

THE GIRL IN THE PARK

by
David Auburn

First Draft - August 1, 2005

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A woman, JULIA, early 30s, reading to her small daughter, MAGGIE, who is about 3. Pre-bedtime. The mother in a rocking chair, girl in her mother's lap.

The book is a familiar one -- GOODNIGHT MOON -- and as Julia reads aloud she intersperses little questions, jokes, improvisations. The little girl responds with her own laughter, comments, nonsense chatter. A moment of routine, tranquil happiness between mother and daughter.

She finishes the book.

JULIA

And now ... it's about that time.

MAGGIE

One more.

JULIA

No. Momma's got to go to work.

Maggie makes some routine protests. Julia tucks the child into bed and turns out the light.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Modest New York apartment, second-hand furniture, cheerful clutter. Basketball game playing on TV. DOUG SANDBURG, Julia's husband, watches with their son CHRIS, 11. Doug has work on his lap. Doug and Chris shout at something in the game as Julia enters.

JULIA

Sh. Boys. She's down.

DOUG

Okay.

Julia is dressed up, wearing a black cocktail dress, putting on earrings.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Wow.

JULIA

Best I could do.

DOUG
You'll kill 'em as always.

She kisses them both.

JULIA
Don't stay up too late.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

A small NY jazz club, quite full. Julia is coming in the back. Behind the bar, the CLUB MANGER sees her, looks at his watch, give her an "it's late" look.

JULIA
(mouths)
Sorry...

Julia goes to the bar. The BARTENDER has an ice water ready for her. He gives her a sympathetic look.

BARTENDER
Go Dog Go?

JULIA
(shakes her head)
Make Way for Ducklings. And
Goodnight Moon, twice.

A PIANO PLAYER on the small stage is looking in her direction. Julia makes eye contact with him. She catches her breath, nods. The Piano Player speaks into a microphone.

PIANO PLAYER
Here she is, better late than
never ... Julia Sandburg.

Julia takes a last drink and moves to the stage.

INT. CLUB - LATER

Julia sings, a jazz standard. She has a good voice, a low-key, charismatic stage presence. The full room listening with pleasure. She finishes and the room fills with applause.

INT. CLUB - LATER

Julia sells CDs from a table at the back. A small line waiting -- she has a following. She autographs one for a pair of FANS.

WOMAN FAN

That was wonderful. As usual.

JULIA

Thank you. I've seen you before, haven't I?

MAN FAN

We try to come at least once a month.

WOMAN FAN

When we can get sitting.

JULIA

Sure, I understand that ...

The CLUB MANAGER comes over with another man, MARCUS, 30s.

CLUB MANAGER

Julia, hey.

JULIA

Hey Kenny. Sorry I was late, I just...

CLUB MANAGER

I want you to meet a friend of mine, Marcus Levin.

JULIA

Hi.

MARCUS

Hi. Big big fan.

JULIA

Thank you.

CLUB MANAGER

Marcus is with Caravan Records, Julia.

JULIA

Oh!

MARCUS

Great set tonight. And congratulations on the Times piece too. It's good to see word getting out.

JULIA

Oh, well, that was a kind of fluke...

MARCUS

(picking up a CD)
You put this out yourself, right?

JULIA

More or less.

MARCUS

Well, listen, we should talk, because we don't have the biggest budgets in town but we think maybe we could do a little better for you, production-wise, help out with promotion ...

Julia nods, surprised and pleased.

INT. SANDBURG APARTMENT - MORNING

Julia wakes up. Sun coming in the bedroom window.

Busy morning sounds, glimpses of activity through the half-open door. Doug, dressed for work, putting breakfast dishes in the sink. Chris stuffing a karate uniform in a backpack.

Julia drowns contentedly for a moment.

The door creaks open. Maggie tottles in, holding a piece of toast with jam on it. She walks to Julia's bedside, looks at her mother, serious.

MAGGIE

Did you sing?

JULIA

Yes.

MAGGIE

How many songs?

JULIA

About ten.

MAGGIE

Did people clap?

JULIA

Yes.

MAGGIE

Do you like cheese?

JULIA

Some kinds.

Doug bustles in with a cup of coffee for Julia.

DOUG

I've got a late meeting, probably
til around six. Can you get Chris
from school? He's got his kung fu
thing til four thirty today.

JULIA

Yep.

DOUG

How'd it go last night?

JULIA

(understating)

Good.

DOUG

Yeah?

JULIA

I'll tell you more when I'm awake.

DOUG

Okay.

He kisses her, hands her the coffee. Julia sits up and
sips. Chris comes in.

CHRIS

Dad.

DOUG

Okay, right, we're late. You got
your backpack? Good. Say good
morning to your mother.

CHRIS
Morning, Mom. Bye.

JULIA
Have a good day.

DOUG
(to Maggie)
Bye sweetie. Be good.

Doug kisses Maggie, then hustles Chris out.

JULIA
Bye guys.

Maggie and Julia are alone. They look at each other. Julia swings her legs out of bed, takes a Kleenex and rubs the jam off her daughter's face.

JULIA (CONT'D)
And as for you...

MAGGIE
What?

JULIA
Let's go to the park.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - MORNING

Julia pushes Maggie in a stroller toward Riverside Park.

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - MORNING

It's a sunny morning. Julia lets Maggie out of her stroller. The child runs toward some playground equipment and begins to climb happily. Julia walks after her.

LATER

Maggie is playing in a sandbox. Julia sits on a bench watching. A few other children about, NANNIES chatting, etc.

Julia sips a coffee, watching her daughter, enjoying the warm sunlight on this cool morning.

JULIA
(calls)
Maggie.

Maggie looks up. She has been biting the knuckle of her index finger.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Don't bite that knuckle, honey.
It's all red.

Maggie takes it out of her mouth. She bits her middle knuckle instead. Julia laughs.

LATER

Julia pushes Maggie on a swing, talking with the girl, singing little snatches of songs, laughing.

LATER

The playground is now quite busy. Many parents and children about. Find Maggie climbing up a slide. She takes a little tumble off a low step. She cries. Julia trots over. The girl has scraped her elbow. Julia wipes it clean.

JULIA (CONT'D)

You're okay. It's just a small
ouch. Does it hurt?

MAGGIE

A little bit.
(crying stops)
It's just a small ouch.

JULIA

That's right.

Julia kisses it. A NANNY is nearby with her CHILD.

NANNY

Oh, miss -- I think she's got
another one there.

Julia looks. The Nanny is pointing at Maggie's knee.

JULIA

Where?

She examines the back of Maggie's knee, where there is a red spot about the size of a dime.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Oh. Thanks. That's just a
birthmark.

MAGGIE

(proud)
I've always had it.

JULIA

That's right.

LATER

Julia notices a SMALL BOY running toward the playground exit. The gate is ajar and the little boy goes barreling right through. Julia is about to follow when she sees the boy's MOTHER belatedly giving chase. The mother dashes out and snags the boy. She drags him by his arm back into the playground, scolding him, a little rough. Julia watches.

LATER

Maggie hiding, furtive, inside a jungle gym. Find Julia stalking her.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Where's Maggie?

MAGGIE

(whispers to herself)
Hiding.

Julia keeps "searching," inside and underneath the jungle gym.

ON Maggie. Silence. She doesn't see or hear her mother. A long moment. She bites her knuckle, not sure what to do. Julia appears behind her.

JULIA

Got you!

She seizes the girl in her arms. Maggie screams and laughs.

LATER

The sky has darkened.

Parents, Nannies begin to pack up the children, take them home.

Julia sits on a bench, watching Maggie hang on a swing some distance off.

Nearby, ANOTHER MOTHER packs up her little GIRL. As they start from the park, a gust of wind blows the child's hat off her head. It blows out of the mother's reach. Julia jogs to retrieve it. She brings it back to the Mother.

MOTHER

Thanks.

JULIA

Sure.

As they depart another gust grabs Julia. It's grown surprisingly windy. She buttons her coat.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Maggie! Time to go.

She turns back toward the swings.

They are empty, moving in the wind.

Julia looks around.

The sandbox is empty.

Benches are bare. The playground has emptied out.

Julia jogs to the climbing equipment where Maggie hid earlier. She ducks inside.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Maggie? Are you hiding? Where's
Maggie?

No answer.

Julia comes back out. She swallows the little wave of panic rippling through her.

She begins to search the playground in earnest, making one circuit. Nothing. She makes another, running.

There is no sign of the girl.

On Julia, hesitant, breathing hard, mind racing.
A sudden, explosive shout.

JULIA (CONT'D)

MAGGIE!

Her voice is shrill with fear.

Silence.

Her POV: the open playground gate.

Julia runs to it, through it.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

The whole park before her.

Two paths branch out from the playground. Julia picks one at random and goes running down it, calling "Maggie! Maggie!" There are a few people about in the park. They look up as she runs past.

No sign of the little girl on this path. She stumbles off it and runs through the grass over to the other, feet flying, deep in panic now, calling until she is hoarse.

JULIA

Maggie! Stop it! Maggie! Answer me!

She comes to the Park drive. A jogger, a few bikes whizzing past. Down the road, across the road, as far as she can see, no Maggie.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Answer me!

Julia stops, choking, gasping, out of breath, tears streaking her face, whipping one way, then the other, frantic. She screams again and again.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Maggie!

HOLD on her, alone in the middle of the road.

FADE TO BLACK.

SLOW FADE IN:

EXT. AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS - DAY

The midtown sidewalk crowded with people going to work, streaming into office towers. A typical New York morning.

Eventually we find Julia in the crowd. She looks different: well-dressed, put-together, a different haircut. As she comes closer we realize she is also significantly older.

FIFTEEN YEARS HAVE PASSED.

Follow Julia as she moves across a plaza toward an office building.

INT. BANK BUILDING - DAY

The offices of a large financial services firm. Julia is among the first to arrive. She has a small, nondescript office. She closes her door and turns on her computer. She takes off her coat. She sips a take-out coffee. She sets to work.

INT. JULIA'S OFFICE - LATER

Julia works at her desk, steadily, unhurried. Occasionally COWORKERS pass. A WOMAN drops off some materials. Julia acknowledges her politely but there is no conversation, no interruption.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Julia jogging on a treadmill. She doesn't listen to headphones or watch one of the TV monitors. She concentrates on her rhythm, and sets a hard, steady pace.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Julia lets herself into her apartment. It is a different apartment than the one we saw before. As she moves through it we see that, while not uncomfortable or even particularly austere, it is bare of any real personal touch, or sign that anyone else lives here.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Julia eats a take-out meal while she goes through the mail, separating bills from junk. The TV is on. She glances at it occasionally as she eats.

FADE OUT.

INT. JULIA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Another day. Julia working. Most of her CO-WORKERS are gone or leaving for the night.

12.
A group of YOUNGER EMPLOYEES are chattering about where to go out for a drink, debating somewhere in the neighborhood or downtown.

EMPLOYEES

See you / have a good weekend /
don't party too much! ...

We note a man, RAYMOND SEGURA, a rather elegant executive in his 50s. He glances at Julia on his way out.

Julia doesn't look up and nobody approaches her. The office begins to empty out.

She keeps working.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Julia enters a small neighborhood Italian restaurant. Not many people here yet. A WAITER greets her immediately and shows her to a table.

WAITER

Hello Ms. Sandburg, good evening,
nice to see you.

JULIA

Hello Carl.

WAITER

How was your week?

JULIA

Just fine, thank you.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER

The restaurant is more crowded now. A busboy clears the remains of Julia's meal. The Waiter comes over.

WAITER

How was everything?

JULIA

Very good, thank you.

The waiter sets down a glass of bourbon and the bill.

WAITER

And there you go. Do you need
anything else?

13.

JULIA
I'm fine, thank you, Carl.

WAITER
Thank you very much. Enjoy your weekend.

JULIA
You too.

Julia slips a credit card inside the bill without looking at it. She picks up the bourbon and warms it in her hands. She drinks. She closes her eyes. She sips the drink, alone at her table in the busy restaurant.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GRACZYK APARTMENT - NIGHT

A party in progress in this large apartment. Thirty or forty GUESTS, all ages. WAITERS circulating. Celebratory mood. Find a COUPLE at the center of the activity. A tall man with kind, appealing looks. This is CHRIS SANDBURG. He is now 26. At his side is CELESTE GRACZYK, quite beautiful, same age. They are talking and laughing with several FRIENDS.

CHRIS
...she's lobbying for a beach somewhere, or under a tree, barefoot, right? And we'll grill hotdogs after, isn't that the plan?

CELESTE
(laughing)
You are such a liar! Just because I don't think we should rent out Radio City Music Hall...

CHRIS
I just figure, if you're going to have a wedding, you know, have a wedding --

CELESTE
We will!
(to the others)
Wait to you see his Dad's backyard. It's perfect, really beautiful and simple...

ELSEWHERE

SARAH GRACZYK (50s), Celeste's mother, is talking with Doug Sandburg. Doug is greyer than we saw him last but otherwise mostly unchanged.

DOUG

...Chris is putting a hell of a lot of work into the house. I haven't been down for a few weeks, but I've heard ...

SARAH

It is stunning. I know he says it's not finished but it already looks just stunning. He is just so talented.

DOUG

He didn't get it from me, that's for sure. I can't change a light bulb.

Celeste's father DAVE GRACZYK (50s) comes over.

DAVE

Sorry to interrupt. Sarah, it might be a good time to do the ...

SARAH

Yes. Good idea. Ooh, it's late.

INT. HALLWAY - GRACZYK APARTMENT - NIGHT

Julia comes out of the elevator. She hangs up her coat on a coat rack in the hallway. She goes to the apartment door and opens it.

INT. GRACZYK APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Stay with Julia as she enters the main room. Everyone is listening to Sarah Graczyk make a speech. Julia quietly finds a place in the back.

SARAH

... so when Celeste told us that she and Chris had made honest people out of each other ...
finally ...

(laughter)

157

SARAH (CONT'D)

...we already had the invitations printed out for this engagement party, to be honest... caterers... we were a little ahead of them ...

Stay on Julia. Sarah's voice is just one element in the background, along with the other GUESTS laughing, WAITERS trying to be quiet but clinking glasses as they clear them, a MOTHER shushing her small SON...

SARAH (CONT'D)

Dave and I ... what can I say? Chris is the kind of boy, the kind of young man that we always...

(tears up a little)

Sorry ... I promised I wouldn't do this. Oh God. Well, you think this is bad, wait for the wedding ...

(laughter)

Anyway. It's a cliché -- "You're not losing a daughter you're gaining a son." But we really do feel we're gaining a son, and we are proud, so proud and happy, that ...

Doug glances behind him and sees Julia. They nod at each other. Doug nudges Chris. He turns and sees her. A mixture of relief and anxiety on his face. He forces a smile. Julia returns it.

Sudden cries of "To Celeste and Chris!" Guests raising their glasses. Sarah has finished her toast. Julia doesn't have a glass to raise.

Sarah gestures Doug up to the front of the room. Doug takes a breath. Silence before he speaks.

DOUG

I'm Doug Sandburg, Chris's Dad. And first we want to thank Dave and Sarah for everything they've done, for this wonderful event. Chris has chosen his in-laws very well, he's a smart man.

Polite laughter. Beat.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Not to mention, well -- what can I say about Celeste?

DOUG (CONT'D)

From the first time we met her, we knew, we could all tell that she just fit, she belonged in this ... with us, all of us, and ...

Doug appears to be having difficulty.

Julia watches intently.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Sorry. What I'm trying to say is how happy we are to have her as our new daughter, and --

His voice suddenly breaks. He struggles for a moment to collect himself, then raises his glass.

DOUG (CONT'D)

To Chris and Celeste.

Everyone echoes the toast. Doug and Julia lock eyes. Then Julia looks away.

LATER

Doug approaches Julia. They embrace. It's neither particularly awkward nor particularly warm.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Hi, Julia.

JULIA

Hi.

With Doug is an attractive woman, AMANDA, 45, and a sullen kid, DEAN, 16.

DOUG

You remember Amanda.

JULIA

Of course. Hi. Good to see you.

DOUG

And her son, Dean...

JULIA

Hello.

DEAN

Hey.

Awkward beat.

DOUG
Well, this turned out to be a
really nice --

JULIA
Yes.

DOUG
You'd met Dave and Sarah before,
right?

JULIA
No. This was the first time,
actually, and they're terrific, it
was perfect, the food,
everything...

Awkward beat.

AMANDA
Congratulations, Julia. About
Chris and Celeste. If you're half
as excited as Doug is ...

JULIA
Oh, I am! I am.

A moment.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Well.

INT. HALLWAY - GRACZYK APARTMENT - LATER

Julia, coat on, waits for the elevator. The apartment
door opens. Chris comes out.

CHRIS
I never saw you come in.

JULIA
I was late. I'm sorry.

Beat.

CHRIS
Did you get to say Hi to Celeste's
folks?

JULIA
They seem terrific.

He stares at her.

CHRIS,
How about Celeste?

Julia doesn't look at him.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
(quiet, firm)
You need to come back in and say
hi to Celeste, and let her
introduce you to her parents.

JULIA
I'll write them a nice note.

The elevator door opens. Julia is about to step in.

CHRIS
Mom. Jesus.

She looks at him.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
At least say you're happy for us.

Julia holds open the elevator door.

JULIA
I'm happy for you.
(beat)
Can I go home now?

INT. CHRIS & CELESTE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

IN A BATHROOM

Celeste brushes her teeth and gets ready for bed.

CELESTE
Chris?

IN THE HALLWAY

We see that this Brooklyn house is being extensively and painstakingly remodeled. Sheets of plastic hang from the ceilings and doorways, dividing living areas from areas still under construction.

Celeste emerges from the bedroom through a curtain of plastic.

15.
Find Chris on a stepladder checking the top of a new door frame. Celeste watches him for a minute. Chris reaches for a piece of sandpaper and touches up the corner of the molding. He sands harder. He's still in his suit from the party.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Come to bed.

CHRIS

Look at these. I knew I should have resanded before I put these on.

CELESTE

It looks fine.

CHRIS

From there. From up here it's a disaster. I'm gonna have to redo it. Shit. I'll have to bring the sander from the shop over the weekend, that means I can't get to the chandelier 'til next weekend...

CELESTE

Honey, stop. Stop.

Chris keeps working for a moment, then stops.

INT. BEDROOM

Celeste in bed, eyes closed. Chris lies next to her, awake. He tosses.

CELESTE

Stop thinking about the doorway.

CHRIS

I'm not.

She looks at him.

CELESTE

Your Mom?

Beat. Chris' voice is quiet.

CHRIS

She stayed for what, ten minutes?

CELESTE

I think it was longer than that.

CHRIS

Half an hour.

Chris rolls over. Celeste puts her arm around him, concerned.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

Julia walks home along the park.

She passes a playground. It's empty and still, apart from some swings twisting and untwisting in the wind.

CLOSE on Julia as she stops and stares into the dark playground. Stay on her. Her face is blank, expressionless. She doesn't move.

She stares, and we stay on her, for an excruciatingly long moment.

CUT TO:

INT. BANK BUILDING - DAY

Julia at work, sipping from a paper coffee cup. Raymond Segura moves past her door holding a china cup and saucer. He slows as he passes, glancing in. Julia eventually looks up. Raymond nods, smiles. He raises his cup in a little hello. It's clear he would like to initiate some interaction, conversation, something. Julia stays stone-faced. After an uneasy beat Raymond retreats.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Julia enters her usual restaurant. The same WAITER greets her.

WAITER

Hello Ms. Sandburg, good evening,
nice to see you.

JULIA

Hello Carl.

LATER

211
Julia finishes her meal. There is a couple at another table nearby. A BLONDE GIRL about 20 and a GUY a little older, maybe 28.

GIRL
...Well, look, I mean, that's just bullshit...

GUY
You knew what you were doing.

GIRL
The fuck I did! What kind of a thing is that to say? What is the matter with you?

Julia can hear them. She glances over, annoyed by the argument.

GUY
Lower your voice for Chrissake. All right? Look. Bottom line? This is not my problem.

GIRL
Whose problem is it?

GUY
Well I guess it's yours, isn't it?

GIRL
What am I supposed to do now?

GUY
Will you fucking lower your voice?

GIRL
I can't believe this. You're acting like such a prick. I don't understand how you can just sit there --

GUY
Fine.

He suddenly gets up, tosses money down on the table and walks out of the restaurant, past Julia.

The girl watches him go in disbelief.

Everyone stares at her. She hides her face, humiliated. She begins crying. Harsh, bitter sobs.

ON Julia, listening.

The waiter brings her usual glass of bourbon. Julia waves it away, annoyed. Her customary quiet evening has been ruined.

JULIA
Just the check, Carl.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Julia riding to work, occupied with the crossword. Crowded car. Her stop comes.

As she shuffles out of the subway car she brushes shoulders with a GIRL, also getting off. It is the blonde girl from the restaurant. She now has a black eye. Julia stares at her.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The girl (her name is LOUISE) walks down the street. Julia is a few yards behind her. Louise goes into a drugstore. Julia watches.

INT. DRUGSTORE - CONTINUOUS

Louise goes to a rack of cheap sunglasses. She picks a pair pretty much at random and tries it on. It hides her black eye.

She takes the glasses and goes to another aisle. She examines some items like shampoo and lotion. She glances around. No one else in the aisle. She quickly yanks the price tag off the sunglasses and slips them on.

She starts out of the store. A DRUGSTORE MANAGER approaches her.

DRUGSTORE MANAGER
Just a moment, miss.

Louise ignores this. The Manager chases her and grabs her arm.

DRUGSTORE MANAGER (CONT'D)
Hold it.

LOUISE
What?

25.
DRUGSTORE MANAGER
You didn't pay for those glasses.

LOUISE
What are you talking about?

DRUGSTORE MANAGER
Those sunglasses. What do you think you're doing?

LOUISE
They're mine. I wore them in.

DRUGSTORE MANAGER
No you didn't.

LOUISE
What? Are you crazy?

DRUGSTORE MANAGER
Do you want me to call the police?

LOUISE
I've had these glasses for two years.

DRUGSTORE MANAGER
You took them off my rack. You think I don't know my own merchandise?

LOUISE
These glasses belonged to my mother! She gave them to me right before she died from cancer you asshole!

DRUGSTORE MANAGER
Tell it to the police.

JULIA
Just a minute.

They both stop. Julia is in the store. She has observed the whole incident.

JULIA (CONT'D)
She did have the glasses when she came in. I saw her.

Louise looks at Julia, very surprised. The manager looks at this well-dressed, professional, totally respectable woman.

JULIA (CONT'D)

In fact, I saw her in the subway this morning. She had them on then, too.

ON Louise and the manager.

EXT. STREET

Julia doesn't look at Louise as she leaves the drugstore. Louise trots after her.

LOUISE

Hey.

She catches up. Julia doesn't stop.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Hey!

JULIA

I'm late for work.

LOUISE

Why did you do that?

Julia stops. She doesn't know. She stares at the girl.

JULIA

I've seen you before.

Julia quickly walks away. Louise watches her go.

EXT. EAST SIDE STREET - DAY

A VAN pulls up outside an East Side brownstone. Chris gets out. The Van bears the logo of his construction company, SANDBURG & HALL CONTRACTING. He carries a tray of coffees. He starts up the steps to the house. WORKERS putting plywood on the windows. Chris hands the coffees around, a little surprise.

CHRIS

Luis ... Here you go. Jake ...

WORKERS

Hey, thanks Mr. Sandburg.

CHRIS

Those are black, there's milk in the other cup ...

INT. EAST SIDE APARTMENT - DAY

A large apartment that is about to undergo a major renovation. WORKERS beginning the demolition -- knocking down old walls, ripping up kitchen tile, carrying out old appliances, etc. It's loud and dusty.

Chris's partner LEE, 30s, is standing with the owner of the apartment, MRS. ANDERSON, 60. As Chris approaches Lee murmurs to him.

LEE

She's killing me already.

Chris' manner is confident, professional.

CHRIS

Mrs. Anderson? Good morning. So?
What do you think?

MRS. ANDERSON

Do they have to be so noisy?

Lee gives him a "told you" look.

CHRIS

Well that just means we're working hard. Now, every day, either Lee or I will be on site, or someone reporting to us. You get a progress report faxed to you daily. And of course if you ever have any concerns you can call me directly, 24/7.

MRS. ANDERSON

It all sounds very organized. I just didn't realize it would be so noisy.

LEE

Demolitions are noisy, Mrs. Anderson.

CHRIS

(smiles, reassuring)
Don't worry. You're going to have a beautiful apartment.

INT. JULIA'S OFFICE - DAY

Julia at her desk, trying to work. She can't concentrate.

EXT. BANK BUILDING - EVENING

It's dark. OFFICE WORKERS who have stayed late trickle out of their buildings. Julia emerges onto the street. She starts across the plaza toward the subway. She stops.

Her POV: Louise is waiting in the plaza, looking at Julia.

LOUISE

You work really late.

Julia doesn't move. The girl is still wearing her sunglasses. She takes them off. The black eye is worse, swollen and ugly.

JULIA

Were you waiting for me?

LOUISE

Not the whole day. I mean, I did some stuff, came back.

Julia doesn't say anything.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

You ran off this morning before I could say thanks. That guy in the drugstore was such a dickhead.

JULIA

You did take the glasses.

LOUISE

(so what?)

Yeah?

Julia stares at her for a minute, then turns and walks quickly toward a subway entrance.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Hey, wait!

Julia goes down the subway stairs. The girl follows.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Will you stop? I just wanted to talk to you for a minute.

Julia turns on the stairs to face her.

JULIA

Whatever you want from me, forget it.

LOUISE

(taken aback)

I just want to --

JULIA

(sharp)

Do you understand? Whatever you have to tell me, I don't care.

ON Louise.

Julia turns her back on her and continues down into the subway.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM

Julia waits for the train. Rumble and clatter as one approaches the station. It stops. People get off, get on. Julia doesn't move. The doors close. The train pulls away. Julia still on the platform.

She swears to herself.

INT. AU BON PAIN - NIGHT

Julia and Louise sit at a table in the fluorescent-lit, nearly empty restaurant, cups of coffee in front of them. Julia listens to the girl, arms folded.

LOUISE

There was this guy. I met him in Michigan. That's where I'm from. He's this successful guy from New York on a business trip or whatever. So we hook up, and he's there for like three days and he says if I come to New York ... actually it's more like "when." He starts with this When I come to New York, like he expects me to come, like it's a done deal.

20.
LOUISE (CONT'D)

And, when I do ... you know, all this incredible stuff, all these promises. So I come. I show up. And he's shocked, right? I mean right away, he makes it, like, abundantly clear that he doesn't want me here, it was all bullshit, he's got a fucking girlfriend and a life, and I was just a fuck on his fucking business trip ... so he takes me to this "nice" restaurant where I'm, what, supposed to be so grateful for a hot meal that he can basically tell me to publicly fuck off and I won't mind? But then I followed him to his place. But then this...

(indicates her eye)

And like, I just really want to get home, you know. I just want to go back to Michigan. And I don't have any money and don't know anybody here except him and you.

JULIA

You don't know me.

LOUISE

Oh that's really fucking compassionate, thanks a lot. I was talking relatively, Jesus.

Beat. Julia stares at her.

JULIA

How much do you need?

LOUISE

Seven hundred dollars.

Beat.

JULIA

You need seven hundred dollars for a bus ticket?

LOUISE

Yeah, well, the thing is I'm also pregnant.

Beat. ON Julia.

Without hesitating much, she reaches for her handbag. She takes out her checkbook.

Louise watches, rather surprised, as Julia writes out a check to CASH for \$700. She rips it out and puts it on the table.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
Cash would be easier.

Julia glares at her.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
I'll take it. Sorry. Thanks. I'll take it.

Julia gets up to go. Louise stares at the check.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
Oh Fuck.

Julia looks at her. Louise is starting to choke up.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
People don't do this kind of thing for me, you know? I'm just, like, really grateful. I don't even know your name. I'm Louise, by the way. Shit. I'm sorry ...I don't know what's ... I just can't believe you did this.

She stands awkwardly and embraces Julia. Julia is discomfited. She breaks off.

JULIA
Don't worry about it.

Julia exits. Louise watches her go.

DISSOLVE TO:

A WEEK OR SO PASSING. Julia goes through her routine:

Julia working at her desk.

Julia sipping her Friday-night bourbon in her regular restaurant.

Julia on the treadmill at the gym.

Julia eating a take-out dinner in her apartment.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BRIDAL STORE DRESSING ROOM - DAY

NARISSA and ALICE, Celeste's friends, 30s, drinking champagne as Celeste tries on a wedding dress behind a partition.

ALICE

...So here's this poor woman, the first biopsy came back negative, but then we had to tell her there was a possibility it was adrenal...

NARISSA

Oh God. Cortical?

ALICE

Not sure. We have to refer her.

Celeste calls over the partition.

CELESTE

She should talk to Sandy Meyer at Sloan Kettering.

NARISSA

I thought she was doing pediatric oncology now.

CELESTE

She is mostly, but she'd do a refer for a friend.

ALICE

That's a really good idea...

CELESTE

Okay, ready?

Celeste comes out, wearing a wedding gown. Jane and Narissa react.

ALICE

Oh that is just stunning.

NARISSA

You look gorgeous.

Celeste studies herself in the mirror.

CELESTE

It's not too bride-y?

ALICE
Here she goes.

NARISSA
It's your wedding.

CELESTE
I just, I don't want to look like
I'm on top of a cake. Chris does,
I guess.

NARISSA
Chris is right. Go with it.

CELESTE
I don't know. You guys will still
take me seriously?

ALICE
Give her some more champagne.

CELESTE
It is pretty...

She looks at the price tag, makes a horrified sound.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LATER

As Celeste and her friends leave the store they pass the Children's Shoe Department, where a MOTHER is helping her SON, about 5, try on a new pair of sneakers, the kind with lights flashing in the soles. The boy is delighted with the shoes. The mother presses his toes to make sure they fit. Celeste watches.

INT. JULIA'S OFFICE - DAY

Julia working, sipping from a take-out coffee cup.
Raymond Segura appears at her door. He steps inside.

RAYMOND
Try this for me.

He sets a cup and saucer down on her desk. Julia looks up, startled.

JULIA
What is it?

RAYMOND

I got a coffee machine and grinder for my office. I'm trying to decide if it's excessive. I mean, of course it is excessive, but I'm trying to decide if it's worth it.

She looks at him, then sips the coffee.

JULIA

It's good.

She starts to hand it back.

RAYMOND

Take it.

JULIA

No.

RAYMOND

I made it for you. Anytime you want, just...
(mimes knocking)
Shame to go down to the street.

Julia is not sure how to respond to this.

JULIA

I --

Julia's phone rings. Raymond takes the cue to slip out. Julia picks up.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Yes.

CELESTE

(on phone)
Julia? It's Celeste.

JULIA

(surprised, wary)
Hi.

EXT. EAST SIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Chris finishes giving some instructions to Lee and then turns to get in his van. Celeste is there, waiting for him.

CHRIS

This is a surprise.

She kisses him.

CELESTE

We're going to dinner. I made reservations.

CHRIS

You didn't have to do that.

CELESTE

I wanted to. There's a new place I've been wanting to try, the chef's supposed to be this new young genius. And you've been working hard, you deserve it. And I think I found a dress.

CHRIS

Well okay then.

They get in the van, cheerful.

CELESTE

Your Mom's coming, too.

ON Chris.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It's a loud, rather trendy place with a busy scene at the bar. Chris and Celeste sit alone at a table for 3, finishing drinks. Chris is tense and sullen. A WAITER comes over.

WAITER

Another drink?

CHRIS

No.

CELESTE

This was really nice, I'll have another glass of this.

The waiter hurries off. Chris glowers.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

(gingerly)
I thought I said eight. I probably
just told her the wrong time.

CHRIS

You told her the right time. She's
not gonna show.

CELESTE

Of course she will. I'm sure she's
just running late.

Chris rolls his eyes.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

What?

CHRIS

My high school graduation? She
said she got the dates mixed up. I
graduated from college, she sent a
card.

CELESTE

Chris.

CHRIS

I wouldn't count on her coming to
the wedding either. And forget
about the rehearsal dinner.

CELESTE

Now you're being ridiculous.

CHRIS

You don't know. This is
ridiculous. I didn't ask you to
"intervene" here, Celeste. It's
very sweet, you trying to "bring
us together," but --

CELESTE

Maybe it has nothing to do with
you. Maybe I want to get to know
my future mother-in-law.

CHRIS

(laughs)
Right.

CELESTE

And if you don't --
(pleased)
There. See?

CELESTE'S POV: Julia coming in the restaurant.
She is directed to their table. Celeste stands.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Julia! I was worried I told you
the wrong place, or ...

JULIA

No, I was ... I got stuck at work.

They embrace awkwardly. Everyone sits.

CHRIS

Hi Mom.

Julia sips her water. Beat. Celeste picks up her menu.

CELESTE

Well. The food here is supposed to
be really interesting.

LATER

They eat. Celeste gamely trying to keep the conversation
going.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Chris just started a big new job.

JULIA

Really?

CHRIS

Big East 50s place. They haven't
touched it for about forty years.
You should see the wiring, it's
like a museum exhibit. Everything
has to go. They're very nervous.

CELESTE

Luckily they've hired the biggest
control freak in Manhattan.

CHRIS

They're nice people. Their kids
are finally gone, they decided
it's time.

JULIA
It sounds very good.

Awkward beat.

CELESTE
Julia, when are you going to come
see our house?

CHRIS
It's not all done yet.

CELESTE
She can get the idea.

CHRIS
Not really. I haven't done the
floors, the chandelier above the
stairs... Maybe you should wait
till it's really finished.

CELESTE
Who knows when that will be?
(off his look)
No, I mean it's beautiful, but the
work you're doing is so, you know,
painstaking. Julia, you should
really see it in stages...

JULIA
Thanks, I'd like to.

Beat. Loud laughter, a shriek from the CROWD at the bar
across the room.

CHRIS
Noisy place.

CELESTE
It's popular.
(beat)
Uh, Julia. I'm curious. Was Chris
always building things as a kid,
or ...

JULIA
Yes.

Beat.

CHRIS
Dad got me my first toolkit. I was
seven.

CELESTE

He told me. He needed you to put everything back together.

(laughs)

He was always disassembling everything, right? Did he really take apart the dishwasher once?

JULIA

Oh, yes.

Beat.

CHRIS

Share some more memories, Mom.

CELESTE

Chris.

Chris pours himself more to drink.

LATER

Mood glum. The waiter brings dessert menus.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Who wants dessert?

They don't answer.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

I'll split something. Come on. The flourless chocolate cake looks... or, ooh, banana creme brulee!

No enthusiasm from either Chris or Julia.

CHRIS

It's late. Forget it, Celeste.

Celeste puts the menu down. She looks defeated. Chris looks angry and anxious to go. Julia sees this.

The waiter comes over. Chris starts to make the "check" gesture.

JULIA

(making an effort)

I ... like the sound of the cake.

Chris and Celeste exchange a surprised look.

WAITER
One chocolate cake.

CELESTE
Two forks.

CHRIS
Three.

WAITER
Coffees?

JULIA
Yes. Please.

The waiter takes the order and departs. Celeste smiles at Chris. The mood is suddenly lighter.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Excuse me for a second.

She gets up to go to the rest room.

Celeste touches Chris.

CHRIS
What was that?

CELESTE
You see? You see?

CHRIS
Something happened there.

CELESTE
She's making an effort! That was a big deal for her. She's trying.

CHRIS
Maybe you're right.

LATER

Julia emerges from the restroom. She starts to return to the table.

She suddenly freezes.

Her POV - THE BAR. There's a crowd of young PARTYERS here. FIND a GIRL in the group laughing, smoking, signalling for more drinks, slapping down \$20 bills, flirting with the GUYS with her.

She turns her head. It's LOUISE. Her black eye is mostly healed and covered with makeup.

Julia marches to the bar. FOLLOW HER.

Julia walks up to Louise and grabs her arm, hard.

LOUISE
What the fuck?

JULIA
What are you doing?

ON Louise, shocked. Julia points at the bar.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Is that my money?

LOUISE
Let go.

Louise tries to turn back to her group.

JULIA
Don't turn away from me.

She yanks Louise around. A glass falls, breaks. Money scatters on the floor.

ACROSS THE RESTAURANT

Chris and Celeste hear the commotion. They look up and see Julia at the center of it.

AT THE BAR

One of the GUYS at the bar tries to intervene.

GUY
What's the problem?

JULIA
Is that my money? What is this?
You lied to me? YOU LIED TO ME?

LOUISE
Fuck off.

Chris and Celeste rush over.

CHRIS
Mom? What's --

40.

JULIA
You little bitch!

Julia lunges at Louise, grabbing her dress, which tears. Chris pulls her back, shocked. Everyone in the restaurant watching now.

CHRIS
Mom, Jesus Christ!

CELESTE
Julia, calm down, okay? Just calm down.

A RESTAURANT MANAGER comes over.

RESTAURANT MANAGER
You're going to have to leave.

CHRIS
I'm sorry, I'm sorry ...

RESTAURANT MANAGER
Can you just get her out of here?

ON Julia and Louise, just a foot or so apart. Louise bends to pick up the scattered cash, straighten her dress.

Flustered, she BITES her MIDDLE KNUCKLE.

Julia goes pale. She seems almost faint. She manages to turn and stumble away. Chris and Celeste follow.

Louise turns back to her group, shaken but affecting bravado.

LOUISE
Crazy old bitch.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Julia walks down the street, Chris and Celeste in pursuit.

CHRIS
Mom. Wait --

Julia walks faster. She begins to run. Tears are streaming down her face. She keeps running, faster and faster. Chris and Celeste give up trying to follow.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JULIA'S OFFICE - DAY

Follow Raymond Segura as he walks down the corridor approaching Julia's office. The office is empty. Julia is not at work.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK PLAYGROUND - DAY

CHILDREN playing in a playground on this pleasant day. We watch them run, shout, laugh, play.

Find Julia walking through the park, rather aimlessly. She approaches the playground.

INT. PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

Julia enters the playground and walks among the equipment, watching the children. Her gaze falls on a LITTLE GIRL about 5 kicking her feet lazily on a swing. Julia goes up to her.

JULIA

How about a push?

The little girl doesn't respond. Julia begins pushing her gently on the swing. The little girl looks uncertain.

JULIA (CONT'D)

There you go. How's that?

She keeps pushing. The GIRL'S MOTHER appears.

MOTHER

Excuse me.

She glares at Julia. Julia backs off.

JULIA

I'm sorry. I just thought she might want a little help.

MOTHER

(voice tight)

It's fine.

12.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
(to the GIRL)
Okay, sweetie? Mommy's here.

Julia watches the Mother help the girl off the swing.

LATER

Two MOTHERS watch their KIDS slide down a slide together. They clap as the kids descend.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Yay! Good job, guys!

Julia is watching nearby. She claps too.

JULIA
Good job!

LATER

We are with Julia under a climbing gym. It's slightly disorienting as all the children scramble on the ladders and catwalks above and around her. She tries to talk to them.

JULIA (CONT'D)
I'm Julia. What's your name? ...
How old are you? ... What's your
name?

MOTHERS and NANNIES sitting nearby look askance at her.

LATER

A SMALL BOY pushes down a second KID in a dispute over a ball. Julia runs over, kneels down to the first boy.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Hey, that wasn't very nice.
Everybody has to share. Can you
say you're sorry?

Their NANNY rushes over.

NANNY
'I look after these children.

JULIA
So look after them.
(back to the boy)
Let's always share, okay?

The Nanny pulls the boys away.

45.

NANNY

You mind your own business.

ACROSS THE PLAYGROUND

The Mother from the swing set observes this. She says something to ANOTHER MOTHER, who nods and dials her cell phone.

LATER

Two PARK COPS get off their bikes and enter the playground. The Mothers direct them to Julia, who is sitting on the edge of the sandbox.

The cops go over. We watch from a distance. They talk to Julia. She says something dismissive and tries to move away. They move again to talk to her. She tries to walk away. One of them takes her arm. She pulls away. They try to calm her down. She grows more agitated. Children stop playing as they notice what's going on.

LONG SHOT of Julia alone in the center of the playground, the two cops holding on to her, parents moving their children away.

INT. EAST SIDE APARTMENT - DAY

Chris is going over construction blueprints with Lee. His phone rings.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Chris, his face full of worry, moves through the busy station. He finds Julia sitting on a bench outside an office. She looks up as Chris arrives.

CHRIS

You okay?

JULIA

(quietly)

I'm not under arrest or anything.

Julia looks embarrassed and drained. Chris doesn't know what to say. He sits down next to her.

A COP, WIDMER, 40, comes over.

WIDMER

This your son?

CHRIS

(nods)
Chris Sandburg.

Widmer indicates for Chris to follow him. They move to a quieter corner of the station.

WIDMER

Okay. Like I told you on the phone, we're not going to charge her. But I am gonna suggest you keep a close eye on her from now on.

CHRIS

Of course. Yes. Thanks, lieutenant. I'm really sorry about all this.

WIDMER

Keep her out of the park, would be a good idea.

CHRIS

Right.

WIDMER

She ever do anything like this before?

CHRIS

No.

WIDMER

She on anything?

CHRIS

No. It's nothing like that. She... My sister...

(beat)

I had a younger sister. When she was about three she disappeared. After, my mother ... changed.

WIDMER

You ever find out what happened to the girl?

CHRIS

Yeah. No.

Widmer looks confused.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

They never found anything. But there was another ... murder, a few months later, a kid in Philadelphia. Same deal, vanished from a playground. They caught the guy. They think he probably did both. He died in prison a couple of years ago.

WIDMER

There's that at least.

CHRIS

Yeah.

Beat.

WIDMER

Well. Look. Keep an eye on her.

INT. TAXICAB - NIGHT

Chris and Julia ride, not speaking.

EXT. JULIA'S BUILDING - NIGHT

They get out of the cab. Celeste is waiting for them. She hugs Julia, concerned. They all go into the building.

INT. JULIA'S BATHROOM

Julia splashes water on her face. She looks at herself in the mirror. She takes a breath, bracing herself.

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN

Celeste opens the fridge. It's empty.

Chris takes water glasses out of a cabinet. He's very tense. He notices the cabinet doors don't close quite right. He works them back and forth.

Julia enters.

CHRIS

I'm gonna fix these for you.

Julia nods, sits. Celeste pours her a glass of water.

CELESTE

Julia, are you hungry? I can go out to the grocery. Or order something.

JULIA

No.

Celeste and Chris watch Julia. A moment.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Come on.

CHRIS

What?

JULIA

Let's get it over with.

She indicates for them to start talking. Chris' frustration bursts out of him.

CHRIS

Shit, Mom --

CELESTE

(stopping him)

Julia, we don't have to do anything tonight you don't want to do. You must be very tired --

CHRIS

You know that cop told me to keep an eye on you?

JULIA

I'm sure he did.

CHRIS

I mean, first the restaurant -- do I need to keep an eye on you?

JULIA

If it would make you feel better.

Chris throws up his hands.

CHRIS

Great, okay, do your whole "passive" thing --

CELESTE

Chris --

CHRIS
This can't go on, you know.

CELESTE
Chris. I think she knows that.

Beat. Julia looks at them, clear-eyed.

JULIA
Of course I do. I'm sorry. About everything. I'm sorry about the park. I'm sorry about the restaurant.

CHRIS
Who was that in the restaurant?

JULIA
Somebody I thought I knew. I was wrong. I had too much wine, I'd had a bad day at work. It was stupid.

CHRIS
What about the park?

JULIA
These mothers, you say two words to their children they become hysterical.
(beat)
But I'm not going to make excuses. It was a mistake. I'm ashamed and I'm sorry.

Beat. Chris and Celeste are somewhat disarmed.

CELESTE
Julia. Would you like to stay with us for a few days?

Chris shoots her a look.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
It's a little dusty but there's plenty of room. We'd love to have you.

JULIA
Thank you, Celeste. I'll be all right.

CELESTE
Are you sure? It's no trouble.

JULIA
I'm sure. Thank you.
(beat)
And now ... you were right. I am
tired.

INT. HALLWAY

Julia sees them out. She kisses Celeste.

CHRIS
I'll call you tomorrow.

JULIA
Okay.

She kisses Chris, then closes the door. Chris waits there for a second, then Celeste pulls him away.

INT. ELEVATOR/INT. LOBBY

Chris and Celeste ride down.

CHRIS
I don't know. Maybe I should have
stayed.

CELESTE
I heard some real clarity from her
in there. Let's give her some
breathing room tonight.

CHRIS
I don't know.

They get out of the elevator and continue out.

CELESTE
Sometimes it takes an episode like
this for someone to decide to make
a change. Trust me? I think it's
going to be all right.

They leave the building. A WOMAN passes them going in.
They doesn't notice her.

As she gets into the elevator we see it is LOUISE.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT

Julia, still at the front door, stares into space for a moment. Then she goes into a SPARE ROOM that she uses as an office. She goes to the closet. In the back, on a high shelf, are some old boxes. She selects one and takes it down with difficulty. It is sealed with tape.

Julia gets the box open. Inside are file folders, papers, etc. She digs around until she finds an old PHOTO ALBUM. She takes it out.

KNOCK at the door. She jumps, startled.

She puts the album on a shelf and goes to the door. She opens it.

Louise.

Julia stares at her.

JULIA

How do you know where I live?

LOUISE

It was on your check.

Julia starts to close the door, fast. Louise tries to stick her hand in. It gets caught.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Ow! Fuck!

She pulls it back. Julia gets the door closed and locks it. She listens for Louise to go away. A moment.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

(through the door)

That really hurt! Why'd you
fucking close the door on my hand?

Julia is silent.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

(through the door)

You could say thanks at least.

Julia is baffled by this until she sees, just inside the doorway, a dropped wad of CASH. She bends down to pick it up. Several hundred dollars.

JULIA

What is this?

LOUISE

Your money. Some of it, anyway.

ANGLE ON Julia and Louise, each sitting on opposite sides of the closed door. Julia fingers the bills.

JULIA

Why?

LOUISE

You tried to help me. I felt shitty.

Beat.

JULIA

Were you pregnant?

LOUISE

(beat)
No.

JULIA

Was everything a lie?

LOUISE

Most of it.

JULIA

You're not from Michigan.

LOUISE

No.

JULIA

Where do you come from?

LOUISE

Right here.

Julia closes her eyes.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I've always been here.

Tears squeeze out and run down Julia's cheeks.

JULIA

(whispers)
Who are you?

LOUISE

What?

JULIA

What's your name?

LOUISE

Louise.

(beat)

Could you let me in? I think I need some antiseptic or something.

Julia slowly gets to her knees.

She unlocks the door.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Julia lets herself in. She carries four big grocery bags. Louise is lying asleep under a blanket on Julia's couch. Julia treads quietly so as not to wake her. She goes to the kitchen.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Louise wakes up. Julia is busy in the kitchen. There's a robe folded on the chair next to the couch.

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN - LATER

Louise comes into the kitchen bleary-eyed and sits down at the table. The table is set for two. There's a bowl of fruit salad and glasses of juice. Julia brings her a cup of coffee and returns to the stove, where bacon and eggs are cooking.

JULIA

Scrambled all right?

Louise nods, staring at all the food. Julia spoons eggs onto a plate.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Bacon?

LOUISE

I'm kind of a vegetarian.

LOUISE
Yeah. I live in this old
refrigerator under the 59th street
bridge. No I'm not homeless.

JULIA
Where do you sleep?

LOUISE
(shrugs)
With guys.

JULIA
What if there is no guy?

LOUISE
There's always some guy.

JULIA
What about last night?

LOUISE
Last night there was you.

Beat.

JULIA
Towels in the cupboard in the
bathroom.

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Julia gets dressed. Louise comes out of the bathroom
after her shower, in a robe.

LOUISE
Going to work?

JULIA
Yes.

LOUISE
What do you do?

JULIA
I work for a large financial
services firm.

LOUISE
Huh. Do you have any, like, lotion
or anything? My skin is really dry
and scaly.

Julia finds a bottle of lotion and gives it to Louise.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Thanks.

Louise goes back into the bathroom. Julia dresses. She glances out the door.

HER POV: The bathroom door is ajar. Louise sits on the toilet putting lotion on her legs. She turns one leg to get at the back of her calf. CLOSE on it. She puts lotion on her knees. She turns her leg slightly to get at the back of one knee.

CLOSE ON IT -- her hand, the robe, the angle all obscure the back of her knee.

Louise glances up. Julia looks away.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

IN HER FOYER, Julia puts on her coat and grabs her handbag. She takes a spare house key out of a drawer and puts it on a table.

JULIA

Louise?

LOUISE

(calls)

Give me a second!

JULIA

There's a key on the table in the hall.

(beat)

Stay as long as you want.

Without waiting for an answer Julia quickly leaves the apartment and shuts the door.

IN THE BATHROOM

Louise is dumbfounded. Then she slowly smiles.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Louise wanders through the rooms, checking out Julia's possessions. She sits on the edge of her bed.

35.

She glances at Julia's bedside reading -- books on finance, "serious" magazines like the NEW YORKER, collections of crossword puzzles.

She looks in Julia's closet. All drab business clothes. She makes a face, goes to Julia's bureau. She finds a jewelry box. She opens it. Some earrings and necklaces. She holds the earrings up, looking at herself in the mirror. Then she finds a diamond wedding ring. She tries it on, examines the gem in the mirror, puts it back.

EXT. DOUG SANDBURG'S HOUSE - DAY

Chris' van approaches this house in a wooded upstate suburb. It's a modest house set in a generous lawn.

INT. DOUG SANDBURG'S HOUSE

Chris lets himself in the back door. Amanda is in the kitchen at the sink. Amanda's son Dean is eating at the kitchen table. Amanda greets Chris warmly.

AMANDA

Hi. You're in big trouble, you know.

CHRIS

I got stuck on a job...

Doug looks in from the next room, where the TV is on.

DOUG

(mock outrage)
What's the matter with you? It's the second quarter!

CHRIS

I know, I know! I was listening in the van --

AMANDA

Get in there. Beer's in the fridge, cold cuts on the table.

CHRIS

Thanks.
(nods to Dean)
Hey Dean.

DEAN

(sullen)
Hey.

38.
As Chris starts inside, Amanda, fiddling with the kitchen faucet, mutters to herself.

AMANDA

Dammit ...

CHRIS

What's the matter?

AMANDA

Oh this old thing's dripping again.

Chris starts to examine the faucet. Doug tries to pull him into the next room.

DOUG

No. No. You do not have permission.

AMANDA

Don't worry about it, Chris.

(to Doug)

I thought you were going to call the plumber.

CHRIS

For that? I've got my tools in the van.

DOUG

Uh-uh. He's gonna think we save all our repairs for when he visits.

CHRIS

It'll take me two minutes!

Chris goes back out to get his tools.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Chris works on the faucet, which isn't too hard to fix. In the b.g., Dean and Amanda are talking.

DEAN

Mom? I need the car for a minute? I gotta go to the library.

AMANDA

Take your bike.

DEAN
I don't have time! I've got to
write this whole report for
History & Civilizations --

AMANDA
Well, the car is off limits for
the time being.

DEAN
Do you want me to fucking fail the
class, Mom? Is that what you want?
I just need the car for like two
minutes!

AMANDA
You said that last time, you
weren't back until after midnight.

DEAN
I was studying with Tobey
Weatherford!

AMANDA
Yeah, well you better work on your
lies, because I talked to Julie
Weatherford and she told me
neither of you were there, and you
put a hundred miles on the car, I
don't know WHERE you went --

DEAN
You wrote down the mileage? That
is so sick!

Chris, finished, interrupts.

DOUG
Uh, Amanda? You're all set.

AMANDA
Oh, Chris, thank you so much.

Dean glares at them both and stalks out.

INT. DOUG'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Doug and Chris watch a basketball game. Chris hesitates,
wanting to bring something up but losing his nerve.
Finally:

CHRIS
I'm worried about mom.

Beat.

DOUG
(quietly)
Yeah?

CHRIS
I had to get her at a police station the other day. She had some kind of freakout. In the park.

Beat.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
A few days before that we went to dinner. There was an incident in the restaurant... I don't know what's going on.

Doug watches basketball, not responding.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Maybe it's my fault. I try not to get in her face too much. That's what she wants, isn't it? Maybe it's the whole wedding thing, all the family stuff that's triggering something. Maybe I've been too absent, I should try to --

DOUG
(quietly)
There's nothing you can do. You know that, right?

CHRIS
No, I don't know that.

DOUG
Chris, I spent ten years trying...

He has to stop. The emotion is just below the surface for Doug and he swallows it with great difficulty.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Nothing ... nothing's gonna pull her loose from ... what happened. Don't let her pull you down too.

DOUG (CONT'D)
(he shakes his head)
If I hadn't met Amanda ...

CHRIS
What are you saying? I should just
forget about her? Go about my
business?

Doug looks at his son, as if to say, "Exactly." Chris
look away. Beat. They watch the game in tense silence for
a moment.

The TV goes fuzzy.

DOUG
Sorry. It keeps doing that. I keep
meaning to call the cable guy.

Chris uses the excuse to get up.

CHRIS
Let me get my tools.

DOUG
Chris ...

CHRIS
It's no problem. It'll only take a
minute.

Chris leaves. ON Doug.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Julia comes in after work, bright.

JULIA
Hello!

She takes off her coat. She sorts through the mail. One
of the letters is an ENGRAVED WEDDING INVITATION. She
glances at it, then looks around.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Louise?

No answer. Julia moves through the apartment, checking
all the rooms.

They are empty. No sign of Louise.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Louise!

Her voice is shrill. She is suddenly near panic. She spins around.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Louise!

NOISE at the front door. It opens. Louise comes in with a paper bag. Julia pounces on her, grabs her.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Where were you? Where did you go?

LOUISE

What the fuck? I went out to get something to drink, there's nothing in your fucking kitchen.

Julia swallows. She steadies herself with difficulty.

JULIA

Sorry.
(beat)
Long day.

LOUISE

Jesus Christ. Maybe I should just go.

JULIA

(quiet)
Please don't.

They both stand there for a moment. Louise shoves the bag at Julia. There's a bottle in the bag.

LOUISE

Have a drink, shit.

She takes off her coat.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - LATER

The bottle is a bottle of vodka. Julia and Louise sit on the couch staring at TV. Julia sips from a glass. Louise refills her own while she clicks through the channels.

A golf match.

LOUISE

What kind of a sick motherfucker do you have to be to watch golf?

She clicks. Financial News, a reporter spouting jargon.

 LOUISE (CONT'D)
This is your whole area, right?
 (shudders)
Yikes.

She clicks. An ESPN show with guys arguing about sports.

 LOUISE (CONT'D)
Look at those faggots. They all
want to fuck each other. That's
the whole unspoken subtext of this
show. It's all about, like, erotic
tension.

Click. A BBC News Anchorwoman.

 LOUISE (CONT'D)
Oh, she is excellent. She's so
cool. Have you seen her? I love
her voice.
 (tries to imitate)
"Paki-STAHN." "DAY-bree from the
explosion in Paki-STAHN..." I
can't do it.
 (beat)
I'd like to go to London...

Julia reaches for the bottle and refills her glass. She
drinks. .

 JULIA
"DAY-bree from the explosion in
Paki-STAHN..."

Julia's accent is spot-on. They both suddenly laugh.

LATER

They eat take-out. Louise looks at the carton Julia is
eating from.

 LOUISE
Which one is that?

 JULIA
 (mouth full)
Pad Thai.

Louise reaches over and pokes her chopsticks in, eats.

LOUISE
(mouth full)

Mmm.

LATER

Late night talk show on TV. Louise has fallen asleep on the couch. Julia quietly clears up. She clicks off the TV. She puts a blanket over the sleeping girl.

She turns out the light.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - DAY

Louise takes down items from the racks -- new pants, shirts, underwear, a dress. She takes them over to the salescounter, where Julia is waiting. Julia takes out her credit card.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Julia shops, filling a basket with groceries. Louise lingers by the magazine rack, flipping through junk magazines.

INT. LOUISE'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Julia clears out space in the closet of her spare room. Louise hangs her new clothes in the closet. Julia puts a pillow and bedding on the couch.

LATER

Louise sprawls on the couch. She smokes, reads magazines, listens to music on headphones.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Julia cooking dinner. A knock at the door. She goes to open it.

It's Chris, carrying a tool box.

JULIA
(surprised)
Hello.

CHRIS
I promised I'd fix that cabinet.

85.
Julia glances at Louise's bedroom door. It's closed. She gestures Chris into the apartment.

IN THE KITCHEN

Chris sees the food cooking.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

That looks good.

JULIA

Nothing fancy.

Chris is puzzled -- it's a big meal Julia's preparing -- but doesn't say anything. He drags a chair over to the cabinet and starts working on the door.

JULIA (CONT'D)

You look nice. Did you get a haircut?

CHRIS

No.

JULIA

You wearing it a little longer these days? The sideburns?

CHRIS

Not really.

JULIA

Oh. Well whatever it is I like it.
(beat)
So. You keeping an eye on me?

CHRIS

Yes.

JULIA

After my li'l brush with the law?

She gives it a little Texas twang.

CHRIS

Right.

JULIA

Well don't worry. I fought the law and the law won. I've going straight from now on.

04.
CHRIS

Okay.

Chris laughs nervously, not sure what to make of Julia's ebullience.

JULIA

Excuse me for a minute, would you?

She abruptly leaves the kitchen.

IN THE HALLWAY

Julia goes to Louise's room. She opens the door quietly. Louise looks up.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Don't leave the room.

LOUISE

(slips her headphones
off)

What?

JULIA

Just stay in here for ten minutes
or so, okay?

Louise shrugs "Whatever." Julia closes the door and goes back to the kitchen and Chris.

CHRIS

Cooking for an army there.

JULIA

I like leftovers.

Beat. Chris works.

JULIA (CONT'D)

How's Celeste?

CHRIS

She's good. She thinks she found a dress she likes. For the wedding. I haven't seen it yet. I don't know, maybe you're not supposed to see it until the day of.

(beat)

And she's pretty busy at the hospital. She's working late tonight, actually.

(beat)

CHRIS (CONT'D)
I was just gonna, I don't know,
grab a slice of pizza or
something.

JULIA
Yeah?

CHRIS
Yeah. But I could ... I mean, if
didn't mind some company, I'd be
happy to...

JULIA
What?

Chris looks at her. Does he have to spell it out?

CHRIS
I don't want to deprive you of
your leftovers.

JULIA
No, no. Are you kidding?

CHRIS
No. I mean ...

Awkward beat. Chris is not sure if Julia is inviting him
to stay or not.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
So should I --

JULIA
(overlap)
Oh, shit. You know what?

CHRIS
What?

JULIA
I forgot. I've got work -- stuff
from the office, they really
loaded me down tonight. I wasn't
going to sit down, even. I was
just going to sort of graze while
I tackle it.

CHRIS
That's fine, I won't get in the
way.

JULIA
It wouldn't be much fun for you.

CHRIS

I don't need to be entertained,
Mom.

She looks at him.

JULIA

It's not a good night.

ON Chris, rebuffed. He looks genuinely hurt. He gives up, nods.

He finishes and steps down off the ladder. He works the cabinet door. It opens and closes smoothly.

CHRIS

There you go.

JULIA

Perfect.

CHRIS

I'll just pack up my stuff.

IN THE CORRIDOR

He notices the guest room door, which is slightly ajar -- Whisps of SMOKE are curling out. Chris frowns, pushes the door open.

THE ROOM IS EMPTY.

Chris sees on the couch a open magazine, the discarded headphones, and an ashtray with cigarette smoldering in it.

JULIA

(sharp)

What are you doing?

Chris jumps. Julia is standing in the door.

CHRIS

Oh -- I just ... Are those yours?

ON the magazines. A COSMO and an US. Not Julia's style at all.

JULIA

(defiant)

Yes.

07.
Julia picks up the cigarette and takes a long drag, then moves Chris out of the room and shuts the door.

JULIA (CONT'D)
If you're done prowling around, I really do have to get to work, please.

CHRIS
Fine.

Chris, bruised, quickly packs up his tools. Julia opens the front door for him and lets him out.

JULIA
I'll talk to you soon. Thank you for the cabinet.

CHRIS
Yeah.

JULIA
Good night.

Chris just nods. Julia closes the door.

Louise comes out of the bathroom.

JULIA (CONT'D)
I thought I told you to stay.

LOUISE
I had to pee for Chrissake --

JULIA
Sh.

She glances at the door. Then hands Louise the cigarette and returns to the kitchen.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Dinner's ready.

INT. RAYMOND SEGURA'S OFFICE - DAY

Raymond at work. Julia appears in the doorway. Raymond looks up. Julia enters. Not saying anything, she goes over to Raymond's coffee setup. She quietly pours herself a cup. They look at each other for a second. Julia gives him a brief smile, then exits. ON Raymond, surprised and pleased.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Julia setting the table for this evening's meal.

Louise comes out of her room dressed to go out. She starts out the door. Julia surprised.

JULIA
Where are you going?

LOUISE
What?

JULIA
You want to tell me what time
you're planning to be home?

LOUISE
(laughs)
What? Who do you think you are?

JULIA
I'm ...
(lameley)
...The person who's giving you a
place to stay, and ...

LOUISE
If you want me to go, just say it.

Julia doesn't say anything. After a moment Louise goes and lets herself out. Julia stares at the door.

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Julia in bed, asleep.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT

Louise lets herself in. A GUY is with her. They're pretty drunk, laughing. He checks out the living room.

GUY
Whoah. Nice place. This is yours?

LOUISE
Shh. It's my Mom's.

05.

GUY
(calls)
Mom! We're home!

LOUISE
(laughing)
Shut up or she'll kick you out,
I'm serious. She's scary.

They kiss. Louise pulls him into her bedroom.

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM

The noise wakes Julia up. She looks at the clock -- 1 AM. She goes out, listening.

MUSIC coming from behind Louise's door. Julia gets closer. Laughter and talk and thumping sounds. Julia listens for a minute, angry.

She goes into the kitchen and gets a glass of water, making as much noise as possible. No change.

She starts back to her room. She pauses outside Louise's door. The laughter has died down and now there are only occasional little murmurs and squeaks coming from inside.

Very irritated, she goes to her hall closet and takes out a coat.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Julia finishes a cup of coffee.

EXT. JULIA'S BUILDING - NIGHT

She returns to her building. Looks up at the darkened windows. A CAB passes. A sudden impulse, and Julia sticks her hand out.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - NIGHT

Julia gets out in front of a Village apartment.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Raymond Segura, in a robe, opens his apartment door. He is astonished to see Julia standing there.

INT. RAYMOND'S APARTMENT - LATER

Julia and Raymond in bed, having sex. We stay on Julia's face -- responding intensely to this experience she has not had for a very long time. Her hands splay across Raymond's back.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Julia lets herself in, ruffled and bleary. She goes into the kitchen. Louise is at the kitchen table, drinking coffee and smoking. Her guy has gone.

LOUISE

Well hello. Where were you?

Julia pours herself coffee.

JULIA

How was your night?

LOUISE

How was yours?

JULIA

(beat)

Excellent.

She takes one of Louie's cigarettes and lights it.

INT. RESTAURANT - MORNING

Julia and Louise eat brunch and drink bloody marys. Julia smokes a cigarette.

LOUISE

So come on, what's the deal? Where did you go last night? Do you have a boyfriend or something?

JULIA

No.

LOUISE

Girlfriend?

JULIA

No. It was a man. A man from work.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
Don't you go out?

Julia shakes her head. Beat.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
You got kids?

JULIA
Yes.

LOUISE
How many?

JULIA
(a slight hesitation)
Two.

LOUISE
How average.

Another pause. Louise looks at Julia.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
You're weird. Don't you want to
know anything about me?

JULIA
Why?

LOUISE
I'm staying in your house. I'm
eating your food. Don't you want
to know who I am?

JULIA
I know who you are.

LOUISE
Who?

ON Julia.

JULIA
You're a girl who needs a new dye
job.

Louise runs her fingers through her hair. Its black roots
are growing out. Julia signals for the check.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Your roots are showing. Let's take
care of that.

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

A HAIRDRESSER combs out Louise's wet hair. It has been dyed dark brown to match the roots.

HAIRDRESSER

There. That's pretty close to the original color, right?

LOUISE

Yeah.

Julia is there, watching. She nods to herself.

INT. CHRIS & CELESTE'S HOUSE - DAY

Some progress has been made on the house -- there's a little less plastic sheeting now. In the living room, Lee helps Chris lug a lovingly restored mantelpiece into place. Chris steps back to eye it, pleased -- it's beautiful.

LEE

It doesn't work for me.

CHRIS

(laughs)

Fuck you.

UPSTAIRS

Celeste is doing a seating arrangement for the wedding, moving small pieces of paper with names on them around a diagram of the tables.

Chris runs up, excited.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Honey. The mantel's in. Take a peek. It's not anchored yet but it's looking good.

CELESTE

I don't know where to put your stepbrother. There's really no one else coming who's his age. Plus, he tends to be fairly pissy.

CHRIS

So put him next to my Mom.

Louise tries to smile at this but something's wrong.
Chris looks at her, shakes his head.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I knew it.

CELESTE

She didn't RSVP. Yet. That doesn't
mean -- Hey, Chris, wait --

Chris turns, angry, and goes back down the stairs.

INT. JULIA'S OFFICE - DAY

Julia working. Raymond steps into her doorway.

RAYMOND

Hi.

JULIA

Hi.

It's a little awkward. He puts a cup of his coffee in
front of her. She laughs, breaking the tension.

RAYMOND

Well. I suppose this is sort of
backwards now, but I have tickets
tonight for a --

JULIA

(quickly)

Sure. Yes.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - NIGHT

Raymond and Julia walk down the street together.

RAYMOND

(excited)

This will be good. The pianist, I
think you'll find, is one of the
two or three best under thirty
playing in New York at the
moment...

He starts to lead her into a JAZZ CLUB. It is the same
club where Julia used to sing, fifteen years ago. She
stops.

JULIA

It's here? The concert's here?

RAYMOND

Yes.

ON Julia, making a decision. A long moment. Then she forces herself to smile, go in the door.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - CONTINUOUS

She enters, very tense. Raymond shows them to a table. As they pass the bar Julia stares at the BARTENDER.

It's a different person -- a young WOMAN. There are no familiar faces here at all. As Julia sits down she notices how different the room looks -- different setup, decor. It sinks in how much time has passed.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - LATER

Julia listens intently, losing herself in the music. Raymond glances at her. Then takes a longer look. His eyes stay on her.

EXT. JULIA'S STREET - NIGHT

Raymond walks Julia home.

RAYMOND

May I ask you something?

JULIA

Sure.

RAYMOND

Why did you come to my house the other night?

JULIA

Did I scare you?

RAYMOND

You ... surprised me.

JULIA

I guess I surprised myself.

RAYMOND

(smiles)

I'm glad you didn't surprise anyone else.

Julia looks at him.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

My son. He came to stay with me the following night. It's a good thing you missed him. I think the idea of women visiting his father in the night would completely blow his mind out, or whatever you say.

JULIA

"Women"?

RAYMOND

(laughs)

No. Sorry. "Woman," singular.

She smiles. Beat. They walk.

JULIA

Where does he live? Your son.

RAYMOND

With his mother, in Venezuela. He's looking for a job in New York, though. That's why he's visiting.

(proud)

He's a very talented journalist.

(beat)

He's at my place now, or I would have steered us in that direction.

JULIA

Oh you would, huh?

RAYMOND

I would have tried, yes.

They pause outside her building.

JULIA

Well. It looks like I've steered us in this direction ...

RAYMOND

Yes?

She doesn't make a move to ask him up.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
But? Tonight didn't live up to expectations?

JULIA
No, no. I had a very good time, Raymond.

RAYMOND
Then what? Don't tell me you've got a puritanical son upstairs.

JULIA
No. I've got a, uh, a...
(stumbling a bit over the word)
Daughter.

RAYMOND
Ah.

JULIA
She's staying with me for a while, too. So. You know how it is.

RAYMOND
I certainly do.

He looks at her, moves in tentatively to kiss her. She returns it. Beat.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
(beat)
Can I ask you something else?

JULIA
Yes.

RAYMOND
Why don't you sing any more?

Julia looks stunned.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
I used to hear you sometimes. At that club.

JULIA
Is that why you took me there?

78.
RAYMOND

No. That was chance. I wanted to hear the pianist.

(beat)

You were quite good, Julia. You had a bit of a following as I recall.

Julia doesn't say anything.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

Are you angry?

Julia has to consider this.

JULIA

No.

RAYMOND

So why did you stop?

Beat.

JULIA

I don't know. Maybe I'll try it again some day.

RAYMOND

You should.

She looks at him. She kisses him again, a serious kiss, then goes inside.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Julia lets herself in.

Louise is on the couch with a new GUY. They're sitting close together. She holds his hands. Julia smirks a little as she goes in to her bedroom.

JULIA

Don't let me interrupt.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Julia comes out of her room and the GUY is up, sitting on her couch. He's about 24, gaunt, wearing a hoodie and staring intently at a small portable Scrabble set. His name is STUART. He nods at Julia.

75.
Julia goes into her kitchen. Louise is pouring a bowl of cereal.

JULIA
A new one, huh? Don't you ever run out?

Louise starts into the living room, annoyed.

LOUISE
He's my brother.

ON Julia.

Louise sits down next to Stuart, picks up a Scrabble tile. She forms a word.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
"Sub" ... plus u, r, b makes
"suburb."

STUART
Good, twenty-four points. And I've got...
(adds)
A, n, i, t, e ... "suburbanite,"
triple world score ... two hundred eighty.

LOUISE
(laughs, pushes him)
Goddamn it!

Julia walks past them into her room.

INSIDE - She closes the door. She paces, tries to collect herself.

After a moment she goes back out. Louise is alone on the couch.

JULIA
Where is he?

LOUISE
Shower.

Beat. Julia stares at her.

JULIA
When are you leaving?

LOUISE

What?

JULIA

You've had a couple weeks. You've had time to get back on your feet. Whatever your next step is, I think you'd better take it.

Louise takes this in.

LOUISE

Well. The honeymoon is over, huh?

JULIA

Yes.

Louise sets her cereal bowl down. She gets up and marches into "her" room. She slams the door. Julia opens it again.

JULIA (CONT'D)

I'll need my key back.

Louise finds it and tosses it at her. She goes to the closet and pulls out the clothes Julia bought her.

LOUISE

You want these back too?

JULIA

No.

LOUISE

Thanks. That's really fucking generous.

JULIA

Don't you dare --

LOUISE

What is your problem all of a sudden?

JULIA

You lied to me!

LOUISE

When?

JULIA

About everything!

LOUISE

I told you I wasn't pregnant. The Michigan thing...you knew all that before!

JULIA

You never told me you had a brother.

LOUISE

What difference does that make?

JULIA

(screams)

Everything!

Louise takes a step back, startled by the hysteria in Julia's voice. Then she pushes past her and goes to the bathroom. She knocks, hard.

LOUISE

Stuart. We're going.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Julia closes the door on Louise and Stuart. She sinks down to the ground. She buries her face in her hands.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Julia lying in bed, dressed, asleep in the middle of the day. Incessant knocking at the door. Julia finally wakes. She drags herself up and goes to answer it.

Stuart.

STUART

I forgot my Scrabble set.

Julia is still half-asleep. She reluctantly opens the door. Stuart comes in, awkward. He goes to the table where he left the Scrabble set. He starts to put the pieces away. Julia is waiting with her arms folded. Stuart stops, looks at her.

STUART (CONT'D)

Do you play?

JULIA

No. I mean, I know how...

STUART

I could help you get better. My sister was bad but she got better. You just have to memorize the word sets.

He looks hopefully at Julia. Is he actually asking her for a game? Julia shakes her head. Stuart finishes putting the set away.

STUART (CONT'D)

I'm going to a Scrabble event in Tallahassee. I just went to one in Providence.

Julia stares at this strange, fragile-looking boy.

JULIA

What is a Scrabble event?

STUART

Oh, it's just people who get together and play Scrabble. Not like the super-champions, but people who can play. You can even win some money sometimes. Not a lot but enough to kind of like get to the next event.

JULIA

Do you?

STUART

(shrugs)
Sometimes.

INT. CORRIDOR

Stuart in the elevator. Julia opposite. Stuart holds the door before it closes.

STUART

It's kind of a long bus ride from Providence to Tallahassee. That's why I had to stay overnight. I wasn't going to live here or anything.

JULIA

I know.

STUART

So. Don't be mad at Maggie.

The elevator doors close.

ON Julia. It takes a second for it to register.

Then Julia STABS the elevator button. Again. Again.

INT. STAIRWELL

Julia flies down the stairs to her lobby.

INT./EXT. JULIA'S LOBBY

She bolts through the lobby and explodes out the front doors.

EXT. JULIA'S BUILDING

Stuart is already halfway down the block. Julia races after him. He turns the corner. Julia follows.

AROUND THE CORNER

Stuart is gone.

Julia looks around, bewildered. Then she sees the SUBWAY ENTRANCE just ahead. Rumble of train below.

She runs down the stairs.

INT. SUBWAY STATION

The train doors are just closing. Julia can see Stuart inside the train. It pulls away. She lets out a little cry of frustration. She runs back out.

INT. TAXICAB

Julia rides, impatient, as the taxi crawls through Midtown traffic.

EXT. PORT AUTHORITY - AFTERNOON

Julia gets out of the cab and joins the crowds streaming into the busy bus station.

INT. PORT AUTHORITY

Julia hurriedly checks a schedule, then goes toward the bus bays.

INT. BUS BAYS

PEOPLE lugging suitcases, boarding busses, saying goodbye to family. Finally Julia spots Stuart in the crowd. He is approaching a bus with destination FLORIDA. Julia hurries toward him. Abruptly she stops.

Louise is here. Stuart holds up the retrieved scrabble set, showing her. She smiles. She walks him to his bus.

Julia watches. They talk earnestly for a moment. Julia can only hear snatches.

LOUISE

...You take your medicine today?

STUART

Yes.

LOUISE

You got enough? You swear?

STUART

Yeah, Maggie. Yes, don't worry, okay?

Louise presses some money on Stuart.

LOUISE

Don't fuck around with it.

Louise hugs him with real affection, real sadness. She puts him on the bus and watches as it starts up. She doesn't move until it disappears up a ramp, out of the station.

Louise turns to leave.

Her POV: Julia. They look at each other.

INT. TAXICAB - AFTERNOON

Julia and Louise ride.

LOUISE

...There were a bunch of us. I mean, kids came and went. You know those kind of people who keep like a million cats, and whenever one runs away they get two more? Paul and Stephanie were like that. I mean, they were okay, they weren't monsters or anything, but they clearly did it for the money, mostly 'cause, you know, the state pays so much per kid and there's no real limit.

Julia tries to take this in.

JULIA

So you were adopted?

LOUISE

Yeah, me and Stuart both were. Well, I don't think they ever technically adopted us. We were, whatever, fosters. I probably have like nine "brothers and sisters" total.

JULIA

Who were your parents?

LOUISE

I guess you could say Paul and Stephanie were. They were severely odd, though. Paul was this incredibly skinny guy and Stephanie weighed like 400 pounds. No wonder they had to adopt. Also they were religious fanatics. We had to pray to this plastic statue of Jesus about fifty times a day. We couldn't watch any TV --

Julia is not getting the information she wants. She interrupts, impatient.

JULIA

Stuart called you Maggie.

LOUISE

That's what Paul and Stephanie called me. I like Louise better.

JULIA

But where were you before?

LOUISE

I don't know. That was the first
place I remember.

ON Julia.

INT. LOUISE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Louise is back in her room, tucked into Julia's sofa,
sleeping.

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julia gets ready for bed. She pads around her room. Then
she goes out into the corridor.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Julia creeps through the dark apartment. She stops
outside Louise's room. The door is open slightly. Julia
looks in. Louise is asleep, lying on her stomach, dark
hair splayed over the pillow.

Julia smiles as she looks in on the girl.

Louise shifts in her sleep. The covers slip off her legs,
exposing them from the calf down.

ON Julia. She struggles with herself, then pushes the
door open. She steps into the room.

INT. LOUISE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Julia stands over the sleeping Louise. She stares at the
girl's legs. She hesitates ...

Then, very slowly, she reaches down and folds back the
edge of the sheet a bit. More of Louise's bare legs are
exposed.

Louis suddenly shifts again. Julia leaps back. She nearly
loses her nerve, but she sees that if she just moved the
sheet a little bit she could see the back of Louise's
knee. She can't resist. She begins tugging at the sheet,
pulling it back with excruciating slowness.

Louise wakes up. She flips over.

LOUISE

What?

Julia starts to bolt from the room but it's too late. Louise is awake and has seen her.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

JULIA

Nothing.

Louise sits up, a little freaked out.

JULIA (CONT'D)

I was just looking for something.

Julia's eyes scan the room. They fall on the bookshelf.

JULIA (CONT'D)

There's a book I wanted. I'm sorry I woke you. Go back to sleep.

LOUISE

Oh. God, you scared me. Do you need the light?

JULIA

No.

LOUISE

You can't see in here.

Louise turns it on. Julia has to grab something. Her hands move to the PHOTO ALBUM that she put on the shelf earlier. She hurries out.

JULIA

Got it. Thanks.

LOUISE

What is it?

JULIA

Nothing. Just some old photos.

LOUISE

Of you?

JULIA

Yes. Some of them.

LOUISE

Let me see?

Julia hesitates.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I'm awake now. Come on, give it up.

Julia reluctantly moves back over to the bed and perches on the edge. She opens the book, not really looking at it.

JULIA

They're old.

Louise points at the book.

LOUISE

Oh my God, is that you?

ON a PHOTOGRAPH of a younger Julia.

JULIA

Yes.

LOUISE

Holy shit, look at those clothes! They're so, like, early-mid-eighties. I can't believe you wore that.

JULIA

Okay.

She starts to get up.

LOUISE

No, hey, I'm sorry. You look good. Seriously. Show me some more. Show me your husband. The one you divorced.

JULIA

Go back to sleep.

LOUISE

Come on. Was he ugly or something?

JULIA

No.

LOUISE

Did he have, like, a beard and no moustache or something? Or those Elvis things? Muttonchops. He had muttonchops, right?

JULIA

No.

LOUISE

Then show me.

JULIA

Here.

She shows her a photo of Doug. He's laughing and smiling with Julia and a toddler Chris.

LOUISE

He was kinda handsome! Not bad.

Nice going.

(she points)

Who's that?

JULIA

My son.

LOUISE

Your son, wow. You got a son?

JULIA

Christopher.

LOUISE

Christopher. Is he gay?

JULIA

What?

LOUISE

You never talk about him. Are you embarrassed? Did he disappoint you or something?

JULIA

No. He lives in town. He came by the other day but you were busy. He has his own business. He's quite successful, actually.

LOUISE

But gay.

JULIA

No, he's not gay. He's getting marr -- Jesus. Why do you ask these idiotic questions?

LOUISE

It's the only way to get you to say anything.

Julia relaxes a bit. She almost smiles.

Louise looks at a picture of a young, radiant Julia.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

God, Julia. You look really happy. Where is that?

JULIA

I don't remember.

Louise yawns, sleepy. Julia starts to get up.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Go back to sleep.

LOUISE

Just stay for a minute, okay?

She rests her head on a pillow and closes her eyes.

JULIA

What?

LOUISE

Just talk, okay?

JULIA

About what?

LOUISE

Anything. I don't care. Talk about the pictures.

Long beat. Then Julia settles back on the bed a bit. She turns a page.

JULIA

(slowly)

Well, these were ... I guess Chris was about five. We were still living downtown. Tiny place. With a small child, you go crazy if you can't take them outside.

JULIA (CONT'D)

But Chris wasn't hard to keep happy, as long as he had something to build or take apart...

(turns a page)

Oh, he's starting school here. He was six. We moved... No, here he must be seven, because we're uptown. Doug was teaching that year... I remember that lunchbox. The Bionic Man ... Chris wouldn't eat lunch the first week or two at school. If he wasn't comfortable in a place he didn't complain or fuss, he just didn't eat. Then one day the teacher told us, "Chris ate his lunch." So we knew he'd settled in. Kids just adapt.

(turns a page)

Oh God, yeah ... Doug won an award for a story he wrote. He had to wear a tux to the dinner. ... I went out and spent \$200 dollars on a dress. It seemed like a fortune. I thought I'd gone absolutely insane. I wore it for years, though. God, look at Doug. Look at us.

Louise is falling asleep. Julia looks at her. She is about to move her aside to get up but it seems too difficult. Instead she fingers the next page, hesitating before she turns it. Then she does.

ON the page -- photos of a BABY GIRL.

Julia stares at them. She turns the page.

The baby is now a toddler, a little girl -- Maggie.

JULIA (CONT'D)

(whispers)

And then ...

(beat)

... you came along.

(beat)

I'd always wanted a girl. I thought I didn't care. I thought it was old fashioned, "sexist" to care. But I did. And you were it. And by then we had the park just down the street. And as soon as I could, I took you there.

Louise is not asleep after all. She is listening.

JULIA (CONT'D)

You loved it so much.

She turns the page. There's one final photo of Maggie at age 3, then the pictures abruptly stop.

Louise looks at Julia, understanding a bit. Julia puts her arm around her, hugging her close. Louise lets her. They lie there together, not speaking, not needing to speak.

FADE OUT.

EXT. DOUG SANDBURG'S BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

A WEDDING TENT has been erected in Doug's back yard. Folding chairs laid out neatly in rows.

Find Celeste being walked down the aisle by her father. Lee is the best man. Celeste's friend Alice is maid of honor. Everyone is casually dressed -- this is the wedding rehearsal. Mood bright.

LEE

(calls to Celeste)

It's not too late, you know. You can do better.

CHRIS

Shut up.

Chris grabs Celeste and dips her and kisses her. She laughs.

Sarah Graczyck, Doug and Amanda are watching from the first row.

SARAH GRACZYCK

Come on, focus you two.

Dean appears, looking pissed off.

DEAN

What am I supposed to be doing here?

AMANDA

You're an usher, honey.

DEAN

And I have to rehearse that?

35.
The bride and groom take their positions up front.
Celeste looks at her father.

CELESTE

Dad. You cannot cry yet.

DAVE GRACZYCK

(eyes wet)

I'm not. Mind your own business.

SARAH

(to Celeste)

Beautiful. Maybe turn a little to
your left, honey. Perfect.

Chris looks around. Celeste, smiling at him, excited and happy. His father in the front row. The empty seats behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE/INT. CAR - DAY

A RENTAL CAR making its way over the George Washington Bridge, leaving the city behind. Find Julia driving.

Louise is in the passenger seat. She examines the dashboard, turns on the radio. Fiddles around until she finds a pop station. An old seventies pop song, something cheesy and irresistible. Louise settles for it, looks out the window, begins muttering along with the lyrics. She can't sing at all.

Julia looks over, annoyed at her off-key quaverings.

Then Julia begins to join in a little. Quietly at first ... then a little louder, getting into it, finding her voice. It is still clear and rich.

Louise stops singing and stares at Julia, astonished at the sounds coming out of her mouth. Julia enjoying her surprise.

Louise turns up the volume and joins in again, bad voice and all. They keep singing with the radio as the car whips down the highway.

CUT TO:

94.
EXT. DOUG SANDBURG'S HOUSE - FRONT - EVENING

The rehearsal is over and Chris is carrying a suit in a garment bag out to his car when he stops.

His POV - ON THE STREET, Julia is pulling up in her rental car.

Chris looks very surprised and - in spite of himself - pleased.

Then his expression changes.

Getting out of the passenger side, wearing a rather sexy dress, is Louise. Chris has no idea who she is. He stares as the two women approach the house.

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The wedding party arrives at a restaurant for the Rehearsal Dinner. Everyone looking askance at Louise (except Dean, who stares at her openly).

As they walk from their cars Chris hangs back, watching Julia enter with Louise ahead. Celeste is with him.

CHRIS

Who is she?

CELESTE

Your Mom said. She's her friend.

CHRIS

Her "friend"? She doesn't have any friends! We didn't invite her. She didn't tell us she was coming.

CELESTE

Well they're here now. Be glad she came at least. Now let's just go in and enjoy the evening.

CHRIS

Was she the one in the restaurant? That night?

CELESTE

Maybe. I don't really remember.

CHRIS

I think she was. I think -- Jesus. You know what? I think she was in my Mom's apartment the other night! When I went over to see her she was cooking this huge meal -- has she been living with her? What the hell is going on?

CELESTE

I don't know! Right now I don't really care! This is our night. We've been planning this for a year. I am not going to let your mother or any of her crazy shit screw it up for me. Are you?

Chris doesn't answer. Celeste moves past him into the restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER

The wedding party having drinks in the bar before dinner. Find Louise at the bar, alone, nursing a drink and watching the party. Dean appears next to her.

DEAN

Hey.

LOUISE

Hey.

DEAN

I'm the inconvenient step-son.

LOUISE

Good to meet you.

He takes a seat at the bar.

DEAN

So like what's your deal?

MEANWHILE

Doug and Chris move toward where Julia is standing talking with the Graczyks, Doug calming Chris.

DOUG

They're gonna set an extra place for her. It's no problem.

CHRIS

Thanks, Dad. Shit. I'm really sorry. She didn't mention anything. Are you sure it's okay?

DOUG

It's all taken care of. Don't worry about it, okay?

They join the group. Julia is chatting with the Graczyks, very animated and charming. Chris listens, not knowing what to make of it.

MEANWHILE

AT THE BAR

LOUISE

Julia's my sponsor. In the program.

DEAN

What, like AA?

LOUISE

Yeah. I'm just starting, I'm supposed to be with her all the time, for support.

DEAN

Oh, okay.

He looks, confused, at the drink Louise is nursing.

LOUISE

Oh, right, no -- the program's for sex addicts.

Dean reacts.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

You know, people who just fuck and fuck and fuck and fuck. I've been struggling with it since I was fourteen. My mother's this ... well, I guess you'd call her a "supermodel," I don't want to say her name, but you'd know it. Anyway, when I was growing up she was never there, she was always traveling, and they put me in this Swiss boarding school. All-girl.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
Well, you know what those are
like.

DEAN
(uncertain)
Yeah...

LOUISE
After they kicked me out for
"extreme depravity" my mother
handed me off to my Dad. So he had
to take me on tour with him -- he
plays in -- well, a certain band
which again should probably remain
nameless. So I was exposed to that
whole world... Anyway, now, I
guess I just associate love and
tenderness with insane
promiscuity. Julia's helping me
work through it. It's a process.

While Dean is struggling to respond, Chris appears next
to them.

CHRIS
Hey Dean.

DEAN
Um...

CHRIS
(to Louise)
I'm Chris Sandburg. Julia's son.

LOUISE
Hi, yeah. Louise.

Chris studies her. It's uncomfortable. Dean mutters an
excuse and disappears.

Chris sits down next to Louise. He looks right at her,
confrontational.

CHRIS
You staying with my Mom?

LOUISE
She's letting me crash there for a
little while, yeah.

CHRIS
How do you know her?

LOUISE

(beat)
I work with her.

CHRIS

At the bank?

LOUISE

Yeah.

CHRIS

What do you do?

LOUISE

I'm a banker. I mean, not full-fledged. Not yet. It's a sort of an apprenticeship. Julia's kind of like my mentor, you know, grooming me, teaching me all the ins and outs of the financial service sector. In a couple years, I expect to be, you know, actually fully banking.

Chris stares at her.

CHRIS

Look, I don't know what you think you're --

LOUISE

(suddenly)
Oh fuck me! What is wrong with me? Congratulations! On your marriage. I should have said something before.

CHRIS

Okay, great, thanks. But I --

She touches Chris' arm.

LOUISE

Julia's proud. Really, truly proud of you, and the life you've made, your business -- everything you've done.

(she looks at him)
You know that, right, Chris? She may not be able to say it, but she is.

ON Chris, rendered speechless by this.

ACROSS THE ROOM, DOUG taps his glass and calls the guests into dinner.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
Oh, good! I'm starved.

INT. RESTAURANT DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The wedding party eating dinner. Chris looks around. Julia looks happy talking with Lee and Sarah. Louise, sitting next to Dave Graczyk, seems to be keeping him amused. Everything seems to be proceeding normally, even well. Celeste gives Chris a look to say "See? It's okay." He nods.

LATER

The meal is over. Everyone pleasantly noisy and boisterous. Sarah Graczyk is tapping her glass. Celeste interrupts, laughing.

CELESTE
-- No more speeches, Mom, come on,
it's gonna be a marathon tomorrow.

SARAH
I just want to say thank you Doug
and Amanda --

CELESTE
Okay, good -- and I want to say
thank you too, and to you --
(to Lee, about Chris)
I want to say, don't let him leave
the state...
(laughter)
And now everybody get out of here
and get some sleep!

Everybody starts to get up. ON Julia.

JULIA
Could I ...

CELESTE
What, Julia?

JULIA
Could I ... say something?

Celeste and Chris look at each other, surprised.

CELESTE

Of course! Everybody. Julia has something she wants to say.

Everyone quiets. Chris and Doug and Celeste watch anxiously as Julia rises and raises her glass. Beat.

JULIA

(haltingly)

I want to say how glad I am that Chris and Celeste have found each other. And how happy I am to be here.

(beat)

I know I haven't always been ... present ... as much as I would have liked. I hope to change that. I hope you'll let me try to change that.

(beat)

I wish you both all the happiness in the world.

It's more, much more than Chris ever expected. He is moved. Celeste squeezes his hand.

Julia starts to sit, then remembers one last thing.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Oh, and thanks for finding an extra place for Maggie.

She sits. People resume their conversations, finish their glasses of wine, start to push their chairs back.

Chris is staring at Julia.

CHRIS

What?

People are getting up around them but Chris has stayed in place. Julia doesn't seem to have heard him.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

What did you say her name was?

JULIA

What?

Chris turns to Louise.

CHRIS

What's your name?

LOUISE
 (quickly)
 I -- Louise --

JULIA
 (jumping in)
 Maggie.

They speak at the same time. It's hard to get it.

LOUISE
 Either one is fine, I usually go
 by --

JULIA
 (firm)
 This is Maggie.

This hangs in the air a moment. Chris stares at his mother. People are starting to take notice.

CHRIS
 Is that what this is?

CELESTE
 Chris...

CHRIS
 Oh no. Is that... Oh God, Mom.

Julia meets his eye, defiantly. Chris is trembling with anger and disbelief. He stands up. He points at Louise.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 Do you know what this is about?

Chris's voice is loud. Everyone stops. Louise can't meet Chris' eye. She looks embarrassed and upset.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 Do you understand what you're
 doing? Do you have any idea?

Louise starts to leave the room. Chris pursues her. Celeste holds him back.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 Where are you going? Look at me!
 What the fuck do you think you're
 doing?

Louise runs out.

JULIA
Maggie!

CHRIS
(shouts)
Maqqie is dead, Mom!

Julia freezes.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
She's dead.

ON Julia, staring at him.

The guests are standing around, silent, frozen. Doug looks stricken.

CELESTE
(firm)
Chris. Stop it. Julia ...

Doug suddenly bolts from the room. Amanda goes after him.

Everyone is staring at Julia. Julia looks shattered and bewildered.

She slowly walks out of the room.

EXT. RESTAURANT

Julia emerges from the restaurant in time to see Louise getting into a cab and pulling away into the night.

Chris comes out a moment later. He approaches Julia tentatively. He puts a hand on her shoulder.

CHRIS
Mom...

Julia shrugs it off violently. She stands there, expressionless, staring into the night.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Many hours later. Julia lets herself into the apartment. She turns on the light. She sets her things down, then walks slowly toward the guest bedroom. She pushes open the door, knowing exactly what she will find. All of Louise's things are gone. The room looks the way it did before she came.

Julia sits on the couch in the darkened room.

FADE OUT.

EXT. AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS - MORNING

Crowds of office workers fill the sidewalk, as in earlier in the film. Find Julia walking to work.

A FEW MONTHS HAVE PASSED.

EXT. BANK BUILDING - MORNING

She stops outside her building to buy a cup of coffee from a vendor on the street.

Raymond Segura is also arriving at work. He watches Julia. She catches his eye, briefly, then she turns away.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Julia works out on a treadmill in the gym, setting a punishingly hard pace.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Julia watches financial news on TV, picking at a take out dinner alone in her apartment.

INT. JULIA'S OFFICE - DAY

Julia stares at her computer screen. She is reading an email from Raymond. We glimpse a few phrases:

... LAST THING I WANT IS TO KEEP BOTHERING YOU ... JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WON'T... IF YOU *EVER* WISH TO TALK I HOPE YOU WILL LET ME ...

Julia presses the DELETE key.

INT. RESTAURANT

Julia finishes her Friday night drink, alone in her usual restaurant. Carl brings her the check. She signs without looking at it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHRIS & CELESTE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Chris and Celeste entertaining two other COUPLES, friends their age. The remodeling is finished. It looks fantastic. Celeste conducts a little tour of the downstairs, pointing out various features. Noises of appreciation from the guests.

UPSTAIRS

Find Chris chatting with one of the GUYS.

CHRIS

... we kind of put it off, but now that the place is finished we're definitely going to go somewhere. Celeste wants beach time, she's talking Mexico. I don't really care, as long as ...

He notices that one of the bulbs on the antique chandelier over the staircase is not lit. He tires to ignore it but it bothers him. As his friend tries to continue the conversation Chris drifts over to inspect it.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Excuse me, just a sec.

Chris climbs onto the banister that runs around the top of the staircase. He balances on it, bracing himself against the wall to get at the bulb. He can't quite reach. He stretches out further. His friend watches, nervous.

DOWNSTAIRS

Celeste is pouring drinks for her friends.

OFF - a terrible CRASH.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Julia moves through the crowded emergency room of this hospital. She carries a large wrapped box.

Eventually she finds Celeste, looking drawn, waiting outside an admitting room. Celeste is surprised to see Julia.

JULIA
Is he all right?

CELESTE
Broken collarbone. Sixty stitches.
I wanted to do them for him but if
I know the person my hands shake.
(beat)
He'll be okay. They're setting the
bone now.

Julia nods, relieved.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
How did you find out?

JULIA
Doug called me.

CELESTE
We would have called you too. We
were just in crisis mode ...

Julia waves this off. Beat. She hands Celeste the box.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Oh, Julia, you didn't need to
bring him anything.

JULIA
It's for both of you.

CELESTE
What is it?

JULIA
A decorative vase.
(off Celeste's
reaction)
It's your wedding present. I meant
to give it to you earlier. I just
thought as long as I was coming
here...

This is so hopelessly awkward that Celeste nearly laughs.

CELESTE
Thank you.

JULIA
How was the wedding?

CELESTE

It was lovely.

JULIA

Can I see him?

CELESTE

Julia, I don't think that's a good idea.

Beat. Julia nods.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Eventually, yeah. But after everything that's happened... I think Chris needs some more time. I don't know how much. I'm sorry.

JULIA

No. I understand.

(beat)

Tell him I came?

CELESTE

Of course.

Julia nods and starts to go.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Julia?

Julia turns.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

She's not your daughter. You know that, right?

Beat. ON Julia.

JULIA

I know.

They look at each other, then Julia walks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BANK BUILDING - DAY

Julia returning to work after a lunch break.

She's about to go back inside when SOMEONE walks by her wearing a hooded sweatshirt. Julia double-takes.

It's hard to see who it is among the people, but the figure finally turns his head slightly and we see it is STUART.

Julia is stunned for a moment. Then she turns to follow him.

EXT. MIDTOWN STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Julia follows Stuart through the crowds and traffic in midtown. He walks a long way.

EXT. PIERRE HOTEL

Finally Stuart approaches the Pierre Hotel. Julia watches in surprise as he goes inside.

INT. PIERRE HOTEL LOBBY

From across the lobby Julia watches as Stuart approaches someone standing near the front desk. It is LOUISE. She's sort-of dressed up, wearing a skirt and T-shirt, though she looks drawn and anxious.

Julia stays out of sight.

Louise and Stuart embrace. They talk earnestly for a moment. Julia can only hear pieces of it.

LOUISE

... just let me talk to him, OK?

Stuart is reluctant but Louise eventually persuades him of whatever it is and Stuart moves out of sight.

Louise sits silently for a moment, waiting, tense.

Then a MAN steps out of an elevator. Louise stands up. The Man sees Louise and he crosses to the lobby to her. He is in his 50s, heavysset, very well dressed, wealthy-looking, with a hard, emotionless face. With him is a young WOMAN about 25.

Julia watches, puzzled.

The MAN stands before Louise. Louise gestures for him to sit down with her but he refuses.

Over the babble of noises in the lobby Julia catches snatches of what appears to be a very tense conversation.

MAN

... are you doing here?

LOUISE

... isn't this where you always...

The Man looks at Louise with disdain. The Young Woman looks irritated and impatient.

MAN

...come here without calling?

LOUISE

...come here at all ...

YOUNG WOMAN

(whiny, to MAN)

... you said we could... gonna be late...

Louise looks at the Young Woman in contempt.

LOUISE

... Does she have to ...

MAN

... none of your ...

The young woman glares at Louise and flounces away.

LOUISE

(calls)

Bye "Mom."

ON Julia.

The MAN starts to walk away too. Louise catches his arm. He turns around, angry. They begin to argue.

The argument escalates. The man takes Louise by the arm, roughly, trying to move her outside. Julia starts. OTHER HOTEL GUESTS starting to take notice.

Stuart comes over and breaks them apart. The Man is surprised to see him.

The sight of the two of them together appears to take the fight out of the Man. He stares at them both, looking guilty and drained. He drops Louise's arm. He quickly digs in his jacket for his wallet. He opens it and pulls out a handful of bills. He thrusts them at Louise. Then turns and walks away.

He retrieves the Young Woman from where she is browsing at a gift shop, and they walk out, right past Julia.

Louise and Stuart sit. Louise divides up the money, giving most of it to Stuart, who protests, tries to give some back to her. She refuses. He thanks her. She takes his hands and talks to him, as if making him promise something. He nods. They embrace. Then Stuart gets up to go.

Louise is alone. We see what a toll this encounter has taken on her. She wipes her streaming eyes, tries to collect herself. Then she leaves the hotel.

EXT. PIERRE HOTEL - DAY

Louise walks down the street away from the hotel.

Julia follows her.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE

Louise keeps walking West, crossing Fifth Avenue. She enters Central Park. Julia, maybe half a block behind, watches her going in ahead of her, then enters the park herself.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK

It's a cloudy day in the park with the wind gusting hard. Not many people about. A few hard-core Cyclists and Joggers. Louise walks rapidly down a path.

Julia walks faster, closing the distance to Louise.

Ahead, the wind is blowing Louise's skirt. Julia can't help watching as she moves closer.

In SLOW MOTION, we watch the wind catch the hem of Louise's skirt and ripple the fabric around her legs.

Then the wind does down, and Julia breaks into a jog and catches up with Louise and puts her hand on her shoulder.

Louise spins around, surprised.

She and Julia look at each other.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Louise stands under the shower, eyes closed, letting the water run over her face.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Louise, in a towel, walks to "her" old room. She glances at Julia, who is in the kitchen.

INT. LOUISE'S BEDROOM

Waiting for Louise on the sofa is the folded robe she used before.

Louise puts it on.

She starts to dry her hair.

Then she notices something on the bookshelf. The PHOTO ALBUM.

She takes it down, sits, opens it. She looks at the photographs that she and Julia looked at earlier.

She comes to the final pictures of the child Maggie with Julia, and the blank page where the pictures end.

ON Louise. She slowly gets up. She finds her handbag. She opens her wallet. She takes out an old, creased photograph.

CLOSE ON IT - It is of Louise and her MOTHER. Louise is 4 or 5. Louise's mother is a striking woman with black hair. The two of them are sitting on a beach, the girl in her mother's arms.

Louise looks at it a moment, then slips it carefully into the photo album, on the blank page.

She closes the book.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Louise sits on the couch, TV on, rubbing lotion into her hands and legs. Julia comes into the room with a tray of food. She sets it in on the table.

The lotion bottle is empty.

LOUISE
Do you have any more of this?

JULIA
On the shelf in the bathroom.

Louise gets up to get it.

AS SHE RISES, CLOSE on the backs of her legs, finally exposed to Julia as the robe rides up.

The backs of her knees are bare. No birth mark.

ON Julia.

Louise is nearly out of the room.

JULIA (CONT'D)
(sharp)
Wait.

Louise stops, turns.

They look at each other. A long moment. Then, finally:

JULIA (CONT'D)
Don't want it to get cold. Do it
after dinner, Louise.

Louise nods. She comes back to the couch. She sits back down.

Julia watches the girl as she picks up her fork.

JULIA (CONT'D)
You look half starved.

Louise gives a little shrug, then begins to eat.

Julia watches for a moment, then picks up a fork herself.

They sit quietly and begin to eat the meal together.

FADE OUT.