

Life As We Know It

by

Ian Deitchman & Kristin Rusk Robinson

Gold Circle Revision
9/21/07

UNDER BLACK:

We hear a KNOCK ON A DOOR.

FADE IN:

ON AN APARTMENT DOOR. It opens to reveal

HOLLY BERENSON, late 20's, in the doorway of her apartment. In the hall is ERIC MESSER, also late 20's.

MESSER

Holly?

HOLLY

Eric?

MESSER

Messer. Everybody calls me Messer.

They size each other up. He's a little unkempt - unshaven wearing jeans and a baseball cap. She's a little more put together - a dress and heels.

Not at all what they were each expecting.

HOLLY

Well it's good to finally meet you, Messer.

MESSER

You too. You ready?

HOLLY

Yeah...
(she's been waiting)
More than ready.

MESSER

Sorry I'm a little late.

HOLLY

It's okay.
(light)
Alison told me it's your M.O.

MESSER

(nods/teasing back)
Yeah, Peter said you'd probably say something.

They both LAUGH POLITELY. Then a beat of awkward silence. They've already gotten off on the wrong foot.

EXT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Holly and Messer exit. Messer walks towards his classic 1975 Norton Commando motorcycle. Hands her a helmet.

MESSER

Here you go.

HOLLY

Uh...

(hands him the helmet
right back)

How about I drive? If you don't
mind. I've only had it a month.

BOOP-BOOP. She unlocks her gleaming, new VW Beetle.

Messer looks at her tiny little car. Underwhelmed.

MESSER

(as he gets in)

Okay, but you're missing out on a
classic ride. That's a '75 Commando.

Holly slams the door shut on him. He couldn't look more cramped. Holly gets in. Turns on the car. Messer rolls down the window to give himself some breathing room.

Holly adjusts a Gerber daisy in a built-in "bud vase" so it faces Messer. Perfect. It sends a chill up his spine.

She powers up the GPS NAVIGATIONAL SYSTEM. Begins happily programming her address as the start address.

Messer watches as she meticulously types in the info. Then she brings up the DESTINATION menu. Turns to Messer...

HOLLY

So, where did you want to eat?

Beat.

MESSER

You know what? Maybe we should
just call it a night.

HOLLY

What?

MESSER

Look, let's just be honest with each
other. The moment you opened the
door you knew you didn't like me.

Holly's stunned. She starts to protest.

MESSER (CONT'D)

It's okay. You're not exactly my type either. I mean, I don't know how many of these things you've been on, but you know if it's going to work out in the first three minutes. So...

HOLLY

So... you don't even want to go to dinner?

MESSER

No, I do. Just not with you.

Holly's flabbergasted.

HOLLY

Are you kidding me?!

MESSER

That came out wrong. I'm just saying, you're obviously not interested in me, right?

HOLLY

Well... no...

MESSER

And I'm not interested in you, so why should we put ourselves through the whole charade?

HOLLY

Because it's polite. Because our *mutual* friends arranged this and it meant a lot to them. Because that's what you DO on a blind date!

Messer remains very calm, secure that he's made the right decision - for both of them.

MESSER

So you're saying you'd rather go through with a date that you KNOW is going to be lousy?

HOLLY

(flustered)

Yes! I mean, no... I mean... What kind of a cynical asshole are you...?

MESSER

Actually, I'm more of a practical asshole.

HOLLY

...It's just basic manners. When you say "Yes Peter, I'll go out with your friend Holly", and I say, "Yes Alison, I'll go out with your friend Messer," we enter into a social contract. And we go out on a date!

MESSER

(beat)
All right, if you really want to get dinner.

Messer pulls the seat belt down and buckles himself in.

HOLLY

Oh my God, no! Are you kidding me? Forget it! I'm not going out with you now.

In the same movement, Messer unbuckles himself. The seat belt recoils with a happy ZIP. He's free.

MESSER

Okay, if you say so.

Messer gets out of the car, puts on his motorcycle helmet. Holly gets out too. She's beside herself.

HOLLY

By the way, you were FORTY FIVE minutes late!

Messer starts up his bike with a ROAR, startling Holly.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I don't know what Alison and Peter were thinking!

MESSER

Me neither!

Messer waves to her as he pulls away.

She watches him ride off, stunned.

FADE OUT:

MUSIC UP AND UNDER: The classic Sesame Street duet, ONE FINE FACE, as sung by Ernie and a very screechy, nails-on-chalkboard Elmo.

SUPER TITLE: **THREE YEARS LATER**

FADE IN:

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S SUV - DAY

ON MESSER AND HOLLY, together in the back seat.

Wedged uncomfortably on either side of SOPHIE, a happy one year old in her car seat. She's enjoying Ernie and Elmo on the car stereo.

There are balloons and party supplies in the back cargo area.

Her parents, PETER AND ALISON NOVACK, 30's, are in the front, singing the duet right along with Ernie and Elmo.

ALISON
(singing Ernie's part)
"I've got two eyes..."

PETER
(doing Elmo)
"Oh, got two eyes!"

ALISON
"So I can see..."

PETER
"Yes, eyes can see...!"

ALISON	PETER
"I've got two ears to	(overlapping)
listen to what you say	"...What you say to me!"
to..."	

MESSER and HOLLY are each in their own individual hell.

Peter and Alison are amused at their friends' plight. It only makes them sing louder. Off Messer and Holly...

TITLE CARD: **LIFE AS WE KNOW IT**

The SUV drives through an attractive Cleveland suburb.

EXT. SUBURBAN COLONIAL HOUSE - DAY

It's a beautiful Spring day.

We PUSH IN on the house. A lush oak tree on the front lawn, SUV in the driveway. BIRTHDAY BALLOONS adorn the porch light.

EXT. HOUSE - BACK YARD

Peter and Messer work together hanging swings on a huge play set.

There's a giant bow attached to the top - Sophie's big birthday gift. This is fully loaded - baby swing, adult swing, slide, tire... They're almost done.

It's a cool day. Peter wears a handsome leather bomber jacket.

PETER

I saw the game the other night.

Peter picks up a basketball on the driveway.

MESSER

Oh yeah? Did you see that slo-mo shot of Dwayne Wade's behind the back stuff?

PETER

No!

MESSER

(sarcastic)

Yeah, nobody did. Burke didn't feel we could take the time to show it. But what do I know?

Messer looks at the swing set, wipes away some sweat.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Geez, you couldn't hire somebody to put this together?

PETER

It's her birthday gift. I'm not going to have a stranger do it. Hand me the Makita.

MESSER

(hands it to him)

By the way, I've got a west coast road trip coming up. You should come with me again. We'll hit Vegas on the way back.

PETER

Uh... I don't know, work is kind of tight these days.

MESSER

Come on, I've got comps at the Bellagio...

(off Peter's look)

What, you can't get away for one weekend?

PETER

Honestly, I don't really want to.

Messer looks at Peter. Where has my friend gone?

MESSER

Don't really want to? Vegas,
craps, poker, free drinks! You're
physically hurting me here.

Peter laughs. Tosses him the ball, changing the subject.

PETER

C'mon, I'll play you to twenty.
We'll get the rest later.

There's a hoop on the driveway. Peter takes off his
leather jacket. Messer checks the ball.

MESSER

I'm just going to kick your ass.

PETER

Right.

Messer shoots a brick. Peter grabs the rebound.

PETER (CONT'D)

So where's Laura?

MESSER

Uh, that didn't really work out.

Peter head fakes Messer. Takes an outside shot. Swish.

MESSER (CONT'D)

God-damnit, I've got three inches
on you!

PETER

Yeah but I'm scrappy.

(beat)

So what happened? I thought you got
her her own helmet.

MESSER

I know. I just didn't see us on that
long march towards death together.

PETER

(classic Messer)

As long as it didn't have anything
to do with your life-affirming
attitude.

Messer squares off in front of him, dribbling the ball.

MESSER

Hey, I'm just realistic.

Messer shoots. SMACK! Peter blocks the ball back into Messer's face. Messer flails his arms. "Aaaah!"

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Holly expertly puts the final touches on a seven layer birthday cake for Sophie. There are a number of hors d'oeuvres platters on the counter in boxes labeled FRAICHE. Alison bounces Sophie on her knee. She notices the completed swing set.

ALISON

Look at that. They actually accomplished something.

(beat)

Do you think that thing is safe?

HOLLY

You won't catch me on Messer's swing.

Sophie reaches for the frosting bowl.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Oh, somebody wants some frosting.

Holly takes Sophie on her lap. Dips her finger into the frosting bowl. Feeds a little bit to Sophie.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Mmm, sugar!

(to Alison)

She is SO Peter's daughter.

Holly showers Sophie with playful kisses on her neck. Sophie laughs.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Who loves the Sophie girl?!

Alison watches the two of them together, smiling.

ALISON

So... I finally met our new neighbor. I think he's divorced, but no kids...

HOLLY

Aren't you tired of setting me up?

ALISON

No.

(beat)

Are you tired of me setting you up?

HOLLY

I don't know. No. Actually yes.

(off Alison's expression)

Oh, don't...

ALISON

What? I didn't say anything.

HOLLY

I know that look.

ALISON

It's just, he seems like a really nice guy...

HOLLY

I appreciate all the effort, but...
I'm happy, just like this.

(gestures to the
catering boxes)

After four years of catering out of my kitchen, Frank and I finally have an actual storefront. I'm a business owner! Things are good. I love my life. Really.

Alison stares at her - not sure she's buying it.

ALISON

Really...?

Holly puts an arm around her friend.

HOLLY

Stop worrying about me. You just keep having the babies and I'll keep spoiling them with seven layer cakes. Okay?

Alison nods.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

See, there it is again.

ALISON

(laughing)

No that wasn't the look. I swear.

THE DOORBELL RINGS. AMY, 16, Holly's helper/baby-sitter sticks her head in the kitchen.

AMY

First guests. Come on, Sophie.

Amy picks Sophie up and they all head to the front door.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - DAY

The birthday party is well under way. Guests, adults and children, mingle, eat, drink.

Messer moves towards the living room where most of the folks are, but TWO WOMEN block the living room doorway with their backs. Messer recognizes them from behind.

MESSER

(flirting)

Look who it is. I don't know
which of you two I've missed m...

The women both turn in to reveal BIG PREGNANT BELLIES.

MESSER (CONT'D)

(surprised)

Whoa!

THE WOMEN TOGETHER

Messer!

Belly-to-belly, they effectively block the doorway.

MESSER

How are you...? Each of you...
(at the bellies)
all... of you?

THE WOMEN TOGETHER

Good, good.

MESSER

Great, great.... Uh, I'm just
going to grab myself a drink.

He squeezes past them.

ANGLE ON HOLLY - She walks towards the living room as well. She too has to squeeze past the pregnant ladies. She carries a PERFECTLY ARRANGED TRAY OF FRUIT.

HOLLY

Pardon me.

The Pregnant women turn their bellies but keep gossiping.

PREGNANT WOMAN #1
(sensitively)
Did she have any tearing?

PREGNANT WOMAN #2
Oh yeah. Stem to stern.

Holly chokes on an Hors d'oeuvres at the sound of that.
The women look concerned, Holly scoots away from them.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Holly and Messer are at opposite ends of a group of
PARENTS gossiping about day care. Toddlers and babies
are everywhere.

MOTHER #1
(mid-conversation)
...she's in pod six, but I really
think she's ready for seven.

FATHER #2
Don't rush her though. Seven's a
big group and the ratio is one to
NINE.

MOTHER #1
Really, that high?

MOTHER #2
...and seven's entirely dry.

This is Greek to Messer and Holly. They look at each
other - ACUTELY AWARE THAT THEY'RE THE ODD ONES OUT.

MESSER
I hope you didn't come here
looking to get laid.

HOLLY
Don't worry Messer, the party'll
be over soon and you'll be back
trolling the internet where you
belong.

With that, the two of them go their separate ways.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Holly mixes up fresh-made guacamole to compliment a tray
of chips and salsa. Peter pops his head in the kitchen.

PETER
There you are. Why are you hiding?

HOLLY

I'm not hiding.

(off Peter's look)

Well, what do you expect? Could there be more pregnant women at this party? All I need is a couple conceiving in the next room and we'd have the whole "miracle of life" cycle under one roof.

Peter kisses Holly on the cheek. Puts an arm around her.

PETER

Come on, let's have your cake.

IN THE DINING ROOM - LATER

All the guests are crowded around singing "Happy Birthday." Sophie sits in her high chair. Holly's MASSIVE CHOCOLATE CAKE is in front of her.

ON MESSER AND HOLLY - They stand behind the other guests. Messer leans in to Holly.

MESSER

Great gift with that jewelry kit.
Two words for you - choking hazard.

HOLLY

Oh, 'cause she's going to be using that baseball mitt real soon.

MESSER

Hey, she's got a great arm.
(off Holly's look)
You know, some girls aren't limited to the kitchen.

Holly elbows Messer. "Ooof!" The crowd finishes singing. Peter and Alison help Sophie blow out the candle. Beat. Sophie drops her face into the cake. Everyone applauds.

THE LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

All the guests are gone save for Holly and Messer. Holly helps Alison clean up after the party, while Peter digs through his wife's purse to pay their baby-sitter, Amy.

Messer sits on the couch with Sophie curled up in his lap. She's drinking milk from her bottle. Sophie points to a stuffed toy duck on the coffee table.

SOPHIE

-uck!

MESSER

What's that? Hey, she said duck.

Alison smiles. Puts a warm hand on Messer's back.

ALISON

Yeah, she's getting words. It's crazy.

Messer gives Sophie the toy duck. She holds it in one hand, goes back to her bottle. Peter hands Amy two twenties as she leaves.

PETER

Thanks for all the help, Amy.

Sophie reaches up and touches Messer's chin. Messer talks right to her.

MESSER

Nice, huh? Smooth. There aren't many ladies I shave for.

Peter smiles, looking at the two of them.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Hey, what time is it?

Holly looks at her watch.

HOLLY

Six fifteen. If you wore a watch you'd know that.

Messer shrugs.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Or owned a cell phone.

MESSER

I don't need a cell phone.

HOLLY

Messer, everyone has a cell phone.

MESSER

Well, unlike everyone, I prefer to exist off the grid.

Holly scoffs. Messer gestures to her watch.

MESSER (CONT'D)

You keep your watch on during sex, don't you?

HOLLY

It's better than wearing a
baseball cap twenty four/seven.
You can take it off, Messer. We
know about the bald spot.

Peter interrupts with four glasses of champagne.

PETER

Guys, guys... either can it or get
a room already.

ALISON

(presenting the bottle)
We've got a little present for the
adults. We wanted to have a mini-
celebration with Sophie's two
favorite people.

Alison and Peter hold their glasses up to toast.

ALISON (CONT'D)

To Sophie's first birthday...

PETER

And to our two best friends. No
one knows us better than you guys.
We love you.

Everybody toasts. Peter grabs his old school 35mm camera.

PETER (CONT'D)

Here, I want to get a picture.

HOLLY

Peter...

PETER

Come on, I got one more picture
and my roll's done.

Peter gestures for her to join Messer on the couch.

PETER (CONT'D)

Go on, sit down.

Holly sits down next to Sophie and Messer.

PETER (CONT'D)

Get in close there. Closer.

Holly and Messer look uncomfortable as they scoot together.

FLASH!

CUT TO BLACK:

SUPER TITLE: **SUMMER**

FADE IN:

EXT. CLEVELAND - PARK - DAY

CLOSE ON - A WATER SPRINKLER, pulsing jets of water. A few ten year old boys and girls play in the sprinkler.

ON MESSER - Jogging along the sidewalk, shirtless. He's starting to overheat. He takes his cap off and runs through the sprinkler, eliciting some yelps from the kids. Messer puts his cap in his back pocket, jogs on.

Up ahead of him, he notices a SEXY WOMAN jogging.

Messer slicks back his wet hair. Runs to catch up with her. Slows down just before he reaches her. Suddenly self-conscious about his hair. Beat.

Messer PUTS HIS CAP ON. Jogs back up alongside the sexy jogger. They smile at each other. Messer loses the headphones. She does the same. And they jog off together.

INT. FRAICHE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

FRAICHE is a hip little specialty food shop/restaurant in the heart of downtown Cleveland. An intimate dining area sits across from the high-end deli counter.

Holly is behind the counter wearing a chef's jacket, talking on the phone. FRANK RAGUSO, 30's, Holly's partner, stands next to her chopping celery at an insane pace. He's a big, hulking guy - looking more like a Teamster than a chef as he minces veges.

HOLLY

(into phone)

...we'll go over the final menus
on Friday. Great. No, thank you!

Holly hangs up the phone. Turns to Frank, excited.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

We're in. We booked the Riverside!

FRANK

(excited)

Holy fuck! Are you kidding me?

HOLLY

Only took three years. But we're in!

FRANK
(finishing her thought)
Man, am I glad I went to culinary
school with you!

Excited, Frank picks her up in a bear hug - he's like a
big brother to her.

HOLLY
Put me down. I hate when you do
that.

Frank releases her. Notices a HANDSOME CUSTOMER pass
outside the storefront window.

FRANK
Hey, Free-Range Turkey is here.

Holly looks up. Spots the extremely attractive man, SAM
(30's), about to enter their store.

HOLLY
Don't call him that.

FRANK
Wrecking the fantasy for you?

HOLLY
He's just a regular customer.
There's no fantasy. I treat him
like everybody else.

She turns to the handsome customer as he enters. Lights up.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
(effusive/fawning)
Hi... The usual today?

SAM
Free range turkey.

Frank can't help but smile.

SAM (CONT'D)
I'm addicted.

HOLLY
That's the goal.

She starts to prepare the sandwich - free range turkey
breast on a baguette with arugula, Granny Smith apple,
pickled red onion and Brie.

SAM
I think you may have created the
perfect sandwich.

HOLLY

It's the Brie.

SAM

No, I think it's the Granny Smith apple.

(beat)

Actually, did you ever think of using Stilton instead of the Brie?

HOLLY

No. I thought it was the perfect sandwich?

SAM

(laughs)

Uh oh, now I've offended you. Forget I said anything. It's the perfect sandwich by the perfect chef.

HOLLY

No, no... Tell you what...

She cuts the sandwich in half. Puts Brie on one half and Stilton blue cheese on the other. Wraps it up and hands him the sandwich.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Half Brie, half blue. On the house. You report back to me.

Sam smiles. She's cute.

SAM

Alright, you got it. Thanks...

(reading the
embroidered name on
her Chef's apron)

Holly.

HOLLY

You're welcome.

He takes out his business card.

SAM

(flirting)

I'm throwing my hat in the ring.

Attempting suave, Sam tosses his card at a glass bowl on the counter marked, "WIN A FREE LUNCH". Misses. Sheepishly picks the card up, places it in the bowl.

He turns and exits. The minute he's gone she fishes out his business card. It reads, "NELSON ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN". His name - SAM NELSON. She smiles, pleased.

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Holly is in a bathrobe, preparing tea. She picks up the cordless phone. Dials Alison's cell. Gets her voice mail.

HOLLY
(into phone)
Hey, I have a boy story for you.
Call me, call me. I'll be up late.

She hangs up. Turns out the light and walks into...

HER BATHROOM. A huge, claw-foot bathtub is filled with bubbles, ready for her. Holly lights a few candles. This is her ritual.

She sinks into the tub. Dunks her head under the water completely, disappearing from frame for a moment. Beat. Holly surfaces, smiles to herself. Relaxed.

From the pocket of her bathrobe, Holly grabs SAM'S BUSINESS CARD. She takes a breath. Picks up the phone and dials. His answering machine picks up.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
(leaving a message)
Hi it's Holly... from Fraiche. I
just wanted to see where you
weighed in on the Stilton... you
know, over the Brie...
(she cringes)
Anyway, I'm sure I'll see you...

BEEP. She's interrupted by call waiting.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Oh... uh...
(presses call waiting/
assuming it's Alison)
Hey, I'm actually on the other
line with...

Beat. Not who she thought it was.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Oh... Yes, this is she.

Holly listens.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
(stunned)
What?
(beat)
Wait, wait. Let me find a pen...

She fumbles out of the tub.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Holly leans against a wall. A FEMALE OFFICER talks to her.

OFFICER

(calmly)
...the highway patrol officer at
the scene found your name and
number on the insurance contact
card in her wallet.

Holly nods numbly.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

We need numbers for the nearest
next of kin. Can you supply those?

HOLLY

(struggling)
Yes... Pete's dad... yes I have it.

OFFICER

This is a lot, I know. Are you
sure you wouldn't feel more
comfortable sitting down?

HOLLY

(absorbing all this)
No. No.
(then focused)
They have a daughter, was she with
them? Was she in the car with them?

OFFICER

No. There was no child at the scene.

HOLLY

Well where is she?

OFFICER

The child...

HOLLY

Sophie, her name is Sophie.

OFFICER

She was in the care of a minor, a
babysitter, at the time of the
accident so officers placed her
with CPS. She's perfectly...

HOLLY

(cutting her off)
CPS?

OFFICER
Child Protective Services. She'll
be perfectly safe...

HOLLY
Physically, where is she?

OFFICER
With a foster family, one with
experience in cases like this...

HOLLY
Cases like this...

OFFICER
Orphaned children.

HOLLY
Jesus.

INT. BROADCAST TRUCK - NIGHT

Messer stands behind a row of TAPE OPERATORS in the back of this broadcast truck. He wears headsets which allow him to communicate with BURKE, 60's, the director, who sits in the front of the truck.

RUDY, 30's, Messer's buddy, is the TECHNICAL DIRECTOR - he works the SWITCHER next to Burke. MIKE, the PRODUCER, 40's and sour, stands behind them watching it all.

They're broadcasting an INDIANS/TWINS game. The pace is frenetic as the director calls the shots.

INTERCUT BETWEEN FRONT AND BACK OF THE TRUCK.

MESSER
(into headset)
I've got an awesome Shannon Stewart
dive cued up. It's a Sportscenter
moment, Burke.

BURKE
Ready four, take four.
(into headset)
Our viewers are Indians fans, Messer.

MESSER
No, they're baseball fans. Help
me out, Rudy.

RUDY
He's right.

BURKE
(defensive)
I'M the director here Messer, not you.

MESSER
And Mike's the producer. Whadd'ya
say, Mike?

The phone in the back of the truck rings.

MESSER (CONT'D)
That's ESPN calling. They know I'm
right.

Mike looks at Burke. Messer's right.

RUDY
Show the replay, Burke.

BURKE
(sighs)
Fine. Ready replay.

Messer smiles, victorious. The phone is still ringing.

MESSER
Cued. Will somebody get that?

Mike answers the phone. Turns to Messer.

MIKE
It's for you.

Mike's not at all happy that Messer's getting a personal
phone call during the game

MIKE (CONT'D)
Holly Berenson?

Messer looks confused.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Messer pulls up to the front of the police station on his
motorcycle. Parks and gets off the bike.

Through the glass doors he can see Holly in the lobby.

Beat. Messer walks into the police station.

WE REMAIN OUTSIDE. Watch as Messer holds Holly. She
crumbles in tears.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - MORNING

The morning sun pours through the windows, illuminating different parts of the quiet, empty house.

An UPRIGHT PIANO with an open book of children's sheet music. Alison's old, over-sized DIAPER BAG. Half a pan of BROWNIES on the kitchen counter.

REVEAL - Holly and Messer are here.

Holly sits on the couch. Messer walks around, antsy. They both look emotionally drained and exhausted.

Messer walks into PETER'S DEN. It's surreal, this empty house. He notices PETER'S LEATHER BOMBER JACKET lying on the floor. Messer bends down, picks it up.

Holly steps into the doorway. She didn't want to be alone. Watches Messer as he hangs Peter's jacket gently on the back of a chair. Brushes the shoulders straight.

Beat. The DOORBELL RINGS.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S KITCHEN - DAY

Holly and Messer sit at the kitchen table across from GEORGE DUNNE (40s), Peter and Alison's attorney.

DUNNE

First of all, I just want to say despite what may appear to be legally binding, there are ways around this.

MESSER

(not following)
Okay...

DUNNE

We've got other options...

Holly cuts him off.

HOLLY

I'm sorry Mr. Dunne, I'm confused...

MESSER

Right now we're just really worried about Sophie.

DUNNE

I'm sorry. I just assumed... Peter and Alison didn't speak to you about their guardianship arrangements?

Messer and Holly both shake their heads.

HOLLY

No.

Dunne sighs. This is going to be harder than he thought.

DUNNE

Well I know they intended to. In preparing their will, Peter, Alison and I talked about who should take care of Sophie in the unlikely event that they should both die. They named the two of you.

MESSER

Excuse me?

HOLLY

Us?

They look at each other, stunned.

MESSER

We're not a couple.

DUNNE

I know, and I'll be honest with you - I advised them against making this choice.

He's sizing them up.

DUNNE (CONT'D)

But they thought you knew their daughter best. They were going to talk to you before they made any final decisions. Obviously they didn't get that chance.

Holly and Messer are struggling to comprehend the enormity of this. They're talking over each other.

MESSER

I don't understand. We can't just...

HOLLY

How are we supposed to...?

DUNNE

(trying to keep calm)
Like I said, we've got some options. Peter's father is a possibility for guardianship.

MESSER

Yes. Nate. Exactly.

DUNNE

And beyond that, given Sophie's age it wouldn't be hard to place her with an adoptive family.

HOLLY

Right...

Holly becomes aware of the array of family pictures on the fridge - Peter and Alison with Sophie.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

But... But Peter and Alison named us.

DUNNE

(hesitant)

Yes...

HOLLY

Well, what if we decided to honor Peter and Alison's wishes?

Messer looks overwhelmed at that. Holly has to take a breath herself. What is she saying?

MESSER

She means hypothetically...

HOLLY

Yes. Hypothetically.

DUNNE

Well, they named you. All I have to do is schedule a hearing to grant you permanent custody.

Messer and Holly share a look - the enormity of it hitting them.

MESSER

But Nate's coming?

DUNNE

Yes. Look, let's not get ahead of ourselves. I'm going to arrange a foster care transfer so Sophie can be placed with you today, at least until Nate gets here. CPS thinks she'll adjust best in her own environment so I'd suggest staying here in the interim.

HOLLY

You think we should move in to
their house?

DUNNE

(yes)

For Sophie. For now. Until you
can discuss things with Nate.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Messer and Holly stand in the hallway of this foster
home. It's a little chaotic. A few kids running around.

A CPS OFFICER talks to Messer and Holly.

CPS OFFICER

...obviously she's too young to
understand what's happening, but
she'll certainly feel the absence
of her care givers. Be consistent
with her and stick to routines.

Messer nods, he wants the lecture over, and he wants to
see his best friend's kid.

A weary FOSTER MOTHER appears with SOPHIE dozing in her
arms. Holly catches her breath at the sight of Sophie.
She looks so vulnerable.

MESSER reaches for her. She seems so small in his arms.

MESSER

(gently)
Hey sweetheart...

INT. PETE'S SUV - DAY

Holly and Messer are on either side of the car seat.
They're working to strap Sophie in without waking her.

HOLLY

I got it. Here.

She hands him the car keys. Straps Sophie in.

Messer climbs in the driver's seat. Switches the
ignition. The MEMORY seat starts to adjust itself to
Pete's shorter position, cramping him.

MESSER

God-damnit.

He fiddles with the seat controls, trying to free his contorted body.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Short bastard...

Holly shoots him a look. Messer finally readjusts the seat correctly. Beat. They pull away in silence.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Holly and Messer enter. Messer carries a sleeping Sophie in his arms. Holly talks quietly into her cell phone.

HOLLY

(into phone)

...make sure he delivers cherry tomatoes, because he shorted us last week. Thanks, Frank. No, no, I'm all right. I'll call you later.

Messer places the sleeping 1 year old in a pack and play. Beat. The two look at each other - what now?

MESSER

Mind if I borrow your phone?

Holly hands him her cell. Messer dials his home number. Checks his answering machine. Holly can hear the tinny voice of a flirty woman, clearly one of his dates.

Messer looks at Holly. It's awkward. He erases the message, hangs up. He opens the fridge, roots around.

MESSER (CONT'D)

LITE beer? The least they could have done is stock the fridge with some Boddington's.

She looks at him. But gallows humor is how Messer deals.

MESSER (CONT'D)

You want one?

HOLLY

No.

He opens a beer. Sits down.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Look, I've got this. You don't have to stay here. You can go home.

MESSER

What does that mean? I'm not going home.

HOLLY

I'm just saying I can handle this.

MESSER

And what, I can't?

Suddenly, Holly GASPS IN SURPRISE.

MESSER (CONT'D)

What? What?

HOLLY

She's awake...

We reveal SOPHIE, awake and standing in the Pack and Play. She's pulled herself up, looks rested and happy.

She stares at them blankly. Messer and Holly stare right back. Long beat.

MESSER

(aside to Holly)

What do we do?

Finally, Sophie smiles.

HOLLY

She's smiling. Just keep her happy.

INSTANTLY Messer and Holly are all BIG SMILES, high voices and happy, happy, happy! OVER-COMPENSATION.

MESSER

Hi sweetie, everything's okay!

HOLLY

We're right here! Let's get you out of there.

Holly tickles her. She laughs at the contact.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

(singing)

"The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round..."

Messer joins in.

MESSER AND HOLLY

(singing)

"...round and round.

(MORE)

MESSER AND HOLLY (CONT'D)

The wheels on the bus go round and
round, all through the town."

Beat. They all look at each other again. Then, Sophie's bottom lip starts to quiver.

MESSER

Oh shit, there's gotta be more to
it than that.

HOLLY

Uh... uh...

Messer and Holly look at each other. How do they keep her from crying? Then, Holly swings Sophie up.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Let's see if the Sophie girl is
hungry! Are you hungry for lunch?
I'm going to make you something SO
special...

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Sophie sits in her high chair, fussing big time now. She bangs her baby spoon, yells, cries. She's hungry.

Holly slaves away at the food processor, pureeing some homemade baby food - steamed green beans and yams.

Messer stands next to Sophie, out of patience himself. Gestures, "let's go, let's go..." Holly mixes just the right amount of GINGER into the yams.

MESSER

You're using ginger? You do
realize she's a baby. It doesn't
have to be perfect.

HOLLY

I'm not going to just feed her
anything.
(to Sophie/sweating it)
Almost ready, sweet-pea...

Messer rifles through the cabinets. Where do they keep the baby food? Pulls out a can of Spaghettios.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

(horrified/snobbish)
Spaghettios?!

Holly pours the puree into Sophie's baby plate. Tastes it. Mmmm. Brings it over to her.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
 Here ya go, sweet girl.
 (feeding her)
 Mmm, isn't that good?

Sophie spits the food out. Fusses even more. Pushes Holly's hand away.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
 Come on Sophie. This is the good stuff.

Sophie pushes the bowl of food off her high-chair tray. It lands with a SPLAT on Holly's foot. Holly's wearing flip flops. She looks down at her foot, the pureed mess dripping between her toes.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
 Eugh.

THWAP! Messer opens the can of Spaghettios. As soon as Sophie hears the can open, she calms down - total Pavlovian response. Messer dumps the Spaghettios into a baby bowl and gives it to Sophie. The kid goes to town.

MESSER
 (tastes the Spaghettios)
 Works for me.

Holly sighs, defeated.

HOLLY
 What time does Pete's Dad get here?

MESSER
 Tomorrow.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

A stunningly beautiful summer day. A warm breeze blows across a green lawn.

A black hearse passes through the frame, its headlights on, followed by a procession of limos and cars.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A rental car sits in the driveway.

HOLLY (O.S.)
We're just so glad you're here,
Nate...

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S - LIVING ROOM

Holly and Messer are with PETER'S FATHER, NATE. Nate walks slowly over to the couch, wheeling a small PORTABLE OXYGEN TANK.

HOLLY
...Especially for Sophie.

Messer can't take his eyes off of it. He looks at the thin tube running from the tank to the nose piece that's secured around Nate's ears. This does not bode well.

MESSER
Alison's parents have passed away
so you're really all she's got.

That doesn't seem to register with Nate.

NATE
Thank you for taking care of the
details, with the service. It was
lovely.

Nate settles into the couch. Alison puts Sophie in his arms, being careful of the oxygen tubing. Sophie immediately starts fussing.

NATE (CONT'D)
Is she hungry, or...?

HOLLY
No she ate.

Sophie fusses more loudly.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
It's obviously a big adjustment
for her...

NATE
Oh sure, of course.

Beat.

NATE (CONT'D)
(holding Sophie out)
Maybe she'd be happier with you...

Nate hands her to Holly. Messer takes her and hands her back to Nate.

MESSER

No, no, it just takes her a little while to warm up.

Nate nods. Looks at Sophie.

NATE

She looks just like him...

That hits Holly and Messer. Beat.

HOLLY

It's good to see Sophie with family.

Beat. No one really knows what to say. Sophie climbs off of Nate's lap. Looks curiously at the oxygen tank.

MESSER

So you've got a house in Miami now?

NATE

A condo. A small condo.

Beat. Messer presses the issue.

MESSER

Because, we were hoping... we assumed... Given that Sophie's your only grandchild, it seems to make the most sense that she...

Suddenly, the oxygen NOSE PIECE is RIPPED OFF of Nate's face, startling him. Ohh!

REVEAL - Sophie has knocked the oxygen tank over.

HOLLY

Sophie, no!

Sophie pulls the tubing out of the tank nozzle. Air hisses out of the tank, blowing on Sophie's face, making her giggle. Meanwhile, Nate tries to breathe shallow.

NATE

Little help...

Messer quickly rights the tank, plugs the tube back in.

Holly scoops up Sophie. She's now chewing on Nate's nose piece. Messer pulls it out of her mouth. Wipes it off and hands it back to Nate.

MESSER

Sorry about that. Good as new.

Nate just breathes through his nose piece for dear life, trying to inhale as much oxygen as he can.

Messer and Holly look at each other - there's no way this is going to work.

EXT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Messer and Holly stand in the driveway. Holly holds Sophie in her arms. They watch as Nate's rental car pulls slowly out of the driveway, clipping the curb in the process. He drives off at two miles an hour.

MESSER

Well, that was some quality family time.

HOLLY

We need to call Dunne.

She looks at Messer.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

We can't just leave her with strangers.

Beat. Messer nods, frustrated.

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON A JUDGE'S GAVEL CALLING ORDER.

JUDGE MURDOCH, 50's, a world-weary man presides over this small court, which is basically a nondescript room.

Holly, Messer and Dunne sit in the back of the room.

Holly and Messer look uncomfortable. She wears a business suit, he's got on a blazer and jeans. Sophie stands on the bench between them in a little dress, trying to free herself from her diaper.

Holly distracts Sophie with a cup of Goldfish crackers.

A COURT CLERK brings the session to order.

COURT CLERK

Next case, the matter of Sophie N., index number 05893-01.

DUNNE

(to Holly and Messer)
That's us.

The threesome make their way to a table in front of the judge. This guy is all about moving through his case load, and this one's pretty cut and dry.

But before he says anything, the Judge just looks at Holly, Messer and Sophie, sizing them up. They couldn't look more like a misfit family.

Sophie pulls on Messer's pants leg with her cheddar cheese fingers. More Goldfish. He looks down at her. She's got an orange ring of cheddar around her mouth. He looks back up - the judge is still just taking them in.

Messer and Holly shift, self-conscious at the judge's gaze.

JUDGE MURDOCH
(nods/satisfied)
Yeah... looks about right.
(then...)
Okay. Well, I've read over your submissions, along with the will, of course. And given that you folks were named as guardians, and the only immediate alternative is foster care, I'm going to follow the parents' wishes here...

Messer looks overwhelmed. He's going so fast.

JUDGE MURDOCH (CONT'D)
...However, permanent guardianship will be subject to a six month review by a court appointed social worker...

Sophie starts throwing the goldfish crackers. Hits the Bailiff in the face. Embarrassed, Messer and Holly try to contain her orange hands. They look up to hear...

JUDGE MURDOCH (CONT'D)
...Until that time, I hereby grant joint legal and physical custody of Sophie Christina Novack to Holly Berenson and Eric Messer.

The judge bangs his gavel. Messer and Holly look stunned.

MESSER
That's it?!

The judge is already looking down at the next case on his docket. Dunne can tell that Messer is about to lose it.

DUNNE
That's it.
(trying to move him along)
Thank you, your honor.

MESSER

It took me longer to get my flat screen installed!

That gets the Judge's attention. He looks up.

MESSER (CONT'D)

You're not even going to ask us anything?

JUDGE MURDOCH

Don't need to. You're already there, pal.

MESSER

How do you know we're not drug dealers, or pimps?!

Holly shoots Messer an angry look.

JUDGE MURDOCH

Are you drug dealers or pimps?

MESSER

Uh, no...

JUDGE MURDOCH

I didn't think so. Case closed.

The Judge bangs his gavel again.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - DAY

Messer walks in carrying Sophie. Holly enters behind them, rifling through Alison's giant DIAPER BAG. She leaves the front door open.

MESSER

And here we are. That's it. Just like that...

He puts Sophie down on the floor to play with her toys. Holly is still looking for something for Sophie.

HOLLY

Where is it?

(re: the diaper bag)

God, it's like a Target in here.

MESSER

(continuing)

Next case. Boom. Done. Over!

HOLLY

Messer!

MESSER

What? I'm just telling it like it is.

HOLLY

(shakes her head)

I can't believe they thought this would work.

MESSER

(laughs)

I can. They were so fucking optimistic about everything...

HOLLY

Language...

MESSER

They thought there'd be peace in the God-damned Middle East, for Chrissake!

HOLLY

Language!

(finds what she was looking for)

HERE it is!

Holly pulls Sophie's favorite stuffed toy duck out of the diaper bag. Hands it to her.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Here's Mr. Duckie, sweetie.

(then, turns to Messer)

I think this was a mistake.

MESSER

NOW you're saying that?

HOLLY

I mean you and I doing this *together* is a mistake. I just don't think your lifestyle is compatible with having a kid.

MESSER

Oh, and yours is?

HOLLY

Well, you're not going to find me at the sportsbook in Vegas on any given Saturday.

MESSER

You know, I hate to break it to you Holly, but I'm part of this - no matter how much you don't want me to be.

HOLLY

Fine. Then let's figure out a schedule. I have to work tonight, so I need you to watch her. When are you working?

MESSER

(shrugs)

I don't know, whenever there's a game. Whenever I can.

HOLLY

You can't be more specific than that?

MESSER

I'm trying to move up, okay. What am I supposed to do when the team goes on the road?

HOLLY

Go on the road!

KNOCK, KNOCK. The moment is broken by a knock on the front screen door. Holly and Messer turn to discover A WOMAN IN BUSINESS ATTIRE on the porch, peering in.

WOMAN IN BUSINESS ATTIRE

Hi. I'm Janine Caul. I'm your case worker from social services.

Holly and Messer's eyes go wide. How long has she been standing there? How much did she hear?

HOLLY

Oh...

MESSER

Wow. Already...

JANINE

Already.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Holly and Messer sit nervously across from Janine. Janine has Sophie on her lap. Smiles at her as she speaks. She's not what you'd expect in a social worker - she's positive, supportive even.

JANINE

...Don't worry, I always see regression in these cases. Just pay attention to when she starts verbalizing again.

Messer and Holly nod.

JANINE (CONT'D)

Okay, now the hard stuff. Let's talk about you guys?

HOLLY

Us?

JANINE

How are you two doing?

MESSER

Uh, well it's obviously a pretty big adjustment.

HOLLY

(trying to sound upbeat)
But we're settling in. It's just going to take a little time.

JANINE

And do you have any sense of where you see yourselves in, say, five years?

MESSER

Five years? Uh...

HOLLY

Well...

MESSER

Hopefully I'll be directing games by then.

HOLLY

And we'd like to open a sister restaurant in Newbergh Heights someday...

What about Sophie? Janine holds up her hand.

JANINE

You know what, don't answer that now. Just think about it. We'll talk again.

(holds up her big case
file/making light)

Trust me. We'll talk again.

Messer and Holly smile awkwardly.

JANINE (CONT'D)
 (hands Holly her card)
 Is there's anything I can do to
 help?

Messer and Holly look at each other - not sure how to
 answer. Is that a trick question?

MESSER
 Uh, I don't know... Don't screw us
 over?

Holly blanches. But Janine smiles.

JANINE
 I'll do my best.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - DEN - EARLY EVENING

Sophie watches Teletubbies on TV, mesmerized. Messer
 unpacks, converting Peter's den into his own room. He
 ducks around a low hanging Deco light fixture.

MESSER
 I don't know how you can watch
 that without being stoned.

Messer picks up the remote.

MESSER (CONT'D)
 Actually, game's starting. Time
 for Tubby bye-bye.

Messer switches the channel to the Indians away baseball
 game. Sophie starts screaming. Hits the TV screen.

MESSER (CONT'D)
 Sophie, come on, it's Messer's
 turn now. We take turns here.

But there's no reasoning with an angry, opinionated one-
 year old.

MESSER (CONT'D)
 Fine, fine, here... Do the words
 "pennant race" mean anything to you?!

Messer uses the PICTURE-IN-PICTURE mode to put the
 Teletubbies in a small frame in the corner of the screen.
 Sophie continues to scream and hit the TV.

Messer changes the proportions so that Teletubbies takes up most of the screen. The Indians game is a postage stamp.

MESSER (CONT'D)

There, you happy?

She's not. She yells and slaps at the tiny image of the baseball game. He stands up, SLAMS his head into the LOW HANGING LIGHT FIXTURE.

MESSER (CONT'D)

OWW! You know what Sophie, I think we both need some fresh air.

Messer gives up, turns off the TV.

JUMP CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

Messer wrestles with a Baby Bjorn, trying to figure out how to put it on. Where do his arms go? How do you adjust the size? Sophie watches him struggle with it.

Finally he gets it on. Picks Sophie up and tries to squeeze her into it. But he's putting both of her legs through one leg hole. He stuffs her into it.

MESSER

There we go.

As soon as he takes his hands away Sophie slides through the leg hole and out of frame.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Oh shit!

He picks her up off the floor. She's fine.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Let's not tell your Aunt Holly about that one, okay?

EXT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Messer walks out the front door. Sophie is in the Baby Bjorn, up against his chest. However, she faces towards him - the wrong way for her size and age. He pulls the straps a little tighter. Too tight.

Messer starts off in a light jog down the street. They look ridiculous.

MESSER

Okay, this'll work.

Just then, A SEXY BLONDE JOGGER runs past him. Messer picks up the pace a little, goes after her.

He jogs alongside the sexy blonde, smiles. She looks at him with the Baby Bjorn. Scowls. You're not supposed to jog with that thing.

Sophie's brow furrows as her head bobs up and down. Suddenly, SOPHIE PUKES all over Messer's chest.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Ah Sophie!

Messer stands there, frustrated and dripping. Watches the sexy blonde's cute ass disappear into the distance.

INT. FRAICHE RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Holly pushes a cart of sandwich platters to the walk-in refrigerator. They're closing up for the night.

FRANK

(going over a checklist)
That's it. We're prepped for the
Riverside.

Holly nods. A CUSTOMER knocks on the glass front door.

HOLLY

(yelling over her shoulder)
We're closed!

REVEAL - It's SAM, standing outside the front door.

Holly enters the walk-in refrigerator. Puts the platters on the shelf, ready for tomorrow. She closes her eyes. Leans her head against the shelf. Frank walks in.

FRANK

Free Range Turkey's here.

Holly peers out. Sees Sam standing outside the door. She can't flirt with him. It's too soon. But she walks over and unlocks the front door.

SAM

Hey, we haven't connected on the
phone so I thought I'd...

HOLLY

(cuts him off/not harsh)
Yeah...

(MORE)

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Look, I know I called you, but
this really isn't a good time for
me. Right now.

SAM
(trying to be cute)
Uh oh, who died?

Holly just looks at him.

SAM (CONT'D)
Oh God! Oh, I'm so sorry. Why
would I do that? Why would I make
a joke like that?

HOLLY
It's alright, you didn't know.

SAM
Exactly. I didn't know. I...

Sam looks at her, doesn't know what to say.

HOLLY
Maybe we can just leave it at that.

SAM
We can *absolutely* just leave it at
that. Yes... Okay...

He starts to go. Then turns back.

SAM (CONT'D)
Except to say... I'm not erasing
your message.

Holly cracks a smile, despite herself. On that note, Sam
goes. Holly turns to find Frank.

FRANK
Are you okay? What can I do for you?

Off Holly...

INT. HOLLY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Holly and Frank try to move Holly's giant claw foot
bathtub. Holly's determined, giving it all she has.

As big a guy as Frank is, even he can't budge it. He
finally stands up. Holly keeps trying.

HOLLY
Mother of God!

FRANK

Uh, Holly...

He can't humor her anymore.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I can bench two hundred, and I can
tell you... this tub's not going
anywhere.

Holly sighs. Frank picks up her glass jar of bath beads
and hands it to her. Small consolation.

INT. SOPHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Holly opens the door, peers in. Messer and Sophie are
asleep together in the rocker. Messer in his boxers, a
blanket wrapped around them. Holly closes the door.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

FROM INSIDE THE SHOWER - The shower curtain is pulled
back revealing Holly. She's now wearing a robe and is
armed with her bath beads and a candle. She looks at the
tiny bathtub. No. It's just not going to happen.

She sighs, pulls the curtain closed, knocking over a pail
of plastic TUB TOYS that CLATTER loudly onto the porcelain.

INT. SOPHIE'S ROOM

Messer is still asleep in the rocker. Sophie wakes from
the clatter. Snuggles into Messer's chest. Finds his
nipple and instinctively LATCHES ON.

Messer stirs, smiling at first. "Mmmm..." Then, he
snaps awake, suddenly aware of what Sophie is doing.

MESSER

Aaahh!

FROM THE BATHROOM - Holly hears Messer yell. She hurries
INTO THE HALLWAY as he emerges from the bedroom carrying
a crying Sophie at arms length.

HOLLY

(alarmed)

What? What happened?

Each becomes aware of the other's state of undress - Messer
in his boxers, Holly with her robe open, inadvertently
flashing her underwear to the world. Messer instinctively
looks. Holly realizes and quickly covers herself.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
What's wrong with her?

MESSER
Not her, me. She went for my nipple.

HOLLY
Oh God, she was trying to nurse.

Messer hands her over - breast level.

MESSER
You take her then.

HOLLY
What exactly do you think I'm going to do?!

Sophie WAILS. Messer examines his sore nipple.

MESSER
I don't know, but she's really hungry. I think that's going to leave a scar.

MOMENTS LATER

Sophie is still WAILING, refusing a bottle.

MESSER
She's not hungry.

HOLLY
Her diaper maybe?

MESSER
I changed her, nothing. She hasn't pooped since we brought her home.
(to Sophie)
What Sophie? What can we do?

Holly looks around. They've exhausted most of her toys.

HOLLY
Maybe a bath will calm her.

Messer's game for anything at this point. They carry her into the bathroom.

MOMENTS LATER

Sophie's sitting in the warm tub, her crying has subsided to sniffles.

HOLLY

There, you go... is that better?

MESSER

Thank God.

Holly stares down at Sophie.

CLOSE ON SOPHIE - her brow wrinkles with tremendous force.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Here we go again.

She doesn't cry though. Holly frowns. Watches Sophie. Then...

HOLLY

Oh no.

She lifts Sophie quickly from the water. The baby's legs dangle below frame. Sophie's face is scrunched. It's clear she's getting ready to poop.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

She's going, lift the lid!

Messer tries, but the toilet seat has a baby-proof safety latch on it. In his panic, Messer can't figure it out.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Turn it! Turn it!

MESSER

I am!

Too late.

HOLLY

Catch it with something!

Messer looks around desperately for something, anything. No hand towels on the towel rack. Impulsively, HOLLY TAKES HIS BASEBALL CAP off. Hands it to him.

Messer holds it underneath Sophie's bottom. No choice.

CLOSE ON MESSER'S FACE - He's never known such horror.

MESSER

Holy shit!

HOLLY

Language.

MESSER
 (are you kidding me?)
 Do you see what's happening here?!
 That's vintage!
 (lamenting his cap)
 Oh. Oh God!

Sophie finishes. Holly wraps her in a bath towel. She's calm for the moment.

Messer just stands there, traumatized. Drops his soiled cap into the garbage, and we...

JUMP CUT TO:

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Sophie is upset again, bawling her eyes out. It was a short reprieve. Holly and Messer are at a loss.

HOLLY
 Sssh, Sophie, Sophie what can we do?

MESSER
 What time is it? There must be
 someone we can call.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S FRONT HALL

Holly and Messer open the front door to reveal AMY, the baby-sitter from next door. We look down at this petite teenager, wearing a sweatshirt over Old Navy pjs.

AMY
 (all teenage earnestness)
 I want you to know I really admire
 what you guys are doing.

MESSER
 Sorry about waking your Dad.

AMY
 Oh, he just said that stuff
 because he thought you were this
 guy from school.
 (opens her arms to Sophie)
 Come here Sophie.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S KITCHEN

CLOSE ON - SMALL KITCHEN TV. It's just showing snow and blaring static.

REVEAL - Amy cradles Sophie sideways, rocking her. Turns on the OVEN FAN, adding to the white noise. Makes laps around the kitchen table.

AMY
I don't know why, but this always
seems to work.

It does. Sophie quiets down quickly.

AMY (CONT'D)
I have an exam tomorrow, so...

HOLLY
Right, of course. Thanks.

MESSER
Can I walk you next door?

Holly takes over with Sophie.

AMY
No, I'm good.

With an exchange of THANKS and GOODNIGHTS, Amy's gone.

As soon as the door closes, Sophie starts to WAIL again. Holly tries to rock her the same way, but no luck. Messer desperately turns on more appliances, turns up the static on the TV. It's a cacophony, but nothing's working.

HOLLY
(yelling over the noise)
Maybe if we go for a drive! I think
Peter and Alison used to do that!

Messer grabs the car keys.

MESSER
Fine with me! She has to fall
asleep eventually!

EXT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Messer starts up the SUV. Holly is in the back seat with Sophie, trying to soothe her. They pull out.

WE STAY ON the dark, empty driveway.

DISSOLVE:

AS THE MORNING SUN RISES, illuminating the driveway.

The SUV pulls back in.

INSIDE THE SUV - Holly and Sophie are asleep in the back. The car's headlights illuminate Messer's MOTORCYCLE in front of the garage. Messer sighs. He closes his eyes.

His head falls against the steering wheel in exhaustion. Beat. Beat. THUD! The morning paper hits the back window of the SUV. Messer sits up, startled.

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Holly and Messer enter. Messer carries a sleeping Sophie. The kitchen phone rings. Holly answers it.

HOLLY

Hello?

She hands the phone to Messer.

MESSER

(sleepily into the phone)

Yep.

He listens.

MESSER (CONT'D)

You're kidding me.

(beat/listens)

No, no. I'm up for it. You KNOW

I'm up for it.

(beat)

See you then.

He hangs up. Turns to Holly

MESSER (CONT'D)

That was Rudy. I'm directing the game today.

HOLLY

But I've got the Riverside!

MESSER

(nods)

Right... But you could take her?

HOLLY

Why do I have to take her?

Because I'm the girl?

MESSER

(hopeful)

Uh... yes?

Off Holly...

EXT. JACOB'S FIELD BASEBALL STADIUM - DAY

The Cleveland Indians are taking batting practice.

INT. BROADCAST TRUCK - DAY

Messer sits in front of the monitors and switcher. He's got the DIRECTOR'S HEADSETS on. He looks like he could sleep for a week. Rudy is next to him, at the switcher.

MESSER
(into headset)
Okay guys, let's see the
graphics...

In mid-sentence, Messer is overtaken by a huge yawn.

MESSER (CONT'D)
(as he yawns)
...for the line-ups.

Rudy looks at him, concerned.

RUDY
You okay, dude?

Messer nods. "Uh huh." Suddenly, Mike - the producer - steps up behind Messer. Puts his hands on his shoulders.

MIKE
Do me a favor, Messer. Don't
screw this up.

MESSER
Are you kidding, after how long
you've made me wait for this? I'm
all over it.

Messer is suddenly overcome by another huge gaping YAWN.

EXT. RIVERSIDE COUNTRY CLUB - PARKING LOT - DAY

Holly gets Sophie out of her seat. Walks to the back, opens the SUV hatch to reveal a number of food platters.

Holly holds Sophie under one arm and tries to pick up a platter of fruit. It's a difficult balancing act.

An ATTRACTIVE GUY IN HIS 30'S approaches from behind her. He can't help but notice the shapely position Holly's in. He flirts with her.

ATTRACTIVE GUY
Need an extra pair of hands?

Holly turns around and REVEALS that she's holding Sophie. The baby instantly changes everything.

ATTRACTIVE GUY (CONT'D)

Oh... Uh, just thought you might need some help, Ma'am.

Ma'am?! Holly looks at him like he just called her something profane. The attractive guy beats a hasty retreat. Passes Frank, who's walking over to help Holly.

FRANK

Who's the guy?

HOLLY

He called me Ma'am!

Holly takes a breath, composes herself. She's not going to let this bother her.

FRANK

Wait, I thought Messer was taking the kid today.

Holly shakes her head. Don't ask.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(protective)

Do you want me to call him? If he's going to start pulling this shit on you...

HOLLY

No, Frank... I'm dealing with it.

FRANK

I know you are. Just, don't forget you're allowed ten minutes to lose your shit over all of this.

HOLLY

I'm fine. Really. Let's just get to work.

INT. BROADCAST TRUCK - DAY

ON TV MONITOR - We see the live feed of the game. It's the first inning, an Indians batter steps to the plate. Off-camera we hear the SPORTSCASTER calling the game.

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)

Grady Sizemore steps up. He's on a hot streak. Eighteen for thirty on this home stand.

Messer watches the multiple monitors intensely. He's focused on the game, but more than anything, he's trying to keep his eyes open.

MESSER
(into headset)
Okay, ready camera three... Take three.

Rudy presses a button on the switcher. The shot changes to a shot of the pitcher.

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)
Santana's coming off a great year last season and a really solid spring training. But he's a fastball pitcher, which is what Sizemore typically eats for breakfast. Here's the pitch...

MESSER
(yawning)
Ready one. Take one.

The shot changes to a straight on view of home plate. The batter swings and misses.

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)
Strike one, on the outside corner...

MESSER
Ready two... take two.

A shot of the crowd cheering.

Messer shakes his head to try and wake himself up. How's he going to make it through nine innings?

He makes sure Mike isn't looking. Then he quickly GUZZLES A CAN OF RED BULL. Splashes some Red Bull on his face, hitting Rudy in the process who gives him a look.

MESSER (CONT'D)
Ready three... take three.

The shot of the pitcher.

Rudy notices Messer's eyes drooping. He pinches Messer's arm without Mike seeing. Messer snaps to, but starts to yawn again. Bigger.

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)
Santana delivers... Sizemore smacks it down the right field line.

Messer's slow on the uptake.

MESSER
 (as he yawns)
 Oh! Take, take, take...
 (finally)
 Take one! Take one!

The shot switches to the home plate angle, but all we see is the catcher standing there. The runner has already hit the ball and started running.

The Sportscaster can see that Messer is behind the play.

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)
 The ball scoots into the right
 field corner. Cuddyer chases it
 down. In RIGHT FIELD.

Messer can't keep up with the play. He scans the different camera monitors for the right shot.

MESSER
 Uh, uh, ready eight... take eight!

Rudy switches to a shot of the right fielder. Too late! He's already thrown the ball to the cut off man.

MIKE
 (getting pissed)
 Come on, Messer...!

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)
 Cuddyer hits the cut off man, but
 Sizemore's trying for third.

MESSER
 Take six!

Shot of the cut-off man. He's already thrown to third.

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)
 Third base, I said! Third base!
 The ball scoots past him!

MESSER
 Take twelve! Take twelve!

A random shot of a baby in the stands.

MIKE
 NO!

MESSER
 (exasperated)
 I mean eleven! Take eleven!

A shot of an empty third base. The runner is already on his way home and the ball's out of the third baseman's hand. We see his reaction to the play at the plate.

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)

Safe! Just under the tag!

MESSER

TAKE ONE!

The shot of home plate. Sizemore dusts himself off. Looks like it must've been an amazing play.

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)

Unbelievable, what a way to start a game! Grady Sizemore with his first ever inside the park home run! Boy, if you folks could've seen that!

Mike is furious. Messer drops his head. Defeated.

INT. RIVERSIDE COUNTRY CLUB - BALLROOM - DAY

A large charity event is underway - catered by FRAICHE.

Frank stands behind the buffet table, making sure everything is going smoothly. Holly stands nearby, offering hummus-stuffed endive to guests.

REVEAL - HOLLY CARRIES SOPHIE IN A BACKPACK CARRIER.

She hands a piece of endive up to Sophie. Sophie spits it out in Holly's hair. Reconsiders, puts it back in her mouth. Basically starts using Holly's head like a table.

HOLLY

Sophie, please, just eat it already.

Sophie spots a WAITER leaving the kitchen with a tray of thimble-sized tomato bisques. Out of the corner of Holly's eye, she sees Sophie reach for the tray and grab it.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

No, no...!

Too late. The tray comes crashing down, pouring mini-soups all over Holly's clothes.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

(to the waiter)

I'm sorry...

Frank quickly helps the waiter clean it up.

FRANK

You like that tomato bisque, huh Soph?

Frank brings the tray and glasses back into the kitchen, leaving a frazzled Holly to fend for herself.

A PAIR OF FEMALE GUESTS, 40's, step up to Holly.

FEMALE GUEST #1

She's beautiful, how old?

HOLLY

She's um 13 months... no, no 14.
Stuffed endive?

Curious, Sophie puts some hummus in Holly's ear.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Sophie, mercy...!

FEMALE GUEST #2

Oo, she's a pip, this one.

FEMALE GUEST #1

(tries the endive/delicious)
Mmmm, thank you.
(back to Sophie)
Is she your first?

HOLLY

(cleaning out her ear)
Uh, yeah...

FEMALE GUEST #2

Just wait till she's toddling
around. Such a wonderful age.

Holly smiles politely, trying to hold it together - but she's sleep-deprived and teetering on the edge.

FEMALE GUEST #1

And she certainly has your eyes.
Don't you pretty girl?

HOLLY

No, actually she doesn't.

FEMALE GUEST #1

Oh, yes she does. Look at them.
Doesn't she?

FEMALE GUEST #2

Absolutely. She's the spitting
image.

Holly chafes at their insistence. Sophie pulls her hair.

HOLLY

Oww! No. She really doesn't.

FEMALE GUEST #1

I don't know, we're looking at the two of you right now and she definitely has...

HOLLY

(finally losing it)

Lady, are you colorblind?! She doesn't have my eyes. Okay?!

Covered in food, her hair a ratty mess, Holly looks like a crazy person. She swings around, practically shoving the back pack with Sophie in the women's faces. Sophie's half-eaten stuffed endive lands on one of their plates.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

She doesn't look anything like me!
See! Now both of you, BACK THE
HELL OFF!

The Female guests recoil. Other guests turn and stare. Everything comes to a halt. Holly looks a bit crazed. Frank quickly steps in.

FRANK

(to the female guest)
Chicken satay?
(to Holly)
Break time.

He pulls Holly INTO THE HALLWAY.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

HOLLY

I have a child, Frank! I'm a mother!
An instant mother! I can't believe
Alison did this to me. She couldn't
have just left me her pearls?!

As soon as it's out of her mouth Holly feels guilty.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry...

FRANK

Don't be.

She looks up at Sophie. Squeezes her hand.

HOLLY

(back to Frank)

I wasn't sure I was ever going to have kids of my own. Now I've got a baby and a MESSER! How will I ever meet someone like this?!

Frank lets her vent.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

It's like the next twenty years of my life have just been decided for me! I have no control!

Self-conscious now, Holly collects herself.

FRANK

Look, your circumstances have changed, but you haven't. You're still hot. Seriously, if I wasn't married, I'd...

HOLLY

(cutting him off/he's like a brother to her)

Nnhn nnhn... Don't go there.

FRANK

What I'm saying is, you're still the same person. Okay? You're still you.

Holly nods. Catches her breath. Beat. A guest interrupts them.

MALE GUEST

Excuse me, Ma'am...?

Ma'am. Holly's head drops.

INT. BAR - LATE DAY

Messer and Rudy are sitting with a couple of beers.

RUDY

Don't sweat it man. Mike'll give you another shot. In a season or two.

MESSER

A season or two?!

RUDY

Hey, it's like Derek Jeter. His first year, he only played fifteen games before they sent him back down.

(MORE)

RUDY (CONT'D)

When they brought him up in '96, he hit .314, had 78 RBI's, a .481 slugging percentage and he was rookie of the year.

MESSER

Dude, the sports analogy - not helping right now.

Rudy feels bad. Beat.

RUDY

If you want I've got a buddy in Phoenix who produces the Coyotes hockey games. I can see if he's looking for anybody.

Messer takes a slug of his beer.

MESSER

Yeah, whatever... By the way, I'm going to be sitting out the rest of the road trips.

RUDY

Mess, don't beat yourself up. Everyone's on your side. You know, except Mike. I mean it's not like you don't have a lot of shit to contend with right now.

Messer looks up at a TV over the bar. SPORTSCENTER is on. They're showing a BLOOPERS PACKAGE featuring Messer's directing fiasco. Messer takes another slug.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hey Messer...

NATALIE, a tipsy party girl, steps up to Messer.

NATALIE

I thought that was you.

MESSER

Natalie...

She leans in and kisses him. Wipes some lipstick off the corner of his mouth. Smiles.

Rudy takes this as his cue and leaves.

NATALIE

How are you?

MESSER

I'm uh... you know... Wow, you look really great.

NATALIE

(sexy)

I know... So what are you up to?

MESSER

Uh... I don't know, what are you up to? Anymore late night swims at the lake?

NATALIE

Not without you. It's not the same.

(puts her arms around
his neck)

Who's more fun than Messer, right?

Messer thinks about that. Fuck it.

MESSER

Yeah, who is more fun than Messer!
What're you drinking?

Natalie smiles.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Holly steps out of Sophie's bedroom, holding a BABY MONITOR. Quietly closes the door. Goes...

DOWNSTAIRS. Puts on her jacket. Notices light coming from under the door of the den. Walks over and opens the door.

HOLLY

She's sleeping, Mess...

REVEAL - MESSER AND NATALIE ARE HALF-UNDRESSED, fooling around on his king size bed, which now takes up most of the den. Natalie screams and covers up. Messer awkwardly pulls his jeans up.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

(flustered)

Oh, I...!

Holly quickly closes the door. She's shocked, then pissed, then just grossed out by what she saw. He's unreal. Meanwhile, Messer takes a breath, opens the door a crack.

MESSER

Yes...?

HOLLY

Having fun?

MESSER

Not yet.

Holly hands him the baby monitor. Messer blocks Holly's view of Natalie. He wants to keep this between them.

HOLLY

Here. Sorry I can't MIND THE BABY while you get some.

MESSER

(waves his hands/
under his breath)
Icks-nay on the abee-bay. Great,
thanks.

He closes the door on her. He hears her through the door.

HOLLY (O.S.)

I'm going back to work now!

Messer hears her walk off and the front door close. Turns to face Natalie, hoping the mood hasn't been broken. No such luck.

NATALIE

Who was *that*?

MESSER

(casual)
Oh, that was just my roommate.
Now where were we...?

Messer tries to pick up where they left off. They start kissing again. It quickly gets hot and heavy.

Then, from the baby monitor, SOPHIE MOANS in her sleep. Messer thinks it's Natalie.

MESSER (CONT'D)

(to Natalie)
You like that baby?

Natalie's eyes snap open. The baby moans louder.

MESSER (CONT'D)

(getting excited)
Oh, baby...

NATALIE

(getting weirded out)
Okay, that's not me.

Messer sits up. Looks at the baby monitor. Sophie quiets. Breathes peacefully again.

MESSER
(tries to make light)
Sorry, kid talks in her sleep.
It's cute, isn't it?

Natalie just looks at him. She's quickly sobering up. Messer makes a move. Starts kissing her again.

MESSER (CONT'D)
Just make believe this is my
apartment.

But it's so NOT his apartment. Natalie tries to get into it until... Sophie WHIMPERS AND GURGLES over the monitor.

Messer tries to ignore it. But then, Sophie SQUEALS loudly, startling Natalie. That's all she can take.

NATALIE
Messer, this is just too weird.

MESSER
You love weird. You're gonna draw
the line here?

NATALIE
I don't understand, that's her kid?

MESSER
No. Well, not exactly. It's ours,
but... don't get hung up on the
details. Trust me.
(starts kissing her)
It's just us, baby. Just us.

Sophie wakes up. Starts to cry.

NATALIE
Messer, this is obviously not a
good time... in your life. I'm
going to go...

Natalie gets up to leave. Messer desperately pleads with her over Sophie's wails.

MESSER
Wait, wait! Just give me a chance
to get her back to sleep! Come on,
who's more fun than Messer right?!

But she's gone. The door slams. Off Messer...

INT. SOPHIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Messer sits in the rocker/glider with Sophie in his arms. He's trying to rock her to sleep. He sings a Tom Waits tune, MORE THAN RAIN, as a lullaby.

MESSER

(singing)

"It's more than rain, that falls
on our parade tonight. It's more
than sad times, it's more than sad
times..."

Holly steps into the doorway and watches them. Messer doesn't notice her. Sophie is just about nodding off.

MESSER (CONT'D)

(singing)

"...None of our pockets are lined
with gold. Nobody's caught the
bouquet. There are no dead
presidents we can fold. Nothing
is going our way..."

HOLLY

What, exactly, are you singing to
her?

Messer is startled, waking Sophie. She fusses.

MESSER

(to Holly)

Do you mind?

(to Sophie)

Sssh... it's okay sweetie. Go to
sleep. Bed time. It's okay...

Holly lowers her voice.

HOLLY

Why are you singing such a
depressing song to her?

MESSER

I like depressing songs.

HOLLY

You're going to give her nightmares.
Sing something happier.

MESSER

Fine.

He turns back to Sophie and tries again. This time, it's the WHITE STRIPES.

MESSER (CONT'D)
 (singing to Sophie)
 "Dead leaves on the dirty ground,
 when I know you're not around..."

HOLLY
 Messer...

Messer switches it up again. Now some RICHARD THOMPSON.

MESSER
 "This cruel country has driven me
 down. Teased me and lied. Teased
 me and lied..."

Holly sighs. But Sophie likes the melody and once again drifts off. Messer sings the lyrics pointedly to Holly.

MESSER (CONT'D)
 "I've only sad stories to tell to
 this town. My dreams have
 withered and died. Oh, my dreams
 have withered... and died..."

Sophie's finally asleep. Messer gets up slowly, so as not to wake her. He gestures to Sophie - it worked!

MESSER (CONT'D)
 (whispering)
 See, works like a charm.

HOLLY
 God, would it kill you to ...

MESSER
 Ssshhh!

HOLLY
 You shhh.
 (then, whispering too)
 Would it kill you to brighten the
 mood around here?

Messer and Holly continue this conversation WHISPERING THE ENTIRE TIME.

MESSER
 It might! Would it kill you to
 just GO with the mood around here?

HOLLY
 Yes, because I don't think Peter
 and Alison would like it very much.

MESSER
 Well, THEY are not here, are they?

HOLLY

Don't say that.

MESSER

Why not? It's true.

HOLLY

It's depressing.

MESSER

No, the thought of masturbating in that little den is depressing. THIS is beyond the fucking pale!

HOLLY

You know, I'm really tired of all your dark little comments. You think your cynicism is some kind of "brutal truth", but it's just an emotional cop-out.

Suddenly, the baby stirs. Messer and Holly both freeze till she settles. Messer moves slowly towards the crib.

They WHISPER EVEN MORE SOFTLY NOW - their whispering lending a comic absurdity to their very real fight.

MESSER

This isn't something you can fix up and make all nice.

HOLLY

I know that.

MESSER

You're just pissed that I brought a girl home.

HOLLY

Messer, I could give two shits about how many girls you bring home.
(referring to Sophie)
All I care about is her.

MESSER

Oh, and I don't?!

If it's possible, Holly WHISPERS EVEN MORE SOFTLY.

HOLLY

Don't get angry at me.

MESSER

(he can't hear her)
What?

HOLLY
 (WHISPERS louder)
 What are you so angry about?!

MESSER
 Everything! How can you not be? I'm
 angry at her asshole Grandfather.
 I'm angry at our lawyer and that
 judge. I'm angry at her for crying
 so God damned much and I'm angry at
 myself for feeling that way. And I'm
 angry at Peter and Alison for dying.

Messer puts Sophie down in her crib. He turns to Holly.
 Gets right in her face.

MESSER (CONT'D)
 And most of all, I'm angry at you
 for telling me to sing happy
 fucking songs!

HOLLY
 Fuck you.

MESSER
 No...

Messer MOUTHS his response to Holly as if he's yelling,
 "...FUUUUCCCKKKK YOOOOOUUUUUU!!!!"

He walks out of the bedroom. Holly follows him.

Once in the hallway, THEY TALK AT NORMAL VOLUME AGAIN.

Messer hurries down the stairs.

HOLLY
 Where are you going?

MESSER
 Out.

HOLLY
 Well that didn't take long. I
 knew you'd run away from this.

MESSER
 And doesn't that make you happy.
 You finally get to be the martyr.

Messer grabs Peter's leather jacket. Turns to leave.

HOLLY
 Alison always said you were a
 chicken-shit.

Messer stops in his tracks. That hurt. Holly knows she's crossed a line. Messer turns back.

MESSER

You know maybe Peter and Alison
never told us about Sophie because
they changed their minds about us.
Did you ever think of that?

With that he walks out. Holly watches him attempt to make a dramatic exit. Messer hops on his motorcycle. Tries to kick start it again and again, but it won't turn over.

Finally, Messer walks the motorcycle into the street. Starts coasting it down the hill until it fires up loudly and he drives off.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Messer on his motorcycle. No Helmet. Riding fast. He's alone on the street. He picks up speed. No one's around.

CLOSE ON HIS FACE - He's intense, venting on this speed. We watch as he disappears into the night.

DISSOLVE TO:

HOURS LATER

Messer is still riding. Suddenly the engine sputters.

REVEAL the gas gauge is on EMPTY. He bangs his bike in frustration. Messer slowly rolls to a stop. He's in the middle of nowhere, halfway up a steep hill.

Messer starts pushing the Commando up the hill. The bike is heavy. He has to put his back into it. His head hangs down as he pushes. We realize he's crying.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Holly sleeps. From the baby monitor, Sophie CRIES. Holly wakes up disoriented, bleary.

INT. SOPHIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Holly enters and picks up the crying Sophie. Sits down with her in the rocking chair and tries to soothe her.

Vulnerable at this late hour, Sophie's crying starts to get to Holly. She tears up herself.

HOLLY
Please stop crying, Sophie.

The moment is broken when the bedroom door opens. Holly looks up to see Messer standing in the doorway.

MESSER
Hey...

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATE NIGHT

Messer and Holly sit at the table. We can hear Sophie sleeping on the baby monitor.

HOLLY
I'm sorry about what I said.
Alison made that crack years ago,
she didn't even mean...

MESSER
Hey...

HOLLY
I don't even know why I said it.
She didn't feel that way about you.

MESSER
I know. I'm sorry too.

Beat.

MESSER (CONT'D)
I couldn't possibly have imagined
being in a situation like this,
let alone with you...
(beat)
But I can't go.

Holly nods - she understands.

HOLLY
I don't want to be here with you
either.
(beat)
But I'm glad you came back.

Beat.

MESSER
Can we really do this?

HOLLY

We don't have a choice.

Messer nods. Beat. They just sit together. Then...

MESSER

Bastards.

Holly cracks a smile. For the first time, she appreciates his dark humor. Off the two of them we...

FADE OUT:

Super Title: **AUTUMN**

FADE IN:

EXT. CLEVELAND STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Messer jogs, but without headphones this time. It's a beautiful, colorful FALL day.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL - Messer pushes a jogger/stroller with Sophie in it. Sophie is a bit of a happy mess - mismatched socks and a face covered with a soggy teething biscuit.

A SEXY FEMALE JOGGER runs up alongside Messer just as...

A cell phone rings. Messer pulls his new cell phone out of a side pouch on the stroller. He's completely oblivious to the Sexy Jogger checking him out.

MESSER

(into phone)

Hey... Baby wipes. Natural care, got it. Okay, bye.

(hangs up phone/to Sophie)

We're making a pit stop, Soph.

Messer LEAVES THE SEXY JOGGER IN THE DUST. Possibly the first time he hasn't noticed a hot woman noticing him.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Holly brews a pot of coffee and gets lunch packed up for Sophie. Messer enters with Sophie under one arm, a diaper bag over his shoulder and a bag of groceries.

MESSER

Hey.

Holly unpacks the baby wipes and a fresh package of diapers. Messer pours her a travel mug full of coffee. They're a well-oiled machine.

HOLLY

Thanks. Alright Soph, we gotta run.

Messer holds Sophie's butt up to his face. TAKES A BIG WHIFF OF HER DIAPER.

MESSER

All clear.

Messer gives Sophie a kiss goodbye. Hands her to Holly.

HOLLY

Okay, we'll see you later.

Then, without even thinking about it, HOLLY AND MESSER GIVE EACH OTHER A QUICK KISS GOODBYE - like a married couple.

They stop in their tracks - what was that?! Look at each other, incredibly awkward.

MESSER

Yeah... umm, have a good day.

HOLLY

(nods)

Uh huh...

She walks out with Sophie.

INT. FRAICHE RESTAURANT - MORNING

Holly and Frank work behind the deli counter. Holly keeps an eye on Sophie, who plays and eats strawberry jam with a customer's two-year old son in a new PLAY AREA.

When Holly looks back up Sophie is gone. REVEAL - Sophie has pulled herself up at the DELI DISPLAY CASE, leaving jelly handprints all over the display window.

Even worse, Holly is horrified to see a CUSTOMER in a white mini-skirt walking out with jelly handprints on her butt.

EXT. JACOB'S FIELD BASEBALL STADIUM - PARKING LOT - DAY

The game is letting out. Holly pulls up in front of Messer's STUDIO CONTROL TRUCK in the SUV. She's singing BABY BELUGA to Sophie. Frank parks nearby in a FRAICHE mini-van. Sophie gives Holly a baby "kiss" goodbye.

Messer steps out of the control truck and greets Holly. She tosses him the SUV keys. Holly gets in the mini-van.

Messer hops in the SUV with Sophie. Immediately ejects the Baby Beluga disc.

Turns to find Sophie sucking on his iPod. He gasps. Grabs it, plugs it into the car stereo. It still works! He breathes a sigh of relief.

MESSER

Okay, who wants to listen to Radiohead?!

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Messer sits on the couch watching Sportscenter. Even though it's only 11, he's starting to nod off.

Holly comes in through the front door, finally getting home from her catering event.

She collapses on the other end of the couch, exhausted.

HOLLY

Hey...

But Messer's already out. Holly leans her head back, too.

CUT TO:

LIVING ROOM - 3 A.M.

ON TV - An extra-loud GIRLS GONE WILD ad comes on.

Messer wakes up. He's been sleeping this whole time. Looks down to discover Holly is now sleeping with her head on his leg. Messer watches her sleep, not sure what to do.

Looks up at the Girls Gone Wild commercial, watching it through the bleary, sleep-deprived eyes of a new father.

Messer leans to the right. Rips a LOUD FART. Holly stirs.

HOLLY

(half-asleep/answering
his fart)

No, I've got to go to the Farmer's Market first.

Messer laughs to himself. Turns off the TV, waking Holly. She sits up, wipes some drool from her mouth, self-conscious.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Oh... Sorry...
(awkward beat)
Good night.

MESSER

See you in three hours.

She goes off to bed.

INT. SHOE STORE - MALL - DAY

Holly and Messer are buying sneakers for Sophie. Holly puts a pair on her. Messer can't get over the price tag.

MESSER
That's nuts. Sixty bucks for F'in
kids shoes?

HOLLY
Language.

MESSER
I said F'in.

HOLLY
Uh huh...
(play-acting)
Sophie, what did you do today?
(imitating Sophie)
We went on a field trip to the
children's zoo and I saw F'in
prairie dogs!

Messer laughs. Fair point. Suddenly, Holly GASPS.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Oh my God, look!

REVEAL SOPHIE has pulled herself upright, holding onto the edge of the chair.

SHE'S ABOUT TO TAKE HER FIRST STEP.

Holly and Messer hold their breath in anticipation.

ON SOPHIE - In an instant she lets go and it all happens. She stumbles one foot after the other towards them.

Holly and Messer leap to their feet, elated. Hug each other. Let out a loud cheer. YEAHHH!!!

This, of course, scares the living hell out of Sophie. She face plants and starts crying.

Holly and Messer scoop her up together. Hug her between them. Caught up in the excitement of the moment.

HOLLY AND MESSER
You did it! What a big girl!

They look at each other, suddenly self-conscious. Pull apart, Messer holding onto Sophie.

SAM (O.S.)

Holly...?

Holly turns to see SAM approaching her. She's surprised.

HOLLY

Hi... Sam...

SAM

I thought that was you. Hope this is better timing.

ON CUE, Messer turns around. Smiles at Sam.

MESSER

Hi.

Instantly, it becomes incredibly awkward for Holly and Sam. Of course, Messer lives for awkward.

MESSER (CONT'D)

(to Holly)

Do have a wipe? She's got some...

Holly shoves the giant diaper bag into Messer's arms. Sam just looks at the three of them.

SAM

Wow, a lot's happened since I last saw you.

HOLLY

No. I mean, yes but... We're not married.

(gesturing to Messer)

We're not even... It's not what it looks like... exactly...

Messer steps in. Shakes Sam's hand.

MESSER

Eric Messer. And this is Sophie.

Messer and Sam size each other up. Messer can't help but be intimidated by Sam's good looks. Not that he's going to show it.

SAM

Hi Sophie. Sam Nelson. I'm one of Holly's best customers.

MESSER

Oh. We're raising our dead friends' child together.

HOLLY

Messer...

MESSER

(to Sam/with a wink)

But don't let that stop you.

Beat. Then, Sam rises to the occasion. Turns to Holly.

SAM

Alright. Actually, I won't. I've been waiting months to ask you this. Do you want to get dinner sometime?

HOLLY

Umm...

Beat.

MESSER

Umm? The man's asking you on a date, that's how you respond?

(to Sam)

Of course she'd like to get dinner with you, Sam. Where were you thinking?

Sam's had enough of this Messer guy.

SAM

(giving him shit
right back)

I don't know, man. You seem pretty interested. Maybe you and I should get dinner.

Holly smiles at that.

Messer just looks at him - touché. The two men stare each other down for a moment. Finally...

HOLLY

Could you excuse us now, Messer.

Messer backs away. He's had his fun. Walks over to the register with Sophie to buy the shoes. After a moment, Holly returns.

MESSER

So, is it a date?

HOLLY

Messer, what was that all about? Why are you acting all... jealous?

MESSER
 (defensive)
 Jealous? I'm not jealous.

Of course he is...

MESSER (CONT'D)
 I'm just trying to help you make a
 love connection.

HOLLY
 Well it worked, we're going out.

MESSER
 Great.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - LATE DAY

Holly fills the small bathtub, tosses in bath beads.
 Places a candle. Determined to have her ritual bath.

But this isn't her big claw foot tub. She closes the
 shower curtain and gets in. Through the gauze of the
 curtain, we see her desperately try to get comfortable in
 the tiny tub.

A piece of the shower curtain gets too close to the
 candle. THE CURTAIN IGNITES. "AAAHH!" Holly tries to
 splash water onto the flames to douse them.

But in extinguishing the fire, she accidentally pulls the
 shower curtain down on top of herself.

Closes her eyes. Lets out a long, slow breath...

INT. SOPHIE'S ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Messer is sitting on the floor with Sophie in his lap.
 He's in the middle of reading a WINNIE THE POOH STORYBOOK
 to her. He's into it, doing the character's voices.

MESSER
 (reading/as Pooh)
 "...The more it snows, tiddely
 pom..." "'Tiddely what?'" said
 Piglet. "'Pom,' said Pooh. 'I put
 that in to make it more hummy.'"

HOLLY (O.S.)
 That is the gayest Pooh I've ever
 heard.

Messer looks up to see Holly in the doorway, ready for
 her date. He's taken aback. She looks incredible.

MESSER

Whoa...

Holly blushes.

HOLLY

What?

MESSER

You look...

HOLLY

Do I look all right?

MESSER

You look pretty damn... all right.
(beat/breaking the tension)
And Pooh IS gay.

HOLLY

No he's not.

MESSER

Of course he is. He's got the
muscle T, he can't stop looking at
himself in the mirror...
(turns back to the
book/in Pooh voice)
Oh, Christopher Robin, kindly bend
over that tree stump so I may take
you from...

HOLLY

(slaps him on the
back of the head)
Stop that!

A car horn honks outside, breaks the moment.

HOLLY(CONT'D)

Oh, that's him.

MESSER

Honking the horn. Classy.

HOLLY

Hey, I'm just looking forward to
having some grown-up time.
(kissing Sophie)
Bye sweet pea.

She leaves. Messer watches her go. Beat. He picks up
Sophie and looks out the window. Watches Holly get into
Sam's car and drive off. He turns to Sophie.

MESSER

F' me.

EXT. VIN SUR VIN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

This is a posh, high-end establishment. Sam and Holly pull up to the Valet and get out. Holly's excited.

HOLLY

Oo, Vin Sur Vin. This is my absolute favorite restaurant in Cleveland. How did you know?

SAM

Uh, because we're in Cleveland. This is pretty much it.

Holly laughs, sad but true, and they ENTER THE RESTAURANT.

It's gorgeous inside. Very romantic. The MAÎTRE DE smiles at Sam.

MAITRE DE

Mr. Nelson, welcome. Your table is ready.

HOLLY

(impressed)

You come here a lot?

Sam shrugs, modest, as the Maitre de leads them to their table.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I can only afford this place once a year if I'm lucky. And it's torture, because I could eat everything off their menu.

SAM

Then you're going to love this.

The Maitre de leads them through a pair of swinging doors and into THE KITCHEN. Holly looks confused.

SAM (CONT'D)

Holly, this is Chef Phillipe Le Croix.

Holly shakes his hand, enamored.

SAM (CONT'D)

I designed this restaurant for Phillipe.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

He's owed me a dinner at the chef's table for about three years now. I thought I'd finally cash in the chit tonight.

HOLLY

(excited)

Are you serious? Sam, I don't know what to say.

SAM

You don't have to say anything.
Eat.

The Chef leads them to a small, romantic table he's set up in a secluded corner of the kitchen. Almost immediately, the food starts arriving.

QUICK SHOTS OF THEIR ROMANTIC DINNER

One exquisite dish after another is brought out - lobster crepes, Yukon Blinis with eggplant caviar, herb-crusted filet of Angus beef, pan-seared Diver scallops, an apricot souffles and a Caramel Chocolate Chunk Tart with Chantilly Cream.

Holly and Sam savor it all - tasting, sampling, devouring and enjoying each other's company.

As Sam gives Holly a taste of his chocolate tart, we...

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A BABY SPOON WITH BABY FOOD

Messer feeds it to Sophie. He sits at the kitchen table across from her in her high chair. A pseudo date of their own.

Sophie has steamed veggies, guacamole, black beans and yogurt. She's wearing as much of her food as she's eating.

MESSER

You know, the sad thing is I usually dig it when my date gets all kinky with her food.

Sophie sucks some guacamole off her bare hand.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Mmm, sexy...

Sophie responds by throwing her food, splattering Messer across the face and chest with guacamole.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Oh really... Is that how you're gonna come at me? All right.

He wipes some guac off his face. Playfully flings it back at her. Sophie is startled at first. Then laughs. Throws some beans at Messer.

MESSER (CONT'D)

See, I've got gross motor skills, so I think I know who's going to win this!

He takes some yogurt in his hand. Rubs it on her face and neck like lotion. Sophie giggles away. Messer is having a great time with her.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Food fight, baby...!

Off the two of them...

INT. SAM'S SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Sam and Holly are on the road. Holly looks blissful.

HOLLY

Oh my God, this was EXACTLY what I needed.

SAM

A sixteen course dinner?

HOLLY

All of it, Sam. Thank you.

She brushes his hand with hers. He looks at her.

They pull up in front of PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE.

Holly looks at Sam, still holding his hand. They lean in at the same time and KISS. It's an uncomplicated moment for Holly. Until...

SPRITZ! SPRITZ! SPRITZ! The lawn sprinklers turn on. Swipe the side of Sam's car. The spell is broken.

Holly looks at where they are - suddenly self-conscious.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I should probably... go in. Relieve, uh...

SAM

Right.

She starts to open the door.

HOLLY

Thank you for tonight, Sam. Really.

SAM

We should do it again.

HOLLY

We should.

With that ambiguity, she gets out. Sam watches her run through the sprinklers up to the house.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Holly enters. Wipes the water off her face. The house is quiet. Holly calls softly.

HOLLY

Messer? I'm home...

She walks into the LIVING ROOM. Finds Messer asleep on the couch once again.

The TV is on, showing two programs at once using picture-in-picture - SPORTSCENTER and THE LEARNING CHANNEL - Dr. Brazelton talking about the toddler years.

Holly looks down at Messer. Watches him sleep. Then, takes his shoes off. Puts a throw blanket over him. Tucks him in. Turns off the TV and goes upstairs.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - DAY

Holly comes downstairs to find Messer and Sophie having breakfast. Sophie sits in her high chair, eating Cheerios and banging a spoon happily.

HOLLY

Morning guys.

MESSER

Morning.

She kisses Sophie on the head. Pours herself some coffee.

MESSER (CONT'D)

So...

HOLLY
So...?

MESSER
Was he good?

HOLLY
He was great, actually. We had a wonderful time.

MESSER
Great.

HOLLY
Yeah, great...

She waits for some kind of reaction from him. Nothing.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
You should get out too.

Messer looks up.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Call one of your little hotties.

MESSER
My little hotties?

HOLLY
Yeah. It's time for you to get back up on the horse.

MESSER
Careful with your euphemisms there.

HOLLY
I'm just saying, don't let me get in the way. Call one.

MESSER
Hey, I'm HAPPY to call somebody.

HOLLY
Pick a night, my friend.

MESSER
Tuesday. I'm going out Tuesday.

HOLLY
You can't Tuesday. We're catering a rehearsal dinner.

MESSER
Well that's my only night off.

HOLLY

Well...

Beat. How do they solve this? Holly cautiously offers...

HOLLY (CONT'D)

We could call Amy...

Holly and Messer switch into parental mode.

MESSER

Are you ready to do that?

HOLLY

I don't know, is it too soon for you?

MESSER

I don't know...

Beat. They both look at Sophie.

MESSER (CONT'D)

(confident)

No, we should call Amy.

HOLLY

Good.

MESSER

Great.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE DAY

Amy plays with Sophie on the floor while Messer and Holly prepare to leave.

AMY

Do you know what you're going to wear for Halloween, Sophie? Are you going to come to the big party at my house?

Sophie says something back in gibberish. Messer gives Amy a slip of paper.

MESSER

So here's my cell phone number, if she gets fussy...

AMY

I'm sure she'll be fine.

HOLLY

And you've got mine too.

AMY

Right here. Don't worry.

Messer and Holly both stand over Amy and Sophie, looking down at the little girl. Neither of them can leave. Amy can't help but be amused.

AMY (CONT'D)

You guys realize that I'm not technically babysitting until you actually leave the house.

INT. GARAGE

Messer heads for his motorcycle. He's wearing Peter's LEATHER BOMBER JACKET. Holly goes for the SUV. Turns back to Messer.

HOLLY

So... did your date cancel?

Off Messer's look, Holly gestures to his five o'clock shadow. His tell.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

You didn't shave.

MESSER

Actually... I didn't even call her. I don't know... Don't get me wrong, she's so hot I can't believe I'm going to say this, but... They gotta be Sophie-worthy now.

Holly smiles, amused.

MESSER (CONT'D)

What? Let's hear it.

HOLLY

(teasing)

No. Messer with standards. I like it.

Messer laughs. Turns to his motorcycle.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

So...

MESSER

(turns back)

So...?

HOLLY

I'm actually not working tonight after all. The rehearsal dinner was cancelled. They broke up.

MESSER

Oh... So... should we get dinner then, or something?

HOLLY

Uh, yeah... Great.

(beat)

That jacket looks good on you.

Messer searches for the standard wise-ass comment, but instead...

MESSER

Thanks.

He pulls his motorcycle out.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Hop on.

HOLLY

Oh no.

She unlocks the SUV with the keyless remote.

MESSER

No, no, not the Dadmobile.

HOLLY

(re: his motorcycle)

Messer, it's not safe.

MESSER

To hell with safe. I'm sick of safe. Safety seats, safety gates, safety latches. I don't want to do anything safe tonight.

(gestures to his bike)

What do you say?

Holly considers the motorcycle. Messer kicks it to life. Revs the engine.

EXT. CLEVELAND STREET - LATE DAY

Messer rides alone on his motorcycle.

REVEAL

Holly follows him in the SUV.

INT. RESTAURANT - DUSK

Messer and Holly are having dinner together. This is a cozy, romantic place. The lights are dimmed. A lit candle on their table. Most everyone here is on a date.

MESSER

...I'm really proud of that bike.
That's my baby. My first born.

Holly smiles.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Took me almost half a year to
rebuild it. Of course, where I
would find the time to do that now
is beyond me.

(sarcastic)

Not that I miss my freedom.

Holly smirks, amused.

HOLLY

Right.

MESSER

It's kind of like a phantom limb,
isn't it? Every now and then you
want to reach down and scratch it,
but it's just not there anymore.

HOLLY

It won't always be like this. Once
she's in school it'll be easier.

That reminds him of something.

MESSER

Speaking of which, shouldn't we be
getting on top of the whole pre-
school thing? I was thinking we
should check out...

HOLLY

The Montessori on Sherbrook? Yeah.
I was thinking the same thing.

Messer nods. Beat. Suddenly self-aware of how they sound.

MESSER

Wow. I've never had a conversation
like this on a date before.

HOLLY

Is that what this is?

MESSER
(surprised)
I don't know... No. I didn't
mean to, uh...

HOLLY
No, no, I'm not saying...

A VENDOR interrupts them with a basket of flowers.

VENDOR
A flower for the lady?

HOLLY AND MESSER
(together)
No. Thanks.

Messer and Holly just look at each other. Awkward beat.

MESSER
Man, this is a REALLY romantic
restaurant.

Holly laughs.

EXT. SEAFOOD RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Holly and Messer leave the restaurant. Messer walks over
to the VALET with Holly's ticket.

Holly stands off to the side. Her cell phone rings. She
looks to see who's calling.

CLOSE ON CELL PHONE - It's SAM calling.

Holly looks at Messer. Presses IGNORE and closes her phone.
Messer walks back over to her.

MESSER
All set. They're bringing it
around. I'll meet you at home.

He starts walking over to his MOTORCYCLE.

HOLLY
Hang on...

Holly hurries ahead of him. Grabs the helmet off his
bike and hops on.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Okay, you win.

MESSER
Really?

HOLLY
But I want to drive.

MESSER
Are you kidding me?

HOLLY
No, you're right. Screw safe.
Let's have a good time tonight.

Messer raises an eyebrow.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Teach me.

MESSER
(impressed/hands her
the key)
Okay, start her up.

Messer stands next to her. Puts a hand on her back.

MESSER (CONT'D)
You gotta pull out the choke
first, turn on the ignition. Now,
your left hand is the clutch, your
right is the throttle. So squeeze
the clutch...

She follows Messer's instructions carefully.

MESSER (CONT'D)
...and let's make sure you're in
neutral...

Messer leans in to her, checks the neutral indicator.
She's aware of how close he is.

MESSER (CONT'D)
Okay, now kick up the kick stand.
You got it?

Holly balances the bike with her legs.

HOLLY
Yeah. I think so.

Messer crouches down by her right foot. Rotates out the
KICK START LEVER.

MESSER
Alright, whenever you're ready,
just pound down on the kick start.

She presses her foot down on it. The bike sputters. She tries again, giving it more oomph. The motorcycle fires up to life. Holly's getting excited.

HOLLY

Whoa...

MESSER

(smiling)

Squeeze the throttle.

She does, revving the engine. It's loud, strong.

HOLLY

Oh my God!

MESSER

Pretty cool, huh. Just make sure your foot's not...

Too late. Holly accidentally presses her foot down on the gear shift lever, shifting the bike into first.

The bike instantly lurches forward. Holly screams. Falls backwards off the bike. The motorcycle is propelled full steam without her into the parking lot.

Messer runs over to Holly. "Oh shit!" Holly's already getting up. She's fine.

HOLLY

I'm alright, I'm alright...

They watch in amazement as the RIDERLESS MOTORCYCLE heads straight for a group of people outside the restaurant. The diners dive out of the way. The motorcycle curves to the right of a banked driveway. Picks up speed as it heads down the driveway, cuts across traffic and plows into a BUS STOP on the other side of the street.

Messer and Holly look stunned.

MESSER

Wow. That was impressive.

HOLLY

Oh Messer, I'm so sorry.

MESSER

Don't worry, it doesn't look so bad.

With that, a BUS pulls into the stop, SLAMMING into the downed motorcycle, sending it flying onto the sidewalk.

Holly gasps.

MESSER (CONT'D)
Okay, now it looks pretty bad.

They walk across the street, to his bike. The front and rear axles are bent, the handlebars crushed. It's a wreck.

MESSER (CONT'D)
Man, you really hated that bike.

HOLLY
Messer, I don't know what to say.
I feel terrible. I'll pay for it,
obviously...

MESSER
No, no, it's okay.

HOLLY
Okay...?

MESSER
Seriously. It is what it is.

Holly doesn't buy that.

HOLLY
But it's your baby! Don't you
want to kill me?

MESSER
You'd think... I don't know, for
some reason I'm feeling kind of
protective of you right now.
(beat)
Actually, I'm kind of in awe. You
didn't even drive it a foot before
you destroyed it.

Holly moans, guilty.

EXT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

A flatbed tow truck pulls up in front of the house.
Messer's motorcycle is mounted on the back.

Holly and Messer enter frame behind the truck in the SUV.

INT. SOPHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Holly and Messer peer in to see Sophie sleeping.

MESSER
Looks like she survived.

Holly nods.

HOLLY
Does it feel cold in here to you?

INT. HALL LINEN CLOSET

The door opens. Messer grabs a BLANKET from the top shelf. A small BAG falls to the floor.

Messer bends down to pick it up. It's a small stash of POT. He smiles to himself.

INT. SOPHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Messer enters with the blanket which he gently places over Sophie. Holly and Messer sneak out of the room.

IN THE HALL - Messer produces the baggie.

MESSER
Look what I found.

HOLLY
Where'd you get that?

MESSER
The linen closet. A little gift
from the other side.

Holly smiles.

MESSER (CONT'D)
Thank you Peter!

HOLLY
Or Alison.

MESSER
Really?

HOLLY
On the right occasion.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Holly and Messer have a nice buzz going. They sit on the floor, against the couch. The stereo plays mellow music.

On the coffee table in front of them is the BABY MONITOR, water, some munchies and a HOLLOWED OUT APPLE with a tinfoil screen - their makeshift bong.

HOLLY

I haven't done this since college.

MESSER

I haven't done this ENOUGH since college.

(pointing to the apple)

Actually, you can thank my freshman roommate for the apple bong.

A RUSTLE FROM the BABY MONITOR. Both stop STILL as they LISTEN. Nothing. Sophie was just rolling over. She's sound ASLEEP. They relax.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Are we being incredibly irresponsible?

HOLLY

(yes, sort of)

No.

(beat)

It was THEIR stash.

Messer LAUGHS, he hadn't thought of that rationale.

MESSER

That's true. I guess we've got their blessing.

Holly gets the GIGGLES too. It's contagious... they really begin to laugh.

It becomes a huge release of emotion.

MESSER (CONT'D)

(through his laughter)

I really, really miss them...

HOLLY

(through her laughter)

I miss them too.

Beat.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

You want to know a secret?

(beat)

I dated Peter.

MESSER

No...

HOLLY

Right before Alison. That's how I met her.

MESSER

For how long?

HOLLY

I don't know. All of a minute.

(off Messer's stunned
look)

It's not that surprising.

MESSER

No, he just, he never mentioned it.

HOLLY

Because I told him not to.

Off Messer's look...

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I just knew it would be one more
thing for you to give me endless
shit about.

MESSER

I wouldn't have given you shit.

(beat)

He was the one with the tiny
penis. Not your type at all. I
know you like 'em...

He holds his hands up like he's measuring a fish. Holly
sighs, amused.

HOLLY

And there it is. I can always
count on Messer.

MESSER

Ah, you love it.

Holly leans over Messer to reach a glass of water. Her
shirt slips off her shoulder, exposing a bra strap.

HOLLY

It's growing on me...

Messer reaches over, tucks Holly's bra strap gently back
under her shirt collar.

MESSER

(knows the feeling)

It is, huh?

(beat)

Do you think they knew that would
happen?

They look at each other. They're close. The room is way QUIET now.

HOLLY
I don't know... I...

MESSER LEANS IN TO KISS HER, impulsively but slowly.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
...oh no...

Messer's lips reach hers. Once they kiss, she gives into it.

She slowly unbuttons every one of his shirt buttons. At the last one, she slips her hands inside his shirt and around him till they meet in the back.

She kisses him deeply. They start tearing at each other's clothes as they kiss. Fall out of frame.

LATER

Holly and Messer are entangled in a single sheet. They face the dresser that still sports a WEDDING PICTURE OF PETER AND ALISON.

Holly looks at the picture of her friends.

HOLLY
There! Are you happy now?!

Messer laughs. So does Holly. They kiss again and we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The morning sun cuts across Messer's face. The light of a new day. He's sleeping with his back to Holly's back.

Sophie is awake, talking happy chirps and gibberish on the baby monitor. Messer and Holly both slowly wake up. But neither of them moves. They just lie there, waiting for the other one to say something.

Long beat. Finally...

HOLLY
Messer...?

MESSER
Yeah...?

They roll over and face each other. It's awkward.

HOLLY

Morning.

MESSER

Morning.

Holy shit! What have we done?!

The moment is broken when the DOORBELL rings. They sit up.

HOLLY

Who could that be?

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MORNING

Messer, clad in boxers and a t-shirt, peers through the side window of the door.

JANINE CAUL stands on the front porch. Messer calls to her through the window.

MESSER

(trying to sound cheery)
You're back!

JANINE

(she does this ten
times a day)
Surprise!

MESSER

(extremely friendly)
Hey... Let me just throw
something on.
(calling upstairs)
Holly, Janine Caul's here!

Holly looks at Messer from the top of the stairs. Hides her surprise, matches his enthusiasm.

HOLLY

Great!

JANINE

Take your time.

With that, the scrambling begins.

Messer races through the living room. Scoops up the bag of leftover pot, the munchies, etc. Any evidence from the night before. But he can't find the apple. He looks underneath the coffee table. Where is it?

INTERCUT WITH

HOLLY IN THE BEDROOM - Holding Sophie under one arm, she hurriedly makes the bed. She gathers Messer's clothes from the floor and hides them under the covers.

IN THE KITCHEN - Messer dumps everything into the garbage can. Mixes up the garbage so that the pot is on the bottom. Smells it. It still reeks of pot. He pours a can of coffee beans into the garbage to cover the smell.

He hurries into his BEDROOM. Quickly gets dressed.

Holly does too. Puts on the first clothes she can find.

OUTSIDE THE FRONT DOOR - Janine Caul waits patiently. She's used to this. Then, the door opens.

REVEAL - Messer, Holly and Sophie stand there trying to look like the all-American family.

Until Messer notices the APPLE BONG in Sophie's hands. Oh shit!

He quickly grabs it and takes a big bite, hiding the foil side in the palm of his hand. His eyes water at the foul taste of ash and apple.

MESSER

(gagging)

Come on in.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Messer and Holly sit on the couch, across from Janine. Sophie is playing nearby.

Janine's demeanor is warm, but every time Sophie so much as makes a peep she makes a note in her pad. Holly and Messer crane to see what she's writing.

HOLLY

She verbalizes constantly. She doesn't have the words yet, but she's walking. And all of her motor skills are developing smoothly.

MESSER

Dr. Stein says she's cool.

Janine nods, makes another note. Turns to Messer.

JANINE

And how are her cognitive skills?

Messer looks blank. He doesn't know what she means.
Holly gives him a look - Answer her.

MESSER
Uh... fine. She's... really
cognitive.

HOLLY
(filling in for him)
She can point out her favorite
characters when I read to her.

MESSER
Oh yeah, she's way into Pooh.

JANINE
And how are you two doing?

HOLLY
How are we doing...?

She looks at Messer. How *ARE* we doing? Turns back to
Janine.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
I'm good.
(to Messer)
How are you?

MESSER
I'm good if you're good.

HOLLY
I'm great.

MESSER
We're great.

JANINE
And where do you see yourselves in
five years?

Holly and Messer look at each other - they've prepared
for this question. They speak as if scripted.

HOLLY
Well, obviously we plan on still
being right here - providing a
stable and secure home environment
for Sophie.

Holly puts her hand on Messer's. Trying to play the part.

MESSER
We're going to continue to support
and nurture her however we can.
(MORE)

MESSER (CONT'D)
And provide a stable and secure
environment for her.

HOLLY
(whispers)
I said that already.

MESSER
(fumbling)
Oh. Yeah. So just, you know,
stable...

JANINE
And secure.

MESSER
Right.

HOLLY
(over-selling it)
This is our home now. We've
really gelled as a family unit.

MESSER
You know, since we last saw you.

Janine nods, makes more notes. A tense beat of silence.

JANINE
Guys, I've been doing this long
enough to know when I'm hearing
the Cliffs Notes version. That's
why they pay me the big bucks.
Don't just tell me what you think
I want to hear. Be honest. How
are you two getting along?

HOLLY AND MESSER
Great!

Janine closes her notebook.

JANINE
Okay. Well, I think that's all I
need right now. I'll give you a call
to set up one last interview, and
then we'll make a final decision.

With that, she smiles and hands Holly the bra she's been
sitting on. The one thing they missed.

HOLLY
Oh... thanks...

Holly and Messer look at each other.

INT. BROADCAST TRUCK - LATE AFTERNOON

The truck is in pre-game mode, this time for a pre-season Cavaliers basketball game. Messer is in the back of the truck, cueing up replays.

Rudy sits next to him. They're in mid-conversation.

RUDY

Dude, why would you sleep with her? The situation wasn't challenging enough for you?

MESSER

We were stoned.

RUDY

Well that'll get the ball rolling...

MESSER

I don't know why we did it. It just happened.

RUDY

I know why.

Messer looks at him. You do?

RUDY (CONT'D)

Well, a couple of possibilities at least. One - you're into her. Simple as that. Or, two - you're desperate to get out of this situation and you'll do anything to sabotage it. Or a combo of the two.

MESSER

That's it? Those are my options?

RUDY

They're all comfortably in your wheelhouse.

Messer covers his face. Moans.

RUDY (CONT'D)

So... given how complicated your life has become, I take it you don't want to hear about the directing job in Phoenix that starts in two weeks?

Off Messer, totally overwhelmed now.

EXT. OUTDOOR FARMER'S MARKET - LATE DAY

CLOSE ON HOLLY - She has a similar expression - overwhelmed by the ramifications of last night. She compulsively picks at a bunch of grapes, eating one after the other.

Sophie is in the backpack. Every time Holly brings another grape to her mouth she reaches for it, hoping it's for her. Frank walks over, breaks the moment.

FRANK

You do realize you're torturing
your kid.

Holly is embarrassed. She's eaten almost the entire bunch. She hands the rest to Sophie. Frank can tell she's stewing.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Stop. You got it out of your
system. It would've been weird if
you guys hadn't hooked up. You're
raising a kid together, you're on
top of each other in that place.
It was a matter of time. So you
made a mistake. It doesn't have to
change anything.

HOLLY

That's not why I'm freaking out.

FRANK

Then why are you freaking out?

HOLLY

I'm freaking out because I'm NOT
freaking out! Because it felt
really... right. And that's gotta
be wrong! Right?!

FRANK

Not necessarily.

Off Holly...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - PRE-DAWN

ON MESSER - Sound asleep. The sun hasn't even risen yet.

Suddenly, a little foot enters frame. KICKS Messer in
the chin. And again, hard. Messer startles awake.

REVEAL - Sophie is in bed between them.

Messer sits up. Looks down at Holly and Sophie sleeping together. Sophie has turned herself completely around.

Through the dim haze of the room Messer can see the picture of Peter, Alison and Sophie staring back at him.

He sits there, stares at Holly and Sophie. WIDE AWAKE now.

INT. AMY'S HOUSE - DAY

Guests are gathered for a HALLOWEEN block party. Amy opens the door to find Holly, Messer and Sophie.

They're all dressed in Pooh Halloween costumes - Sophie as PIGLET, Holly as TIGGER and Messer as WINNIE-THE-POOH. Messer's outfit is full-body, features a big paunch and looks extremely toasty.

AMY

Oh my God, you guys are so awesome!
Sophie, you look so cute!

She gestures for them to come on in. The house is filled with lots of kids and lots of parents. Messer and Holly survey the crowd. They're no longer outsiders.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - LATER

Messer is pushing Sophie on a swing set. Holly stands nearby with a group of parents, chatting. Messer can overhear snippets of their conversation.

HOLLY

...we've considered a couple pre-schools, but we haven't interviewed. We're on a list at Grantham...

Holly seems to fit right in. It's 180 degrees for her from Sophie's first birthday party.

AT THE SAME TIME, an overly friendly LAW SCHOOL GRADUATE, 20's, is talking Messer's OTHER ear off.

LAW SCHOOL GRADUATE

...Ah, law school was bullshit.
I'm thinking about bumming around Amsterdam for a year...

Messer pushes Sophie harder and harder as he listens. She claps and yelps happily. Messer smiles at her, but he looks pained. He cocks his ear, trying to overhear Holly.

HOLLY

...I know, she's growing so fast.
It's insane. I feel like I'm
going to blink and she'll be in
high school...

Sweat pours off Messer's forehead as he listens and
pushes. He wipes his face with his big orange paw. He's
starting to spiral - hearing about his future in one ear
and the single life he's missing out on in the other.

LAW SCHOOL GRADUATE

...Or just hop on my bike, hit the
open road. See where it takes me.

And another snippet from Holly...

HOLLY

...Please, the day she goes off to
college I'll be turning fifty!

LAW SCHOOL GRADUATE

...I don't know, I'm not really
married to anything.

Messer pushes Sophie so hard now she's no longer
squealing for joy. She's trying to handle the G forces.
The Law School Graduate notices.

LAW SCHOOL GRADUATE (CONT'D)

Dude, watch the guns there.

MESSER

(looks at him)
Huh...?

WOMAN #1

Holly this is my husband, Brian.

HOLLY

Nice to meet you.
(gesturing to Messer)
And have you met my... my...
(what to call him?)
...My Messer?

My Messer? Messer turns to look at Holly and...

THWACK! The baby swing clocks Messer in the head. He
flops backwards, end over end, looking much like the
animated Pooh when he's unstuck from Rabbit's hole.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

(rushing over to him)
Messer, are you okay...?

Messer gets up, embarrassed and overwhelmed.

MESSER

Uh, yeah, yeah... Excuse me...

Messer pushes through the crowd. Goes INSIDE THE HOUSE, in search of some kind of escape. He's drenched in sweat, moving awkwardly past people in the bulky costume.

He veers left into a TINY BATHROOM.

Closes the door, shutting out the party. He tears at the Pooh outfit. He wiggles his way out of it, looking like he probably dropped about five pounds wearing that thing.

Looks at himself in the mirror. Splashes water on his face. Feeling trapped in the tiny, windowless bathroom.

Finally Messer opens the door. Holly's waiting for him.

HOLLY

What's the matter?

MESSER

Nothing. I'm fine.

He tries to move past her. She won't let him.

HOLLY

Talk to me.

Beat.

MESSER

My Messer?

HOLLY

I'm sorry. I didn't know what to call you. I mean, you're not my husband.

MESSER

Yes, I'm not your husband.

HOLLY

I know that.

MESSER

We're not married.

HOLLY

I know that too.

(beat)

This is about us sleeping together, isn't it?

MESSER

No. It's not just about sex.
This isn't natural!

(beat)

I mean, we live in their house,
Holly. We sleep in their bed,
we're raising their kid. We're
"acting" like we're married! But
I'm not Peter. You're not Alison.

(beat)

It's like we're playing house.

Holly looks stung.

HOLLY

Playing house?

Messer nods.

MESSER

Yes.

Holly takes a breath. Gathers her thoughts.

HOLLY

Let me just get this straight. You
think we've just been pretending?

Messer doesn't say anything.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Have you been "pretending" with
Sophie?

MESSER

No, no, I love Sophie.

HOLLY

So just with me then.

Again, Messer doesn't know what to say.

MESSER

(fumbling)

Well... what about you and that
Sam guy?

HOLLY

I haven't returned any of "that
Sam guy's" calls because of you.
Because I'm not playing house,
Messer.

(getting emotional)

It's all been very real to me.

Beat. Messer feels terrible. He's not trying to upset her. Then...

MESSER

I'm up for a job, in Phoenix.

HOLLY

Oh...

MESSER

It's directing Coyotes games,
hockey. It's just for the rest of
the season. At least for now.
It's a big opportunity, the kind
I've been looking for.
(beat/truly torn)
And I don't know what to do.

HOLLY

(pained/cold)

I think you should take it.

That's all she can say right now. She turns and walks out, through the party guests. She stops by Amy. Grabs Sophie, the diaper bag, her Halloween candy.

Messer makes his way towards her through the guests.

MESSER

Holly, wait...

She's got everything. Walks out the door with Sophie. Messer watches her go, and we...

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Messer jogs in T-shirt and shorts, sweating as the hot sun beats down on him. It looks to be summer again.

But then he turns a corner and jogs towards JOBING.COM ARENA - home of the Coyotes. He's in Phoenix.

Messer enters THE ARENA through the loading dock, past the Zamboni. We can see the COLD ICE OF THE HOCKEY RINK.

SUPER TITLE: **WINTER**

Messer jogs off into the arena...

EXT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - MORNING

A fresh blanket of SNOW covers the neighborhood.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Holly is alone, making breakfast. She hears Sophie yell on the baby monitor. Puts down what she's doing, but then...

SAM (O.S.)
(on the baby monitor)
Good morning Sophie girl. It's
just me. Need a lift?

Holly smiles as Sophie responds to Sam in happy gibberish. She walks into the LIVING ROOM and meets them at the foot of the stairs.

Sam comes down carrying Sophie. Hands her to Holly.

HOLLY
Morning, sweet pea.

SAM
Is it okay that I got her?

HOLLY
She seems okay with it so, sure.

Holly and Sam kiss.

SAM
I've got to go home. I have an
early meeting.
(embraces her again)
But we're on for Saturday, right?

HOLLY
(nods)
Messer flies in tomorrow.

SAM
Never thought I'd be glad to see
Messer.

They kiss again. Off-screen, we hear the ROAR OF AN ARENA CROWD, and...

CUT TO:

INT. JOBING.COM ARENA - NIGHT

A Coyotes player takes a slap shot, the goalie blocks it. Two players scramble for the puck behind the net.

REVEAL - We're watching this on a TV MONITOR in the
BROADCAST CONTROL TRUCK.

Messer directs the broadcast, which is considerably more
fast-paced than even the most exciting baseball game. He
calls out cameras coolly and efficiently - in his
element. His PRODUCER stands behind him.

MESSER

Ready two, take two... ready
seventeen, take seventeen. Ten,
follow Tjarnqvist. Take ten.
Eight, find Rachunek for me.
There you go, take eight...

A GOAL is scored. The red light behind the net flashes.

PRODUCER

(impressed)
Nice cutting, Mess.

Messer smiles to himself, excited. This is what he's
always wanted to do, and he's loving it.

MESSER

Okay, cue replays on A, B and X.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. CONTROL TRUCK - NIGHT

The door to the control truck opens. The game is over.
Messer and his crew step out, exhilarated.

MESSER

...Two hat tricks! Have you ever
worked a game like that?!

PRODUCER

It was like the playoffs.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Hey Mess, we're gonna grab a round at
McCusker's. You wanna come?

MESSER

Nah. Next time. I'm flying to
Cleveland tomorrow.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Oh yeah, what's in Cleveland?

MESSER

Just... Personal stuff.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

Messer enters with a basket of dirty laundry and a beer.
A YOUNG DAD and his DAUGHTER are finishing their laundry.

Messer watches them as he loads a washing machine. The Dad
folds a pile of laundry while the girl rolls socks into
balls, fires them into the laundry basket like basketballs.

YOUNG DAD
She scores! Two points.

MESSER
(nodding to the Dad)
Hey.

YOUNG DAD
Hey.

Then to the girl.

MESSER
Nice shot.

CHARLIE
(smiling)
Are you new in the building?

MESSER
Kind of.

CHARLIE
(like it's one thought)
The last dryer's broken I'm
Charlie and that's my Dad.

Dad smiles at that.

MESSER
Hi Charlie. And Charlie's Dad.
I'm Messer.
(then)
How old are you Charlie?

CHARLIE
Six. Six and three months.

He nods, impressed. A big girl - where Sophie's headed.
Charlie nails her last sock. Smiles at Messer.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Gotta go.

They take their basket. Messer just watches them.
Father and daughter.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MESSER'S CLEVELAND APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

It's freezing, snowing a bit. Holly gets Sophie out of the SUV. Bundles up her winter parka. Sam gets out, carrying the car seat.

SAM

Should I come up, or wait here,
or...?

HOLLY

Sure. You can come up.
(then, stopping him)
Actually, no. Maybe you should
wait here. It might be a little
weird if...

(then again)

No. It's fine. It's twenty
degrees out. Of course you should
come up.

INT. MESSER'S CLEVELAND APT. - DAY

The apartment is spare, except for anything having to do with Sophie - toys, dolls, kids clothes, etc.

Messer opens the door to reveal Holly, Sophie and Sam. Holly holds the little girl in one arm - a diaper bag and some toys in the other.

Messer lights up at seeing Sophie.

MESSER

There's my girl!

He takes her out of Holly's arms and hugs her big.
Kisses her. Holly can't help but smile at the reunion.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Oh, I missed you SO much!

Holly and Messer look at each other. But before Messer can say anything, SAM ENTERS - carrying Sophie's car seat.

MESSER (CONT'D)

(surprised)

Oh. Hey.

SAM

Hi Messer.

MESSER

(to Holly)

So... you two... Wow, you didn't waste any time.

HOLLY

Messer, don't... No cracks.

MESSER

No, I'm fresh out of cracks.

Awkward beat. He takes the diaper bag.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Did you pack her...?

HOLLY

Yeah, it's in the bag.

MESSER

And...

HOLLY

She's got Mr. Duckie.

Sam hands the car seat to Messer. Messer looks at Holly.

Beat. Holly gives Sophie a kiss goodbye.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Have a fun weekend, sweetie.

She turns back to Messer at the door.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I'll have my cell phone on if you need anything. We'll be at the Ritz tonight.

MESSER

The Ritz... I would expect nothing less.

(then...)

Whadd'ya know, one crack left.

EXT. MESSER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Holly and Sam get INTO THE SUV. Holly watches as Sam begins to meticulously type the RITZ-CARLTON address into the GPS Navigation System. She registers the irony. Looks up at Messer's apartment window.

SAM

I'm so glad we're getting to...

HOLLY IMPULSIVELY GRABS SAM AND KISSES HIM. Big.
Finally, she pulls away. Sam is stunned.

HOLLY

Okay. Let's go.

Sam hits the gas and the tires squeal.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FRAICHE RESTAURANT - DAY

Frank and Holly are working behind the counter. Holly is manically chopping garlic. Frank stops her.

FRANK

Uh, unless you want to kill our patrons, I think that's enough garlic.

REVEAL - Holly has absentmindedly chopped a massive amount of garlic.

HOLLY

Oh... sorry.

FRANK

So last night was that relaxing, huh?

HOLLY

Last night was wonderful. The hotel was wonderful. SAM was wonderful, and... UHHHHH!

FRANK

What?

HOLLY

Messer...

FRANK

What did he do now? I swear, I will grind him into...

HOLLY

No. Nothing. Messer didn't do anything. He just...

(beat)

You know, the first time I went out with Sam I felt like I was cheating on my husband, and now... I see Messer and I feel like a divorcee'.

FRANK

You don't have anything to feel
guilty about, Hol.

HOLLY

Of course I don't!

She sits down. Frank sits down next to her.

FRANK

Do you love him?

HOLLY

Sam?

FRANK

No. Messer.

HOLLY

No. I don't.

(beat)

I don't know. I SHOULD love Sam.
With Sam it's about me. It's about
the two of us. But with Messer...
I feel all kinds of things for him,
but... are they because of Sophie
or about Sophie or THROUGH Sophie,
or what? And what if there was no
Sophie? Would I even care that
he's in Phoenix?

FRANK

Well there is that. He did move
to Phoenix. Maybe that says it
all about Messer.

That resonates with Holly.

INT. MESSER'S APT. - KITCHEN - DAY

Sophie is sitting on a chair as Messer ties her shoe laces.

MESSER

(to himself)

Holly's right. We should go
velcro.

Sophie reaches for Messer's glass of soda on the counter.

MESSER (CONT'D)

No, no. No soda for you. You
want a little more juice?

Messer grabs her "sippy-cup."

MESSER (CONT'D)

Hang on a sec, you're leaking here.

As Messer futzes with the leak-proof cup, Sophie stands up on the chair, reaches up to his glass of soda on the counter. Messer sees her out of the corner of his eye.

MESSER (CONT'D)

(as he turns)

Hey, monkey-girl, what did I say...?

But he's too late. Sophie loses her balance and falls. The glass shatters on the floor.

Messer rushes to Sophie. She's on the floor, crying hysterically. Her hand is bleeding. He picks her up.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Oh my God... Okay, it's okay honey.
I've got you. Let me see your hand.

Messer looks at the cut.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Oh Jesus... All right Sophie, it's
okay, it's okay. We're going to
go for a ride.

Messer hurries out of the apartment.

EXT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

HOLLY rushes into the ER, past some parked ambulances.

INT. HOSPITAL ER - EXAM ROOM - DAY

A DOCTOR and NURSE are working on Sophie's hand. Holly stands nearby. Calm. Even as Sophie cries.

Messer is behind Holly. There's blood on his T-shirt. He looks shaken and guilt-ridden.

DOCTOR

Okay, so we've irrigated the wound.
We're just going to put in a few
stitches so it heals properly.
There should be minimal scarring.
If one of you could come over here.

Holly's quick to take Sophie's side.

HOLLY

You're doing so great, sweetheart.
I'm right here...

Holly continues talking to her as the Doctor begins stitching up Sophie's hand.

PUSH IN ON MESSER - He's focused on Holly. Watches her stroke Sophie's hair. Talk reassuringly to her.

There's something so incredibly beautiful and strong about Holly in this moment. It calms Messer.

EXT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Holly and Messer walk out of the ER. Holly holds a now sleeping Sophie in her arms. Sophie's hand is bandaged up. It's snowing outside.

MESSER

Holly...

HOLLY

Don't feel guilty. I don't think this was your fault. It was an accident. It could've just as easily happened with me.

MESSER

Please, you have her for two months and everything's fine. I have her for two days and look what happens.

HOLLY

Hey, she's going to be fine.

(beat)

Okay?

Messer takes a breath.

MESSER

Thanks.

Holly hands Sophie to him.

HOLLY

Here. You take her home.

Messer is hesitant.

MESSER

Are you sure...?

HOLLY

Of course I'm sure.

(beat)

And then tomorrow you should go back to Phoenix.

(MORE)

HOLLY (CONT'D)
That's where your life is now,
Messer. You go live yours. I'm
going to live mine. It's alright.
I've got this.

MESSER
What about our last interview with
Janine?

HOLLY
I've got it.

Beat. Holly looks at him - is he going to protest? No.
Messer just nods, accepting.

Holly kisses Sophie. Walks away. Messer watches her go.

EXT. DINER - LATE DAY

Messer pulls up in front of a diner with Sophie in the
back seat of his rental car. He gets out and opens her
door to get her out of her car seat.

MESSER
Okay, who's hungry for some dinner?

He notices that she's dumped the DIAPER BAG over - its
contents spilled out all over the back seat and floor.

MESSER (CONT'D)
Oh Sophie...
 (putting things back
 in the diaper bag)
Okay, this thing has got to go.

Messer notices Sophie chewing on a piece of paper.

MESSER (CONT'D)
What do you have in your mouth?

Messer takes the piece of paper out. Looks at it
curiously. It's an old PHOTO LAB RECEIPT.

INT. PHOTO DEVELOPING STORE - DAY

Messer stands in front of a STORE CLERK, holding Sophie.
The clerk examines the soggy, smeared PHOTO RECEIPT.

MESSER
It's really old.

STORE CLERK
Yeah, I noticed. What's the name?

MESSER

Novack.

EXT. PHOTO DEVELOPING STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Messer stands outside the store holding Sophie and the PHOTOS. It's still snowing.

Messer opens the photos, starts looking through them. These are the pictures Peter took at Sophie's first birthday party.

Shots of Sophie with her birthday hat on. Eating her first bite of cake. Photos of Peter and Alison.

MESSER

You see that? That's your Mommy
and Daddy. That will always be
your Mommy and Daddy.

He flips through some more of the photos.

Stops still on the last photo - the picture of Messer, Holly and Sophie taken after the party.

MESSER (CONT'D)

And this is... us.

He lingers on this shot, taking it in.

MESSER (CONT'D)

The three of us.

Off the photo we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

CLOSE ON THE PHOTO OF Messer, Holly and Sophie.

Messer is settled into his seat now, still looking at the photo. FOCUSING ON HOLLY. Her face.

An OLDER WOMAN sitting next to him leans over.

OLDER WOMAN

You have a beautiful family.

MESSER

(self-conscious)
Oh. Thank you.

With that, he puts the photo back in his pocket. Pulls out some homework - a team roster with pictures for the Coyotes' next opponent and a camera map. Starts making notes.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen, this is your
Captain again. We're clear for
our takeoff to Phoenix.

The plane kicks into gear.

FROM THE RUNWAY - we watch the plane take flight.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Sophie is playing on the floor. Holly is cleaning up.

Holly finds Peter's LEATHER BOMBER JACKET draped over a chair. The same jacket Messer wore when they went out. Beat. She hangs the jacket up in the closet.

SOPHIE'S ROOM - LATER

Holly tries to sing Sophie to sleep with a happy Raffi song.

IN THE HALLWAY - SAM steps out of the bathroom. Listens in to Holly's singing from outside Sophie's door.

HOLLY
(singing)
"...Heaven above him and the sea
below. He's just a little white
whale on the go..."

Holly trails off. Sophie stares back at her.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Too happy, huh? All right Soph,
what's that song that Messer
sings? Uh...
(singing)
"This something something has beaten
me down. Teased me and lied.
Teased me and lied. I don't
remember all the words to this song.
My dreams have withered and died."

Amazingly, Sophie's eyes close. Sam walks away.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
"Oh my dreams have withered... and
died."

Sophie lies calmly in her arms. Daddy's girl.

EXT. PARK - AFTERNOON

Sophie sits on a park bench, kicking her feet. Holly struggles to get her shoe laces tied. Sam is with them.

HOLLY
Sophie, hold still...

But Sophie's too quick for her. She hops off the bench and runs across the park lawn. Holly and Sam chase after her.

SAM
I got her.

HOLLY
Sophie, I gotta tie those...
You're going to trip.

Sophie runs towards a small pond with ducks.

SOPHIE
Duck! Ducks!

Holly catches up to her.

HOLLY
What?

Sophie points to the ducks.

SOPHIE
Ducks.

Holly is surprised and excited to hear her talking again.

HOLLY
Yes, that's right! Ducks!
(to Sam)
She said ducks!
(to Sophie)
You said ducks!

SOPHIE
Ducks! Kack. Kack.

Holly is overjoyed.

HOLLY
Yes, baby. Quack, quack! That's
what they say!

SAM
Way to go, Sophie!

HOLLY

(to Sam)

Oh my God, when Messer hears about
this...!

And that says it all. Sam and Holly share a look. He knows she'd rather be here with Messer. And she knows it too.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Sam, I... I didn't mean...

SAM

(he gets it)

Yes you did.

(beat)

It's okay. I don't want to play
at this.

Holly nods, aware of the irony.

HOLLY

I'm sorry.

SAM

Me too.

With that, Sam walks away. Holly doesn't stop him. Watches him go. Sophie breaks the moment.

SOPHIE

Mama...

Holly looks down at the little girl. Sophie's squatting down, pulling at her shoe laces again.

Holly's overcome with emotion. She sweeps Sophie up in her arms. Hugs her tightly. Sophie's shoe laces dangle.

INT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Holly watches over Sophie as she plays with Play-Doh.

The DOORBELL rings. Holly turns. Walks to the front door and opens it.

REVEAL - JANINE CAUL standing on the porch. Holly smiles, she was expecting her.

HOLLY

Hi Janine. Come on in.

MOMENTS LATER

Holly and Janine sit across from each other in the living room, while Sophie plays on the floor.

JANINE

So where's Eric?

HOLLY

Oh, Messer's... Actually,
Messer's in Phoenix. That's
probably the first thing we should
talk about.

Janine looks at Holly, sympathetic but disappointed.

JANINE

Okay... Well, yeah let's talk
about that...

MESSER (O.S.)

Wait, I'm here, I'm here...!

Both women turn to DISCOVER MESSER coming through the front screen door.

HOLLY

Messer...

He takes his coat off. Stamps the snow off his feet.

MESSER

I know. I'm late. Sorry. I was on
a road trip in Phoenix, but I left
early. Did you tell Janine...?

HOLLY

(going with the story)
Uh, yeah. I was just telling her.

MESSER

I said to my producer, I don't
care if this is a Stanley Cup
game, there's no WAY I'm missing
that interview.

(sits down next to Holly)
What? You didn't get my message?

HOLLY

No. I didn't.

MESSER

Oh, I'm sorry. Well, no harm done.

He gives Holly an awkward kiss hello on the cheek.

Janine looks at them for a beat. Then...

JANINE

(takes out her notebook)
Okay... Well, why don't we start
where we left off. Have you guys
thought about where you see
yourselves in five years?

HOLLY

Yes, I've actually given this a
great deal of thought, and I...

Messer puts his hand up to silence her.

MESSER

Holly, if I may...
(to Janine)
We don't know. It's as simple as
that, Janine. We don't know where
we're going to be in five years.
We don't know where we're going to
be in *one* year.

Holly shoots him a look. He ignores her.

MESSER (CONT'D)

But here's what we do know. We
love this little girl. We're her
parents now.

(looks at Holly)
And no matter what happens with
us, that's never going to change.
Whatever we don't know, we'll
figure out. Together. We're a
family.

Beat. Janine smiles and nods, satisfied.

JANINE

Okay.
(to Holly)
Did you want to say...?

HOLLY

Uh, no. What he said.

JANINE

(smiles)
I can live with that.

CUT TO:

EXT. PETER AND ALISON'S HOUSE - LATER

Messer and Holly wave goodbye to Janine. Close the front door. Holly whirls around on Messer.

HOLLY

What the hell are you doing here?

MESSER

Where's Sam?

HOLLY

Sam and I broke up.

MESSER

(smiles)

Really...

HOLLY

Messer, why are you here?!

MESSER

What? You didn't think I was gonna spend the rest of my life in that heat, did you? Let me tell you, Phoenix is for pussies. I quit. I'll get another directing shot somewhere down the line. This is where I should be.

HOLLY

For how long?

MESSER

Look, I don't know an eloquent way to say this. I...

(looks at Sophie)

I screwed up, okay? I woke up with the three of us in bed and it was like all of a sudden I had become somebody's husband and somebody's father and I didn't know how I'd gotten there. But... I want to do this with you. I don't want to think about it anymore. I want my wife back.

HOLLY

You don't have a wife.

(beat)

The truth is, if it wasn't for Sophie we wouldn't even be having this conversation.

MESSER

That's not true...

HOLLY

It is. You were right. This isn't the way it's supposed to work. It's not natural. You're supposed to meet somebody, fall in love, get married, and THEN have the baby. Not the other way around.

(beat)

It's not enough that I'm just Sophie-worthy.

MESSER

Okay, think of it this way. The Browns could have a perfect season and end up in the Super Bowl, right...? Or, they could have a shitty season, back into a wild card spot, win a couple playoff games on the other teams' last minute fumbles and then end up in the Super Bowl.

HOLLY

(lost)

I have no idea what you're talking about.

MESSER

Either way... they're in the Super Bowl. *WE'RE* in the Super Bowl!

She stares at him blankly.

MESSER (CONT'D)

Okay, forget the football analogy. I want you. Not because of Sophie, because of YOU. The truth is, Peter and Alison were right about us. You and I are supposed to end up together.

(beat)

We just did the whole thing backwards. And now...

Beat.

MESSER (CONT'D)

I'm falling in love with you.

He waits for a reaction from her. So does Sophie, it seems. Holly smiles, getting emotional.

HOLLY

You're such a cynical asshole.

She leans in and they kiss. Big.

When Holly opens her eyes, she NOTICES SOMETHING THROUGH THE WINDOW, half-buried on the snow covered lawn.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

What's that?

MESSER

(smiles)

A little insurance.

Messer gestures for her to check it out. He picks up Sophie and follows Holly OUTSIDE.

As Holly gets closer she smiles. She leans down and dusts some snow off to reveal a PORCELAIN CLAW FOOT.

It's a BATHTUB.

HOLLY

(melting)

Oh my God, it's beautiful.

She CLIMBS in, snow and all.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

It's so... so big!

MESSER

That's the idea.

HOLLY

Come here...

He hands her Sophie and climbs in with her. They kiss big.

As the snow falls we leave the family, sitting in the claw foot bath tub on the lawn.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

MUSIC UP AND UNDER: Bright Eyes' "FIRST DAY OF MY LIFE."

INT. SOPHIE'S ROOM - DAY

We're looking out through an open window. It's a beautiful SPRING day outside.

Pull back to reveal SOPHIE

Messer is pulling a very pretty dress over her head.

MESSER

There you go.

He picks up some shoes.

SOPHIE
 (pointing to a
 different pair)
 No, no, no, no, no! Purple, daddy.

Holly steps up behind them with a small hair brush.

MESSER
 Excuse me. Her highness requests
 purple.

HOLLY
 Of course. What goes better with
 an orange dress?

Messer retrieves the favorite shoes, puts them on her.

MESSER
 All done. Let's show Mommy how
 pretty you look.

He picks her up and hands her to Holly.

HOLLY
 Oh I think we're ready.

They leave us alone in the room.

From OFF SCREEN, we can hear them walk down the stairs
 and greet a big crowd of guests.

MESSER (O.S.)
 Here's the birthday girl!

Everyone cheers and sings "Happy Birthday" to Sophie.

We PUSH IN on a photo on Sophie's dresser. It's the
 picture that Messer found - Messer, Holly and Sophie
 together at her first birthday party.

Off the picture of this new family we...

FADE OUT.