

M A I D

by

Molly Smith Metzler

Based on

Maid: Low Wages, Hard Work, and a Mother's Will to Survive
By Stephanie Land

Episode 101

Draft, 11/12/2019

NOTE:

In this episode, and in the series, we are entirely in Stephanie's POV; we never leave it.

She controls the camera and the narrative of this story, and when she wants to, she can show us her internal life: quick flashes of memories, images, desires, rewrites -- some real, some imagined.

When this happens, ***the text switches to bold italics.***

1

EXT. HIGHWAY - ROUTE 20 WA - PACIFIC NORTHWEST - SUNSET 1

We see: a woman in a MAID uniform. She's on her hands and knees, covered in mud, hysterically CRYING. She's in the meridian of a busy highway, in the rain.

This is Stephanie (mid-20s, funny and tough, with tattoos from knuckle to shoulder on both arms and a general demeanor of: *don't fuck with me.*) But in this moment, her hard shell is gone. We're meeting her at her most vulnerable. She has been absolutely crushed by this day.

Mascara-tears stream down her face as she crawls through garbage and grass, looking for something. She can't find it, whatever it is. But she's desperate for it, panicked.

Behind her, in the rain, we see the HEADLIGHTS of an ancient red Subaru wagon ("Ruby") pulled over on the meridian. Cars THUNDER by her in both directions, splashing rain. People HONK at her.

OFF a maid, in the mud, cracked open by today, we --

CUT TO:

ONSCREEN: "18 HOURS AGO"

2

INT. SINGLE-WIDE TRAILER - WOODS - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT 2

CLOSE ON: Stephanie's face, very calm. She's made a decision. She stares straight ahead with conviction.

Now we see what she's looking at: a bare male chest. It rises and falls, as he falls deeper into sleep. She's watching, waiting for it to be safe to make her move.

We're in a dark, damp, cramped single-wide trailer in a blackout-dark pine forest. A clock says: 2:11 AM.

Something has gone very wrong here. There's broken glass on the floor. A hole's been punched in the wall.

The male chest breathes in and out. JAMIE (25, charming and dangerous) is finally asleep. Now's her chance.

Quickly and quietly, she shoulders a backpack and tip-toes over to a pack n' play, where MIA (almost 3) is asleep. She picks her up. Mia releases a small CRY.

Stephanie freezes, looks over at Jamie. A beat.

He doesn't stir. Stephanie signals to Mia: we gotta be quiet. Mia points at something, urgently. Steph knows exactly what she wants. She grabs Mia's beloved mermaid doll and hands it to her. Mia clutches it with dear life.

Steph tip-toes across the broken glass to the door, and escapes. All she has with her is her daughter, a backpack, and a mermaid.

3

INT. RUBY THE SUBARU - CONTINUOUS

3

RAIN on the windshield. Mia in her carseat. Darkness.

Steph climbs into the front seat, wet, and puts the car in neutral, lets it glide out of the driveway. No lights.

MIA
(groggy)
Daddy's sleeping?

STEPHANIE
Shhhhhh. Daddy's sleeping.

MIA
Shoop?

(We don't know what "shoop" means yet, but we will soon.)

STEPHANIE
(whispers)
No, no Shoop, baby. Shoop's sleeping. Mia should be sleeping...

At the base of the driveway, Stephanie turns back to dry off Mia. She covers her naked toes with a blanket.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Close your eyes, bunny boo.

We see: Steph's hands are trembling as she touches Mia, this is that terrifying. She kisses Mia's hand, rubs her nose. Mia's eyes close, drifting back into toddler sleep.

When Steph turns back to the steering wheel, she almost jumps out of her skin. Jamie is standing there, shirtless, in the driveway. His face is hurt, stunned.

JAMIE
What are you doing?

Stephanie starts the car. He's coming towards her, fast.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Hey. What is this?

She SLAMS the car into DRIVE, peels out. In the rearview, she watches Jamie come down the driveway and into the middle of the dirt road, staring after her in disbelief.

Stephanie speeds off, white-knuckling the steering wheel.

4 **EXT. GRAVEL ROAD NEAR TRAILER - BACKWOODS - CONTINUOUS** 4

The darkness engulfs her car as she drives down the curvy road. The reality of what she just did hits her.

Leaving was animal, primal. She didn't plan this, didn't think it through. She just had to get Mia outta there.

Trees the size of city buildings dwarf her as she drives past dilapidated trailers, ramshackle sheds, a boat full of trash, all cloaked in tarps. Pelted by rain.

PING PING PING. Like bullets. Her cellphone explodes with notifications. Text message from Jamie. Jamie. Jamie.

Then: RINGING. Her cellphone (a pre-paid one, no internet). Jamie calling. Jamie. Jamie. Jamie. She hits ignore and keeps driving. In the backseat, Mia sleeps.

She glances down at the gas tank -- it's always on empty. Question is, how empty? The answer: Below empty.

5 **EXT. SHELL GAS STATION - BARELY OPEN - CONTINUOUS** 5

Steph pulls up to a gas station, desolate except for one other car. She jumps out, rushing. Jamie could be moments behind her. She gets her wallet out, peers in.

ONSCREEN: "\$18.00"

She puts the nozzle in, pumps as little as possible.

ONSCREEN: ~~"\$18.00"~~

ONSCREEN: ~~"\$17.46"~~

ONSCREEN: "\$15.96"

A MAN (40s) leers at her from the next pump, looking her up and down. Likes what he sees. Gross. She turns away,

zips her hoodie up. Looks in at Mia, asleep.

MAN

Awful late to be out, ain't it?

STEPHANIE

Awful late to suck a dick. Sir.

Okey-doke. He turns away. She gets out her phone, scrolls, makes a call as she replaces the gas pump.

A WOMAN'S VOICE (PRE-LAP)

Leave a message. Or don't. You do you.

BEEP.

6

EXT. DARK ROAD - NIGHT

6

Alone on the road, huge wet pine trees tower over Ruby as Stephanie drives.

A WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Leave a message. Or don't. You do you.

BEEP. Steph's getting nervous that she can't reach her.

A WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(CONT'D)

Leave a message. Or don't. You do you.

7

EXT. TANIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

7

Ruby rolls up to an old farmhouse, muddy pick-ups in the driveway, farm equipment in the yard. It looks like no one is home. Steph parks, gets Mia out of seat.

MIA

(sleepy)

Mommy.

STEPHANIE

I know. I'm sorry, honey. I'm gonna find you somewhere to sleep.

She gets Mia, clutching her mermaid doll, out of the car.

EXT. TANIA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Steph KNOCKS. The door swings open to reveal TANIA (30's, punky, loose from drinking.) She's Steph's friend.

TANIA

Steph? Hey!--

STEPHANIE

I called, you didn't answer...I'm sorry, I don't mean to just barge in...I didn't know where else to go...and I...

TANIA

What's wrong?

(noticing)

Are you okay?

Steph shakes her head, no. Seeing her friend makes her raw. She fights off a SOB, suddenly very upset.

TANIA (CONT'D)

Oh God. Is it Mia?

STEPHANIE

No! She's fine.

TANIA

(she loves Jamie)

Is it Jamie?

STEPHANIE

No, he's not hurt either. We just...we need to crash here. Me and Mia. Till I figure out what to do. Can we do that?

TANIA

Oh my God of course. Always. Get in here.

But from behind Tania, an explosion of MALE LAUGHTER.

SIX MALE VOICES (O.S.)

(rowdy, drunk)

OH! / BURN!!!! /He fucked you UP!

Steph freezes at the sound of their voices. Heart sinks.

STEPHANIE

...are there people here?

TANIA

Not people. Boneheads. Ethan's playing
Fortnite with the losers --
(over her shoulder)
Cuz he forgets whose place this is.

STEPHANIE

Are the guys from Fountain here?

TANIA

Yeah. Why?

Stephanie wheels around and rushes off, back to the car.

TANIA (CONT'D)

Wait! Steph! Where are you going?

STEPHANIE

They'll tell Jamie I'm here, I gotta go.

TANIA

Why can't Jamie know you're here? What
the hell's going on??

ETHAN (30s, a chef, Jamie's friend) comes out, a
smoldering blunt in one hand, a cell phone in the other.

ETHAN

Hey, Steph. Thought I heard your voice.

She clocks the phone in his hand. His sheepish look.
(Jamie has texted him, asked him to keep her there.)

STEPHANIE

Hey Ethan, yeah, heading out now, see ya.

ETHAN

Wait! Come chill with us.

STEPHANIE

(no)
Got Mia.

ETHAN

I'll hold her. Come in, take a load off.
(re: holding out the blunt)
We got some sick dank from Humbolt...?

STEPHANIE

Fuck yeah, fire it up!

We see: Stephanie, four years ago, in a midriff-bearing tee, takes a huge hit off a blunt, playing cards with the guys. [She used to be at these very parties inside Tania's house.] MUSIC blares. Tania, Jamie, Ethan, and THE SIX GUYS are all fucked up, playing cards. They all react as she throws her winning cards down.

GUYS

(rowdy, drunk)

OH! / Shit, bro. / Ya burnt!

STEPHANIE

(joking, to Jamie)

*I believe that's what they call a flush.
"Flush," from the Latin word: you suck.*

JAMIE

(flirty)

I'm a phoenix. I will rise again.

They are cute together. Young. Buzzed. Hot chemistry.

STEPHANIE

Next time.

Ethan drops the act, moving towards her, voice firm:

ETHAN

*Look, he's on his way over. He knows he
drank too much. Just hear the man out --*

STEPHANIE

(to TANIA)

Bye.

Stephanie gets into her car and shuts the door.

ETHAN

He just wants to talk! Don't be a bitch!

TANIA

Ethan.

Tania leans into the window, softly:

TANIA (CONT'D)

Do you have someplace else to go?

INT. RUBY - DARK STREETS OF PORT TOWNSEND - NIGHT

Mia CRIES in the backseat. Steph tries not to cry in the front seat. She has no where to go. She's just driving.

We see: the main street of Port Townsend WA at night. A sweet, hippied-out, moneyed, seaside town. Lots of shops selling artisanal things. A ghost town after ten PM.

MIA

Shoop, Mommy.

STEPHANIE

(eyes on the road)

Shoop's sleeping.

She slows down at a light, and eyes the shittiest motel in town, Townsend Inn. The sign out front says "Vacancy!" and "Special: \$65 Queen Room." Mia WAILS.

ONSCREEN: "\$15.96"

MIA

Shoop, Mommy. Shoop.

STEPHANIE

Try to shut your eyes.

MIA

Shoop! I want Shoop!

STEPHANIE

I know you want Shoop, but you know what Mommy wants?

(under her breath)

Mommy wants the last owner of Ruby-the-Suby to have jammed *any other mix tape* into this janky piece of shit tape deck--

And: Mia's having a BREAKDOWN, as 3 year-olds do. SCREAM!

MIA

I WANT SHOOP I WANT SHOOP SHOOP!

STEPHANIE

(brightly, yep)

O-KAY! Time for some Shoop!!

Ruby's tape deck, broken for decades, has a bunch of matchbooks stuffed below it.

Stephanie POUNDS her fist on top of the dash. Nothing happens. She mashes another matchbook into the tape deck, POUNDS again. It awakes:

SALT-N-PEPA (ON TAPE)
 Shoop shoop ba-doop shoop ba-doop
 Shoop ba-doop ba-doop ba-doop shoop...

Mia smiles. This is her fav. Their anthem.

We see: Steph changing her diaper in the backseat, in the sunshine, dancing her baby legs to "Shoop."

We see: she and Mia looking like rappers, sitting way down low, drive-by style, nodding their heads to "Shoop."

We see: Ruby parked at the Bowman Bay beach, a picnic on the hood of the car, to "Shoop."

We see: Stephanie and Jamie having really hot sex in the backseat, when suddenly "Shoop" comes on. They laugh.

SALT-N-PEPA (CONT'D)
 (dying)
ba....doop....ba.....doop

MIA
 (upset)
 No!

STEPHANIE
 Don't cry, hang on...

She POUNDS again. Not happening. It's over. Mia CRIES.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
 Now we just free-style!
 (she knows every word:)
 "You're packed and you're stacked,
 specially in the back, Brother, wanna
 thank your mother for a butt like that!"

The streets are so dark. Where should she go?

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
 "Can I get some fries with that shake-
 shake boobie? If looks could kill, you
 would be an uzi. You're a shotgun, bang!"

OFF Steph, watching for any sign of Jamie on the street --

10

INT. SUBY - PARKED - NIGHT

10

Stephanie's in the backseat now, Indian-style, Mia draped across her legs, falling asleep. Mia's got a hat and gloves on. She's wrapped in a blanket, Steph rocking her.

STEPHANIE

(now whispering, slowly)

"Bright as the sun, I wanna have some fun. Come and give me some of that yum-yum chocolate chip, honey dip.."

She's been reciting the words to this song for an hour.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

"Can I get a scoop? Baby, take a ride in my coupe, you make me wanna...." [yawns]

Mia's asleep. Out cold. Stephanie rolls her neck.

Alone with her thoughts for the first time, she looks out the window at the sea. We GO WIDE and see: she's in the parking lot of a park, down by the water. No one around.

It's a cold, crisp autumn night. She takes her sweatshirt off, lays it over Mia as an extra layer, ignoring the fact that she's only in a tank top now.

She glances at her old phone. "No new messages."

But then it lights up. An eruption of incoming text messages. They pour in. They're from MOM ("you okay?" "xoxoxo") and DAD ("Hi, Steph!" "Love you!" "Here for you!") and FRIENDS ("I love you!" "You did the right thing!") Her screen fills with heart emojis.

But that's not real. Screen returns to BLACK. Steph's eyes go back to the sea, shivering in her tank top.

11

EXT. PUBLIC PARK PARKING LOT - WATERFRONT - DAWN

11

POLICEMAN

GOTTA MOVE, MA'AM.

A COP (40s, gruff, treats her like shit automatically) is RAPPING on the window. Stephanie jolts awake, Mia's asleep in her lap, as before. Her eyes find his face.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

Can't sleep here.

She rolls down the window.

STEPHANIE
I-Isn't this a - public place?

POLICE OFFICER
Can't park here. You got no where to be,
you can go to the Walmart parking lot or
you can go to social services.

STEPHANIE
But --

POLICE OFFICER
Now.

He eyes sleeping Mia with pity before he moves off.

STEPHANIE
Mia.
(kiss kiss kiss)
We gotta roll, bunny boo. Wake up.
(then)
There she is! Hi hi hi. Are you cold?

MIA
I'm hungry, Mommy.

12

EXT. CITY OF PORT TOWNSEND COMMUNITY CENTER - MORNING

12

Stephanie pulls up to a generic building with a mostly empty parking lot. As she parks, she eyes the sign above the door. "City of Port Townsend - Home & Community Services." She's never been here before. It looks closed.

MIA
Mommy.

Mia is offering Stephanie a french fry. She has a McDonald's gold crown on, and a Happy Meal in her lap.

ONSCREEN: ~~-\$15.95~~
ONSCREEN: \$12.35

STEPHANIE
No, you eat your Happy Meal, honey.
Mommy bought that for you.

Mia goes back to munching. Steph eyes the "Hours of Operation" sign on the door. It says "8:00 AM - 5:00 PM"

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

(to Mia)

Ok, so we hang here till they open. Good news is: we're first in line. No wait.

SMASH TO:

13 **INT. SOCIAL SERVICES OFFICE - WAITING AREA - 2 HRS LATER** 13

AN OVER-CROWDED waiting room in a dumpy, generic, damp building. Steph cradles Mia in an uncomfortable chair. They've been waiting all morning to see someone.

This place is horrible. It's full of PEOPLE who look to be in situations far worse than Stephanie. Mia's fussy, doesn't want to sit still anymore.

STEPHANIE

Come here, honey. We have to sit.

MIA

No Mommy!

AN ELDERLY WOMAN, sitting next to them, wearing a dirty Seattle Seahawks jacket, elbows Stephanie.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Psst! Lookie-look.

The woman opens a plastic bag in her lap, like she is revealing the Holy Grail.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)

Ya wanna buy some Ensure?

We see: it's a bag of super-dented cans of Ensure. The woman smiles, a sad crazy smile. She doesn't smell good.

STEPHANIE

Oh...no thank you.

RECEPTION (O.S.)

LAND?

STEPHANIE

YES! LAND!

(to Ensure lady)

Sorry - that's me.

ELDERLY WOMAN

You're making a mistake, girl. French
vanilla.

Steph hurries off with Mia, and we TRACK with her into --

14

INT. SOCIAL SERVICES - JULIE'S CUBICLE - CONTINUOUS

14

A generic cubicle where JULIE (50's, gay, a veteran social worker struggling to keep the compassion alive) has her eyes on her computer, typing.

Finally, Julie looks up at her with a cold, dark stare.

JULIE

***So. You're looking for a big fat
government handout, cuz you're a jobless
white-trash piece of shit, amirite?***

STEPHANIE

What?

Julie looks up from her computer, for real this time.

JULIE

Your form. You gonna give it to me?

STEPHANIE

Oh, sorry. Here.

JULIE

(takes the form, skims)
The child in your lap...she's Mia?

MIA

(holding up her mermaid)
And Schmariel!

JULIE

What?

STEPHANIE

Her doll. We call her Schmariel.
(re: mermaid doll)
Cuz she's a knockoff Ariel from the
dollar store. *Schmariel*.

Julie stopped listening two lines ago.

JULIE
Are you the child's legal guardian?

STEPHANIE
She's my daughter, yes.

JULIE
Can you prove that?

STEPHANIE
Wanna see my stretch marks?

A beat.

JULIE
Birth certificate is what I need. Bring
it next time. Are you under the influence
of drugs or alcohol right now?

STEPHANIE
N-no.

Julie's eyes coolly appraise Stephanie.

JULIE
You sure? You look tired.

STEPHANIE
We slept in the car last night.

JULIE
So you're homeless.

STEPHANIE
I wouldn't say that, no.

JULIE
So you have a home?

STEPHANIE
How bout a little screen time, bug?

Mia nods like a fiend. Stephanie gets out a knockoff, off-brand tablet that has duct tape on the corner (and no wifi). But it has headphones, which she puts on Mia.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
I had a home. I left it.

JULIE
 (re: form)
 Because of James Boyd? That Mia's father?

STEPHANIE
 Jamie.

JULIE
 You wrote here that he's scary at times.
 What does that mean?

CLOSE ON: Jamie's face, contorted with rage, last night.

JAMIE
GO HEAD. TRY TO LEAVE. I WILL FUCKING
KILL YOU! DO YOU HEAR ME?

Mia SCREAMS in her pack-n-play, truly afraid.

STEPHANIE
 When he drinks. He punches things.

JULIE
 Punches you? Punches Mia?

STEPHANIE
 No. Never us. Just things. He gets into
 these black moods. Last night was the
 worst it's ever been. We weren't safe.

JULIE
 Did you file a police report?

STEPHANIE
 No.

Julie gives a vaguely disappointed nod, makes a note.

JULIE
 Want to call the cops now? Not too late.

STEPHANIE
 And say what? That he didn't hit me?

JULIE
 There are shelters for domestic violence
 victims, but you gotta file a report.
 Abuse has to be on record.

STEPHANIE
 I wouldn't say I'm abused. Just scared.

(Yes, she is abused. Emotional abuse *is* abuse. But she doesn't know that yet - that's part of her journey.)

JULIE

Okay, hun. According to you, you're *not* abused and you're *not* homeless. So why are you here?

ONSCREEN: "\$12.35"

STEPHANIE

We have nowhere to sleep tonight.

JULIE

You don't have a friend to crash with?
 (Steph shakes her head, no)
 (then, re: the form)
 What about Mom? Says here she's local?

We see: a quick flash of PAULA (50s, with wild hair and a radiant, contagious smile) madly hurling clothes and shoes onto the lawn in front of her house.

PAULA

***I'M NOT YOUR GODDAMN MAID! I AM THE
 GODDESS APHRODITE!!! I FUCK THE SUN!!!***

STEPHANIE

I'd rather sleep in my car.

JULIE

How bout Dad?

We see: a quick flash of DAN (50s) in a jacuzzi, unaware that we're watching him. He's alone, his head down, shoulders shaking as he sobs. An image that haunts Steph.

STEPHANIE

We don't speak. Look, my family's not really an option. And everyone I know in Port, I know through Jamie. He grew up here and he's like, *America's Favorite Goddamn Person*, and the only friend I do have is dating his best friend, so no, what are my other options?

Julie looks at Stephanie, takes her in.

JULIE

You employed?

STEPHANIE

Not since Mia.

JULIE

Education?

STEPHANIE

Got into college, didn't go.

JULIE

Any skills?

STEPHANIE

Waitressing. Bartending.

(then)

I write. That's what I was gonna study.

JULIE

Aw, cute. Any other skills?

We see: Mia's GIGGLING face at the beach. She's exuberant and well-adjusted. That's Steph's skill - being a mother.

STEPHANIE

No.

JULIE

Alright, here's the deal. The homeless shelter on Haines Street is full. I can put you on the list but it'll be weeks. In the meantime, there's the mission at St. Carmel, they usually have beds.

STEPHANIE

...I can't take Mia to that place.

JULIE

Sure you can. Wear Deet, get there early.

STEPHANIE

No. There Must be something else you can do for us.

JULIE

Without a job, I can't do squat. You need POE. Proof of Employment.

STEPHANIE

I can't afford daycare without a job.

JULIE

Well, we can get you on the list for subsidized daycare, but you need two pay stubs to qualify.

STEPHANIE

I need two pay-stubs worth of work to qualify for subsidized daycare so I can work? What kind of fuckery is that?

Julie writes an address on a post-it, hands it to her.

JULIE

Try this. It's a cleaning service, lotta turnover. If you kiss Lonnie's ass, she might give you a POE form up front today.

Stephanie takes it, sighs, and stands.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I'll tell her you're on your way over. Can't bring your kid, though. Lonnie'll eat her, like a cookie.

STEPHANIE

What am I supposed to do with Mia?

JULIE

You don't have anyone who can watch your daughter for *one hour*?

OFF Stephanie, she does have one person...

15

EXT. PAULA'S HOUSE - OUTSKIRTS OF PORT TOWNSEND - MORNING 15

Stephanie pulls up outside a modest, two-story house set back in a thicket of pines. A rundown ski-chalet type.

She doesn't move for a second. Really debates this.

MIA

Grammy's house!

STEPHANIE

Yep. Grammy's house.

MIA

Yay yay yay.

STEPHANIE
 (nope)
 Yay.

16 **EXT. PAULA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

16

With Mia in her arms, Steph KNOCKS on the front door.

STEPHANIE
Mom? It's Steph.

The door opens and a HUGE SHIRTLESS MAN (30s, with bedhead) opens the door. He was legit asleep 20 secs ago.

SHIRTLESS MAN
 C-Can I help you?

STEPHANIE
 Uh...sorry...I...

She steps back, checks the number on the door. Is this not the house? Is she losing her mind?

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
 Sorry - is Paula here?

SHIRTLESS MAN
 Who?

STEPHANIE
 Paula Land? This is her house. I'm her daughter.

ANGRY MALE VOICE (O.S.)
 WHO IS IT??

MAN
 NO ONE! A GIRL LOOKING FOR HER MOM!

ANGRY MALE VOICE(O.S.)
 JESUS CHRIST.

MAN
 I have no idea who Paula is, lady. We AirBnB'ed this place from Will Someone.

STEPHANIE
 Will AirBnB'ed my mom's house?? You can't be serious.

The door SLAMS in her face.

17 **EXT. RV CAMPGROUND - WOODS OUTSIDE PORT TOWNSEND - DAY** 17

Ruby moving slowly along a one-lane road that winds through the campground. Stephanie eyeballs each RV site carefully. She's been at this for a while.

Finally, she spots what she's looking for: AN AIRSTREAM. It's old, lots of miles on it. Very distinctive. Hipster.

18 **EXT. WILL'S AIRSTREAM - RV CAMPGROUND - CONTINUOUS** 18

She pulls up to it, and sees PAULA (50s, long braided pigtails, chunky jewelry, *electric* energy) outside, scrunched over a table, working on an enormous painting.

MIA

Grammy!

PAULA

Mia? It's MIA AND STEPH! How exciting, you're here to see this!

Stephanie's barely got Mia out of the carseat, but her Mom's ushering her over to her art, pointing.

Paula speaks in breathless, high-energy monologues, a fast-moving train, which Stephanie is very used to.

PAULA (CONT'D)

This is what all the brilliant contemporary painters and sculptors are doing in the art world right now, they're working with *archetypes*. Do you know about archetypes?

STEPHANIE

Mom. --

PAULA

(excited, pointing)
There are five archetypes, that's what I'm representing here, in cobalt. The Hero, the Mentor, the Everyman, the --

STEPHANIE

Mom.

PAULA

And then there's Carl Jung's archetypes, which are more universal. Those are *inherited potentials* which are actualized when they enter your consciousness--

STEPHANIE

MOM. Why didn't you tell me you AirBnBed your house?

PAULA

I did, didn't I?

(sniffing)

Uh-oh. Someone's got a stinky dee! Hi hi hi my beauty. *Did you do a stinky dee?*

Mia GIGGLES. Loves Grammy! Steph picks Mia up, begins changing her diaper on the table.

STEPHANIE

I just drove around two campgrounds, like a stalker, looking for you.

PAULA

(re: Mia)

Her sun is in Sagittarius and she *does*, she has a have a very similar archetype to your grandmother, Elizabeth.

STEPHANIE

Mom.

PAULA

Honey, if you don't check in with me from time to time, that's on you.

WILL (O.S.)

IS THAT Stephanie?

WILL (a bookish hipster with a gelled pompadour, barely older than Stephanie) comes out of the house, pissed.

WILL (CONT'D)

(British accent)

Bloody hell. You disturbed the people at the AirBnb?! You're a monster, init.

STEPHANIE

I can't do him today, Mom. With his fake British accent.

WILL

That's very hurtful. You know I was born and raised in Yorkshire.

STEPHANIE

I also know you moved to New Jersey at 6.

PAULA

Don't give Will a hard time. He can be as British as he wants! *Look at me*, I'm half French, half Italian but I identify as 100% Icelandic fairy.

Jesus Christ. This is Stephanie's support team?

STEPHANIE

Can I speak to you privately, Mom? I'm in a rush.

PAULA

(proud of herself)

Nope. Anything you can say to me, you can say in front of Will. He's my partner in business and life.

STEPHANIE

What business? Renting your house out and making you sleep in a can in the woods?

WILL

You're a malignant tumor, init.

PAULA

ENOUGH! Stephanie, OUT WITH IT!

STEPHANIE

What?

PAULA

You're here to ask for something! Out with it. What do you want from me?

Stephanie is momentarily stunned. She takes a breath, wants to bolt. But she's without options.

STEPHANIE

...can you watch Mia for an hour? I have a job interview.

(then)

Just one hour. Two max.

Will and Paula exchange a look, negotiating this silently. He's opposed, but she overrules him.

PAULA

My grand-daughter is *always* welcome to experience me, be a part of my life.

STEPHANIE

Thank you.

(then)

Remember the rules? You *gotta* use your phone when you have Mia, Mom. *Gotta answer your phone*. Nod that you hear me.

PAULA

NOD!

STEPHANIE

And don't drive her anywhere. Do you have food? Can you give her lunch?

WILL

(scoffs)

We're a pub now.

STEPHANIE

Any problems, call me. Not Jamie. Okay?

PAULA

(to Stephanie)

My beautiful girl. I wish I saw you more.

(then, very lucid:)

Though, every time I see you, your light is a little dimmer, isn't it.

STEPHANIE

Alright, great talk.

(to Mia)

Be a good girl! Back in one hour.

19

EXT. STOREFRONT LAUNDROMAT - DAY

19

WIDE SHOT of a small shopping plaza, with some nondescript storefronts, none of which have been updated since the 90's. One is called, simply: "Laundromat."

We FIND Stephanie out front, looking at the post-it note, confused. Is this the place? We FOLLOW her inside...

20

INT. STOREFRONT LAUNDROMAT - DAY

20

Steph approaches a KOREAN WOMAN (30s) folding laundry.

STEPHANIE

Hi, I'm looking for Classic Clean?

The Korean Woman stares back at her. Eats chips.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

(pointing at post-it note)

Address says it's here, but?

The Korean Woman points behind her, a hallway.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Thanks.

We MOVE through the laundromat to a door in the back that has CLASSIC CLEAN scrawled on it in black Sharpie. Underneath it says: "MUCAMAS QUERIDAS!" (Maids wanted!)

Stephanie pushes the door open, pokes her head in--

21

INT. CLASSIC CLEAN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

21

LONNIE PENA (50s, short and squat, with hair puffed up into a mullet) eats Ramen behind her desk, watching TV. On the wall behind her is a large color-coded schedule.

LONNIE

(without looking up)

Shitter's one door down.

STEPHANIE

Are you Lonnie?

LONNIE

If this is another summons, you can shove it up your ass.

STEPHANIE

No, I'm Stephanie. Julie sent me?

LONNIE

Oh. One of Julie's girls. Poor thing. Not you, Julie. Being a social worker sucks. Take a seat.

There's only one other chair. It's taken by a fat, mean-looking Chihuahua. Stephanie opts to stand instead.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

So you on parole?

STEPHANIE

No.

LONNIE

Got any priors?

STEPHANIE

N--

LONNIE

Don't lie, I'm gonna check. You got a problem with a background check?

STEPHANIE

No.

LONNIE

You're white. You speak English.

A beat. Is that a question or a statement?

STEPHANIE

I am white and I speak English, yes.

LONNIE

Ever cleaned professionally?

STEPHANIE

It's all I do. I have a three year-old.

Lonnie points to a poster that reads: "\$12.00 an hour/ Washington State Minimum Wage."

LONNIE

We pay that, no exceptions. Bump ya 50 cents once background check clears and you go full-time. You good with that?

Stephanie and Mia are handed a giant presentation check that says "\$500/Week." APPLAUSE and CELEBRATORY MUSIC erupts from an UNSEEN CROWD. Stephanie beams. Mia holds a bunch of red balloons. Confetti in the air!

STEPHANIE

Yes. Great.

LONNIE

But. Full-time ain't a 40-hour week. Company policy is you can't work more than six hours a day. More than six hours, bitches start throwing their backs out, which breaks my heart, it does, but I can't be paying out benefits. So six hours a day is the max you can work.

Steph and Mia are handed a much, much smaller presentation check: "\$375/week." Less music. Less confetti, less balloons. But a check's still a check.

STEPHANIE

Okay...

LONNIE

And it's September, the tourists are gone.

(eyeing her board)

So I only have one weekly shift open. A three-hour clean, over on Camano.

STEPHANIE

One shift?

Steph and Mia are handed a tiny check: "\$37.50." Steph is unhappy. Mia has just one balloon. No music. No confetti.

LONNIE

Thought I was gonna have to do it myself, but now you're here...

STEPHANIE

Yes. I'll take it.

LONNIE

(she's up, on the move)

Uniform's twenty-five bucks, follow me. Comes outta your first check.

Mia's one red balloon pops. She stars to CRY.

STEPHANIE

Um, how soon do you think I could get a POE? Julie said, if I asked you nicely, maybe you'd give it to me today?

She hands Steph a uniform (a muted pink dress, with a white apron and stiff white collar) and an empty caddy.

LONNIE

Cart before the horse, hun. This is a try out. You ain't hired yet. Got a car?

(Steph nods)

We provide a ferry pass, but gas and tolls are on you. So are cleaning supplies, rags, gloves, and everything else you need except the Dyson.

She hands Stephanie an awkward, large Dyson vacuum.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

If you don't return the Dyson to me directly after the shift, you don't get paid. Understand?

(heading back to desk)

You're due over there at one. Let me get you the address --

STEPHANIE

I'm starting today?

LONNIE

That's good news, ain't it, Broke?

The door opens and two maids in uniform come in: CATALINA (30s, big presence, fills a room, overfills her uniform) and ANGIE (20s, sullen & undernourished) come in.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

Hey girls. This is...

(doesn't remember names)

...it's gone.

STEPHANIE

Stephanie.

LONNIE

New member of the family!

(not recalling their names)

Introduce yourselves.

CATALINA/ANGIE

Catalina. / Angie.

STEPHANIE

Hi.

ANGIE

Hey, I know you. You date Jamie Boyd.

A beat.

STEPHANIE

You know Jamie?

ANGIE

(thinks he's sexy)

Sure. The cook from the Fountain. He makes the tiramisu.

(Tiramisu from The Fountain Cafe is *legendary* in town.)

CATALINA

Lonnie. Can I get my goddamn paycheck?

ANGIE

Yeah Lonnie, what the fuck.

LONNIE

Calm your tits. They're on my desk.

Angela and Catalina head to the desk.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

(back to Steph)

Here's the address. Her name is Regina but *don't* call her that. Don't call her anything. Don't speak to her directly.

Catalina and Angela overhear this, think it's hilarious:

ANGIE

You're sending the new girl *to Regina*?

CATALINA

Vegina's gonna eat her alive.

LONNIE

Hey! Don't call Regina that.

ANGIE

Why not? She is a vegina.

(to Stephanie)

We will legit never see you again.

Stephanie tries to figure out whether they are joking.

LONNIE

Don't listen to them. Regina's not *that bad*. She just has very high standards. Now, let yourself in when you get there. She works from home and likes it quiet. No humming. No chit chat. No music.

ANGIE

No happiness of any kind.

OFF Stephanie, this will not be fun...

STEPHANIE (PRE-LAP)

Hey Mom, how's it going?

22

INTERCUT: INT. RUBY / EXT. YARD OUTSIDE WILL'S AIRSTREAM 22

RAIN on the windshield. Steph's in the parked car, her phone to her ear. On the other end, Blondie BLARES.

STEPHANIE

Did you feed her?

PAULA

Oh she's a little love-child, that's what she is! Her spirit RESOUNDS!

It's true. Mia is dancing in the puddles with Paula, a flower chain around her head. Looks super happy.

STEPHANIE

Did she have lunch?

PAULA

She's a very powerful archetype.

(to Mia)

Aren't you, Elizabeth?

STEPHANIE

That's not her name, Mom.

PAULA

Should be her name! The spirit of my mother is in her. Elizabeth wants into her name, she told me so.

STEPHANIE

Did you feed her lunch, yes or no?

PAULA

Yes. Grilled cheese and tomato with a side of straight Tom Collins mix.

STEPHANIE

So I got hired. They want me to start right now. (then) Hello?

Paula's busted out into a dance solo, performing for Mia. Will enters the frame, cracking a beer, amused by Paula.

PAULA
(into phone, on shoulder)
YES. I HEAR YOU. YOU'RE STARTING NOW.

STEPHANIE
Can Mia stay longer? Not the whole day.
Just until maybe dinner?

PAULA
WOHOO! Of course she can! *I adore her!*

STEPHANIE
Thanks, Mom. And remember the --

CLICK. Stephanie takes a deep breath. It will be fine?

23

EXT. PORT TOWNSEND AREA - VARIOUS - DAY

23

A SERIES OF RAPID SHOTS:

- Steph loads cleaning supplies into the caddy Lonnie gave her. (Cheap ones from a Dollar Store: off-brand Windex, Comet, bleach, rubber gloves, microfiber towels).

ONSCREEN: ~~\$12.35~~
ONSCREEN: \$5.26

- Steph rams the gas nozzle into Ruby - tries to put just \$2 of gas in, penny by penny, as before.

ONSCREEN: ~~\$5.26~~
ONSCREEN: ~~\$5.05~~
ONSCREEN: ~~\$4.55~~
ONSCREEN: \$3.91

- Steph picks up a sandwich from the gas station case.

ONSCREEN, RED: " ~~\$-8.09~~"

- Yikes! She puts it back, picks up a yogurt parfait.

ONSCREEN, RED: " ~~\$-.50~~"

- She puts it back and walks off. The number returns to:

ONSCREEN: "\$3.91"

STEPHANIE

Sorry. I missed the turn, my phone --

REGINA

We'll have to reschedule.

STEPHANIE

No! I can be done by 4, ma'am, for sure. I'm fast and I'm good. No problem.

REGINA

I'd really rather you come back another time than do a shoddy job and just throw a bunch of cleaning products around.

STEPHANIE

You won't be disappointed, I promise.

Regina looks her up and down, assessing. Decides: fine.

REGINA

This wood? It's imported French cherry. I know people think I'm particular, but I want you to see this, come over here. This is what happens when you don't *honor the grain*. See? Look what the last girl did. *Do you see that?*

She peels up a corner of carpet and points to a spot on the wood floor. There is absolutely nothing there.

STEPHANIE

Oh yeah. Wow.

REGINA

Please care. Rub with the grain, never against it. I'm here.

STEPHANIE

...you're where?

Regina turns her head, indicating her ear pod. She's obviously on the phone now. Not speaking to the maid.

REGINA

No, we can't re-open a closed deal. Tell him no, of course we can't. We're in NYC this weekend, so everything in the fridge can go, so my whole house doesn't smell like Kombucha when I get back. Got it?

Oh, she's talking to Stephanie?

STEPHANIE

Sorry. Yes, the fridge. Got it.

REGINA

We compost. Do you know what that is?

(Stephanie nods)

Use the bin labeled "Compost." Can you read or should I show you?

STEPHANIE

...I can read.

REGINA

Ugh! Just put him on, I'll talk to him.

Regina's on the phone again. Her perfect ass disappears down the hall. Stephanie watches her go, thinking she's just as advertised: mean as a snake.

(Note: but actually, she's not; we'll see more of her, she's not what she seems here.)

Steph gathers up her stuff and steels herself to dive in--

30

INT. REGINA'S HOUSE - VARIOUS - DAY

30

A RAPID SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Steph on her hands and knees, scrubbing the bathroom floor. Scrubbing the toilet, the stains. The tub. Pulling the hair outta drains, wiping the pubes off the floor.

- Sweat pouring off Stephanie's brow. This is back-breaking. She checks her phone, "NO SERVICE." It's 2:45.

- Steph hurrying up, down, up, down, up, down the stairs. Sometimes with laundry baskets, sometimes with trash, sometimes with the heavy vacuum. Out of breath.

- She checks her phone, "NO SERVICE." It's 3:15. She's worried.

- Steph makes beds. Vacuums lines into rugs. Folds laundry. Replaces towels. Dusts. Changes lightbulbs.

- Steph checks her phone, "NO SERVICE." It's 3:25.

- Steph scours the oven. The counters. The appliances. The kitchen floors. Unloads the dishwasher. Opens the sub-zero fridge.

A beat. We SLOW down for her to take this in.

It's the most stocked, healthy, gorgeously colorful fridge she's ever seen. Packed to the gills. Fruit, vegetables, pastries, meats, cheese, six types of water.

She drags the "compost" bin over, and starts throwing everything out. Her mouth waters more with every item she tosses, this is excruciating. She's weak with hunger.

Stephanie holds a perfect peach, tempted to take a bite. But at this exact moment: Regina passes through, on the phone, and grabs a Perrier. She eyes the clock.

REGINA
(disapprovingly)
Tick tock. We should've rescheduled.

Regina disappears. Steph finishes with the compost, closes up the bag, and picks up the pace, double time:

- Steph splays magazines. Fluffs pillows. Wipes framed art, pictures of Regina & Steven on boats, on mountains. Their wedding day. (Regina is much younger than him.)

- Steph windex-es the endless glass windows. Woozy, she stops for exactly three seconds, steadying herself...

31

INT. REGINA'S HOUSE - NURSERY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

31

Steph rushes into the room, and finds: the most picture-perfect toddler bedroom anyone has ever seen. A hand-painted zoo mural on the wall. A reading nook, looking out over the pool. A doll house that's a mansion. A princess bed. American Girl doll sets.

It's all that a girl could want. Every little girl.

Steph leans against the wall, woozy. She looks at her phone. "NO SERVICE". 3:45. No time to waste. She vacuums.

MIA
Wheeeeeee!

Steph turns, and when she twists, the room gets blurry.

We see: Mia bursts past Stephanie into the room, running wildly. To her, this is Disneyland. She starts grabbing toys, elated, jumping on the trampoline. Putting the little girl's princess crown on. Spinning with delight.

Our POV spins too, and drops to the floor. Stephanie is down; she's fainted. Mia's bright face appears above us.

MIA (CONT'D)

Mommy?

The screen goes BLACK. For just a moment. Then --

32

INT. REGINA'S HOUSE - NURSEY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

32

Regina's face appears above us, where Mia's was.

REGINA

Why are you on the floor?

Steph rolls to her side, sees Regina's Tory Burch flat.

STEPHANIE

(groggy)

What happened?

REGINA

I heard a thunk. I think you fainted. Or are you a drug addict?

STEPHANIE

No. Sorry...I uh skipped breakfast this morning, that's all.

REGINA

Did you hit your head?

STEPHANIE

No.

REGINA

Hang on - don't get up too fast.

Regina exits. Stephanie sits up, gets her bearings. Regina returns with a balance bar, some juice.

REGINA (CONT'D)

Balance Bar.

STEPHANIE
I'm so sorry. Thank you.

REGINA
(Steel Magnolias accent)
Just drink your juice, Shelby.

Regina winks at her. Is she a human? Wow. A surprise.

STEPHANIE
This is so nice, this room. I have a
daughter, too. She'd love it.
(then)
How old is yours?

REGINA
...I don't have children.

A beat. This is clearly a touchy subject.

STEPHANIE
Isn't this a nursery--?

REGINA
It's staged. We're getting ready to sell
the house, so.
(cold)
Steven had it staged.

STEPHANIE
Oh.

A beat. Now it's awkward, the two of them on the floor.
The moment of humanity lifts like a veil. Regina gets up.

REGINA
Well. Not to be a taskmaster, but...

Stephanie pops to her feet immediately.

STEPHANIE
I'm fine. I'll get back to work. I'm
almost done. Just have this room left.

REGINA
(correcting her)
This room, and all the lawn furniture.

Lawn furniture? But Regina's gone. Steph takes out her
cell. "NO SERVICE," 3:53. Shit. She quickly finishes the
nursery, wiping everything down fast, and rushes out--

33 **EXT. REGINA'S LAWN - CONTINUOUS**

33

In the history of cleaning women, no one has ever moved this fast. Stephanie scrubs the crap out of the lawn furniture, running from chair to chair, sweating.

Finished, she runs out of the frame and onto--

34 **EXT. PORT TOWNSEND FERRY - UPPER DECK**

34

-- the upper deck of the ferry, trying to get cell service. In a total panic, breathless. "NO SERVICE."

She paces, phone above her head, until it comes alive -- at last. The first thing she sees is: "13 missed calls"

They're all from "Mom." Shit. She dials her mom back but it doesn't ring. Straight to a computerized voice:

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)

The number you have reached -

Stephanie looks out at Port Townsend, in the distance. They haven't even left the dock yet.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

STEPH! HEY!

A different group of PEOPLE (all 20s, more of Jamie's friends) wave down at her.

STEPHANIE

HE'S NOT WITH ME!

Steph looks back at the horizon. Fuck. Could this ferry please go already!? Fuck.

35 **EXT. WILL'S AIRSTREAM - DAY**

35

Ruby screeches to a halt in front of the trailer. Steph jumps out of the car and runs to the door.

STEPHANIE

Mom?!

She tries the door, but it's locked. She BANGS on it.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

MOM!? MIA!?

She runs to the back of the Airstream, where she finds --

36

EXT. BEHIND WILL'S AIRSTREAM - CONTINUOUS

36

-- Paula painting. She's strangely distant, in somewhat of a fog. There's no trace of the woman we met before.

STEPHANIE

MOM. Didn't you hear me calling you???

PAULA

(eyes on her art)

Calling me? It was *me* who called you, Stephanie. Many, many times--

STEPHANIE

Where's Mia?

PAULA

I have a life, you know.

(cold)

I can't be watching children for hours. I have work of my own to do. My own work!

STEPHANIE

Oh my God. MIA?!?

(running back to the door)

WILL! IS MIA IN THERE?! OPEN THE DOOR!

Steph POUNDS on the door. Paula follows her, her eyes suddenly dark and mean. Like a shark that smells blood.

PAULA

I bet you'd like to get in there with him. *Wouldn't you.*

STEPHANIE

OPEN THE GODDAMN DOOR!

PAULA

I see how you act around Will. Always pushing your tits into his face--

STEPHANIE

What the fuck are you talking about??

WILL (O.S.)
 Bloody hell. I was napping.

Will opens the door wide, so she can see. No Mia.

WILL (CONT'D)
 She's not here. Jamie picked her up.

A beat. No. No, no, no...

STEPHANIE
 What do you mean Jamie picked her up?

WILL
 We couldn't reach you. Your mom got tired
 so we called him to pick her up.

29 Stephanie takes off, back towards her car. Paula follows--29

PAULA
 I've seen you. The power that you wield
 over men.

Steph's in a full sprint to her car, Paula stays on her--

PAULA (CONT'D)
 What kind of woman flirts with her
 mother's boyfriend, anyway?
 (then)
 Why can't you be happy for me for a
 change?! WHY CAN'T YOU LET ME HAVE THE
 HAPPINESS I'VE EARNED! I AM STRONG, YOU
 KNOW. YOU CANNOT OVERPOWER ME! I AM --

Paula's still going, but Steph dives into Ruby and peels
 out, leaving skid-marks --

37 **EXT. JAMIE'S SINGLE-WIDE TRAILER - DEEP WOODS - DUSK** 37

-- Ruby skids to a halt in the gravel driveway outside
 Jamie's trailer. Stephanie jumps out and rushes in,
 moving so fast she doesn't even close the car door.

38 **INT. JAMIE'S TRAILER - WOODS - CONTINUOUS** 38

STEPHANIE
 Where is she?!

Steph bursts in. Jamie's at the stove, stirring something in a pot. He greets her calmly.

JAMIE

She's fine. She's asleep on the bed in a clean diaper and pjs.

She doesn't take his word for it, she charges past him and into the bedroom-area. Mia is indeed asleep, clutching Schmariel, looking clean and cozy.

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

We did bath-time, she had buttered noodles. She's exhausted, but okay.

Stephanie kisses Mia's cheek. Relieved to see her.

A beat. She takes a breath, steels herself to face him.

She finds him still at the stove, stirring his pot, like nothing's happened.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Ya hungry?

Steph glances around the trailer. He's been busy. There's no glass on the floor. The window's boarded up. Everything is tidy. Even he is tidy. His hair's combed to the side. Cigarette behind an ear. Hand bandaged. There's a wildflower in a goddamn mason jar.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Dinner's almost ready. Irish stew.

(re: the beer can)

It's for the stew. I'm not drinking.

Haven't had a drink today.

He smiles at her assuringly, man of the year.

Jamie hurls a tupperware bowl full of mac and cheese across the kitchen, in a rage. This was last night.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

YOU LIKE A MESS, STEPH? LET'S MAKE A

FUCKING MESS THEN!

Steph cowers on the floor, Mia WAILS in her pack-n-play.

Jamie sets the table. He pulls out a chair for her. She doesn't move or sit.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
C'mon, I'm trying here.

STEPHANIE
I'm not eating dinner with you, Jamie.
I'm here to get Mia and we're leaving.

JAMIE
I went to a meeting today. Ethan took me.

STEPHANIE
That's not...

JAMIE
Could you please sit? You need to eat.

He guides her to a seat at the table. God, she really would like to eat. For this safe, warm home to be real.

Jamie goes back to the stove, ladles it into bowls.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
I was surprised Mia was at your mom's.
(then)
Is Paula back on meds these days?

He knows she's not. This is just his specific way of torturing her.

STEPHANIE
Mia was only supposed to be there a couple hours.

Jamie places a bowl of stew in front of her. She keeps her hands in her lap, food untouched. He digs in.

JAMIE
I know you're angry with me.
(direct, eyes fierce)
But leaving Mia with your mom?

STEPHANIE
My mom's good with her for short periods of time. They do art projects, dance.

JAMIE
She was alone in a wet diaper, when I got there. Watching a UFC cage match on TV.

Steph's crushed to hear that. But she doesn't respond.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Where were you?

STEPHANIE

I got a job. I had no signal where I was.

JAMIE

A job?! How are you gonna work? Who's gonna watch Mia? *Not your Mom.*

STEPHANIE

I'll figure it out. It's my business.

JAMIE

Hey, would you eat a little? You're hurting my feelings.

STEPHANIE

I am not gonna eat your motherfucking soup, so stop fucking asking me.

Jamie puts his spoon down.

JAMIE

What is this?

(gently)

Who are you? Taking off in the middle of the night? Punishing me like this?

Leaving Mia with a batshit crazy person?

(then)

Are you feeling...mentally healthy?

We see: Paula's face CLOSE UP, laughing manically at a great joke, in a streak of sunlight.

STEPHANIE

No. Don't you do that. I'm not insane. You're the one who woke me up in a rage over some dirty dishes in the sink. Punched a hole in the fucking wall.

JAMIE

I drank too much. I went too far. I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

We see: a beer bottle SHATTERS against the wall right above Mia's pack-n-play. Glass RAINS down. Steph SCREAMS.

STEPHANIE

I picked glass out of Mia's hair last night, Jamie.

JAMIE

I didn't mean for that to be so close to her. I'd *never* hurt her. You know that.

STEPHANIE

No. I don't.

Jamie tries to embrace her, but she dodges him and gets up. Heads towards Mia.

JAMIE

Are you serious right now? Where the fuck are you gonna go? What's the plan here?

She keeps moving, doesn't respond.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

(getting mad now:)

I'm the only person who gives a shit about you! Pay the bills, let you mooch off me. *If you walk out, you'll have no one.*

A beat. Stephanie stops and stares at him. Then, quietly:

STEPHANIE

I know that, Jamie. I am well aware of just how completely fucked and alone I am. But I'm not gonna pick glass out of my daughter's hair ever again.

(then)

I may have no one. But Mia's got me.

Stephanie steps into the bedroom and scoops up Mia.

MIA

(sleepy)

Mommy...

Mia clutches her mermaid. Steph heads out of the house --

39

EXT. SINGLE-WIDE TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

39

-- and into Ruby, where she puts Mia in her car seat. Jamie has followed them outside.

MIA

DADDY.

Mia is reaching over her shoulder toward Jamie --

MIA (CONT'D)

I WANT DADDY!

STEPHANIE

I know you do, honey, but we have to go.

JAMIE

You can't do this. You can't steal my kid!!

Stephanie gets the car door closed, gets herself into her seat behind the wheel. Steph drives off, staying strong...

40

EXT. HIGHWAY WESTBOUND - ROUTE 20 WA - SUNSET

40

Ruby's on a busy highway, a grass meridian divides the two lanes. Stephanie drives, elbow pressed into the door panel, her hand cradling her forehead. Stressed.

In the backseat, Mia plays with Schmariel.

MIA

Where are we going?

STEPHANIE

I...I don't know. I need a sec.

MIA

I want Daddy.

STEPHANIE

We can't do that, we --

Stephanie's phone buzzes. Screen says "Lonnie."

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Hold on, sweetie.

Stephanie answers the phone, putting it on SPEAKER.

41

INTERCUT: INT. CLASSIC CLEAN / INT. RUBY - CONTINUOUS

41

STEPHANIE

Hi, Lonnie. The Dyson, I know. I just --

Lonnie's in the office, putting food in Pixie's dog bowl.

LONNIE

Regina's not happy with your clean.

STEPHANIE

What?

LONNIE

She called, said you did a shoddy job,
and were on your phone the whole time.
You need to go back and do it right.

STEPHANIE

I-I can't. I'm in Port Townsend now. I've
got my daughter with me...

LONNIE

Those are not-me problems. You want this
job? Want to be paid for today?

STEPHANIE

It's a forty-minute ferry ride each way.

LONNIE

Then you better get cracking.

DIAL TONE.

MIA

Mommy.

Stephanie is stunned. What the fuck is she going to do?

MIA (CONT'D)

Mommy?

Stephanie looks at the time, the gas tank. Shit.

MIA (CONT'D)

MOMMY!

STEPHANIE

(dead tired)

What!?

MIA

Window Mommy.

Stephanie lowers Mia's window a little.

MIA (CONT'D)

More! More!

She rolls it down all the way, absent-mindedly. Mia holds her doll out the window.

CLOSE ON: Schmariel, dangling from a tiny toddler hand, her hair in the wind. And then....gone.

Stephanie sees: A FLASH OF RED HAIR in the rearview mirror as it disappears into the meridian of the highway.

MIA (CONT'D)
SCHMARIEL!!!

Mia begins to WAIL like they ran over a puppy.

MIA (CONT'D)
MOMMY! SCHMARIEL!

Stephanie locks her jaw, looks straight ahead.

STEPHANIE
Okay but. Mommy's late. So we'll have to look for it on the way --

MIA
NO!

All the lack of sleep and the emotional trauma of the last day breaks forth from Mia in an explosive tantrum.

MIA (CONT'D)
SCHMARIEL!!

STEPHANIE
I have nine minutes to make the ferry Mia, and I need to figure out dinner--
(Mia SCREAMS)
How bout Shoop?

Stephanie punches the dash and SHOOP starts to play.

MIA
Schmariel....

Stephanie sees in the rearview: the true anguish on her daughter's face. The loss of this mermaid, her only item.

A beat. Stephanie sighs, can't see her kid like that.

STEPHANIE
Okay! I'll go back and get it! We'll go back super quick, okay? Hang tight.

She spots a place to u-turn and turns Ruby around sharply, the wheels SQUEALING in protest.

42

EXT. HIGHWAY MERIDIAN - ROUTE 20 WA - MOMENTS LATER

42

And now... we understand what we were looking at, in the first scene of this episode.

Stephanie's crawling through garbage-strewn grass, on her hands and knees, looking for fucking Schmariel.

Cars THUNDER by her in both directions, splashing rainwater at her. And she's quite a sight: a beautiful maid, covered in mud, hysterically crying. Cars HONK.

A PASSERBY'S VOICE
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, LADY?

She's having a breakdown is what she's doing. She wipes her tears away and keeps looking.

STEPHANIE
I'm looking for Schmariel!
(something breaks in her:)
I'm finding you, Schmariel. I am finding
you, Schmariel, you motherfucker!

Behind her, we see: Ruby pulled over, its headlights on. Stephanie keeps looking.

Finally, she spots a WISP OF RED HAIR under a leaf.

CLOSE ON: the decapitated, tire-burned head of the mermaid. She and Stephanie stare at each other a moment.

Then we hear: A CRASH. The horrible sound of metal crunching metal, and glass exploding.

The sound reaches us before the image does. But Stephanie knows what she's going to see before her head turns--

It's her worst nightmare. Ruby has been hit by a Ford Taurus. Glass everywhere. Smoke billowing. Stephanie SCREAMS and takes off running towards the car.

43

EXT./INT. RUBY - CONTINUOUS

43

Ruby is bent and mangled. The Taurus hit her hard. The passenger side is totaled, both windows are SHATTERED.

Where's the carseat? Where's Mia?

STEPHANIE

MIA?

Stephanie wrenches open the door behind the driver's side and finds Mia's car seat on the floor, facing her, lodged between the drivers seat and the door.

The floor of the car is pushed inward and upward, trashed, just inches from Mia's feet.

Mia's wide eyes lock on Stephanie, her small mouth frozen, scared. But she appears completely fine.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Are you hurt!? Are you okay!?

MIA

I'm okay, Mommy.

Stephanie unbuckles Mia and pulls her out, her little arms and legs wrapping tightly around her mother's body. Stephanie searches Mia's body, looking for injury or blood, as she steps away from the wreckage.

CARS slow down as they pass, gawking.

Stephanie drops to her knees and WEEPS, clutching Mia. A TEENAGE BOY (lanky, spiked hair) with a gash above his left eye emerges from the totaled Ford Taurus. He COUGHS.

TEENAGE BOY

Jesus Christ.

(eyes falling on Mia)

She was in the car?

STEPHANIE

Of course she was in the car, you fucking idiot! How could you hit my fucking car? How could you hit my fucking car? THAT I still OWE MONEY ON! THAT I NEED FOR WORK! THAT WE NEED TO SLEEP IN, YOU FUCKING IDIOT! THAT WE NEED TO FUCKING SURVIVE! HOW COULD YOU HIT MY FUCKING CAR!?

TEENAGE BOY

...I didn't see you... I'm sorry...

STEPHANIE

How could you hit my fucking car!

The teenage boy backs away, afraid of Stephanie.

MIA
(re: mermaid)
Did you find her, Mommy?

STEPHANIE
Are you really okay? *You're really okay?*

Stephanie buries her head in Mia's hair...

MIA
I'm okay. Is Ruby okay?

Behind them, Ruby is dead. Demolished.

ONSCREEN: "\$2,200"

STEPHANIE
No, honey, Ruby's not okay.

Off Steph's face, we see: FLASHING LIGHTS. We cut to --

44

INT. AMBULANCE - A FEW MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

44

SIRENS. Mia's in the back of the ambulance as A PARAMEDIC (male, 30s) examines her. Steph watches like a hawk.

A COP approaches and hands her a ticket.

STEPHANIE
What's this? You're giving *me* a ticket?

ONSCREEN: "\$234.00"

COP
Parking in the meridian's illegal, ma'am.

STEPHANIE
Sir, I don't have the money to pay this.

The cop glances at Mia with pity.

COP
If you have any personal items you'd like to retrieve from the car before the tow truck gets here, now is the time.

STEPHANIE

Tow? Who pays for that?

ONSCREEN: "\$500.00"

COP

Do you have someone who can pick you up?

We see: Jamie's heroic face, happy to be called, running up the meridian. Jamie's strong back, lifting Mia up into his arms. Jamie looking at Steph with love, compassion, urgency...he'll take care of everything.

COP (CONT'D)

Ma'am? If you don't have anybody to call, we could drop you at home?

STEPHANIE

No thank you, I'll call someone.

COP

Can you make that call now? Gotta clear the meridian, you can't stay here.

STEPHANIE

Yes, Sir.

He walks off. The paramedic is finished examining Mia.

PARAMEDIC

See how she does tonight, Ma'am. If you notice any bruising, or if she seems in pain at all, take her to the ER.

He ruffles Mia's hair and she smiles.

STEPHANIE

Can she stay with you while I get my stuff out of the car?

He offers his hand to Mia, high-five. She reciprocates.

45

EXT. HIGHWAY MERIDIAN - MOMENTS LATER

45

Stephanie steps away and heads towards Ruby. The car is wrecked. The back seat, where Mia was, is covered in glass and debris. Her carseat was incredibly close to the shattered window, to the floor that had been pushed up to meet her toes. This was a really, really close call.

She reaches through the shattered window in the back seat and retrieves her caddy of cleaning supplies. The Dyson.

She retrieves her phone (which reports that she has "5 missed calls" from Lonnie) and backpack from the front seat and sees, incredibly, that the Salt n' Peppa mix tape has ejected from the deck. It's in a pool of glass.

Ruefully, she grabs the tape and pockets it.

As she walks back up the meridian, she opens her phone and scrolls through her options of who to call.

Finally, and against her own wishes, she selects a contact and presses "CALL."

46 **EXT. HIGHWAY MERIDIAN - NIGHT**

46

The emergency vehicles pull away, leaving Stephanie and Mia standing on the side of the road, holding hands.

Stephanie has her backpack, a caddy of cleaning supplies and a Dyson. Mia has nothing. We watch them, dwarfed by huge trees, completely alone on the meridian.

After a few moments, Steph eyes a pick-up approaching.

47 **INT. BATTERED PICK-UP TRUCK - CONTINUOUS**

47

DAN (50s, an electrician in a battered Carhartt jacket and weathered ball cap) pulls up. The cab's loaded with electrician gear. He pokes his head out, timidly.

DAN

Steph? Mia?

MIA

Grandpa!

Dan gets out of the car and rushes towards Mia, giving her a big bear hug. He goes to give Stephanie the same --

But, very firmly, Stephanie holds her hand up: no. She will not hug him. He nods, message received.

DAN

(to Mia)

Look at you. You've gotten so big! Did you get any boo-boos? Any ouchies?

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)
 (she shakes her head no)
 You're tough! Alright girls, hop in.

STEPHANIE
 Thanks, Dad.

Dan opens the door for them and they climb in.

48

INT. DAN'S PICK-UP - MOMENTS LATER

48

Dan drives. Stephanie is in shock, still stunned.

DAN
 You sure you're both fine?

Stephanie touches Mia's little face. Nods, yes.

DAN (CONT'D)
 That's the thing with this highway.
 People speeding home from work, not being
 careful. Where's your car now? They tow
 it to a shop? Or?

Steph nods, vaguely. She actually isn't sure.

DAN (CONT'D)
 Did you have your hazard lights on? Cuz
 if you did, the fault's not yours--

STEPHANIE
 (sharp)
 Can we not talk about this? Sorry.

DAN
 No, sure.
 (beat)
 So where to? Port Townsend?

What a horrible question. She has no answer. None.

DAN (CONT'D)
 You and Jamie still in that single-wide?
 Got the address in my GPS I think--

STEPHANIE
 No. Uh --
 (then)
 We're not going home.

DAN

Okay.

(a beat)

Where to then?

We see: a blank piece of paper in a notebook. Stephanie writes simply on the page: "?"

DAN (CONT'D)

I'd invite ya back to my house if I could, but Charlotte and the kids are there. Best if you and she don't --

STEPHANIE

Just drop us at the ferry station.

(lying)

My friend'll meet us there.

DAN

You sure?

STEPHANIE

If you don't mind. Please.

DAN

Ferry station. Coming up.

She continues to look out the window, as they pull up to a stop light. We see: a wet, suburban shopping plaza.

STEPHANIE

Actually, can you stop here a minute?

DAN

Where?

STEPHANIE

Dollar Store. Double park, I'll run in.

49 **EXT. DISCOUNT/DOLLAR STORE - MOMENTS LATER** 49

Dan's truck pulls up in front. Steph jumps out, sprints into the store, not wanting to leave Mia for long.

50 **INT. DISCOUNT/DOLLAR STORE - AISLE - MOMENTS LATER** 50

Steph races down the aisle, looking for something, scanning the shelves. Under the florescent lights, we see just how muddy she is. How in shock. How zombie-like.

She sees it and stops. Grabs it off the shelf.

51 **INT. DISCOUNT/DOLLAR STORE - CHECKOUT - MOMENTS LATER** 51

A register BEEPS, a screen says "\$3.75." We watch Steph sigh and pull the last singles from her wallet.

ONSCREEN: "~~\$3.91~~"

ONSCREEN: "\$.16"

52 **INT. DAN'S PICK-UP - MOMENTS LATER** 52

Back on the road, Dan takes the curvy, pine-tree-lined streets to the ferry. He knows these wet streets well.

They sit in silence. Mia asleep in her carseat. Steph stares out the window, not wanting to chat.

We see: Dan in the jacuzzi again, alone, in the past. His shoulders and head bent, weeping. We linger in this haunting memory a bit longer this time, REVERSING to REVEAL that Stephanie is talking to a COP while watching this. POLICE LIGHTS flash. Behind her, a WOMAN we don't know (40s, this is Charlotte) sits silently, not participating. She has a split lip, one eye swollen shut.

They drive in silence. His eyes on the road, hers out a window. Eventually, he pulls up at the ferry station.

DAN

You sure your friend's coming?

He doesn't believe it, she knows he doesn't, but...

STEPHANIE

Yep, thanks again.

Stephanie gets Mia out of the car seat, gets her bag.

DAN

Need anything else? From your old pop?

Steph looks at him, his eyes. Then she CLOSES the door.

The station is brightly lit and mostly deserted at this late hour. A few TRANSIENTS nod off on a wood bench. Some CUSTOMERS loiter around, waiting for the next ferry.

Steph carries Mia to an isolated bench. Mia stirs.

MIA

Boat ride!

STEPHANIE

No, we're not getting on the boat. Not tonight.

MIA

Why not?

STEPHANIE

We're just gonna take a little rest.

Stephanie scans the ferry station for signs of danger. She doesn't see any. This'll have to do for shelter.

Stephanie's eyes land on: the Elderly Woman in the dirty Seahawks jacket. She's in the corner, drinking an Ensure.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Okay, bunny boo.

(pointing to her lap)

You put your silly little monkey head *right here*.

MIA

Your silly head.

STEPHANIE

No your silly little sleepy head. Let's get you comfy.

Mia puts her head in her mother's lap. Steph makes her as cozy as she can, fighting back tears. They are homeless, sleeping in a ferry station.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Hey.

(playful)

I got you something...

Stephanie playfully reveals: a new knockoff Ariel doll.

MIA

Schmariel!

STEPHANIE

All better.

Mia smiles, Schmariel clutched to her chest. Steph strokes her face until she's out, back asleep...

A beat.

COMMUTERS flood through the glass bridge that connects the ferry station to the boat. All dressed properly for the wet, chilly evening. All rushing to get home. They might *notice* Stephanie and her baby, but they don't look.

OFF Stephanie, in a muddy maid uniform, with a cleaning caddy and vacuum at her feet, rubbing Mia's back.

A long, sleepless night ahead.

END.