

IN BETWEEN

a pilot

by

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IN BETWEEN

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. MAIN STREET - BETWEEN, GA - EARLY MORNING

This is a very small town.

A WOMAN (EMMA, 30) stands on one side of a CROSSWALK. She surveys the empty street as she sips coffee from a huge MUG with "ADAMS AND SON - ATTORNEYS AT LAW" stamped on the side.

Between's lone STOPLIGHT turns RED. The SIGN flashes "WALK", but Emma waits a bit before she does so. It appears she's quietly COUNTING to herself.

EMMA (V.O.)

The town of "Between", named in the most un-ironic and unimaginative way possible, lies halfway between the bustling metropolises - "metropoli?" - of Monroe and Loganville in the southern bucket of humidified peaches that is the state of Georgia.

Emma finally crosses, passing a sign that says "WELCOME TO BETWEEN - POP. 296." She gets in a CAR parked on the side of the road, and pulls out onto the empty street.

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

If you were to look at Between on a map you would notice that it bears an uncanny resemblance to a rhinoceros doing a sit-up.

She STOPS at a stop sign, as a TRIO of ELDERLY LADIES (sporting matching BLUE HATS adorned with REFLECTIVE SAFETY STICKERS) awkwardly speedwalks through the intersection. One of them (MYRTLE, 70) smiles and WAVES at Emma.

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

On its Facebook page for "Arts and Entertainment", there are no entries.

Emma passes a sign: "THANKS FOR SPENDING TIME IN BETWEEN."

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

And Between's tourism site proudly boasts there are no registered sex offenders.

(MORE)

EMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Kind of like when a man I dated
 bragged that he "never hit a woman."
 You wish it was a given - but good
 to know, nonetheless.

EXT. HIGHWAY GA-138 W - A LITTLE LATER

Emma drives on the relatively empty freeway.

EMMA (V.O.)
 But that's not where my story begins.

EXT. HIGHWAY I-20 W - A LITTLE LATER

The traffic intensifies, as the city of ATLANTA looms ahead.

EMMA (V.O.)
 It started one month ago today, right
 there in Atlanta, Georgia. The city
 where I spent my formative years.

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL - PARKING STRUCTURE - LATER

Emma PARKS her car and approaches a BANK OF ELEVATORS. She whips out her iPhone and takes a picture of a DRAWING of a PISSED OFF LOOKING DOVE. "EMORY MEDICAL CENTER PARKING" is printed on a flouncy ribbon in the dove's mouth.

EMMA (V.O.)
 After a while, parking spots tend to
 blend. "Dove" is damn good. I'm
 usually up on "Egret."

She steps on the elevator, and silently stands next to a man in a FULL UPPER BODY CAST -- on it, a bumper sticker reads "MY MUD BOGGER RAN OVER YOUR HONOR STUDENT."

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL - FRONT HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

As she walks down the MAIN HALL, Emma quickly narrates all of the following exactly one second before it happens:

EMMA (V.O.)
 Dr. Hall and his gaggle of
 Neurosurgery Residents...

A TALL DOCTOR rushes by, followed by FOUR SMALLER RESIDENTS.

EMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Susie Maylor turns the world on with
 her smile...

SUSIE (65, African American) is sitting behind her greeting desk and does, indeed, SMILE.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Nurse Jackson takes one in for the cut.

A NURSE pushes a patient on a gurney.

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

And Lawrence provides two-ply damage control.

A LARGE MAN tosses her some tissues, which she catches without looking -- as she turns into a door that says "ICU - 3G."

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL - CHRISTOPHER'S ROOM - SAME TIME

She enters. There lies a MAN (CHRISTOPHER, Emma's brother, 33), hooked up to a multi-branched tree of medications.

EMMA (V.O.)

That's my big brother. He's been in a coma for the last thirty days after an aneurysm burst. He then went "Status Epilepticus" and was diagnosed with "Hydroencephalus." I know they're both serious, but they conjure up images of a cage match between a dinosaur on Sesame Street and a lesser known Greek water-god.

Emma grabs a YELLOW GOWN and GLOVES hanging on the door.

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

Adding to the fun, Chris picked up a stomach virus that's apparently crazy contagious, so we all have to "yellow up" when we see him.

She gently pushes a lock of hair out of his eyes with her now yellow-gloved hand.

EMMA (CONT'D)

(to Christopher)

I look like a giant Easter Peep.

She signals a NURSE from the hall and shows him an empty IV.

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

Unbeknownst to me, right after our parents died, Christopher made me his Power of Attorney. Apparently, his functioning alcoholic wife with Narcissistic Personality Disorder rated lower than his estranged psychiatrist baby sister with commitment issues.

(MORE)

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

(then)

It should be noted that my brother never liked me that much growing up. But he watched over me anyway.

EXT. EMMA'S CHILDHOOD HOME - 24 YEARS AGO

A six year old Emma and nine year old Christopher are arguing. (NOTE: We can also hear their parents YELLING at each other in the next room.) Christopher's FRIEND watches the action.

CHRISTOPHER

You can't play with us. You're a baby and you're only a girl.

EMMA

I'm way smarter than you, dorkus!

FRIEND

You suck, crybaby.

Without thinking, Christopher SLUGS his friend, who goes down immediately.

CHRISTOPHER

My sister never cries.

Emma looks at her brother. She clearly adores him.

EMMA (V.O.)

He's right, I never did. Our parents were certifiable, and Mom was drunk more often than not -- so somebody had to be the grownup.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - 15 YEARS AGO

A fifteen year old Emma -- wearing a blazer perfect for a thirty year old -- is in front of her meticulously organized locker. An eighteen year old Christopher is berating her.

CHRISTOPHER

You're a freak.

EMMA

Shut up, troglodyte eunuch.

A GORGEOUS TEENAGE BOY walks up to Emma. She GLOWS.

TEENAGE BOY

Hey, Ems. I can't go with you to the dance. I forgot I already asked Jolyn Pedakio last week.

Christopher SLUGS the guy, who goes down immediately.

EXT. EMMA'S CHILDHOOD HOME - ROOFTOP - 12 YEARS AGO

An eighteen year old Emma sits on the roof of the house. In the background, we can hear her parents ARGUING. It's bad.

EMMA (V.O.)

Our parents never cared enough to
use their inside voices and fake it
for the kids. Like normal people.

Christopher crawls out the window with a BOTTLE OF SCOTCH.

CHRISTOPHER

Happy Thanksgiving - a time for peace
and familial closeness!

EMMA

(re the bottle)
You lifted the good crap?

CHRISTOPHER

I don't think she realizes I'm tall
enough to reach the top shelf.

The YELLING in the house intensifies. Emma furrows her brow. Christopher immediately sings at the top of his lungs --

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

*I AM PIPPI LONGSTOCKING, IF YOU SAY
IT FAST IT'S FUNNY! PIPPI, PIPPI
LONGSTOCKING, HOW I LOVE MY FUNNY
NAME!*

Emma LAUGHS.

EMMA (V.O.)

It worked every damn time.

Christopher takes a sip from the bottle. Emma sweetly pushes a lock of hair out of his eyes, then --

EMMA (CONT'D)

I was accepted to NYU.
(beat, softly)
I'm saying yes.

Christopher takes another sip, looks at her for a long beat, then crawls back inside. Emma yells after him --

EMMA (CONT'D)

I feel trapped here, Chris. I want
to start my life. You should, too.
You can come with me!

Nothing. Emma sits alone.

EXT. INTERSTATE - DAY - 12 YEARS AGO

Emma is driving, and smiling. Manhattan, with all its possibilities, lies in front of her.

EMMA (V.O.)

Chris wouldn't return my calls for
the next twelve years.

(beat)

When I tried calling at all...

INT. NY LOFT - KITCHEN - EVENING - FOUR WEEKS AGO

Emma and a MAN (40ish, good looking), are having passionate sex on every surface of her kitchen. Plates are falling, clothes are FLYING --

EMMA (V.O.)

I had shirked the shackles of Georgia
and was pretty happy in the wilds of
Manhattan.

The man EXITS the frame as he kisses Emma's stomach and makes his way down from there. Emma SMILES.

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

Sometimes I was way happier than
others.

Emma's phone RINGS. From below --

MAN (O.S.)

Don't. You. Dare.

EMMA

Or what? Punishment'll be swift and
merciless?

He pops back into frame and SMILES wickedly.

MAN

I can assure you there will be nothing
swift about it.

EMMA

(laughs)

It could be a work thing. Lemme
just look --

She briefly glances at the phone. Her brow furrows.

EMMA (CONT'D)

It's a Georgia number...?

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Hello?

The man kisses Emma's neck as she listens. Suddenly, her face goes white --

EMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Until everything changed on a dime.

EXT. NY APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING - A LITTLE LATER

Emma is driving away, expressionless - the man fading in her rearview. (NOTE: her car is making some terrible sounds.)

EMMA (V.O.)
 I was recently hired at an incredibly prestigious practice, but they gave me one week's leave to "take care of family business." I figured that would be plenty of time.

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL - CHRISTOPHER'S ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

A newly arrived, and exhausted, Emma is next to Christopher's bed, getting the rundown from a young, officious, oddly perky, NURSE (JULIE, 27, Latina.) Over this --

EMMA (V.O.)
 Sometimes life doesn't go as figured.

Emma looks at Julie.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 Okay. Umm. How long are people typically...like...this?

JULIE
 Unfortunately, there's no way to know. Could be days. Could be weeks.

EMMA
 But, I mean, he will wake up...right?

JULIE
 We hope so.
 (then)
 And with luck, he might actually be able to communicate with other people again!

Julie nods, smiles, and leaves. Emma doesn't move a muscle.

EXT. DEW DROP INN - BETWEEN, GA - LATER

Emma DRIVES into the inn's parking lot. She gets out of her car, suitcase in hand. She's leaving a voicemail --

EMMA

(into phone)

This is now the third time I've gone straight to voicemail -- where are you?! You know I don't say this lightly, but: I need you.

(then)

Call as soon as you can, okay? Love.

She hangs up, and ENTERS the inn's reception area.

EXT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Emma parks in front of a small house. Her car still sounds awful. As she walks to the door, she checks her phone, and furrows her brow when she sees nothing.

EMMA (V.O.)

This is the house where Chris lives.

(then)

Lived.

(deliberately)

Lives. Smack in the middle of Between. It's eight blocks away from my hotel, thirty eight point one miles away from Atlanta.

She rings the bell, and A WOMAN (JEANNIE, 40, trashy, hard for her age, dressed very provocatively) answers.

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

This is Christopher's wife. She's light years away from being family.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - SAME TIME

It's a mess. A haze of cigarette smoke hangs in the air. There are flowers and gift baskets EVERYWHERE.

EMMA (V.O.)

I barely knew Christopher, so I super barely knew Jeannie. And that sweet, sweet ignorance was a bliss I'd never have back.

SYDNEY (9, Christopher's daughter, shy, wise way beyond her years, NOTE: there are light bruises on her left arm) peeks from behind her mom. Emma SMILES.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Hi. I'm your Aunt Emma. I haven't seen you since you were this --

Emma holds her hand up about a foot off the ground -- it's apparently been a very long time -- but Sydney starts to shyly walk away. Jeannie SMIRKS.

JEANNIE

Don't take it personal.

Sydney turns around to see if she's being watched. Emma makes a FUNNY FACE from behind Jeannie. Sydney smiles. Jeannie looks at Emma - who shrugs innocently.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Emma is sitting on the couch, while Jeannie serves her some SWEET TEA. Jeannie is drinking a large, MOCHA-LOOKING BEVERAGE. Sydney, still wary of Emma, eyes it.

SYDNEY

Can I have some?

JEANNIE

No, Syd - this is Mama's special Chocaccino. Get yourself a damn YooHoo outta the fridge.

Emma FURROWS her BROW at Jeannie's tone. Jeannie notices --

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

You got somethin' against the 'Hoo?

EMMA

Me? God, no. I love the..."Hoo."

Sydney goes to the kitchen. Jeannie takes a big sip, then --

JEANNIE

So, Christopher...

EMMA

Oh. Umm, not good.

Jeannie takes in Emma's MOSTLY BLACK outfit.

JEANNIE

Looks like you already started mourning.

EMMA

(an explanation)
I'm from New York...

Sydney enters, YooHoo in hand. She puts it on the table, then sits and stares at it. She alternates looking at it out of each eye. Five times. This is not lost on Emma.

EMMA (CONT'D)

What's she doing?

JEANNIE

It's a stupid winking thing - she does it all the time.

(to Sydney)

Stop! It makes you look slow!

Emma is horrified. Sydney is unfazed - she simply gets up, takes her drink, and walks up the stairs. She alternates the hand in which she holds it. Emma watches, then --

EMMA

What'd she do to her arm?

JEANNIE

It's like the winking thing, only she changes hands. I don't know where the hell she gets it from.

EMMA

I meant the bruises.

JEANNIE

You don't got kids, do you?

EMMA

No.

JEANNIE

They're klutzy. They go out to play for five minutes and they end up needin' a hundred stitches.

Emma nods, but she doesn't look completely convinced.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

So Chris ain't doing well?

EMMA

Just doesn't seem to be waking up yet. The nurse said if you come by, maybe --

JEANNIE

(snaps)

You saying my work's not important?!

EMMA

(thrown)

Wh -- ? No. I didn't say anything
remotely like that. Or even know
what you actually do for that matter --

JEANNIE

Pharmacist's assistant over unto
Doleson's Drugs. I'm on my feet all
day to put food on the table for my
little girl. Nobody understands how
hard it is around here for me.

Something catches Emma's eye. Sydney is on the top stair,
watching the whole conversation. Emma WINKS at her again.
Sydney scampers off. Emma looks at Jeannie.

EMMA

I really just came here to tell you
they said it might do him some good
to hear familiar voices. Maybe you
and Sydney could go together and --

JEANNIE

No! I'm not putting her through
that! She's depressed already. She
gets all torn up every time she
watches the news. Trouble in some
TickyTackyIckyStan and she's upset
for days.

EMMA

Your nine year old child is concerned
about the Middle East?

JEANNIE

She knows more about it than I do.

Emma bites her tongue.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

You want her to see him, you take
her. I ain't gonna be a part of it.

EMMA

I can take her right now if she's
okay with it.

JEANNIE

She'll never go with you. She's
shyer than a neutered dog's balls on
a cold day.

EMMA

That...doesn't even make sense, I --

Sydney appears at the bottom of the stairs and SMILES.

SYDNEY
(softly)
I'm ready.

Emma looks at Jeannie. Under her breath --

EMMA
Huh. Your daughter's not a shy dog
ball.

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL DAY - PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE - A LITTLE LATER

Emma and Sydney walk. Emma checks her phone. Nothing.

EMMA
Dammit.
(off Sydney's concern)
Just waiting for a call.

Emma's phone RINGS. She looks at the Caller ID hopefully.
Then sighs, disappointed.

EMMA (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hi, Mrs. Keiser.
(beat)
No, no, I'm glad you called. I wanted
to tell you I'm out of town due to a
family member's illness, but --
(for Sydney)
-- it shouldn't be too long before
everything is back to normal and I'm
back in the office again.
(listens, then softly)
You just ate six protein bars and
then threw them back up?

Sydney makes an "eww" face, as they walk through the doors.

EMMA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
No, Mrs. Keiser, the fact that it
was "health food" doesn't make it
any better...

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL - FRONT HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Emma is just hanging up as they approach Susie's desk.

SUSIE
(smiles)
Hello! How are you?

EMMA
We're okay, Susie. I just brought
my niece in to say hi to her dad.

SUSIE
(by rote, chirps)
Okay!

Emma smiles at Sydney. As they turn the corner --

EMMA
She says the same thing. Every.
Single. Day.

As the doors to the ICU close behind them --

SYDNEY (O.S.)
(imitates Susie)
Okay!

Emma LAUGHS. Sydney GIGGLES.

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL - CHRISTOPHER'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Emma and Sydney enter. Sydney immediately stops dead at what she sees: the EKG -- the respirator -- the colostomy bag -- the bite guard -- the Pulsox monitor is SCREECHING!

Sydney closes her eyes, softly HUMS the "Pippi Longstocking" song, and subtly rocks back and forth to calm herself.

EMMA
It's okay, Syd. It's okay. Will
you look at me?

Slowly, Sydney opens her eyes. Emma smiles warmly.

EMMA (CONT'D)
All that noise is just because he
moved his finger. Silly, right?

Emma quickly "yellows up" -- gown and gloves -- then walks over to Chris and fixes the PULSOX monitor on his finger. It immediately stops beeping. She turns to Sydney --

EMMA (CONT'D)
Sweetheart, we can turn around right
now if you want to. I would totally
understand. And so would your dad.

Sydney takes a long beat, and looks over at her father.

SYDNEY
(softly)
Daddy? It's me.

The EKG BEEPS. Sydney whirls around to look at Emma.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)
Am I hurting him?

EMMA
No. I think he knows you're here.

Sydney puts on the gown and gloves, and WHISPERS to her dad --

SYDNEY
You are my sunshine and I love you
more than Cookie Crisp.

Emma closes her eyes and steadies herself.

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL - CHRISTOPHER'S ROOM - LATER

Emma watches as Sydney stands by her dad's bedside.

SYDNEY
And I got my first F. But it was
only because I let Donnie Dorotzak
look at my sheet and we got caught.
I don't know why I did it, except
he's nice and I wanted to help him --

Sydney goes on, but over this we hear -

EMMA (V.O.)
There's a system the doctors use to
"grade" someone in my brother's
condition. It's called the Glasgow
Coma Scale. The higher the score,
the better the chance at recovery.
In short, minor brain damage yields
a score of at least thirteen. My
brother, at last count, scored a
four.

Sydney's voice is, once again, at the forefront --

SYDNEY
I know you're going to ground me
when you get home. And that's okay.

Emma watches.

EMMA (V.O.)
There is no scale to measure blind
optimism fueled by indescribable
fear of loss.

Emma watches as Sydney takes a long last look at Christopher -
one eye at a time, five times each.

INT. DOWN THE HATCH - LATER

A waitress (KATIE, 20, gorgeous, Barbie-like, Southern Belle) - puts a burger in front of Sydney, a water in front of Emma.

KATIE

Sure you don't want nothin'? Sweet son of Mary and Joseph, you're a skinny little thing.

EMMA

(an explanation)
I'm from New York.

KATIE

Oh, that's why you wear all that black outta season!
(then)
We should talk. I got dreams of modeling there. You think twenty's too old for that?

EMMA

I don't think twenty's too old for anything. Good luck.

KATIE

I don't need luck, ma'am. "What you are is your gift from God, who you become is your gift to God."

Katie nods sagely and moves off. Emma sighs.

EMMA

Twenty. All dreams yet to be fulfilled and an ass that doesn't require seven hours of Piloxing every week to achieve.

Emma checks her phone; nothing.

SYDNEY

You want a bite of my burger?

EMMA

Hmm? Oh, no. I don't eat meat.

Sydney removes the burger from the bun, leaves the patty on her plate, and hands the bun to Emma. Emma smiles. Her phone RINGS. She looks at the ID hopefully, then sighs --

EMMA (CONT'D)

(into phone)
Hi, Mr. Dawson, I --
(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

(beat)

Well, I'm sorry your wife feels that way, but as your doctor, I believe you've made great strides in expressing your emotions, and I --

Emma looks at Sydney, who has stopped eating and is WINKING at her burger. Five times with each eye.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Mr. Dawson, can I call you back? I'm in the middle of a dinner meeting with a very important client.

Sydney looks up at Emma and GLOWS. Emma shuts off her phone.

EMMA (CONT'D)

(gently)

Why do you wink like that, sweetie?

SYDNEY

Sorry.

EMMA

No. No "sorry" - it doesn't bother me at all. But why do you do it?

SYDNEY

I want...to be fair to each eye.

EMMA

Do you do it more when you're going through a tough time?

Sydney looks at Emma -- astonished. Someone understands.

SYDNEY

Yes.

EMMA

Sydney, it's fine. You're fine. We all have our "things." The secret is making sure we have our things and they don't have us.

SYDNEY

Even you?

EMMA

Oh, sweetie - I've got a list longer than my arm. Sometimes, I go back in my kitchen over and over again to make sure my oven is turned off.

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

(mock whisper)

And I don't even cook.

(off Sydney's laugh)

We can talk about it if you want.

Anytime. I kinda know some stuff...

SYDNEY

'Kay.

Sydney takes a beat, then goes back to her food. Emma watches her for a second, then eats the hamburger bun.

EXT. MAIN STREET - BETWEEN - LATER

Emma pushes the crosswalk button - it says "WALK." She starts to cross, but Sydney grabs her arm just as a CAR WHIZZES BY.

SYDNEY

One, two, three, four, five...

EMMA

One of your "things?"

More cars go by.

SYDNEY

No. Broken signal. Six, seven, eight, nine, ten. We can go now.

EMMA

Wh - how long has it been like that?

As they cross --

SYDNEY

Always. We all just know to count.

EMMA

That's dangerous for visitors.

SYDNEY

Nobody ever comes here.

EMMA

Salient point.

SYDNEY

Adjective. "Noticeable or important."

EMMA

Sydney. How do you know that?!

SYDNEY

I read the dictionary when I'm bored.

EMMA

Does your mother know?

SYDNEY

No. She already thinks I'm weird. Daddy knows. He said he'd tell her when it's time.

EMMA

Your mom is wrong. You're not "weird." You're amazing.

(off Sydney)

Hey, I want you to listen to me. I know I'm new in your life, but I am promising you right now that I will always tell you the truth. I will never ever lie to you. Okay?

Sydney takes a beat, then nods - convinced.

SYDNEY

(imitating Susie)

Okay!

Emma smiles as they reach the car.

EMMA (V.O.)

Suddenly, I realized: after all the years of Christopher protecting me, he didn't make me his power of attorney to return the favor to him. He knew his kid was special - and he knew her mother would never see it. And so, in case he was ever gone, he wanted protection for his baby-genius.

Emma looks at Sydney, then --

EMMA (CONT'D)

"Epiphany."

SYDNEY

Noun. "A sudden or striking realization."

Emma takes her in.

EMMA

(smiles)

Yup.

They get in the car.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOEXT. DEW DROP INN - THE NEXT MORNING

Emma is talking on her phone while she heads to her car.

EMMA

(into phone)

Sheila, I'm just saying it's normal
to feel depressed after a divorce.
I don't think Duloxetine is necessary.

(beat)

No, I *haven't* actually been married,
but that's really neither here nor
there...

She shakes her head, and gets in her car.

INT. DOLESON'S DRUGS - A LITTLE LATER

Jeannie is busily labeling bottles while Emma talks.

EMMA

...so after testing Sydney's IQ -
which I promise is gonna be
astronomical - you should probably
switch her to a different school. I
did some research last night and I
think maybe Freinholt Academy --

JEANNIE

Freinholt is an hour and a half away
and I can't do it with my schedule.

A uniformed COP (HANK, 38, burly) ENTERS. Jeannie turns her
back to Emma and her full attention to Hank -- she's CHARMING.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Officer Hank. Keeping the mean
streets of Between clean?

HANK

Protectin' and servin', ma'am.

(then)

Reverend Macy wanted me to tell you
he's holding a prayer vigil for Chris
tomorrow night.

JEANNIE

We need all the help we can get.

HANK

And Katie wanted to make sure you
got the food she sent over.

She hands Hank a PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE.

JEANNIE

You tell her if her damn deep fried pickles weren't so tasty, half the town wouldn't need to mess with this Lipitor business.

Hank LAUGHS and EXITS. Emma stares at Jeannie. In shock.

EMMA (V.O.)

Into every Hyde, a little Jeckyll must fall.

JEANNIE

(re Emma's stare)

What? I got somethin' on my uniform?

EMMA

No, I just...look, back to Sydney. With all due respect, she's an exceptionally smart kid, and --

JEANNIE

You say "all due respect" - but you don't respect me - and you don't respect Chris neither.

EMMA

What?! Yes, I do! I just didn't --

JEANNIE

All that time you're adding up at the hospital ain't gonna make up for ignoring your brother all those years.

EMMA

Jeannie, this isn't about me, or you, or even Chris. I'm concerned that you're raising a gifted child in a school for the average. Now, she has some issues that --

JEANNIE

My Syd don't have any "issues!"

EMMA

Okay, can you please just let me finish one sentence?!

(off Jeannie's shrug)

She has some "issues" that are common with highly intelligent children. She needs special help and therapy, but ultimately that little girl can be anything she wants to be.

JEANNIE

I know what she'd wanna be. She'd wanna be gone - just like you!

EMMA

You can't deny her the future she deserves just because you're afraid she might leave someday! Trust me, if she wants to, she'll find a way to go anyway. I mean --

JEANNIE

It's my break time.

Jeannie abruptly EXITS. Emma stands there, FUMING.

EXT. DOLESON'S DRUGS - MOMENTS LATER

Emma, still angry, heads to her car. She looks across the PARKING LOT. She sees Jeannie, in her own car: SMOKING and SURREPTITIOUSLY DRINKING out of a SMALL VODKA BOTTLE.

It's 9am. Emma is spellbound. Suddenly, it dawns on her --

EMMA (V.O.)

"Unfit." Adjective.
"Incapable", "unsuitable", "inept",
or...

Jeannie takes a long pull off that bottle. Emma's eyes widen --

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

..."Mom."

Emma slowly gets in her car.

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL - CHRISTOPHER'S ROOM - LATER

Emma, in her yellow gown, sits and talks to her brother.

EMMA

So I'm now convinced this coma crap is just a desperate cry for help.

(then)

I know. Don't say it. I deflect uncomfortable situations with half assed stabs at humor. Always have. I blame our parents. You, on the other hand, *married one of them*.

(shakes her head)

I mean, what the hell, Chris? She's even pathologically defensive and a compulsive interrupter like Mom. Not to mention the pesky rampant day drinking...

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

(beat)

You have a stone cold genius of a kid who needs some help. And I don't think your Cirrhosis-addled-possibly-borderline-personalities-should-be-an-ex is the one to give it to her. So. I need a sign if you want me to keep going. To keep messing with your life. Because the thing is, if I do, you're gonna wake up and maybe not even recognize it.

(heartfelt)

Chris, if you can hear me - please.
Give me a sign.

Nothing. She SIGHS and closes her eyes, then --

JULIE

Emma!

Emma's eyes pop open. Julie is standing there, pointing at Christopher. His eyes are OPEN! They're not focusing, but they're open.

EMMA

Chris! Hi! Hi -- I'm here! I'm right here! I love you so much, I --

Chris closes his eyes again. Emma looks at Julie.

EMMA (CONT'D)

What -- what does this mean?!

JULIE

It could mean he hears you, and he's trying to wake up.

Emma smiles hopefully. Julie continues --

JULIE (CONT'D)

Or it could be just a reflex response to some pain.

EMMA

Wait, I'm -- so you're saying he could or he could not know that I'm here right now?!

JULIE

You have to be patient. It's a waiting game...

Julie hands her some TISSUES. As she exits --

JULIE (CONT'D)

This is usually when people cry.

Emma, true to form, does not cry. She's numb.

EXT. MAIN STREET - THAT AFTERNOON

Emma parks on the side of the street.

EMMA (V.O.)

I decided to believe he heard me.

She starts to cross, and a car whizzes by. She steps back just in time. She rolls her eyes --

EMMA (CONT'D)

One, two, three, four, five, six,
seven -- screw it.

She starts to cross again and another car speeds by.

EMMA (CONT'D)

(quickly)
Eight, nine, ten.

She crosses. She walks straight to a BUILDING with a sign in front that says "ADAMS AND SON - ATTORNEYS AT LAW." On the door is a note: "GONE TO TOWN MEETING."

EMMA (CONT'D)

Oh dear God, they have town meetings.
I hope Ma and Pa and Half Pint are
there.

She sees a GROUP of PEOPLE walking into a TOWN HALL type of building down the block. She takes a beat, checks her phone, and once again finds nothing. She sighs, and starts to walk.

INT. TOWN HALL - A LITTLE LATER

A meeting of about FORTY PEOPLE is in progress as Emma enters. A GOOD LOOKING MAN (JAKE, 35, African American, dressed hipper than the town) stands at the podium, holding court.

JAKE

...and so, in closing, the vote on
repaving Moore street is on Friday.

There is some polite clapping.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Seriously? That's it?! I heard
Myrtle sprained her ankle late one
night on account of that messed up
curb near her house...

Myrtle (from the opening sequence) is wearing a SPLINT and sitting with two of her fellow BLUE HATS. She nods.

JAKE (CONT'D)

And Hank, you had to replace two new tires on your patrol vehicle after hitting that Everest of a bump...

Officer Hank, still in uniform, nods in agreement.

JAKE (CONT'D)

And Katie, I heard it on good authority that you suffered the consequences of an angry pothole when you stumbled home from "Down the Hatch" the other night.

Katie (Emma's waitress from before) smiles, rolls her eyes, and self consciously covers her bandaged arm with her sleeve.

JAKE (CONT'D)

So let's --

He stops and shakes his head, then looks to a TALL MAN sitting next to the podium -- whittling a piece of wood. This is FRANK GENTRY (55, austere, reeks of power, a bear of a man.)

JAKE (CONT'D)

Must I?

FRANK

It's our new catchphrase.

JAKE

Let's "Kick Some As...Phalt" and fix up our streets.

Emma can't help herself, she LAUGHS. Everyone LOOKS.

EMMA

Sorry. I've never lived in a place with kitschy slogans.

(then)

I mean, I don't "live" live here or anything, but I'm here for a while due to some unforeseen circumstances and, umm --

Everyone still looks at her. Emma's uncomfortable.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Well somebody really should say something, or I'll just yammer until you think I'm rocking a mild Histrionic Personality Disorder...

She laughs. The crowd does not.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Yup, well, funny to me...because I'm
a psychiatrist, so --

FRANK

(to the crowd)
Who's next?

EMMA

Actually, I've got something...

Frank steadies his eyes on her.

FRANK

You wanna offer to work some of your
big city, touchy-feely, bullcrap
therapizing on us, SoHo?

(then)

I know who you are.

EMMA

Wow. 98% humidity, yet a chill just
went up my unsuspecting spine.

Emma steps to the podium, and SMILES at the crowd --

EMMA (CONT'D)

Hi. I'm Emma. And I can't help but
notice that your crosswalk on Main
Street is defective. I've almost
been run over twice - in a city with
virtually no traffic. So someone
should, you know, fix that.

FRANK

Why do you care?

EMMA

Because I have a niece who lives
here and I'd like her to keep both
her legs...?

FRANK

I object!

EMMA

Well, that seems inhumane at best.

A couple of people LAUGH. Frank looks at them. They STOP.

FRANK

I hope your brother wakes up soon --
we all do; he's a good man. But our
town is fine the way it is. Thank
you for your concern.

(to the crowd)

Time for a ten minute break.

Katie HOPS UP on a CHAIR and addresses everybody with a
CONFIDENT smile. The men obviously appreciate her --

KATIE

I gotta head back to the Hatch, but
I want ya'll to give a big thank you
to the Blue Hat Club for bringing
their Southern Comfort Fizzy Punch!

The crowd CHEERS, and heads straight for the punch table.

EXT. TOWN HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Jake makes a beeline for Emma, who is rapidly walking away.

JAKE

Hey, New Person! Frank likes the
light that way, and the town leaves
it alone because they all like Frank.

EMMA

Okay, first: that's insane, co-
dependent, and a little creepy. And
second: what the hell do they like
about him exactly?

JAKE

He's one of them.

EMMA

Ah. Small town logic.

JAKE

Ah. Condescension.

Emma, clearly busted, tries not to smile.

EMMA

I notice you didn't say "you" like
him.

JAKE

I...have some issues at the moment.

EMMA

How did he know who I was?

JAKE

Population of fewer than three hundred people. Gossip is our lifeblood.

EMMA

What do you do?

JAKE

I'm a lawyer.

EMMA

Oh, good! Are you "Adams"...or "Son?"

JAKE

Adams.

EMMA

Your son's old enough to practice law?

JAKE

Nope. I don't even have kids. The town just thought it looked better on the sign -- more trustworthy.

EMMA

I need your legal advice.

JAKE

Good. I need your psychiatric skills. Let's go grab some food.

Emma notices some townspeople, standing outside and not-so-subtly watching her with Jake. Jake SMILES.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Afraid *people will say we're in love?*!

EMMA

(confused)

No. You're gay.

JAKE

I'm -- what?!

EMMA

Your clothes are way too hip for Mayberry, you just quoted a song from "Oklahoma", and you're the only man who didn't openly salivate when "Gisele Bundchen" hopped up on that chair.

(off Jake's laugh)

And you got a Gisele Bundchen reference...

JAKE
 (hushed tones)
 Okay, yes. I'm gay.

EMMA
 And nobody here knows?!

JAKE
 They're kinda like my mother: they know, but they don't know they know.

EMMA
 Have you actually *told* them?

JAKE
 Have I actually *told* this small southern town that their black lawyer is also a homosexual? No.

EMMA
 Well, then maybe they don't know, and they don't know they don't know.
 (smiles)
 You know?

JAKE
 What are you in the mood to eat?

EMMA
 Ah, I see segues haven't made it down this far south.
 (then)
 I'm assuming a nice vegan pasta fagioli is out of the question here?

JAKE
 Follow me...

EMMA
 This town has an Italian restaurant that speaks vegan?!

JAKE
 No, Krager's Market around the corner sells Spaghetti O's.

EMMA
 Be still my beating palate.

As they walk, the growing crowd outside Town Hall watches, and we --

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEINT. DOWN THE HATCH - A LITTLE LATER

Emma and Jake sit in a booth. Katie takes their order.

EMMA

So, your "vegetarian" vegetable soup is made with beef stock?

KATIE

Yes'm. With little chunks of bacon.

EMMA

How is that vegetarian exactly?

KATIE

It's "vegetable" soup...?

EMMA

I'll just have coffee.

Katie SMILES and GOES. Emma SIGHS, under her breath --

EMMA (CONT'D)

Unless it's infused with pork juice.

JAKE

It's veal based, if memory serves...

Emma LAUGHS. She checks her phone. She furrows her brow.

JAKE (CONT'D)

You got a steady fella?

EMMA

Wow. You got that from one furtive phone glance. Umm: sure. In the neighborhood of "steady" anyway. He and "steady" are sharing a culdesac.
(changing the subject)

So, look. Like I said, I'm here for about a week, and --

JAKE

You got a lot of patients back in the big city?

EMMA

Don't we have business to discuss?

JAKE

Just taking the scenic route.

EMMA

Okay: yes. I was recently hired at a very prestigious psychiatry practice on the Upper East Side and I'm over the moon about it. They did a blurb on me in the Times and everything.

(then)

And I have five phone sessions lined up for tonight, actually, but it's not quite the same as face to face.

JAKE

You could always Skype with your patients. That might work.

(off Emma's surprise,
thick fake accent)

Even in the south, over unto the store? They have magic typewriters with pitchures on the screen and we bang on them!

EMMA

Sorry. I just hadn't thought of that. It's a good idea.

(then)

So, my legal issue. I think I have to figure out a better living situation for Chris' daughter.

JAKE

Jeannie hasn't hurt Syd, has she?

EMMA

I saw a few bruises on Sydney's arm.

JAKE

What'd Jeanne say about 'em?

EMMA

That her kid's a klutz.

JAKE

Do you know otherwise?

EMMA

Well, no but...

JAKE

Has Jeannie suddenly become a drug addict?

EMMA

Spiked Chocaccinos. Lots of them. And from the looks of it, she's got a fully stocked bar in her car.

JAKE

Not ideal by any stretch of the imagination, but still: hardly low grade street smack.

EMMA

She also doesn't recognize that her own kid is gifted, and in need of psychological assistance for her OCD and what I'm sure is situational depression. If that's not considered harmful, I don't know what is.

JAKE

I hear you. I really do. But I have to warn you that legally it's very difficult to prove a parent's unfit.

(off Emma's silence)

But. I have a proposition for you. I could investigate and try to help you...if you try to help me.

EMMA

With what? No offense, but what the hell does a lawyer do in a town of three hundred people?

JAKE

Defend an eighteen year old kid from Frank's wrath.

(off Emma)

Scott Taggart. High school senior. Captain of the football team. Good grades. Recently caught with a large amount of both prescription and over-the-counter drugs in the school parking lot. Kids even get high off Rokitussin these days.

EMMA

"RoboTripping."

(an explanation)

I'm from New York.

JAKE

He ran from the police, and got in a car accident. No one was hurt, but there was property damage. Frank's hellbent on sending Scott to prison for intent to distribute and reckless endangerment. Trial's in one week.

EMMA

Why does he think he has the power
to put Scott away?

JAKE

He's the judge.

EMMA

How eerily fitting.

(then)

Speaking of eerie, what's he carving
with that scary little knife?

JAKE

He whittles military heroes.

(off Emma's surprise)

Retired Army sergeant.

(then)

Look, Scott's a good kid; it's his
first offense. He just messed up.

EMMA

Can't you strike a plea deal for
counseling over prison?

JAKE

The prosecution and I are in
agreement, but Frank won't budge.

Now, if I had an ally who was a mental
health professional, then maybe...

The SOUND OF WOMEN GIGGLING interrupts their conversation.

Emma looks behind her to see a GORGEOUS MAN (PATRICK, 40)
putting the finishing touches on a BROKEN KITCHEN DOOR JAMB.
THREE YOUNG WAITRESSES watch him like groupies.

EMMA

Because nothing's sexier than a local
door...thing... fixer...?

PATRICK

(without looking)

"Jamb." Door "jamb."

EMMA

A local door "jamb" fixer who has
inexplicably bionic hearing...

Patrick laughs, as he packs up his tools. He walks up to
the table, he's lethally cute. And fully aware of his power.

PATRICK

Speaking of hearing, I think most of Georgia heard your car pull into town. That "perclackity" sound it's making is either a rear wheel bearing or your torsion bar mounts.

(off Emma)

I teach shop at the high school. I help out here because they pay me in pie.

(then)

Patrick.

EMMA

Emma.

JAKE

If you need any de-perclackiting, he's your man.

Patrick GRINS again and GOES. Jake watches, longingly --

JAKE (CONT'D)

I like pie.

EMMA

No ring. What's wrong with him?

JAKE

Very messy divorce, never got over it, and he's currently sleeping his way across the fine state of Georgia. All issues, by the way, that I'd be more than happy to deal with.

EMMA

Why do you live here, lone gay man?!

JAKE

I moved here for love.

He leaves it at that. She gestures for him to continue.

EMMA

Scenic route, or no deal.

JAKE

I'm from Atlanta -- born and raised. Eleven years ago, I went to a party, and met the love of my life. He lived here, I wanted to live wherever he lived -- so, I bought a place and a couple months later, he...found someone else.

EMMA

So, why did you stay?!

Emma briefly glances at her phone again. Jake notices.

JAKE

If Culdesac's not calling you during a time like this, he's an ass.

EMMA

He's not an ass.

JAKE

Tell me one good thing about him.

EMMA

(smiles)

He's -- very good in the kitchen.

JAKE

Well, I give you permission to go forth and sleep with my Patrick.

EMMA

(ignoring him)

So, a Scott for a Sydney you say?

Jake SMILES. Emma NODS. Katie drops off their orders.

JAKE

Now drink your porkaccino, darling.

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL - FRONT HALLWAY - LATER

Emma and Sydney enter. Sydney is holding a mylar PIPPI BALLOON that drifts in front of Emma's face. Emma BOPS it out of the way with her head. This makes Sydney LAUGH.

They pass Susie, still at her desk. She SMILES.

SUSIE

Hello! How are you?

EMMA

A little overwhelmed at the moment.

SUSIE

(by rote, chirps)

Okay!

Emma and Sydney walk, but Emma comes back --

EMMA

Susie, why do you say that no matter what I tell you?

SUSIE

I work in the neurosurgery wing,
darlin'. It's survival.

Emma nods, writes down a number, and hands it to Susie.

EMMA

We can talk sometime if you want.

Susie is wary. Then, from over by the doors to the ICU --

SYDNEY

(imitates Susie)

Okay!

Emma smiles at Susie, and walks to Sydney.

EXT. JAKE'S OFFICE BUILDING - THAT EVENING

Emma parks. She's texting as she gets out of the car.

INT. JAKE'S OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER

Emma, finishing a text, ENTERS to find Jake. The office is comfortable, and covered with very impressive DIPLOMAS.

EMMA

Sorry I'm late, Sydney was --

Jake gestures to SCOTT (18, very nervous, looks strung out), sitting in the small waiting area, holding hands with MOLLY (18, tough.) Scott's leg is twitching a mile a minute. Emma notices. Molly takes Emma in --

MOLLY

You look too cool to be a therapist.

EMMA

It's all the black.

(then)

I'm Emma.

MOLLY

Molly.

(gestures to Scott)

Scott.

Scott looks at Emma briefly, then at the floor.

JAKE

How 'bout we give them a little
privacy, Molly?

Molly looks at Scott: *okay?* Scott nods, almost imperceptibly. Molly leans in, KISSES him, and WHISPERS something in his ear. Emma watches this: interesting.

Molly EXITS with Jake. After a beat, Scott looks at Emma --

SCOTT

I know I'm supposed to act crazy or something. I'm not crazy.

EMMA

I didn't say you were.

SCOTT

Yeah, but: nuthouse or prison -- aren't those my choices?

EMMA

No. Not if you can explain to me why, after four years of damn near perfect grades and every extracurricular activity in the book -- you suddenly decided to *sell drugs*. What happened?

(off his silence)

Okay, but I'm going to have a real tough time helping you out.

Scott GNAWS at his THUMBNAIL, after a beat --

SCOTT

I was just...I was hard up for cash. Can't we just leave it at that?

EMMA

I could if it was the truth.

Scott says nothing. Emma SIGHS -- it's gonna be a long night.

INT. TOWN HALL - LATER THAT EVENING

Emma is talking to Frank, who is paying more attention to the SMALL WOODEN SOLDIER he's whittling than he is to her.

EMMA

He's not saying why he did it -- yet. But I'm betting it has something to do with the girl. With teenage boys, it almost always has something to do with the girl...

FRANK

I don't know why he started seeing her.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Molly's been all kinds of trouble since she was knee high to a grasshopper.

EMMA

I'll find out specifics -- but it comes down to this: he's eighteen and he messed up. Once. So let's use treatment and counseling to guide him through a rough patch. Let's help him rather than lock him up.

FRANK

You're saying "let's" -- who exactly is going to do all this work, SoHo?

EMMA

Why do you keep calling me that?

FRANK

My ex-wife moved there after our divorce.

Emma takes note. She points to the carving in his hand --

EMMA

And why do you do that?

FRANK

I don't know, I -- I want to make it look exactly how I want it to look?

Emma takes note of that, too. Frank SIGHS. He's had enough.

FRANK (CONT'D)

No matter what you say, that boy committed a crime and he's going to prison. Justice will be served.

Frank EXITS. Emma watches after him.

EMMA

Sweet Baby Jesus, you need a shrink.

EXT. MAIN STREET - THE NEXT MORNING

Emma is walking down the street. Several townspeople watch her carefully and WHISPER and POINT.

EMMA (V.O.)

Talk to one Captain of the football team, and apparently a girl can develop quite a reputation...

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Emma has been pulled over by Officer Hank.

HANK

Ma'am, you were going forty in a
twenty mile per hour zone.

EMMA

It won't happen again.

HANK

(then, sotto)

I'll let you off with a warning if
you help me with my jitters.

EMMA

Wh --? Oh, you want me to...okay,
yeah. I mean we can set up an --

Hank leans against her car. He's going to be there a while ---

HANK

I think it has to do with the fact
that I don't feel like I've won my
Pop's respect. Ten years on the
force and he still can't say he's
proud. Makes me mad. Makes me so
mad sometimes all I can see is red.
Also, I was twelve years sober and
just fell off the wagon a month ago
'cause I'm in a relationship with a
ladyfriend who's really screwing
with my head even though the sex is
hotter'n hell. So, maybe something
like Ativan? Dr. Phil said it helps
with anxiousness.

Emma just blinks. What?!

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

Emma gases her car. Katie approaches her.

KATIE

Hey, Skinny Minnie! Guess what?
I'm gonna give up meat just like you
so I can drop a few "lubs" before I
move north. And I gotta whole skin
regimen I found online by some lady
who used to be on a soap opera!

EMMA

Why are you changing anything?

KATIE

Well, my boyfriend, he keeps saying I ain't quite ready yet. He says there are lots and lots of pretty girls there and I gotta stand out from the herd.

EMMA

My free advice is, don't let someone else tell you what you can or can't do.

(then)

And women don't travel in herds.

Katie is touched. She GOES. Then she comes back --

KATIE

Truth is, sometimes he ain't so nice to me, but then I cut my arms and I feel better.

She shows Emma her arms. Emma is momentarily dumbstruck.

INT. BETWEEN FLUFF AND FOLD - LATER

Emma stands in line, a bag of dirty clothes in her hands. Myrtle, wearing her splint, appears behind her. She leans in very close to Emma's ear --

MYRTLE

I don't much believe in all that therapy hoo-ha, dear, but I'm a little interested in something. You met my grandson, William...

EMMA

Umm, no. I met with a Scott...?

MYRTLE

(smiles)

I do that all the time. They were so much alike. Scott's father, my son William, died three years ago. Now, it's left me very *distracted* to say the least. So, why would you tell Scott you didn't think it had any effect on him?

This is all news to Emma. She's visibly taken aback.

INT. JAKE'S OFFICE - LATER

Jake is reviewing paperwork. Emma enters and SITS.

EMMA

What the hell, Opie? Your simple town has some complicated problems. First of all, why would Scott deliberately not tell me about his dad, but then tell Myrtle he did? They're stopping by later today...

(then)

And by the way? I'll take your word for it, but the kid looks like he's been sampling his own wares. If this does go to trial, he'll need to get some coaching, stay away from the girlfriend with the bad rep, and take a shower.

Jake is silent. He looks serious.

EMMA (CONT'D)

You do see me, right...?

JAKE

Sorry. I, umm -- I got information for you. About Sydney. The good news is, you could have a case. But you'd have to start by getting the welfare department involved.

EMMA

I can do that.

JAKE

And even if they did agree with you about her situation not being suitable, you'd still have an incredibly hard time getting custody.

Emma is completely taken off guard by the word "custody."

JAKE (CONT'D)

Isn't that what you'd ultimately want...?

EMMA

I...have no idea.

JAKE

Where'd you expect her to go if she didn't stay with her mother, Emma?

EMMA

I thought...maybe they'd just force her mom to comply. To treat Syd the way she should be treated.

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

(then)

Or I guess I thought maybe Syd could live with me in New York.

JAKE

Because what you want to do when a special needs child's father is hanging on for dear life and her mother is drowning in alcohol and self pity is move her to a new, loud, completely overwhelming city.

EMMA

I...have a life there that I love. I just got my dream job and...

(softly)

I thought Chris would wake up and make everything okay.

JAKE

We can't count on that happening.

(then)

I'm sorry, Emma.

EMMA

(softly)

I know.

JAKE

You won't get anywhere with Syd if she doesn't live with you -- even temporarily. Then, and only then, would you be able to pursue a non-parental custody action.

(off Emma)

You need to move here -- at least for a while -- if you're serious about this. If you're serious about Sydney.

Emma is frozen. Then, softly --

EMMA

I'm starving.

JAKE

Let's go get some vegan pork pie.

He SMILES. She looks at him appreciatively. They EXIT.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOURINT. DOWN THE HATCH - A BIT LATER

The last remnants of a burger sit in front of Jake, and what's left of a plain green salad in front of Emma.

JAKE

You're living in a decrepit hovel of a hotel.

EMMA

Thank you...?

JAKE

My house is big. There's room for you. If you do decide to stay...

EMMA

(small smile)

Lordy, I think that'd make the whole town implode. We should do it for the sheer entertainment value alone.

(then, serious)

We're umm...talking about me potentially giving up my whole life in New York. For longer than I already have and maybe, ultimately, forever. I mean, I care about Syd - I've even started to care about this crazy town -- a little -- but I have my job back home -- I have my patients back home.

JAKE

And there are no other shrinks in all of New York who could help them and we have plenty here.

EMMA

Jake, I don't belong in a place like this! I wear too much black after Labor Day or before Labor Day or whenever you're not supposed to wear it. I eat too many vegetables. I not only know what "quinoa" is, and how to spell it, but I like it -- and honestly? This town doesn't want me any more than I want it!

JAKE

Maybe it doesn't want you, but it sure does need you.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

(then)

I think you're worried about leaving Culdesac. Has he even bothered to call you yet?

EMMA

Yes, actually. We Skyped.

JAKE

You Skyped. Your brother is in a coma, Emma! Why isn't he with you?!

EMMA

Because he's busy, he's ---

JAKE

What? He's what? I'm pretty much your only friend down here except for a nine year old genius, so if you're going to tell anyone -- which by the looks of that pulsing vein in your neck, you probably should -- it might as well be me.

EMMA

Fine. He's married, okay?! I mean, he's "separated" and "he's going to leave her" and all the rest of the crap men say, but it's been two and a half years and he hasn't. Yet some idiotic part of me still thinks he will. So -- excellent choice on my part, right?! Oh, and also? He's my boss.

(off Jake)

And you know how he became my boss?! He was my psychiatrist until we fell in love and he hired me at his firm! So, at last count, that breaks about sixteen or seventeen rules of ethics and could get both of us fired and our licenses revoked. And honestly? Right now I'm actually grateful that he's being a colossal ass.

Jake looks at her -- confused.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I'm grateful because he's like this fly, you know? Just buzzing around the massive pile of crap that I'm dealing with here. And I'm so happy to be distracted.

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

To think about anything other than my comatose brother who I barely bothered to know!

(then)

I hope you're breathing deep the rich irony here: this is the personal life of the psychiatrist who you're begging to come and help your town's mental health!

JAKE

Good!

EMMA

Wh -- good?!

JAKE

Yes! It's a perfect excuse to start over. What the hell are you waiting for?

EMMA

I...

JAKE

What?! Love him?

EMMA

Yes!

JAKE

No! What you love is the fact that you'll never actually have to commit to him because he'll never leave her and somewhere inside you know it.

EMMA

Okay, yes -- I have commitment issues. There -- it's out there. But I do love him -- when I'm with him, it's *electric*. And I stupidly still believe that someday he'll choose me. Can't you understand that?

JAKE

More than you know.

Emma calms a little.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I have a surprise for you.

EMMA

I hate surprises.

JAKE
It's vegetarian vegetable soup.

EMMA
Really?

JAKE
Oh, sweetheart, you'll never find
that here...

INT. EMPTY OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Emma and Jake enter an office down the hall from Jake's. It's empty except for four FOLDING CHAIRS and a DESK. There is a pop art picture of a LARGE FOOT painted on the wall.

JAKE
This was the town podiatrist's office.

EMMA
That explains both the groovy artwork
and the lingering odor of much used
feet...

JAKE
No one's rented it since he left. I
made some calls today and...it's
yours. If you want it.
(off Emma, quickly)
I just wanted to make sure it was
available to you if you needed it.

Emma walks over to an old desk, picks up a NAMEPLATE for the door: DR. EMMA STANLEY MD, and looks at Jake: really?!

JAKE (CONT'D)
It cost about a buck fifty seven.
It's not pressure. Just "sentiment."
(then)
Oh. And this. Just more "sentiment."

He hands her a FRAMED PICTURE of her and Christopher together as kids. Emma stares at it for a very long, full, beat.

EMMA
God, that's dirty pool.

From Jake's office, we hear Scott --

SCOTT (O.S.)
Hello?

EMMA
(to Jake)
We'll continue this later.

INT. EMPTY OFFICE - LATER

Emma, Myrtle, and Scott sit in FOLDING CHAIRS.

MYRTLE

William didn't even smoke. The doctors told us it was "small cell" which was supposed to be good news, but four months later he was gone.

EMMA

How did you feel after your dad died, Scott?

SCOTT

How the hell do you think I felt?!

MYRTLE

Scott!

EMMA

It's okay. He felt angry. He still feels angry.

MYRTLE

His mother left when he was only twelve. He's been through a lot, my sweet boy.

Myrtle sweetly TUGS Scott's SLEEVE. The gesture comforts him. There is a TINY BLUE RIBBON tied around Myrtle's pinky finger. Emma notices. Scott notices her noticing. He quickly turns to her --

SCOTT

You're right -- I'm angry. Sometimes I get so pissed about everything that I...I wanna just, like, run away from this crap town and --
 (to Myrtle, heartfelt)
 The money was so we could go someplace else and...start over. That's the truth. I swear. Just you and me and Molly --

Myrtle FURROWS her BROW at Molly's name. Emma takes that in, then looks at Scott -- who SHIFTS in his seat. There's a lot not being said here. Emma turns to Myrtle --

EMMA

I can definitely say Scott's actions could've been predicated on his grief, though Frank'll probably wonder why this has manifested itself so drastically *three years later*.

Emma looks at Scott. He can't look her in the eye.

EMMA (CONT'D)

(pointedly)

But the good news is, I find that people -- and probably even Frank -- can't help but be moved by the *truth*.

Scott knows Emma didn't believe him.

EXT. PARK - THAT EVENING

In a tiny park down the street from the office building, Emma and Jake sit on the bench. Jake's sipping a SCOTCH.

EMMA

He didn't sell drugs because he's "pissed about his past", he sold drugs because he's desperate about something in his present. I still think it's about the girl. Give me another day or two to dig.

JAKE

That's about all we got.

(after a beat)

Did you ever hear about the time your brother ran through this park in the middle of the night -- buck naked with Willie Nelson lyrics written all over his body?

EMMA

I'm gonna have to go with "no."

JAKE

He couldn't resist a dare. He would do anything -- anything for a laugh. Course, he calmed down a bit once Sydney was born.

EMMA

God, she loves him.

JAKE

And he loves her. All six foot three inches of him sitting cross legged at town meetings daintily brushing her American Girl doll's hair.

(off Emma)

Would've been cuter if Syd had actually been with him at the time...

Emma smiles. So does Jake. It's bittersweet. Then --

EMMA

I want to know him, Jake.
 (beat, a big decision)
 I'm wanted in New York. I'm needed
 here.

Jake NODS. Emma holds up the now EMPTY GLASS.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Nice. Way to bogart the single malt --
 I'll go grab more.

INT. EMPTY OFFICE - LATER

Emma enters to find Scott in the middle of a PANIC ATTACK.

SCOTT

I can't -- I can't -- I've never --

It's escalating. Emma calmly sits him down.

EMMA

You're having a panic attack. You're
 going to be fine. Look at me, okay?
 Lock eyes. Breathe. And let it
 flow through you. Invite it in and
 it'll go away. I promise. That's
 good. Breathe. Breathe...

He does. She holds his hands and breathes with him.
 Gradually, his panic starts to subside.

EMMA (CONT'D)

You ever had one of those?

Scott shakes his head.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Scott, you have to tell someone what's
 going on or you're going to hurt
 yourself. I can help you -- whatever
 it is -- but you have to trust me.

Scott looks at her for a long time, then SHAKES his head.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Who are you protecting?! Is it Molly?
 Is she in trouble?
 (changing tacts)
 If so, I get it. My brother's in
 trouble. Turns out, I'd do anything
 for him -- even move my whole life.

SCOTT

He's in the hospital, right?

EMMA

Yes. He's in a coma. Something's very wrong with his brain. They don't even know if he's in there, I --

Scott FLINCHES at that. Emma notices. Then it HITS her --

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

I was right: it did have something to do with a girl. Just not the one I thought.

She looks at Scott. Then, very gently --

EMMA (CONT'D)

The ribbon on your grandmother's finger -- was it because she's having difficulty remembering things?

Scott immediately STANDS UP and PACES. Emma has her answer.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Issues with names, confusion about time and place...? The night she fell and hurt herself -- she was *lost*...wasn't she?

He starts BREATHING RAPIDLY again; this is very hard.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Scott, I've worked extensively with Alzheimer's patients before, so if --

SCOTT

You can't tell anybody!

EMMA

Why?

SCOTT

Because...she doesn't know! I don't know how to tell her...

EMMA

Scott, you have to talk with her about it. There are informed decisions she has to make...

(very gently)

...before it gets worse.

SCOTT

But see, it doesn't have to get worse! There's this drug. It's new -- her doctor in Atlanta told me about it.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

We started her on it this month, and it's helping! Insurance doesn't pay for it -- but it makes her...*her*.

EMMA

That's why you needed the cash.

SCOTT

Yes. So I could buy more. And fix this -- and fix her. Because I...

He looks at Emma, his eyes pleading.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I can't do it -- I know I can't do it. After everything else I...I can't...

He isn't able to finish. Emma KNOWS.

EMMA

...lose her, too.

He looks at Emma for beat, then turns his back to her as he softly starts to cry.

INT. TOWN HALL - LATER

Emma waits for Frank. He ENTERS, clearly annoyed.

FRANK

It's late and I'm a very busy man.

EMMA

I don't mean to pull you away from Tiny Robert E. Lee or Tiny Stonewall Jackson, but we have to talk.

(then)

Molly wasn't Scott's problem. She was just the one person he felt safe confiding in -- someone who'd had her own share of difficulties.

(beat)

Myrtle's sick. Alzheimer's. Scott found a medication that helps, but they can't afford it. He sold illegal drugs to buy legal ones. For her. The only person he has left.

FRANK

I'm sincerely sorry to hear that. Myrtle is a good lady.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

(then)
But he still did something wrong.
Very wrong.

EMMA

For God's sake, he loves her -- and he's absolutely terrified he's going to be all alone in this world, can't you understand that?!

FRANK

Therapy and hugging and singing "Kum Bah Yah" won't change the fact that he could've killed somebody!

EMMA

Scott is suffering from deep seated abandonment issues -- selling drugs was a desperate attempt to keep from being left yet again. Therapy -- and I mean modern therapy, not the 1971 "Kum Bah Yah" version you're so inexplicably convinced I practice -- could help him! What is your problem with trying to *help* him?!

Frank looks at her for a beat, but says nothing.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Look, you don't have to respect my profession, or even believe in it, but I assure you: you have issues, too, sir. We all do. And you're going to have to deal with them at some point -- or your stress related hypertension's going to bite you right in the confederate ass.

(then)

Scott did it because he loves his grandmother. Now, I need you to ask yourself -- really ask yourself -- haven't you ever done something stupid for someone you love? Something that makes no sense at all?

(off Frank's silence)

If you truly haven't? I pity you more now than I even did before. And that's saying a lot.

She STORMS OUT. Frank is shellshocked.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVEINT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

Emma is sitting with Jeannie.

JEANNIE

You quit your job?!

EMMA

I did. And I was thinking maybe you could use a tiny vacation and I could help you out by taking care of Syd.

(gently working her)

I know how hard things are for you.

(off Jeannie's silence)

I also know you don't like me -- and that's okay -- we're very different people. But I have a right to get to know my niece. However late I am to the party, I'm here now.

Jeannie takes a beat then, as vulnerable as we've seen her --

JEANNIE

We're not that different, you and me. I don't know your brother much better'n you do. I think he'd up and leave me if it weren't for Syd...

EMMA

Wh -- you want to talk about it?

JEANNIE

(after a beat)

Sydney! Getcherbuttdownhere - your aunt's gonna watch you for a week!

Without missing a beat, Sydney (wearing a lot of BLACK) walks down the stairs with her suitcase in her hand. She's ready.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Emma and Sydney enter. The place is very urban and cool. Jake meets them and takes Syd's suitcase.

JAKE

I'll take your bag, m'lady. Now go see your room upstairs!

Sydney scampers upstairs. Jake turns to Emma --

JAKE (CONT'D)

I told Scott we're going to trial.

Emma SIGHS. They're silent for a beat.

JAKE (CONT'D)

On a happier note, a friend of mine
at Between High agreed to test Syd
today if you want.

EMMA

(yells up to Syd)
You okay with stopping by the high
school in a little bit?

SYDNEY (O.S.)

(imitating Susie)
Okay!

Emma looks at Jake and SMILES.

EXT. MAIN STREET - THAT AFTERNOON

Emma and Sydney are walking together. After a beat --

SYDNEY

I kinda think you're my best friend.

EMMA

I kinda think you're mine, too.

SYDNEY

Is he ever going to wake up?

Emma stops cold. She kneels down to Sydney.

EMMA

Syd, the truth is: I don't know.

(then)

What I can tell you is this: if he
doesn't -- and I'm still going with
"if" here -- then my heart will break.
And your heart will break. And things
will be very bad for a while. But.
I can promise you this: you won't go
through it alone. Okay?

Sydney looks at her for a beat -- she WINKS one eye, then
the other. Emma takes that in, surprised by how touched she
is. Emma looks at Sydney, and WINKS one eye. Then the other.

EXT. BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL - A LITTLE LATER

They walk up the stairs to the school. Before they enter --

EMMA

Hey Syd, important question. Has it
been bad for you at home lately?

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)
 (off Sydney's nod)
 You wanna talk about it?

SYDNEY
 Mom...yells a lot. And I just...I
 don't like her new special friend.

Holy crap. Emma's head spins. Sydney continues --

SYDNEY (CONT'D)
 She has sleepovers with him. He
 makes mushy waffles.

EMMA
 How many nights is he there?`

SYDNEY
 Since Daddy got sick? Most of them.

On Emma, biting her tongue.

INT. BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - LATER

Through the glass partition we can see Sydney -- with PATRICK,
 who is administering the IQ test.

INTERCUT as Emma talks on her cell to Jake.

JAKE
 (into phone)
 Emma, I am as shocked as you are. I
 had absolutely no idea my Patrick
 was filling in for Mrs. MacKenzie
 while she's on maternity leave.

EMMA
 You? Are ridiculous.
 (looks in at Sydney)
 I think they're almost done.

JAKE
 Then tell me real quick, how long
 has it been going on with Jeannie's
 "special friend?" And who is he?!

EMMA
 Syd won't say yet -- she's learned
 from the best how to stuff everything
 important deep down.
 (then)
 This'll help our custody case, yes?

JAKE
 This'll help our custody case. Yes.

There's a KNOCK on the window. Patrick is smiling at Emma.

EMMA

Oops -- gotta go.

JAKE

Go. Oh, also? You should make sweet love to him.

INT. BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL TESTING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Emma and Patrick talk.

PATRICK

Mrs. MacKenzie says the standard waiting time for results on the Stanford-Binet is about two days. So, now we wait.

(then)

You're a brain shrinker, right?

EMMA

That is the technical term, yes.

(smiles)

You know, if you ever feel like you need to talk, about...issues or --

PATRICK

Oh, no -- I don't do...that. No.

(inscrutable)

I'm okay.

(changing the subject)

You wanna grab dinner sometime?

EMMA

(smiles)

I'm on to you, Mister.

PATRICK

Here's hopin'.

EMMA

I mean, I lived in a city filled with your type. You charm the pants off of everyone -- and I do mean everyone -- but you never actually let anyone in.

PATRICK

Says the woman who's never been married.

EMMA

Says the man who's probably slept his way from Monroe to Loganville.

PATRICK

Don't sell me short, lady. I spend a lot of time in Atlanta, too.
(smiles that smile)
I, umm...you're different.

EMMA

And I bet you've never said that to absolutely everyone.

He SMILES. She shakes her head -- he's almost irresistible.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - LATER

Jake and Emma talk in the kitchen.

JAKE

What do you think?

EMMA

I'm usually not a fan of skipping grades but I think, in this case, it might be less jarring for her stay close to home and go to *this* school with older kids than to bus all the --

JAKE

Of Patrick.

EMMA

Wh -- seriously?! I'm smack in the middle of a hideously inappropriate relationship that I have to call off despite the fact I can't stop thinking about him. My cup runneth over.

JAKE

Right, but if you were at all healthy at the moment...

EMMA

Then, I don't know. He's...sexy -- so very very sexy -- but he's got a gold medal in manslutting...

JAKE

It's an official sport?

EMMA

And he's not even my type! I like men fueled by equal parts self hatred and single malt. He's a little "Zen and the Art of Door Jambs" for me...

Emma's phone rings. She picks up without looking.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Hello?

FRANK (V.O.)
 Yes, I've done something stupid for
 love.

Emma's shocked. She knows exactly who this is.

EMMA
 (into phone)
 Where can I meet you -- your office?

FRANK (V.O.)
 My home.

Emma hangs up. She excitedly turns to Jake.

EMMA
 That was Frank. I gotta scram.

Emma starts to go then turns around. Oops --

EMMA (CONT'D)
 Where does he live?

Jake writes down an address. Emma starts to go again, then --

EMMA (CONT'D)
 Are you taking care of our kid?

JAKE
 You didn't leave before remembering
 to ask. See? This whole motherhood
 thing fits you like a glove.

EMMA
 Shut up. It's a steep learning curve
 I'm on...

JAKE
 I'm taking care of our kid.
 (smiles)
 We're a good team.

EMMA
 Thank God you're gay or this could
 be very confusing.

Jake starts to say something, but the DOORBELL rings. Jake
 opens it to find Patrick, toolbox in hand.

PATRICK
 Hi, Jake. Hey, Emma.

Emma shoots a look to Jake. Jake smiles coyly.

JAKE

Patrick graciously offered to help
fix the woodwork in the kitchen.

(pointedly)

Maybe he can fix your perclackity
later. Now, go!

Emma shakes her head and EXITS.

EXT. FRANK'S HOUSE - LATER

Frank sits on the porch -- it's decorated with NUMEROUS
CARVINGS. This is a man with a lot of time on his hands.

Emma approaches. She looks at each of the soldier figures.

EMMA

General, Sergeant...evening,
Lieutenant...stand down, Private...

Frank doesn't crack a smile. He can't make eye contact.

FRANK

My son died.

EMMA

(floored)

Wh -- oh, my God, Frank -- when?!

FRANK

Seventeen years ago.

(off Emma)

He was the town's electrician. I
make them keep the light that way
'cause he put it in. Most people
don't remember that...

EMMA

Frank, I'm sorry. I truly am.

FRANK

I heard you're staying.

EMMA

Small town. Gossip. Lifeblood.

FRANK

Now, I still don't believe in your
New Agey Soho crap. My ex-wife and
I tried it once after Andrew passed
and it helped so much that she left
me. Only idiots think that touchy
feely witchcraft works.

EMMA

(sweetly)

Don't mince words, Frank, let it all out.

Frank lets out half a chuckle, and says nothing for a beat.

FRANK

But I do understand doing something that makes no sense 'cause you love somebody.

He doesn't continue. Emma does, very cautiously --

EMMA

If it's okay to ask, what happened to your son?

FRANK

(softly)

Drunk driver.

EMMA

What happened to that driver?

FRANK

Hit and run.

Emma takes that in, then gently pushes forward.

EMMA

And what would you do if you saw him? Have you thought about it?

Frank can't look at her. This is new. And hard.

FRANK

I'd hurt him.

(defensive)

Wouldn't you if you were me?

EMMA

I'd want to. But...I'd try to get help. And I'd...talk about it.

(gently)

And I wouldn't aim that hurt at someone who doesn't deserve it.

Frank looks at her for a beat, and then at the ground again for a long time. Without looking up --

FRANK

You telling me you really think you can help Scott?

EMMA

Yes Frank, I really think I can.

He looks up -- his emotional armor on once again.

FRANK

I want to know who gave him those drugs to sell. I want him to cover all the damage he caused in the wreck. And I want you to get his head straight -- or whatever of his needs straightening.

(then)

And if it doesn't work? Prison.

(off Emma's nod)

You tell anyone we spoke? Prison.

EMMA

I think we should examine your preoccupation with incarceration.

FRANK

I still don't trust you.

EMMA

I still don't trust you, either.

FRANK

Nice that we agree on something.

EMMA

You made a joke, Frank! I --

Frank wordlessly walks inside. Emma sighs.

INT. EMMA'S NEW OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

Emma picks up the nameplate on the desk, walks to the hall and starts putting it up by her door. Permanently.

EMMA (V.O.)

We all spend a lot of time trying to circumnavigate pain.

There's a KNOCK at the door. It's Katie. Her BANDAGES *almost* completely hidden by her LONG SLEEVES.

INT. CHRISTOPHER'S HOUSE - JEANNIE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Jeannie is on the bed, rifling through a large bag COMPLETELY FILLED with OVER THE COUNTER and PRESCRIPTION drugs.

EMMA (V.O.)

Sometimes, we pick the unhealthiest ways we can find to dull it.

Hank ENTERS, with a plate of (mushy) waffles. Jeannie hands him some VICODIN, pops some herself, and KISSES him hard...

INT. EMMA'S NEW OFFICE - LATER

Emma starts to hang the picture of her and her brother on the wall. There's a KNOCK on the door. She answers.

EMMA (V.O.)
 Personally? I'm hoping life works
 like that rock tumbler we played
 with when we were kids.

It's Scott. He stands for a beat, then HUGS Emma. Tight.

EXT. MAIN STREET - SAME TIME

Frank stands alone at the crosswalk, looking at the light for a very long time. Finally, he presses the crosswalk button, quietly and stubbornly counts to ten, then crosses.

EMMA (V.O.)
 That it knocks us around a lot...

He looks back at the light and gives a world weary SIGH.

INT. JAKE'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Jake sits at his computer. After a long beat, he brings up pictures of him with his ex. It's CHRISTOPHER!

EMMA (V.O.)
 ...but ultimately makes us shinier
 and more polished versions of
 ourselves.

Jake looks at shots of them on vacations, making funny faces, kissing. He stares for a long time, still very much in love with the man who broke his heart many years ago.

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL - CHRISTOPHER'S ROOM - LATER

Emma is sitting by her brother. She continues --

EMMA
 And hopefully makes us exactly what
 we're supposed to be. Exactly when
 we're supposed to be it.
 (then)
 I'm staying, Chris. I'm in. Now
 come back, dammit, Sydney needs you.
 (hard for her)
 And I do, too.

She lovingly pushes a lock of hair out of his eyes and looks at him for a long beat. Then, very very tentatively --

EMMA (CONT'D)
 (softly singing)
*I am Pippi Longstocking. When you
 say it fast it's funn...*

But she can't finish. Because the tears finally come.

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL - PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Emma is walking to her car, exhausted. Her phone RINGS. She looks at it for a beat, then sends it to VOICEMAIL.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - THAT NIGHT

Emma comes through the door. Jake meets her. He whispers --

JAKE
 Patrick's still in the kitchen. He got very hot so he took his shirt off, but I'm sure it had nothing to do with me turning the heater on.

EMMA
 Okay, seriously, this trying to get me laid locally stuff was so damn funny the first thirty seven times...

Emma's phone RINGS. She looks, then sends it to VOICEMAIL.

JAKE
 Culdesac?

EMMA
 Yeah. I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna break up with him. It's just not the right time.
 (then)
 How is our little bundle of joy?

From upstairs --

SYDNEY (O.S.)
 (singing)
*I AM PIPPI LONGSTOCKING! WHEN YOU
 SAY IT FAST IT'S FUNNY!*

EMMA
 She sings that when she's stressed.
 What's wrong?!

Jake starts to answer, but Emma runs up the stairs.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - SYDNEY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sydney is SMILING and happily decorating her room.

SYDNEY
 (singing)
 PIPPI PIPPI LONGSTOCKING. HOW I
 LOVE MY FUNNY NAME!

Jake looks at Emma. He takes her hand.

JAKE
 Nothing. Nothing is wrong.

Sydney looks up and SMILES. She looks happier than we've ever seen her.

The doorbell RINGS.

EMMA
 I'll get it.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Emma opens the door. There, standing in front of her, is "Culdesac." Very simply --

CULDESAC
 I left her. I choose you. Come home.

Before she can speak, he KISSES her hungrily. She can't stop him. Or herself. She was right -- it's electric.

It gets more and more heated as he pulls her out to the porch, closing the door behind them.

INT. EMORY HOSPITAL - CHRISTOPHER'S ROOM - LATER

Christopher lies in his bed. The usual sounds of the hospital can be heard in the BG. He doesn't move a muscle.

Suddenly, his eyes OPEN. He seems slightly more alert than last time. He blinks once. Twice. Then, after a beat, the screen smashes to -

BLACK.

THE END