pregnancy, nothing's broken.

MICHAEL

But things get broken in the
process.

MADELINE

Mostly at hospitals.

PATRICIA

State maternity wards do have a
thirty-three percent intervention
rate.

MICHAEL

What's yours?

Patricia picks up two folders from the desk and hands one to each of them.

PATRICIA

Point-two. All the stats are in there. The studies are all state funded, nothing private.

Madeline opens her folder with interest.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Medical interventions can be miraculous, but not everybody needs a miracle. Most of the time they just create so many complications we end up treating the treatment.

Madeline glances over PHOTOGRAPHS of infected epidural sites.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Epidurals, for instance. Very effective as an analgesic, but you need Pitocin to compensate. You put all those chemicals in play and doctors want constant fetal monitoring. Which leads to dramatically increased Caesarian rates.

Madeline flips to a bloody c-section PHOTOGRAPH.

MADELINE

Anything about the baby's heart rate makes them nervous, they cut them out.

Patricia nods, gravely. Michael opens his folder.

PATRICIA

You almost can't blame them, malpractice suits are epidemic. Some OB's won't even deliver anymore because insurance is so high.

Michael shakes his head as he scans his folder.

MICHAEL

This is all academic if it's safer to deliver at the hospital.

Madeline reads aloud.

MADELINE

'Mothers are three to six times more likely to die delivering in a hospital than a midwife-supervised clinic or home birth.' It's on page fourteen.

Michael searches Patricia's face for signs of deception. Finds none. He returns to the folder with increased interest. Patricia turns to Madeline.

PATRICIA

You said you had taken some fertility drugs.

Madeline looks up from her folder.

MADELINE

For three years. But I was off them for eleven months before she came. We got pregnant twice while I was on them, but...

She lays a hand on her belly. Looks down.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Sorry.

She wipes her eyes with her sleeve. Patricia grabs a box of tissues from her desk, pulls out a handful and offers them to Michael.

With a look of gratitude, he accepts them and relays one to Madeline.

Patricia watches him brush the hair from Madeline's eyes.

Watches him take Madeline's hand.

She reaches out and places her own hand on Madeline's and Michael's.

PATRICIA

There's nothing to be sorry about.

INT. NATUREBIRTH - WAITING ROOM - LATER

Madeline and Michael come down the stairs, still holding hands, Patricia close behind. Shelly awaits them at the bottom.

PATRICIA

Shell, can we get Madeline an I.D. bracelet and a cookbook, and maybe something for the road?

She hesitates. Disappears from the room. Patricia turns to Madeline.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

To make sure you've got our number. We'll get you a copy of Shelly's pregnancy cookbook, too. If you're anaemic, so's your baby, so keep your blood count up. Prune juice, Cream of Wheat, soybeans, molasses, lentils. Plenty of vitamin C for absorption. She's got a great shake in there to jump you back to a hundred percent if you start to feel weak.

Shelly re-enters, balancing a wax paper-wrapped plate on an amaturely bound book. She hands them both to Michael, and pulls out a silver I.D. bracelet.

Madeline holds out her wrist. As Shelly fastens the bracelet, she catches Madeline's skin in the clasp. Madeline winces a little.

SHELLY

Sorry.

PATRICIA

Monday?

Madeline notices Michael sneaking a cookie from the wax paper. He takes a bite. Madeline smiles. She nods.

MADELINE

Thanks Patty.

Patricia smiles back.

Madeline and Michael head out the front door.

Patricia remains in the doorway, watching as Madeline climbs into the SUV.

LONGING breaks through her facade.

Patricia turns. Moves back through the room and retreats up the stairs.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Madeline rubs over her right breast as she pours milk into a saucer from a carton labeled, "Soy-Moo".

She sets the saucer down on a cat mat next to a second bowl, already filled with cat food, and returns to the counter. On it, a small television plays.

ON THE TELEVISION: a row of cows in high tech milking stalls.

She unmutes the TV, and picks up the carton.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

--with proper care, these cows
could supply grade "A" milk for
many years, but over-milking
quickly renders them useless...

She returns the carton to the fridge. With visible distaste, she removes a butcher's wrap and lays it on the counter.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Within a short time, the only place
left for them is the
slaughterhouse...

Upon the wrap, a post-it note reads, "Thanks Babe! - Love, J".

She turns off the TV. Draws a butcher knife from a block on the counter. Reluctantly, she unwraps a mound of liver.

Careful not to touch it, she starts to slice the meat. As she cuts, a line of pink juice runs down the blade toward her hand. And onto her fingers.

She puts down the knife, and moves quickly to the sink. As she scrubs her hands, she notices the saucer of milk and cat food are untouched.

MADELINE

Dinner time for boys!

She crosses to the cat mat. Makes kissing noises as she freshens the already full food bowl from a bag labeled, "Organicat".

She rises and waits.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Come on, sweetie. You have to eat something.

A SCRATCHING sound comes from a flimsy back door, off the kitchen. Madeline crosses and opens it.

Jonesy struts in. He's left a disemboweled rat at the door.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Oh, Jonesy!

He rubs against Madeline's leg. Affection pushes through her revulsion.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

I've got nice food for you, right here, baby.

She pulls on a pair of rubber gloves.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Poor thing.

Starts toward the rat. Turns away, disgusted. She looks to a coat rack, sees a pair of mittens sticking out of a coat pocket.

EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Carrying the gored rat in her gloved and mittened hands, Madeline crosses a thriving yard to a large compost heap.

She digs a small hole in the pile. Drops the rat inside. Watches it for a moment, sadly. Buries it.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Michael takes a large bite of liver. Madeline watches him. Picks at a fruit salad, but does not eat.

Michael pours himself a glass of soy milk and takes a sip. Madeline watches as a tiny white drop escapes from the glass and descends to his chin.

He slices another bite of liver and looks up at her, holding up his fork.

MICHAEL

Thanks for doing this.

She smiles. Points to her own chin. Michael puts down his fork, picks up a napkin and dabs at his chin. Still there.

Madeline smiles affectionately.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

No?

MADELINE

Uh-uh.

He tries again. Still no luck.

She takes her own napkin from her lap and wipes the milk from his chin.

Michael gives her hand a sensuous caress. She withdraws it and pretends not to notice.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Jonesy killed another rat.

Michael watches as she resumes poking at her dinner.

MICHAEL

You can't feed him soy milk.
You're driving him to murder.

Madeline gives him a frown.

MADELINE

Did you take the car in?

MICHAEL

Two thousand dollars later. It's
still making the noise.

MADELINE

You never should've bought an SUV.

MICHAEL

It's a hybrid.

Madeline rubs her chest again.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You okay?

MADELINE

Just gas or something.

He takes another bite of liver. Swallows.

MICHAEL

I bought Patricia Lang's book.

MADELINE

Womanwilll?

He nods.

MICHAEL
I didn't know she was a drinker.

MADELINE
She's been sober since I met her.

MICHAEL
She thanked you in the forward.
You two were really close.

MADELINE
I learned a lot from her. She's an
amazing teacher.

MICHAEL
Some of her stuff is pretty far
out.

MADELINE
She revolutionized Women's Studies.
We had a two year wait list for her
class at Aimsly.

The PHONE RINGS. Michael pushes his chair back and rises.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
We have an answering machine.

MICHAEL
That's Mom. I'll grab it in the
living room.

He moves quickly from the kitchen. Madeline rests her head
on a hand.

She WINCES, her hand moving back up to her chest.

She struggles to call out, but the pain is too much. She
tries again, manages a weak call.

MADELINE
Michael!

Michael rushes into the room, the phone still to his ear,
sees Madeline doubled over on the table. He lowers the phone
and rushes to her side.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
My chest...

MICHAEL
Can you move?!

MADELINE
Call Patricia...

He picks up the phone.

MICHAEL
I have to go.

As he helps Madeline to her feet, he tries to end the call.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Don't call Dr. Sohn, we're going to
the ER.

Madeline's almost too weak to talk.

MADELINE
No... Take me to Patricia's...

MICHAEL
Ma, I'm hanging up!

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

A team of nurses swarms over Madeline, inserting catheters
and hanging I.V. bags.

MADELINE
What's wrong...?

Nobody answers. Michael stands helplessly, several feet
away.

MICHAEL
What's happening to her?

An ER DOCTOR turns to Michael.

ER DOCTOR
Sir, if you want us to help your
wife you're going to have to step
outside.

A middle aged man walks in wearing a suit and tie. DR. SOHN.

DR. SOHN
It's okay, Michael.

The ER Doctor turns to Sohn.

ER DOCTOR
Richard Sohn. What are you,
slumming?

DR. SOHN
The mother in-law called me, she's
a family friend.

Sohn turns to Michael.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
Your mother's on her way from
Meadowbrook, she'll be here in an
hour.

Sohn turns back to the ER Doctor, nods to the chart in his
hand. The ER Doctor hands it to him.

ER DOCTOR
Heard they were giving you some
trouble, Dick.

DR. SOHN
Par for course in my line.

Sohn scans the chart. Looks alarmed.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
Right upper quadrant pain, elevated
blood pressure - this is
Preeclampsia. We need to induce
right now.

MADELINE
What?!

MICHAEL
She's only thirty-two weeks!

ER DOCTOR
Let's get three twenty-five
microgram vaginal doses of Cytotec.
We're inducing.

MADELINE
No!

DR. SOHN
I'll take care of her, Mike.

Madeline leans forward through the wall of scrubs and calls
to Michael.

MADELINE
Call Patricia!

The ER Doctor guides Michael back as the nurses begin to
erect a sterile tent over Madeline's lower half.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Michael, PLEASE!

The Doctor pulls a curtain, closing Michael from the area.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Michael paces, a cell phone to his ear.

MICHAEL
He's not her doctor, Ma! You
shouldn't have sent him in the
first place! Hello? Ma! Shit.

An elevator opens and Patricia gets out.

PATRICIA
Is she okay?

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM/EMERGENCY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Patricia and Michael push through an overcrowded room.

PATRICIA
If it's Preeclampsia, the only
thing they can do is deliver.

Patricia waves to a triage nurse and they push through the emergency room doors.

They continue through a chaotic emergency room, doctors, nurses, patients pushing past.

They move through a curtain.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Two nurses hold Madeline down as the ER Doctor struggles to get her legs into a set of stirrups. She pulls and kicks, but he overwhelms her and locks her legs into place.

MADELINE
Get off me!

Patricia pulls back the curtain and enters, Michael close behind.

PATRICIA
What the hell is going on?

ER DOCTOR
You can't be in here.

Patricia tries to approach Madeline, but Sohn stands in her path.

DR. SOHN
You can't be in here, miss.

PATRICIA
I'm her midwife.

Madeline pulls an arm loose and RIPS out her I.V.

MADELINE
It's too soon!

ER DOCTOR
Why isn't she sedated?

NURSE
She's on thirty milligrams of
diazepam.

Sohn turns to the nurse, momentarily awed. Patricia slides past to Madeline's side. Michael tries to follow, but the ER Doctor steps in his way. Patricia leans in to Madeline.

PATRICIA
Where's the pain?

MADELINE
My chest.

DR. SOHN
It's right upper quadrant,
increased blood pressure, probably
HELLP syndrome. We're inducing.

Patricia ignores him, totally focused on Madeline.

PATRICIA
Is it moving out toward your
shoulder blade?

ER DOCTOR
You can not be in here.

Patricia turns back to the ER Doctor.

PATRICIA
What are her enzymes?

He doesn't answer. Patricia rises, turning to Sohn.
Advances on him.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Tell me you got her levels before
ordering an induction.

DR. SOHN
If it's hypertension, that baby's
in jeopardy.

PATRICIA
If it's a gallstone, she's not!

ER DOCTOR
I'm calling security.

PATRICIA
I'm her doctor and I'm not going
anywhere until I see numbers. You
have me thrown out and then murder
her baby because of your own
negligence I'll see to it you never
work again.

Sohn holds her look. Patricia stands her ground. She isn't
moving. Sohn speaks without breaking Patricia's stare.

DR. SOHN
Run her enzymes.

ER DOCTOR
Okay, you heard him. Let's get
numbers back here in sixty seconds.

A nurse rushes out through the curtain. Patricia continues
her face off with Sohn.

PATRICIA
What's your name?

DR. SOHN
Doctor Sohn.

PATRICIA
Where are your scrubs?

DR. SOHN
I'm a friend of the family's.

MADELINE
He's not my doctor!

Madeline tries to pull her legs from the stirrups, but they're locked in place.

ER DOCTOR
If you're wrong, you're in serious trouble.

PATRICIA
Go fuck yourself.

The nurse comes back through the curtain, slightly out of breath, and hands a piece of paper to the ER Doctor. He reads it. Gives Sohn an embarrassed glance.

ER DOCTOR
Cancel the Cytotec and schedule an ultrasound to confirm a stone.

The nurses release Madeline's arms. She immediately wraps her hands around her belly as Michael slides past the ER Doctor to her side and Patricia unlocks her legs.

MICHAEL
I'm so sorry.

MADELINE
Take me home.

EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - LATER

The Mathesons' SUV moves down a tree lined, two-lane road.

INT. MICHAEL'S SUV - CONTINUOUS

Michael drives, Madeline sits in the passenger seat, weak, but fully conscious.

He reaches out and takes her hand. They sit in silence for a long moment. She pulls her hand from his, ties back her hair and turns toward the window.

Michael squints as HEADLIGHTS glare behind them. He looks up to the rear view mirror. Madeline turns weakly to look.

An Audi is close behind them.

MADELINE
Maybe you should pull over.

Michael rolls down his window, waves the car to pass.

MICHAEL

Where?

EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The side of the road has virtually no shoulder, declining straight into the trees.

The Audi pulls into the opposite lane.

INSIDE THE SUV

Michael negotiates the curving road as the Audi speeds alongside them.

It accelerates to pass...

A NEW HORN BLARES, UP AHEAD - A pickup truck ROCKETS toward them.

The Audi tries to pull back into the right lane, but it hasn't cleared the Mathesons' vehicle...

IT CLIPS THE FRONT END - sending the SUV swerving to the right. Michael pulls left to compensate - and veers into the oncoming lane.

THE PICKUP TRUCK SPEEDS STRAIGHT AT THEM, HORN BLARING.

Madeline wraps her arms around her belly...

Michael manages to steer the SUV back into right lane, just as the truck flies by, brakes screeching.

Michael grips the steering wheel, breathing hard. In front of them, the Audi speeds away.

MICHAEL

Asshole!

(to Madeline)

Are you okay?

Madeline nods, composing herself. A HISSING SOUND issues from the dash: SSSSSS...

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You hear that?

...SSSSSS-BANG! - Michael'S AIRBAG INFLATES IN HIS FACE.

The SUV veers off the road, down the incline and into the surrounding woods.

The car swerves out of control. Madeline clutches her belly, closes her eyes.

CUT TO BLACK.

A WET WHISTLING.

INT. MICHAEL'S SUV - LATER

Madeline's moonlit face stares out in shock.

The windshield before her is shattered, obstructing the view out. Thick trees and underbrush block the view on all sides. She turns to the driver's seat...

Michael's neck has been slashed open by a piece of the dash, the source of the whistling.

Michael's final breath wheezes out.

MADELINE

Michael...

Madeline pulls her eyes from him and looks at her belly.

She runs her hands over it. It is unharmed.

Madeline looks to her seatbelt buckle. She tries to undo it, but it's been smashed shut.

She looks back up to Michael. Fights back her tears. She turns back to her belly. Touches it. Closes her eyes.

She WRENCHES the seatbelt from the buckle with uncanny strength...

She drops forward, her belly stopping just inches from the dash.

OUTSIDE THE SUV

The SUV is nose down on a forty-five degree incline, front bumper against a tree

BACK IN THE SUV

Madeline slides along the dash toward the door...

BANG! - THE PASSENGER SIDE AIRBAG EXPLODES INTO HER STOMACH, BLASTING MADELINE BACKWARDS AGAINST THE SEAT.

She drops back to the dash. Her face twists into a horrified grimace, then goes slack. Her hands move down between her thighs.

A small BLOOD STAIN blossoms on the crotch of her pants.

EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - NIGHT

The PICKUP TRUCK sits hastily parked, flashers on, driver's side door open.

EXT. FORREST - MOMENTS LATER

The PICK UP TRUCK DRIVER moves down the incline, the SUV barely visible through the thick underbush a hundred yards ahead.

MADELINE (O.S.)
She isn't moving.

He turns...

MADELINE SITS IN THE UNDERBRUSH, PALE AND IN SHOCK.

She holds out her broken Naturebirth I.D. bracelet.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Please...

HER PANTS ARE SOAKED IN BLOOD.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Call Patricia.

INT. NATUREBIRTH - BIRTHING SUITE - LATER

Madeline lies on the bed. Her blouse is torn to expose a massive BRUISE on her belly.

INT. MIDWIFE'S EXAM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Patricia sits watching Madeline on a small monitor. Shelly enters behind her.

SHELLY
The police are coming with an ambulance.

Patricia continues to stare at the monitor.

PATRICIA
She won't go.

SHELLY
She needs to go to a regular
hospital.

PATRICIA
They'll induce labor. She won't go.

SHELLY
The baby's dead, Patty.

Patricia's eyes explore Madeline's form. Her belly.

PATRICIA
She'll deliver in three weeks on
her own.

SHELLY
She can't make that decision right
now. She doesn't know what she
wants.

Patricia explores Madeline's face on the monitor.

PATRICIA
She knows exactly what she wants.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

STATIC.

Madeline sits at the kitchen table, staring blankly at the flickering glow of white noise on the television through two partially blackened eyes. The phone is RINGING.

She dunks a metal tea strainer into a mug of cold, black tea again and again.

An answering machine picks up in Michael's prerecorded voice.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
Hi, you've reached the Mathesons.
Before you know it, we're gonna
have a teenager on our hands, so
leave a message while you can still
get through.

PATRICIA (V.O.)
(through the machine)
Madeline, it's Patricia. We should
talk soon. About the delivery...
(MORE)

PATRICIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You should try to get out. It's
not good for you to be too
stationary right now... Call me,
okay?

The machine cuts off. The tea strainer's chain breaks and the little silver sphere disappears into the black liquid.

Madeline picks up the mug and brings it to her lips. On it, the cartoon of mother cat and her kittens alongside the words "World's Greatest Mother".

As she drinks, a line of black tea dribbles down her chin.

Jonesy the cat leaps onto the table. He rubs against Madeline's hand, purring.

She picks him up and cradles him to her stomach--

HE HISSES AND SCRAMBLES FROM HER GRIP.

INT. BABYHOUR CLOTHING STORE - AISLE - TWO WEEKS LATER

Madeline stands amidst organic baby accessories, the bruises around her eyes starting to yellow.

In her hands is a coffin-like Moses basket.

Behind her, a SKINNY CLERK rounds the corner of the aisle, barely masking her disturbance at Madeline's condition.

SKINNY CLERK

Did you... find what you were
looking for?

Tears well in Madeline's eyes.

SKINNY CLERK (CONT'D)

Miss?

Madeline turns, cradling the basket. The Clerk looks to the floor below her - steps back, horrified.

Madeline follows her gaze, holding the basket out to see...

BLOODY WATER STREAMS FROM BETWEEN MADELINE'S LEGS TO THE BABY BLUE CARPET, BELOW.

The basket drops. Madeline follows, unconscious before she hits the floor.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. NATUREBIRTH - BIRTHING SUITE - NIGHT

Madeline unleashes a blood-curdling SCREAM.

She is squatting, surrounded by assistant midwives, each supporting her from a different angle. Candles burn throughout the room.

Patricia looks up from between Madeline's legs.

PATRICIA
The baby's descended.

Madeline's pain is exquisite.

MADELINE
I'm tearing!

PATRICIA
No you're not, you're stretching.
Hear me.

Madeline cannot respond.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Hear me, Madeline!

Madeline exhales a feral groan through gritted teeth, her face a map of absolute torment.

Patricia turns to the assistants.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Hands and knees.

They help Madeline onto all fours, Patricia taking position behind her.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Safe.

Madeline screams again.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
That's it, open.

Blood begins to leak from one of her nostrils.

The assistant midwives share distressed glances over Madeline's writhing body.

She screams in PRIMAL AGONY.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Underwater!

The assistant midwives help Madeline to her feet. Together with Patricia, they guide her to the full Jacuzzi.

Patricia jumps into the water and helps lower Madeline in, positioning herself between her legs.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Safe!

One of the assistants looks down at her hands. They are covered in blood.

A dark red cloud blossoms in the water around Madeline's torso.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
The head is born!

Madeline grips the edge of the Jacuzzi, her knuckles white.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Open. Open! Open and push!

She heaves a final, savage push, her fingernails bending back against the tub. Displaced water extinguishes several candles.

A plume of black blood swirls into the water.

Patricia guides a form from between Madeline's legs into the murky depths.

She lifts the tiny body from below the surface.

Madeline strains to look...

The baby is dead.

A blanket of silence descends upon the room.

MADELINE
I want to hold her.

Shelly locks Patricia with a sober glare.

Patricia looks down at the glistening, lifeless form.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Please...

Patricia lays the tiny corpse in Madeline's arms.

Shelly turns and exits.

The assistant midwives just stare. Patricia glares up at them.

PATRICIA

Airway.

They look uncertain.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Airway. Do it.

Madeline watches as an assistant reluctantly slides a bulb syringe into the baby's mouth, sucking up clear liquid. Blood spirals up into the shaft.

Tears stream down Madeline's face.

Patricia dismisses the assistants with a look, and they file out.

Madeline turns the baby and hugs it to her chest. Strokes its tiny tuft of hair. She looks up at Patricia.

MADELINE

I want to be alone with her.

Patricia pauses. She climbs out of the pool. Leaves the room.

Madeline is alone.

She holds the baby out to look at it.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

You're so little.

Pulls it close again.

She lays her cheek against the child's hair.

INT. MIDWIFE'S EXAM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Patricia sits at her desk watching the monitor. Madeline's voice filters in.

MADELINE (V.O.)

Do you know how much I want you to stay?

Shelly speaks from across the room.

SHELLY
This is sick.

BIRTHING SUITE

Madeline runs her fingers gently up the colorless flesh of the baby's back.

MIDWIFE'S EXAM ROOM

Patricia watches the monitor as Madeline's fingers reach the corpse's tiny lips.

MADELINE (V.O.)
Please...

SHELLY
You have to stop this.

BIRTHING SUITE

Madeline closes her eyes.

She opens the baby's mouth and lowers it onto her breast.

MADELINE
Stay...

MIDWIFE'S EXAM ROOM

Patricia has seen enough. She rises and heads for the door. She's already talking as she pushes into the

BIRTHING SUITE

PATRICIA
You can't will a baby back to life--

She stops and stares...

THE BABY IS NURSING.

Color has returned to her flesh.

Madeline turns to Patricia.

MADELINE
It's Grace. Her name is Grace.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE UP:

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Warm daylight fills the room.

A steaming cup of green tea sits on the counter next to an audio baby monitor.

Madeline pulls a strainer from the mug. The bruises on her face are almost completely gone.

On her chest, Grace sleeps peacefully in a hemp sling.

The phone rings. She turns and considers it. Answers.

MADELINE
Hello?

A woman's voice can be heard faintly on the other end of the line.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
I'm okay. It's been hard packing his things, I'm sorry... The baby's doing great... I'm not talking about this, Vivian... Well, Sohn isn't my doctor...

Madeline strokes Grace's hair. Kisses her forehead.

Atop the fridge, Jonesy the cat chews the sinew of a mangled rat between his paws as he watches Grace lying silently on her mother's shoulder.

Madeline lifts the tea and takes a sip. BURNS her lip.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Damn.

The voice on the other end of the line pauses, then gets louder.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Nothing, I'm fine.

Jonesy hears something. Absconds.

FZZZZZZ. The doorbell.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Vivian, I really have to go.

She moves into the

FRONT HALL

Still holding the phone, Madeline opens the front door.
Patricia smiles back.

Madeline gingerly eyes a bouquet in her hands.

Motions her inside and closes the door behind her. She turns
to Patricia and covers the receiver.

MADELINE
My mother-in-law.

Patricia nods. Stands awkwardly, waiting for Madeline to
conclude her call. She reaches a finger out to Grace, who
grips it in her own tiny hand.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Okay, right. No thanks, I can take
care of that... Thank you. Bye,
Vivian.

She hangs up. Shakes her head.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
She nursed Michael till he was
three years old.

PATRICIA
She misses him.

An uncomfortable silence.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Can I use the bathroom?

Madeline points down the hall.

Patricia starts toward it.

Remembering the bouquet, she stops and turns.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Oh. I got these....

Madeline looks at them, ambivalent.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
 Realized I never got you a
 congratulations gift... Woman's
 version of a cigar.

Madeline accepts them.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Patricia stares at herself in the mirror, disgusted.

PATRICIA
 (whispering)
 'Woman's version of a cigar.'

She closes her eyes. Takes a practiced breath.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline stands at the sink pruning the flowers, half
 watching the television.

ON THE TELEVISION: a Lab Technician slices into a pig,
 exposing an artery. Blood drains from the wound into a steel
 receptacle.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 ... The blood must be centrifuged
 before clotting begins, or the
 apparatus will become blocked by
 the fast congealing proteins in the
 plasma, called coagulation
 factors...

The Technician wraps a leather tourniquet around the pig's
 leg.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Pressure is applied intermittently
 between bleedings to preserve the
 animal's blood in its own body and
 assure the freshness of samples...

Patricia enters behind her.

PATRICIA
 Pleasant.

MADELINE
 Animal Planet. I'm hooked. It's
 like a vegan horror movie.

Patricia laughs.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Thanks for coming. It's a little
tough for us to get out.

PATRICIA
Of course.

Patricia nods toward Grace.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
May I?

Madeline hesitates, momentarily, then nods.

Patricia lifts the baby from the harness and cradles her.
Grace lets out a happy squeak.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Oh, wait a sec. I got something
for her.

Patricia reaches into her purse and pulls out a stack of baby
music CD's.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
"Pachelbaby" is my favorite.

Madeline takes them. Patty digs back into her purse.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
And...

She removes a little stuffed mouse.

MADELINE
You didn't need to do this.

PATRICIA
Sure I did.

Patricia holds the mouse up to Grace's tiny hand and gives it
a squeeze. It lets out an electronic message.

STUFFED MOUSE
I like to hug with Kitty!

The baby strokes its faux fur.

PATRICIA
She's beautiful.

MADELINE
She hardly even cries.

PATRICIA
How are you doing?

MADELINE
No complaints. Nipples hurt a
little bit.

Madeline fills a vase with water.

PATRICIA
You keep those things stimulated,
you can nurse till your sixty.

MADELINE
Neuroendocrine reflex.

PATRICIA
You got it.

Madeline gives the bouquet a final pruning.

MADELINE
How was the bloodwork?

PATRICIA
All normal.

MADELINE
Of course it was.

Patricia watches as Madeline clears the discarded pieces of
the flower stems into the garbage. She looks down at Grace.

PATRICIA
She validates everything I've been
saying about the power of a
mother's will.

She looks up at Madeline.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
You're the perfect case study.

Madeline puts down the flowers.

MADELINE
We're not a case study.

She lifts Grace from Patricia's arms.

PATRICIA

I know you don't want to take her to the hospital, but there are some tests that could help us understand--

MADELINE

I don't need to understand a miracle.

PATRICIA

Madeline--

MADELINE

If it was up to them she'd be dead. You said you could take care of anything she needs, if you don't want to help us--

PATRICIA

Alright, I get it.

Patricia suddenly looks down - JONESY is rubbing his chin against her leg.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Doctor Jones.

She reaches down and scoops Jonesy into her arms.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

The prominent North American rat surgeon, lives.

She strokes his back. Madeline turns her attention back down to Grace, hair falling over her eyes.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

(to Jonesy)

Jesus, you're huge.

Jonesy purrs in Patricia's arms, rubs his chin against her face. Patricia looks up at Madeline.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Remember what Tracy Sullivan used to call us three?

Madeline coos quietly at Grace.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

'Ma and Pa and Baby J.'

Madeline looks up. She and Patricia are face to face.

Patricia reaches out and brushes the hair from Madeline's eyes.

Madeline pulls away.

MADELINE

Don't.

PATRICIA

I'm sorry.

She lets Jonesy down.

MADELINE

You should go.

PATRICIA

Do you still think about us?

Madeline doesn't answer.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

I just want to know what happened.

MADELINE

I wanted a family.

Madeline looks down at Grace, tears falling down her cheeks.

PATRICIA

I'm sorry.

MADELINE

Just go.

PATRICIA

Maddy, I'm sorry.

She reaches a hand out to comfort her, but Madeline steps back.

MADELINE

Get out.

Patricia's eyes well with sympathetic tears.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Get out!

Patricia turns for the door, crestfallen.

Jonesy lets out a sad meow as she departs.

Madeline looks up after her, reluctant longing in her own eyes.

She looks back down at Grace. Manages a smile for her sake.

INT. VIVIAN'S AND HENRY'S HOUSE - MICHAEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Vivian, her face devoid of expression, sits on a race car shaped children's bed.

The wall behind her is painted yellow with a rising sun, the wall to her side, with a red-orange sunset.

The room looks like it hasn't been changed at all since Michael was a child. Trophies, toys and comic books line the shelves.

In Vivian's hands is a PHOTOGRAPH of her, thirty-four years younger, holding a baby Michael.

She is grinning in the picture, despite Michael's worried frown.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Madeline sits at the kitchen table with Grace on her lap. She contemplates Patricia's baby music CD's. Shuffles through them.

She selects one, slides it into a plastic toddler's radio, and hits play:

An asinine Barney rip-off.

BARNEY RIP-OFF (V.O.)

(singing)

Family, family, we all love each
other. Family's have a dad and a
mother. Sometimes there is a
sister or brother. Family, family--

Madeline hits stop, pulls the CD out. She tries another:
"Pachelbaby."

Hits play. The sound of a good sized kazoo orchestra, playing the "Pachelbel Canon," sings forth from the multicolored radio. Madeline smiles.

She runs her finger down Grace's cheek. Leans down, closing her eyes and inhaling the scent of Grace's hair--

She pauses, something strange about the scent. She leans in for another smell. It's gone.

She leans back in the chair, losing herself in the kazoo-canon as she runs a tiny, pink hairbrush delicately through the baby's tuft of hair. She looks down...

A LARGE CLUMP OF GRACE'S HAIR HAS COME OUT INTO THE BRUSH.

MADELINE

Oh, baby, I'm so sorry!

Grace lets out a snivel as Madeline rises. She throws the brush into the garbage.

It lands on top of PATRICIA'S BOUQUET.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - MADELINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Madeline jolts upright in bed.

She looks at an audio baby monitor, beside her. The tiniest peep is heard.

INT. NURSERY - MOMENTS LATER

The other end of the monitor listens silently beside a crib.

Madeline pushes into the room, hyper alert, crossing to the crib. Inside, Grace stirs, but remains asleep.

Madeline's eyes dart an inspection of the area.

Over the crib, a mobile constructed of stuffed cats chasing stuffed mice hangs totally motionless. Upon it, Madeline finds what she's looking for...

A FLY.

She opens a hinged window above Grace and shoos at it gently.

MADELINE

(whispering)

Out you go.

The fly rises, buzzing between her hands.

Her tolerance starts to slip. She swats at it, but misses, losing sight of it.

She scans the room. Grabs a "Fresh Start" magazine from a stand beside a nursing chair and rolls it into a club.

She turns a slow circle, searching for the fly. Even in the dark, she finds it. It's landed on the wall by the door.

She starts toward it, but it lifts off the wall and she loses it, again.

She returns to the crib, her back against it, standing guard. Listens...

BZZZZZZZZZZZZ - from behind her. She turns, the makeshift club raised...

Madeline swallows a panicked gasp, lowering the magazine.

THE FLY HAS PERCHED ON GRACE'S FACE.

It crawls to the end of the baby's nose. Disappears INTO HER NOSTRIL.

Madeline waves a hand frantically over Grace's face, but it's useless. She clutches the magazine helplessly.

The fly reappears. She shoos at it with her hand.

It lifts off, circles the crib. And returns to Grace's face.

It crawls toward her eye. Madeline shoos desperately. The fly rises up and out of the crib.

Madeline stalks it across the room, her knuckles white around the magazine. She swings. Misses.

She scans the area, wrath burning in her eyes.

BZZ BZZZ.

She sees it. Perched on a picture frame. She stalks within an arm's reach. Cocks the club...

She blasts the fly into oblivion across the frame.

Breathing hard, she inspects her ruined prey. Tiny, larva writhe within the dead fly's exploded open belly.

INT. NURSERY - MORNING

Madeline hammers a nail into the ceiling. She hangs a roll of fly paper from it and unravels the sticky contents beside Grace's mobile.

Below, Grace stares up through a MOSQUITO NETTING fastened over her crib.

Madeline sniffs the air, makes a distasteful face.

A SCRAPING sound issues from the hallway.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline emerges from the nursery.

Down the hall, chunks of soiled cat litter fly out of a partially open closet door onto the floor, the source of the SCRAPING SOUND.

MADELINE

Oh, Jonesy...

Madeline opens the closet, recoiling at the smell. Jonesy the cat stands kicking old litter out of his box, several flies buzzing around it. It hasn't been changed for a while.

Jonesy darts from the closet and disappears down the stairs to the first floor.

Madeline stands with her hand over her nose, surveying the scene. The hallway and closet are covered with clumps of soiled litter.

INT. VIVIAN'S AND HENRY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Vivian stands in a doorway, staring, her face flushing.

VIVIAN

Henry!

Henry rushes up a staircase into the hall.

HENRY

What's a matter?

Vivian glares at him from the doorway. She points into the room. Steps aside to let him look.

MASTER BEDROOM

The room is immaculate, except for a pair of socks and men's underwear that have been left on the bed.

HALLWAY

Henry looks at Vivian, confused.

HENRY
What?

VIVIAN
That room is a pig sty.

HENRY
Looks okay to me.

VIVIAN
Pick up your room!

Henry looks concerned. Vivian's eyes well with tears.

Henry takes her in his arms.

Tears roll down Vivian's cheeks.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
Clean up your room...

HENRY
Okay, Vicky.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Madeline blankets the area with non-aerosol deodorizer. The hall and closet are clear of all litter.

She surveys her work. Pristine.

INT. NURSERY - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline walks to the crib, smiling.

MADELINE
All clean.

She peels back the mosquito netting.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
No more bugs, no more stinky--

She sniffs the air. Leans into the crib, sniffs again.

She scoops Grace from the crib and carries her to the changing station across the nursery.

She peels back Grace's cloth diaper. It's clean.

She leans in and smells Grace. Blanches from the stink.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - LATER

Beside an audio baby monitor, a dozen natural baby soaps and shampoos are arranged along a tile counter. Madeline bathes Grace in a plastic baby tub, singing to her softly.

MADELINE

"The stars in the heavens have
tucked in the sun, and each little
flower knows this day is done..."

Madeline selects one of the baby soap bottles and squeezes a dab onto a natural sponge.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

"... And one lonesome bird sings a
quiet goodnight, my sweet little
angel it's time to sleep tight..."

She lathers Grace's little arms. Her little legs. Her little tummy.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

"...So sleep and dream just close
your eyes, I'll be here waiting the
moment you rise."

She dabs Grace's nose with a dot of foam. Grace grins as Madeline continues to scrub her with the sponge.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

"... My sweet little angel it's
time for goodnight."

GRACE STARTS TO SCREAM.

Madeline is suddenly hyper alert.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Okay, honey, bath time's over.

The water around Grace starts to turn PINK.

Madeline frantically rinses the lather from Grace's body...

A SMALL, RED SUBDERMAL PATCH IS REVEALED ON HER SIDE.

INT. NURSERY - MOMENTS LATER

On the changing station is a Rolodex, turned to "Lang, Patricia".

Madeline paces, holding a wailing Grace and a portable phone. The sore on Grace's side has been dressed with a light bandage. Around it, are several small bruises.

Madeline contemplates the Rolodex for a moment. She dials.

MADELINE

It's okay, honey, we're okay.

The Naturebirth voicemail message picks up.

SHELLY (V.O.)

Hi, you've reached Naturebirth, we're probably in delivery, but if you leave a message, we'll get back to you after the miracle.

MADELINE

Patty, it's Madeline. Grace has a really bad rash. She smelled funny, so I had her in the tub, I don't know what happened. I checked the temperature. It might have been the soap. I don't know, please call me back as soon as you can.

She hangs up. Looks down at Grace.

INT. NURSERY - LATER

Grace lies on her stomach, her naked bottom and legs protruding from a blanket. She is no longer crying, but her flesh is slick with sweat. Something BEEPS.

Madeline pulls an electronic thermometer from Grace's rectum.

Ninety-three degrees.

She shakes it a couple times, looks again. Same result.

MADELINE

Piece of crap.

She drops it in the garbage.

Grace starts to snivel. Madeline takes her into her arms.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Okay, I know, I know. Let's just get you a nice snack, okay?

She instinctively withdraws her hand.

Shelly peeks in.

SHELLY

You okay?

Patricia nods unconvincingly. Shelly enters and moves to her side.

She notes a "Auto Rodder" magazine on Patricia's desk, opened to a listing of Motor Homes. One of them is circled.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

You going somewhere?

PATRICIA

No. I don't know. I thought it might be fun to go for a road trip or something. Get away.

SHELLY

From me?

PATRICIA

Of course not.

Patricia closes the "Auto Rodder". Her photograph flutters to the floor, landing face up to reveal a decade old picture of her, Madeline and a baby kitten the same coloring as Jonesy. She scoops it up and returns it to her upper drawer.

SHELLY

She's sick.

Patricia has nothing to say in her defence.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

You're the wrong person to help her.

Again, Patricia remains silent.

Shelly turns and leaves, closing the door hard behind her.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - NURSERY - DAY

Madeline unravels a roll of fly paper from a nail in the ceiling...

DOZENS OF ROLLS OF FLY PAPER hang throughout the room. They are dotted with dead flies.

Madeline surveys her work, manically satisfied. She listens.

BZ. BZ BZ.

The buzzing comes from a fly already ensnared in the goo of a nearby strip.

The ensnared fly gives up. Madeline listens.

The room is totally silent.

Grace lets out a tiny snivel. Madeline moves to the crib.

MADELINE

You ready for a snack?

She peels back the mosquito netting and lifts Grace into her arms. The SORE on her side has grown out from beneath the bandage into a moist, red rash.

Grace reaches toward Madeline's breast, lips loosely pursing.

Hope rises on Madeline's face. She sits in the nursing chair, fumbles open her blouse, and brings Grace's head to her breast.

Grace starts to nurse.

Madeline lets out a relieved breath. She WINCES.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Gentle, honey.

Grace nurses harder. Madeline suppresses her pain.

Harder, still...

Grace STOPS.

A nauseated look twists the baby's features into a grimace.

She VOMITS a mouthful of milk onto Madeline's blouse and the arm of the nursing chair.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Oh, honey.

Grace starts to cry. Madeline rises, patting her back.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Shhh... It's alright.

After a moment, Grace begins to calm.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
 Just get a little rest, baby.
 Patty's gonna call back soon.

INT. VIVIAN'S AND HENRY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vivian sits up against the headboard of the bed, her eyes betraying the busyness of her mind. Henry slumbers next to her, emitting a faint snore from his open mouth.

Vivian runs her hands up her nightgown. Lets them examine her breasts. Her nipples.

She turns her attention to Henry. To his snoring MOUTH.

She reaches under the covers. Henry awakens with a start.

HENRY
 What are you--

VIVIAN
 Shhhh...

She kisses him. He kisses her back, aroused.

She lies back and guides him on top of her. She gently guides his head down.

Henry looks up at her. Smiles. He moves his head down, passing her chest - she stops him.

Guides his head back up to her breasts. She lowers his mouth to her breast.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
 That's it.

Again, he starts to kiss his way down her stomach. Again, she brings his face back to her breast.

She strokes his head as he sucks.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
 That's it, baby.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - NURSERY - NIGHT

Grace's dry lips purse loosely as she dreams beneath the mosquito netting.

On the nursing chair, TWO NEW MILK VOMIT STAINS are visible.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Madeline rolls over onto her stomach. She sits up, clutching her breast.

She listens to the baby monitor. Silent.

Madeline slides her feet from under the covers and sits on the edge of the bed. Flicks on the lamp beside her, bags visible under her eyes in the dim light.

There is a small brown stain on her nightgown over her breast.

She unbuttons the gown. Begins to pull it aside to examine herself. She WINCES in pain.

The gown is stuck to her skin beneath the stain. BLOOD. She slowly peels the fabric off.

Lifts her breast from the gown.

EXT. MATHESON HOUSE - STREET - SAME

A green Saab is parked out front.

INSIDE THE SAAB

Patricia watches Madeline inspecting herself in the dim light of the lamp.

Madeline rests her head on her hand, exhausted.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Madeline regains consciousness still seated on the edge of the bed - must have passed out.

A weak snivel crackles from the baby monitor behind her.

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

Madeline enters and crosses to the crib. She peels back the mosquito netting.

Grace lies half conscious, shivering. The rash on her side has continued to grow, raw and red, but it is no longer moist. Her lips have lost much of their color, and her skin is pale and dry.

MADELINE

Sweetheart...

Madeline lifts Grace into her arms.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

You have to eat something, baby.

She settles into the nursing chair and parts her stained gown. Exhausted, she holds the wailing baby to her chest. Grace turns away.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Please, honey.

Madeline slumps back in the chair, too tired to remain upright.

She tries to encourage Grace's head toward her breast, but Grace continues to resist.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

You need to eat something....

She tries again, to no avail.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Baby...

Madeline begins to nod out.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Please....

Her eyes flutter closed.

INT. NURSERY - LATER

Madeline stirs to consciousness with a slight grimace. In an instant, she remembers Grace and looks down. She grins through residual exhaustion...

Grace is nursing.

RAVENOUSLY.

Madeline's grin is displaced by a WINCE.

MADELINE

Whoa, easy baby, you're hurting
mommy.

Grace sucks furiously.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Okay, sweetie, mommy needs a break.

The pain is too much. Madeline tries to lift Grace, but she won't budge. She sucks harder.

Tears well in Madeline's eyes. She pulls at Grace again. Finally, she budges...

A LINE OF BLOOD RUNS DOWN GRACE'S CHIN.

Madeline looks down at her chest, checking herself with her hand. She winces. Examines her fingers - BLOOD.

Grace starts to snivel, reaching towards the wounded breast.

Madeline tries to guide her to her other breast.

Grace turns away, her whole body twisting toward the wounded breast, her blood speckled lips sucking at the air.

INT. NURSERY - DAWN

Madeline cries silently as she stares at the crib from the opposite side of the room.

In the crib, Grace drools happily in her sleep, her lips full and moist.

Beneath her chin, her saliva has stained the white sheets
PINK.

She rolls over, exposing her chest and side. The rash has receded almost completely.

The rising light of dawn climbs Madeline's chest, illuminating the BLOODSTAIN on her gown - It covers half of her chest.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

The defective wheels of a shopping cart spin and squeak across a supermarket floor.

Madeline pushes the cart. She is PALE.

Grace sleeps soundly in the sling on Madeline's chest. Her skin glows with health.

Madeline puts a large bottle of molasses in the cart, next to lentils, prunes and Cream of Wheat.

HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE AISLE - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline stands before a long row of natural medicines and vitamins.

She selects a bottle labeled, "IRON 4 LYFE," and places it in the cart next to a dozen different multivitamins and supplements.

MEAT SECTION - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline rounds an aisle and wheels the cart past a meat section.

CLERK (O.S.)
Kinder kills, cleaner cuts.

A CLERK at a promotional stand holds a bite sized cube of beef out to her on a toothpick.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Carl's Free Range Organic Cattle
give you kinder kills and cleaner
cuts.

On the stand is a picture of a single cow standing in a sun drenched, grassy bovine paradise.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Carl's cows are completely free of
antibiotics and synthetic growth
hormones.

Madeline slows the cart to a stop. Looks over at the hundreds of glistening, red steaks that line the shelves.

She picks up a roast. Pushes her finger against the shrink wrapping, forcing the blood trapped beneath into a corner of the package.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Madeline stands at the sink, pushing a blood speckled yellow rubber glove against the shrink wrapping around a large roast.

Blood drips steadily from a puncture in the plastic into a funnel in the neck of a baby bottle.

TWO DOZEN MORE MEAT PACKAGES litter the kitchen counter. The corners of each have been punctured, the meat inside drained of its juices.

Behind Madeline, Grace lets out a snivel from a high chair.

MADELINE

I know. Just another sec.

Madeline squeezes the final drops from the roast, filling the bottle. Removes the funnel and screws on a rubber nipple.

She stares at it, uncertain.

Grace offers the beginnings of a cry. Madeline removes her rubber gloves.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Alright. Here we go sweetie.

She sits down beside Grace. Brings the nipple to her lips.

Grace hesitates. Starts to suck. Slowly at first, then faster. The bottle begins to drain.

Madeline allows herself a breath of profound relief.

KITCHEN - LATER

Grace sleeps peacefully in the highchair.

Madeline, back in her rubber gloves, quietly loads the spent meat packages into a large trash bag.

Behind her, Grace's eyes begin to FLIT beneath their lids.

EXT. BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline drags the trash bag in her rubber gloved hands across browning grass to the compost heap.

She begins burying the meat, piece by piece, in the pile.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Beads of SWEAT form on Grace's FLUSHED brow.

Her body TENSES as all her muscles suddenly flex in spasm.

EXT. BACK YARD - SAME

Madeline pulls a heap of compost over the final piece of meat. She picks up the empty trash bag and starts back toward the house.

INT. SAAB - SAME

Patricia watches Madeline from inside the car.

EXT. BACK YARD - SAME

Madeline stops. Looks around the side of the house toward the street in front.

The Saab drives off. Madeline continues toward the house.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline reenters, removing her gloves. Looks up...

GRACE IS CONVULSING IN HER CHAIR.

MADELINE

Grace!

Madeline rushes to her, lifts her from the chair and cradles her to her chest.

Grace vomits a burst of blood down Madeline's back.

INT. NURSERY - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline paces anxiously, phone to her ear, cradling a barely conscious Grace to her chest.

The baby's half-closed eyes are glazed, her pale skin spotted with splotches of red. Madeline's blouse is soaked with the sweat pouring from Grace's skin.

MADELINE

(into phone)

Shelly, it's Madeline.... When will she be...? Please just have her call me as soon as she's back, it's an emergency.

She hangs up. She contemplates the phone. Dials:

9... 1...

She looks up at the mirror above the changing station.

She and Grace are both splattered with blood. She looks down.

Grace has opened her eyes. She leans weakly toward Madeline's breast, her lips PURSING. She lets out a tiny, desperate moan.

Madeline hangs up the phone.

She unbuttons her blouse.

INT. DR. SOHN'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Vivian enters an upscale waiting area. A wealthy looking pregnant couple sits in civilized silence.

She watches a SECRETARY nervously fielding a phone call.

SECRETARY

(into phone)

I'm sorry, you'll have to call back later, the doctor is with a patient. Yes sir. Thank you.

INT. DR. SOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Richard Sohn holds a nearly empty glass of milk.

A voice issues from a speakerphone on an expensive cherry desk.

VOICE (V.O.)

(from speakerphone)

I can't get another continuance, Richard.

Dr. Sohn remains silent, his face devoid of expression. He contemplates the lush, masculine office, its centerpiece, an empty gynecologist's chair. Dusty shafts of light creep in through closed blinds.

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Are you listening? If you're not there Thursday, they'll arrest you.

The phone beeps, another call.

Dr. Sohn moves to the desk and contemplates a blinking button on the phone labeled, "Front Desk".

DR. SOHN
I've got a patient.

He hits the blinking button, dropping the first caller.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
Yes?

SECRETARY (V.O.)
(from speakerphone)
A Mrs. Matheson is insisting on
seeing you.

Vivian is heard correcting the Secretary in the background.

SECRETARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
... Judge Matheson.

Dr. Sohn pauses.

DR. SOHN
Send her down.

INT. DR. SOHN'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Secretary gestures down a hallway. Hangs up the phone.

INT. DR. SOHN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Sohn hangs up the phone. He stands for a moment,
thinking. Fixes his hair. A knock.

He crosses and opens the door.

DR. SOHN
Your Honor.

VIVIAN
Hi, Richard.

She turns her cheek to him for a kiss. He obliges with moist
lips.

DR. SOHN
Come inside.

He motions her in.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
You look wonderful.

VIVIAN

Thanks.

She crosses to the window. Opens the blinds.

DR. SOHN

I didn't think you'd come. I'm so sorry about Mike.

VIVIAN

The woman he married. She's sick.

DR. SOHN

Does she need a referral, I can--

VIVIAN

She said the baby was dead after the accident. That she was carrying it to term anyway.

She shakes her head in disgust.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

After all we'd been through... We were going to say it was a still birth. I didn't hear from her so I called the birthing clinic about funeral arrangements and the assistant told me the baby was fine.

DR. SOHN

Who's her OB?

VIVIAN

A midwife delivered. This woman won't go to the hospital, she won't see a real doctor, she won't even answer the phone.

DR. SOHN

Have you called the police?

VIVIAN

I've seen this a thousand times. If I let the police file, that baby spends weeks in state care while youth services shuffles paperwork.

She crosses back to Sohn.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I don't want this woman raising my granddaughter.

(MORE)

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
 If I can get a medical report to
 confirm she isn't fit....

She places a hand on his arm. Sohn looks at her.

DR. SOHN
 And you take the baby.

VIVIAN
 My son is gone.

He stares back at her.

Picks up his milk from the desk. He looks down into the near
 empty glass.

DR. SOHN
 There might be something you can do
 for me, too.

He drinks the last sip, looks back up at her, a speckle of
 milk on his upper lip.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
 I got in a little trouble--

VIVIAN
 Shhh...

Vivian licks her thumb.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
 Just help me. Then I'll help you.

She reaches out and wipes his lip clean.

INT. NURSERY - DAY

Grace is asleep in Madeline's arms, smiling contently, her
 lips speckled with blood. The splotches are completely gone
 from her skin, now restored to a healthy shine.

FZZZZZZZZ!

Madeline awakens. The DOORBELL.

INT. FRONT HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline moves hastily down the stairs toward the front door,
 cradling Grace.

FZZZZZZZZ!

ON THE TELEVISION: a litter of kittens nurse along a mother cat's chest.

Madeline strokes Grace's hair ever so slightly, ignoring the phone. The answering machine picks up.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Hi, you've reached the Mathesons.
Before you know it, we're gonna
have a teenager on our hands, so
leave a message while you can still
get through.

The machine clicks off.

Madeline looks down at Grace. She hugs against Madeline's chest, no longer nursing, eyes heavy with sleep.

INT. NURSERY - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline gently lays a sleeping Grace down in the crib and pulls the mosquito netting over it.

As she rises, she pauses and looks at her hands. They're shaking. She wraps her arms around her body. Cold. Glances at the clock:

1:21 AM.

INT. MADELINE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Madeline twists under a heavy blanket, unable to sleep.

She sits up, shivering. She is wrapped in layers of Michael's warm clothes; the hood of a sweatshirt pokes from the collar of a heavy sweater.

She moves to her dresser. Suddenly light-headed, she leans against it. The spell passes but she continues to shiver. She pulls on another sweater.

GRACE'S CRIES suddenly ring from the baby monitor.

INT. NURSERY - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline rushes into the room, turning on the lights. She darts to Grace's crib. The mosquito netting has been ripped aside.

GRACE IS SPECKLED WITH BLOOD.

She scoops the baby into her arms, turns and sets her down at the changing station. She cleans her face with a baby wipe, desperately searching for the source of the bleeding.

Grace's face wipes clear, revealing no wounds. She wipes her body. Nothing.

Madeline looks back toward the crib. She lifts Grace and crosses to it. She reaches in and lifts up Grace's stuffed mouse...

She steps back, the stuffed mouse falling from her hand. It delivers its electronic message as it hits the floor.

STUFFED MOUSE

I like to hug with kitty!

A DEAD RAT sits in the crib, gored and disemboweled in Jonesy's trademark style.

Madeline looks up at the nursery window blowing open and closed in the wind. A good sized tree branch hangs a few feet from the window, reaching back to a large tree.

Below, SOMETHING MOVES in the shadows surrounding the house.

MADELINE

Jonesy...

Tears well in Madeline's eyes. She forces them back.

She reaches out and shuts the window.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline fills a teapot with water, holding the whimpering baby in her other arm.

MADELINE

Shhh.

She puts the pot on the stove and switches on the burner. Reaches to put the top on the teapot - her hand is shaking so much it clatters against the pot before sliding into place.

Grace stretches toward her breast, lets out a snivel. Madeline looks confused.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

You just ate, sweetheart.

Checks the clock:

3:32 AM.

She offers Grace a finger. Grace curls her own fingers around it - then pushes it away. She stretches back toward Madeline's breast.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Sweetie...

Grace is sucking at Madeline's shirt.

Madeline tries not to cry. She summons a smile for the baby.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Okay, honey. Mommy's thirsty, too.

Madeline inserts a tape into the TV, picks up the remote and sits at the kitchen table.

ON THE TELEVISION: the footage of the kittens nursing along their mother's chest, comes on.

Madeline calms, slightly. She lifts the layers of clothes covering her chest. Brings Grace to her breast.

The baby immediately begins to nurse, blood quickly visible around her lips.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
That's it.

As Madeline watches the television, her eyes start to close.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

A FAINT WHISTLING competes with a VOICE from the television.

Madeline's eyes open sluggishly, a layer of crust around them. She squints in the daylight, her skin ghost white.

VOICE FROM TELEVISION (V.O.)
The owner had no malicious intent,
this is just mental illness. If
you can't take care of yourself,
how can you take care of your
animals?

Madeline strains to focus on the television.

ON THE TELEVISION: a Veterinarian stands over an emaciated Doberman, tubes running from her body. Ribs show through her patchy black fur, a steady shiver running through her.

VET

(on television)

When Lucy came in, she had so many fleas they were literally sucking her dry. If she had stayed out there this fatigue and chill would get worse, and eventually the heart just wouldn't be able to keep up. For her to have a chance, even without the fleas, we've had to load her system with the vitamins she lost...

As the last of the water boils off in the teapot, the whistling fades into a faint hiss, revealing a SUCKING SOUND.

Madeline looks down...

GRACE IS STILL NURSING.

Grace's skin is so white, blue veins are visible underneath. Her chin and chest are COVERED IN CONGEALING BLOOD, where drops of her meal have escaped her lips over the last several hours of nursing.

Madeline lifts Grace from her chest, a layer of dry skin peeling from the baby's cracked lips and sticking to Madeline's flesh.

Grace's face twists into a hungry grimace and she begins to whimper, revealing gums that are almost completely white.

Weakly, Madeline lifts her to examine the rest of her body.

THE BABY'S STOMACH IS DISTENDED, LIKE A WATER FILLED BALLOON.

She stares into Madeline's eyes, terrified - her sniveling pauses...

MADELINE

Baby...

Grace's cloth diaper suddenly fills. And FLOODS.

Bloody stool runs down the baby's leg.

INT. NURSERY - LATER

In the crib, Grace tosses in feverish semi-consciousness, her body covered in sweat.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Madeline sits slumped against the wall, struggling not to cry. Her hand shakes so badly holding the phone to her ear that she uses the other hand to steady it.

MADELINE
 (into the phone)
 I need to talk to Patricia...

She fights not to break down.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
 Please, Shelly...

INT. NATUREBIRTH - FLOWER HALL - SAME

Shelly stands with a portable phone to her ear.

SHELLY
 She's still not in, Madeline. I
 can take another message... I'm
 sure she got your voicemail, too...
 No, she hates cell phones.

She listens, but writes nothing.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
 Right... I'll see if she can stop
 by... Have you thought more about
 going to the hospital? If there's
 something wrong... Okay, fine,
 I'll let her know.

She hangs up.

Patricia walks into the flower hall. She looks like she hasn't been sleeping.

PATRICIA
 Who was that?

SHELLY
 Trailer guy.

Patricia looks disappointed.

PATRICIA
 It's a Motor home.

Shelly nods. Takes in Patricia's condition.

SHELLY

She's not going to call.

Patricia turns and leaves the room.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - SAME

Madeline clutches her knees to her chest and rocks back and forth.

Behind her, Grace snivels feebly in her sleep from the nursery.

Tears slide from Madeline's tired eyes. She lets the phone slide from her hand.

INT. VIVIAN'S AND HENRY'S HOUSE - MICHAEL'S ROOM - DAY

Vivian holds the phone to her ear.

VIVIAN

I told you, if I make a criminal complaint, the baby will rot in foster care for weeks.

INT. DR. SOHN'S OFFICE - SAME

Dr. Sohn listens to Vivian on speakerphone.

VIVIAN (V.O.)

(continuing)

But I'm not leaving her with that woman another night.

Dr. Sohn opens his door a crack and peers down the hall. Two DETECTIVES stand at the front desk questioning his Secretary. He closes the door.

VIVIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Richard?

DR. SOHN

Give me till this evening.

INT. VIVIAN'S AND HENRY'S HOUSE - MICHAEL'S ROOM - SAME

Vivian hangs up the phone. She is sitting cross legged on the floor with a cardboard box in her lap. She blows a layer of dust off the top. Opens it and removes a coiled plastic tube...

SHE IS SURROUNDED ON ALL SIDES BY HUNDREDS OF BABY PICTURES.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The blinds have been pulled over the kitchen window and taped crudely in place to seal off the light from outside.

Madeline, her skin pale and dry, her breathing abnormally rapid, dumps two vitamins onto Shelly's cookbook, opened on the counter.

The words beneath the vitamins read, "Anemia Flush Fun Frappe".

She scrapes the pills into her other hand, already filled with a dozen different vitamins.

Drops them all into a blender on top of prunes, lentils and what looks like molasses. Her hand is shaking badly, but she manages to fit the cover onto the machine and hit "Puree".

The vitamins grate and grind into the rest of the contents, forming a brown sludge. Her finger is so unsteady, she can't hit the stop button. She holds her wrist and tries again.

Barely holding back tears, she hits her mark and the machine winds down...

FZZZZZZZ. - The doorbell.

FRONT HALL

Madeline crosses to the door, hope rising on her gaunt face.

MADELINE

Patricia?

She opens the door, squinting in the sun.

Dr. Sohn stands before her, doctor's bag in hand. His smile wavers as he takes in her condition.

DR. SOHN

Mrs. Matheson...

She breaks down.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)

Shh, you're alright.

FRONT HALL

Sohn moves inside, putting an arm around Madeline and shutting the door behind him. Madeline tries to pull herself together, speaking between sobs.

MADELINE

I'm - sick.

DR. SOHN

It's okay, I'm here to help.

He guides her into the

KITCHEN

Helps her into a chair, kneeling before her.

MADELINE

We're not - going - to the hospital.

DR. SOHN

Shh, it's okay. I can't help you unless I know what's going on.

Madeline manages to compose herself, slightly.

MADELINE

I'm so cold.

He observes her layers of clothes.

DR. SOHN

Can you open your mouth for me?

She does.

Sohn slides a finger slowly across her gums. They are colorless, like Grace's.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)

You're badly anemic. We're going to have to do a proper exam.

MADELINE

What kind of exam?

DR. SOHN

This is a serious condition, but it can probably be treated with a little time and proper nourishment.

(MORE)

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)

It could be as simple as feeding the baby formula for a little bit so your body can recoup, but I need to do a proper examination to confirm the extent of the condition.

Dr. Sohn's eyes move to her chest - he pulls them away.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)

It can be slightly intrusive. Maybe you'd be better just getting the child and coming to the hospital.

MADELINE

No. Please. I don't care if it's intrusive.

Sohn stares at her.

INT. VIVIAN'S AND HENRY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Vivian stands in a robe, staring in the mirror.

One of her hands flexes repeatedly just off screen.

An empty plastic bottle sits on the sink. The plastic tube Vivian took from the cardboard box rises from the top and winds up toward her chest.

Her hand flexes in rhythm around a small hand pump.

MILK dribbles into the bottle.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Dr. Sohn sets his bag on a fresh, white tablecloth. Fastens a stethoscope around his neck.

Madeline sits at the table, drinking the anti-anemia frappe from her World's Greatest Mother mug.

She shivers as she watches Sohn remove the coiled tube along with several other plastic components, setting each on the table. He sees her shaking.

DR. SOHN

If you're too cold to disrobe, we can--

MADELINE

No. I'm alright.

Dr. Sohn watches, nervously, as Madeline peels off a sweater, then another, then a sweatshirt, leaving her in nothing but a thin tank top. She shivers badly.

Sohn looks away. He pulls on a pair of latex gloves.

DR. SOHN

Would you stand, please?

She does. He moves around behind her, inserting the eartips of the stethoscope. Raises her shirt, exposing her naked back. He places the stethoscope's diaphragm against her white skin. Closes his eyes.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)

Nice and deep for me.

She takes a breath. He moves the stethoscope down her back and sets it in another spot.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)

Once more.

She breathes again. He takes off the stethoscope and moves to the table. Attaches a needle to a plastic catheter. He nods to her chest, her arms across it for warmth.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna need one of those.

Madeline unfolds an arm. Dr. Sohn ties her off with a rubber tourniquet. Gently massages a vein to the surface.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna stick you. Are you ready?

She nods. He slides the needle into her vein. Fastens the sample jar to the other end of the catheter.

Blood immediately moves into the jar. In a moment it's full. He removes it and sets it on the tablecloth. Removes the needle.

MADELINE

That's it?

He applies a small Band Aid to the insertion point, nodding. As he smooths the Band Aid against her flesh, his eyes drift back toward her chest.

DR. SOHN
Just one more.

He turns back to his doctor's bag. Removes a coil of rubber tubing.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I should have explained this to you, before. I need a sample of your breast milk.

Madeline looks alarmed. Sohn removes a brass hand pump from his bag.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
To make sure the baby's getting what she needs.

He connects the pump to the tube.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
The newer models are less cumbersome, but these old brass units provide a much more natural suction.

Madeline looks down at her chest.

MADELINE
One of them is... sore.

DR. SOHN
All I need is one.

He attaches a tarnished metal cup to the other end of the tube.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
I know the pewter looks archaic but the leather seals are much gentler than plastic flanges.

He removes a stained cherry box from his bag. Opens it and takes out a large glass collection jar.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
The jars were bigger because with such a precision instrument your supply would be triple. This is the original blown glass.

He attaches the jar to a valve in the middle of the tube. He considers it. Offers it to her.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
Why don't you hold this. I need
both hands.

She takes it. He offers her the pewter breast cup. She
hesitates.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
It's okay to turn around.

Slowly, she turns her back to him. She reaches back and
accepts the flange.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
Whenever you're ready.

Madeline lifts her shirt, delicately. Her wounded breast is
covered by a small bandage.

She connects the flange to her uninjured breast. Nods.

Sohn begins deftly squeezing the hand pump.

Milk begins to flow down the tube, through the pump and back
out to the collection jar in Madeline's hand. Sohn stares at
liquid running through the tube.

DR. SOHN (CONT'D)
Just tell me if the pressure is too
much. The newer models have a more
rapid cycling time, but--

MADELINE
It's okay.

DROPS OF MILK begin to escape from beneath the seal of the
hand pump.

Madeline stares down through glazed eyes, watching her milk
run through the tube into the glass jar.

Sohn watches a line of milk drip down his hand, beads of
sweat along his brow.

A hoarse CRY crackles from the audio baby monitor behind him.
He turns to it.

DR. SOHN
Is she sick?

Madeline closes her eyes. Ignores Grace's crying.

MADELINE
She's just cranky.

Grace continues.

DR. SOHN
Maybe I should get a look at her.

MADELINE
No. I'm trying to let her learn to sleep on her own. Crying's good for her lungs.

DR. SOHN
Did a midwife tell you that?

MADELINE
Please, just get what you need.

Grace lets out another groan.

DR. SOHN
That baby's sick.

MADELINE
She's just got a little bit of a cough.

DR. SOHN
Where is she?

MADELINE
She's fine, just let her sleep.

Sohn disconnects the hand pump, puts it down and starts toward the front hall.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
No, please.

Madeline disconnects the flange, letting her shirt fall back over her breast.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Don't go.

Sohn's eyes drift to a milk stain forming on her shirt.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Don't leave me.

Another broken cry comes from the monitor. Sohn pulls his eyes from Madeline and moves toward the hall.

Madeline moves after him.

FRONT HALL

Sohn moves toward the stairs, following the sound of Grace's cries. Madeline moves after him.

MADELINE

Please!

He pulls out his cell phone and dials as he starts up.

STAIRWAY

Madeline moves up behind him.

MADELINE

Please, stop!

He continues toward the second floor, phone to his ear.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

You don't understand!

Sohn approaches the top of the stairs. Tears stream down Madeline's face.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Don't do this!

Sohn's call goes through as he reaches the upstairs hallway.

DR. SOHN

Vivian, it's Richard--

CRASH. - MILK AND BLOOD POUR DOWN SOHN'S FACE AS MADELINE BREAKS THE COLLECTION JAR OVER HIS HEAD WITH A WEAK BLOW.

Madeline backs down the stairs behind him.

Sohn wobbles unsteadily on the top step.

His cell phone drops from his hand and falls off the side of the stairs as he falls forward into the upstairs hallway.

His head crashes into a metal table, twisting his neck grotesquely, before he slams face first into the hardwood floor.

Madeline stares at his fallen body, the broken collection jar in her hand. Down the hall, Grace lets out another cry. Madeline steps over Sohn and runs to the nursery.

INT. VIVIAN'S AND HENRY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vivian enters from her adjoining bathroom, buttoning her blouse.

On her vanity, her cell phone blinks red:

"ONE NEW VOICEMAIL - Sohn, Richard".

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

Madeline holds Grace in her arms.

MADELINE

Shhh...

She strokes Grace's hair, calming the baby.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

No one's taking you away.

INT. VIVIAN'S AND HENRY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vivian hangs up her phone, frustrated.

Behind her, the sound of HAMMERING.

VIVIAN

Henry, I can't hear myself think!

Henry kneels before a half built CRIB, hammer in hand, the wall behind him shining with a fresh coat of pink paint.

HENRY

Did you get Richard?

Vivian rises, grabs her phone and purse and starts from the room. Henry starts after her.

VIVIAN

Please. Just finish the crib.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Madeline stands with Grace in her arms, looking down.

Sohn lies face down before her. His milk covered head is a mess of matted hair and broken flesh.

Dark red blood runs in gentle rivulets from the wound forming a small pool around his head.

Madeline sinks to a crouch beside him. She reaches out toward his face. Touches his cheek.

He doesn't move. She reaches out again. Turns his head to face her--

A MIST OF BLOOD SPRAYS FROM SOHN'S CRUSHED NOSE COATING MADELINE'S HAND.

She falls back, shielding Grace instinctively. Sohn's glazed, dead eyes stare past them into infinity.

Grace stops crying.

A soft, moist lapping sound is heard. Madeline turns...

GRACE IS SUCKING ON MADELINE'S BLOOD COVERED HAND.

Madeline wipes away tears as she watches her daughter feeding on the dead man's blood.

Madeline turns back to Sohn's corpse.

A resigned determination cools her features.

INT. NATUREBIRTH - MIDWIFE'S EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

Patricia sits with her hand on her lower drawer.

Her thumb strokes the well worn handle.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Grace's hungry cries crackle from the monitor.

An intermittent DRAGGING sound punctuates the baby's moans.

On the counter next to the monitor, the blender sits almost empty, only a small amount of the mud-like anti-anemia drink left inside.

INT. NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

Grace cries weakly in the dark crib.

The DRAGGING sound continues from the hall outside.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The World's Greatest Mother mug sits empty on the floor, coated with the brown residue of the anti-anemia drink.

Madeline holds onto Sohn's wrists and leans all her weight backwards. His body slides several difficult inches along the floor of the dark hallway, the source of the dragging sound.

A veil of sweat lines Madeline's brow, but some color has returned to her skin.

Again, she leans all her weight back and drags Sohn's body another foot towards the bathroom.

In her back pockets are a pair of EMPTY BABY BOTTLES.

INT. NATUREBIRTH - MIDWIFE'S EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

Patricia slides open the lower drawer. Stares into it. She pulls out a dusty bottle of gin.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT

Madeline roots through a drawer beneath the sink, breathing hard. Sohn's body lies face down beside the tub behind her.

She finds what she's looking for.

Grace's cries crackle from the baby monitor beside the sink, weaker now. Next to it, one of the empty baby bottles.

With renewed determination, Madeline picks up the bottle and kneels before the body.

With some effort, she lifts one of Sohn's arms and lays it across her lap. She unbuttons his sleeve and rolls it back, exposing the flesh beneath.

Behind her, Grace lets out another hungry cry. Madeline lifts the object she removed from the drawer.

SCISSORS. Fighting back tears, she levels them against Sohn's flesh with a shaking hand. Cuts him.

A tiny stream of blood dribbles out unimpressively.

Tears escape from Madeline's eyes and run down her cheeks.

Grace's cries swell from the monitor.

Madeline repositions a hand around Sohn's arm, grasping his wrist. Closes her eyes.

She sinks the scissors into his flesh, unleashing a CRIMSON STREAM.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

A figure moves through the shadows.

JONESY.

He stares up at the house from the darkness. Lets out a mournful, broken moan.

EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - NIGHT

Vivian's Mercedes speeds through the night.

INSIDE THE MERCEDES

She drives with the phone to her ear, once again.

VIVIAN

Richard, call me back. I'm going over there.

She hangs up. Accelerates.

INT. NATUREBIRTH - MIDWIFE'S EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

Patricia unscrews the cap on the gin bottle.

Smells the booze inside.

She closes the bottle and returns it to the drawer. She picks up the "Want-Ads", the motor home circled.

KNOCK-KNOCK - someone at the door.

SHELLY (O.S.)

I'm heading out. Do you need anything?

PATRCIA

No. Thanks Shelly.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT

Madeline sits with Sohn's arm across her lap, the bottle in her hand, tears running down her cheeks.

Grace's cries continue from the monitor behind her, weaker now.

Madeline holds back a retch as she watches blood flow down Sohn's wrist, off his finger, and into the bottle, now halfway full.

Tears hang from her chin, drip into her lap.

INT. NATUREBIRTH - MIDWIFE'S EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

Patricia stands over her desk with the phone to her ear, looking at the "Want-Ads" magazine.

PATRICIA

Is this Cory? Hi, it's Patricia Lang about the motor home. Sorry it took so long to get back. I wanted to go ahead and move forward.

She listens.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

I thought you left a message with Shelly... Shelly, my assistant... No, that's perfect, I'm sure we just got our lines crossed. See you then.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT

Madeline fights back her tears as she watches the blood flow into the bottle, two-thirds full.

From the monitor behind her, Grace's cries have grown still weaker, her voice more hoarse.

Madeline lifts Sohn's arm higher to hasten the blood flow--

FZZZZZ - The doorbell. Madeline looks toward the sound.

EXT. MATHESON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Vivian stands at the front door. She rings the doorbell again.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

FZZZZZ.

Madeline turns from the sound to the monitor, Grace's cries continuing to fade.

She turns back to Sohn, grips his bicep and runs her hand down his upper arm, forcing a surge of blood from the wound.

EXT. MATHESON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Vivian knocks on the door. It's open.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Grace's cries are hardly audible from the monitor.

A final surge of blood runs off Sohn's finger and into the bottle. Full.

Madeline drops Sohn's arm and rises. As she stands, she realizes Sohn's blood is running steadily from his arm and forming a puddle on the floor.

She runs a hand over the other empty bottle still in her back pocket. Kneels quickly, and reaches a hand under Sohn's waist.

INT. FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Vivian moves into the house. Locks the door. She scans the area. Looks toward the kitchen.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madeline slides Sohn's belt from his pants, and loops it through itself.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Vivian takes in the room. All signs of Sohn's presence are gone.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The haphazardly coiled breast pump tube protrudes from Sohn's bag on the floor behind Madeline as she pulls the belt tight around his arm.

Grace's cries have stopped, nothing but a faint, broken wheeze audible.

Madeline picks up the full bottle and hurries into the hall.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Madeline rushes toward the nursery. Vivian calls up from the bottom of the stairs.

VIVIAN (O.S.)
Madeline?

Madeline stops.

VIVIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Are you home?

She looks down at the bottle in her blood covered hands. Toward the nursery.

VIVIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The door was open.

Vivian's footsteps begin to ascend the stairs.

MADELINE
I'm just feeding the baby.

The footsteps stop.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
Make yourself some tea, I'll be right down.

Madeline stands listening.

INT. STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Vivian absorbs Madeline's tone.

VIVIAN
Do you want anything?

MADELINE (O.S.)
I'm fine.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Madeline listens for a long moment.

VIVIAN (O.S.)

Okay.

Vivian's footsteps move back down the stairs. Madeline hurries toward the nursery.

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

Madeline enters, moves to the crib and lifts Grace into the her arms. The baby is weak and pale and hardly conscious, her skin dry and cracked.

Madeline lowers the bottle to her lips.

MADELINE

Come on, honey.

The rubber nipple rouses her slightly.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Please.

She sucks weakly. Starts to snivel.

Madeline checks the bottle.

It's clogged.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Vivian turns on the stove beneath Madeline's teapot. She peers around the kitchen again. Crosses to the baby monitor.

She examines the blender beside it. Runs a finger through the residue of the brown frappe drying inside.

INT. NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

Grace looks up through glazed, half closed eyes as Madeline braces the open bottle on the lip of the crib, above.

Madeline probes the inside of the cap, clearing a lump of congealed blood from within--

The bottle SLIPS from her shaking hands.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Vivian cocks her head as a wet THUMP is heard from the monitor.

INT. NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

Madeline forces back tears as she kneels before the pool of blood absorbing into the rug below.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline hurries toward the upstairs bathroom, pulling the second, still empty bottle from her back pocket.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline enters, unscrewing the cap from the bottle...

The belt has slipped from Sohn's arm and his wound has continued to bleed, forming a huge puddle over most of the bathroom floor.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Vivian leans into the baby monitor, listening. Turns the volume louder.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madeline tries not to step in the blood as she hoists Sohn's arm up. The wound lets out the tiniest trickle.

He's bled out.

She drops to her knees in the puddle and runs the lip of the bottle over the floor, trying to scoop up the blood. It doesn't work.

She looks around the bathroom. Grabs one of Grace's natural sponges from the sink and runs it through the puddle.

FOOTSTEPS mount the stairs, below.

She squeezes the sponge out above the bottle, but most of the blood runs down the sides and over her fingers.

Vivian calls up in a loud whisper.

VIVIAN (O.S.)
Madeline?

MADELINE
Yup!

VIVIAN (O.S.)
Everything alright?

The footsteps continue up the stairs.

Madeline drops Sohn's arm and rises, catching her reflection in the mirror.

Her clothes are spattered with blood, her hands and knees soaked.

The footsteps continue up.

She turns on the sink and begins frantically scrubbing her hands.

INT. STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Vivian slows, listening curiously to the water from the sink. She continues up.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madeline pulls the drawstring of her pants and lets them fall around her ankles as she peels off her blood spattered shirt.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Vivian reaches the top of the stairs. Looks down the dark hall. The bathroom door is slightly ajar, a light on inside.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT

Madeline stands in her underwear, frantically scanning the room.

Footsteps approach in the hallway outside.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Vivian moves toward the bathroom, angling her head for a look inside--

Madeline steps out wearing Michael's robe. Vivian stops, momentarily thrown by the reminder of her son.

Madeline takes the opportunity to close the door behind her. Vivian tries to make out Madeline's condition in the darkness of the hall.

VIVIAN

Sorry, I--

Madeline holds a finger to her lips for quiet and gestures toward the nursery.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Can I just get a peak?

Downstairs, the TEAPOT WHISTLES.

Madeline ushers Vivian quickly back toward the stairs.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline follows Vivian into the room and removes the teapot from the stove.

MADELINE

What are you doing here?

In the light of the kitchen, Madeline's condition is clear.

VIVIAN

I was worried. Jesus, Madeline, you look terrible.

MADELINE

I haven't been getting a lot of sleep.

Vivian glances at the teapot in Madeline's shaking hands.

VIVIAN

Could I have some tea?

Madeline puts down the pot.

MADELINE

I ran out.

Vivian holds her look.

VIVIAN

When was the last time you saw a doctor?

MADELINE

Today. I'm fine, really. They did some blood tests, told me to use formula for a few days, that's all. I'm just tired.

VIVIAN

Richard Sohn didn't stop by, did he?

She watches Madeline carefully.

MADELINE

No. You asked him to check on me?

VIVIAN

I'm... I got worried. You weren't picking up the phone. I wanted to make sure everything was alright. God, Madeline, you really look--

MADELINE

Can we do this another time?

Vivian pauses.

VIVIAN

Couldn't I just have a quick look at her?

MADELINE

She's had a tough day, I just want to let her sleep. Tomorrow, okay?

VIVIAN

Is she sick?

MADELINE

Vivian, really. Tomorrow.

Again, Madeline holds her look. Vivian nods.

INT. FRONT HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline follows Vivian toward the door. Vivian sees SOHN'S CELL PHONE lying broken on the floor.

VIVIAN

I'm gonna run into the loo before I go.

Madeline hesitates. Nods.

She watches Vivian move down the hall. When she's halfway to the bathroom, Madeline ducks back into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Madeline quickly crosses to the baby monitor.

INT. NATUREBIRTH - MIDWIFE'S EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

Patricia paces with the phone to her ear.

PATRICIA

...Hello? I'm trying to recall some voicemails I erased from my box, can you help me with that?

INT. MATHESON HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Madeline listens closely to the monitor. Nothing--

She turns quickly, glances over her shoulder into the hallway. Nothing there.

She turns up the volume.

Grace's faint breathing crackles from the speaker, slow and weak, barely audible.

She rises and moves back into the hall.

INT. FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Madeline anxiously watches the bathroom door. Looks up toward the nursery.

Back to the door.

INT. NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

A shadow passes across the moonlit wall.

Vivian. She pauses to take in the fly paper hanging above her.

She continues to the crib.

The rug beneath her gives like a wet sponge. She looks down. Squints at the dark stain on the carpet.

She looks up at the crib. Sees the mosquito netting. Disgusted, she peels it back.

Even in the dark, Grace's condition is clearly dire. Her breathing is slow and labored, her glazed eyes half closed.

Vivian's eyes find Madeline's baby sling on the counter by the crib.

INT. FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Madeline's patience slips. She starts down the hall toward the downstairs bathroom.

INT. NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

Vivian tightens the sling on her chest. She starts back toward Grace...

JONESY LASHES OUT A CLAW from beneath the crib and lets out a hiss. He crawls out and stalks protectively between Vivian and the baby emitting a guttural growl.

Vivian scans the room. Sees Madeline's HAMMER.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline knocks on the downstairs bathroom door.

MADELINE

Vivian...?

She turns as a muffled FELINE YELP is heard from above. A moment later Jonesy darts across the hall into the kitchen.

Madeline turns back and swings open the bathroom door. Empty. She spins and runs toward the stairs.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Vivian!

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Vivian, Grace strapped to her chest, stops halfway down the hall.

She backs into the upstairs bathroom.

Madeline emerges at the top of the stairs, runs straight for the nursery.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vivian steps back as Madeline rushes past - her foot hits something...

INT. NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

Madeline enters, running straight to the crib. PANIC floods her face...

MADELINE

Grace!

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vivian stares down at Sohn's corpse.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline rushes from the nursery.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vivian hears Madeline running down the hall, pulls the hammer from her purse and steps back into the shower.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Madeline passes the bathroom and turns onto the

STAIRWAY

MADELINE

Vivian!

She rushes down the stairs.

FRONT HALL

She runs to the kitchen. Empty.

Turns and runs down the hall to the downstairs bathroom.
Empty.

She looks back up the stairs. Moves back onto the

STAIRWAY

Rushes back up.

MADELINE

VIVIAN!

She turns into the

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

She pauses. The bathroom door is slightly ajar.

She moves toward it. Slowly opens it wider.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madeline moves slowly into the room. She steps past Sohn's
body. Peers around the corner of the shower...

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Vivian emerges from the cat closet and disappears down the
stairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Madeline sees bloody footprints in the shower, along with
Vivian's shoes.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Madeline bursts from the bathroom and sprints toward the
stairs. She reaches the top...

Vivian is two-thirds of the way down.

MADELINE

Wait!

Vivian turns, Grace lying half conscious in the sling. She
holds the hammer out before her.

VIVIAN
Get away from us.

MADELINE
Please, you don't understand.

Vivian backs down the stairs.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
She's special. Please. She
needs... special food.

VIVIAN
You're sick.

Madeline starts down the stairs.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
Get back!

Vivian raises the hammer.

MADELINE
Please.

Madeline continues down.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
You'll kill her.

Vivian takes another step back, and moves onto the first
floor.

Madeline gauges the distance between she and Vivian. Between
Vivian and Grace.

FZZZZZZZZ - The doorbell.

Madeline lunges at Vivian - who slams the hammer into her
ribs. Madeline lets out a groan as she buckles over in pain.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Patricia, standing at the front door, hears Madeline inside.

PATRICIA
Madeline!?

INT. FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Madeline clutches her side. Vivian stares at her, in shock
over Madeline's assault.

MADELINE

Please - just let her go.

Behind Vivian, Patricia calls again through the door.

PATRICIA (O.S.)

Maddy!

Vivian turns for just a moment. Madeline charges again - Vivian quickly turns back, blindly swinging the hammer RIGHT INTO MADELINE'S TEMPLE.

The force of the blow sends Madeline twisting to the floor.

EXT. MATHESON HOUSE - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Patricia moves toward the back door.

INT. FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tears run down Vivian's cheeks as she stares down at Madeline's body.

VIVIAN

Madeline?

Madeline doesn't move at all. The hammer slides from Vivian's hand.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

EXT. MATHESON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Patricia slams her body into the flimsy back door. It's hinges give, but it holds firm.

INT. FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Vivian straddles Madeline's body, kneeling down over her. Leans an ear to her face to check for breathing.

VIVIAN

Oh Jesus, please wake up!

She grabs Madeline's face and tries to jostle her to consciousness.

Grace's limp arm drops from the sling.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry!

Vivian leans down again to check Madeline's breath. Grace's little hand brushes against Madeline's chest.

Madeline's eyes open - SHE BITES INTO VIVIAN'S NECK.

Vivian tries to pry herself loose, but Madeline reaches up and clutches the back of her head.

Vivian reaches for the hammer. Madeline clamps her teeth harder, blood running faster down her chin.

Vivian's hand curls around the hammer...

SHE SLAMS THE CLAW END INTO MADELINE'S HEAD.

Madeline's jaw CLENCHES - then releases. She drops from Vivian's neck and falls to the floor.

Vivian sits back, clutching her neck as a single spasm twists through Madeline's body. She is still.

Blood flows steadily from a deep double gash over Madeline's temple, pooling on the floor around her head.

A crash is heard from the kitchen as Patricia slams against the back door.

Vivian takes her hand from her neck. Blood is hemorrhaging from her throat.

Grace is roused to slight consciousness by the scent of the blood cascading down her chest.

Vivian slides from Madeline to the floor. She slumps back against the wall.

Another crash is heard from the kitchen, accompanied by the sound of splintering wood.

Vivian's body falls limp against the wall, her glazed eyes frozen in her colorless face.

Patricia emerges from the kitchen into the hall. She looks in horror at the scene before her. She rushes to Madeline and drops to her knees beside her.

PATRICIA

Madeline!

She takes her head in her hands.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Maddy!

On Vivian's chest, Grace snivels weakly as blood continues to flow past above her, just out of reach.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

A WELL NOURISHED COW grazes happily on a patch of beautiful green grass.

A fence separates it from a stretch of two lane blacktop, shimmering in the midday heat.

On either side of the baking road, cracked desert plains stretch into the distance until they're swallowed by the wavering glow.

A VEHICLE bleeds into view on the deep horizon.

A MOTOR HOME.

INT. MOTOR HOME - DAY

Patricia sits behind the wheel, her hair hidden beneath a red bandana. The road before her is reflected in a pair of sunglasses.

She regards the lone cow as the vehicle speeds past.

A cat sits in the empty passenger seat. JONESY.

PATRICIA

Hey fatso.

He watches the road through the windshield. Curls into a fetal position, revealing a large belly and purring contently as he bathes in the sun.

Up ahead, a rest stop diner becomes visible.

EXT. REST STOP DINER - PARKING LOT

The motor home rolls smoothly into a mostly empty lot.

INT. MOTOR HOME

Patricia turns off the engine. She looks at Jonesy, snoozing in the passenger seat.

PATRICIA
Dinner time, baby.

Jonesy hops off the seat and moves below a curtain, farther back into the vehicle.

Patricia takes off her sunglasses and removes her bandana, revealing bleached blonde hair, cropped close to her scalp. She rises and follows Jonesy.

KITCHEN

Jonesy rubs his chin on Patricia's leg as she takes a can of wet food labeled, "Mighty Meat!" from a cabinet.

She places it on an automatic can opener and watches the blade slice into it.

She pulls the can from the device, peels off the top and scoops the chunky, wet beef into a bowl. Places it on the floor for Jonesy.

He digs into it, taking greedy little bites.

She moves further back into the vehicle, pushing another curtain aside.

SLEEPING QUARTERS

Shafts of desert sunlight pierce the tinfoil coverings partially baked from a small window.

Patricia enters. She smiles.

PATRICIA
So quiet back here.

MADELINE

smiles back awkwardly from a foldout cot, her hair cut short and dyed red, a double scar above her temple.

In her arms is a radiant looking, FIVE MONTH-OLD GRACE.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Hi sweetheart!

Grace grins back.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
She looks fantastic! She finally
had something to eat?

Madeline nods, offering a strained smile.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
I told you everything tested
healthy, it's all about maintaining
your diet. If we keep your blood
count up, we can do this!

Patricia smiles at Madeline, triumphantly, kneeling down
before her to stroke Grace's face.

She looks down at the floor, her smile fading. She looks
back up, taking in Madeline's condition:

She is PALE. A layer of SWEAT beads on her forehead.

Her black tank top is WET.

MADELINE
There's something else.

Madeline lifts her shirt. A large, blood soaked bandage
covers her breast.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
She needs more, now.

As she lifts the bandage, a curtain of blood runs down her
stomach.

PATRICIA'S FACE GOES WHITE WITH ABJECT TERROR.

MADELINE (CONT'D)
She's teething.

CUT TO BLACK.

In the darkness, a baby starts to CRY.

FADE OUT.

THE END.